

# *Fourth International*

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## **HOW THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY BETRAYED TROTSKYISM 1973 — 1985**

**Statement of the  
International Committee  
of the Fourth International**

# Fourth International

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# Editorial

With this issue, the regular quarterly publication of the *Fourth International* as the theoretical journal of the International Committee of the Fourth International is being resumed after an interruption of more than a decade. The publication of the *Fourth International*, for which the Workers Revolutionary Party had central responsibility, was all but abandoned in 1975. After that year, only two more issues appeared — one in 1979 and the last in 1982.

The fate of the *Fourth International* magazine was a concentrated expression of the political degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the resulting crisis within the ICFI. As the International Committee has established during the past year, the collapse of the WRP in 1985-86 was the outcome of the protracted nationalist and opportunist degeneration of the Healy-Banda-Slaughter leadership. From the early 1970s on, the building of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution was increasingly subordinated to the narrow practical needs of the British organization, which systematically abused its political authority within the ICFI to advance its nationalist interests.

Despite the critical role that had been played by the *Fourth International* throughout the 1960s in the struggle against Pabloite revisionism and in the political education of the cadre of the ICFI, the WRP leadership lost all interest in sustaining the publication. Healy came to the conclusion that the needs of the WRP could be better served by publishing a monthly "theoretical organ" of the British section, which was entitled *Labour Review*.

Although it had far greater technical facilities at its disposal, the WRP insisted in 1979 that the printing of the *Fourth International* should be assigned to the Workers League, which — though barred from direct membership in the ICFI due to the reactionary US Voorhis Act — accepted this task. However, the WRP assumed no responsibility whatsoever for any aspect of the publication, financing and distribution of the magazine.

The refusal of the WRP to support in any way the publication of the *Fourth International* was bound up with Healy's repudiation of the programmatic foundations of the ICFI. Before the *Fourth International* could see the light of day, the International Committee had to liberate itself from

the chauvinist and opportunist scoundrels of the Workers Revolutionary Party who had over the course of the past decade betrayed every fundamental principle of Trotskyism.

In 1953 the International Committee had been founded to oppose the liquidation of the Fourth International into Stalinist, social democratic and bourgeois nationalist organizations which then dominated the working class and anti-imperialist movements all over the world. That struggle to defend Trotskyism was further developed in the fight between 1961-64 against the unprincipled reunification of the American Socialist Workers Party with the Pabloite revisionists and the historic betrayal of the LSSP in Sri Lanka.

But from the mid-1970s on, the WRP systematically rejected all the lessons of the long struggle against Pabloism. With ever-increasing cynicism, Healy mocked the political heritage of Trotskyism and became the most unrestrained practitioner of opportunism.

The restoration of the *Fourth International* as the genuine theoretical organ of the ICFI is the result of the victorious struggle that has been waged against all the liquidationist factions that have emerged out of the collapse and decomposition of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

This first issue is devoted to the publication of an exhaustive analysis of the betrayal of Trotskyism by the Workers Revolutionary Party. It was written between May 18 and June 9, 1986, during the first plenum of the ICFI to be held after the split with the WRP (Slaughter-Banda faction) in February 1986. With this document the ICFI has accomplished what not one of the factions claiming to represent the WRP has even attempted — an objective Marxist analysis of the historical, political and theoretical origins, development and outcome of the Workers Revolutionary Party's break with Trotskyism.

The International Committee is confident that this document will play a decisive role in clarifying revolutionists all over the world as to the significance of the collapse of the WRP, contribute to the education of an entirely new generation of Trotskyists among workers and youth, and provide a powerful foundation for the expansion of the ICFI as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.





**How the Workers  
Revolutionary Party  
Betrayed Trotskyism  
1973—1985**

**Statement of the International Committee  
of the Fourth International**



# PART ONE

## From Trotskyism to Opportunism

### 1. Why the WRP Collapsed

The political crisis which suddenly erupted inside the Workers Revolutionary Party in the summer of 1985 and which rapidly developed into a devastating split within its central leadership is an event of extraordinary significance for the Fourth International. Within a matter of weeks, the oldest and founding section of the International Committee of the Fourth International virtually disintegrated. The three principal leaders of the WRP — Gerry Healy, Michael Banda and Cliff Slaughter — who represented collectively nearly 140 years of experience within the socialist movement were thrown, almost overnight, into the most vicious factional conflict the Trotskyist movement has ever seen. Despite a period of intimate political collaboration which spanned three decades, Slaughter and Banda were to be found on one side of the factional barricades and Healy on the other. And it was not long before the unstable coalition between Banda and Slaughter broke up and they were engaged in a war to the death no less frenzied than that which they had previously waged against Healy.

And yet, the collapse of the Workers Revolutionary Party between July and October 1985 came as a complete surprise only to those who had not taken notice of the protracted degeneration in the political line of the party during the previous decade. The circumstances surrounding the development of the split — the political disorientation and demoralization which followed the end of the miners strike in March 1985, the savage internecine warfare within the Central Committee, the eruption of a dirty scandal involving Healy, the unprincipled cover-up by the Political Committee of his gross abuse of authority, the apparently sudden collapse of the WRP's financial structure, the conspiracy to defraud the International Committee — arose out of the nationalist degeneration and uncontrolled growth of opportunism within the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

This conclusion, which flows inexorably from a Marxist analysis of the whole development of the WRP since its formation, is rejected by all the different tendencies, except one, that have emerged out of the collapse of the Healyite organization. Except for the members of the newly formed International Communist Party — who, significantly, represented the only principled opposition to the Healy leadership prior to the split and based their struggle upon internationalism — all the others insist that the blame for the crisis in the WRP must be placed upon Trotskyism and the

International Committee of the Fourth International. In one way or another, they claim that the degeneration of the WRP (in so far as they admit that any degeneration took place) was the inevitable product of the struggle for Trotskyist principles.

However different the surface form of their attack, all the tendencies hostile to the ICFI agree on one central point: Trotskyism has been historically incapable of rooting itself in the working class and its resultant isolation is the cause of all political degeneration and splits within the Fourth International.

In defending himself against the International Committee, Healy alleges that his Trotskyist opponents believe in "*whiter than white socialism of the purest water and the smallest number...*" (WRP Political Committee Statement, May 30, 1986). His ally, the petty-bourgeois Greek nationalist S. Michael, denounces the ICFI for putting forward "*the reactionary return to the practices of the period of defeats and isolation of Trotskyism...*" ("A New Era for the Fourth International," January 21, 1986) As the principal leader of the Fourth International during "the period of defeats and isolation" was Leon Trotsky, the practices which Michael is fighting against are those associated with the founding and building of the World Party of Socialist Revolution, i.e., the struggle against Stalinism and centrism. He declares that the fight for Marxist principles and program "*means to work to impose defeats on the world working class and the Fourth International.*" (Ibid.)

In another statement, Healy defended his practices by insisting on the necessity of opportunism and attacked David North, a leading supporter of the International Committee, in the following manner: "*For him... the most vital question is to maintain doctrinal purity [which is] possible only in the smallest discussion group: numbers encourage only doctrinal impurity.*" (News Line, February 14, 1986)

To sum up, Healy's position is that it is impossible to build a movement in the working class without betraying Trotskyist principles. This is the first time that a tendency which claims adherence to Trotskyism has openly declared that its guiding principle is to have no principles!

Banda, in a somewhat more bombastic form, shares the same position and has concluded that the Trotskyist movement must be destroyed. In an infamous document published in February and upon which the now defunct Slaughter-Banda-Bruce faction of the WRP based its split from the International Committee, Banda declared:

"*It is certainly no accident — in fact it proceeds logically*

and practically from this very conception of the IC in 1953 — that not a single section of the IC — and this includes the Workers League of the United States — at any time in the last 32 years has been able to elaborate a viable perspective for the working class." (*Workers Press*, February 7, 1986)

The conception attacked by Banda, upon which the ICFI was based, is that of the revolutionary hegemony of the proletariat and the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the Party. Sublated into this conception is the historical struggle against Stalinism, centrism and all those agencies of imperialism within the workers' movement who remain tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie.

It is significant that Banda, just weeks before he wrote the above-quoted lines, stated that "the party has been split not on tactical and programmatic issues, but on the most basic question of revolutionary morality." (*News Line*, November 2, 1985) This was nothing more than a fancy middle-class way of admitting that Banda's split with Healy was totally unrelated to any question of principles and program.

Another crusader for "revolutionary morality," Cliff Slaughter, has concluded that the degeneration of Healy as well as his own is the result of the "isolation" of the Trotskyist movement. "At no time after the death of Trotsky did the FI prove capable of overcoming its isolation from the great mass struggles... This smallness and isolation were of course decisive factors in militating against the successful development of Marxist theory." (*Workers Press*, April 26, 1986) This statement, which seems plausible to organic opportunists and to those unfamiliar with the history of the entire Marxist movement, is in basic agreement with Healy. The Trotskyists, he claims, cannot develop Marxism because they are small. They are small because they are isolated from the working class. Why are they isolated? Slaughter does not say, but gazes longingly at the answer propounded by Healy, who has already declared that isolation is the inevitable price paid for principles.

Of course, when they speak of isolation, it is not from the working class, but from the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracy and from the various currents of petty-bourgeois radicalism and nationalism. Trotskyists, they maintain, are "isolated" insofar as they reject the bribes and blandishments of those who currently occupy powerful positions within the workers' movement or who currently enjoy a following within the middle class or among the masses of the semi-colonial countries.

Another group which has deserted the International Committee in the aftermath of the split has summed up the position of all the anti-Trotskyist tendencies in the clearest form. The Liga Comunista of Peru has declared that the degeneration of Healy and all previous struggles within the Fourth International demonstrate the complete bankruptcy of Trotskyism, which, they assert has existed "in the form of small revolutionary sects, increasingly isolated from the masses." (*Comunismo*, March 1986)

Justifying their decision to abandon the revolutionary struggle against the national bourgeoisie in Peru, they claim that the Fourth International has sat "on the sidelines of the new development of the world revolution, when this was reinitiated in the decade of the 40's with Albania, China, Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Korea, Algeria, etc.

"The Trotskyist movement couldn't learn anything from these developments... The practice of the sect relieved them



Gerry Healy

of any direct obligation in the leadership of the masses, allowing them to ignore or characterize all these developments in the most arrogant manner." (*Ibid.*) The characterizations to which they object are such Marxist terms as national bourgeoisie, Stalinist bureaucracy, petty-bourgeois radicalism, centrism, etc..

The theoretical leader of this group, Jose B., has taken this analysis to its ultimate lengths by asserting that the class basis of Trotskyism in the proletariat is the source of its isolation from the masses: "Evidently it is a case of a movement rooted in social forces totally adverse to the social forces which are objectively revolutionary. Therefore it must be objectively destroyed." (*Ibid.*)

Not long after this document was published, Cliff Slaughter rushed off to Peru to shake the hand of its author — in such haste that he forgot the organization's telephone number and was stranded for several days at the Lima airport.

It is remarkable, but not surprising, that all of these renegades should present an interpretation of the crisis of the WRP which, in its essentials, corresponds entirely to the analysis which was presented last December by the leading anti-Trotskyist organization in the world today, the American Socialist Workers Party. In the December 2, 1985 issue of *Intercontinental Press*, Doug Jenness, one of the main leaders of the SWP, traced the origins of the degeneration of the WRP back to 1961-63, when its leaders defended "orthodox" Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism:

"The Cuban revolution did not develop in the way that had been expected by the World Trotskyist movement, that is, on the basis of its 'theory of permanent revolution.' The majority of forces who considered themselves part of the Fourth International, however, wholeheartedly embraced

the revolution and began to adjust their theory to take account of the way the class struggle was actually unfolding.

"Healy and his followers, on the contrary, elevated the 'theory of permanent revolution' to the level of a dogma. From this position they considered that since the Cuban Revolution was not led by a Trotskyist party, there was no socialist revolution." (p. 726)

This statement, which marks the first time the SWP revisionists have admitted that the June 1963 split within the International Committee was precipitated by their rejection of the theory of Permanent Revolution, shows the real significance of the position of all those who now attack the ICFI, regardless of whether they are "pro-Healy" or "anti-Healy." The SWP declares that the degeneration of the WRP is the product of its defense of "out-dated" Trotskyist principles. The renegades of all stripes agree. So while Healy justifies his betrayal of principle by claiming that the working class cannot be won to Trotskyism, the renegades agree with him on this decisive issue.

There is a precise scientific term for the trend that all these renegades represent: **Liquidationism**. They represent that most reactionary wing of opportunism which has now broken with Trotskyism and is demanding the destruction of its organized expression, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its national sections.

The class basis of this tendency is the petty-bourgeoisie in all capitalist countries, who have succumbed to imperialist pressures and who no longer believe in the viability of a revolutionary perspective based on the international proletariat. This tendency is most pronounced in the major imperialist centers, where the working class remains dominated by the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies, and in those less-developed countries where the radical petty-bourgeoisie dominates the mass anti-imperialist struggle.

The opportunist degeneration of the WRP, which was personified by Healy, facilitated the growth of right-wing



Cliff Slaughter

tendencies not only in Britain but in other sections as well — especially Greece, Peru, Spain and Australia (although in the latter country the right-wingers represented a small minority whose attempts to destroy the Socialist Labour League were decisively defeated). As the split within the WRP and ICFI has revealed, these opportunist forces became transformed into a full-blown liquidationist tendency, whose battle-cry is "Junk Trotskyism!"

For this reason, however explosive and unanticipated, the unequivocal separation of the ICFI from all these liquidators is the precondition for the growth of the revolutionary vanguard all over the world and for the establishment of the political independence of the proletariat from the petty-bourgeois agencies of imperialism in the workers' movement of every country.

Unlike our opponents among the liquidators, the International Committee of the Fourth International does not content itself with mere assertions. All the liquidators, with a host of petty-bourgeois academics at their head, are propounding all sorts of theories to explain the collapse of the WRP. But not one of them has undertaken a serious analysis of the political and class line of the WRP during the past decade. This is not merely a question of personal weaknesses. They do not want any objective analysis of how the WRP degenerated, lest the working class should be armed with the lessons of the experience. Instead, they prefer an atmosphere where there is a maximum of confusion and demoralization and in which they can leave their question



Mike Banda



marks dangling over the viability of Trotskyism and the socialist revolution.

However, the International Committee has conducted the necessary examination of the degeneration of the WRP — and it demonstrates irrefutably that this degeneration was accompanied at every step by an abandonment of Trotskyism and its international strategy of World Socialist Revolution. Far from representing a break with this degeneration, the liquidators are its most diseased product.

## 2. Internationalism and the Fight for Trotskyism in Britain

The precondition for the development of a Trotskyist party in Britain was the struggle against a nationalist outlook which expressed the pressure of imperialism and its ideology on the oldest working class in the world. Prior to the founding congress of the Fourth International, Trotsky intransigently opposed the attempt by the British ILP to preserve its national autonomy and later chastized the Workers Internationalist League, of which Healy was then a member, for refusing to subordinate its factional differences in Britain to the interests of the international proletariat and work within the discipline of its world party. He warned the WIL leaders:

*"It is possible to maintain and develop a revolutionary political grouping of serious importance only on the basis of great principles. The Fourth International alone embodies and represents these principles. It is possible for a national group to maintain a constant revolutionary course only if it is firmly connected in one organization with co-thinkers throughout the world and maintains a constant political and theoretical collaboration with them. The Fourth International alone is such an organization. All purely national groupings, all those who reject international organization, control, and discipline are in their essence reactionary."* (*Documents of the Fourth International*, Pathfinder, p. 270)

This warning was not originally heeded by the WIL and valuable time was lost until its leaders finally recognized that the development of their organization was not possible without accepting the political authority of the Fourth International. In 1944, the WIL accepted unification with the existing British section. The development of the Revolutionary Communist Party proceeded through a sharp internal struggle against a petty-bourgeois clique within the leadership that was headed by Jock Haston. This was part of an international struggle against a petty-bourgeois tendency that was sympathetic to Shachtman and which was represented by Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman inside the Socialist Workers Party. It was in the course of that struggle that Healy emerged as the leader of the British section.

In 1953 the British section was split as a result of the growth of an international revisionist tendency led by Pablo and Mandel that proposed to liquidate the Trotskyist movement into Stalinism. The very existence of the Fourth International, which had been theoretically undermined by the revisionist conceptions that permeated the documents of the 1951 Third Congress, was placed in danger. Despite the previous retreats on critical theoretical and political questions that had been made by the leaderships in Britain and the United States, those forces within the Fourth International who based themselves on the working class rallied to defeat the revisionists. The high-point of this struggle was

the issuing of the *Open Letter* by SWP leader James P. Cannon in November 1953, which established the International Committee of the Fourth International to mobilize and lead the orthodox Trotskyists against the Pabloite liquidators in the International Secretariat. Healy, having collaborated closely with Cannon in the fight against Pablo and his representative in Britain, John Lawrence, endorsed the issuing of the *Open Letter*.

This historic document denounced the Pabloites for *"working consciously and deliberately to disrupt, split, and break up the historically-created cadres of Trotskyism in the various countries and to liquidate the Fourth International."* (*The Militant*, December 21, 1953)

The letter then restated the historic principles upon which Trotskyism was based:

*"(1) The death agony of the capitalist system threatens the destruction of civilization through worsening depressions, world wars and barbaric manifestations like fascism. The development of atomic weapons today underlines the danger in the gravest possible way.*

*"(2) The descent into the abyss can be avoided only by replacing capitalism with a planned economy of socialism on a world scale and thus resuming the spiral of progress opened up by capitalism in its early days.*

*"(3) This can be accomplished only under the leadership of the working class as the only truly revolutionary class in society. But the working class itself faces a crisis of leadership although the world relationship of social forces was never so favorable as today for the workers to take the road to power.*

*"(4) To organize itself for carrying out these world-historic aims the working class in each country must construct a revolutionary party in the pattern developed by Lenin; that is, a combat party capable of dialectically combining democracy and centralism — democracy in arriving at decisions, centralism in carrying them out; a leadership controlled by the ranks, ranks able to carry forward under fire in disciplined fashion.*

*"(5) The main obstacle to this is Stalinism, which attracts workers through exploiting the prestige of the October 1917 revolution in Russia, only later, as it betrays their confidence, to hurl them either into the arms of the Social Democracy, into apathy, or back to illusions in capitalism. The penalty for these betrayals is paid by the working people in the form of consolidation of fascist and monarchist forces, and new outbreaks of wars fostered and prepared by capitalism. From its inception, the Fourth International set as one of its major tasks the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism inside and outside the USSR.*

*"(6) The need for flexible tactics facing many sections of the Fourth International, and parties or groups sympathetic to its program, makes it all the more imperative that they know how to fight imperialism and all its petty-bourgeois agencies (such as nationalist formations or trade union bureaucracies) without capitulation to Stalinism, and, conversely, know how to fight Stalinism (which in the final analysis is a petty bourgeois agency of imperialism) without capitulating to imperialism.*

*"These fundamental principles established by Leon Trotsky retain full validity in the increasingly complex and fluid politics of the world today. In fact the revolutionary*



James P. Cannon

situations opening up on every hand as Trotsky foresaw, have only now brought full concreteness to what at one time may have appeared to be somewhat remote abstractions not intimately bound up with the living reality of the time. The truth is that these principles now hold with increasing force both in political analysis and in the determination of the course of practical action." (Ibid.)

The letter continued with a review of the main lines of Pablo's program and his disruptive splitting actions all over the world, and then issued this call to Trotskyists all over the world:

*"To sum up: The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally. The Pablo faction has demonstrated that it will not permit democratic decisions truly reflecting majority opinion to be reached. They demand complete submission to their criminal policy. They are determined to drive all orthodox Trotskyists out of the Fourth International or to muzzle and handcuff them.*

*"Their scheme has been to inject their Stalinist conciliationism piecemeal and likewise in piecemeal fashion, get rid of those who come to see what is happening and raise objections. That is the explanation for the strange ambiguity about many of the Pabloite formulations and diplomatic evasions.*

*"Up to now the Pablo faction has had a certain success with this unprincipled and Machiavellian maneuverism. But the qualitative point of change has been reached. The political issues have broken through the maneuvers and the fight is now a showdown.*

*"If we may offer advice to the sections of the Fourth International from our enforced position outside the ranks, we think the time has come to act and to act decisively. The*

*time has come for the orthodox Trotskyist majority of the Fourth International to assert their will against Pablo's usurpation of authority." (Ibid.)*

Several months later, on March 1, 1954, Cannon analyzed the historical implications of the split:

*"We alone are unconditional adherents of the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the party of the conscious vanguard and its role as leader of the revolutionary struggle. This theory acquires burning actuality and dominates all others in the present epoch.*

*"The problem of leadership now is not limited to spontaneous manifestations of the class struggle in a long drawn-out process, nor even to the conquest of power in this or that country where capitalism is especially weak. It is a question of the development of the international revolution and the socialist transformation of society. To admit that this can happen automatically is, in effect, to abandon Marxism altogether. No, it can only be a conscious operation, and it imperatively requires the leadership of the Marxist party which represents the conscious element in the historic process. No other party will do. No other tendency in the labor movement can be recognized as a satisfactory substitute. For that reason, our attitude towards all other parties and tendencies is irreconcilably hostile.*

*"If the relation of forces requires the adaptation of the cadres of the vanguard to organizations dominated at the moment by such hostile tendencies — Stalinist, Social Democratic, centrist — then such adaptation must be regarded at all times as a tactical adaptation, to facilitate the struggle against them; never to effect a reconciliation with them; never to ascribe to them the decisive historical role, with the Marxists assigned to the minor chore of giving friendly advice and 'loyal' criticism, in the manner of the Pabloite comments on the French General Strike." (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism, Vol. 2, New Park, p. 65)*

The international struggle against Pablo was decisive for the future development of the Trotskyist movement in Britain. Despite their small numbers and extreme poverty — which was exacerbated by the provocations organized against them by the openly pro-Stalinist Pabloite Lawrence group — the British Trotskyists had been immeasurably strengthened by the theoretical lessons of the struggle within the Fourth International. It proved to be the indispensable preparation of the British Trotskyists for their intervention in the crisis which erupted in 1956 inside the Communist Party following Khrushchev's partial revelation of Stalin's crimes and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Hungary.

Politically armed through the struggle against Pabloism, the Trotskyists were able to win important forces from the ranks of the British Communist Party — thus providing new opportunities for the expansion of the movement's theoretical work as well as its activities inside the trade unions and the Labour Party. These gains were consolidated with the founding of the Socialist Labour League in 1959.

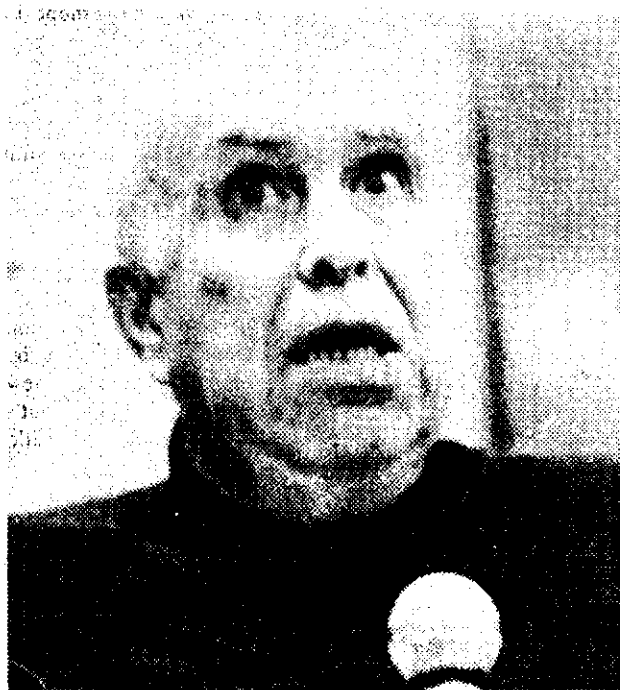
During this period, the British Trotskyists began to play an increasingly active political role in the work of the International Committee, especially after Cannon evinced a weakening in his stand against the Pabloites. Healy and his closest collaborator, Mike Banda, had closely followed the evolution of the Pabloites in Europe — especially their centrist response to the invasion of Hungary — and were convinced that there existed no grounds to suggest that the

political differences between the International Secretariat and the International Committee had diminished. In fact, they were convinced of the opposite. Therefore, they viewed with increasing alarm the growing conciliationism within the American SWP toward the Pabloites.

Behind the increasing political tension between the SLL and the SWP was a growing divergence in the orientation of the two sections. Since 1957, when the SWP had launched the so-called "regroupment" campaign in the United States, it was increasingly directed in its political work toward the milieu of petty-bourgeois radicalism. The line of the SWP, even in its theoretical organ, grew softer and more conciliatory to the historic enemies of Trotskyism. By 1958 Hansen was publicly repudiating the political revolution against the Kremlin bureaucracy. The SLL, on the other hand, was deepening its penetration of the mass workers' movement on the basis of an unrelenting struggle against the right-wing Social Democratic bureaucracy. In 1958 and 1960, Healy met with Cannon and other leaders of the SWP to see whether it would be possible to restrain their precipitous moves toward reunification with the Pabloites and work for the maximum clarification of the international cadre as a prerequisite for unity discussions with the International Secretariat.

However, the political differences between the SWP and the SLL continued to widen. In 1960, more than a year after Castro had come to power, the SWP swung over to the position that a workers' state had been created in Cuba and that the "Castro team" consisted of "unconscious Marxists" who represented an adequate substitute for a Trotskyist party of the Cuban working class.

On January 2, 1961, the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League addressed a letter to the SWP leadership in which they expressed their deep concern that the veteran Trotskyists of the United States were drifting away from the strategic goal of the Fourth International. It



Michel Pablo

stressed to the SWP the great importance of the struggle for principles:

*"We are entering a period comparable in significance to 1914-1917 and it is as vital now as it was then to break sharply and clearly with all sorts of centrist tendencies within our own ranks. If we are to fulfill our revolutionary duty in the coming years as the Bolsheviks did, we have to follow the example of Lenin, not that of Luxemburg, in not merely criticizing but also uncompromisingly separating ourselves from all sorts of contemporary Kautskys; first and foremost, from the Pablo gang." (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism, Vol. Three, p. 46)*

It is important to note that the SLL was insisting that the struggle against centrism and all forms of opportunism assumes the greatest significance at the very point when the objective situation brings forward an intensification of the class struggle and expands the possibilities for party building in the working class. Moreover, this attitude of theoretical intransigence came precisely when the SLL was beginning to make major gains inside the workers' movement — especially among the youth inside the Labour Party Young Socialists, where the SLL was building its factions and training a youth cadre as Trotskyists.

It warned the SWP that the *"greatest danger confronting the revolutionary movement is liquidationism, flowing from a capitulation either to the strength of imperialism or to the bureaucratic apparatuses in the Labour movement, or both. Pabloism represents even more clearly now than in 1953, this liquidationist tendency in the international Marxist movement. In Pabloism the advanced working class is no longer the vanguard of history, the center of all Marxist theory and strategy in the epoch of imperialism, but the plaything of 'world-historical factors,' surveyed and assessed in abstract fashion."* (Ibid., p. 48)

The SLL took the Pabloites to task for their combination of impressionism and objectivism, and analyzed the significance of their revisionism for the Fourth International: *"...all historical responsibility of the revolutionary movement is denied, all is subordinated to panoramic forces; the questions of the role of the Soviet bureaucracy and of the class forces in the colonial revolution are left unresolved. That is natural because the key to these problems is the role of the working class in the advanced countries and the crisis of leadership in their Labour movements."* (Ibid. p. 49)

The British Trotskyists warned: *"Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement. In Britain we have seen the results of Pablo's revisionism in Pabloite actions since the formation of the Socialist Labour League and the current policy crisis in the Labour Party and we are more than ever convinced of the need to build a Leninist party absolutely free from the revisionism which Pabloism represents."* (Ibid.)

Contrary to those who claim that principles stand in the way of building a party and in direct contradiction to the claims of that flabby imposter, S. Michael, that the upsurge of the masses negates the need for theoretical irreconcilability, the SLL declared:

*"It is because of the magnitude of the opportunities opening up before Trotskyism and therefore the necessity of*



**British Young Socialists march during the 1960s**

*political and theoretical clarity that we urgently require a drawing of the lines against revisionism in all its forms. It is time to draw to a close the period in which Pabloite revisionism was regarded as a trend within Trotskyism. Unless this is done we cannot prepare for the revolutionary struggles now beginning. We want the SWP to go forward with us in this spirit." (Ibid.)*

The SWP responded with hostility to the proposals of the SLL. Cannon, who had given up on the American working class and reconciled himself to serving as the national chairman *emeritus* of an increasingly middle-class organization, wrote to Farrell Dobbs on May 12, 1961: "*The breach between us and Gerry is obviously widening. It is easier to recognize that than to see how the recent trend can be reversed. In my opinion, Gerry is heading toward disaster and taking his whole organization with him.*" (Ibid., p. 71)

In the course of the next two years, the SLL forced a discussion on the most fundamental problems of Marxist program and method despite all the attempts of Hansen to prevent any clarification of the historical implications of the 1953 split. The documents produced by the leaders of the SLL, especially Cliff Slaughter, were among the most important contributions to the development of Trotskyism since the great struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939-40. To the ever-lasting historical credit of those who led this fight, the SLL courageously challenged the liquidationist wave that was engulfing large sections of the Trotskyist movement. Against the seemingly irreversible

tide of adaptation to various petty-bourgeois leaders temporarily dominating the anti-imperialist struggle in the semi-colonial countries, the SLL dared to stand up for principles that were being derided as out-of-date and irrelevant. It defended the perspective of the proletarian dictatorship and fought back against the debasement of Marxist theory by pragmatists and impressionists looking for the easy way out of building the Fourth International. It did not merely defend the *Open Letter*: the SLL fought to extract the essence of Trotsky's teachings and their historical relation to Lenin's life-long struggle to build a genuine proletarian party. Working in a country whose theoretical traditions were dominated by empiricism, the British Trotskyists became the champions of a renaissance of Marxist theory and exposed the bankrupt objectivism which constituted the anti-dialectical underpinnings of the Pabloite attack on Trotskyism.

As the word began to get around that the SLL was not going to play ball with Hansen's scheme to liquidate Trotskyism under the cover of reunification, the slanderers set to work in order to frame the SLL and its national secretary, Gerry Healy, as "ultra-left" sectarians. But despite the calumny and falsifications, the SLL began to forge links with Trotskyists in different parts of the world. With extraordinary patience, its leaders undertook to train a Trotskyist faction within the SWP, impressing upon its members again and again that there existed no way to defend the Fourth International and build its sections all over the world except

through the most exhaustive and thorough-going struggle against revisionism. Above all, they stressed that nothing could be built anywhere in the world, including Britain, unless the fight for the Fourth International was placed at the center of the work in each country.

In June 1963, as the SWP was carrying through its unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites — an action which was to destroy countless sections and cost hundreds of Trotskyists in Latin America their lives as a result of the catastrophic errors which followed — Healy addressed a final letter to the party with which he had closely collaborated for more than 20 years. He denounced with indignation their cover-up of the betrayals of the LSSP in Sri Lanka and their publicity build-up of various bourgeois nationalists like Ben Bella. And he poured scorn on those who justified their abandonment of principles with the claim that they had broken out of "isolation."

*"Of course you have no time for the 'sectarian SLL.' Our comrades in the ranks and in the leadership fight day in and day out against reformism and Stalinism in the best traditions of the Trotskyist movement. But they do not yet speak to tens of thousands at public meetings like Ben Bella, Castro and the so-called Ceylon May Day meeting. In your eyes we are merely small, 'ultra-left fry.'*

*"Our comrades took the leadership in the recent campaign against unemployment, organized and spoke to a mass meeting of 1,300, but this is small stuff. When our comrades*

*deal powerful blows against the Social Democrats in the youth movement in the teeth of a violent witch-hunt, your correspondent T.J. Peters (a one-time leading SWP supporter who now writes like a retired liberal) speaks only of the great future before 'British Labour.'*

*"We old-fashioned 'sectarians' believe that the Fourth International of which our organization has always been an integral part, offers the only alternative to the corrupt leadership of so-called 'British Labour.' But Peters has no time for us. He, like you, has really seen the light.*

*"It took you some time. (As the saying goes 'Those who come late to Christ come hardest.') It is approximately 12 years since George Clarke joined forces with Pablo and published the message of the infamous Third Congress in The Militant and what was at that time the magazine Fourth International. You failed to understand Pablo at that time, and then we had the split of 1953. Cannon hailed this split with the words that we were 'never going back to Pabloism.' But at last you have made it. You now have allies all over the place, from Fidel Castro, to Philip Gunawardene and Pablo.*

*"We want to say only one thing and in this our congress was unanimous. We are proud of the stand which our organization has taken against such a disgraceful capitulation to the most reactionary forces as that to which the majority leadership of your party has fully succumbed."* (Ibid., pp. 163-64)

One year later, in June 1964, when the LSSP — which had



French auto workers occupying Renault plant during May-June 1968 General Strike



The leaders of the Sri Lanka (Ceylon) coalition government of 1964, in which the revisionist LSSP participated

opposed the *Open Letter* and then played a key role in the maneuvers which led to the reunification — entered the bourgeois coalition government of Madame Bandaranaike, the warnings of the Socialist Labour League were confirmed. Healy had travelled to Colombo to attend the LSSP conference and to campaign against the traitors who were plotting their way into the coalition government. On the day of the conference, June 6, 1964, he stood outside the gates of the Town Hall, demanding to be admitted so that he could speak to the delegates and urge them to reject the decision of N. M. Perrera, Colvin De Silva and other LSSP leaders to enter the bourgeois government. Though he succeeded in forcing a vote on the question of his admission into the conference, Healy was denied entry. He remained at the gates outside the meeting, calling on delegates to break with the LSSP leaders and support the revolutionary wing. When the conference was over, Healy went to address dock workers in Colombo port, textile workers at Wellawatta weaving mills, and a group of university students. At all these meetings he explained the historic significance of the betrayal carried out by the LSSP in collaboration with the Hansen-Mandel "United Secretariat." His call for the defense of Trotskyism against the LSSP traitors evoked a powerful response. The work he carried out in Sri Lanka — which was further developed during subsequent trips by Michael and Tony Banda — laid the basis for the rebuilding of the Trotskyist movement in that country.

In the United States, the SLL worked to reorganize the Trotskyist movement in the aftermath of the SWP's desertion of the Fourth International. Immense political assistance was given, not only in the analysis of the split but in the development of a revolutionary perspective for the American proletariat. Fighting against tendencies to see the split simply in the context of radical politics in the United States, the SLL fought to develop a genuine Marxist party, oriented to the working class and based on internationalism. As a result of this protracted theoretical and political clarification, the petty-bourgeois radical and anti-internationalist character of the Spartacist group was ex-

posed and the conditions were created to transform the American Committee for the Fourth International into the Workers League in November 1966.

The work conducted by the Socialist Labour League between 1961 and 1966 represented a historic contribution to the building of the Fourth International. It had assumed responsibility for leading the struggle against revisionism and reorganizing, along with the OCI in France, the world Trotskyist movement.

It was during this period of intensive theoretical work on an international front that the SLL laid the foundations for enormous political and organizational advances within Britain. In 1964 it captured the leadership of the Labour Party Young Socialists. In response to a purge by the Wilson leadership in the Labour Party, it established the YS as the independent youth organization of the Trotskyist movement.

This influx of a new generation made possible an expansion of the SLL's political work. In 1968, the revolutionary perspective for which it had fought against the Pabloites was completely confirmed by the French General Strike of May-June. This development led to the rapid growth in the OCI in France and, under conditions of a growing conflict between the working class and the right-wing reformist Labour government, a substantial increase in the size of the Socialist Labour League. In September 1969, the first daily Trotskyist newspaper, the *Workers Press* was established.

In June 1970 the Labourites called an election, based on opinion polls which showed them coasting to an easy victory over the Tories. However, the treacherous record of the Government, exemplified by its abortive attempt to introduce anti-union laws, created the conditions for the victory of the Tories. This set into motion an escalation of class conflict on a scale not seen since the end of World War II. Workers, intellectuals and youth began to enter the Socialist Labour League in unprecedented numbers. The facilities and resources of the movement expanded at a tremendous speed. Actors and playwrights attended SLL lectures, joined



the party and assisted in the staging of such powerful gatherings as the Alexandra Palace rally which drew an audience of 4,000. In response to the introduction of anti-union laws by the Heath government (the Industrial Relations Act) and the growth of unemployment, the SLL organized a national campaign against unemployment based on youth marches which attracted immense support in Britain and whose progress was followed with pride throughout all the sections of the International Committee.

Educational camps in Essex were held during the summers of 1970, 1971 and 1972 that attracted ever-larger international delegations. The strength of the SLL and its stature among revolutionists all over the world had grown enormously. As a result of its struggle against revisionism, it had been able to develop the first serious Marxist analysis of the post-war capitalist boom ever attempted within the Trotskyist movement and explained the explosive contradictions embodied in the Bretton Woods system of international finance based on dollar-gold convertibility. The British Trotskyists exposed the characteristic impressionism of Mandel's theory of neo-capitalism, which attempted to transform Marx's *Capital* into an apology for the subordination of the working class to middle-class protest movements.

### 3. Conflict with the OCI

Despite — or rather, inseparably connected with — these advances, new problems arose within the International Committee in the aftermath of the split with the Socialist Workers Party. As early as 1966, differences began to emerge between the SLL and the OCI in relation to the role of the ICFI. The difference which first arose at the Third Congress of the ICFI in April 1966 over the question of the historical continuity of Trotskyism was a clear indication of centrist deviations within the world movement. While the OCI fought alongside the SLL against the Robertsonites and the Voix Ouvriere group who openly rejected the struggle against Pabloism as the essential criterion of historical continuity, the differences between the two sections grew wider. The French insistence that the Fourth International had to be "reconstructed" was not merely a dispute over terminology. It suggested a political orientation toward centrist forces under the cover of an international regroupment, and thus placed the gains of the fight against Pabloite revisionism in jeopardy. By making concessions to those who claimed that the Fourth International was "dead" and had to be "reconstructed," it was declaring, if only implicitly, that the lessons of the past struggles against revisionism were not of decisive importance. Thus, it led directly to the political swamp of centrism, where everyone could get together regardless of the political records of the tendencies they represented.

Under conditions of the upsurge of the working class and student youth in France in 1968, these centrist vacillations assumed immense importance in the political development of the OCI and the ICFI. The French organization, which had for years been struggling to simply pay its bills and establish a presence within the labor movement, suddenly grew like an inflated balloon. By 1970 it was able to organize a rally at Le Bourget airport in Paris that was attended by 10,000 workers and youth. However, the OCI leadership of Lambert and Just adapted to the petty-bourgeois elements, such as Charles Berg, who flooded into the movement.

Before long, the right-wing tail was wagging the Party dog.

Throughout this period, the differences between the SLL and the OCI developed over a wide range of principled questions, ranging from the refusal of the French organization to support semi-colonial Egypt against the Zionist state in the 1967 war to the syndicalist and abstentionist line of the OCI during the May-June General Strike and the 1969 Presidential elections.

Having experienced considerable growth in spite of themselves, the OCI leaders felt increasingly self-confident and disdainful toward the International Committee. After relocating themselves in a massive fortress-like structure befitting their new self-importance, Lambert and Just proceeded to establish their own international operation based on dealings with centrists all over the world. Among their most unprincipled relations was that which they cultivated with the Bolivian POR led by G. Lora, an organization which had a long history of collaboration with bourgeois nationalists and which had supported Pablo in 1953.

In July 1971 the OCI organized a youth rally in Essen, Germany, on a completely centrist basis, inviting representatives of not only the POUM — the centrist organization which played a major role in the defeat of the Spanish proletariat — but also of the Robertsonites and the US National Students Association, which had received CIA funding. In the course of that rally, which the SLL had agreed to attend, a resolution was presented by the British YS delegation which called on youth to devote themselves to the struggle for the development of dialectical materialism. The OCI, which had argued with the SLL against presenting the resolution, voted publicly against it.

One month later, the Bolivian army staged a coup which resulted in the overthrow of the "left" military regime of General Torres and the destruction of the Popular Assembly. Having supported the Torres government and expected that the military regime would supply the working class with arms in the event of a coup, Lora was deeply implicated in this political disaster. Tim Wohlforth, who was then secretary of the Workers League, published, with the agreement of the SLL, a critique of the policies of the POR.

The OCI responded by calling a meeting of its international faction in Paris and issuing a statement which denounced the SLL and the Workers League for capitulating to imperialism by attacking the POR publicly. Moreover, it had the audacity to claim that Lora was a member of the ICFI.

The ICFI majority, led by the SLL, responded to this attack by declaring a public split with the OCI on November 24, 1971. There is no question that the characterization of the OCI as a centrist organization was politically correct and the criticisms of the French organization's political line were entirely justified. Moreover, on the question of philosophy, the SLL correctly opposed the attempt by the OCI to deny that dialectical materialism was the theory of knowledge of Marxism and to claim that the Transitional Program rendered superfluous any further development of Marxist theory.

However, unlike the struggle with the Socialist Workers Party — which was waged throughout the party ranks over an extended period of time — the split with the OCI was car-



**The leadership of the Third Congress of the International Committee (clockwise from upper left): M. Banda; C. Slaughter; S. Just, France; M. Rastos, Greece; G. Healy; P. Lambert, France**

ried out without any extensive discussion within the ICFI or among its cadre in the national sections. The international ramifications of the split were given only cursory treatment, which bore no resemblance to the international fight that had been waged by the SLL between 1961 and 1966. It need only be pointed out that the ICFI did not win a single member from the French organization, despite the theoretical and political bankruptcy of the Lambert-Just leadership, and what was even worse, no attempt was made to develop a faction within the OCI. In not one document did the SLL go so far as to make an appeal to the French membership for support.

In contrast to the enormous patience and tenacity with which the SLL conducted the struggle against the degeneration of the SWP — which continued even after the split (the American supporters of the ICFI remained in the SWP for another year) — the break with the OCI was carried out with a political haste which could only leave a legacy of confusion that played into the hands of the French centrists. It should be pointed out that there had been no congress of the ICFI for five years prior to the split, and the break occurred just a few months before the next full congress, the

fourth, was scheduled to take place. The OCI called for an emergency meeting of the International Committee and repeatedly demanded further discussion. This was unilaterally rejected by the Socialist Labour League, which simply declared that the split was inevitable and historically necessary.

Under these conditions the split — considered from the standpoint of the education of the cadre of the International Committee and the clarification of the most advanced sections of workers all over the world — was decidedly premature. It represented a retreat by the Socialist Labour League from the international responsibilities it had assumed in 1961 when it took up the fight against the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party. However necessary the critique of the methodological roots of centrism, and despite the subsequent claims that the split was over essential questions of philosophy, the issue of dialectical materialism neither exhausted nor superseded the fundamental political and programmatic questions that remained to be addressed.

While the split was directly precipitated by the Bolivian events, the SLL was soon claiming that they were only of



**Bolivian workers and students gather to fight the right-wing military coup in 1971**

secondary importance, and that the split within the ICFI had already taken place at Essen when the OCI opposed the resolution on dialectical materialism. This was a false polemic. The events in Bolivia — in which the OCI provided a political cover for Lora — were of immense historical importance for the international working class, above all for the proletariat of Latin America. It was absolutely essential that the ICFI should have analyzed this experience in the most minute detail — just as Trotsky analyzed the events in China, Germany and Spain — in order to expose the counter-revolutionary implications of centrism in the present period. It was not enough to state that Lora and the OCI were wrong. More important from the standpoint of Marxism and the development of the ICFI as the World Party of Socialist Revolution would have been to raise this event to the level of a strategic experience of the international proletariat. This was all the more necessary in as much as the Bolivian proletariat had a long association with the Fourth International. In 1951 Pablo had sanctioned a parliamentary road to power in Bolivia, thus paving the way for the defeat of the 1952 Revolution. At the Fourth Congress of the ICFI in April 1972, the Bolivian events were barely referred to.

The SLL could correctly point to the serious mistakes which the OCI had made in France in 1968-69. But the problem was that these differences had not been discussed within the IC prior to the split. Moreover, the critique of the OCI ended before it reached the point of developing, on the basis of a Marxist analysis of the OCI's abstentionism, a concrete revolutionary perspective for the French proletariat.

This is a fundamental question. The task confronting

leaders of the Fourth International is not only to unearth the betrayals and expose the mistakes but to discover the correct road. In the course of the fight against the SWP, the SLL restored to its rightful place in the practice of American Trotskyists the tactic of the Labor Party. Later, it corrected a tendency within the Workers League to adapt to Black nationalism and encouraged serious theoretical work on the development of a correct programmatic attitude toward this question.

Despite the strategic importance occupied by France in the development of the World Socialist Revolution, all work on the perspective of the ICFI for that country came to an end once the split was completed. Thus, despite the deep historical connections of the Trotskyist movement with the proletariat of that country — and whose problems had been the subject of some of Trotsky's greatest writings — the SLL simply abandoned the French working class.

Why, then, did the Socialist Labour League proceed in this way? The answer must be found first of all in the political development of the class struggle in Britain and the work of the British section. The sharpening of the class struggle under a Tory government produced an elemental upsurge in the working class which, as we have already noted, enabled the SLL to recruit hundreds of new members. But despite the many organizational successes, as important as they were, a process of political adaptation to this spontaneous upsurge of the working class in Britain began to take place — and it was reflected in political terms almost immediately in a change in the attitude of the British leaders toward the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Ironically, the SLL leadership responded to the growth of their own organization in much the same way as the OCI had responded to their political advances. Healy, Banda and Slaughter began to look upon the ICFI as an auxiliary to the practical work that was being carried out within Britain. The growth of the SLL was increasingly viewed as the basis for the future development of the ICFI, rather than seeing the building of the ICFI as the precondition for consolidating and advancing the gains of the movement in Britain. Their attitude toward the ICFI and its small and politically-inexperienced sections resembled the contempt with which the "big" ILP of the 1930s had viewed the Fourth International.

The haste with which the SLL carried through the split with the OCI — without an exhaustive struggle against centrism throughout the International Committee and within its own ranks — represented an adaptation to the spontaneous upsurge of the British labor movement and marked a serious retreat from the struggle to build the Fourth International. Despite the warning which it had made a decade earlier, the SLL failed to develop the political struggle against centrism within the Fourth International and make the lessons of that struggle the basis for the political education of its own cadre. This could not have happened at a worse time. Precisely because broad new layers were entering the SLL, it was more necessary than ever to base these forces on the historical foundations of the world Trotskyist movement and its long and on-going struggle against all forms of revisionism.

This retreat inevitably undermined the gains which had been made by the SLL. Inasmuch as the new forces were not grounded in great international principles, reinforced by a clear understanding of the world perspective, relations within the party inevitably assumed an increasingly pragmatic character based on limited tactical agreements centered on immediate goals ("Bring down the Tory government"). Moreover, politically-unclarified members were vulnerable to changes in the moods of different class forces to which the leaders themselves, having failed to theoretically comprehend the principal lessons of the struggles of the previous period, began to adapt.

Thus, within a very short period of time, the SLL, beneath the pressure of powerful class forces unleashed by the eruption of the world capitalist crisis in 1971-73, began to develop rapidly in the direction of centrism. This was the enormous price the Healy leadership paid for the failure to keep the pledge it had made to the Fourth International in 1961.

#### 4. The Founding of the Workers Revolutionary Party

In 1973 the campaign was launched to transform the SLL into the revolutionary party. This was an event which clearly had historic implications for the International Committee of the Fourth International. However, this was not the way in which this decision was approached by the SLL leadership or explained to the rank and file.

The founding of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 was preceded, under the supervision of Leon Trotsky, by the preparation of hundreds of pages of documents which presented, first and foremost, the historical foundations of

the American section of the Fourth International and its international perspective. All the crucial questions of program and principles were elaborated. The creation of a new revolutionary party was conceived of as an historical conquest of the most advanced sections of the proletariat, not as an episodic tactical maneuver to facilitate recruitment. It was presented as the outcome of a protracted international struggle within the communist movement and the most advanced sections of the proletariat.

The founding of the WRP, however, was explained in a very different way. A Central Committee resolution, dated February 1, 1973, offered a perspective for the transformation of the SLL into the party without even mentioning the central Trotskyist strategy of the World Socialist Revolution. It did not state the basic programmatic positions of the Fourth International, nor did it relate the decision to found the party to the theoretical conquests won in the struggle against Pabloite revisionism.

Nothing in the draft perspectives indicated that the transformation of the SLL into the Workers Revolutionary Party was based on anything more than practical considerations related to the growing anti-Tory movement within the working class. The document was clearly written from the standpoint of adapting to the general level of trade union consciousness, and the program it outlined was limited almost entirely to demands of a democratic character. Not a word was said about the dictatorship of the proletariat as the strategic goal of the socialist revolution in Britain. The perspectives did not explain and expose the class nature of bourgeois democracy — the first requirement of a revolutionary program for the British working class.

The document had nothing to say about the struggle against British imperialism, nor did it say anything about the relationship of the British working class to the national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world. The programmatic section of the document did not call for Irish self-determination.

In its content and underlying conception, the program upon which the WRP was founded had nothing whatsoever to do with Trotskyism. There was not a single passage which went outside the precincts of centrism. This was bound up with the essentially nationalist perspective with which the WRP was launched. In calling for the transformation of the SLL, the Healy leadership proclaimed that it had only one goal: **the election of a Labour government to replace the Tories!**

*"The Socialist Labour League, transformed into a revolutionary party, will undertake a specific political task: to unite the working class behind a socialist programme to throw out the Tory government and replace it with a Labour government; to lead the struggle to expose and replace the Labour leaders who serve capitalism; to take the mass anti-Tory movement through the struggle for socialist policies under a Labour government; in this fight, to win many thousands to Marxism and throw out the reformist leaders of the trade union and labour movement.*

*"Such a revolutionary party will work in the factories, the trade unions, youth movement, tenants' movement, among the unemployed, among students — wherever there is a struggle against the Tory government — in order to present the real socialist alternative to these forces.*

*"Members of the party will be the most active and leading*

fighters in every struggle on wages, on jobs, on rents, on the social services and on democratic rights. But in these struggles they will be fighting first and foremost to build the political movement to throw out the Tories, at the center of which is the assembling and training of the forces of the revolutionary party itself." (*Fourth International*, Winter 1973, p. 132)

This was the first time in history that a Trotskyist party was founded for the specific purpose of electing a Social Democratic government! A more provincial perspective could not be easily imagined. In his *Critique of the Draft Program* Trotsky had written: "In our epoch, which is the epoch of imperialism, i.e., of world economy and world politics, under the hegemony of finance capital, not a single communist party can establish its program by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of developments in its own country." (*Third International After Lenin*, New Park, p. 3)

But in 1973 the SLL was proposing to establish a party on the basis of an election program! Moreover, in asserting its right to form a revolutionary party, the SLL presented itself as merely the most consistent fighter against Toryism and for democratic rights. It explained the revolutionary party almost entirely in terms of the necessity of defending "basic" rights, whose class content were not specified:

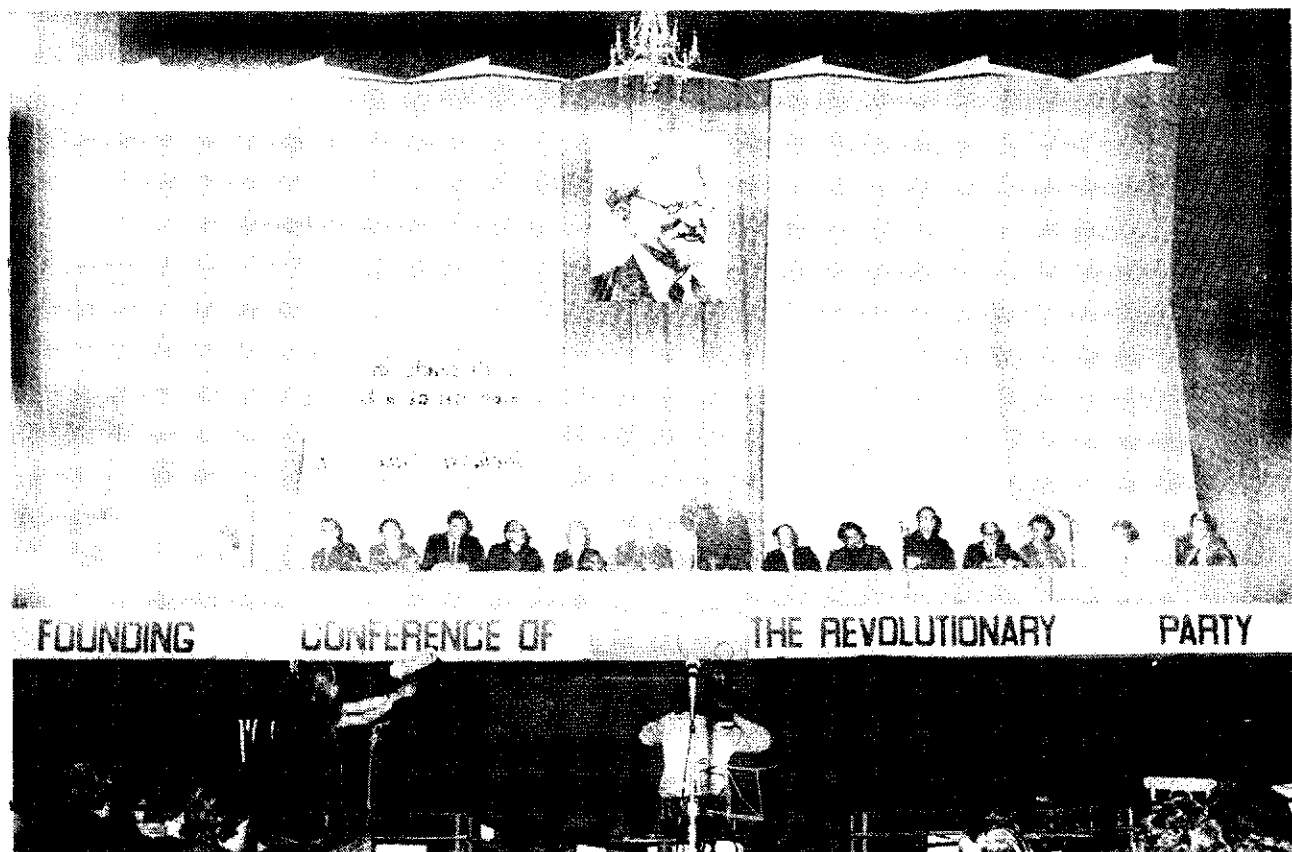
"Today, when the Socialist Labour League calls for support to transform itself into a revolutionary party, it does so on the basis of its own record in defense of these basic rights and the struggle for alternative leadership..."

"The present SLL grew out of the whole struggle on basic policies and defense of basic rights like the right to work." (*Ibid.*, p. 130)

For a while, Healy toyed with the idea of calling the new organization the "Basic Rights Party"! Fortunately, he gave up on this proposal, but the political outlook which had given rise to that idea permeated the founding document. In the program section of the document, which appeared as if it had been borrowed from the policy committee of the T&GWU, the basic rights were enumerated as follows: *the right to work, the democratic right to strike and organize in trade unions, the right to defend rights won in the past and change the system (!), the right to a higher standard of living, the right to health and welfare benefits, and the right to decent housing.*

The transformation of the League into the party was organizationally spearheaded by a mass recruitment campaign, in which all who agreed with this program were welcome to join the British section. But this program was written in such a way that membership would be open to anyone with even the vaguest Social Democratic sentiments. Thus, the transformation of the SLL into the WRP was bound up with a dangerous lowering of the political qualifications for party membership. Recruitment was organized not for proletarian revolution, but for the election of a Labour government and the enactment of a Social Democratic program.

Moreover, the document hardly identified the Socialist



The Founding Conference of the WRP, November 1973

Labour League with the International Committee of the Fourth International. Precisely four brief paragraphs were devoted to the history of the Trotskyist movement. As for revisionism, it was referred to only in its British guise, the International Marxist Group, and no reference was made to the historic struggles of the previous decade. Thus, those who joined on the basis of this program would not have necessarily known that they were becoming members of an international communist organization, nor would they have had to agree with the perspectives of the ICFI and its authority over their political work. In explaining the growth and political development of the SLL during the previous decade, it made no reference to the struggle for proletarian internationalism against the betrayals of Pabloite revisionism.

The decision to found the Workers Revolutionary Party was not discussed at the Fourth Congress of the International Committee. It was approached as a national endeavor unrelated to the international struggle against revisionism. The transformation of the SLL into the WRP was not consciously fought for as the culmination of the protracted struggle against Pabloite liquidationism and OCI centrism through which the continuity of Trotskyism was preserved and defended. Instead, the "transformation" was utilized as a way of debasing the program and blurring the historical principles for which the SLL had fought. Thus, in the very founding of the WRP the impact of the turn away from the building of the ICFI was already felt within the British section.

However, it was not wrong to found the Workers Revolutionary Party nor would it be correct to say that the centrist character of the program meant that the new party was not Trotskyist. A series of incorrect and inadequate documents do not by themselves change the character of a movement which was the product of decades of struggle within the working class. But the manner in which the WRP was founded was marred by an opportunist deviation which expressed the pressure of the growing mass movement upon the party — specifically, an adaptation to its trade union level of consciousness. The form of this adaptation was directly related to the failure to develop the struggle against centrism within the Fourth International. Once again the old truth was being verified; those who carry out a hasty and theoretically uncompleted split with the centrists wind up adopting their platform.

## 5. The Expulsion of Alan Thornett

One month after the founding of the WRP, the impact of the Arab oil embargo forced the Heath government to impose a three-day work week just as the miners were preparing a national strike in support of their pay claim. After the National Union of Mineworkers began all-out strike action in January 1974, Heath decided to call a General Election in the hope that he would win a popular mandate to use state violence to smash the strike. Instead, the strike continued throughout the election campaign and won support within broad sections of the middle class who swung toward the Labour Party. The WRP had been calling for the bringing down of the Heath government, new elections and the return of a Labour government. It had previously insisted in its program for the transformation of the League into the Party that "*This demand for the election of a*

*Labour government on socialist policies, is the indispensable step in preparing the working class for state power, because it means above all the break from reformism.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 132-33)

The Labour Party was returned to power as a minority government, and this development was to have profound consequences for the Workers Revolutionary Party. Having based the founding of the Party just four months earlier on the struggle to bring down the Tories and return a Labour government, the realization of this perspective within such a short period of time led very quickly to a serious crisis within the new organization. Hundreds of people had been attracted to the party on the basis of this specific task, and, in the euphoria which followed the return of Labour to power, began to slip away from the party before their real political education as Trotskyists had even begun.

The broad area of agreement between the Party and the working class that had existed during the glorious hey-day of the anti-Tory movement now came up against the reality of a Labour government, whose first action was to settle the miners' strike on the basis of the union's demands. The WRP leadership was compelled to redefine its program and placed renewed emphasis on its Trotskyist identity and opposition to the ruling Social Democrats. However, the concessions that had been made to centrism over the previous two years meant that the reorientation could not be carried through without creating friction within the leadership. Moreover, in the midst of these changes, the centrist empire in France struck back! Two cowardly middle-class renegades who had fled the party during the first days of the Tory onslaught — Robin Blick and Mark Jenkins — began collaborating with the OCI in forming the "Bulletin" group for the purpose of creating a faction inside the Workers Revolutionary Party. The specific aim of these scoundrels — who were to eventually become open anti-communists — was to bring about the removal of Healy from the party leadership. A fertile field for their operations existed in the form of the political and theoretical confusion arising from the founding program which had brought an influx of recruits, including a substantial section of workers, on a centrist basis. Moreover, the older members of the party had not really assimilated the basic principles and political lessons involved in the struggle against the OCI.

In the summer of 1974, as has now been documented, Blick and Jenkins established secret contact with Alan Thornett and several other members of the WRP Central Committee. Thornett, who held an important union post at the British Leyland plant at Cowley, was the secretary of the Party's industrial arm, the All Trades Unions Alliance. The Western Region of the party which he represented had grown considerably during the anti-Tory period.

The Blick-Jenkins group attacked the WRP from the right — ridiculing its stress on the depth of the capitalist crisis and its warnings of the dangers of a military coup in 1973-74 (which were later confirmed in a detailed report, published in the capitalist press, on the crisis within the Tory cabinet during the miners' strike); denouncing the WRP's criticisms of the Labour and TUC bureaucracy and specifically attacking the *Workers Press* for unmasking Wedgewood (Tony) Benn.

Their attacks proved effective precisely because large sections of the Party were politically disarmed in front of the



Labour government. Furthermore, Thornett, who had developed a close relation with sections of workers on the basis of the centrist "basic rights" deviations of the 1973-74 period, now resisted the return by the WRP leadership to sharp attacks on the Labour government, especially under conditions where it retained a precarious hold on power and was faced with the imminent necessity of calling new elections.

The Thornett faction was born with a club foot. It lied to the Party leadership and the membership about its real origins. While criticizing the Healy leadership for failing to apply the method of the *Transitional Program*, it developed an entirely new conception within the Trotskyist movement — the creation of a "transitional program" for factions, in which the minority, starting from what it believes the Party ranks are prepared to accept, gradually introduces further demands which are strategically aimed at the systematic demobilization of the Trotskyists and the conquest of power by the revisionists, culminating with a counter-revolution against the Fourth International.

In a political sense, Thornett abdicated any right to lead the WRP when he secretly collaborated with three deserters (John Archer, who had joined the OCI, worked with Blick and Jenkins) who wrote his program and platform. The fact that he violated the most fundamental precepts of democratic centralism and acted as an agent of hostile anti-Party forces was proved by a statement written by his guru, Robin Blick, on November 4, 1980:

*"This statement is motivated by the continuing refusal of WSL [Workers Socialist League founded by Thornett after the split] leadership to give a true account of its own origins. I have until now refrained from commenting on the polemics between the WRP and the WSL as to the role of the Bulletin group and myself in the events leading up to the expulsion of the Thornett opposition six years ago. But I now feel it is time WSL members knew the facts. The WSL leadership has had more than enough time to put the record straight..."*

*"The seeds of the Thornett opposition were sown with the publication, from January 1974 onwards, of the "Bulletin" by, at first, myself and Mark Jenkins, another former SLL (now WRP) member. This Bulletin was mailed out to all WRP members of whom we had the addresses, irrespective of what we thought their attitude might be toward it. It was by this means that it came into the hands of, amongst others in the WRP's Western Region, Central Committee member Kate Blakeney. Others in the Western Region region reading it included Alan Thornett..."*

*"The first contact made with the Western Region WRP was with Kate Blakeney, who Mark Jenkins met, at her home, in late August. Another meeting, this time with myself as well as Mark Jenkins, followed very shortly. Kate Blakeney expressed substantial agreements with the criticisms of the WRP in the Bulletin. She informed us that there existed an unofficial and rather secret opposition within the Western Region consisting of herself, Alan Thornett, John Lister, Tony Richardson, and possibly some others. It had no clear platform, or understanding where the WRP had gone wrong, but was rather a coming together of people who for various reasons were dissatisfied with the national performance of the WRP. There was particular hostility towards Healy's sudden elevation to the highest*

*positions of leadership of the 'jet set' converts to Trotskyism, notably Vanessa Redgrave."*

There could not be a more damning indictment of the unprincipled and petty-bourgeois and syndicalist origins of the Thornett clique, which, like all right-wing oppositions, were initially drawn together by a hostility to the Party "regime" and only articulated their politics later. The Blick statement described how the faction was established "in mid-September 1974, at an exit road on the M4 near Reading, late one night.

*"The meeting took place in Alan Thornett's car. He had brought Kate Blakeney with him. Present with me was Nick Peck, an old SLL member, who drove me to the rendezvous. At the first meeting we discussed the crisis in the WRP and Alan Thornett's views on it and its possible causes, also the situation at Cowley, and the adverse effects of the WRP's sectarian policies on WRP industrial activity both there and nationally. We agreed to meet again, with the purpose of regularizing political collaboration in the fight against the Healy leadership."*

What a wretched and cowardly group: in the dead of night on a deserted service road, it plotted the overthrow of a long-established Party leadership, which had played a historic role in the world Trotskyist movement, on the basis of, first, industrial policy and second, its "national performance." There was no reference to Trotskyism or the Fourth International, as if the fate of the WRP leadership was of no concern to the ICFI!

*"Over the next few days — this was in the middle of September — Alan Thornett and Kate Blakeney agreed that they should not only collaborate with the Bulletin group (that meant, in view of the problem of security, with me) but that they should draw into that collaboration as many comrades from the Western Region as they felt could be trusted and shared sufficient agreement to conduct a common struggle against Healy. Alan Thornett was to prepare a statement for presentation to the WRP Central Committee and, on this basis, build an oppositional current, exploiting such freedoms as Healy might be obliged to permit him according to the WRP constitution on the rights of minorities and factions."*

This makes a mockery of Thornett's later claims that his rights had been denied by the WRP leadership. All such rights had been forfeited when he organized his faction on this anarchist basis.

*"It was agreed that I should give any assistance, principally political-literary, that Alan Thornett and his supporters might need in conducting this fight. It was on the basis of this understanding that I drafted substantial sections of Alan Thornett's first oppositional document*

*"Those for which I was principally responsible are:*

*"(a) The section on the Transitional Programme*

*"(b) The section on Workers' Control*

*"(c) The section on Corporatism*

*"(d) The section on Social Democracy*

*"I was also invited to make suggestions for, and insertions into, the other sections of the document. The same applied to the second document, only, on this occasion, I was made responsible for proportionally a smaller part of it, mainly those sections on Workers' Control and Factions. Both*



Alan Thornett

documents are reprinted in the WSL's "The Battle for Trotskyism" as solely their own.

"I also assisted Alan Thornett in preparing his addresses both to the Central Committee and to the anniversary rally of Workers Press, where he developed some of the themes contained in his first oppositional document on workers' control and transitional demands.

"Contacts were on a daily basis, through phone calls and, at least once, but sometimes twice or three times a week, by visits, either by myself to Oxford or Reading, or by Western Region WRP members to my flat in Acton. Meetings also took place at both venues with Francois de Massot and leading participants in the Western Region opposition, me being present on each occasion.

"Despite unavoidable political differences, this collaboration endured up to and during the expulsion of the opposition just before the WRP Conference in 1974. In fact, before each meeting (whether in London or Oxford) between Alan Thornett and Healy, Alan Thornett would contact me to discuss the best way to present his case and counter any possible arguments made by Healy or others of the WRP leadership. Following these encounters, I would get a detailed report, usually by phone, but sometimes if the meeting was in London, in person, almost as soon as they were over. I was fully informed of Central Committee business long before rank and file WRP members found out about it — if at all. (In fact, this was so since August, when the first contact with Kate Blakeney was made.)

... "Alan Thornett relied upon the Bulletin group also for the

technical preparation of his second document, which was typed out (if not duplicated) for him by John Archer on the very eve of the WRP Congress at which he was to hand it out. Even the location of the WRP Congress was discovered by the Bulletin group, allowing the expelled WRP members to be brought in from the Western Region to lobby it.

"I well remember myself arriving in Oxford by train in October 1974 armed with a typewriter and being taken to a house where I spent the entire night drafting a section of the second document submitted by Alan Thornett."

Blick concluded his statement by offering the following advice:

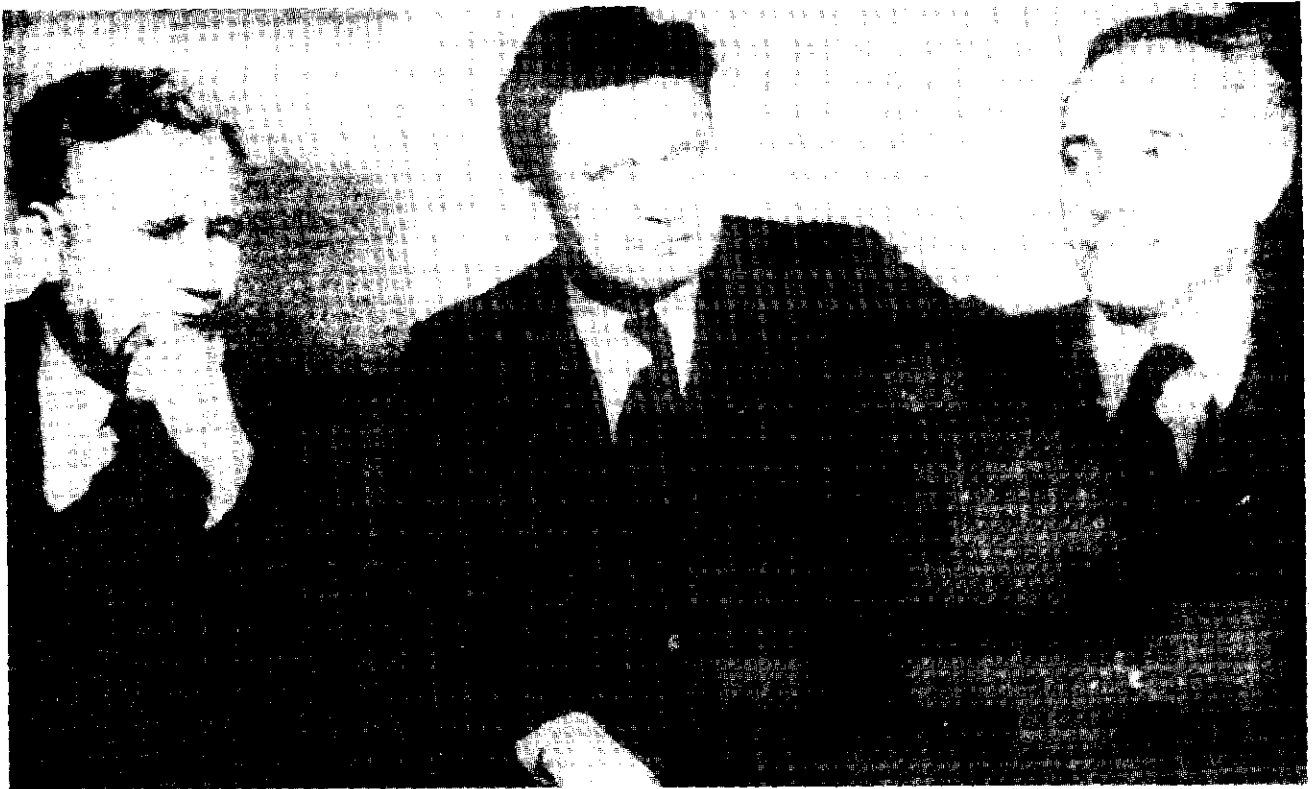
"The longer the WSL leadership continues to deny what it knows to be the truth, and purveys as the truth that which it knows to be a lie, the easier it will become for the WRP to make political capital out of the falsehoods disseminated by the WSL about its past. By making this statement, I hope to persuade those involved in the events in question to at least give a true account of them." (Quoted from copy of original letter)

This document confirmed the allegations made by Healy that Thornett was operating as a political agent of forces hostile to the party. The protestations of the Thornett clique about the violations of its rights were utterly dishonest and hypocritical. The real political banner of any inner-party faction is disclosed by the methods it uses. In seeking the assistance of forces openly hostile to his own Party, Thornett had objectively set out to destroy the Workers Revolutionary Party. By entering into a conspiracy against the Party of which he was a member, he demonstrated that he was not interested in correcting its leadership, preserving the unity of the WRP on a principled basis, and educating the membership.

It was the height of political duplicity for Thornett to conspire against his own Party and then denounce the leadership for violating the constitution. Healy, who then had accumulated 45 years of experience within the communist movement, could recognize an anti-party clique when he saw one. However, it is another matter entirely whether the leadership was politically wise in acting to expel Thornett on organizational grounds prior to an exhaustive discussion of the political differences, regardless of their origins. This is not a question of being wise after the event. The Trotskyist movement had, before Thornett emerged on the scene, acquired a great deal of experience in dealing with unprincipled minorities — of which the most famous was the Shachtman-Burnham-Abern tendency. Experience has taught the Trotskyist movement that the political clarification of cadre must be the overriding priority in any factional struggle — even one involving a disloyal clique.

In a discussion with a member of the ILP in 1935, Trotsky remarked that "it is best to let petty-bourgeois tendencies express themselves fully so that they may expose themselves." (*Trotsky's Writings on Britain*, Vol. 3, New Park, p. 123)

In the above passage, Trotsky was referring to a loyal opposition. But the point he was making was applicable to a wider range of circumstances. Had Healy been inclined to work over the lessons of the Fourth International's past struggles, he might have recalled how Cannon had handled the Morrow-Goldman faction in 1945-46. This experience played no small role in Healy's own development.



James P. Cannon, Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman

Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman developed an opposition to the Cannonite majority on the Political and Central Committee of the SWP on a broad range of issues. They collaborated closely with Jock Haston, the national secretary of the Revolutionary Communist Party, of which Healy was then in a minority. Demanding unity with the Shachtmanites, Morrow and Goldman functioned as a faction of the Workers Party inside the SWP leadership. Early in 1945, Cannon established that Morrow and Goldman left meetings of the SWP Political Committee to give Shachtman a full account of all its proceedings, including the latest sets of minutes. He would have been fully justified in throwing them out of the party; moreover, he would have enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the SWP membership had he taken this action.

However, Cannon decided against such organizational measures for two reasons. First, he feared that the differences with Morrow and Goldman had not been sufficiently developed to justify a split, despite their provocative behavior. He correctly sensed that they reflected vague "unity" sentiments among sections of the party who, having joined the party after 1940 in the course of the rapid expansion of the SWP at the end of World War II, did not understand the fundamental differences between the SWP and Shachtman's petty-bourgeois centrist group. He also recognized that there was confusion within the European sections of the Fourth International about the nature of the minority. Both Morrow and Goldman enjoyed considerable prestige inside the Fourth International: the latter as Trotsky's lawyer; the former as the author of *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*. Cannon believed that it would be a serious error to accept a split under these conditions

because it would not come to grips with the political issues which had given rise to the minority. Second — and this was for Cannon a factor of enormous importance — the split would have not, at that point, taken place over differences which would be clearly understood among the politically-conscious sections of the working class.

Therefore, at Cannon's initiative, the SWP Political Committee addressed a carefully-worded letter to Morrow and Goldman in which it indicated that there were not sufficient grounds for a split, and invited them to meet with the Political Committee to work out organizational grievances and create the best conditions for further political discussion. This was not a short-term maneuver aimed simply at winning the public opinion of the party to its side. As a result of this intervention, the internal struggle with the Morrow-Goldman faction continued for more than a year — until Goldman resigned to join the Shachtmanites in May 1946. Morrow was expelled on the basis of irreconcilable programmatic differences in November 1946, after being allowed to address the party congress. By that point, the differences were so clear that not even Morrow believed that he was still a socialist. He left the conference hall and abandoned the revolutionary movement almost immediately, and soon after became a supporter of US imperialism.

In the course of this intense struggle, the full implications of the differences between Trotskyism and the Shachtmanite tendency in terms of the actual social forces they represented within the workers' movement were clearly established. The irreconcilability of the differences, which had been established at an embryonic stage of their development in 1940, were again verified under conditions in which

Shachtman's political links to the right-wing trade union bureaucracy, beneath the impact of the Cold War, were assuming a direct political form.

No such clarification took place during the struggle against Thornett, which was over almost as soon as it began. Rather than recognizing that the ability of the OCI to establish, through Blick and Jenkins, a faction inside the WRP was the product of the failure to develop the struggle against centrism, the Healy leadership compounded the previous mistake by moving for an organizational settlement.

There were additional factors which had to be considered. Thornett's platform had been partially built by the political line upon which the Party had been founded. His opposition to the running of candidates by the WRP in the two 1974 elections was the inevitable product of the Party's programmatic concentration on the election of a Labour government as the basis for the WRP's existence. Having brought large numbers of workers into the WRP on this basis, it is understandable that Thornett reacted against what he saw as a reversion to "sectarianism." Moreover, the differences which he raised relating to the use of the *Transitional Program* — specifically on the slogan of workers' control and nationalization without compensation — reflected the pressures from those worker elements who had joined the Party on the basis of the anti-Tory line and had not been won over to revolutionary socialist policies. In this sense, despite his unprincipled methods, Thornett represented a large constituency within the WRP — for whose political confusion Healy and Banda were responsible and whom they now had to win to genuine Trotskyism. Having invited workers to join the party simply to bring Labour back to power, it was, politically speaking, bad manners to throw them out when they evinced resistance to organizing a revolutionary opposition to the Social Democrats — especially under conditions in which there were real concerns that the minority Labour government was on the verge of being brought down again by the Tories. The Thornett tendency represented powerful Social Democratic sentiments within the British working class — and an organizational settlement with those who articulated this tendency could only have an adverse effect on the work of the party inside the trade unions.

To make matters worse, the political differences raised by Thornett, to the extent that they had been developed in the autumn of 1974, had not reached the level at which a split could be justified in front of the working class. It was not sufficient for Healy and Banda to have a hunch, no matter how astute, that Thornett was functioning as an agent of the OCI. In 1940 Trotsky had warned Cannon not to take premature organizational measures against the minority, insisting that "*you must act not only on the basis of your subjective appreciations, as correct as they may be, but on the basis of objective facts available to everyone.*" And he cautioned that organizational impatience "*is not infrequently connected with theoretical indifference.*" (*In Defense of Marxism*, New Park, p. 198)

Healy fought Thornett by mobilizing the Party apparatus against him, relying heavily on the middle-class academics and professionals to intimidate the minority and make the organizational case for expulsion. Physical violence was used against the Thornett group. Elements like Cyril Smith

were exhumed from their London flats to assist Healy in rigging a Control Commission while Slaughter, who had been sulking in Leeds for years, was brought down to play the role of priest at Thornett's execution, providing a suitably sophisticated Marxist benediction as Healy lowered the axe. Healy dealt with heretics within the Party not in the manner of Trotsky but in that of Henry the Eighth, and all he succeeded in doing was to place over Thornett's head the halo of a martyr.

The expulsion of Thornett cost the party several hundred members and wiped out its most important faction in basic industry. The direct result of the politically-irresponsible factional methods was to tilt the social base of the party toward the middle class. Forces like Redgrave and Mitchell rose to prominence as Healy, wounded by the desertion of the worker with whom he had collaborated so closely, reacted bitterly to what he regarded as a personal betrayal.

Coming on top of the unclarified split with the OCI, the bureaucratic expulsion of Thornett was a political disaster for the WRP. In the first instance, fundamental international questions had been evaded. Now, basic questions related to the political line of the movement in Britain were left unanswered. Regardless of Thornett's aims, intentions and orientation, the emergence of his faction was bound up with crucial problems of the development of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the British working class. The coming to power of the Labour Party in March 1974 and its re-election in October 1974 placed immense political pressures on the Marxist vanguard and required theoretical clarity, without which tactical resourcefulness inevitably degenerates into opportunist scheming.

In this sense, the struggle with Thornett was the first great test of the WRP leadership's ability to fight the Social Democracy. As Healy should have remembered, his own clashes with Haston inside the old RCP arose over the vexed question of the relation of the Marxist vanguard to the Labour Party. The International discussed the question exhaustively and devised a means of putting the contending positions to a practical test. Healy led an entry faction while Haston maintained leadership of the "Open Party." Ultimately, the correctness of Healy's position was verified, and the experience played an important part in his emergence as the leader of the British section.

In 1974 the WRP leadership was confronted with the need for developing longer-term tactics in relation to the struggle against the Labour Party. Preparatory to winning the masses within the Labour Party, it had first to win the workers within its own Party. Insofar as a substantial number of them followed Thornett, it was the responsibility of a wise leader to create conditions for these workers to understand the correctness of the party's analysis. If this was not attempted, it was precisely because considerable confusion existed within the Healy camp.

As the anti-Tory offensive built up, especially after the massive strikes that erupted in defense of the Pentonville Five dock workers in the summer of 1972, the SLL leadership — which, unlike all the petty-bourgeois revisionist groups, was supremely confident that the working class could and would bring down the Tory government — came to believe that the victory of the Labour government would rapidly clear the decks for a final showdown with the Social Democrats. Healy, who had made a serious study of the

Cromwellian Revolution, was wont to draw parallels between the coming Labour government and the Long Parliament of 1640. With this analogy, he sought to anticipate the situation that would arise when Labour, returned to power through the strength of the trade unions, confronted the demands of the working class for radical changes incompatible with capitalism under conditions of deepening world financial instability.

But history took a detour that Healy had not anticipated. From 1974 on they faced a long Parliament of another sort. The fall of the Tories and the return of Labour produced a new round of illusions in the viability of Social Democracy. This was reflected first of all inside the Workers Revolutionary Party. The inability of the Healy leadership to conduct the patient political and theoretical struggle posed by the emergence of the Thornett opposition meant, within the context of the class struggle in Britain, that the Social Democracy had won an important victory over the WRP. In the name of saving the WRP from agents of the OCI, Healy plunged the WRP into a political bloodbath that enormously weakened the organization. Far from achieving political clarity as a result of the inner-party struggle, the Trotskyist movement in Britain emerged from the struggle more disoriented than at any time in the previous 21 years.

It must be added that at no time prior to the expulsion of Thornett was the struggle within the British section brought to the attention of the International Committee. Healy obviously believed that the ICFI had no independent role to play in the affairs of the WRP and looked upon it as merely an organizational appendage of the British movement. On this matter, there is no evidence that Thornett's views were any different from Healy's.

## 6. 1975: The Year of the Great Shift

In July 1975 the Wilson government moved to introduce pay laws restricting the working class to a 10 percent rise despite the higher rate of inflation. Before the pay laws had even been legislated — they had only been presented in the form of a White Paper — the WRP leadership called an emergency conference that same month to adopt a Political Committee statement which made a fundamental change in the previous line. The resolution declared:

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party calls upon the whole working class to fight against the Labour government's pay laws and the abolition of free collective bargaining.*

*"The living standards and basic democratic rights of the working class are in danger.*

*"By violating Labour Party policy and enforcing a bankers' solution to the economic crisis, the Labour government has set itself on a collision course with the working class." (Quoted in Five Years of the Workers Revolutionary Party, resolution submitted to the Re-called Fourth Congress, June 9-11, 1979, p. 3)*

These statements were completely correct. But then came the following:

*"No worker can live on a 10-per-cent pay increase when hyper-inflation is surging at more than 60 percent.*

*"It gives the working class no alternative but to fight the Wilson government and bring it down.*

*"The Labour government no longer has the confidence or*

*support of the vast majority of the Labour and trade union movement." (Ibid., p. 3)*

Neither of these statements were true. There was an alternative to the call to bring down the government — a campaign inside the Labour Party and the trade union movement for the withdrawal of the pay legislation and the removal of the right wingers who had introduced it. The assertion that the Labour government no longer enjoyed any support was put forward with no evidence to back it up. Instead of a campaign in the labor movement to defeat the Labour government's legislation, the resolution declared:

*"The only way to unite the whole movement is to force their resignation (Wilson and the right wing) and make the Labour Party seek a fresh mandate to go to the country in a general election and defeat the Tories." (Ibid., p. 4)*

The resolution signified a fundamental programmatic break with the proletarian orientation for which the British Trotskyists had fought for decades. To call for the bringing down of a Labour government, under conditions in which the revolutionary party had not yet won the allegiance of any significant section of the working class and in which the only alternative to Labour was a Tory government which the working class had brought down little more than a year before, was the height of adventurism. At the very point when the Labour Party was being compelled to turn openly against the working class, creating conditions for a powerful intervention within its mass organizations, the WRP presented an impossible ultimatum. At a very early stage of this confrontation, the WRP proposed to pre-empt the struggle within the working class organizations with a campaign that would place the fate of the Labour party in the hands of the national electorate.

The WRP exploded this political bomb just as there were signs of political opposition to the right-wing parliamentary faction inside the local Labour Party constituencies. This began with the ultimately successful move to oust Reg Prentice as the parliamentary representative of Newham North-east — the same constituency in which Vanessa Redgrave had stood in the October 1974 election. While forces within the Labour Party were fighting to get rid of the right-wing, the WRP was demanding that Labour Party supporters bring down the Labour government! This policy was so far removed from the actual development of the working class — not to mention the historic traditions of the Bolshevik-Trotskyist movement — that it cannot be simply explained as a political mistake.

It was a profoundly disturbing expression of the class shift that had taken place inside the leadership of the WRP which was inseparably connected with the split of the previous autumn. A predominantly petty-bourgeois leadership, upon whom Healy was now resting, had quickly become disillusioned with the Labour government and was impatient with the tempo of development in the political consciousness of the working class. It is far easier for Vanessa and Corin Redgrave to break with the Labour Party than it is for a coal miner or shipyard worker.

The reason given for this fundamental change in the political line of the party — the Labour Party White Paper on pay limits (It was not even a pay cut!) — exposed the callousness of the WRP leadership to the working class. How could this event compare with an historic experience such as Ramsay MacDonald's infamous betrayal of 1931 — the for-



**James Callaghan, Harold Wilson, and Ron Hayward (chairman of the Labour Party), at a Labour Party campaign press conference**

mation of the National Government — and the cutting of the dole in the midst of the Depression? These events formed the political reference point for entire generations of workers. But a party which calls on the working class to bring down a Labour government on such a flimsy basis as a parliamentary white paper — ignoring the dangers of Toryism, which the working class had just summoned its strength to defeat — would not be taken seriously.

Trotsky warned an ILPer against such light-minded impatience:

*“It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform. For example, by its decision at Brighton. For us — yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour.*

*It is a great danger for revolutionists to attach too much importance to conference decisions. We use such evidence in our propaganda — but it cannot be presented beyond the power of our own press. One cannot shout louder than the strength of his own throat.” (Trotsky’s Writings On Britain, Vol. 3, New Park, pp. 118-19)*

Trotsky was in sharp disagreement with those who proposed that the ILP should adopt an abstentionist position toward the election:

*“Let us suppose that the ILP had been successful in a boycott tactic, had won a million workers to follow it, and that it was the absence of this million votes which lost the election for the Labour Party. What would happen when the war came? The masses would in their disillusionment turn to*



the Labour Party not to us. If Soviets were formed during the war, the soldiers would elect Labour Party people to them, not us. Workers would still say that we handicapped Labour. But if we gave critical support and by that means helped the Labour Party to power, at the same time telling the workers that the Labour Party would function as a capitalist government, and would direct a capitalist war — then, when war came, workers would see that we predicted rightly, at the same time that we marched with them. We would be elected to the Soviets and the Soviets would not betray.

**“As a general principle, a revolutionary party has the right to boycott parliament only when it has the capacity to overthrow it, that is, when it can replace parliamentary action by general strike and insurrection, by direct struggle for power. In Britain the masses have yet no confidence in the ILP. The ILP is therefore too weak to break the parliamentary machine and must continue to use it. As for a partial boycott, such as the ILP sought to operate, it was unreal. At this stage of British politics, it would be interpreted by the working class as a certain contempt for them; this is particularly true in Britain where parliamentary traditions are still so strong.”** (Ibid.)

If the boycott policy of the ILP could be termed unreal, then the policy adopted by the WRP in 1975 toward the Labour Party could be legitimately described as insane. The WRP leaders, ignoring what Trotsky had written and indifferent to what the workers felt, proposed a **partial** defeat — force the Labour government to resign and then, having suitably punished it, vote it back in! The reminds one of a mentally-incompetent parent who decides to force his child to conquer his fear of heights by forcing him to stand on the edge of a windowsill! The problem with the maneuver proposed by the WRP is that its success depended not so much on the working class as on the middle class, for the re-election of Labour would depend to a large extent on their agreement with the WRP policy — or at least its second half.

Just two years earlier, in its unfortunate founding program, the SLL had at least made one correct point: *“The working class must completely reject the IMG and IS, who oppose the fight to elect a Labour government on socialist policies. They advance the ultra-left and adventurist argument that the Labour Party is already sufficiently discredited in the working class, thus substituting themselves for the class. At the same time, they refuse to fight to mobilize politically the working class against the Tory government, on the grounds that the consciousness of the workers is confined to the level of economic struggle.”* (Fourth International, Winter 1973, p. 132)

What catastrophic event had happened in two years to convince the WRP that the IMG-IS line was now correct? Moreover, if Healy and Banda had concluded that the Labour Party was so discredited in the eyes of the working class that it must be brought down, why then did they propose that it be re-elected? There were no answers given to these questions. Indeed, the questions weren't even asked inside the central leadership, that was fast degenerating into a middle-class clique grouped around Healy.

The new policy was elaborated in a manifesto issued in the autumn of 1975, entitled *“Force Labour to Resign.”* This document confirmed that the WRP, for all its radical rhetoric, had despaired of winning workers to its policies. There would have been no reason for demanding new

national elections if the WRP seriously believed that it could mount a struggle against the right-wing line of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy within the working class and its organizations. In fact, the policy of the WRP was one of passively waiting on the Tories to bring down Labour — not one of actively intervening in the internal life of the workers' movement to develop a force that could be mobilized against the right-wing.

Such a policy was perfectly suited to the middle-class celebrities inside the WRP who were uninterested in the arduous and unglamorous day-to-day work that is necessary to build a revolutionary party in and of the working class, and not merely for it. Healy and Banda were turning their organization into a party of political impressarios (lecturers, actresses, journalists) for whom the WRP provided a platform and audience which was assembled for various festive occasions and then sent home and forgotten about.

There were several glaring contradictions in the manifesto. It warned against *“any turn away from the great struggle which is now inevitable and necessary in the Labour Party”* — but this was precisely what the WRP was proposing to do. Then, it declared it was necessary *“to oppose completely all premature splits, adventures and panic gestures of the centrists.”* But the WRP was proposing the biggest premature split and panic gesture of all — the bringing down of the Labour government! What is most curious about this advice is that it would appear to be directed against those within the Labour Party who were fighting to oust the right wing. Finally, the manifesto stated: *“The responsibilities for the betrayals and threats of splits must be placed where it belongs — on Wilson and the right wing.”*

But if the responsibility for the betrayals rested with Wilson and the right wing, then why wasn't the WRP putting forward the demand that these right-wingers be replaced and expelled?

By 1976 it began to become clear that the ultra-leftism of the WRP was a peculiar form of parliamentary cretinism turned inside out. All the problems of the working class could be solved...if only new elections took place. The Second Congress of the WRP in October 1976 issued a resolution entitled *“The Crisis: A Revolutionary Socialist Solution:”*

*“The working class are far more powerful than the parasites who run this system. Their task is to take their place alongside the workers of Vietnam, Mozambique and Angola who have shown imperialism can be beaten.*

*“But the only way to demonstrate this strength is by bringing down this government of traitors. Then accounts can be settled with both the Tories and their agents in the Labour movement.*

*“A general election can be fought. The working class can be welded into an unbreakable force behind a socialist program and building of a revolutionary leadership to halt the crisis.*

*“We call on workers to reject any attempt at coalition and to bring down the Labour government and force a general election on socialist policies.”* (Five Years, p. 4)

In place of a consistent fight within the workers' movement against the Labour leadership — building factions inside the unions, developing caucuses inside the Labour Party, etc. — the WRP leadership substituted an eclectic combination of left-phrasemongering and



**Firemen fought a bitter strike against the Callaghan Labour government in 1977-78.**

parliamentary reformism. The full strength of the working class can never be manifested in elections. To say that "accounts can be settled with the Tories and their agents in the Labour movement" through a general election on whatever issues it is fought is to espouse a "parliamentary road" perspective, whatever the declamations about "preparing for power" and the "momentum of the revolution."

In a front-page comment on November 12, 1976 the *News Line* declared: "The whole labour and trade union movement must act immediately to stop the Tory and the bankers taking over.

"This can be done by the working class using its strength through its own organizations — the trade unions and Labour Party.

"The first essential step is to call an emergency Labour Party conference to adopt a full socialist program.

"Secondly, this discredited, crumbling, anti-working class Callaghan government must be forced out of office.

"And thirdly a General Election must be held on socialist policies to rout the Thatcher gang."

The WRP leaders deserved the praise of all fair-minded British democrats for devising this impeccable procedure. First, they demanded that the Labour Party adopt socialist policies at an emergency conference. Then, assuming that this would be done, they did not propose that this revolutionary program be implemented. Instead, the WRP called for the resignation of the Government and the holding of a General Election on the socialist policies that the ruling party had already adopted. In other words, socialism could only be implemented once it had been ratified at the polls.

**From Trotskyism to Opportunism**

Only an absurd policy could have produced such ludicrous aberrations in the policy statements of the WRP.

To grasp how far the political line of the WRP had shifted from the working class it is useful to contrast the policies developed after July 1975 with those fought for under the previous Wilson Labour government.

The WRP had based its call for the bringing down of the Labour government on the introduction of pay laws. But the former Wilson government had frozen wages under the Prices and Incomes Act in August 1966 and launched attacks on the living standards of the working class. But at that time — when the British Trotskyists were in the thick of the struggle to build the ICFI — the SLL took a completely different approach. Setting out the attacks of the Labour government in his pamphlet "The Alternative to Wilson," published in 1967, Healy raised the question:

"How do we fight the present right-wing leaders of the Labour and trade union movement without letting the Tories back? This is a question which occupies the attention of many sincere people."

The SLL called for the replacement of the Wilson leadership under the demand of "Make the 'left' MPs fight" on a program of socialist policies. Nine years later a struggle was developing in the constituency Labour Party branches against the open right wingers. But the WRP, while proclaiming the need for flexibility and patience, had in fact cut itself off from this development with the policy of forcing the government to resign, leaving a clear field for the centrists, such as the Militant tendency, to dominate the opposition to the right wing.



Mass picketing during the Grunwick strike

## 7. The Labour Government in Crisis

As the Labour government entered its fourth year in office in 1977, it faced growing opposition throughout the working class. A series of crucial mass struggles erupted — most notably that at Grunwick, the Leyland toolroom strike, and the London airport maintenance dispute — which brought the Callaghan regime into a direct confrontation with the trade unions. The so-called “social contract” between the TUC and the Labour government was being shattered by the renewed offensive of the working class. As these struggles were building up, the Labour government entered into an informal parliamentary bloc with the bourgeois Liberal Party to sustain its majority and remain in office. The fact that the Liberals agreed to this arrangement meant that the British ruling class had decided that the time was not yet ripe to bring the Tories into office. Instead, they chose to utilize the Labourites a bit longer to attack and demoralize the working class.

This crucial development in the political situation demonstrated that the WRP, since 1975, had been working without any strategical conception to guide its struggle against Social Democracy within the labor movement. All that Trotsky had written on the interconnection between strategy and tactics, about the necessity of finding the correct orientation to critical changes in the objective situation, of the need for a continuous sharpening and refinement of the party's political line, based on the most scientific appreciation of the development of the class struggle and the subjective consciousness of the working class, had been ignored.

Had the Party been fighting on a Marxist line — abstracting the dialectic from the class struggle rather than from the movement of Healy's impressions — it would have under-

stood, at least by early 1975, that there would be inevitably a period during which the working class bided its time and tested the Labour government. It would have recognized, at the same time, that this period of uncertain duration would inevitably give way to a renewed upsurge of the working class against the Labour government that would have revolutionary implications. The WRP would therefore have worked out its line on the basis of preparing the working class for the coming unavoidable confrontation — advancing those necessary slogans that would have exposed the right-wing Social Democrats, mobilized the working class against the policies of the government, placed demands on those within the Labour Party and trade unions who claimed to disagree with government policy, and collaborated on a critical and independent basis with those within the constituency Labour Parties who were fighting to expel the right wingers — while patiently expanding the work of the Party inside the trade unions, working class neighborhoods and among the youth. At each stage in the development of this work, the Party would have taken an objective reading of the response among the workers to its policies and gauged the level of political development of the class. On this basis, in line with changes in the political situation, the Party could introduce the necessary corrections and concretizations within its propaganda and agitation. Such a practice is called “patiently explaining” and “winning the masses.”

In 1930 Trotsky analyzed the method employed by the Bolsheviks in 1917: *“In my short work on the Austrian crisis I deliberately noted in parenthesis that the formula ‘to patiently explain’ was introduced by Lenin in April 1917. Six months after that we held power. This means that patient explaining by the revolutionary party has nothing in common with delaying tactics, gradualism, or sectarian aloofness. To*

'patiently explain' does not by any means imply explaining things in a desultory fashion, lazily, one table spoonful a day. By this formula in April 1917 Lenin was saying to his own party: 'Understand that you are a small minority and acknowledge it openly; don't set yourself tasks you don't have the strength for, such as the **immediate** overthrow of the Provisional Government; don't be afraid to place yourself in opposition to the defensists, who the overwhelming majority of the masses are following today; try to understand the psychology of the honest defensists — the worker and peasant — and patiently explain to them how to break out of the war.' Lenin's advice meant, in other words, 'Don't think that there are any fancy recipes or gimmicks by which you can suddenly grow stronger without having won over the consciousness of the masses; devote all your time, all your revolutionary impatience, to "patiently explaining".' Such is the true meaning of Lenin's words.

"One must not of course go to the opposite extreme and interpret my words to mean that I basically assume the Austrian communists will come to power in seven months. That is, to say the least, not very likely. But if one assumes that events really will develop at a tempestuous speed in the coming period (which cannot be excluded), this only means that the gains to be made from 'patient explaining' will rapidly become greater.

"Therefore the phrase 'now it is too late' seems to me a total misunderstanding. What other methods can there be for proletarian revolutionaries? Sheer political impatience which wishes to reap before it has sown, leads either to opportunism or adventurism or to a combination of both. In the past five or six years we have seen, in every country, dozens of examples of both opportunist and adventurist attempts to artificially strengthen the proletariat's position without the conscious participation of the proletariat itself. All these attempts have ended in failure and only weaken the revolutionary wing.

"You write that the social democratic masses in Austria are in a revolutionary mood but that their readiness for revolution is paralyzed by the powerful apparatus of the Austrian social democracy. The masses, you say, lack **only** (nur) the appropriate leadership.' 'Only!' But this tiny word 'only' encompasses nothing less than **the entire activity of the revolutionary party**, from the first propaganda efforts to the seizure of power. Without winning the confidence of the masses in the experience of struggle there can be no revolutionary leadership. In some periods it takes decades to win this confidence. In revolutionary periods, months can produce more (with correct policies) than years of peaceful events. But the party can never leap over this basic task. It confronts the proletarian revolutionaries of Austria in its entirety. The phrase 'to patiently explain' refers above all to this task: 'Win the confidence of the workers!' And it warns against bureaucratic self-deception, which of necessity leads to adventurism, and against masquerading methods, against behind-the-scenes machinations whose aim is to cheat history and force one's will upon the class." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky 1930*, Pathfinder, pp. 71-73)

We have quoted from this letter at such length because every word reads as if Trotsky had written it as a reproach to the WRP leadership.

The crucial transitional period of 1975-77 had been squandered by Healy and Banda, who, oblivious to questions

of stages and tempo, could only shout the same thing again and again — "Bring down the Labour government" — on all occasions. Thus, when the actual confrontation between the trade unions and the Labour government erupted in 1977 the WRP was nowhere near the working class. This offensive exposed the enormous price the WRP had paid for its ultimatum line within the working class. It had been unable to make the necessary gains which would have prepared the party for a significant intervention in the mass struggles. From 1975 on, despite a substantial membership and a daily newspaper, the WRP could not point to a single struggle in which it played a major role through the work of its cadre, other than *News Line* reporters. There was no record of growth within the trade unions, not to mention the Labour Party for which the WRP had no policy at all.

Politically, the WRP had nothing to add to its line except additional adjectives. Thus, the perspectives document of August 1977 declared: "*The Workers Revolutionary Party calls for the most resolute fight to bring down the Liberal-Labour coalition government, just as we called for the bringing down of the Labour government since July 1975.*" (p. 7)

Far from dramatizing the political significance of a parliamentary bloc with the Liberals, this statement could only serve to make workers sceptical that any decisive change had taken place. A worker who followed the line of the *News Line* might have asked: "You say that we should bring down the Labourites because they have entered into a coalition with the Liberals. But you were telling us that two years before the coalition was formed."

For a Marxist leadership, the turn by Callaghan to the Liberals would have certainly been the occasion for a dramatic sharpening of the class line against the Social Democratic traitors. It would have immediately called upon the trade unions and Labour Party to sack Callaghan and his right-wing cabinet — thus linking itself with the considerable mass movement that was developing rapidly. Of course, it would not be sufficient to raise this demand here and there. Rather, it would have required sustained work at all levels of the labor movement. Although it might appear that the WRP's continuation of the old line coincided with the new situation, it did only to the extent that a stopped clock is correct twice a day (as long as you do not have to know whether its daytime or evening). An incorrect line which is developed in opposition to the Marxist method cannot become correct, from the standpoint of revolutionary action, because of a fortuitous change in the objective situation. Any similarity between the new political developments within the class struggle and the line of the WRP, past or present, was purely coincidental.

The formation of the Labour-Liberal pact on March 23, 1977 was approached by the Workers Revolutionary Party simply from the standpoint of confirming the duplicity of the Social Democrats and justifying its previous call for the bringing down of the government. It did not analyze the changes within the class struggle which forced Callaghan to seek the support of the Liberals, and on that basis devise new tactics which would enable the WRP to intervene within the rapidly polarizing mass organizations of the working class.

On the eve of the Labour-Liberal pact, the *News Line* was headlined "**Labour Is Up For Grabs.**" This sarcastic headline

was a diversion from placing central emphasis on the political crisis within the Labour Party, which reflected the resistance of the working class. The article noted in passing that a Labour MP named John Ryman had raised the question:

*"Is there really any good reason why Labour MPs should continue to support the government?"*

*"The government has deliberately embarked on a systematic economic strategy resulting in massive unemployment in my constituency, low wages, higher prices, closure of hospital wards and teacher training colleges and untold deprivation and misery for 3 million widows throughout the country."*

Even more significant was the statement made by Arthur Scargill, who was then the Yorkshire NUM president, in reaction to the pact with the Liberals: *"My view is it (the government) should not have reached an agreement with the Liberal Party and should not be prepared to stay in office on a mandate which is now contrary to that submitted in 1974...If in fact we are prepared to become a coalition with the Liberals then the question needs to be posed: Would we go further if the situation dictated and be prepared to accept a coalition with the Tories?"* (News Line, March 28, 1977) Significantly, this statement was buried on page two, which expressed the absence of any perspective for deepening the contradictions within the Labour movement, challenging the Lefts to oppose the coalition and offering them critical support in the fight to sack the Callaghan cabinet.

It must be stated that such a campaign would have been immeasurably strengthened and would have opened up broad possibilities had the WRP cadre been strategically positioned among the rank and file in the factories and even within the Labour Party. It could have mounted a political campaign against the position of TUC secretary Len Murray who stated: *"The TUC wants this present government to stay in office to do the job that it has begun."* (News Line, March 22, 1977)

But the refusal to **do anything** beyond shouting against the Lib-Lab pact was covered up with bombastic rhetoric which claimed that the WRP was no longer "preparing for power." Instead, Healy proclaimed that the WRP was now engaged directly in "the struggle for power." In terms of the actual practice of the WRP, this verbal change meant nothing at all. Rather, it served as a formula which, for all its dramatic impact, justified the political abstentionism of the WRP and its sectarian isolation from the working class. In the language of Bolshevism, the preparation for power is the struggle to win the masses. As the 1921 Third Congress of the Comintern declared, to conquer the power the party must first conquer the masses. Only on that basis can it undertake the struggle for power. Though this precept was based mainly on the experience of the German Communist Party, which then had only about one-half million members, we tend to believe that Lenin would have approved its use in relation to the Workers Revolutionary Party which did not have quite so many in 1977.

However, having gone beyond Lenin, Healy set out to prove that the winning of the masses ("preparing for power") was an unnecessary detour from the highroad of the struggle for power. According to the 1977 August Congress of the WRP, *"The role of the Party cannot be reduced to arithmetical factors."* That is quite true — such factors as

political tempering of cadre, the moral authority of the party and its leaders, and the historical traditions which it represents can assume immense revolutionary significance that extends the power of the party far beyond what might be indicated by its membership figures. Still, it is highly unlikely that the British ruling class will be overthrown by a party with 600 members. No, arithmetic figures alone will not decide the revolution. But woe to the revolutionary party which attempts to conquer power without placing proper emphasis on the importance of numbers.

The political disarray within the WRP in the summer of 1977 — at the height of the Grunwick struggle — was uniquely expressed in the central conclusion of its August conference:

*"Previously, the Party had called for a policy of 'Labour to Power' and of 'Forcing the Labour government to carry out socialist policies' in order to expose to the working class the cowardice and treachery of the Labour leaders before the capitalist state."*

*"It now became necessary to abandon this formula just as in 1917 Lenin had abandoned the slogan 'Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry' and called for an independent struggle by the working class, in alliance with the poor peasantry led by the Bolshevik Party."* ("Five Years of the Workers Revolutionary Party," p. 6)

This was an incredibly dangerous muddle — which revealed that Healy understood neither the "democratic dictatorship" nor the Labour Party. To make an equation between Lenin's repudiation of this formula and the WRP's change of line on Labour to Power would have staggering implications. The world-historic significance of Lenin's correction was that he recognized the historic inability of the peasantry to construct an independent party through which it could exercise power. The concept of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry as an intermediate and independent stage of development, prior to the dictatorship of the proletariat, was effaced from the program of the Bolshevik Party and the future Communist International (until being revived by Stalin and Bukharin in the 1920s). To somehow connect this correction to the question of the Labour Party could only mean that the WRP had concluded that there could not be, for reasons of the most fundamental historical and sociological nature (which it did not bother to explain), another Labour government prior to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a perspective meant the complete disarming of the WRP cadre and the abandonment of the working class. Moreover, it exposed the fact that in place of serious work on the political line, Healy was making it up as he went along.

During the following year, the Lib-Lab pact was ended — the signal that the Tories were now prepared to organize the overthrow of the Labour government. In the meantime, opposition to the Callaghan regime reached such levels within the working class that its pay policies were repudiated at the Labour Party conference in October 1978 by a two-to-one margin. Once again, the developments underscored the paralysis of the WRP in relation to the Labour Party and broad masses of workers. Despite the immense upsurge throughout the working class and the uproar within the Labour Party, the WRP was completely isolated. Even worse, the never-changing demand for the bringing down of the Labour government placed the WRP in an uncomfort-

table proximity to the Tory Party. No matter, now more than ever, Bring down the Labour government!

Had the WRP been working as a Marxist party should, it would have developed a tactical line that took into account the new situation, and stressed that the Labour government was in its death throes and that the imminent threat of a return to Tory rule could only be halted by sacking the Callaghan cabinet and implementing socialist policies. Instead, the WRP made no attempt to identify its political line with the anti-Tory feelings of the masses.

So great had been the political change in the WRP between 1973 and 1978 that the party whose greatest growth had come through the upsurge of anti-Tory feeling was now completely indifferent to this basic class sentiment and made no attempt to utilize it for revolutionary purposes.

## 8. The Trial of the "Observer" Lawsuit

From the standpoint of tracing the political degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party, there was one politically-revealing event which took place during the waning days of the Labour government — the trial of the lawsuit brought by the Workers Revolutionary Party against the *Observer* newspaper. In September 1975, three years before the trial, the educational center of the WRP was raided by police after a defamatory article appeared in the *Observer* suggesting that caches of arms were hidden on the grounds of the school. The WRP correctly sued for libel, and the case finally went for trial in October-November 1978.

Neither Banda nor Healy testified on behalf of the WRP. Instead they left the elaboration of the party's principles to three other members of the Central Committee — Corin Redgrave, Vanessa Redgrave and Roy Battersby — and the WRP's attorney. Given the nature of the allegations made by the *Observer*, the newspaper's attorneys inevitably attempted to focus the jury's attention throughout the trial on the attitude of the WRP toward violence. This was not an unprecedented situation for Marxist revolutionaries, who have frequently combined an irreconcilable defense of the right of the masses to employ revolutionary violence against the organized state violence of the ruling class with a clear rejection of individual terrorism.

However, the behavior of the WRP defendants was a shameless and grovelling capitulation to bourgeois public opinion. The WRP witnesses — who were the plaintiffs in the case and faced no charges — did everything they could to portray themselves as respectable ladies and gentlemen who were members of an upstanding law-abiding petty-bourgeois discussion club. In all fairness to Dame Vanessa (OBE) and Sir Corin, it must be stated that these gifted thespians were performing the lines written by Healy. They had been instructed not to use the trial for the purpose of revolutionary agitation and propaganda. Their speeches were addressed to His Lordship in the courtroom and the middle-class jury. When questioned about their attitude toward violence, they answered as if the revolutionary principles of Marxism were entirely compatible with Quaker theology.

In violation of all revolutionary principles, the WRP allowed the tone of the trial to be set by its attorney, Mr. John Wilmers QC, who carefully tailored his presentation to

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The front page of 'The Observer' with the witchhunting attack on the WRP College of Marxist Education

appease the court and its prejudices. The *News Line* of October 25, 1978 reported his opening statement:

"The plaintiffs 'believe most fervently in Marxism,' Mr. Wilmers continued.

" 'They want to bring about a revolution in this country, but a revolution in the sense of a fundamental change, not in the sense of shooting it out in the streets.

" 'They speak of mobilizing the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and for the building of a socialist society.

" 'But they are fundamentally opposed to violence and force.

" 'They think they can achieve their aims by educating people in their beliefs and by propaganda.'"

This opening statement, which went unchallenged and uncorrected by the WRP witnesses in the weeks that followed amounted to a repudiation of Marxism. On Thursday October 26, 1978, the *News Line* reported on the previous day's testimony of Corin Redgrave. It was a travesty of Trotskyist principles.

"During the afternoon, Mr. Redgrave was cross examined by Mr. Colin Ross Munro, QC for the defendants, about the political policies of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

"Asked about the struggle for workers' power, Mr. Redgrave said that it was being pursued by peaceful, legal and constitutional methods.

" 'No armed uprising led by the WRP?', asked counsel.

" 'Not so far as our aims are concerned,' replied Mr. Redgrave.

"Mr. Redgrave told the court that the party may consider the possibility of resorting to arms 'to meet force with force' — in the event of a fascist state in Britain.

"This would be a situation in which all forms of democracy had been abolished and the majority of people had lost their democratic rights."

This testimony amounted to a cowardly repudiation of all the fundamental teachings of Marxism on the class nature of bourgeois democracy. The possibility of resorting to arms was limited to struggle against the fascist state — that is, until after the defeat of the proletariat. The testimony soon got even worse.

*"Asked where the working class would obtain arms for an uprising, Mr. Redgrave said that it was possible that it could come from sections of the army who themselves might wish to defend democratic rights.*

*"That has been the history of such democratic rights in the past, and that was what happened in Portugal."*

It must be kept in mind that this testimony was being given just at the point when the WRP's agitation for the bringing down of the Labour government was at its height and when the Party had declared that it was engaged in the struggle for power. But, when speaking publicly and addressing a mass working class audience, Redgrave not only renounced revolutionary violence but declared his confidence in and support for the army of British imperialism and its state. If nothing else, this testimony exposed that for all its political bombast about bringing down the government and fighting for power, the WRP was awed by the capitalist state. Again and again, even allowing for the most careful phrasing aimed at protecting the WRP from further legal action, the Party's witnesses went out of their way to appease the state, volunteering statements which served only to dupe the masses and undermine their political consciousness.

Redgrave went so far as to suggest that workers' defense guards were only necessary where there weren't sufficient police to patrol the areas!

On Saturday, October 28, 1978, the *News Line* published more nauseating testimony from Corin Redgrave, who was functioning as the chief spokesman of the WRP: *"I have not taught violence, I have never practiced violence, and I oppose violence, and that is the course my party has always taken," he said.*

At the end of the trial, after the jury found for the plaintiffs and held that the *Observer* had written untruths, the judge denied the Redgraves and the other WRP plaintiffs the one thing they craved — respectability. However, the supreme irony of the case is that the conduct of the WRP plaintiffs did far more damage to their reputations than anything the *Observer* had accused them of.

## 9. The Fourth Congress of March 1979

The policy adopted at the Fourth Congress of the Workers Revolutionary Party was the culmination of four years of ultra-leftist stupidities that had shattered the party's base in the trade union and labor movement. As the delegates were meeting, the British bourgeoisie, shocked by the "Winter of Discontent" offensive and convinced that the Callaghan government had lost control of the situation, were preparing a parliamentary coup to oust the Social Democrats and install the most right-wing Tory government in the post-war period. The Fourth Congress took no notice whatsoever of these developments. Instead, Healy and Banda presented a document which glorified the WRP's frenzied campaign to bring down the Labour government.

Large sections of the Fourth Congress perspectives were devoted to a justification of the Party's line since 1975. It reproduced virtually every mistake which Trotsky had analyzed in 1931-32 during the struggle against "third period" Stalinism.

The document stated: *"The Labour leaders no longer rest on the working class. For almost three years the government has ruled not by the consent of the working class but by reliance on the most reactionary elements in the Tory, Liberal, Scottish Nationalist and Ulster Unionist parties at home and with the endorsement of European and US bankers abroad...The continued existence of the rump Labour government carries with it great dangers for the working class because it obscures the conspiracies of the armies, the police and right wing."* (*The World Political and Economic Crisis, the Building of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Struggle for Power*, pp. 29-30)

Every sentence exposed the complete disorientation of the WRP leadership. To claim that Social Democracy does not rest on the working class is to deny its historical origins and to ignore its specific political function. In Britain more than any other European country, the Social Democracy is the creation of the trade union movement. The fact that its leaders function as political agents of the ruling class has long been recognized by Marxists and for this reason the Labour Party is scientifically defined as a bourgeois workers' party. The value of this concept is that it both lays bare the contradiction that dominates the political life of the working class and orients the revolutionists toward the struggle to break the masses from the Labour Party. In simply claiming that the Labour Party relies on the Tories and ignoring the essence of the matter, the reliance of the bourgeoisie upon the Labourites, the WRP turned political reality inside out and, as a result, turned the party's tactics upside down.

Within three weeks, precisely because they had lost all confidence in the ability of the Labour Party to contain the working class, the Tories were to introduce a "no-confidence" motion to force new elections. But the Fourth Congress blithely proclaimed:

*"Only a resolute struggle of the working class led by the Workers Revolutionary Party can bring down this rump Labour government and provide a socialist perspective for the British working class..."*

*"The experience of the working class and our party has proved that no effective struggle against the Tories is possible without an implacable campaign against the government menace — and all those who hide their acquiescence to the Callaghan regime behind a facade of protest and reformist calls for the expulsion of Healey and Callaghan."* (*Ibid.*, p. 33)

The political essence of this verbal bombast was petty-bourgeois pessimism and prostration before the Labour bureaucracy. It concluded that it was impossible to fight the right-wing leaders through the mobilization of the working class inside the Labour Party and the trade unions. Herein lies the key to unravelling the class content of the political line of the WRP. Its campaign to bring down the Labour government was based not on the rising militancy of the working class and its hostility to reformism, but rather on the growing frustration and disillusionment of the middle class with Social Democracy. Thus, the call for a General Election was an ill-conceived attempt to bypass the struggle



## 10. The Election Campaign



Thatcher

against reformism within the workers movement by bringing to bear the social weight of the middle class in what would inevitably become a nation-wide referendum on the Labour government.

The policy of the WRP was shot through with hopeless contradictions. First, Healy shouted himself hoarse demanding that the workers bring down the Labour government, which, he claimed, relied on the Tories. Then, according to the Fourth Congress resolution:

*"In the event of a general election the Workers Revolutionary Party will put forward its own candidates but will not hesitate to propose to Labour's rank and file a common struggle to keep the Tories and Liberals out."* (*Ibid.*, p. 32)

What Healy never explained is why this laborious electoral detour was necessary to conduct a struggle against Social Democracy! Why were such miraculous healing powers attributed to a General Election campaign? Nor did Healy explain why the Party should propose a common struggle to keep the Tories out if the Labour Party relies on the Tories.

Moreover, why was Healy insisting that the General Election had to be conducted under the existing Labour leadership — which is the only conclusion which could be drawn from the WRP's explicit opposition to *"reformist calls for the expulsion of Healey and Callaghan."* (*Op. cit.*, p. 33)

This line proved to be a gross miscalculation — a political adventure in defeatism the likes of which had not been seen since Shachtman proposed to use Hitler to change the government of the USSR. The WRP demands for the bringing down of the Labour government dove-tailed with the perspectives of the Tories, who correctly appraised the mood of the middle class and forced the dissolution of Parliament in late March.

On March 28, 1979, the Tories introduced a no-confidence motion which, for the first time in more than 55 years, brought down a government. Just four days before, the WRP finally noticed what was going on and issued a belated warning that *"reactionary forces are gathering for an unprecedented, all-out attack to pauperize the working class, smashing its organizations and basic democratic rights."* (*News Line*, March 24, 1979)

But on the same page, featured prominently in its front-page advertisement for the 19th Annual Conference of the Young Socialists, was the slogan, **"Bring Down the Labour Government."**

Proclaiming that *"The ides of March are indeed upon us,"* a resolution passed by the Conference, which had been drafted by Banda, declared: *"All those who stood for the retention of this grotesque charade of a Labour government now stand completely unmasked. The WRP and YS policy of bringing down the Labour government as part of the struggle for power has been indisputably vindicated. But the fact that the Tories in their own reactionary and perverse way have underlined our warnings a thousand fold does not give us any satisfaction."* (*News Line*, March 26, 1979)

Not even Banda's Churchillian rhetoric could hide the fact that the policies of the WRP had gone disastrously awry. He admitted with some chagrin that *"It would have been far preferable if the Callaghan government of job destroyers and wage cutters had been brought down and dealt with by the working class a la Heath in January 1974."* (*Ibid.*)

In reality, it would have been far preferable had the WRP fought the Labourites from 1975 on a *la Trotsky* — that is, by concentrating their fire against the Labourite traitors for opening the doors for the Tories, by demanding that the left-talkers break with Callaghan and sack the right wing, by intervening inside the on-going struggles against the pro-Tory Labourites inside the local Labour Party branches, and by systematically mobilizing the working class on the basis of Transitional demands. Such a policy would have immeasurably enhanced the stature of the Party in the eyes of Labour Party militants and the working class as a whole.

The demoralization of the resolution was revealed by the fact that it took a Tory victory for granted and did not even bother to call for the mobilization of the working class to stop the Tories and vote Labour.

There was then another shift in the political line of the WRP. Recognizing that its entire previous line had been discredited by the Tories' parliamentary coup, the WRP leaders sought to throw dust in the eyes of their members and the working class by claiming that it did not matter if Thatcher won. They denounced, with mind-boggling sophistry, various revisionist groups for having said that a Tory government would be worse than a Labour government:

*"What is decisive in Britain today is not whether Thatcher and Joseph subjectively hate the working class more than Callaghan and Healey and are therefore more anxious to attack them.*

*"The decisive factor is the objective world crisis and its impact on British capitalism. The stage is set in Britain for civil war, whoever wins the coming General Election.*

*"To claim, as all the revisionists do, that major attacks on workers can only take place if the Tories win and that they*

are relatively safe if Labour wins, is to leave the working class unprepared for the battles ahead." (*News Line*, April 7, 1979)

This line of reasoning was a mockery of Marxism. The objective significance of the political forms through which the class struggle is manifested was discounted. A Trotskyist would have argued as follows: "Regardless of the subjective similarities between Thatcher and Callaghan, we must not allow the Tories to come back to power and carry out the job begun by Heath. Though Callaghan has betrayed us, there is no point in punishing him at our expense. First things first. We must mobilize the working class, on the basis of a revolutionary program, to keep the Tories out. We must foil the Social Democrats' attempt to demoralize the workers by calling for a massive, but critical, vote for Labour. This will strike a blow against capitalism and create the best conditions to expose the Social Democratic traitors for once and for all."

The WRP said nothing of the sort. Instead, the *News Line* statement continued: "We know that large numbers of workers will vote Labour in the election, in the fervent hope that their jobs and living conditions can be preserved by another Labour government. Workers' interests cannot be protected in that way."

What then did the WRP propose? It ran 60 candidates to put forward what it called "socialist principles" — that is, in place of a genuine political strategy to mobilize the working class it offered a propaganda diversion. An election intervention with candidates running under the Party banner could only be effective if this campaign was based on a struggle to mobilize the working class against the Tories, while exposing the Labourites and preparing workers for the inevitable revolutionary showdown with these reformists.

Rather than fighting on this clear revolutionary line that every politically-conscious worker could understand, the

WRP intervention was a model of political evasiveness and ambiguity:

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party participates in this General Election, not in order to rally the workers behind Callaghan, Foot or Benn, but in order to take forward our perspective of organizing the struggle for power."*

The essential content of the WRP line — that there is no difference between Social Democrats and Tories — reproduced the same crude error that Trotsky had examined in his struggle against the Stalinists prior to the victory of Hitler. Answering the Stalinist argument that in as much as fascism and Social Democracy serve the bourgeoisie there exist no difference between the two, Trotsky wrote:

*"The gist of this Stalinist philosophy is quite plain: from the Marxist denial of the absolute contradiction it deduces the general negation of the contradiction, even of the relative contradiction. This error is typical of vulgar radicalism. For if there be no contradiction whatsoever between democracy and Fascism — even in the sphere of the form of the rule of the bourgeoisie — then these two regimes obviously enough must be equivalent. Whence the conclusion: Social Democracy = Fascism." (Germany 1931-1932, New Park, p. 63)*

Only occasionally and buried deep within their election statements did the WRP leaders call for a Labour vote. However, within the ultra-left form the seeds of the germinating opportunism were already beginning to sprout. On Election Day, after having declared repeatedly that the outcome of the balloting was of no significance and that civil war was imminent, the WRP issued a surprising call for a massive turnout by workers and the middle class to "deliver an electoral death blow [!] to Toryism." (*News Line*, May 3, 1979)

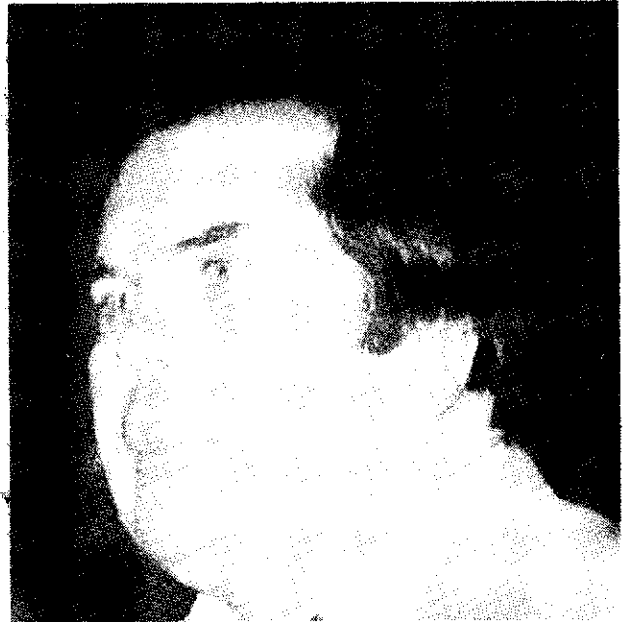
It then warned that Thatcher intended to destroy the trade unions and basic rights of the working class. As a



Vanessa Redgrave campaigning as a WRP candidate in the 1979 election



**Corin Redgrave**



**Alex Mitchell**

deterrent to this threat the *News Line* pointed to its 60 candidates and stated: "While not enough to form a government, we offer a clear socialist policy alternative to the world economic crisis of capitalism and its manifestation in bankrupt Britain." (*Ibid.*)

But what were workers to do in the face of the imminent Tory victory in which the destruction of the workers' movement was threatened? The following astonishing perspective was offered:

*"In the next General Election, whenever that might be, we will work to field sufficient candidates to form a government."*

This was no passing remark: Faced with the reality of a Thatcher government, the four-year-long experiment with ultra-leftism crash-landed — and Healy bailed out with an opportunist parachute. The period from 1975 to 1979 had been characterized above all by a turn away from the working class, both within Britain and internationally. As we will later show, in its work outside Britain, the WRP had already been cultivating opportunist relations with non-proletarian and reactionary forces. A similar shift within Britain itself, though disguised for a period with ultra-left demagogy, had been thoroughly prepared.

## 11. The Degeneration of the Party Regime

The class basis of this shift had been prefigured in the destruction of the trade union cadre of the Party in basic industry in 1974-75, which created the conditions for the dangerous growth of middle class influence — represented especially by such forces as the Redgraves and Alex Mitchell, upon whom Healy increasingly relied, as well as the dozens of declassed and uprooted individuals who worked in the center — in the leadership of the Party. This social layer within the Party became the principal transmission belt for the penetration of alien class interests into the Workers Revolutionary Party. The 1975-79 "struggle" against the Social Democrats reflected the impatience of these petty-

bourgeois radical elements toward the working class and their inability to conduct a systematic fight against the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. Moreover, elements among the journalists, actors and actresses who passed from Fleet Street and the West End into the Political Committee of the WRP, without any apprenticeship in the class struggle, provided a physical link to material resources such as the Party had never known. Apart from the day-to-day struggles of the Party membership inside the working class, huge amounts of money were raised. The central leadership thus acquired an independence from the rank and file that destroyed the foundations of democratic centralism.

The Party was divided into an "Upstairs" — a coterie of exalted individuals around Healy — and a "Downstairs" occupied by hundreds of rank and file members who were denied any role in the decision-making process and simply took orders. This created within the Party a whole series of destructive political relations. The leadership grew increasingly impervious to the real relations between the Party and the workers at the level of the class struggle. Contact between the Center and the WRP branches assumed a purely administrative character, not unlike that between a local business franchise and the head office. Healy himself became a remote figure who most members did not even know — and he knew very little about them. His trips to Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli were undoubtedly far more frequent than his visits to Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and Cardiff.

Healy's high-flying diplomacy and his sudden access to vast material resources, based largely on his opportunist utilization of Vanessa Redgrave as the WRP's calling card in the Middle East, had a corrosive effect on the Party's political line and its relation to the working class. Whatever its original intention, it became part of a process through which the WRP became the political captive of alien class forces. At the very point when it was most in need of a course correction, the "success" of its work in the Middle East, which from the beginning lacked a basic proletarian reference point, made it less and less dependent upon the

penetration of the working class in Britain and internationally. The close and intimate connection with the British and international working class that the WRP had developed over decades of struggle for Trotskyist principles was steadily undermined. The isolation from the working class grew in direct proportion to the abandonment of these principles. One significant fact illustrates this process. In the May 1979 election, the Labour vote grew as workers marched to the polls to deliver — despite their hatred of Callaghan — a solid class vote against the Tories. Thatcher came to power as a direct result of a sharp swing to the right within the middle class, the very social force upon which the WRP leaders, with their call for an electoral referendum on the Labour Party, had, from 1975 on, based their fight against the Social Democrats. But even as it reported the vote totals, the WRP boasted: “We did not call for a Labour to Power victory.” (*News Line*, May 5, 1979) Here the WRP was glorifying its political insensitivity to the working class.

The article went on to say: “We believe that the most vital lesson of the past four and a half years of Labour, and the General Election debacle, is that the working class has been left leaderless by the Labour and TUC leaders.”

In making this declaration, the *News Line* Editorial Board probably did not realize that they had drafted the most devastating indictment of the role of the Workers Revolutionary Party over the previous four years.

If the working class had been left leaderless, this was because its **revolutionary vanguard** and its **most politically-conscious sections** had been misled by the WRP leadership, which having completed its adventure in defeatism now recoiled as frightened opportunists from its consequences.

## 12. The Right-Centrist Leaven of Ultra-Left Downsliding

The response of the WRP leaders to the Tory victory was to begin a steady political forced march to the right, which was to culminate in the most vile adaptation to the reformists in the Labour Party. This shift found its first clear-cut manifestation in the open support given by the WRP to the betrayal of the three-month steel workers' strike by the ISTC bureaucracy and its right-wing leader, Bill Sirs.

The strike began early in January 1980, and initially the WRP campaigned for the mobilization of the trade unions in general strike action against the Tory attack on jobs. It took a critical attitude toward the Sirs leadership. In a front page statement that appeared on January 18, 1980, the *News Line* stated that “Sirs and his fellow TUC bureaucrats have done everything possible to avoid the political implications of this confrontation and confine the strike to purely trade union and wages issues...”

“The trade union leaders are terrified of the confrontation building up with the Tories and the capitalist state because they know that a general strike will immediately bring forward the question of state power.

“This is the central question in the steel strike, which no amount of reformist compromise and bureaucratic maneuver can resolve. Throughout the strike, Sirs has done all he can to prevent it from spreading and keep his members tied simply to the demand for higher wages.”

Ten days later, the *News Line* published a statement by the All Trades Unions Alliance (industrial arm of the WRP)

which bitterly denounced the ISTC leader: “Sirs has since boasted to the Tory press that he and Chapple ‘prevented’ moves towards a general strike...” (January 28, 1980)

On January 29, 1980, the *News Line* combined an attack on Sirs with a denunciation of another prominent union leader: “Or consider the politics of Arthur Scargill, the A.J. Cooke of the 1980s, who insists on presenting the steel strike as a wage struggle against the Tories, as it was for him in 1974. Scargill makes only muted demands on the TUC leaders, whose responsibility is to mobilize the trade union movement in defense of jobs, wages and basic rights, but who consciously betrayed the firemen’s strike of 1977/78.”

After this statement, there was a mysterious change in the political tone of the *News Line*. For the next month, there was no criticism of Sirs despite the fact that he continued to oppose the mobilization of the working class behind the steel workers in a struggle against the Tory government. The new emphasis in the *News Line* was on the danger of Tory violence. In a major statement of the Political Committee, published on February 25, 1980, entitled “**Unite Against Tory Violence**,” none of the previous criticisms which had been made of Sirs during the first weeks of the strike were repeated. A lengthy editorial board statement, which appeared on March 1, 1980, also made no criticism of the ISTC leadership. Sirs was not even mentioned by name.

Finally, on March 6, 1980 the *News Line* reported in a very mildly critical tone that there was a danger that steel union leaders were pulling back. The next day there was some muted criticism of a separation of the wages and jobs issue.

The issue of March 8, 1980 carried a full page ad, purchased by the ISTC, congratulating the *News Line* for “its thorough and honest coverage.”

As the strike continued throughout the month of March, support continued to build up within the working class behind the steel workers, especially among Liverpool dockers. But the *News Line’s* coverage remained virtually uncritical toward the ISTC leadership, offering nothing more than an occasional rebuke — such as the comment which appeared in the issue of March 14, 1980, which noted in a single sentence: “Sirs will not call publicly on the TUC leaders to act.”

On March 31, 1980 the Sirs leadership decisively betrayed the strike, accepting a miserable wage settlement and going along with Tory proposals that guaranteed the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs in the steel industry. The ISTC bureaucracy agreed to collaborate with the British Steel Corporation in speed-up and cost-cutting measures that were to have a devastating impact throughout the industry. The terms of the agreement were widely known almost immediately.

Sirs accepted Clause 4(3) which agreed to “reduce inbuilt overmanning through job restructuring,” and clause 4(4) which promised an examination of “areas of activities which are excess to requirements.” Clause 4(6) opened the door to the loss of the guaranteed work week, and Clause 5(4)b stated that outside factors such as further slump in steel demand must be taken into consideration.

The first reaction within the WRP leadership appeared to be one of shock at the nakedness of the betrayal, and an attempt was made to save face with the steel workers who



Steel union leader Bill Sirs (center) with pickets during the 1980 strike

were publicly denouncing the settlement. The *News Line* of April 2, 1980 called the ISTC-BSC agreement a sell-out, and in the next day's issue a lead article by Alex Mitchell, entitled "Anger at Steel Return," noted that the wage settlement didn't even cover the rate of inflation.

Healy, however, took violent exception to this attack on the ISTC bureaucracy, which only a few weeks before had expressed its appreciation to the *News Line's* uncritical coverage of its role in preparing the betrayal of the strike. The *News Line*, like other national newspapers, did not appear on April 4, 1980. Healy put this one-day holiday to good use by carrying through a decisive change in the policy of the WRP. When the newspaper reappeared on Saturday, April 5, 1980, a front-page Political Committee statement announced a decisive shift in the evaluation of the strike. Mitchell's brief sling with trade union militancy came to a screeching halt. Now, the *News Line* produced a sickening defense of Sirs's betrayal:

*"After three months of grueling strike action the steelworkers had taken the purely wages struggle as far as they could, and there was not a penny more.*

*"They returned to work to meet the next phase of the Tory threat — the attack on 50,000 jobs...*

*"It was the TUC leaders on the General Council who betrayed the steelmen's strike, not the leaders of the ISTC. Bill Sirs does not claim to be a revolutionary or anything like it.*

*"The revisionists led by the political windbags and ranters of the misnamed 'Socialist Workers Party' have a front-page headline this week saying 'Sell-out' (Socialist Worker, April 5, 1980)*

*"Those who are trying to blackguard Bill Sirs are deliberately confusing the issue. Whether they like it or not, they are covering for the real backstabbers of the steel strike — the TUC leaders."*

This type of wretched sophistry had previously been confined to the newspapers published by the Stalinists, who specialized in providing excuses for those who betrayed the working class and denouncing those who criticized the traitors. Now, this counter-revolutionary contraband was being smuggled into the *News Line* by Healy.

### 13. 1981: The WRP Embraces the Popular Front

The cynical betrayal of the steel workers was bound up with the WRP leadership's previous retreat from the working class and was just the curtain raiser for the wholesale abandonment of principles that was carried through in 1981. Having impatiently abandoned the difficult political and theoretical struggle in the working class against social democracy, Healy was now in the process of developing an utterly opportunist modus operandi within the labor movement. All the work of the WRP became con-

centrated not on penetrating the mass movement from "below" — that is, through the recruitment of youth and factory workers one by one and their transformation into cadre — but from "above" — that is, by cultivating friendships among strategically-placed Labourites and trade union officials.

As Trotsky had warned, based on a review of the experiences of the British Communist Party: *"One of the psychological sources of opportunism is superficial impatience, the lack of confidence in the gradual growth of the party's influence, the desire to win the masses with the aid of an organizational maneuver or personal diplomacy. Out of this springs the policy of combinations behind the scenes, the policy of silence, of hushing up, of self-renunciation, of adaptation to the ideas and slogans of others; and finally, the complete passage to the positions of opportunism."* (*Marxism and the Trade Unions*, New Park, p. 74)

Of all the forms of opportunism, none is more dangerous and politically-fatal than the conception that the capitalist state apparatus can be captured by stealth and placed at the service of the working class. Lassalle was the first to go astray on this question and each subsequent experiment produced not only bigger blunders but actual crimes and betrayals. Healy was now ready to try his hand at this folly.

In the aftermath of the steel strike, Healy re-established ties with a Labourite operator in Lambeth by the name of Ted Knight. This man had been associated with Healy back in the early 1960's, but when forced to choose between Trotskyism and a career in the Labour Party, followed the dictates of his conscience and broke decisively with the Socialist Labour League (predecessor of the WRP). Now, after a long hiatus, their paths crossed again. They discovered that each man had something the other wanted. Knight had important connections inside the Labour Party and was on good terms with an up-and-coming middle-class "left" by the name of Ken Livingstone. Healy, on the other hand, controlled a few printing presses and could place the resources of a large apparatus at Knight's disposal. A bargain was struck. Healy would provide Knight with an opportunity to broaden his base while fending off criticism on the left. Knight would provide Healy, or so "Red Ted" claimed, with a passable substitute for working-class power through Lambeth and the Greater London Council.

Having given up on the dictatorship of the proletariat, Healy was prepared to settle, as he approached his 70th year, for some influence on the titans of reformism in London. Having set out on the revolutionary road in 1928, Healy — like so many he had fought and scorned in the past — had finally been persuaded of the futility of the Long March. A short cut had to be found, and so he hit upon a novel idea: if he could not convince the working class to replace Parliament with Soviets, why not try to convert Parliamentarians into commissars?

Making a deal with Knight was one thing. Selling it to the Party was something else. This political take-off on the Three Penny Opera had to be dressed up with the required "left-sounding" phrases and in this way the concept of the Workers Revolutionary Government, based on Community Councils, burst upon the scene.

Despite the assurances given to rank-and-file WRP members that the Workers Revolutionary Government based on Community Councils was merely an up-dated, made-in-



Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight

Britain version of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat based on Soviets, the real content of this previously unknown species of state power was quite different.

As defined in the programmatic statements of the WRP, the Community Councils were envisaged as the political offspring of capitalist local government, and not as independent organs of proletarian power. The specific function assigned to these Councils by the WRP was to serve as the adjunct of Labourite councillors caught between the Tory financial squeeze and the working class.

It was especially significant that the WRP assigned the mass trade union organizations only a negligible role in the formation and leadership of these councils, despite the overwhelming weight of the trade unions in the political and social life of the working class. According to *Manifesto '81*, passed at the Fifth Congress of the WRP in February 1981:

*"At the very heart of the Community Councils will be the trade unions. But the Community Councils will make the struggle for jobs, living standards and basic democratic rights the responsibility of the whole community and not only local bodies like the trades councils."* (p. 8, Emphasis added.)

The WRP would soon be demanding, in practice, the complete subordination of the trade union struggles to the interests of the Labour-dominated local government institutions which have evolved over the last 400 years in Britain as organs of the capitalist state. Though it had been insisting less than two years earlier that the Labourites rely upon the Tories, the WRP was now ignoring the crucial role played by Labour-controlled "Local government" in



upholding the authority of the capitalist state over the working class. Implicit in the policy developed by the WRP was the utterly reformist conception that Local government, once a majority of its seats are controlled by Labour councillors, becomes an organ of workers' rule. This amounted to nothing more than reviving the old and discredited conceptions of "municipal" socialism that flourished during the epoch of the Second International and which today forms the centerpiece of Stalinist strategy in Italy.

The WRP had come a long way from the days when it opposed subordinating the working class to the bourgeoisie and even to such radical petty-bourgeois leaders like Castro. But now they glorified the possibility of democratizing organs of the capitalist state and using them in the interest of the working class.

Especially crucial in understanding the non-proletarian axis of the Community Councils projected by the WRP was its demand that:

*"The Community Councils must incorporate existing local community bodies which have sprung up almost overnight in some area — for example, community groups against police violence, against racism, against hospital and school closures, against cutbacks in local facilities such as playgrounds and libraries, against the cuts in medical facilities and university education, and also tenants and ratepayers' organizations." (Ibid., Emphasis added.)*

It all sounded very popular and democratic, but in actual fact it amounted to an attempt to shift the axis of revolutionary struggle away from the proletariat and its independent class organizations to various socially-amorphous "local bodies," which have come into existence as offspring of the capitalist state. Inevitably, this shift away from a proletarian axis led directly to open advocacy of Popular Front class collaboration. The Community Councils, insisted the WRP, "must open their doors to all those fighting the Tories — local Labour groups, other political organizations in the labour movement and other people regardless of their religion, color, nationality and even if they mistakenly (!) voted Tory at the last General Election. (Ibid., Emphasis added)

Whether these "other people" might include Tory "wets" who had "mistakenly" served in previous Tory governments, and, like Ted Heath, had perhaps "mistakenly" attempted to destroy the trade unions, was not explained. That was left by Healy in the area of "the Open Question."

#### 14. All Power to the GLC!

If the Party fight for a General Election between 1975 and 1979 transformed it into an unintentional instrument of Tory policy, its campaign for Community Councils from 1981 on made it a conscious agent of Social Democratic treachery. From now on, all the work of the WRP leadership was concentrated on developing its anti-working class alliance with sections of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy. This new line was inaugurated in practice, not without a few problems, in January 1981.

Faced with Tory demands for a cut in local services, the Lambeth Labour Councillors, led by Ted Knight, had to decide whether to fight the government and defend services or seek a way around the confrontation, at the expense of the working class, by raising local tax rates.

The WRP came out against the raising of the rates. In the *News Line* of January 7, 1981, an editorial entitled "Don't do the dirty work" warned:

*"Local councils who put up rates to try to beat the Tory cuts are playing with fire. Not only is it economically absurd — rate increases simply cannot compensate — but it means political suicide.*

*"It is dangerous for other reasons. It off-loads the burden of Tory policies on to working-class families, who are already facing the most terrible problems in terms of unemployment and exorbitant charges for gas, electricity, heating and public transport.*

*"It also lashes the middle class and turns potential anti-Tory allies into bitter opponents of Labour and the trade unions. This is what the Tories want."*

But one day later, on January 8, 1981, the *News Line* reported that Lambeth had been forced to raise rates. By January 9, 1981, it was editorially supporting the rate increase: "If the council had not decided on a supplementary rate it would have resulted in a major financial default, the councillors being surcharged with a £11.2m deficit and a takeover by government commissioners. That would only help the Tories and it would be horrendous for the future of the boroughs."

Seven years earlier, the WRP had advanced a revolutionary policy to defend social services. It had stated: "Housing, health and education are public services which must be first call on the nation's wealth. The nationalization of the land, of the building and building material industry, of the banks, of the drug manufacturers is the only basis for building up these services.

*"The debt of these necessary services to the banks and money lenders must be cancelled immediately. Labour councillors must be made to repudiate the debts and provide the necessary services." (WRP Perspectives, Adopted August 1, 1974)*

This policy was thrown overboard in order to line the Party up behind the Lambeth reformists. Healy arranged for the publication of a special 24-page edition of the *News Line* on January 17, 1981, which included an eight-page supplement devoted to heaping praise on the Lambeth councillors and Ted Knight. An editorial board statement called on a "Crisis in Local Government" Conference in London to "give full support to Labour-controlled Lambeth Council" which, it claimed, "has taken a correct and decisive stand."

Denouncing the attacks made by various revisionist groups against the Lambeth decision to raise the rates, the *News Line* phrase-mongers wrote: "Lambeth councillors are the very first to admit that they cannot go on subsidizing the Tory cuts with rate increases. Its political cost would be disastrous and economically can't be done.

*"But this isn't the argument. The issue at Lambeth is whether to declare bankruptcy, get banished from office by central government and let in the Tory commissioners or to stay and fight the Thatcher-Heseltine slump policies...*

*"We don't believe that Lambeth or any other Labour council should commit political suicide. Their task is to stay in office and campaign for the development of the mass movement against the Tories and for the unity of all sections of the community against Thatcher's slump policies...*

*"It would be ludicrous and reactionary to terminate the*



*Lambeth struggle now, which is what the revisionists want before the main war has begun."*

This was simply the language of Parliamentary cretinism, in which the fate of the working class is made dependent upon defending the portfolios of petty reformist politicians.

Healy made no attempt to keep his political books straight. Just two years before, he had insisted that a Labour government be brought down under conditions in which the WRP admitted that the Tories would carry out savage attacks on the working class if they won the election. Now the same Healy was arguing that "it would be ludicrous and reactionary" for the Labourites to "commit political suicide"...by defying the Tories!

By January 19, 1981, the *News Line* was calling on workers, in a full-page editorial, to "Stand firm by Lambeth Council." An absolutely shameless apology was made for the Labourites, denouncing all those who opposed their decision to raise the rates. Healy's skull-duggery rendered meaningless, under the circumstances, the use of the term "revisionism." Petty-bourgeois groups were given new stature by the treachery of the WRP leaders:

*"The revisionists take the 'no rates increase' resolution and turn it into a moral issue. On Saturday, they used it to beat the Lambeth councillors without giving a moment's consideration to the vastly changed objective situation and the overriding necessity to develop the anti-Tory front from decisive bases like Lambeth.*

*"There is no such thing as a solution via rates increases, and the Lambeth council never said there was. But the majority on the council were absolutely correct to introduce a supplementary rate last week in order to hold the line against Thatcher and stay at their elected posts...*

*"Those who give up the old gains without a fight can never make new ones. Those who preach such a solution are really 'Thatcher's people' because they are speaking 'her' language....*

*"In other words, behind their fake 'left' words, and their talk of a 'militant stand' against the Tories, they are in fact hellbent in getting Labour out of Lambeth and the Tories in."*

This was nothing but the rhetoric of Stalinism employed by the WRP to cover its opportunism and denounce those opposed to the Social Democrats. This intervention demonstrated that the WRP was being consciously transformed into an appendage of Social Democracy, thus completing its desertion from Trotskyism into the camp of centrism. By 1981 the WRP was explicitly defending the capitalist state against the working class, even justifying attacks on the labor movement by referring to the fiscal problems confronting government officials.

Along these lines, the *News Line* of January 20, 1981, denounced those who attacked the rate increases for not recognizing that "we are living under capitalism. And capitalism in the phase of enormous crisis in which the rights of the Welfare State are being smashed by an ultra-reactionary Tory government."

This right-wing line, though developed by Healy, struck a chord among a layer of social democratic professors who had been snoring away for years inside the WRP — only emerging from their academic lairs whenever they were needed to side with Healy in a factional war against those within the Party who defended a proletarian line. Among

those who enthusiastically stepped forward to defend the Lambeth reformists was none other than Hull University's Tom Kemp. He likened opponents of the rate hike to the German Stalinists who campaigned in 1931 alongside the fascists to bring down the Social Democratic government in the infamous "Red Referendum." Unfortunately, Kemp's article should have been written two years earlier.

In the course of his tortured article, Kemp had a flash of insight into the real significance of the "Lambeth Turn":

*"It gives an opportunity for developing respect for the Workers Revolutionary Party among sections of the labour movement who have only just begun to move away from reformism. In this regard it widens and deepens a relationship with the centrist currents that can overcome very rapidly what was seen as the revisionist dangers of the future."* (*News Line*, February 21, 1981)

## 15. The WRP Attacks the Trade Unions

In May 1981, the Labourites won the Local elections and obtained a majority on the Greater London Council, providing the WRP leadership with an opportunity to extend its relations with "centrist currents" in local government who were defending the capitalist state against the working class. The significance of this turn in relation to the class struggle was soon illustrated in the most striking manner.

In June, the underground (subway) workers' union threatened to strike to win a 15 percent wage increase. The *News Line* replied in an editorial entitled "Mr. Weighell's Double-Cross," dated June 26, 1981:

*"There is only one way to describe the all-out strike call by Sidney Weighell to London tube workers — it is a provocation by a right winger aimed at discrediting the new left-wing led Greater London Council...*

*"With his union conference a few days away, Weighell has set out to push the GLC — which has direct control of London Transport — into a confrontation it does not seek...*

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party has said consistently that sectional demands must be subordinated to the main struggle against the Tory government. Only Thatcher will be aided by battles between workers and Labour councils.*

*"But Weighell isn't interested in the fight against the Tories, as his diatribe against Livingstone proves. NUR members on the Underground should reject his decision and stand firm with the Greater London Council against the main enemy — Thatcher, Heseltine and Fowler."*

On July 4, 1981 the *News Line* demanded that:

*"A confrontation between the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Labour-led Greater London Council over London Transport's pay claim must be avoided at all costs.*

*"The threatened strike by Underground men from July 20 would create a dangerous split in the unity of the labour and trade union movement, and the Tories will rush in to exploit it..."*

*"Any wage negotiations between the GLC and the NUR must take these political and economic facts of life into account..."*

*"The unions have the right to go forward with their full claim and the Labour leader Ken Livingstone would be the last person to deny them this right.*



GLC leader Ken Livingstone

*"But equally, the GLC leaders have the right to demand that Weighell will stand in unity with the council in its struggle against the Tories."*

Thus, in the name of unity, the WRP made it clear that it would support, in the event of a strike, whatever measures the GLC chose to take against the union. On July 8, 1981, the *News Line* published a full page letter from Livingstone in which the position of the GLC was defended — thus establishing the complete solidarity between the WRP and Livingstone against the working class.

There was not an ounce of difference between Healy's line against the transport workers and that of the Stalinists in Spain in 1937 and during World War II. Whereas the Stalinists demanded that the working class should subordinate its interests to the requirements of the so-called "anti-fascist" struggle, the WRP insisted that "sectional struggles" — i.e., those of the working class — "must be subordinated to the main struggle against the Tory government."

This phrase amounted to a cynical play on the word "struggle." For a Trotskyist, the most crucial stage in the development of the class struggle against the bourgeois enemy comes when the working class enters into conflict not only with the established right-wing leaders but more importantly with the lefts. This is an unmistakable sign that the working class is seeking a path toward revolutionary struggle.

Bourgeois society in Britain is never in greater danger than when the working class begins to saw away at its vital prop among the labor lefts. But at precisely this stage, the WRP functioned as the most conscious defender of these demagogues of reformism and, therefore, of capitalism itself. Refusing to place demands upon these lefts — and thus exposing in the most vivid manner their refusal to break with the bourgeoisie — the WRP leadership acted to discipline

the working class on their behalf. All the immense resources that had been accumulated by the WRP were employed to create an immense obstacle between the working class and the path to socialist revolution. **In the fullest political and historical sense, Gerry Healy had become a traitor to the working class, an enemy of Marxism and a political agent of the bourgeoisie within the labor movement.**

His monstrous betrayal of the working class had direct and devastating political consequences within the British workers movement. The WRP worked consciously to deprive the working class of a revolutionary perspective. Instead, it argued day in and day out that there existed no alternative to the policies of the left reformists — the hapless servants of capital. Under his leadership, the WRP sowed demoralization and confusion within the working class. An organization which calls itself revolutionary can commit no greater crime against the working class. The message from the WRP was: The Labourites are in power — Call off your struggles — Abandon your wage claims — Maintain unity with the Reformists — Place your fate in their hands — And, for God's sake, get off the streets and go home.

## 16. Towards a Party of Law and Order

While the WRP was fighting the trade unions on behalf of the GLC, trouble was developing on another front in the class struggle. Thousands of oppressed immigrant workers and youth in London, Manchester and Liverpool rose up against the squalid conditions of capitalism and the brutality and racism of the police. These rebellions expressed not only the hatred of the youth toward Thatcher but also their contempt for the hoardes of social democratic office holders who function as the wardens of the inner-city ghettos. These rebellions were by no means accidental, and expressed the frustration generated by the incessant betrayals of the Labourites: their hypocritical appeals for patience, their refusal to mobilize youth against the forces of the capitalist state, and their inability to improve their conditions.

The fact that the WRP was seen by thousands of youth in Brixton and Toxteth as the allies of the reformists only intensified their frustrations and convinced them that there existed no way to make their views known except through a spontaneous uprising. If these rebellions were without leadership and program, the WRP must be held largely responsible. In the summer of 1981, what alternative could the WRP offer to the rebellious youth seeking a way to fight the Tories and their reformist servants? Its talk of an "anti-Tory" struggle led by the left talkers could only appear comical to youth who instinctively despised these hopeless Parliamentarians. Nor could it propose a turn to the working class, for the WRP had just instructed the unions to submit to the discipline of the GLC. In short, the WRP had nothing to show the youth except a blind alley.

The political logic of the WRP leaders' capitulation to the reformist agents of the capitalist state found its most obscene expression in their hysterical denunciations of the rebellions — to which they habitually referred as riots — and their attempts to deny that there existed any real objective basis for the explosive tensions. Instead the *News Line* insisted that the rebellions were really state provocations. This formulation conveniently allowed the WRP leaders to denounce the rebellious youth in the name of the "anti-Tory struggle" while, at the same time, avoiding any political at-



1981 riots in Toxteth, Liverpool

tack on the local Labour governments which presided over the besieged areas.

In an editorial which appeared in the July 11, 1981 issue of the *News Line*, the WRP opined that "Labour-controlled councils are being plunged further into debt by the riot damage and the huge cost of policing." Why didn't the WRP tackle this problem by demanding that the GLC throw the cops out of the areas?

On July 18, 1981, the *News Line* published a statement of the WRP Political Committee entitled: "The Riots: Police-Army Provocation?" It attempted to prove that the rebellions were the product of a conspiracy masterminded by special agents of the state who were "working to create bloody conflict in Britain." It claimed that the "riots" had been orchestrated to enable the Tories to carry out "a violent pre-emptive strike against the working class using terror and intimidation against all government opponents."

Calling for "total vigilance against police infiltrators and army agent provocateurs," the WRP insisted that the rebellion "was not simply a spontaneous outburst against unemployment or social deprivation inflicted by Tory policies. On the contrary, each incident was deliberately generated by the actions of the police special units."

Blackguarding large sections of the East Asian and Black community as provocateurs or their dupes, these cowardly scoundrels complained that "the police made no attempt whatsoever to stop the smashing of windows and looting."

Acting as the mouthpiece of the GLC, the WRP Political

Committee noted resentfully that "All the Cities and Boroughs where the riots have taken place are Labour-controlled." Rather than analyzing this weighty political phenomenon, the Healyites offered their condolences to the reformists: "Riot damage is going to add enormously to their running costs under conditions in which Heseltine has refused to yield a penny more. The situation is fast approaching when these local authorities will not be able to cope with the cost of policing and defending the remnants of essential social services."

The statement concluded: "We restate our complete opposition to young unemployed people falling for police provocations and engaging in looting and acts of vandalism. This will not solve any of the problems they face and only provide candidates for Whitelaw's concentration camps when the real struggle is against the Tories and for the social revolution."

Those who wrote and voted for this statement deserved to be run naked through the streets of Brixton and Toxteth and spat upon. The reactionary charlatans on Healy's Political Committee could not concede what even the Tory jurist Lord Scarman was forced to admit in his Commission report that was issued several months later: that there existed objective causes for the youth rebellions.

In December 1981, two months after the publication of the Scarman report, WRP General Secretary Banda replied to its findings in a lengthy article spanning eight pages in the *News Line*. It was a belated attempt to clear the air of the stench created by the Party's line on the rebellion and restore the WRP's credibility among the youth of Brixton and Toxteth. Perhaps it was also an attempt on Banda's part to settle accounts with his own conscience.

Banda's analysis amounted to an unintended but devastating indictment of the position of the WRP Political Committee. Dedicating his article to the memory of youth killed during the rebellions and "to the tenacity, unity and courage of the thousands of youth and adult workers who defended their homes and communities against police terror and Tory government provocations," Banda's version of events totally contradicted the claims made by the WRP during the past summer.

Far from labelling the youth as provocateurs, Banda celebrated their struggle: "For a whole weekend they held the streets against hundreds of police from all parts of the Metropolitan region..."

"Brixton burned. But the arson destroyed more than property. It also destroyed, in the minds of many workers, any belief that peaceful co-existence with the forces of state repression — the police — was possible. It revealed with stunning clarity the implacable hatred of millions for the Tory government and the bankrupt capitalist system which had forced them into grinding poverty and deprivation." (*News Line*, December 5, 1981)

Banda's document was written neither to expose Healy nor correct the Party. Now that the rebellions were safely over and Lord Scarman's findings had endowed the street battles of the previous summer with a certain legitimacy, it was Banda's specific task to whitewash the record of the WRP. But he was right on one thing. Brixton burned and the arson destroyed more than property. It destroyed the political credibility of the WRP leadership among the working class youth.

## PART TWO

# The Permanent Revolution Betrayed

### 17. The WRP Abandons the Proletariat of the Backward Countries

The opportunist essence of the ultra-left deviation which developed in relation to the WRP's line on the Labour Party emerged most clearly in its abandonment of the theory of Permanent Revolution and its strategy of World Socialist Revolution. In the first instance, the unprincipled relations established by the WRP with bourgeois regimes in the Middle East, starting in April 1976 with an agreement with the Libyan government negotiated and signed behind the back of the International Committee, was an attempt to overcome the political problems of the party by turning to non-proletarian and alien class forces.

In place of an international strategy aimed at the building of Trotskyist parties in as many countries as possible, the WRP evolved its own "foreign policy" whose purpose was to gather the material resources necessary to finance the work of the party in Britain. A policy based on this nationalist-opportunist outlook inevitably assumed the most reactionary forms imaginable. By 1978-79 the WRP had become, in the most literal sense of the word, a paid agent of the Arab bourgeoisie, in which the *News Line* functioned as a propaganda organ justifying the crimes and betrayals of the regimes with which Healy had established unprincipled alliances.

All the Marxist principles for which the Socialist Labour League (predecessor of the WRP) had fought in the early 1960's against the capitulation of the American SWP to the Pabloites were dispensed with. In that period the SLL had led the struggle against Hansen's attempt to liquidate the International Committee via capitulation to bourgeois nationalism. It insisted that the historical necessity of building Trotskyist parties in the former and semi-colonial countries retained its full validity, the episodic and limited successes of Castro notwithstanding. In its refusal to accept the designation of Cuba as a "workers' state" the SLL was engaged in a defense of the Marxist theory of the class struggle at its most fundamental level — the conception that the historical path to socialism requires the **international mobilization of the working class on the program of the dictatorship of the proletariat**. Basing itself on the essential theoretical premises of dialectical materialism, the SLL fought all those, led by Hansen and Mandel, who suggested that petty-bourgeois nationalists could evolve spontaneously into Marxists and take the place of Trotskyist cadres in the working class trained under the leadership of the Fourth International.

In September 1963, in the immediate aftermath of the split with the Socialist Workers Party, Cliff Slaughter explained the fundamental differences that placed the International Committee in irreconcilable opposition to the Pabloites:

*"In the backward countries, fighting to resolve the crisis of leadership means fighting for the construction of proletarian parties, with the aim of proletarian dictatorship. It is especially necessary to stress the proletarian character of the leadership in countries with a large petty-bourgeoisie or peasantry. On this question, the revisionists take the opposite road to Lenin and Trotsky, justifying their capitulation to petty-bourgeois, nationalist leaderships by speculation about a new type of peasantry. In recent years, the Pabloites have declared that the character of the new states in Africa will be determined by the social character and decisions of the elite which occupies state power, rather than by the class struggle as we have understood it." (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism, Vol. 4, New Park, p. 188)*

Rejecting Hansen's claim that "without conscious theory men will respond to 'objective forces' and arrive at the path of Marxism," and insisting upon "the decisive question of resolving the **subjective problems of the world revolution**," Slaughter declared:

*"It is in this sense that the fight for dialectics is the fight to build the world party in every country. Neither can succeed without the other. Dialectical materialism will only be understood and developed in the struggle to build the party against all enemies. The party can be built only if there is a **conscious fight for dialectical materialism against the ideas of other classes**. It is on revolutionary theory that the ability of the party to win the political independence of the working class is based." (Ibid., p. 193)*

In a passage which now reads as an indictment of the whole opportunist line pursued by the WRP itself between 1976 and 1985, Slaughter stated:

*"The decisive test of a Marxist party's orientation towards the mass movement is the degree of success in building a revolutionary cadre, whose links with the working class are forged in struggle against the opportunists and bureaucrats. In their concern over the past ten or fifteen years to 'get closer to the new reality,' the revisionists have produced a circle of 'leaders' and a method of work diametrically opposed to this revolutionary preparation. For the colonial and semi-colonial countries, it is clear that the so-called sections of the Fourth International which follow Pablo have become mere apologists for the nationalist leaderships. Their aban-*

donment of an independent orientation to the working class is explicit. Such a method produces only a soft group of professional advisers who are not adverse to becoming petty functionaries, as we see in Algeria. From these positions of 'influence' they help along the 'objective' process whereby the petty-bourgeois leaders are pushed towards Marxism." (*Ibid.*, p. 217) If anything, the repudiation of the theory of Permanent Revolution — conceived of not only as a critique of bourgeois nationalist leaders but as the strategy of world socialist revolution — was betrayed even more shamelessly by Healy, Slaughter and Banda than it was by the Pabloites in the 1950's and 1960's. They turned their backs on the proletariat and oppressed peasant masses of the semi-colonial and oppressed countries and unconditionally supported their subordination to the bourgeois rulers. Entranced by the mirage of these rulers' political strength — produced by the temporary tactical advantages obtained as a result of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the rise in oil prices — Healy staked the political future of the WRP on the financial rewards that could be realized through various unprincipled alliances. In this way, the political line of the WRP became a by-product of recycled American, European and Japanese petro-dollars — confirming in the most direct sense Trotsky's definition of centrism as a secondary agency of imperialism.

## 18. The Evolution of WRP Policy in the Middle East

The abandonment of the theory of Permanent Revolution by the Workers Revolutionary Party did not take place overnight. Rather, through a series of pragmatic maneuvers, devised by the WRP leadership to establish relations with Arab bourgeois regimes, Healy, Banda and Slaughter paid less and less attention to political considerations of a principled character. Never proceeding from the standpoint of building the International Committee of the Fourth International, the WRP's work in the Middle East moved further and further away from its supposed point of departure — the defense of the PLO and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination — to developing alliances with all the regimes in the Middle East as the opportunities arose.

With ever-increasing cynicism, the WRP exploited its relation with the PLO to increase its bargaining power with Arab bourgeois leaders. Corresponding to this process, the WRP was impelled to translate its practical opportunism into outright programmatic revisions of Trotskyism which, echoing Stalinism, endowed the Arab and semi-colonial bourgeoisie with the leading role in the anti-imperialist struggle. These revisions, in turn, paved the way, from 1979 on, for political betrayals of an utterly grotesque character.

On April 29, 1976, the Workers Revolutionary Party signed an agreement with the Libyan government. Neither the terms nor existence of this document were ever reported to the International Committee of the Fourth International, which learned of it for the first time in November 1985, when it was discovered by the Control Commission that had been established by the ICFI to investigate the political degeneration of the WRP.

This unprecedented violation of democratic centralism meant that the practice of the British section in the Middle East was outside of any political control by the International Committee. For a period, the development of this sort of

behind-the-scenes contacts was concealed by formally correct declarations on the political situation in the Middle East, such as the ICFI's denunciation of the 1976 Syrian invasion of Lebanon and the Tel al-Zaatar massacre. In November 1976, in a statement drafted by the WRP Political Committee, the ICFI published what was one of its last Trotskyist declarations on the Middle East:

*"To defeat this aggressive conspiracy is the responsibility of the Jewish and Arab workers alike. Only the unconditional victory of the Arab peoples against Zionism, the overthrow of the racist Israeli state and the creation of a democratic socialist Palestine can end the menace of another war. In this struggle the Arab ruling class can and will play a treacherous and cowardly role, vacillating between imperialism and the Arab workers and peasants. This is the unquestionable lesson of the Syrian invasion of Lebanon..."*

*"The liberation of the Arab nation from imperialism and the definitive defeat of Zionism cannot be entrusted to the reactionary Arab capitalists and landlords. This task can and must be carried out by the Arab and Jewish workers under the leadership of the International Committee of the Fourth International." (News Line, Nov. 13, 1976, p. 9)*

This statement concluded with a call for the building of sections of the ICFI **"in all Arab countries and Israel."**

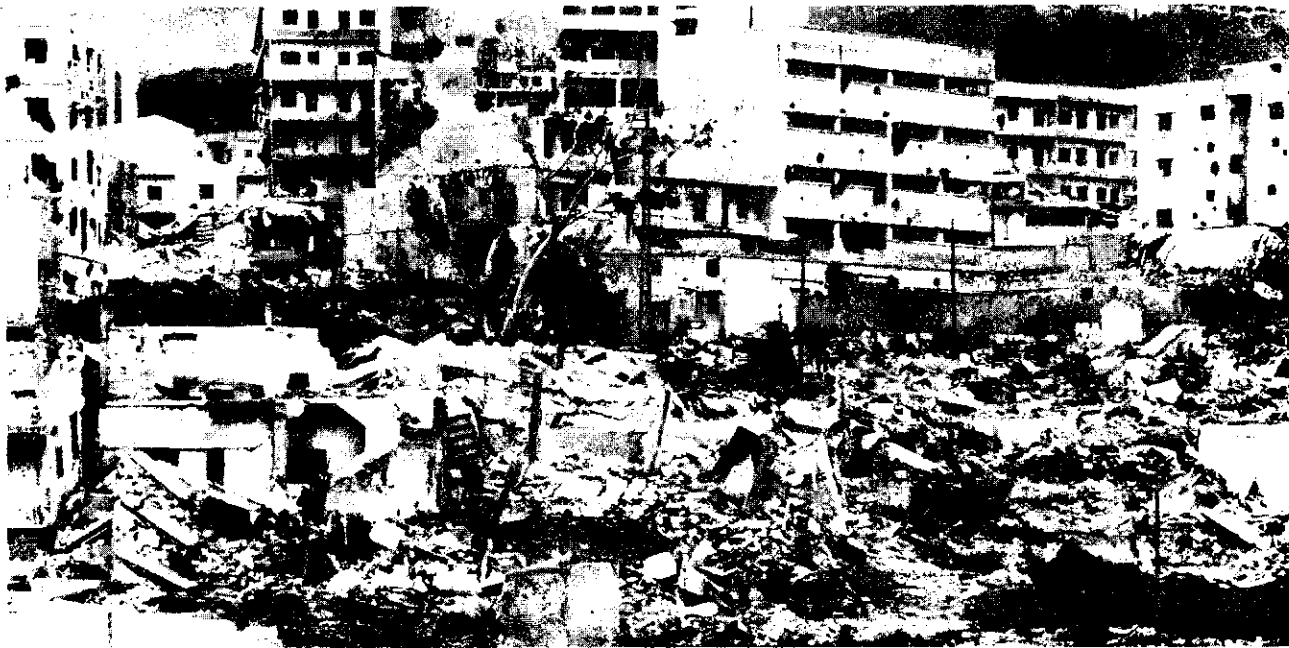
In July 1977 the WRP signed a joint communique with the Libyan government which the ICFI learned about after its text was published in the *News Line*. This initiated a policy of petty-bourgeois adulation of Col. Gaddafi which we shall document further on.

During the following year, the WRP dramatically expanded its activities in other Middle East countries, cultivating relations with the Ba'athists of both Syria and Iraq. The timing of the relationship with the latter is particularly sinister, as the Ba'athists were then locked in a bitter factional struggle against the Iraqi Communist Party. In order to exploit this struggle for its own advantage, the WRP provided an unspeakable defense of the execution of members of a working class party.

On February 2, 1979, in an article entitled "A Conspiracy Exposed," the *News Line* reported with favor the execution of 21 members of the Iraqi CP for "illegally forming cells in the armed forces." On March 8, 1979, in response to a readers' letter protesting this class betrayal, the *News Line* defended the executions in a full-page unsigned statement.

It declared that the *"Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party of Iraq has played a hundredfold more progressive role in the Middle East than Stalinism"* — thus abandoning the class criterion in its evaluation of political tendencies and forgetting that the Trotskyist criticism of Stalinism in the Middle East has always centered on its unprincipled and opportunist relations with the bourgeois nationalists. It was on this basis that the International Committee criticized the Communist Party of Sudan in 1971 — while protesting the execution of its leaders by the hangman Nimeiri. But in 1979, the WRP denounced the Iraqi CP and justified the murder of its members for just the opposite reason — their failure to fully abide by the terms of an opportunist agreement between the Stalinists and Ba'athists!

*"The fact is that the CP members were executed according to military codes which the Iraqi CP discussed, approved and agreed to implement. To this day the Iraqi CP*



Thousands were massacred in 1976 siege of Tel-al Zaatar camp in Beirut

has not called for the repeal of the military laws which ban the formation of secret cells in the army. It has never contested the fact that the arrested officers were guilty [!] of the charges brought against them.

**"This is a straight case of Moscow trying to set up cells in the Iraqi armed forces for the purpose of undermining the regime. It must accept the consequences..."**

*"It is a principle with Trotskyists that we defend workers, whether they are Stalinists, revisionists or social democrats from the attacks of the capitalist state.*

**"But, as the facts show, that has nothing to do with the incidents in Iraq." (p. 10)**

As if this was not enough, the statement went on to warn the reader who wrote the letter protesting the executions that he *"should start from these revolutionary considerations, unless he wants to become a pawn in the cynical conspiracy of the Stalinists and imperialists in the Middle East."* (p. 10)

## 19. Perspectives of the Fourth Congress of the WRP (March 1979)

The Fourth Congress of the WRP, which dragged on for nearly two weeks, was held less than a month after the overthrow of the imperialist puppet Bakhtiar and the victory of the Iranian national revolution under the leadership of Khomeini. In a lengthy programmatic resolution written by Michael Banda, the WRP's fundamental revisions of Marxism and Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution were codified. In light of the critical role which this document played in sanctioning the transformation of the WRP into an agency of bourgeois nationalist regimes, it merits careful analysis.

There were two essential and interconnected aspects of this eclectic document. First, it tailored its analyses to justify the already-established opportunist relations of the WRP

with various bourgeois regimes and the PLO. Thus, the necessity for socialist revolution was only recognized in those countries where the WRP had not yet established ties with the bourgeois nationalists, as in Iran (for the time being). Second, it presented for the first time a perspective which virtually obliterated class divisions in the semi-colonial countries and, in turn, elevated the armed struggle to the level of strategy and transformed it into the essential criterion for evaluating the anti-imperialist credentials of various nationalist leaderships. This document clearly establishes Banda's central role in the political degeneration of the former British section. He had failed to assimilate the critical component of the theory of Permanent Revolution as a strategy of the **international proletariat**. Instead, he advanced a petty-bourgeois line which was nothing but Pabloism in pseudo-Maoist attire.

In a section of the document dealing with the struggle in Zimbabwe and the attempts by British imperialism to force a negotiated settlement, the document proclaimed that the effect of the world economic crisis *"drives the multi-millioned masses of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East to armed revolt."* (*Perspectives of the Fourth Congress*, p. 14)

There would be nothing wrong with this statement if the subsequent exposition correctly identified the antagonistic social forces present among these "multi-millioned masses" and defined the class nature of the political tendencies in the leadership of the "armed revolt." In fact, the document never referred to the independent class interests and tasks of the proletariat in the struggle to establish its hegemony in the anti-imperialist struggle. Instead, Banda legitimized the subordination of the proletariat and the peasantry to the national bourgeoisie.

Painting the role of Nkomo and Mugabe in bright colors, the document asserted: *"The powerful hammer blows of the Patriotic Front guerillas struck against the armed forces of the Smith regime have effectively demolished the conspiracy*

of Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau and given new strength and courage to the Zimbabwean people in their struggle for complete liberation of their country."

These remarks, which replaced analysis with adjectives and adverbs, served only to disarm members of the WRP and Zimbabwean workers and peasants — as subsequent events were to demonstrate. It exaggerated the political depth of the opposition of Mugabe and Nkomo to Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau. While this trio functioned as the most craven stooges of imperialism, Mugabe and Nkomo, with whose representatives the WRP was in regular contact, represented a more dominant section of the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie, skillfully manipulating the mass movement to secure a better deal with Britain and the United States.

The crafty and treacherous formula devised by Banda to justify the WRP's capitulation to the Zimbabwean agents of British imperialism read as follows:

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party stands unconditionally on the side of the African working class and peasantry against the ruling regimes and their agents in the national movement. We support the Patriotic Front of Mugabe and Nkomo in so far as the Front continues the armed struggle against Smith and rejects a constitutional compromise. Only the armed overthrow of the capitalist state in South and Central Africa and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government can put an end to apartheid and restore the land to the peasantry and nationalize the mines, estates and factories."* (Ibid., p. 15)

This conception was based on the fraudulent reconciliation of irreconcilable class opposites. In complete violation of all Marxist principles, the WRP program replaced class program with armed struggle as the basis for determining the attitude of the Fourth International toward a bourgeois national leadership. The armed struggle — presented as a political abstraction — served as the bridge for justifying the program of the Popular Front in the underdeveloped countries. Rather than stating clearly that the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie is incapable of securing genuine national independence and that it will prosecute the armed struggle only within the limits of its class interests, the document hitched the fate of the working class to the policies of the bourgeoisie. Banda's "in so far as" was a hoax which pretended that the armed struggle, under the leadership of Nkomo and Mugabe, flowed automatically into the overthrow of the capitalist state and the realization of socialist policies — without the building of an independent revolutionary leadership of the working class.

The condition placed by Banda, Slaughter and Healy upon the Patriotic Front — that it "rejects a constitutional compromise" — was politically worthless and amounted to placing confidence in the African bourgeoisie. It represented a denial of the responsibility of the Trotskyist movement to fight for the political organization of the working class independently of the native bourgeoisie and prior to the latter's inevitable betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Moreover, it was a political farce to suggest that a workers' and peasants' government could be established under the aegis of the Patriotic Front, regardless of the duration of the armed struggle. This reference to a workers' and peasants' government — realized through an armed struggle led by the national bourgeoisie enjoying the uncritical support of the WRP — constituted a Pabloite decep-



**Banda** ...

tion of the working class, which assisted in the disorientation of the Zimbabwean masses and left them unprepared for the treachery of the Patriotic Front leaders.

These fundamental revisions of Trotskyism were based politically on Banda's petty-bourgeois conception of "armed struggle" as the supra-class strategy of anti-imperialist struggle, rather than a tactic which is employed by definite social forces in pursuit of their class interests. This position repudiated all the lessons of Trotsky's struggle against the Comintern's 1927 betrayal in China. In opposition to all Stalin's support to the bourgeois Chiang Kai-shek "in so far as the bourgeoisie does not obstruct the revolutionary organization of the workers' and peasants' and wages a genuine struggle against imperialism," Trotsky wrote:

*"The sole 'condition' for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical, and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organizations or the banners to become mixed directly or indirectly for a single day or a single hour; it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue, and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a genuine struggle against imperialism or not to obstruct the workers and*



peasants. For practical and expedient agreements we have absolutely no use for such a condition as the one cited above. On the contrary, it could only cause us harm running counter to the general line of our struggle against capitalism, which is not suspended even during the brief period of an 'agreement.'" (*The Third International After Lenin*, New Park, pp. 127-28)

The treachery of Banda's formula and the Menshevik-Pabloite character of his policy was to be graphically exposed within less than a year when the WRP abandoned its one condition — that the Patriotic Front reject a constitutional compromise — in order to preserve its cowardly alliance with the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie.

## 20. The WRP Betrays the Zimbabwean Revolution

Before returning to our analysis of the document, let us illustrate how the line worked out in practice.

In September 1979 the Patriotic Front — taking no notice of Banda's one condition — called off the armed struggle. Mugabe and Nkomo arrived in London to participate in talks at Lancaster House on a **constitutional settlement** of the national struggle in Zimbabwe. Rather than denouncing this reactionary charade and calling upon the Zimbabwean masses to repudiate the Lancaster House trap, the WRP immediately adjusted its political line to accommodate this right-wing shift in the policy of the Patriotic Front. During the next six months, the *News Line* was to function as a daily semi-official propaganda organ for the Patriotic Front, dispensing political bromides to ease the growing anxiety among British and Zimbabwean workers — including countless African students in London — over the bankruptcy of the nationalist leaders.

In its issue of September 10, 1979, in a front-page article headlined, "**Nkomo Slams Bishop**," the *News Line* informed its readers: "*Leaders of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front, in London for the constitutional conference which opens in Lancaster House today, have made it clear they will not accept anything short of full majority rule.*" Rather than exposing this shallow boast, the *News Line* proceeded to uncritically quote Nkomo at length. The only note of caution introduced by correspondent John Spencer in the course of the entire article was the comment, "*There should be no illusions in the role of the Thatcher government, which is the arch-enemy of the liberation movements all over the world.*" He conveniently failed to make the point that the Lancaster House talks were based on the collaboration of the Patriotic Front with this same British imperialism.

On September 22, 1979, in article entitled "**Patriotic Front Sticks to Its Guns**," the *News Line* provided the following misleading reassurances:

*"After two weeks of tough negotiations at Lancaster House, the Patriotic Front is clinging to its guns for an independent Zimbabwe based on full rights for all citizens."*

The article suggested that a major concession had been made by the "Salisbury puppets" in accepting Tory proposals for a new constitution — neatly forgetting that until two weeks before the WRP had supposedly made its support for the Patriotic Front conditional upon rejection of constitutional compromises. As it turned out, Ian Smith held out longer than Nkomo and Mugabe! Again, however, the

*News Line* warned that obstacles stood in the way of a settlement: "*But the Patriotic Front is still deeply unhappy about the British constitutional plan. Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe maintained that it still contains traces [!] of racism because it refers to white and black voting registers and specifically allocated white seats in Parliament.*"

Within three days, the *News Line* was reporting that the Patriotic Front had overcome its unhappiness and accepted the 24 white seats demanded by British imperialism. The headline of the September 25th article noted that the "**Move upsets Salisbury.**" While just a few days before the Patriotic Front had been quoted as denouncing the assignment of white seats as racist, the *News Line* observed that "*the present racist constitution is now a dead letter...*"

On October 5, 1979, the *News Line* reported that Lord Carrington had submitted an ultimatum to the Patriotic Front, demanding that Mugabe and Nkomo accept the constitutional framework prepared by British imperialism or the talks would be dissolved.

On October 9, 1979, the *News Line* led the issue with the Patriotic Front's "seven differences" with the constitution proposed by Carrington. None of these differences were of a fundamental character and established that the Patriotic Front had essentially capitulated to imperialist control over an "independent" Zimbabwe. But the *News Line* did not call upon the Patriotic Front to quit the talks or in any way criticize their stand. Instead, the *News Line* issued a meek protest on behalf of the Patriotic Front.

In its issue of October 15, 1979, in an article entitled "**Land Question a Key in Zimbabwe Talks**" correspondent John Spencer complained that Carrington's proposal "*amounts to a crude ultimatum aimed at smashing the talks if the Zimbabwe liberation movement refuses to be bullied into accepting the terms laid down by Westminster.*"

*"Carrington is bringing the talks to the point of breakdown despite the Patriotic Front's consistent willingness to continue negotiations and prevent the negotiations breaking down.*

*"The draft constitution which Carrington is trying to impose gives nothing like full independence and sovereignty to the people of Zimbabwe.*

*"It contains provisions which would be unacceptable and offensive to any other sovereign government throughout the world and even more important, its provisions run directly counter to the interests and requirements of the Zimbabwean people."*

By this point the *News Line* was functioning as a surrogate message service between the Patriotic Front and the British ruling class — not as a tribune of the working class and the oppressed masses of Zimbabwe. It was faithfully reporting the Patriotic Front's discomfiture at the hard bargain being driven by Carrington and tactfully warning that it might be forced against its wishes to quit the talks. For this reason, the *News Line* — no doubt at the request of aides to Nkomo and Mugabe — reported criticisms of the talks made by the United Nations representative of the Patriotic Front.

However, in the course of the next 24 hours the Patriotic Front had decided to continue with the Lancaster House betrayal and the *News Line* was given the job of portraying this miserable capitulation as an audacious counter-blow to Carrington. Thus, a banner headline on the October 16,

1979 edition of the *News Line* proclaimed: "WE STAY! — Carrington Gets Answer From Nkomo."

The first paragraph of John Spencer's article read: "Patriotic Front co-leader Joshua Nkomo said last night that the British government had no right to throw the liberation movement out of the Lancaster House talks on the future of Zimbabwe."

In its on-going capacity as messenger service, the *News Line* quoted "one Patriotic Front cadre" as saying: "A deal between the British government and Muzorewa is worthless because they cannot deliver an end to the war."

One month later, when the Patriotic Front capitulated to the Carrington proposals, the news was buried on an inside page and the coverage suggested that significant concessions in wording had been made by the British government.

In the *News Line* of November 27, 1979, in order to create a bizarre diversion to distract attention from the shameful betrayal in progress, Alex Mitchell was called in to write a front-page "Zimbabwe talks sensation" which was headlined, "SINISTER PLOT EXPOSED — EXCLUSIVE"

According to "an impeccable source which must remain anonymous" Mitchell reported that "British intelligence has mounted the biggest electronic surveillance operation in its history against the Patriotic Front delegations at the Rhodesia talks in London..."

"It has provided the Foreign Office — and therefore the regimes in South Africa and Salisbury — with the detailed thinking and tactics of the Patriotic Front led by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe" — as if British imperialism needed bugs to anticipate the betrayal of its agents in Zimbabwe!

The article concluded with messenger-boy Mitchell delivering a petty threat to British imperialism: "Unless Carrington is prepared to completely withdraw his plan and unconditionally accept the Patriotic Front's proposals then the Patriotic Front has every right to quit London and return to

the armed struggle until final victory." One might ask why the *News Line* was not demanding that the Patriotic Front quit London and return to the armed struggle if final victory was possible? Indeed, this cynical statement proves that the Workers Revolutionary Party leadership was working consciously as agents of the colonial bourgeoisie to betray the Zimbabwean Revolution.

On December 5, 1979, the *News Line* played the last card of the Patriotic Front. A front-page article entitled "ZIMBABWE CHARGE: TORIES OPT FOR WAR" reported that Mugabe and Nkomo warned that "if Carrington ended the London Conference without an agreement with the Patriotic Front, then the liberation war would continue."

On December 14, 1979, the *News Line* began preparing its readers for the capitulation of Nkomo and Mugabe. A front-page lead by Mitchell declared: "The Patriotic Front is being pressured from all sides to accept the Tory ceasefire proposals and lay down its arms in the struggle to liberate Zimbabwe." He offered excuses for the Patriotic Front, claiming that it was "holding out alone" and that the "front line states have also deserted the liberation fighters" — creating a picture of hopelessness to justify political capitulation to Carrington and the abandonment of the armed struggle which it had just a few months earlier proclaimed as the basis of its support of the Patriotic Front.

Thus, on December 18, 1979, the *News Line* reported without any criticism that the "Patriotic Front sign dotted line."

For three months, the Workers Revolutionary Party had faithfully supported every step backward taken by the Patriotic Front and accepted the dirty job of selling the deal to the working class in Britain and the fighters in Africa. It worked day-in and day-out to boost the authority of Mugabe and Nkomo in order to facilitate their betrayal. Not once during the entire proceedings at Lancaster House did the Workers Revolutionary Party present anything that remotely resembled a Marxist analysis of the policies of the



Joshua Nkomo



Robert Mugabe

bourgeois nationalists nor advance a revolutionary program to counter their betrayal. It must be stated that the Healy-Banda-Slaughter leadership played the role of adjutants of British imperialism through their reactionary collaboration with the Patriotic Front traitors.

Later, three months after the betrayal had been carried through, the *News Line* carried an article in its issue of March 3, 1980 entitled "Whatever happened to the Patriotic Front?," which declared:

*"The masses of Zimbabwe stand in the greatest danger from the intrigues of imperialism and the opportunism of their own leaders."* In a cynical and belated warning, the *News Line* reported that "Now, the Patriotic Front leaders are working hand-in-glove with General Sir John Acland, Walls and Maclean in the integration of the ZIPRA and ZANLA armies into one centralized army."

The new "critical" attitude did not last long. Two days later, the front page of the March 5, 1980 issue of the *News Line* carried the banner headline: "MUGABE VICTORY: GIANT BLOW AT THE TORIES."

The article began: "The landslide victory for Robert Mugabe in the Zimbabwe elections is a tremendous affirmation of the revolutionary movement of the masses of Africa and the whole world."

*"It continues the irrepressible march of the masses since the victory over imperialism in Vietnam and followed by Angola, Mozambique, Iran and Nicaragua."*

Maneuvering to ingratiate itself with Mugabe, the *News Line* denounced Nkomo, whose military forces were now described as "a conventionally trained force under the heavy grip of Soviet and East German advisers."

But just one year earlier, in the document of the Fourth Congress, Banda was describing Nkomo's forces as a vital component of the future "workers' and peasants' government" in Zimbabwe.

In the same issue, having declared its enthusiastic support for Mugabe's electoral victory, which the WRP described as a blow to British imperialism, the *News Line* reported without comment the policies outlined by the new government: 1) "Nationalization with compensation"; 2) "Acceptance of the capitalist base of the Rhodesian economy with 'modifications in a gradual way' without seizure of private property or blanket nationalization"; 3) The establishment of Zimbabwe's non-aligned status "with friends among both NATO and Warsaw Pact countries"; 4) Co-existence with South Africa.

The sum total of the WRP's policies in southern Africa — for which Healy, Banda and Slaughter shared equal responsibility — was a political betrayal of historic magnitude.

## 21. The WRP Betrays the Arab Masses

Even more directly and immediately than in the case of Zimbabwe, the Resolution of the Fourth Congress provided the theoretical justification for the WRP's betrayals of the workers and peasants in the Middle East.

Banda's document described the struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionism as the "highest point of the world revolution" — a Pabloite definition which distorted the objective relations which exist between the component parts of the international class struggle. Moreover,

the definition of one particular sphere as the "highest point" carried the political implication that all other struggles were subordinate to it. This formulation arose as the justification for the reorientation of the international work of the WRP around a whole series of opportunist alliances with the Arab bourgeoisie.

This theoretical construction was then supplemented by the assertion that "The strategy of Anglo-US imperialism in this area is dictated solely by its desire to protect the oil fields from expropriation by a radical regime." (Fourth Congress Resolution, p. 15, emphasis added)

The political conclusions that followed implicitly from this absurd evaluation were 1) that the practical work of the WRP must be concentrated on the defense of these radical bourgeois regimes, coordinating its work with the foreign ministries of various Arab states; and 2) that the working class, playing only a secondary role in the anti-imperialist struggle, must necessarily subordinate its independent interests to the defense of the existing regimes, previously defined as the main enemy of Anglo-US imperialism.

This subordination of the working class was then justified through a political appraisal of Middle Eastern history that acknowledged the existence of only the external enemy of the Arab masses — Zionism — while ignoring the internal social contradictions through which the interests of imperialism are mediated. Thus, Banda wrote: "No better instrument existed for imperialism than Zionist immigration." (*Ibid.*) This declaration evaded all the questions which are central for a Marxist analysis of the tasks of the proletariat in the Middle East. Aside from the fact that Zionist immigration was a direct product of the betrayals of Stalinism and Social Democracy that produced the victory of fascism in the 1930's and the outbreak of the second imperialist world war, the incapacity of Arab rulers to defend the national rights of the Palestinian people and devise a strategy to defeat Zionism raises the question of the crisis of revolutionary leadership — internationally and within the Middle East itself. Having rejected this fundamental class axis — the starting point for the elaboration of a revolutionary program and plan of action — the Fourth Congress document degenerated into a petty-bourgeois journalistic glorification of the foreign policy of the Arab bourgeoisie.

Rather than cultivating within the minds of the advanced Arab workers a critical attitude toward the policies of the bourgeois states in the Middle East — explaining the organic inability of even the most radical regimes to pursue a consistent anti-imperialist line, warning against their naive illusions in such imperialist instruments as the United Nations, and exposing every act of bourgeois perfidy toward the working class and oppressed masses in every Arab country — the document placed the main emphasis on their supposed diplomatic achievements, raising these carefully-orchestrated political burlesques to the level of genuine victories of the workers and peasants. The outcome of this petty-bourgeois method was the actual betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggle, especially that of the Palestinian masses.

Thus, "Thanks to the intervention of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime which had consistently opposed the recognition of Israel in any form and supported the Palestinian Revolution in the dark days of the Lebanese civil war, the Camp David plot was foiled." What pathetic short-sightedness!



Yassir Arafat

That was not all. Inspired by Middle Eastern statecraft, Banda proclaimed "At the Baghdad Summit in November 1978, the radical regimes of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria and South Yeman and the PLO secured the support of the conservative states of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Emirates to reject the Camp David agreement and reaffirm the right of the PLO to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The pledge of financial and political support to the Palestine Revolution from the oil-producing states was a severe blow to the reactionary dreams of Sadat." (*Ibid.* p. 16)

One has only to look back over the sanguinary history of the last eight years — in which the PLO and the Palestinian people have experienced countless acts of betrayal and treachery at the hands of their "Arab brothers" — to recognize the worthlessness of this evaluation. During this period, Healy and Banda were in constant contact with the PLO, and their analysis was an objective link in the chain of events which led to the disarming and isolation of the Palestinian movement. Since 1978 each and every one of the states referred to in Banda's panegyric has stabbed the PLO in the back and worked for the physical annihilation of its leaders and cadres.

In fact, the WRP functioned as part of the vicious conspiracy against the PLO. Healy's main political objective in the Middle East was not to secure the national rights of the Palestinian people but to cultivate materially rewarding relationships for the WRP with the "oil-rich" Arab states. When forced between the two, Healy invariably protected his ties with the Arab regimes. A political cover for this duplicitous maneuvering was provided by Banda, who wrote in the Fourth Congress resolution: "The Baghdad summit also ended the bloody factional struggles in the PLO and laid the basis for a co-ordination of Iraqi-Syrian foreign and defense policy as well as possible reunification of the Ba'ath parties." (*Ibid.*)

The WRP leadership's real contempt for the PLO was ex-

posed in this passage. Their acceptance of Iraqi hegemony in the internal affairs of the PLO was a violation of the very concept of self-determination. Banda's winged reference to the ending of "bloody factional struggles in the PLO" meant that the WRP supported the suppression of democratic rights of political tendencies existing among the Palestinian masses. It was politically obvious that the Ba'athists suppressed precisely those tendencies that conflicted with the Iraqi leaders' relations with imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy.

As for the speculation about the relations between the Iraqi and Syrian branches of the Ba'ath monstrosity, why did the prospect of unity among these bourgeois politicians arouse the enthusiasm of the WRP leaders? Since when are Trotskyists cheer-leaders for such political maneuvers? This speculation exposed the petty-bourgeois credulity of Healy and Banda in the historical viability of bourgeois nationalism. Within a matter of months, all talk of unity was drowned by a new wave of bloody internecine warfare among the competing national branches of Ba'athism.

As for its relations with the PLO, the political deceit of the WRP leadership was compounded by theoretical dishonesty. Behind the cover of unconditional support of the PLO against imperialism — a principle repeatedly betrayed by Healy — the WRP belittled the decisive role of the proletariat of the Middle East. Healy, Banda and Slaughter dishonestly assigned to the PLO a role which it will not and cannot play: "The strength of the working class and peasantry is directly reflected in the growth of the PLO and its emergence as the leader of the struggle for the emancipation of the whole Arab nation." (*Ibid.*, emphasis added)

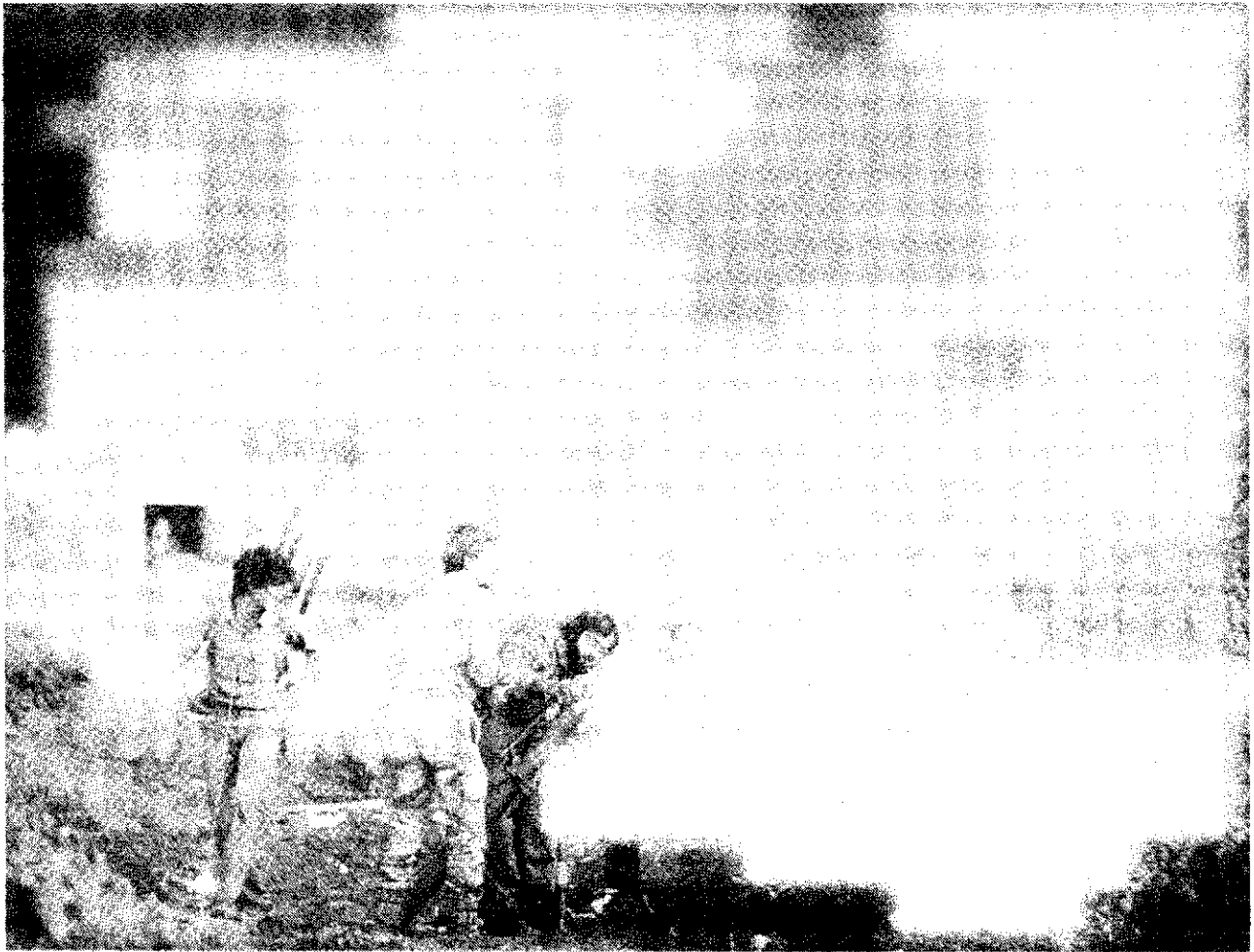
This statement was the most complete repudiation of the Theory of Permanent Revolution, which holds that in the epoch of imperialism only the proletariat, armed with a Marxist program and on the basis of the class struggle, can carry out the democratic task of national unification and liberation from imperialism. Moreover, the genuine unification of the Arab peoples is historically bound up with the liquidation of the existing state frontiers which block economic progress and perpetuate both the ancient feudal and tribal divisions as well as those fomented by imperialism.

Far from projecting itself programmatically as the unifier of the entire Arab nation, from the Maghreb to the Gulf, the PLO has traditionally described itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and has explicitly recognized the existence of diverse social tendencies within its own ranks.

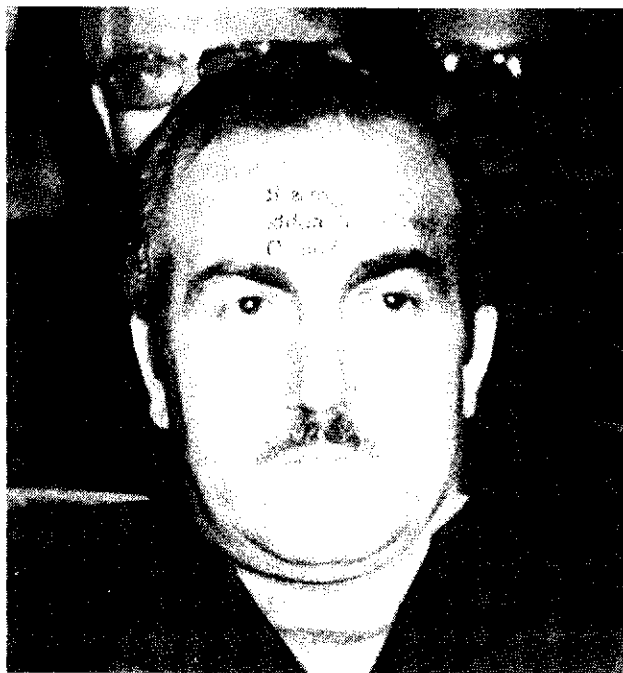
In all these anti-Marxist formulations, there was not to be found within this document any suggestion of the historic role of the working class in the Middle East. Needless to say, the problem of the unity of Arab and Jewish workers — a matter of strategic importance which the Fourth International emphasized in the 1940's while opposing the creation of Israel — was not even mentioned.

In another display of journalistic effluvia, Banda claimed that "the PLO has overcome all the obstacles in its path, united the Palestinian people, and won recognition as their sole legitimate representative." (*Ibid.*)

This was the worst form of treachery, in which craven flattery, posturing as scientific analysis, told lies to the Palestinian people. It is hardly necessary to refute the claim



**Palestinian fighters in Lebanon**



**Abu Jihad**

that the PLO "has overcome all the obstacles in its path..." Only fools would take such a statement seriously. From a theoretical standpoint, the assertions which follow deserve more careful consideration. It is not only impossible, for the reasons given above, for the PLO to unite the Arab nation. It cannot, in a Marxist sense, truly unite the Palestinian people, any more than the Awami League could unite the masses of Bangla Desh or, for that matter, the Patriotic Front could unite the Zimbabwean masses. Unless the specific class forces present within the national movement are defined, the reference to the Palestinian nation is a political abstraction which once again serves to bury the decisive role of the working class. As for the definition of the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people, this formulation is acceptable in a public defense of the PLO against the intrigues of imperialism, Zionism and the Arab bourgeoisie. But it can only sow illusions and create confusion when it is presented as a political definition in a programmatic document of the Trotskyist movement. The only conclusion that can flow from such a definition is that the WRP opposed the building of the ICFI among the rapidly growing Palestinian working class. In other words, Trotskyism has no role to play in the emancipation of the Palestinian masses.

Once again it was Banda who provided the theoretical justification for this liquidationist capitulation to the

Palestinian bourgeoisie. The Fourth Congress Resolution reads:

*"The hallmark of the PLO has been the armed struggle in the form of a protracted guerilla war, the stress on the mobilization of the masses as opposed to individual terror and the determination to carry the fight on to all fronts.*

*"This struggle is epitomized in their rallying cry 'Revolution until victory'." (Ibid., pp. 16-17)*

The same "armed struggle" theory that was employed to cover up the class nature of the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe was used in providing a political characterization of the PLO. This false theory was to have even more tragic consequences in the Middle East than it had in Zimbabwe. The "armed struggle" and an abstract "mobilization of the masses" was counterposed to the organization of a proletarian party to establish the independence of the working class from the bourgeois Arab regimes. The subsequent development of the class struggle in the Middle East, especially in the aftermath of the Zionist invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, demonstrated the fallacy of the PLO's "armed struggle" conceptions.

Within Lebanon itself the PLO was unable at any time to put forward a program for the unification of the Palestinian and Lebanese masses. The organization of military parades in Beirut served only to antagonize Lebanese nationalism and proved counter-productive. For all their heroism, the military units of the PLO could not stop the Zionist advance. Ultimately, the Zionist forces met their match in the movement of aroused workers and peasants in Lebanon — which demonstrated that the principal weakness of the PLO, inherent in its very structure, was its inability to formulate a program that could have, in advance of 1982, mobilized this great power in defense of the Palestinian right to self-determination. For a Marxist, the perspectives of the class struggle is epitomized in a program, not a "rallying-cry."

The Resolution then sought to provide a theoretical explanation for the adulation of Gaddafi's regime in Libya. In a crucial passage which referred to the growing pressure of imperialism in the Middle East and its efforts to enlist the support of Egypt and the Sudan, the Resolution asserted that *"these imperialist-prompted overtures can only serve to exacerbate tensions within the national movement and push the most radical elements in the Arab national movement to recognize that the 'historical weapon of national liberation can only be the class struggle.' (Trotsky)" (Ibid., p. 17)*

In this passage reality was turned inside out, converting the class struggle, which is an objective product of the development of capitalism in the Middle East, into a policy subjectively adopted by the national bourgeoisie under the pressure of imperialism. With this theoretical formulation, Banda provided an apology for the Bonapartist role characteristic of bourgeois regimes in under-developed countries, which balance precariously between imperialism and the native working class. Such regimes, whose rulers harangue the masses from their balconies, habitually seek to adapt the class struggle to the practical needs of their deals with imperialism.

For the immediate purposes of the WRP, this subtle formula provided a cover for political double bookkeeping in the Middle East; that is, it allowed the WRP to claim that Col. Gaddafi combined within his person both the radical national movement and the proletarian class struggle, and

that the Libyan Jamahiriya was evolving into a socialist state.

The Resolution claimed that the "political bloc between the Workers Revolutionary Party and the General Peoples Congress of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya" was proven correct by Sadat's betrayal of the PLO, and that the bloc "was formed within the framework of strictly-defined practical tasks and with the retention of complete independence of our own organization..." (Ibid.)

But this claim was belied by the nature of the bloc, which was based on tasks of an essentially propaganda character — *"warning the Arab peoples and the European working class about the altered tactics of imperialism and the counter-revolutionary content of Sadat's and King Khaled's foreign policy." (Ibid.)* However, as Trotsky insisted, *"It is precisely in the sphere of propaganda that a bloc is out of the question. Propaganda must rest upon clear-cut principles and on a definite program. March separately, strike together. A bloc is solely for practical mass actions. Deals arranged from above which lack a basis in principle will bring nothing but confusion." (Germany 1931-1932, New Park, p. 136)*

Confusion...and money! Healy and A. Mitchell might protest that their bloc with Libya entailed such practical tasks as organizing pickets outside the Egyptian and US Embassies in London. But, for Trotskyists, was it necessary to form a united front in order to carry out an elementary act of anti-imperialist solidarity? Would a rank-and-file worker first demand a united front with the union bureaucracy before agreeing to carry out his duties on a picket line? The fact of the matter is that the WRP's bloc with Libya was established in the area of political analysis — that is, it committed the WRP to saying only those things which the Libyan Jamahiriya wanted to hear or wanted to have said.

## 22. The Aftermath of the Congress

The Fourth Congress opened the floodgates for a wave of opportunism unprecedented in the history of the Fourth International. A few weeks after the Congress, a WRP delegation which included Healy, Mitchell and Vanessa Redgrave flew off to the Gulf States for a money-raising jamboree of a politically-depraved character.

Notwithstanding the Congress Resolution's denunciation of the Gulf States, Healy hob-nobbed with the feudalists and big bourgeois of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. The political flavor of the trip was indicated in the following notation made by Healy about his stay in Kuwait (We quote from a document written and signed by Healy, dated April 14, 1979, summarizing the results of the trip. It was discovered by the International Control Commission in November 1985.): *"We worked closely with the Palestine Liberation Organization, although they were not required to assist us with funds since in the opinion of the delegation this was mainly a matter for Kuwaitis and their friends among the rich Palestinians."*

Healy's collaboration with these reactionary forces was graphically illustrated in one incident described in his report:

*"On March 31st an invitation was made to the delegation to meet at dinner with a group of left-oppositionists led by the SULTAN family. The object of this meeting was expres-*

sed to Vanessa Redgrave by NAJJAT SULTAN as an invitation to explain the real reasons for your visit to Kuwait. The delegation declined to accept this invitation as we did not wish to intervene in the political matters in Kuwait."

Having steered clear of the radical trouble-makers, Healy was able to report that large sums of money were raised "from leading Kuwaitis including generous cheques from the Crown Prince, the Governor of Ahmadi" and other leading feudalists.

### 23. Libya: How the Bloc Looked in Practice

It would be impossible within the limits of this resolution to reproduce each of the articles in which the *News Line* glorified the achievements of the Libyan regime. Still, we shall provide the most illustrative examples of how Healy prostituted Marxism and transformed himself and his closest cronies into hirelings of this bourgeois state.

In accordance with its propaganda bloc with Gaddafi and its "theory" of proletarian class struggle waged by the national bourgeoisie, the *News Line* of September 4, 1979 carried a two-page article on Libya entitled "Masses of Workers Take Over Factories." It uncritically reported that workers, "following a speech by the secretary-general of the General People's Congress, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi" had seized "full control of production."

Without indicating the slightest reservations, it quoted Gaddafi's claim that "the Jamahiriya was heralding a radical transformation in the basis of political order and social construction of the whole world."

In the August 29, 1979 issue of *News Line*, a four-page color special celebrating the 10th anniversary of Gaddafi's rise to power carries an article entitled "Oil Riches Regained for the People." The article baldly claimed that "The great advances made by the Libyan masses would not have been possible if the Revolutionary Council had not taken on, and defeated, the international oil giants."

Considering the fact that the British Trotskyists had once led the struggle against the theoretical capitulation of Pabloism to Castroism, this article epitomized the WRP leadership's cynical contempt for questions of principle. While claiming that Libya had defeated the oil conglomerates, the article failed to mention that most of their holdings had never been expropriated and nationalized. Instead, the far more modest gains of the Libyans — centered on renegotiating the terms upon which foreign companies conduct their operations within the country — were described with inflated journalistic rhetoric.

One week later, in the *News Line* of September 5, 1979, the following betrayal of Marxism was published: "The revolution led by Colonel Gaddafi has fought consistently against every form of bureaucracy. The Libyan Jamahiriya has conclusively disproved this cynical bourgeois lie that bureaucracy is the inevitable outcome of revolution. Bureaucracy is not inevitable except in certain historical circumstances. The experience of the Libyan Revolution has demonstrated that the struggle for the world socialist revolution can and will destroy bureaucracy forever."

Here, Gaddafi was elevated to the level of Trotsky, and the latter's profound historical analysis of the roots of bureaucracy was contemptuously dismissed and replaced with a vulgar fantasy that doesn't merit serious con-



Muammar Gadhafi

sideration. The sole purpose of this anti-Marxist dribble was to corrode the theoretical foundations of the British section and demoralize its cadres, who, having devoted their lives to the struggle against bureaucracy in the workers' movement, now read in the *News Line* that Gaddafi had discovered a magic potion in Libya that rendered the historical work of the Fourth International superfluous. Who needed *The Revolution Betrayed* when the *Green Book* was available — courtesy of WRP presses in Runcorn!

In the *News Line* of October 9, 1979, Gaddafi's *Green Book* was glorified in a two-page article by Mitchell. Describing the proceedings of a seminar held on the significance of this work, Mitchell wrote:

"A total of 60 papers were translated and circulated for discussion, covering different aspects of the world wide crisis of democracy, the two-party system, the growth of bureaucracy, and the transfer of power to the masses..."

"It was Gaddafi and a small group of Libyan academics who made the most stimulating and incisive contributions. They patiently and firmly explained each stage of the development of the *Green Book* theories which are to create a society in which the old forms of government and bourgeois democracy are replaced by popular committees and full ownership, control and authority in the hands of the armed masses."

"In the Jamahiriya, they explained, democratic rights are safeguarded because wage workers have become partners in



*their factories and offices and therefore exploitation has been abolished."*

In this masterpiece of journalistic flunkeyism, Mitchell never suggested that he disagreed with this utopian nonsense. Nor did he feel the need to differentiate the Party's position from that of the Green Book on the subject of Marxism and the USSR. Instead, the uncritical reporting continued:

*"They said that Marxism was a product of the industrial revolution and that it had been put into practice in the workers' revolution in the Soviet Union.*

*"But they took the point of view that the Soviet revolution had not been able to attain democracy for the masses. They said that Libya's Third Universal Theory had been born out of an analysis of the two main world trends — so-called 'liberal' capitalism and Marxism."*

It is unthinkable that Lenin would have permitted such a description of Sun Yat-senism in the pages of the Bolshevik press. But then again, Healy was very far from Lenin.

In 1980 Healy attempted to prove to the Gaddafi regime that the program of the Workers Revolutionary Party was essentially identical to that of the Libyan Jamahiriya. In a document discovered by the International Control Commission, entitled **"Notes on the Programme, Strategy and Tactics of the Workers Revolutionary Party,"** submitted to the Libyan government and dated April 30, 1980, Healy wrote:

*"We have agreement with the Jamahiriya (sic) on:*

*"a) The popular role of the Revolutionary Committees (Green Book) as the basis for the manifestation of the democratic revolutionary power of the masses. These committees could assume other names in line with the organizational traditions of the masses, but their content and aims would be that of Revolutionary Committees.*

*"b) The Workers Revolutionary Party agrees with the Jamahiriya (sic) on the role of Partners in a Socialist society (see our notes already submitted on Part Two of the Green Book)."*

Healy was now ready to proclaim Gaddafi as the leader of the Libyan working class and the Green Book as a worthy alternative to Marxism. A draft resolution adopted by the WRP Political Committee on July 28, 1980 declared that *"the Workers Revolutionary Party salutes the courageous and tireless struggle of Colonel Gaddafi whose Green Book has guided the struggle to introduce workers' control of factories, government offices and the diplomatic service, and in exposing the reactionary maneuvers of Sadat, Beigin and Carter... We stand ready to mobilize the British workers in defense of the Libyan Jamahiriya and explain the teachings of the Green Book as part of the anti-imperialist struggle."*

On December 12, 1981 the Political Committee of the WRP issued a statement which declared: *"When Gaddafi and the Free Unionist Officers seized popular control in 1969, they set Libya on the road of socialist development and expansion...Gadaffi has developed politically in the direction of revolutionary socialism and he has shunned the palaces and harems of some other Arab leaders."*

These publicity snow-jobs on behalf of the Libyan bourgeoisie, paid for by Gaddafi, led directly to a political betrayal of the PLO little more than a half-year later. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982, as bombs rained down on Beirut, Gaddafi's contribution to the

anti-Zionist struggle was to call upon Arafat to commit suicide! Not even this statement provoked a sharp political attack.

## 24. How Healy Courted the Ba'athists

Healy, Banda and Slaughter share political responsibility for the deaths of the hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants and youth who have been slaughtered as a consequence of Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran and the reactionary perpetuation of the war by the bourgeois Islamic Republic long after the defense of its territory had been secured.

As we have already documented, the WRP provided unprincipled support for the right-wing Iraqi Ba'athists to the extent of endorsing their murder of members of the Communist Party in the winter of 1978-79. The ties between Healy and the Iraqi Ba'athists became even closer after Saddam Hussein overthrew and murdered long-time President Al-Bakr in July 1979 and carried out a ruthless purge of all his potential opponents in the leadership of the Ba'ath party. Among those killed was Talib Suwailh, an executive member of the Central Bureau of the Trade Union Federation of Iraq, who only a few weeks before his execution on trumped-up charges had shared the platform with Healy at the July 1, 1979 Conference of the All Trades Unions Alliance (the trade union arm of the WRP) and personally brought



Saddam Hussein

greetings to its delegates. The ensuing blood purge was barely noted by the *News Line* and Suwailh's death was neither reported nor protested by the Healy leadership.

Instead, after the executioners had completed their bloody work, the *News Line* of August 10, 1979 provided enthusiastic coverage for a march by Saddam Hussein's thugs through the streets of Baghdad, gloating over the deaths of their opponents. This issue endorsed the executions, accepting Hussein's claim that the 55 condemned men were "traitors" and publicizing his phony assurances that his dictatorship "shall fight oppression everywhere, support right everywhere, support the poor everywhere [and] fight exploitation everywhere."

It was apparent that the political upheaval within the Ba'ath party was part of a reaction within the Iraqi bourgeoisie against the Iranian Revolution, and that Hussein's coup marked a shift toward closer relations with US imperialism as well as preparation for military conflict with Iran. The Healy leadership, however, refused to make any serious analysis of what was taking place in Iraq. Instead, it escalated its obscene adulation of Hussein's Bonapartist dictatorship.

During the coming months there were countless articles which amounted to nothing more than public relations jobs in behalf of the Iraqi regime. The political content of the line expressed in these articles was complete capitulation to the Iraqi bourgeoisie. Within Britain, the net effect of such articles could only be the deadening of the political consciousness of Party members and the advanced workers, insidiously conditioning them for future political capitulations within their own country. The incessant glorification of popular frontism in the Middle East could only serve to blur the class lines on an international scale — facilitating the unprincipled relations which Healy was already developing with trade union bureaucrats and Labour Party centrists in Britain.

A wholesale miseducation of the Party workers and youth and disorientation of the International Committee, within which the WRP exercised inordinate influence, was in progress. The theoretical capital of the Trotskyist movement, built up over six decades of struggle against Stalinism and revisionism, was being systematically looted by Healy and his henchmen in the WRP Political Committee and on the *News Line* editorial board.

In an article dated June 25, 1980, entitled "**Iraq Goes to the Polls**" and written by Healy's bag-man in Baghdad, Alex Mitchell heaped praise on a fraudulent plebiscite staged by Hussein to bolster his blood-stained regime. By no stretch of the imagination could Mitchell's article be described as a politically-literate, let alone Marxist, analysis. This was not because Mitchell was a stupid man. Rather, he was carrying out a deliberate policy, worked out by Healy and Banda on the basis of the Fourth Congress Resolution, which had sanctified bourgeois leadership over the national and anti-imperialist movement.

Applied to Iraq, this meant political boot-licking in support of the Bonapartist state. Joking over the political impotence of the national assembly — that is, the absence of any credible form of democratic rights for the working class — Mitchell approvingly quoted one Ba'athist official. "We don't want a debating society."

Accepting the reactionary premise that Ba'athism is the

leader of the whole Iraqi nation, Mitchell observed: "*The most striking thing about the people gathered at the polling booths was the sheer range of class layers that they represented.*"

Nearly half the article was devoted to ridiculing a communist journalist from India who suggested that the Ba'athists had employed coercion to produce a big electoral endorsement of the regime. He sarcastically objected to the behavior of Indian and Sri Lankan journalists who "*had thrown themselves into a fearsome interrogation of the election officials...Harried officials spent more than 90 minutes giving detailed replies to every question, but still the super-democrats and ballot-box wallahs were not convinced.*" These lines reveal Mitchell's real contempt for the democratic rights of the working class and the oppressed poor.

## 25. The Outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War

In the months leading up to the outbreak of war in September 1980, the WRP stepped up its glorification of the Ba'athist regime. On July 28, 1980, the Political Committee passed a draft resolution which declared: "*The Workers Revolutionary Party welcomes and pledges maximum aid to the dynamic and radical policies of the Iraqi government led by President Saddam Hussein. By giving the land to the peasantry, granting autonomy to the Kurds, eradicating illiteracy, multiplying per capita income, and ending forever the domination of the foreign oil monopolies, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party has advanced the Arab revolution and created a firm basis for cooperation with a revolutionary socialist regime [!] in Britain.*"

On the basis of this resolution, Healy commissioned a series of six articles, published in August, detailing, according to the *News Line* introduction, "*the social and economic development, cultural life, — from art to archeology — the new role of youth and the political struggle of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to use the natural wealth of the country to improve all aspects of life of the Iraqi people.*" (August 9, 1980)

Six weeks later, Hussein and the Ba'athists used the national wealth to plunge the Iraqi people into a bloody war against Iran.

The historical background of the Iran-Iraq War is a territorial rivalry that stretches back for centuries and which was exacerbated by imperialist domination in the aftermath of the break-up of the old Ottoman Empire. Since the 1930's there had been repeated border clashes which were concluded with various imperialist-imposed settlements which merely prepared the seeds for a renewal of the fighting. At the heart of the longstanding border conflict has been sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, the waterway formed by the convergence of the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun rivers as they intersect and flow into the Persian Gulf. Iraqi governments have always insisted their country must have full sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab — as opposed to the 'Thalweg' principle under which the boundary would be fixed at the median point of the waterway — because it is Iraq's only outlet to the sea.

In 1975, the Shah's regime in Iran — with the backing of the United States — won major concessions including the 'Thalweg' principle after coming to the brink of an all-out

war with Iraq. When Saddam Hussein announced on September 17, 1980 that he was abrogating the five-year-old Algiers Agreement he could argue, with some historical justification, that the 1975 agreement had been imposed upon Iraq by imperialism. But in so doing, he was merely echoing the complaint voiced by the Tehran government about every other treaty that 'resolved' the Iraqi-Iranian border dispute.

In any case, whatever the legitimacy of Iraq's claim to sovereignty over Shatt al-Arab, it was clearly only a smokescreen for an attempt to annex a sizeable and valuable chunk of Iranian territory. Within hours of the eruption of all-out war, Iraqi troops had penetrated deep into Iran, far beyond any area traditionally claimed by Iraq.

The timing of the Iraqi invasion was critical in exposing its class character. By attacking Iran in the midst of the 'hostage crisis,' the Ba'athist regime was clearly seeking the backing of US imperialism and the reactionary Saudi and Gulf regimes, all of which had been thrown into paroxysms of fear by the toppling of the Peacock Throne. Hussein was in essence saying, Iraq's military might, which had been built up to counter Israeli aggression, was now "a gun for hire."

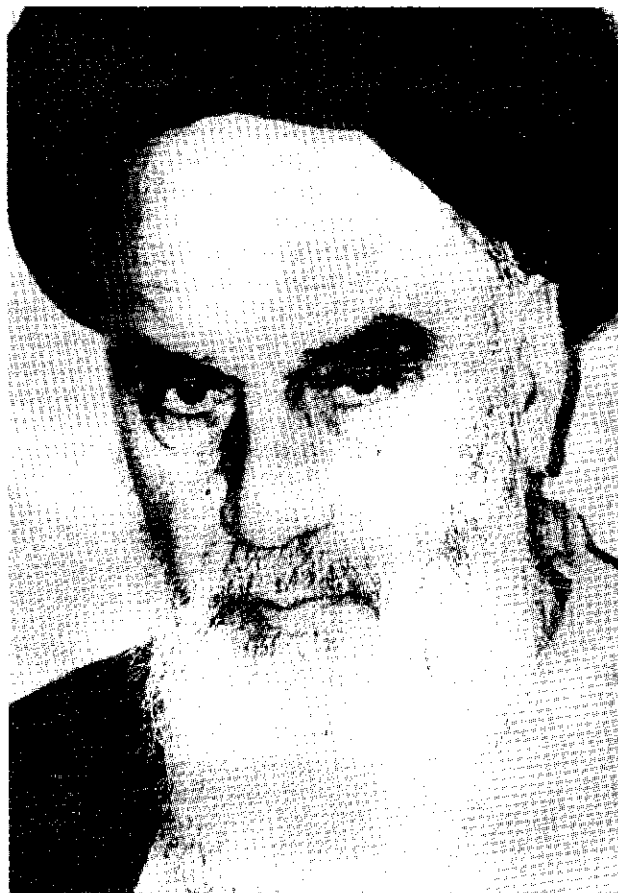
The launching of the war was the continuation, in fact the climax, of a steady swing to the right by the Ba'athists that had been consistently covered up by Healy. From 1975 on, relations with the Shah's regime and the Saudi royal family improved steadily; trade with the US rose sharply; the Iraqi CP was subjected, with the approval of the WRP, to severe repression; and in March 1980 the Ba'athists announced they were forming a united front of groups opposed to South Yemen's pro-Soviet bourgeois national government.

In the wake of the 1978 Camp David accords, the Iraqi Ba'athists asserted that the leadership of the Arab revolution had fallen to their party. But for all their bluster about revolution — assiduously publicized by the *News Line* — when confronted with a real mass and popular uprising in Iran, the Ba'athists feared it and fatally misjudged its power. To the everlasting dismay of Saddam Hussein, who in 1975 had helped orchestrate the pact with the Shah's "omnipotent" regime, Iran in the aftermath of its anti-imperialist revolution was not "ripe for the picking."

The WRP responded to the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980 with a lame attempt to bring its political books up to date with a denunciation of the war and a call for an immediate cease-fire. But it was not possible to turn Marxist analysis on and off like a kitchen faucet and the statement of its Political Committee, dated September 24, 1980, was shot through with contradictions which reflected the treacherous line which the WRP had pursued right up to the outbreak of war.

The analysis of the war and the political conclusions which flowed from it was dominated by the WRP's faith in the historically progressive role of Ba'ath nationalism and its capacity to lead the anti-imperialist struggle. For this reason, it approached the war as if it were an aberration, a temporary diversion from the progressive logic of Ba'athism, rather than as an inevitable expression of the reactionary character of Iraqi bourgeois nationalism, its sinister anti-Persian chauvinism, its ultimate dependence upon imperialism, and its inability to formulate a viable program for the unity of the masses of the Middle East and Asia Minor.

Even as the Ba'athists were carrying out policies which



**Khomeini** — *Iran's Islamic revolution is a bourgeois off*

directly served the interests of US imperialism, the Soviet bureaucracy and Zionism, the Political Committee claimed that "the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party is, in the long run, the real threat to their intrigues and interests in the Middle East. It has demonstrated time and again that it is not subservient to these reactionary forces." (*Documents of the Fifth Annual Congress*, p. 20)

The reference to the Ba'athists as the "real threat" to imperialism "in the long run" proves that the working class in the Middle East, and, for that matter, in all the semi-colonial and backward countries, no longer entered into the political calculations of the Workers Revolutionary Party leadership. This blindness to the existence of the proletariat, let alone its revolutionary role, produced a craven capitulation to the bourgeois regimes and a perspective of complete hopelessness for the national liberation struggles. Thus, rather than calling on the working class to overthrow the Iraqi Ba'athists and assume its rightful place in the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, Healy and Banda crawled on their bellies to the Ba'athists, pleading with Saddam Hussein to end the war lest the PLO would be deprived of a bourgeois regime to sponsor the struggle against Zionism.

This bankrupt dependency on the bourgeois regime was articulated as follows: "As the Iraq-Iran warfare is taking place the real danger is to the Palestinian revolution in South Lebanon. The PLO has suddenly become dangerously beleaguered. Not only has it lost the immediate support of Iraq and Iran, but it cannot hope to rely upon the crisis-ridden Assad regime in Syria nor the two-faced King Hussein

of Jordan. *The Palestinian revolution and its allies in the Lebanese National Movement are threatened to the north by the CIA and Israeli-backed forces of Pierre Gemayal's Falangists and in the South by Major Saad Haddad's fascists and the Israeli army.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 21)

Rather than declaring emphatically that the PLO had been betrayed by the Arab bourgeoisie, the WRP mourned the loss of its patronage and suggested to the Palestinians that there existed no alternative to this political dependency. Far from even hinting at the treacherous role of the Ba'athists, the Political Committee placed responsibility on the crisis confronting the PLO "*squarely on the shoulders of imperialism and the shabby maneuvers of the Soviet bureaucracy*" — as if anything else could be expected from imperialism and Stalinism. Along these lines, the statement referred to the ICFI as a mere "*opponent of these counter-revolutionary forces.*" (*Ibid.*)

This political self-debasement was expressed in another formulation: "*We differ from the national liberation and the national revolutionary movements on the decisive question of the revolutionary party and the building of the World Party of Socialist Revolution.*" (*Ibid.*)

The implication of this statement was that the construction of the revolutionary party and the struggle for world revolution is a **tactical question** which Trotskyists debate with bourgeois nationalists. The very manner in which this issue was presented denied the historical materialist foundation of the policy of the proletarian party. The WRP

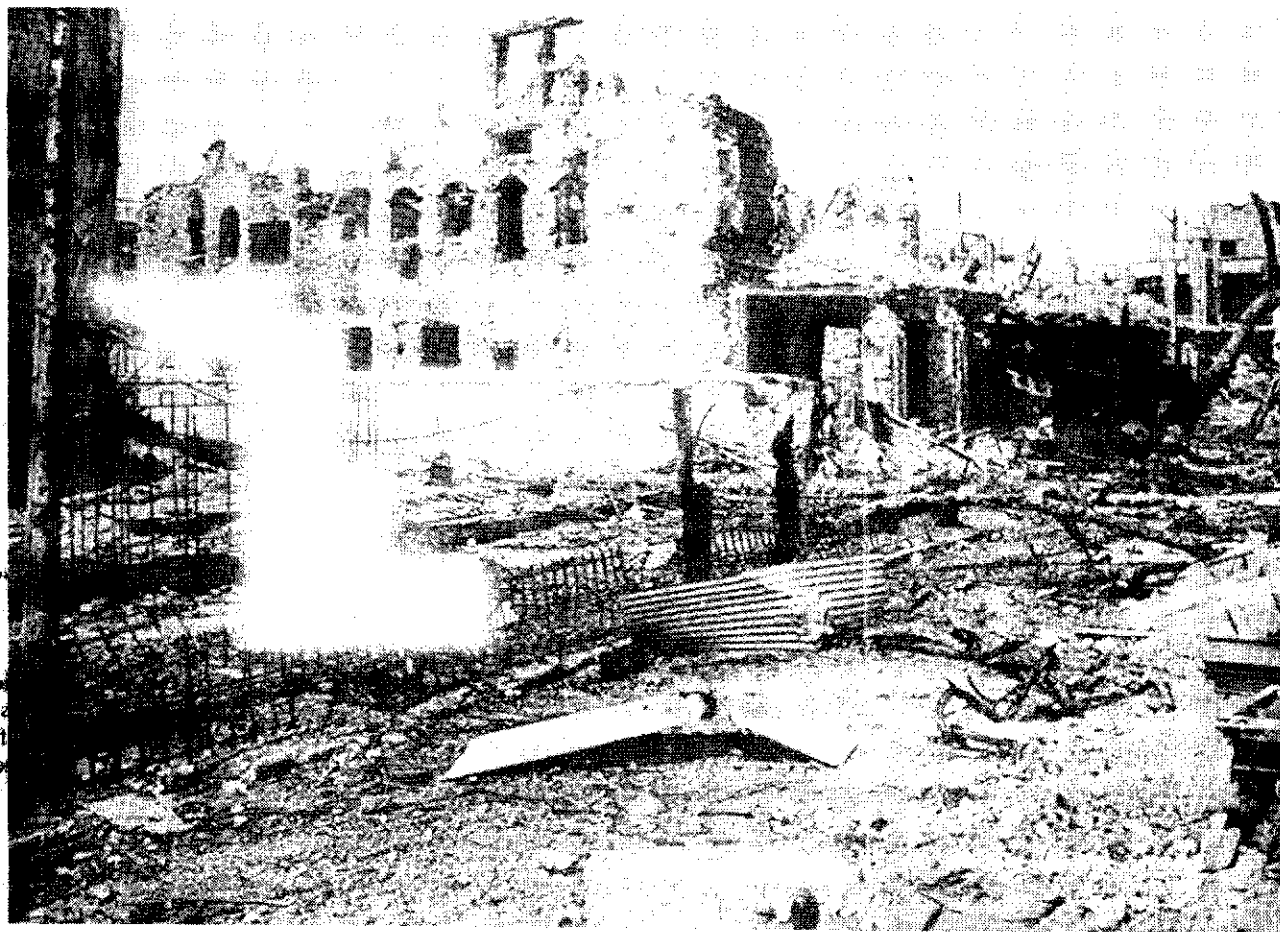
clearly rejected the Marxist view — based on objective reality — that the Ba'athists are the representatives of the class enemy of the proletariat. Instead, in the most extreme Pabliste formulation, the possibility was left open that a political convergence between the Trotskyists and one or another variety of bourgeois nationalism may be eventually realized and, on this basis, a hybrid "World Party of Socialist Revolution" built.

The reference to two political categories, **national liberation and the national revolutionary movements**, was made to establish a rough equality between the political character of the PLO and the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party.

The Political Committee stated in conclusion: "*The political yardstick against which every force is tested in the Middle East is the struggle against Zionist imperialism. The Workers Revolutionary Party can proudly say that its record has been principled, consistent and spotless.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 22) This passage combined a theoretical blunder with an outright lie. The first sentence falsified the Theory of Permanent Revolution; the second violated the limits of human credibility.

Trotsky explicitly rejected the bogus political "yardstick" of the WRP when he wrote: "*One must measure not the attitude of every given national bourgeoisie to imperialism 'in general,' but its attitude to the immediate revolutionary historical tasks of its own nation.*" (*Third International After Lenin*, New Park, p. 132)

Five days after the publication of the Political Committee



The city of Khoramshahr, destroyed in the Iran-Iraq fighting

statement, a supplementary statement, dated September 27, 1980, was issued by the Central Committee. This was no less treacherous and self-contradictory than the previous one. On this occasion, the WRP went as far as to urge the Iraqi masses "to mobilize against the war by arresting the bloody hand of the war instigators and to seek unity with the Iranian masses in confronting the common imperialist enemy." (*Documents*, p. 24)

But the insincerity of this appeal was exposed by the fact that the Central Committee tactfully avoided mentioning the names of the "war instigators." Apparently, the "bloody hand" was not attached to any body! However, Healy and Banda (who authored these statements) did not fail to offer Saddam Hussein some friendly advice: "*The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party has consistently fought against every attempt to make it subservient to imperialism and Stalinism. For that, it has won the support of all revolutionary forces, including the Workers Revolutionary Party. It must understand that its present military offensive and war aims are a break with that policy, cannot be supported, and if persisted in will result in disaster for the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party itself.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 25)

This statement ended not with a call for revolutionary action by the working class against imperialism and its national bourgeois agents, but rather with a pathetic appeal for "a peace conference now of Iraq, Iran, the PLO and all those fighting the imperialists and Zionist enemy!" (*Ibid.*, p. 27) Presumably, this conference would have included a delegation from the WRP, with Healy and Banda serving as attorneys for Saddam Hussein to assist in the drafting of a peace treaty. The reactionary content of this statement is that the political and historical issues which gave rise to the war should be settled, with the help of the WRP, behind the backs of the working class and without the intervention of the masses under their own banners.

At no time did the WRP consult the International Committee as it proceeded to formulate, in friendly competition with the British foreign office, its own foreign policy.

As the war continued into 1981 with thousands killed and maimed, Healy was still attempting to cling to the coat-tails of the Ba'athists. Thus, at the Fifth Congress of the Workers Revolutionary Party in February of that year, a Manifesto which was unanimously adopted declared: "*Our opposition to the war does not diminish our support for the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in Iraq in so far as it continues to uphold its struggle against imperialism and Zionism and support the Palestinian revolution.*" (*News Line*, February 7, 1981)

Healy was not prepared to let the corpses of thousands of workers and peasants in Iran and Iraq come between him and the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. Retreating even from the WRP position of the previous September, Healy no longer held that the continuation of the war was incompatible with the defense of the Palestinian struggle against Zionism.

**Such devious formulations cannot be attributed simply to mistakes of a theoretical nature. They are the work of a man who had directly sold himself and his party to the agencies of bourgeois states and who was working consciously and directly in their behalf. No other conclusion can be drawn from this record.**

In the official statements issued by the Political Committee, Central Committee and Fifth National Congress, the

WRP had sought to balance between the two opposing camps and had failed to specifically recognize the right of the Iranian regime to repel Iraqi aggression. A principled Marxist position would have explicitly stated that Iran was waging a defensive war against an opportunist attack by the Ba'athist regime in collaboration with US imperialism. It would have called upon Iranian workers to take up arms against Iraqi forces while maintaining an attitude of critical vigilance toward the bourgeois Islamic leaders, placing no confidence in their disavowals of aggressive designs against Iraqi territory and rigorously defending its political independence. At the same time it would have demanded that Iran renounce all claims against Shatt al-Arab and that the national rights of all minorities in Iran be respected. Moreover, it would have explained that the political roots of the interminable conflicts between Iranians and Iraqis arise out of the uncompleted democratic revolutions in both countries, the state divisions which hinder economic progress and obstruct the instinctive strivings of the masses of Iran and Iraq for unity. In addition, it would have explained that the sole basis for ending fratricidal conflicts and securing national independence from imperialism is through the unity of the proletariat of Iran and Iraq, the overthrow of capitalism in both countries and the common struggle for the establishment of the United Socialist States of the Middle East. In summation, it would have explained that the only alternative to fratricidal war, economic dependency and imperialist domination is the socialist revolution.

By early 1982 it was clear that the military position of Iraq was growing increasingly precarious. In May the Iranians scored major victories, culminating in the recapture of Khoramshahr. In typical opportunist fashion, without any theoretical explanation, this event was described in a *News Line* editorial, dated May 25, 1982, as "a triumph for the Iranian revolution and its struggling masses." With equally typical shortsightedness, the *News Line* also expressed its full confidence in the intentions of the Iranian bourgeoisie: "*We do not believe Western claims that Iran's next intention is to invade Iraq. If this did come about, we would oppose it as vigorously as we opposed the Iraqi invasion of Iran.*"

These stupid illusions expressed a complete absence of any Marxist analysis of the class nature of the contending forces. Blind to the new dangers in the political situation, the *News Line* went on to declare that Iran's military successes had "strengthened the revolution in the process."

"*This is a sign of the political development of the revolutionary masses, not only in Iran but throughout the world and the British working class should take note.*"

The Islamic Republic did not take notice of the *News Line* editorialists and pressed ahead with its attack against Iraq. In placing intolerable political and economic demands upon its people, the Khomeini regime exposed the fact that Islamic fundamentalism was nothing more than a messianic guise for the traditional expansionist aims of a capitalist Greater Persia, occupying the role of strongman in the Gulf. At this point the conflict ceased to be a defensive war on the part of the Khomeini regime and it called for a sharp change in the policy of Marxists, who would now be obliged to adopt a defeatist position in relation to the war.

However, the *News Line*, anxious not to offend the rising power in the Gulf and increasingly doubtful about the value of its ties with Iraq, issued only a mild rebuke using, as usual,



**Iranian soldiers killed in their foxholes**

the Palestinians as a cover for Healy's political skullduggery: *"The Iranian invasion of Iraq is a disservice to the besieged Palestinian and Lebanese fighters in Beirut and to the Iranian revolution itself, and must be denounced."* (July 16, 1982)

With the financial resources of the Iraqi regime bankrupted by the war, Healy decided that his alliance with Saddam Hussein was no longer of any use. The time had come to shift to the more promising bourgeois camp. But there were two major obstacles blocking Healy's path — the prior opposition to the Iranian invasion and the initial analysis made by the International Committee three years earlier of the

class nature and perspectives of the Iranian Revolution. In a statement dated February 12, 1979, the International Committee of the Fourth International laid bare the class nature of the Khomeini leadership and warned that no confidence should be placed in the Islamic clergy.

While acknowledging Khomeini's paramount role in the events leading up to the downfall of the Shah, the ICFI rejected any concession to his religious ideology and political program:

*"The truth is that the masses are moved by class questions, not religious ones."*





Savas Michael

*"However, in the absence of an organized revolutionary leadership and because of the cowardly class collaborationist policies of Iranian Stalinism in the Tudeh Party, Ayatollah Khomeini and other religious leaders of the Shi'ite sect have been able to establish a virtual political monopoly on the opposition forces.*

*"Millions of Iranians today follow Khomeini not because they desire the reactionary Utopia of an 'Islamic state' but because the Ayatollah symbolizes uncompromising opposition to the Pahlavi Dynasty and its autocratic rule.*

*"Khomeini's own political doctrine is vague, contradictory and ambiguous.*

*"It combines progress and reaction. Sharia law and the Constituent Assembly, oppression of women and personal liberty.*

*"The policies of Khomeini reflect the contradictory and equivocal nature of the bazaar merchants and other elements of the Iranian native capitalist class and petty bourgeoisie.*

*"These sections of Iranian society balance precariously between imperialism, the oil monopolies and the banks, on one side, and the Iranian masses on the other.*

*"Their semi-colonial position forces them to oppose US and British imperialism.*

*"But they cannot and will not challenge capitalist state power in Iran...*

*"Now it is the fundamental questions of the socialist revolution which predominate.*

*"It is the conscious mastery of these questions and the revolutionary practice dictated by a scientific grasp of the objective situation, that will decide the issue.*

*"What are these basic principles, established in over a century of revolutionary experience?"*

*"The working class is the only revolutionary class in modern society. The revolution against imperialism is a world revolution, to which the revolution in each nation is subordinate..."*

*"The capitalist state cannot be taken over and adapted to socialist purposes: its bodies of armed men must be smashed, broken up, dispersed.*

*"The people must be armed and mobilized behind a Marxist revolutionary party." (News Line, February 17, 1979, pp. 7-10)*

The statement concluded with the elaboration of a revolutionary socialist program and the call for the construction of an Iranian section of the ICFI.

## 26. A Mission for S. Michael

In order to justify a completely opportunist political shift toward full support for an Iranian victory, Healy had to attack the analysis made by the ICFI and replace it with a bogus assessment of the class nature of the Khomeini regime. This plan was secretly worked out, without any discussion within the International Committee, between Healy and his personal agent in Athens, Savas Michael, the hand-picked general secretary of the former Workers Internationalist League (renamed Greek Workers Revolutionary Party in November 1985 after this organization split from the ICFI).

S. Michael agreed to go to Iran and produce for Healy's use an anti-Marxist travelogue which, based on his subjective impressions and revisionist sociology, would prove that the Islamic Republic was being transformed into a socialist republic of the "masses." Just as Healy had been unconcerned about the persecution of members of the Iraqi CP, S. Michael was not troubled by the fact that his trip to Iran coincided with the ferocious repression of every left-wing tendency in the country. In fact, the high-point of his trip was an appearance on Iranian television, which amounted to a public act of solidarity with the regime's suppression. Not since the Sri Lankan LSSP renegade Colvin R. Da Silva appeared on Soviet television in 1958 to sanction the repressions carried out by the bureaucracy in Hungary had such a shameful act of class treachery been carried out by a man claiming to be a Trotskyist. This action undermined the credibility of the Fourth International in the eyes of countless Iranian workers.

The articles produced by Michael, published in the *News Line* in February and March of 1983, were a travesty of political journalism, rivalling only Mitchell for the crassness of its impressionism and theoretical ignorance.

He dismissed all allegations of state repression by referring to his tourist observations: *"For a person coming from the West, especially from a country like Greece that has gone through decades under the police state of the right wing and through dictatorship, one fact is striking: nowhere can one see a policeman.*

*"Nor is an armored car anywhere to be seen as was usual in Pahlavi's time or as still is usual in the various police-military regimes across the five continents." (February 24, 1983)*

This, presumably, meant that the liquidation of the





**The Iranian Revolution shattered Shah's regime**

capitalist state was already achieved. This deep political insight was further confirmed by yet another striking observation: *"Revolutionary Iran is a country undoubtedly ruled by the youth. With a military jacket on top of their humble civilian clothes, a submachine gun hanging from the shoulder, with burning revolutionary devotion, these young children of the people, the vanguard of the people, direct, safeguard, mobilize, and sacrifice themselves."*

To demonstrate the non-bourgeois nature of the state, which he characterized as "the rule of the deprived," Michael argued that the Iranian regime was the most popular in the world, enjoying virtually unanimous support. He based this on a wildly subjective conception of state power:

*"If we consider the degree of popular support as a basic criterion for estimating the degree of political stability of a regime then, undoubtedly, the Islamic regime of Tehran must be considered as extremely stable. Between the masses and their leadership, especially Imam Khomeini, there are mighty bonds forged in the furnace of the revolution."*

To deduce the political stability of a given regime from an abstraction called popular support — rather than a scientific analysis of the interrelationships between class forces — is nothing but idealist tom-foolery. However, there was an element of truth in Michael's claim — but on an entirely different level. Comprehended in the political terms of Marxism, the popular support for the Khomeini regime reflects the illusions of the masses, which is hardly a firm political foundation.

The depth of his charlatanry was summed up in the following renunciation of Marxism: *"In the forging of these very deep bonds, an immense role was and is played by the influence of Islam upon the masses."* Thus in Iran, presumably, there was no longer any need for the struggle of Marxists against religious obscurantism.

### **The Permanent Revolution Betrayed**

In analyzing the nature of the Iranian developments, S. Michael proved, by quoting a conversation with an Iranian student, that the theory of Permanent Revolution is derived from the Koran: *"The incessant revolution is a fundamental Islamic principle."* Healy's agent then chronicled the evolution of the five revolutions that had occurred between 1979 and 1982: first, the overthrow of Bakhtiar; second, the takeover of the US Embassy; third, the defeat of Bani-Sadr; fourth, the cultural revolution; and, finally, the fifth revolution which *"as Imam Khomeini said, aims at establishing social justice. It is the social revolution."*

*"Whoever fails to see the social dimension of the Islamic Revolution in Iran will never understand its depth."* (News Line, February 28, 1983)

In describing the social revolution, Michael remained tactfully vague on the state of property relations and profits: *"The private sector still includes small and medium scale enterprises, the bazaar, various services as well as agriculture, after the agrarian reform."* Translating these details into the language of Marxism, it is obvious that private property is thriving, commodity production predominates in the countryside, and internal trade flourishes under the auspices of bazaar merchants.

This can only mean that the class struggle is raging beneath the surface of Iranian society — a fact which Michael then attempted to gloss over with the following remark: *"The social contradictions, of course, have not been eliminated. But the revolution is orientated towards grappling with them in a radical way through the mobilization of the masses."*

Finally, in the third article, entitled **"War and Revolution,"** Michael got down to business and carried out his main mission — justifying the invasion of Iraq and the expansionist war aims of the Iranian bourgeoisie. Noting that

battles were now being waged on Iraqi soil, Michael reported that he "discussed with various Iranians the advisability of continuing the war."

He quoted at length the self-serving rationalizations of the supporters of the regime — one of whom states that the conclusion of the war may be followed by social unrest that Iraq would attempt to exploit — and then declared his own emphatic support for the continuation of the Iranian invasion.

In a complete departure from Marxism, Savas Michael made the progress of the world revolution dependent on the military successes of the Iranian bourgeoisie:

*"A military crushing of the Baghdad regime would destabilize everything in the regime [region?]. The Hashemite monarchy in Jordan would in all probability be the first victim, according to Iranian estimations. The other reactionary regimes will follow suit. The Palestinian question, undoubtedly, will be placed on a new basis."*

This last opinion, it should be noted, was definitely not shared by the PLO, which has repeatedly declared that the continuation of the war has been an unmitigated disaster for the Palestinian masses.

Since this analysis was published, close to a half-million Iranians and Iraqis have been slaughtered, the economic development of both countries has been set back by decades, and immense obstacles have been placed in the path of creating fraternal ties between their suffering proletariat. Only the socialist revolution will lead the masses out of the bloody quagmire into which they have been led by the Iranian and Iraqi bourgeoisie.

The results of Michael's cheap journalistic adventure provided Healy with the necessary cover for his complete repudiation of the ICFI statement of February 12, 1979. By the autumn of 1983 the WRP was ready to announce a complete shift in its political line. Using the decision of the French government to supply the Iraqis with Exocet missiles as a flimsy pretext, the *News Line* of October 10, 1983 issued a call for the military victory of Iran and denounced the Iraqi regime in the following terms: *"The Iraqi regime has been militarily defeated and comprehensively exposed as a tool of imperialism. It must be overthrown by the Iraqi masses without delay. Its continued existence is giving imperialism a military base and a pretext for their war plans."*

With this statement, the Healy leadership of the WRP had truly completed its passage into the camp of the counter-revolution. It had reached the point at which it was prepared to violate the most basic principle of Marxism and subordinate the proletariat to the predatory war aims of a bourgeois state.

## **27. The Malvinas War: How Healy Worked as an Imperialist Stooge**

The outbreak of war between Britain and Argentina over the Malvinas islands in April 1982 exposed the political putrefaction of the central leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party. Above all, it revealed that Healy, utterly corrupted by his prostitution of principles over the previous decade, now stood on the extreme right wing of the WRP, and well to the right of most Pabloite groups and even of sections of the Labour and Communist parties. After years of masquerading as a defender of national liberation

movements, while functioning in reality as a petty agent and paid propagandist within the British labor movement of the colonial bourgeoisie, Healy proved incapable of conducting a principled struggle in defense of an oppressed nation confronting the onslaught of British imperialism.

The initial reaction of the WRP was politically confused, as Healy advanced the line that the war between Britain and Argentina was an inter-imperialist conflict. An editorial which appeared in the April 3, 1982 issue presented Healy's potted theory of the origins of the war:

*"Argentina is one of the Reagan administration's client states in Latin America, and it is significant that Washington's protests have been purely formal."*

*"US imperialism wants to grab control of the Falklands for two basic reasons. Firstly, beneath the Atlantic waters around the islands are rich oil reserves — possibly ten times the amount of oil in the North Sea. Secondly, the Pentagon is anxious to establish a communications base in the region to monitor the movement of shipping around Cape Horn."*

This editorial concentrated on the crimes of the junta, and the reference to Britain came only in the second half of the statement. There was no reference to the historical right of Argentina to the Malvinas, which, parenthetically, the *News Line* continued for some time to refer to as "Falklands." Significantly, the same issue carried a lead story on page two which was provocatively headlined, **"Argentina Invades Falklands."**

The party line set down by Healy was summarized in the headline of the issue of April 5, 1982, which read, **"This is Not Our War."** It claimed that *"The working class in Britain and Argentina have absolutely no interest in this war, which serves the interests only of the big oil monopolies, the arms manufacturers and the armed services chiefs."*

The next day, beneath a headline which read **"The Main Enemy is at Home for British and Argentinian Workers,"** there was an indication of differences within the Party leadership. While the *News Line* lead hinted at the need for a General Election, the front page also carried an advertisement for an April 8th public meeting on the war, in which the following words appeared:

**"Falkland Islands — This is not our war! — Benn and the opportunism of the Labour leaders."**

Throughout the Party and even on the editorial board, there was an instinctive demand for a campaign against Thatcher. But Healy's office was opposed to this and ordered a public meeting to disassociate the WRP from any campaign against the government, with the public announcement centering its fire on the only parliamentary figure who had explicitly called for a General Election.

The *News Line* carried no report on the speeches given at the April 8th meeting, but did quote a resolution that had been carried overwhelmingly. It concluded with a call for a General Election.

This call for a campaign against Thatcher infuriated Healy and forced his hand. He drafted a political letter, dated April 10, 1982, *"to each member and cadre of the WRP,"* which was clearly a right-wing attack specifically aimed at silencing those in the Party who were, at the very least, critically supporting Benn's call for the bringing down of the Tory government. It can be safely said that never in the entire history of the Fourth International had the prin-



**British aircraft carrier in the Malvinas War**

... principal leader of any national section resorted to such vulgar sophistries to justify capitulation to an imperialist government and to oppose the right of a semi-colonial country to defend itself against imperialist attack.

The letter began by fabricating a politically-fictitious scenario to misrepresent the essential class issues at stake in the war:

*"1. The inter-imperialist crisis over the future of the oil deposits in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands (!!) is a further powerful testimony of the break-up of the economic and political relations within the camp of world imperialism.*

*"Secretly (!), US imperialism supports Argentina, while professing friendship toward Britain. In reality, the driving force behind the hypocrisy of this two-faced relationship is the world-wide decline of US imperialism itself."*

This bizarre theory of the origins of the conflict, contradicted by the indispensable role played by the United States in supplying and protecting the British fleet as it sailed into the South Atlantic, served as the basis for defining the war as an "inter-imperialist crisis." This false characterization became the basis for denying political support to the Argentine masses in their struggle against British imperialism. The letter continued:

*"For Britain, driven to desperation about the future of its enormous investment in the North Sea, in the face of the world slump in oil prices, the consequences are catastrophic. If its phased-out Navy strives to resurrect the spirit of Pirate Drake, it has nothing to do with the future of the 1,800 semi-feudal old-style Englanders who inhabit the islands. Oil is the basic issue, especially if it can be produced more cheaply than in the North Sea, thus assisting the partial recovery of at*

*least some of the burdens of excessive capital expenditure. So the Naval and nuclear juggernauts 'fly the flag' in a military adventure which they cannot win"* (Emphasis in the original).

Healy knew even less about geography than he did about the Leninist principle of self-determination. He offered no economic analysis to substantiate his claim that "Oil is the basic issue" nor did he explain how deposits at the bottom of the South Atlantic, 8,000 miles from Britain, could be extracted more cheaply than oil in the North Sea. Moreover, Healy did not attempt to reconcile the contradiction bet-



The 'News Line' headline "This Is Not Our War" revealed Healy's capitulation to British imperialism

ween his claim that oil "in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands" will solve the problems of "excessive capital expenditure" in the North Sea and the reality of the billions of pounds sterling being spent by the British government to sail the fleet into the South Atlantic. This would all be comical were it not so politically disgusting.

The abysmal level of Healy's political reasoning was also exposed in his categorical assertion that Britain "cannot win." The prediction was not only wrong; it exposed the unseriousness with which he approached the political tasks of the WRP. If he really anticipated an imminent military catastrophe for British imperialism, two fundamental conclusions would have been immediately drawn by any Marxist. The first, was that the destruction of the British fleet in Argentina and a corresponding loss of thousands of lives would produce the immediate collapse of the Tory government and create, almost overnight, an intensely revolutionary situation. The second, flowing from the first, was that the WRP must work might and main for such a military defeat and prepare the party for the probable consequences. Healy neither drew the first conclusion nor worked on the basis of the second.

The letter was loaded down with banal non-sequiturs that could be mistaken for senile ramblings. The crisis of bourgeois rule was depicted as a problem of "indecisive capitalist statesmen and great scandals. From the patriarch Macmillan ('you've never had it so good' Supermac) to Profumo. From Sir Harold and 'slagheap speculation', to 'I'm a Tory now' Marcia. From the 'New Horizon' Kennedys to the disaster of the Bay of Pigs. From Nixon to Watergate. From Reagan to who knows what? etc., etc."

He finally arrived at the class nature of the war, and proceeded to quote a section from Volume 21 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, dealing with the attitude of socialists toward war; and then immediately proved that he did not understand what he had quoted:

*"These Leninist principles are as basic to the Falkland Islands today as they were when he wrote them in 1915. We are dealing with our attitude towards imperialist war, as it is a conflict in reality between British imperial interests and those of the Argentine Junta acting as a front for the United States, in which 'War is the continuation of politics by other (i.e. by violent) means'."*

The Lenin quotation had stressed that Marxists "deem it necessary to study each war historically (from the standpoint of Marx's dialectical materialism) and separately." As this was completely contrary to the subjectivism of Healy — who denied the existence of any historical content within dialectical categories and who believed that the memorization of the names and sequences of the logical concepts, jotted down in the course of a confused reading of Hegel, could be used to justify his arbitrary impressions and supply the desired answer to any political problem — he refused to apply this correct logical-historical method to the study of the Malvinas War. The first casualties of his ignorant disdain for Marxism were the fundamental political categories of **oppressed and oppressor nations** — without whose proper use it is impossible to define any war in the imperialist epoch.

Incapable of distinguishing between imperialist Britain and Argentina, Healy essentially reproduced the petty-bourgeois position of Shachtman, who in the 1940's characterized all wars, even the struggle of China against the

Japanese occupation, as inter imperialist conflicts. Like Shachtman, Healy concluded that it was impossible to base the party's position on "an abstract characterization of the class character of the state involved in the war," but rather proceeded from a supposedly concrete examination of the "realities of living events" — in this case, a dispute over oil with Argentina fronting for US imperialism.

Thus, Healy declared in words which should be branded on his backside: "It is not (emphasis in the original) at all a question that historically the islands belong to Argentina as that cowardly organ of revisionism Socialist Worker implies..." He also objected to the following statement which appeared in the newspaper of the British Pabloites, who declared that the British imperialists "have no right to the territory against the rights of the Argentinians."

Healy then visited his wrath against the centrist MP Tony Benn who had the temerity to respond to the Malvinas War with a call for the bringing down of the Tory government — which was, under the circumstances, to the left of Healy's cowardly position. The WRP's "theoretician" gave a dazzling display of his "practice of cognition" by producing a series of sophistries aimed at justifying his dastardly opposition to Benn's correct demand.

*"Benn can call for bringing Thatcher down, knowing full well that the chauvinism not only within the right-wing Labourites but the so-called 'left' as well will ensure that the Tories will have a parliamentary majority and are immediately in no fear of their government being brought down."*

While Benn at least was prepared to fight the chauvinism within the Labour Party and oppose the imperialist war openly, Healy, a political coward who was thoroughly intimidated by the dispatching of the British fleet, wrote off the possibility of any struggle against Thatcher.

Within this context, Healy's denunciation of Benn for "parliamentary opportunism" was sheer duplicity. In practice, he was defending the Tory government.

Healy then summarized his political conclusions:

*"a) The source of the crisis is the continued break-up of the economic and political base of world imperialism.*

*"b) For the workers in Britain and Argentina who have no country, the main enemy is at home. The war is not our war. It has arisen out of the totally REACTIONARY NATURE OF IMPERIALISM.*

*"c) The workers of Britain and Argentina must work for the defeat of their own ruling class. The ruling class who today intensify their campaigns to justify their war, will just as easily turn their guns on the working class in Britain as they have done in Argentina over many years past."*

*"d) The working class in Britain and Argentina, as Lenin explained, must actively prepare the defeat of their own ruling class by developing the struggle to turn imperialist war into civil war and thus take advantage of the growing weaknesses of the imperialist ruling class."*

Having already defined the war incorrectly as an inter-imperialist conflict and having refused to give even critical support to Benn's call for the bringing down of the Tory government, Healy's reference to civil war was utterly hollow and hypocritical. Behind Healy's vague and eclectic formulations lay a calculated opposition to any policy, slogan or practical activities that would bring the WRP into conflict

with the capitalist state and disrupt the imperialist war. Thus, the letter did not put forward a single concrete proposal for action within the British labor movement. In this internal letter to the party cadre, in the midst of a war crisis, there was not to be found a single political slogan or a proposed tactical initiative.

Rather, Healy concluded his letter by instructing the members to fulfill petty organizational quotas set by the Party apparatchiks to meet the financial requirements of their London bureaucracy:

*"a) We need an increase of 1,800 News Line sales each and every day from Monday April 19th, 1982.*

*"We need that vital £20,000 towards the Youth Training Fund by the same date Monday April 19th.*

*"These are two essential and vital practices directly connected to the revolutionary struggle against imperialist war over the Falkland Islands. Without such practices we can use all the 'left words' we like and do nothing more than disappear into the swamp of revisionism and reformist Labourism.*

*"Here we have the test of tests... We await with some anxiety your most revolutionary and practical answers by April 19th."*

These paragraphs represented the most consummate and, in this case, politically sinister, opportunism: he attacked the call for a General Election and the bringing down of the Tories with disparaging sarcasm — "we can use all the left words we like" — and made the continued inflow of money into the center "the test of all tests." These are the words of a man who had become utterly insensitive to the needs of the class struggle and the historical responsibilities of the Party he represented. Healy awaited "with some anxiety"



Gallieri

The Permanent Revolution Betrayed

not the reports from the field on the sentiments of the working class and the labor movement's response to the party line but "an increase of 1,800 News Line sales" and "that vital £20,000." His response to the war was not that of a Bolshevik nor even that of a left-centrist, but of a cowardly petty-bourgeois reformist careerist whose only concern was to defend the party coffers.

This time Healy had gone too far for even Michael Banda, who found it impossible to close his eyes to Healy's shameless defense of British imperialism. With Healy's letter already printed and on its way to Party branches, Banda issued a protest and demanded an immediate change in policy, along the line of the resolution that had been passed at the April 8th meeting. Seeking to head off a political scandal, Banda convinced Healy to recall his political letter and those which had gone out were collected and returned to the center. Banda then supervised a cut-and-paste redrafting of the Political Letter, dropping all attacks on the revisionists and Tony Benn and adding one crucial paragraph following the reference to Lenin:

*"There is one vital historical difference. The Argentine resistance to British imperialist interests invokes a powerful element of the National Liberation struggle, since the islands belong historically speaking to Argentina and the country has every right to have them returned. Hence the spontaneous mobilization of the masses demanding they should be returned."*

This political shift was gradually worked into the policy of the News Line. On April 13, 1982 the News Line finally denounced "The Thatcher government's imperialist war against Argentina" and by the next day the WRP included in its front page May Day advertisement two new slogans: "Down with Thatcher's imperialist war over the Falklands!" and "Mobilize the working class to bring down the Tory government!"

Three and a half years later, in the midst of the explosion that followed the exposure of Healy's depraved abuse of female cadre, Banda glorified his own role in opposing Healy's line on the Malvinas war. But as the facts show, his "struggle" against Healy was conducted in an utterly unprincipled manner, behind the backs of the Party membership and the International Committee.

At issue was not merely an episodic error in political analysis. Healy's Political Letter was consciously directed against a section of the labor movement and those within the WRP who called for action against the Tories. In other words, Healy's real starting point was not an incorrect evaluation of Argentina's claim to the Malvinas but an adaptation to the British imperialist establishment. His definition of the war as an inter-imperialist conflict was derived from his opposition to any mobilization of the working class in defense of Argentina.

Under these conditions, the failure of Banda — and, we might add, Cliff Slaughter — to challenge Healy openly in front of the entire Party and the International Committee — was of a far greater political significance than the hasty and face-saving correction. No political explanation was offered to the membership about the circumstances surrounding the change in line. The first commandment of Bolshevism, to expose the right wing within the party, was violated. Later in 1982, when a member of the WRP Central Committee wrote to Banda and complained about the political cover-up, he

was summarily expelled. All this amounted to a conscious cover-up of Healy's role within the leadership as a political lackey of British imperialism. Banda, in effect, left the time-bomb ticking inside the WRP and the International Committee of the Fourth International. He knew, as did Slaughter and all those privy to the events of early April 1982, that Healy was politically unfit to continue inside the leadership of the Trotskyist movement.

In articles which appeared in the *News Line* during the war, scathing denunciations were made of various right-wing tendencies within the labor movement whose positions were similar or identical to Healy's. In the issue of May 28, 1982, in response to a reader who confessed disgust with the pro-imperialist policies of the Labour Party leadership and who asked for an explanation of their role, the *News Line* replied:

*"The first and most important point to grasp is that Foot and his henchmen are not 'bad' individuals who have committed a 'mistake' and that our task is to try to correct them."*

In another question about the war policy of the "Militant" group, which in no way differed from that of Healy, the *News Line* replied in its June 12, 1982 issue:

*"The 'Militant' tendency is a group of renegade fake 'Trotskyists' who provide a cover for the right-wing in the Labour Party. Masquerading as Marxists, the role of 'Militant' is to try and block those moving towards serious revolutionary politics...In reality, they are abject reformists, adherents of the parliamentary road to socialism, and close collaborators with the bureaucracy against left-wing members of the Labour Party."*

*"Thus the call for a 'class stand' against the war is merely a smokescreen behind which 'Militant', in fact, line up with the Labour right wing (as Healy did against Benn) and British and American imperialism in the reactionary imperialist war against Argentina."*

In the August 1982 edition of *Labour Review*, Slaughter wrote a merciless analysis of the political line of "Militant" leader, Ted Grant. He used such phrases as "farrago of nonsense," "sentimental drivel," and "hopeless confusion" to characterize Grant's "Healyite" equation of Argentina and Britain, warning that "he strives to 'bend' Marxism to fit his opportunism and betrayal." He mocked Grant for denying what "every man and woman all over the world fighting against imperialism has understood..." and he concluded that "This treachery, masquerading as Marxism, must be exposed in every way possible." (pp. 11-15) But this rule did not apply to the central leader of the WRP.

There is still another side to this lugubrious tale. In the course of correcting Healy's grotesque right-wing line, Banda introduced a few opportunist novelties of his own. In a reply to a reader who asked what position the WRP would adopt toward the Argentine junta if it worked in that country, the response which appeared in the daily "Questions & Answers" column, for which Banda was politically-responsible, explained:

*"A section of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Argentina would unconditionally support the Argentine bourgeoisie against British imperialism..."*

*"A Marxist party in Argentina must therefore form a united front with the bourgeois military junta in the fight against the predatory war of British and US imperialism."*

*This must not involve any concession of the political independence of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard."* (June 1, 1982)

This was a miserable caricature of Trotsky's position: to speak of unconditional support to the Argentine bourgeoisie precludes genuine political independence of the working class; to offer the junta a "united front" was to abandon the political vocabulary of Marxism and to betray the working class.

In its leadership of the democratic struggle for national self-determination, the Argentine working class defends neither the bourgeoisie nor its functionaries in the military. As Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program*, "In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the USSR. On the contrary, it maintains full political independence from the one as from the other. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies and in the USSR, strengthens there the authority and influence of the Fourth International, and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country, the reactionary bureaucracy in the USSR." (New Park, p. 36)

In the concrete conditions under which the Malvinas war arose, it was doubly treacherous to follow the policies suggested by Banda, which would have placed the would-be Trotskyists of Argentina in a "united front" not only with the junta but also with every rabid petty-bourgeois chauvinist in the country, including those who moon-lighted for Galtieri in his death squads.

The war was launched by the junta as a desperate diversion to forestall its imminent collapse. It then proceeded to conduct the war in a manner which guaranteed the maximum suffering for Argentine working class and peasant soldiers and the ultimate victory of British imperialism. In this situation, Trotskyists would have utilized the war to hasten the revolutionary overthrow of Galtieri and directed its agitation in pursuit of that goal. While not rejecting whenever necessary coordinated action with the government, insofar as our Party is not yet able to overthrow it, under no conditions would we explain such actions in terms that lent the slightest credibility to the regime or placed upon our Party responsibility for the junta's actions. At all times we would expose the treacherous nature of the bourgeoisie, the incompetence and depravity of its officers, and demand the arming of the workers and the formation of their own militias. At the same time, we would put before the masses our program for a workers' and farmers' government and the liquidation of Argentine capitalism through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The WRP's whirlwind romance with the Argentine junta was the most quixotic product of Banda's elevation of armed struggle to the level of a strategy. This established a false criteria which enabled the WRP to hold open the prospect that a military conflict could transform a gang of jackbooted hirelings into intransigent opponents of imperialism and potential liberators of the working class. In its issue of June 17, 1982, the *News Line* defended its previous claim that Britain could never retake the Malvinas Islands by accepting the claims of the Argentine junta at face value and projec-

ting a protracted war. This article, written under the supervision of Banda, respectfully quoted the fatuous claims of "President" Leopoldo Galtieri, "Foreign Minister" Costa Mendez, and "Defense Minister" Amadeo Frugoli and claimed that *"These are sentiments which are widely shared throughout Latin America"* — as if there existed any real identity between these discredited tyrants, who were soon to be arrested and dispatched to prison camps, and the genuine anti-imperialist views of the masses.

The article then interpreted the Malvinas War as the starting point of *"a profound awakening of the national question"* and made no reference whatsoever to the Latin American proletariat and the class struggle. Full confidence was placed on the junta, and the *News Line*, accepting the empty boasts of the discredited generals, predicted that the war would go on. While Galtieri was hiding in the Presidential palace and mass demonstrations of workers were demanding his head, the *News Line* offered a shameless apology for the junta:

*"Whatever temporary settlement is reached today, the supply lines and the British positions on the islands themselves remain prime targets in the future for the Argentine armed forces."* Had any Argentine "Trotskyist" attempted to assuage the anger of the masses with this sophistry, he would have rightly been strung up on a lamp-post in the Plaza del Mayo.

An even more incredible statement followed: *"A protracted war under these conditions will be a running sore that will turn the Malvinas into Thatcher's Vietnam, a war which she can no more win than the United States win (sic) in South-east Asia."*

This prediction proves that the WRP had not an ounce of confidence in the British working class and its revolutionary role. The junta now became the gravedigger of British imperialism, just as the Iranian military was soon to be proclaimed the executor of revolutionary tasks in the Middle East. It confirmed, moreover, that the so-called "correction" in April had been merely a political cosmetics job which did nothing to restore a proletarian class line in the WRP.

In a number of articles, Banda and the *News Line* attempted to give an orthodox cover for their attitude to the Argentine junta by references to Chiang Kai-shek's struggle against Japan in the 1930's. This was an utterly mechanical and invalid comparison. To equate the life-and-death struggle of the Chinese people — striving to secure for the first time their right to national existence, against the imperialist invaders who occupied their country — with the diversionary war launched by the discredited junta in 1982 is a mockery of dialectical concreteness. The very fact that the Argentine Pabloites uncritically adapted themselves to the worst chauvinist elements played into the hands of the more astute bourgeois radicals, such as Alfonsín, who maintained their distance from the junta.

To sum up, the tasks of Trotskyists in Britain was to unconditionally defend the right of Argentina to self-determination and work at all times for the defeat of the British government and its military forces. In Argentina, Trotskyists had to defend national self-determination with their own, proletarian, methods, upholding at all times the political independence of the working class and the banner of revolutionary internationalism.

The inability of the WRP to conduct from the start of the war a principled policy in Britain or elaborate a revolutionary strategy for Argentine workers was bound up with the fact that Healy and Banda repudiated the Marxist conception of the capitalist state, endowed it with a liberating role, and attempted to make use of it, in one form or another, as an instrument of Party policy and the class struggle.

## 28. How Healy "Defended" the PLO

This rejection of revolutionary Marxism at the most fundamental level found its most egregious expression in a campaign launched in November 1979, entitled "Thatcher Must Talk to the PLO!" Thousands of petitions were distributed to party members who were obliged to circulate them throughout the workers' movement. For several months this campaign was publicized in the *News Line*. A number of things should be said about this campaign.

First, it exposed the opportunist character of the WRP's relations with the PLO. What was initially depicted as a revolutionary alliance between the Palestinian masses and the proletariat of an advanced capitalist country was, in fact, a marriage of convenience in which the WRP agreed to serve as a middle man between the PLO and the British government, using the WRP's influence in the workers' movement to exert pressure on the Thatcher government. Second, it showed that Healy, in personally conducting the work in the Middle East, acted not as a spokesman of the revolutionary proletariat in Britain but as a "man of influence" and useful client. Rather than warning the PLO leaders of the dangers and futility of an orientation to the British bourgeoisie, Healy placed his party at the service of their illusions. In the process, he fortified the confusion of the PLO and disoriented the WRP cadre and a section of the working class.

On November 9, 1979, the WRP Political Committee published a statement which was reprinted as a leaflet for mass distribution. It stated: *"The government must open negotiations with the PLO to secure a just settlement for the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state in their homeland."*

To involve the WRP in a political campaign along these lines amounted to a complete betrayal of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. What "just settlement" could be achieved under British imperialism? What Healy actually had in mind is indicated in the phrase *"an independent state in their homeland."* In imperialist diplomacy as well as in revolutionary politics every word counts — and the political content of this formulation is what is known throughout the world as United Nations Resolution 336. This language implied a political settlement with Zionism, in which the historic partition of Palestine is accepted, the Palestinians are denied the right to return to and enjoy sovereignty in all parts of their homeland, and are restricted to a ghetto-state under the guns of imperialism.

The statement went on to agree with Arafat's claim that Britain *"has a great moral and historical responsibility...to make good her past mistakes."* The WRP statement then catalogued the crimes of British imperialism since the Sykes-Picot treaty of 1915 — while suggesting that this foul



record could be corrected on the basis of appealing to Thatcher's conscience and urging her to talk to Arafat.

Speaking as class collaborationists who are attempting to strike a bargain, the WRP Political Committee said the following: "It is now a stark reality that there can be no peace in the Middle East without Palestine, and there is no Palestine without the PLO. Today the PLO is recognized by more countries in the world than Israel. It is recognized by the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity, and the Non-Aligned Movement."

Presumably the WRP Political Committee wanted to join this company and reassure everyone that it now believed that "peace" could be achieved through negotiations with imperialists.

This entire campaign carried with it the most reactionary connotations. In serving as the emissary of the foreign policy of the Palestinian nationalists, the WRP leadership was also clearing the way for class collaboration in Britain itself. If it is correct to demand that Arafat meet with Thatcher over the fate of Palestine, why shouldn't the TUC bureaucrats meet with the Prime Minister over the fate of the trade unions? Such is the counter-revolutionary logic of the WRP's abandonment of the heritage of Trotskyism. The *Transitional Program* had specifically rejected the politics upon which the WRP's petition campaign was based:

*"The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government, no matter what might be the diplomatic and military relations between the two countries at a given moment. If the governments find themselves in a temporary and, by the very essence of the matter, unreliable alliance, then the proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the non-imperialist 'ally' through its own methods, i.e., through the methods of the international class struggle (agitation not only against their perfidious allies but also in favor of a workers' state in a colonial country; boycott, strikes, in one case; rejection of boycott and strikes in another case, etc.)."* (p. 35)

The relevance and applicability of this policy is not in the least affected by the fact that the PLO is not a government. The same principle is in operation in dealings with a national liberation movement, and the WRP, which was no longer operating with a class compass, had completely betrayed it.

## 29. The WRP and the Irish Struggle: A Case of Chauvinist Hypocrisy

From 1976 on the policy of the WRP was marked by a thorough-going abandonment of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution and an adaptation to bourgeois nationalism which assumed grotesque dimensions. The central perspective of establishing the political independence of the working class, without which there can be no strategy for proletarian revolution, was entirely liquidated in pursuit of counter-revolutionary alliances with the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. Healy and Banda found new friends all over the world — from the bourgeois radical Gaddafi to the blood-stained tyrant Galtieri. Excuses, apologies and justifications were found for their crimes and betrayals, from the Libyan call for the self-immolation of the PLO to the execution of Iraqi communists.

There was one national struggle, however, toward which the WRP offered no such leniency — that of the Irish Republicans against British imperialism. The volumes of Marx and Lenin which had been gathering dust in the WRP library were brushed off whenever an IRA bomb exploded in London, and suitable quotations on the impermissibility of individual terrorism were culled from a specially-prepared index-file. One would have thought that the sole contribution of Marx to the Fenian question consisted of extended diatribes against nitro-glycerin.

The acid test of the WRP's attitude toward the right of oppressed nations to self-determination was not Libya, Iraq nor, for that matter, Algeria — as Banda, covering his own tracks, has recently suggested. The cutting edge of the struggle against imperialism in Britain is the uncompromising defense of the right of the Irish people to unify their country. The attitude of Healy, Banda and Slaughter was a foul mixture of chauvinism and cowardice. The last series of articles worthy of Trotskyism on the Irish question that appeared in the press of the WRP was written by the late Jack Gale in the early 1970's. This was before the WRP liquidated all work directed toward the building of an Irish section of the International Committee.

The hostility of the WRP toward the Irish struggle rose in direct proportion to its adaptation to the national bourgeoisie of the Middle East — thus demonstrating that these relations had been developed not as part of an anti-imperialist strategy but rather as a political confidence game aimed at securing material resources to service Healy's maneuvers with sections of the labor aristocracy in Britain. It is obvious that the ferocious denunciations of "IRA terrorism" had far less to do with a principled defense of Marxist theory and the education of Irish workers and youth than with the WRP leaders' anxiety over their own legal status and their relations with Labourite reformists.

But putting aside any speculation about the personal motives of Healy and Banda, their attitude toward the Irish question had a definite political content that was expressed in various documents of the WRP. By 1981 the leadership of the WRP was well on the way toward rejecting the unconditional defense of the right of Irish self-determination. In fact, it must be stressed that the most abominable statements to appear in the *News Line* came after this political shift had been made.

In the aforementioned *Manifesto '81*, adopted at the Fifth Congress, the WRP's approach to the Irish struggle reeked of the arrogant paternalism of the Labour bureaucracy. The WRP defined its program toward Ireland not in terms of revolutionary struggle aimed at smashing British imperialism but from the standpoint of "Government policy in the north of Ireland...based on scrupulous observance of the principles of non-intervention and self-determination for the Irish people." (p. 19)

This is the language of imperialist "white papers" and Whitehall. The three paragraphs reserved for Ireland never issued a call to the British working class to demand freedom for the Irish people. It is hard to believe that in a statement that presented the program that the WRP planned to implement once it had taken power there was reference to "the north of Ireland" — thus indicating that Her Majesty's "Workers Revolutionary Government" formed under Prime Minister Healy and Foreign Secretary Van Der Poorten



**IRA bombing of an Army barracks in London**

(Banda) would recognize the 1921 Partition of the six counties and, even more incredibly, still view them as part of Great Britain! One can not help but wonder with foreboding what grim fate would have awaited IRA prisoners of war after their dossiers had been reviewed by Home Secretary Slaughter.

The next resolution which addressed the Irish question was Banda's magnum opus entitled "*Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution Today*." Had the Old Man lived to read this improbable document, he would have publicly disassociated himself from it with the declaration "if this is Trotskyism I am no Trotskyist." The Irish national struggle merited again no more than three brief paragraphs, buried inside a section of the document that carried the sub-title, "*Victory to the PLO*." As a matter of fact, these paragraphs did not deal with the Irish struggle as such. Rather, the references to Ireland provided nothing more than a backdrop for the scoring of a few factional points against the "Militant" tendency.

While Banda's document acknowledged the historical legitimacy of such diverse trends within bourgeois nationalism as the Chinese Kuomintang, the Indian National Congress and the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party regimes in Iraq and Syria and proclaimed its "*unconditional defense of Cuba, the Nicaragua Sandinistas and the Salvadorean FMLN against US imperialism*," (pp. 10-11) Ireland and the IRA

seemed to have slipped Banda's mind and no one else inside the WRP leadership took any notice.

The probable cause for this omission was finally explained one year later, in the last programmatic document produced jointly by Healy, Banda and Slaughter — the Resolution of the Seventh Congress of December 1984. The Irish struggle was referred to as "*an inseparable part of the British Socialist Revolution*" — a claim which, when read within the context of the right wing evolution of the WRP, provided an orthodox-sounding cover for practical indifference to the specific responsibilities of British Trotskyists to the struggle against British domination of Ireland. As we will soon illustrate from statements which appeared in the *News Line*, the Irish struggle was seen simply through the prism of the developing class struggle in Britain and the practical interests of the WRP.

Quoting the famous passage in which Lenin denounced those formalists within the labor movement who vilified the 1916 Irish Rebellion as a "putsch," the WRP leaders chose to distance themselves from this classical definition of the Marxist attitude toward wars of national liberation. They wrote:

*"Lenin's remarks, however, do not exhaust the concrete problems posed by the Irish national struggle today in the period — not of imperialist war and the domination of the British working class by reformism — but in the period of*

*break-up of reformism and the developing socialist revolution in Britain and Ireland.*"(p. 58)

This quote was followed by a series of perfectly correct criticisms of the limitations of Republicanism which place proper emphasis on the decisive role of the proletarian class struggle in Ireland as the means of resolving the national question. But the suspect character of these assertions are indicated in the above formulation — which replaced Lenin's scientific characterization of the epoch with a "new" definition that amounted to nothing more, when read carefully, than an excuse for subordinating the entire Irish question to the political conjuncture in Britain. From the standpoint of Marxism, nothing was added by counterposing "the period of the break-up of reformism and the developing socialist revolution in Britain and Ireland" to Lenin's real definition of imperialism — which, on the basis of an objective world-historical study of political economy, he characterized as the eve of socialist revolution. Moreover, by definition imperialism, which Lenin defined politically as "reaction all along the line," heralds the break-up of reformism. Thus, the WRP's reference to "the domination of reformism" was a non-Marxist and an artificial construction which was smuggled in to justify their patronizing and egotistical attitude toward the Irish struggle.

Thus, the WRP would again and again denounce the terrorist actions of the IRA primarily from a chauvinist and selfish standpoint — i.e., its adverse effect on the class struggle in Britain, or more precisely, the political headaches it created for the WRP — rather than criticizing bourgeois Republicanism from a principled position which recognized the vast historical significance of the national struggle in Ireland and demonstrated the inability of bourgeois nationalism to carry out the unification of the Irish nation and secure its independence from British imperialism. A "critique" which made the denunciation of terrorism, rather than the inability of bourgeois nationalism to reunify the island, its starting point placed a shameful question mark over its commitment to the completion of the democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class.

Let us now examine how this line looked in practice. In July 1982 the IRA carried out a bombing in Hyde Park, London, in which several soldiers and their horses were killed. This was denounced by the *News Line* in an editorial which was defended a week later in a "Questions and Answers" column reply to a reader:

Stating that the bombing occurred "under conditions where the mass movement against the Tories is beginning to emerge," the *News Line* claimed that "The bombings were a political gift to Thatcher which she lost no time in exploiting to the full. Within days the police were given another whopping pay rise and the SAS were called out as part of the security surrounding Falkland war service in St Pauls.

"All this has been accompanied by a racist campaign directed against Irish workers in Britain and a fresh deluge of patriotic calls from the media.

"It was for these reasons that we called on the labour and trade union movement to denounce the bombings as a state provocation..."(July 27, 1982)

Not only was this statement a libel against the IRA, which had claimed responsibility for the action. But it amounted to a previously unknown tactical novelty in the Fourth International: "conjunctural opposition to individual terrorism."

Presumably, Healy and Banda — who, by the way, was somewhat less enthusiastic about "armed struggle" when it took place within ear-shot of Clapham — would take a different view toward individual terrorism during ebbs in the class struggle, that is, during precisely those periods when Marxists must wage the most determined struggle against such subjective methods!

In December 1983, just as the WRP was defending the betrayal of the print workers by the SOGAT bureaucrats (men of "politically-moderate opinions") it replied to the bombing of Harrods with an hysterical denunciation of the IRA. The arguments employed by the *News Line* were so cynical and opportunist that it managed to undermine the principled struggle waged by Marxists against individual terrorism.

"It is an outrage against London workers and the Labour-led Greater London Council (GLC), which has courageously [!] championed the right of the Irish people to self-determination. It is also an unexpected but highly welcome Christmas gift to Prime Minister Thatcher and her hated, crisis-ridden Tory government."(December 19, 1983)

This editorial, which occupied nearly an entire page, had nothing to do with a principled criticism of terrorism and everything to do with glorifying the GLC and reformist careerists like Livingstone. What ramparts were "courageously" manned by the GLC bureaucrats in defense of Irish self-determination? The *News Line* made a respectful bow before Livingstone's "firm gesture of support" for the electoral successes of the IRA, and warned that such noble acts of solidarity were "mindlessly damaged" by the "barbarous act" of the Sinn Fein, whose "reactionary xenophobia" had become "a blind hatred of everything British."

These statements not only exposed the political rottenness of the WRP's relations with the GLC; it also unmasked the hollowness of Healy's and Banda's conception of self-determination, which had nothing to do with Trotskyism. To argue against the bombs of the IRA by eulogizing the paper bullets of GLC press releases is to completely abandon the Marxist defense of self-determination. As Trotsky wrote:

"What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against trampling upon this right. Bolshevism penetrates right into the midst of the oppressed nation; it raises them up against their oppressors; it links up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat of the capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Indians or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of the civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism." (Germany 1931-32, New Park, pp. 133-34)

The fight for this Bolshevik policy has no meaning outside the struggle to build a section of the Fourth International within the oppressed country itself. It is on this central question that Healy broke completely with Trotskyism. This is the real content of his political degeneration and capitulation to British imperialism.

## PART THREE

### The Collapse of the WRP

#### 30. The WRP in Crisis

Despite the outward appearance of increasing influence and success, the real political strength of the Workers Revolutionary Party within the working class and among the youth steadily deteriorated. The resources obtained through opportunist relations with bourgeois nationalists served only to temporarily paper over a rapidly-developing organizational crisis within the WRP. Nothing revealed more concretely the devastating impact of opportunism than the sales figures for the *News Line*. In 1980-81, the average weekly paid circulation of the *News Line* was 90,162. In 1981-82, beneath the impact of the WRP's repeated betrayals of the working class in the pursuit of its alliance with the GLC and the Labour lefts, the *News Line* circulation fell to 63,350 — a drop of more than 33 percent. By 1983-84, that figure was to fall still further to 51,223.

While the WRP's strength within the workers' movement at the grass-roots level was deteriorating, Healy was going all

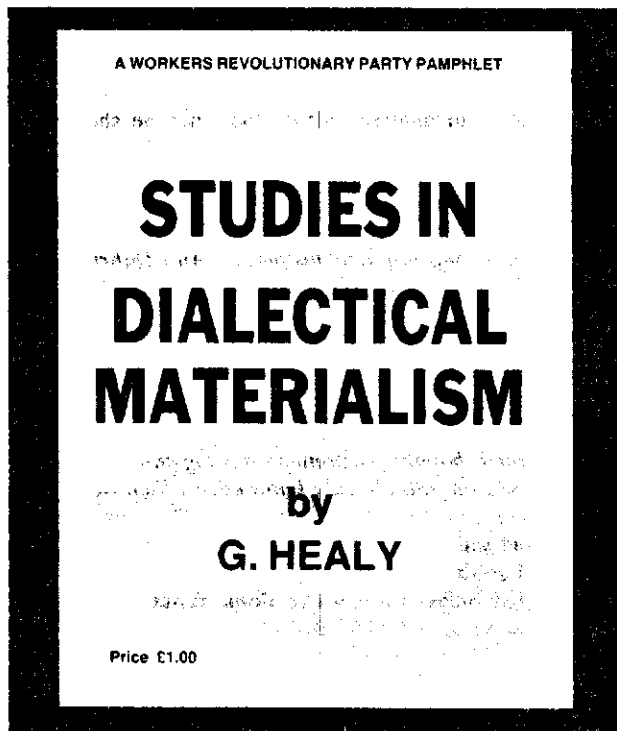
out to build up an immense apparatus to service his centrist accommodation with sections of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, thus increasing the Party's dependency upon the resources acquired from non-proletarian forces.

Then disaster struck. In June 1982 the Zionists invaded Lebanon and the facilities of the PLO inside that country were largely destroyed. This was followed by the eruption of internecine warfare inside the PLO which further weakened its influence. The Arab bourgeoisie swung sharply to the right, and the ensuing political shake-up dealt a blow to the foreign policy of the WRP. The implications of the decline of the political weight of the party within the working class, which had been covered over for so long, now threatened to explode in the form of a catastrophic financial crisis.

Through the machinations of Healy and the WRP finance office, this was averted through a policy of massive borrowing and the mortgage of party property. On this basis, the WRP leadership avoided a political reckoning with the real source of the crisis — the betrayal of Trotskyist principles — and continued to hide the true state of affairs from the party membership.

#### 31. The Idealist Distortion of Materialist Dialectics

Given the immense role which it came to play inside the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Committee, it would not be possible to adequately trace the political degeneration of the WRP without referring to the gross distortion of scientific materialist dialectics by the leadership of the British section. The defense of a correct philosophical method, upon which Trotsky had insisted in his great struggle against Burnham and Shachtman in 1939-40, had been correctly developed by the Socialist Labour League in its fight against the revisionism of the American Socialist Workers Party. In the tradition of Trotsky, the SLL demonstrated the inner connection between the political and class line of Hansen and his pragmatic method, most clearly expressed in his definition of dialectical materialism as "empiricism consistently carried out." The International Committee's critique of the SWP's objectivist method and the examination of its connection to a whole series of fundamental revisions of Marxism, especially on the role of the conscious factor in the revolutionary process, was concretely illustrated in an exhaustive analysis of the whole political line of the SWP and its Pabloite allies in Europe.



G.Healy's "Studies"

In subsequent years, however, the SLL moved increasingly toward the view that in as much as all revisionism is related to an incorrect theory of knowledge, the actual analysis of the political forms through which revisionism is manifested was no longer necessary. On this basis, it was possible to justify splits within the Fourth International on the basis of disputes over questions of epistemology, without the clarification of political differences. This idealist view was propounded by Slaughter in 1971-72 in the course of the struggle against the OCI (which had wrongly denied that dialectical materialism is the theory of knowledge of Marxism) and was enthusiastically seized upon by Healy. A whole new basis for the political and theoretical life of the International Committee was created, in which all questions relating to program and principle were seen as "inessential" forms of the more "fundamental" problems of dialectical cognition. This rejection of the unified and inter-connected character of what Lenin had referred to as the three component parts of Marxism — based on German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism — inevitably, under the pressure of class forces, opened the door for the worst sort of theoretical charlatanism. Especially after the opening of the College of Marxist Miseducation in 1975, at the very point when the political crisis within the WRP was developing with extreme rapidity, the utterly one-sided and abstract (in the bad sense of the word) study of "the moments of cognition" became a means of justifying a revisionist line.

The systematic study of any of the political, historical and economic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky was brought to an end inside the WRP by 1977. All work to develop the political heritage of the ICFI's struggle against Pabloite revisionism was likewise abandoned by the WRP. This was inseparable from Healy's "theoretical" views, which held that all knowledge was purely relative and that references, in the course of political discussion, to the great Marxist classics, amounted to "imposing thought images on the external world." In the course of an unrelenting assault on historical materialism, Healy hammered out a "philosophical method" that added up to a thorough-going defense of unprincipled politics.

In reality, Healy's method was a gross distortion of scientific dialectics which betrayed a complete lack of understanding of either the philosophical work of Hegel or Marx. The actual content of Healy's "theory of knowledge" — which claimed to trace the dialectical transition from individual sense perception to abstract thought and practice — amounted to nothing more than a glorification of the individual process through which he translated his own pragmatic intuition into various party activities. An auto-didact in the worst sense of the word, Healy came to believe that the memorization of a few Hegelian categories in proper sequence provided a master-key to universal knowledge. A serious study of Trotskyism, political economy, the history of the workers' movement and, last but not least, the historical origin and development of philosophical concepts could be replaced with a few "juggled phrases."

In June 1980, under the cover of introducing a new and eccentric branch agenda, Healy sought to establish a constitutional foundation for pragmatic impressionism in the day-to-day political work of the WRP. This was clearly outlined in a letter to all branch secretaries, written on June 14, 1980, by Healy.

*"The aim of the Agenda is to re-organize the work of our branches so that in the course of the meetings, theory emerges as a guide to practice. In other words the dialectical method is manifested in the way our practice is carried out.*

*"The purpose is to train comrades in what is best described as the unconscious use of the dialectical method, just as one performs many skills and activities without necessarily being conscious that one is doing so." (Emphasis added)* In other words, Healy had discovered that one could act as a Marxist without being conscious of it — some 20 years after the great American pragmatist Joseph Hansen had proclaimed this discovery to the world. In fact, Healy was now propagating the very same views that Trotsky had indignantly denounced in 1940. Replying to Burnham, Trotsky wrote:

*"In the attorney's plea of Shachtman to the effect that you are an 'unconscious dialectician,' the stress must be laid on the word unconscious. Shachtman's aim (also partly unconscious) is to defend his bloc with you by degrading dialectical materialism. For in reality, Shachtman is saying: The difference between a 'conscious' and 'unconscious' dialectician is not so great that one must quarrel about it. Shachtman thus attempts to discredit the Marxist method." (In Defense of Marxism, New Park, p. 107)*

Like Gogol's hero who was constantly amazed to discover that letters combine to form words, Healy informed his bewildered members:

*"Consciousness of theoretical abstractions comes later when we begin to think and analyze what we have been doing."*

How would this discovery assist a Party member obliged to analyze a complex development in the political situation — such as the declaration of self-determination by Turks on the island of Cyprus, the permissibility or impermissibility of providing critical support to bourgeois nationalists, or, to provide an example from contemporary events, the signing of the Anglo-Irish deal. For such developments, do we need "consciousness of theoretical abstractions" before or after we complete our analysis and decide what we should do? The answer to this question was given by Engels long ago when he wrote that *"the art of working with concepts is not inborn and also is not given with ordinary everyday consciousness, but requires real thought, and that this thought similarly has a long empirical history..." (Anti-Duhring)*

Healy went on to provide a homeopathic depiction of the phenomenology of thought that closely resembled what some American pragmatists have described as the "ink-blot" theory of knowledge: *"Consciousness is in brief a subjective form manifesting the relations that are materialized through our activity. It arises from the transition of new and as yet undetermined thought phenomena passing through perception in transition into abstract knowledge which we already possess, thereby, becoming determinate. The new, disturbs the old, and sets in motion the abstract theoretical process which will guide our practice. This sometimes happens so quickly, that unless we learn to think about what we are doing as soon as possible after we have done it, much valuable knowledge can be lost."*

For the operation of this profound process, any mind will do — and not only that of a human being. As Trotsky observed: *"On sighting a hare, a rabbit, or a hen, a fox concludes: this particular creature belongs to a tasty and nutritive type,*



The WRP's College of Marxist Education in Parwich

and — chases after the prey. We have here a complete syllogism, although a fox, we may suppose, never read Aristotle. When the same fox, however, encounters the first animal which exceeds it in size [setting "into motion the abstract theoretical process"], for example, a wolf [an "as yet undetermined thought phenomena passing through transition into abstract knowledge...disturbs the old"], it quickly concludes that quantity passes into quality, and turns to flee." [ "This sometimes happens so quickly" that the fox does not have time to realize that he is an expert in Healy's practice of cognition.]

Healy's political aim was to deaden the theoretical convictions of the WRP cadre and to transform them into unconscious activists who towed the opportunist line worked out on the Political Committee of the WRP. He deliberately inculcated a contemptuous attitude toward genuine Marxism. The political traditions of Trotskyism — its careful study of all political phenomena and their thorough discussion throughout the Party — was derided as the fatal flaw of "propaganda groups."

In January 1982 Healy used the occasion of the 58th anniversary of Lenin's death to flaunt his contempt for Trotskyism. In a 16-page pamphlet purporting to be an analysis of the legacy of Leninism, Healy made not a single reference to Leon Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Fourth International — until the final sentence when he noted, as an afterthought, that Trotskyists are the best Leninists. But, in an implicit attack on the Trotskyist movement, Healy claimed that Stalinism "has placed the Leninists of today far behind an understanding of his theoretical achievements and the

revolutionary practices which flowed from them." (*Leninism 58 Years On*, New Park, p. 1) This statement essentially wiped out the theoretical contribution made by Trotsky to the development of Marxism after the death of Lenin.

Significantly, Healy identified the continuity of Lenin's work not with Trotsky and the Left Opposition but with "the enormous advances in physics since Lenin died." (*Ibid.*, p. 10) Healy singled out the year of Lenin's death — 1924 — not to note that it marked the emergence of the Bukharin-Stalin "theory" of socialism in a single country and the beginning of the Left Opposition's struggle against it, but to point out in a gaudy display of erudition that "It was in that year that the physicist Louis de Broglie laid the foundations of quantum mechanics (quantum theory) which studies the motion of small-scale particles." (*Ibid.*)

This shift from politics to physics (of which Healy knew next to nothing) as the axis of dialectical materialism within the revolutionary party was inseparably linked with the repudiation of Trotskyism by the WRP leadership. The basic texts upon which Healy now relied in the preparation for his lectures were supplied by the Soviet academics, who have been engaged in a futile attempt to transform Lenin into a state philosopher. (The significance of the contributions of various Soviet philosophers such as T. Oizerman and E. V. Ilyenkov merits serious and careful discussion within the Trotskyist movement. This would require a review of the history of Soviet philosophy since the suppression of the Mechanists and the Deborinists in the late 1920's. Let us merely note at this time that such questions were never even broached by Healy.)



In early 1982 a member of the WRP, Chris Talbot, wrote a review in a WRP publication which criticized a book entitled *Dialectics in Modern Physics* by the Soviet philosopher Omelyanovsky. This occasioned a scathing response from Healy, defending Omelyanovsky against the criticisms of Talbot, who happens to be a professional mathematician. Not since Stalin denounced Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony ("muddle instead of music") had a politician made such an unwarranted intrusion into a field outside his area of competence. Healy's reply, which was presented as a major contribution to the pending WRP Sixth Congress, was significant not merely because it demonstrated his penchant to write about things of which he knew nothing at all. More importantly, it provided an insight into Healy's political orientation and the underlying significance of his dialectical arabesques.

As Mao used ping-pong as a means of opening the door to the United States, Healy was attempting to use physics as a bait to open relations with the Stalinists and other counter-revolutionary forces. He flattered the Stalinists with the bogus claim that "*Soviet scientists and physicists have, despite Stalinism, kept the lead, thanks to the nationalized property relations in the USSR*" (*Internal Bulletin No. 1*, May 25, 1982, p. 3). This assertion could not be made by anyone who possessed a serious knowledge of the present state of physics. Moreover, to attribute this imagined pre-eminence to the existence of nationalized property relations in the USSR was to seriously depart from the analysis of the cultural and intellectual development of the USSR made by Trotsky.

Healy's document revealed an even more insidious objective. Deliberately distorting the famous article written by Lenin in 1922, *On the Significance of Militant Materialism*, Healy attempted to make the case that without an alliance "*with 'non-communists,' scientists and others, such as those interested in the materialist interpretation of Hegelian dialectics, a victorious revolution would not be possible.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 1)

Lenin was writing quite specifically about the tasks of "successful communist construction" inside the Soviet Union after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution. As is well-known, Lenin placed even well-known ex-Mensheviks (as long as they were prepared to accept Soviet power), such as Axelrod, in important state academic posts. Moreover, he stressed the need to gather all the forces at the command of the Soviet state to vanquish the legacy of cultural backwardness in the USSR. The article goes on to define quite clearly the tasks Lenin had in mind.

Healy's article, with its deliberately obscure wording, implied that a political and theoretical alliance with "non-communists" — including Stalinists and God knows who else — is necessary for the victory of the socialist revolution. Thus, the attack on Talbot was clearly a political justification for the class-collaborationist line of the WRP.

### 32. Opposition Inside the International Committee

During 1981 and 1982 Healy began to commit his dialectical ruminations to paper, thus, for the first time, give the cadre within Britain and internationally an opportunity to subject his ideas to a more careful and systematic examination. The culmination of his theoretical labors were

a series of articles written on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of Trotsky's death entitled, "*Studies in Dialectical Materialism.*"

In October 1982 David North, the national secretary of the Workers League informed Healy and the WRP Political Committee that he had serious differences with the philosophical method that constituted the basis of Healy's "cadre-training" and the political work of the WRP and International Committee. (While not a member of the International Committee due to reactionary American laws, the Workers League had participated in its work as an observer.) For years Healy had claimed that his work on what he called "the practice of cognition" represented a crucial development of materialist dialectics and justified this by citing Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* and Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*.

North, having submitted Healy's writings to a careful analysis, had come to the conclusion that they represented a complete departure from Marxism. Moreover, the discovery that Healy had plagiarized large portions of his articles from little-known Soviet sources placed the political legitimacy of his work in serious question. North made the following key points:

"Cde. Healy's '*Studies in Dialectical Materialism*' suffer from one decisive defect: they essentially ignore the achievements of both Marx and Lenin in the materialist reworking of the Hegelian dialectic. Thus, Hegel is approached uncritically, essentially in the manner of the Left Hegelians against whom Marx struggled.

"In approaching Hegel in this manner, the distinction between materialism and idealism is not only effaced; Comrade Healy explicitly passes over to idealism in expounding Hegel as a Left Hegelian...

"Cde. Healy does not take into account the oft-repeated warnings of both Marx and Engels that the Hegelian dialectic was unusable in the form it was left behind. Thus Cde. Healy seeks to explain the process of cognition directly from Hegelian logic. This is a false approach. The process of thought cannot be explained from the Logic any more than the nature of the state could be explained from the Logic...

"The chief defect of Cde. Healy's articles — ignoring the achievements of Marx and Lenin — is glaringly apparent in his virtual indifference toward historical materialism. Cognition is treated as a movement of thought concepts outside the law-governed, historically-developing social practice of man." (*A Contribution to the Critique of G. Healy's 'Studies in Dialectical Materialism'*, pp. 13-15)

North related his political criticisms to the political line of the Workers Revolutionary and the International Committee:

"For several years (in my opinion, this began in 1976 and only began to predominate in 1978), in the name of the struggle for dialectical materialism and against pragmatism, the International Committee has drifted steadily away from the struggle for Trotskyism.

"An increasingly one-sided and narrow concentration on the 'process and practice of cognition' — almost entirely divorced from a concrete study of the objective situation — has led, as is expressed in '*Studies*,' to a blatantly idealist vulgarization of dialectics, a caricature of Lenin's work on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, that reproduces the very forms of





**Marx — declared that Hegel's dialectic was "unusable in its present form" and had to be critically reworked**

*mystification that Marx criticized in his writings against the Left Hegelians 140 years ago (and which Engels exposed in his polemic against Duhring in the 1870s)...*

*"A vulgarization of Marxism, palmed off as the 'struggle for dialectics,' has been accompanied by an unmistakable opportunist drift within the International Committee, especially in the WRP.*

*"The work of the IC in the Middle East, which has never been guided by a clear perspective of building the International Committee in that area of the world, has now degenerated into a series of pragmatic adaptations to shifts in the political winds. Marxist defense of national liberation movements and the struggle against imperialism has been interpreted in an opportunist fashion of uncritical support of various bourgeois nationalist regimes. The outcome of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon has starkly revealed the bankruptcy of this approach. At the present time, the IC has been unable to make an assessment of the situation in the Middle East. The WRP has yet to take a clear position on the present diplomatic maneuvering of the Reagan administration." (Ibid., pp. 35-36)*

After referring critically to the WRP's line on Zimbabwe, Iran, Libya and the Malvinas War, the notes concluded:

*"This does not mean that our work has been all wrong and that no achievements have been registered. That is, of course, not the case. But the rapid development of the world crisis, the desperate crisis of Stalinism, and the radicalization of the masses in all the major capitalist countries present an opportunity for Trotskyism. However, we would be committing the greatest political error if, at this very moment, we pulled in our Trotskyist horns." (Ibid., p. 38)*

On October 22, 1982, North first informed Healy of his differences with *Studies in Dialectical Materialism*. The

next day, following a meeting with the WRP Political Committee, he provided Banda, at the request of the WRP General Secretary, with a copy of his notes on Healy's writings on philosophy. After studying these notes Banda informed North that he fully agreed with the criticisms, acknowledged that Healy's subjective method was bound up with a degeneration in all areas of the political work of the WRP, and that it would be necessary to fight for a full discussion within the party on the issues raised by the notes. A discussion was then held with Cliff Slaughter, the secretary of the ICFI, who stated that he believed North's criticisms of Healy's writings to be correct and that he would support the opening of a full discussion, although he would have to give further consideration to the form of his own intervention. After Banda informed Healy that he agreed with North's criticisms, Healy bitterly attacked North for having "interfered" with "his" cadre inside the WRP.

North returned to the United States on October 25, 1982, expecting that a proper discussion would be organized within the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International. On that very day — as the International Control Commission later established — Banda received a letter from a member of the WRP Central Committee, Brendan Martin, raising criticisms of the party's failure to make a principled correction of its errors on the Malvinas War as well as its adaptation to bourgeois nationalism in the Middle East. He asked that these matters be discussed in a principled manner in the Party.

During the following week Healy persuaded Banda to drop his support for North and preserve the unity of the clique on the Political Committee of the WRP. As is shown by Healy's private notes — discovered later by the International Control Commission — he moved simultaneously to have Martin expelled from the WRP and to isolate North from the WRP leadership. One of Healy's private notes, dated October 28, 1982, read: "*D. North seeks to take advantage of theoretical indecision and backwardness in the approach which he makes to comrades.*"

Healy then contacted Slaughter and such resident academicians as G. Pilling and obtained their agreement to attack North's criticisms at the next meeting of the International Committee. While this was being arranged, Healy and Banda organized the factional assault on Brendan Martin, who was expelled from the Party in the middle of November.

When North returned to Britain on December 18, 1982, Banda informed him that he had studied the notes more carefully, was now in complete opposition to their criticisms, and that he now believed that Healy's *Studies* were an invaluable contribution to Marxist literature. He warned North that if he persisted in these criticisms, this would quickly lead to a complete rupture of political and organizational relations with the Workers League. During meetings of the WRP Political Committee which spanned over the next two days — at which V. Redgrave became hysterical and denounced North as a "political gangster" — Slaughter and Pilling took the lead in defending Healy's *Studies*, without replying to a single specific point raised in North's notes. They defended Healy by asserting that any criticism of *Studies* must be an attack on dialectics and Hegel; and that any criticism of Healy by an American must

be pragmatic. Healy did not attend these meetings to defend his writings in person.

The political atmosphere at these meeting was not one in which an objective discussion could be conducted. North agreed to withdraw his notes — which, at any rate, had not been prepared initially as a document — and consider the points which had been made by Slaughter, Pilling and Banda.

This was the first attempt by the International Committee to intervene in the political crisis within the WRP. For historical reasons relating to the whole development of the Fourth International, the British section exercised immense and overriding authority within the International Committee. All the other sections, consisting of young leaderships, had been actually created in the process of the struggle led by Healy, Banda and Slaughter against the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, the betrayal of the LSSP in Sri Lanka and the capitulation of the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste to opportunism. There existed no other leadership which had such an awesome political record of unbroken political struggle against Stalinism, Social Democracy and centrism. Moreover, there existed an immense disparity between the organizational strength of the WRP and the other sections of the ICFI. From the mid-1970s on, the WRP consciously used its organizational strength as a club against the ICFI. Furthermore, it concealed the mercenary character of its work in the Middle East while systematically falsifying the reports which it gave to the ICFI on the political development of the British section.

Slaughter functioned within the leadership of the ICFI as a factional representative of the WRP, looking after the political and financial interests of the British section. We shall return to this question later. (A full account of the struggle between the Workers League and the WRP, up to the February 1984 meeting of the International Committee, has already been given in the December 11, 1985 letter of the WL Political Committee to the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party.) However, it must be stressed that the WRP leadership was not prepared to accept any form of political control by the International Committee. The myth of Healy's political infallibility was upheld by Slaughter and Banda to preserve the unchallengeable sovereignty of the WRP inside the ICFI. In other words, the personal infallibility of Healy was preserved to uphold the collective infallibility of the British section.

It was to take more time until the ICFI sections had attained sufficient maturity and experience to assert its authority over the WRP. But although the struggle could not yet be carried to a conclusion, 1982 was the beginning of a Trotskyist rebellion within the ICFI against the political degeneration of the WRP and its misuse of its authority.

From that point on, the WRP leadership knew that it could not carry through its betrayal of Trotskyism without first smashing the International Committee. Thus, to prepare this destructive work, it postponed the 10th Congress of the ICFI until 1985 — some four years after the 9th Congress.

### 33. Youth Training: A Fabian Escapade

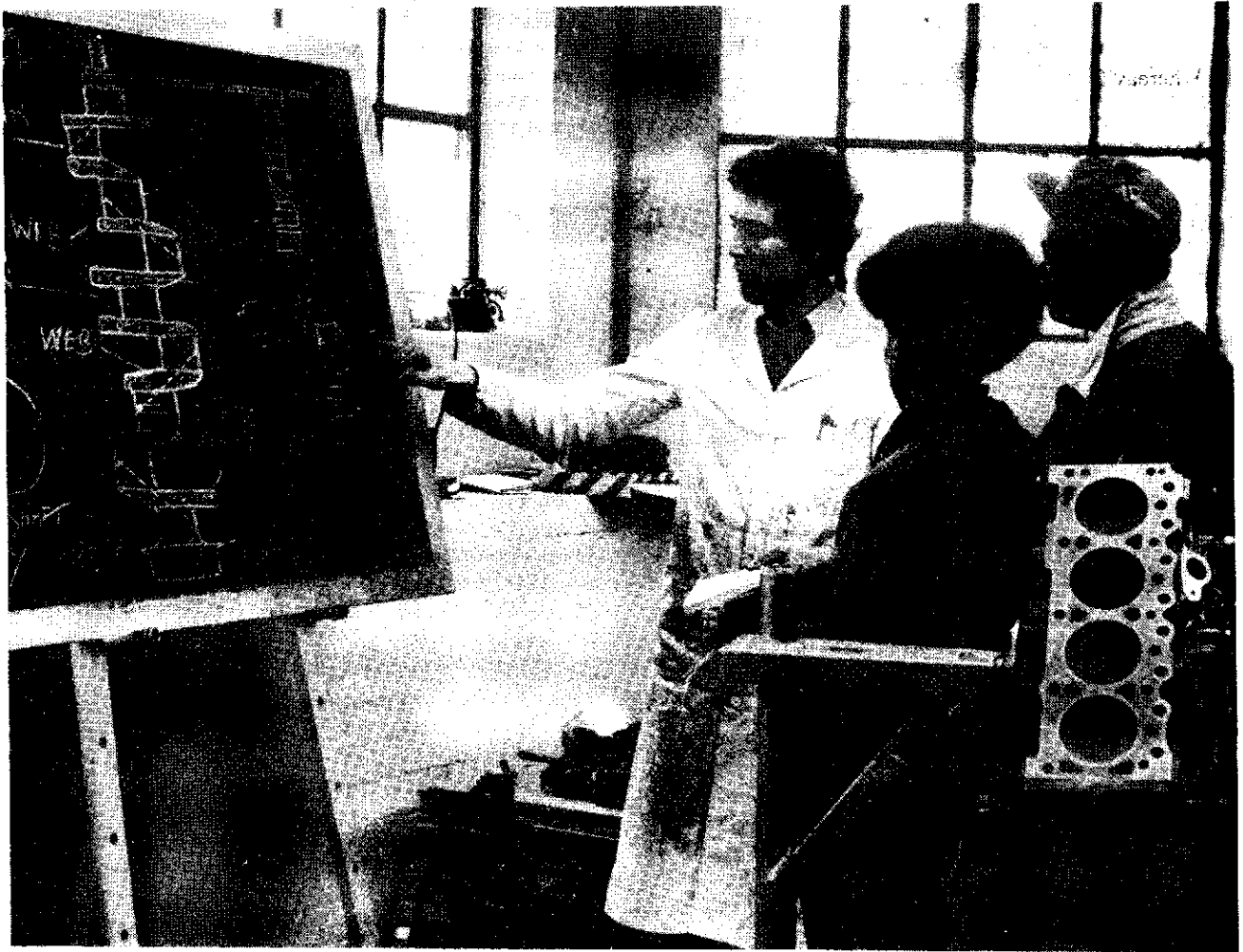
In the aftermath of the criticisms of the Workers League, a few cosmetic attempts were made to refurbish its Trotskyist credentials inside the International Committee and to remove the most obvious targets from further attack. Healy's by-line virtually disappeared from the *News Line* and except for one short article — a rambling piece which carried the bizarre title, "How Hegel Fell Into the Tory Think-Tank" — Healy wrote nothing more on philosophy. To counter the assertion that the WRP was abandoning Trotskyism, the *News Line* carried prominent advertisements which announced a new series of lectures at its Education Center on the theory of Permanent Revolution. However, changes of this kind did not represent a departure from the WRP's opportunist course. In fact, the slight shift which was to be observed on the question of Permanent Revolution was permitted by Healy only because the political changes in the Middle East had temporarily derailed his old alliances. Thus, Iraq and Zimbabwe could be easily cited as a vindication of Trotsky's characterization of bourgeois nationalist duplicity. At the same time, Healy worked with S. Michael to cultivate new relations with the Iranian regime.

But there was no fundamental change in the political line and, in fact, the various zig-zags in positions were the public reflection of the maneuvers going on behind the scenes. Healy was hard at work deepening his unprincipled relations with the trade union bureaucracy and sections of the Labour Party.

Healy saw the opportunity to win the support of the trade union bureaucracy for a reformist scheme that could be used to deflect the youth away from revolutionary struggle. The idea of a job training scheme for youth had been germinating in Healy's brain for a while, ever since he had been taken for a tour of state-controlled youth centers in Iraq. Armed with what he had seen in "socialist" Iraq, Healy began the liquidation of the Young Socialists into his pet "Youth Training" project in 1981, which gathered steam in the aftermath of the spring and summer riots.

The public justification for this scheme was that jobless youth were a menace to the labor movement and that the Young Socialists would undertake to provide some minimal weekly training to give young people a few rudimentary skills. Healy proclaimed that the YS was setting an example that the entire trade union movement should follow. That is, he proposed that the burden and expense of providing youth with basic skills should be carried by the labor movement with, wherever possible, friendly help from bosses and various bleeding-heart liberals.

The trade union bureaucrats were naturally delighted to hear that Healy was no longer in the business of mobilizing youth against themselves and the reformists in the Labour Party. They were more than happy to provide a bit of cash, pieces of old machinery, the remnants of first-generation computers and spare circuit boards, hairdryers for would-be beauticians, yarns of wool for potential dress-makers, used spark-plugs for a future generation of motor mechanics, and worn-out boxing gloves for aspiring heavy-weights. This last contribution gave rise to some anxiety within the leadership of the WRP, after Vanessa Redgrave suggested that fighting on the premises of Youth Training might frighten away



Car mechanics class at the first Youth Training Center established by the WRP, in Britain.

potential contributions from liberal pacifists and other bird-watchers. Thus, boxing and karate classes were banned, and subsequent attempts to reverse the immediate loss of members by offering classes in Spanish and English drama proved unsuccessful. It seems that youth were more interested in perfecting their skills in the martial arts to get ready for the next round against the cops in Brixton than in preparing for holidays on the Costa del Sol and performances at the Old Vic.

In their noble efforts to bring the bright light of culture to the benighted youth of the inner cities, the WRP leadership completed their abandonment of the *Transitional Program*. The political content of Youth Training was utterly reactionary, aimed at diverting young people away from the struggle against capitalism and its servants in the labor bureaucracy.

First of all, Trotsky placed upon the capitalist system full responsibility for unemployment. To suggest that the cost of unemployment be borne by the working class and its organizations means to accept the claims of the capitalist state and the employers that they are bankrupt and unable to provide jobs and training. In the 1938 resolution on youth, adopted at its founding conference, the Fourth International declared:

*"In the fight against unemployment the slogans raise the*

*school age, organize apprenticeship, make sense only to the extent that the weight of this must be borne not by the working class but by the big capitalists. Hence the Bolshevik-Leninists owe it to themselves to formulate the demands of working class youth in this field as follows:*

**"Prolongation of the school age to 16, with a grant for family support in working class and small farmer families.**

**"Reorganization of the school in cooperation with the factory: the school should prepare children for life and work; it should weld the youth to the older generations; hence the demand for control by workers' organizations over technical education.**

**"Reduction of the period of apprenticeship to a maximum of two years.**

**"Forbidding of all work not connected with the actual apprenticeship.**

**"This setting up, at the expense of the bosses, in connection with every business or group of businesses engaged in manufacturing, mining, or trade, of apprentice schools, with an attendance of at least three percent of the personnel employed in the business or group of businesses.**

**"Choosing of the instructor by the labor unions.**

**"Control of these schools by a mixed commission of workers' delegates and delegates of the apprentices them-**

selves." (*Documents of the Fourth International*, Pathfinder, pp. 279-80)

Whereas Trotsky developed these transitional demands to mobilize the youth alongside the working class against capitalism, Healy proposed instead the reformist demobilization of young people in line with the requirements of capitalism and the labor bureaucracy.

Not only was the Youth Training scheme indefensible from the standpoint of Trotskyism, it was based on theoretical conceptions which were utterly anti-Marxist. Healy developed the idea that youth could not be won to revolutionary struggle as long as they were unemployed, a position which he derived from a serious misunderstanding of certain passages in Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Thus, he made the organization of youth in revolutionary struggle dependent upon full employment, a curious variation of the two-stage theory of revolution — whose first stage, once completed, would make the second stage impossible.

In late 1982 the WRP published a statement entitled "Six Reasons Why you should join the Workers Revolutionary Party" — which should have been called, "Six reasons why the WRP is a centrist organization." In its third reason, the WRP proudly proclaimed that its youth movement concentrated on discouraging young people from occupying themselves with politics.

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party allocated over one-third of its financial budget to the development of its youth section, the Young Socialists. We support the non-political aims of the Youth Training movement which is encouraged by the Young Socialists to provide skills for jobless school-leavers and unemployed youth forced to enroll in the government's wage-cutting YOP schemes.*

*"We believe that the youth, with no job, no skill and outside the trade unions, are cut off from the rest of the working class and cannot develop as conscious participants in political life. We therefore see this task of learning a skill as standing above politics."* (Emphasis added)

A more thorough-going renunciation of revolutionary struggle could not have been penned by the Tory minister for education.

As in all of Healy's pet projects, behind the public display of high-minded altruism there was a payoff being worked out behind the scenes. Bill Sirs, the man who helped the Tories throw tens of thousands of steel workers on to the dole, was among the most enthusiastic supporters of Youth Training and celebrated the opening of one of its premises. Attempting to cultivate friendly relations at all levels of the bureaucracy, the WRP toned down its criticisms of these professional traitors. Thus, reason number four for joining the WRP had only this to say about the WRP's policy for the trade unions:

*"All members of the WRP are obliged to be members of their appropriate trade union. The party supports the TUC in its decision to organize unemployed workers and youth into the trade union covering his or her occupation as if they were at work.*

*"It is, however, quite another thing to campaign and implement it. The TUC is not doing this, and every effort must be made to force them to carry it out."*

Here in a public statement aimed supposedly at recruiting

workers into a revolutionary party, there was no reference to the historical treachery of the TUC and its on-going collaboration with the Tory government! In its servility to the bureaucracy the WRP was now competing with the Stalinists.

In regard to the latter, the tone of the WRP was strangely muted. In reason number one it described its attitude to the Stalinist gangsters in the Kremlin as follows: "*The WRP has fundamental political differences with the bureaucratic leaders of the Soviet Communist Party on the nationalist orientation of 'socialism in a single country'.*" The "river of blood" separating Stalinism and Trotskyism had now been downgraded to "political differences."

The statement went on to describe "peaceful coexistence" and "peaceful road to socialism" as "*policies which threaten the gains of the international working class and will, if not checked, lead to disastrous defeats for the working class.*"

As if the policies of Stalinism had not already led to disastrous defeats and as if there still existed the possibility that these policies, which arise from the deepest needs of imperialism and are socially based upon a parasitic and counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, could be "checked."

### 34. The WRP Defends Stalinism

The subdued tone of the references to Stalinism in the *Six Reasons* was no more accidental than any other of the opportunist formulations we have examined thus far. Without any discussion within the WRP, not to mention the International Committee, Healy was privately cultivating relations with the Stalinists. The International Committee does not yet have all the facts at its disposal, but attention should be drawn to the following:

1. In 1980 the *News Line's* sports reporter, Paul Feldman, was allowed by the Soviet Union to attend the Moscow Olympics and was accorded the warmest reception — an occurrence for which there is no parallel in the history of the International Committee.

2. The Soviet bureaucracy accorded to New Park Publishers the rights to an English-language edition of E. V. Ilyenkov's *Lenin's Dialectics and the Metaphysics of Positivism*. A member of the Workers League of the United States was instructed to translate this volume, but the American Trotskyists were kept completely in the dark about the agreements into which the Workers Revolutionary Party had entered.

3. In 1982 the Workers League published a lengthy analysis of the crisis in the Soviet economy which answered an attempt by the American Pabloites to glorify the nationalized industry. This article was not reprinted in any WRP publication, and the only explanation given for this censorship was that the article was "one-sided." In contrast to the treatment accorded the *Bulletin*, the *News Line* had previously reprinted without any critical comment a Novosti press release praising the conditions which exist in the Soviet steel industry.

4. The coverage given to the Solidarity movement in Poland was episodic and without any political depth. Not a single analysis was prepared by the *News Line* of the programmatic documents of the many tendencies to the left of Walesa. A single set of articles — of a non-analytical journalistic character — were prepared on the basis of a trip to

Poland made by the wife of a party member who had gone to visit her family. While the *News Line* was able to arrange a trip to Moscow for the Olympics, no attempt was made to obtain credentials for a trip to Warsaw. The greatest confirmation of Trotsky's conception of Political Revolution was, from a theoretical standpoint, completely ignored. Not until 1983 — nearly two years after the suppression of Solidarity — did the WRP decide that the time had come to make a major issue of Solidarity, and that was in order to create an immense press scandal at the expense of Arthur Scargill during the Blackpool conference of the TUC.

At the very least, all of these incidents were part of a steady weakening in the political line of the Workers Revolutionary Party toward Stalinism.

However, the reaction of the WRP to the crisis within the British Communist Party which erupted in June 1983 with the takeover of the *Morning Star* by its editorial board invites no other conclusion than that the principles of Trotskyism were being betrayed in the interests of some behind-the-scenes maneuver which no one in the WRP — except the clique in the Political Committee and a few of Healy's operatives in the apparatus — knew about.

In response to the vote by the People's Press Printing Society — which was run by the so-called "Tankie" faction of the Stalinists — to assume control of the *Morning Star* and ignore the instructions of the hacks in the CPGB bureaucracy, the *News Line* organized an unprecedented campaign to mobilize support in the labor movement behind Euro-Stalinist boss McLennan and his cronies.

"The '*Morning Star*' is the daily paper of the Communist Party" screamed the headline of a Workers Revolutionary Party statement (no committee was specified) which appeared in the June 6, 1983 issue of the *News Line*. The statement declared:

*"The Communist Party has every right to take political*



McLennan

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*decisions and to insist that its members on the PPPS and the 'Morning Star' editorial board carry them out. This includes the 'Star' editor, Tony Chater, the assistant editor David Whitfield and the PPPS secretary, Mary Rosser...*

*"All the political as well as the management questions at the 'Star' are Communist Party questions. The PPPS management committee is subordinate to the Communist Party executive committee, and not the other way around."*

Without any examination of the political line of the contending factions within the Communist Party, the *News Line* unconditionally upheld the "right" of the Stalinist chieftains to reassert their bureaucratic control over the *Morning Star*. No reason was given, moreover, why the Trotskyist movement should support one or another faction of feuding Stalinists. There was no evidence that the PPPS takeover of the *Morning Star* involved a state attack, nor was there any indication that either faction was expressing, even in a distorted form, the interests of the working class. It was clearly a falling out among thieves, related to alliances formed by various CPGB leaders with different sections of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. If anything, the faction represented by McLennan speaks for the extreme right-wing of the Communist Party which has even flirted with the Tories and the Social Democratic Alliance. On this basis, an argument — however foolish — could have been concocted in support of Chater. Thus, it is very hard to understand what Healy and Mitchell were up to in June 1983. Perhaps Mike Banda knew but he never told anyone.

The June 8, 1983 edition of the *News Line* placed the good offices of the WRP at the services of the CPGB leadership and published in full a statement by its Political Committee, which gave the Euro-Stalinist side of the story. In an accompanying article, the *News Line* warned that if the PPPS succeeded in taking control of the *Morning Star*, "it would amount to a political coup against the Communist Party" and insisted again that "The Communist Party has a right to publish its own daily paper."

With WRP members wondering what was going on and the whole fishy business starting to stink to high hell, Healy finally came up with a profound reason for the latest maneuver: "If recent events are anything to go by, the Communist Party will find difficulty in having its political statements and opinions published." (*News Line*, June 15, 1983)

Thus, the greatest task confronting the British Trotskyists was to spare the labor movement from this terrible loss! There was another and even more profound reason given for defending the CPGB leadership:

*"The new political line means liquidating the historical link with the party and orienting towards the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party." (Ibid.)*

And to whom had the Stalinists been orienting before the Chater "coup"? Had Healy perhaps forgotten the official adoption of the parliamentary road to socialism in 1951? Or the CP's enthusiastic support for Churchill during World War II? Or its approval of Trotsky's assassination in 1940?

Healy then gave the McLennan faction some curb-side advice: "The party leadership has the clear responsibility to call an emergency congress to discuss the Chater takeover of the '*Morning Star*.' It must formulate a political policy to be implemented in the pages of the '*Star*.'"

"The congress must also call an extraordinary meeting of the PPPS and rally shareholders to oust Chater and Co and all those who want to break party discipline and split.

"The issue of political principle, despite our well-documented opposition to Stalinism remains: the 'Morning Star' is the daily newspaper of the Communist Party and must remain so." (Ibid.)

Healy did not tell the members of the WRP whether this new principle — that Trotskyists must unconditionally defend Stalinist organizations against the consequences of splits within their ranks and fight to uphold their bureaucratic discipline — should be written into the *Transitional Program* or introduced alongside of it as a special motion.

Concern over the fate of the *Morning Star* continued to mount within Healy's office and inside the editorial board of the *News Line*. An editorial which appeared on the following day complained bitterly:

"The Chater-Rosser plan has never been submitted to the Communist Party for consideration and discussion. It is the brain-child of a handful of people on PPPS management committee.

"In other words, the fate of the 'Morning Star' is going to be decided by a tiny minority who have never bothered to consult the party leadership and membership."

Definitely an unprecedented state of affairs inside the Communist Party! More than 55 years after the expulsion of Leon Trotsky from the Communist International — which represented the usurpation of political power from the Soviet working class by the Thermidorian bureaucracy — and 50 years after the complete transformation of the Stalinist parties into the political instruments of counter-revolution, Healy, himself a victim of Stalinist "inner-party democracy," was decrying the fact that Chater was dishing out to McLennan what McLennan had been dishing out to others for years.

Healy's next move was to order the publication of an Open Letter from the WRP Political Committee to the members of the Communist Party, which appeared in the June 24, 1983 edition of the *News Line*. It began dramatically: "Your daily newspaper, the 'Morning Star', has been victim of a successful political coup. It is no longer under the political control of the Communist Party of Great Britain or its congress."

This event, the letter claimed, "represents not only a repudiation of the Communist Party, but the historical foundations on which the party was formed, namely to defend the great gains of the Russian Revolution of 1917 led by Lenin and Trotsky and the establishment of the first workers' state in history."

It was, first of all, empty sophistry to claim that the CPGB in any way rests on the "historical foundations" of 1917. All such connections were severed through an historical process through which Stalinism was transformed into an agency of imperialism within the workers' movement. On the basis of Healy's logic, the Fourth International might just as well defend the KGB on the grounds that its historical foundations are the Cheka. Moreover, if it was correct to intervene in support of one faction of the British Communist Party — based simply on a sort of organizational metaphysics — then the way is clear for the Fourth Inter-

national to appoint itself the guardian of the ruling Stalinist factions in Communist parties throughout the world, from the USSR to Afghanistan.

This statement was of extraordinary significance for yet another reason: it amounted to a complete acceptance of the Stalinist theory of the Communist Party. The idea that the CPGB was founded to defend the Soviet Union belongs to Stalin and Harry Pollitt, not to Lenin and Trotsky. In fact, the conception that the sections of the Comintern exist to defend the USSR was the political corollary of the theory of "socialism in a single country." If the central task of communist parties is conceived of as the defense "of the great gains of the Russian Revolution of 1917" — and not the extension of the world socialist revolution — it follows logically that such parties must function as auxiliary instruments of the Soviet state and its foreign policy.

As Trotsky wrote, referring to Stalin's theory: "The new doctrine proclaims that socialism can be built on the basis of a national state if only there is no intervention. From this there can and must follow (notwithstanding all pompous declarations in the draft program) a collaborationist policy towards the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention, as this will guarantee the construction of socialism, that is to say, will solve the main historical question. The task of the parties in the Comintern assumes, therefore, an auxiliary character; their mission is to protect the USSR from intervention and not to fight for the conquest of power. It is, of course, not a question of the subjective intentions but of the objective logic of political thought." (*The Third International After Lenin*, New Park, p. 47)

For Trotskyists, the defense of the Soviet Union is a tactical task subordinate to the strategy of extending the world socialist revolution.

Healy's crude error, which was neither corrected nor challenged in the Political Committee, was bound up with a method of work in which principles were no longer discussed or even considered. Everything which the WRP did was a function of immediate tactical considerations. In this sense, Healy was water-skiing on the surface of politics — reacting to events as they came up and devising a line on the basis of a "Get-rich-quick" approach. Such a method of work is inseparable from sordid maneuvering and the worst forms of political skulduggery. Tactics which are worked out on the basis of immediate gains invariably place the party at the service of hostile class forces. Excluding for the moment the possibility that there existed any ulterior motives in the defense of the McLennan faction, the method employed by Healy proceeded from a tactical opportunism aimed at winning the ear of Communist Party members. But the political content of the line determined the types of ears the WRP would reach.

In this case, the line of the *News Line* was not directed toward the education of the WRP membership, the advanced workers and to those few healthy elements who may exist within the ranks of both factions within the Stalinist party. Rather, it was directed at courting favor among a section of degenerate Stalinist bureaucrats inside the trade unions of the McGahey type who, for their own right-wing reasons, backed McLennan. This type of intervention may have won Healy a few new friends, but it did nothing to develop the struggle against Stalinism within the British workers' movement and win new forces to Trotskyism.

On the basis of its tactical opportunism, the WRP sought to rally support in the labor movement behind the CPGB bureaucracy's "right" to publish the *Morning Star* just four years after it had endorsed the right of the Iraqi Ba'athists to execute members of the local Stalinist party!

### 35. Strange Interlude: The 1983 Elections

On election day in 1979, the WRP was boasting about its plans to field enough candidates in the next election to be able to form a government. But when Thatcher called a snap election in May 1983, those who recalled those ambitious plans may have been surprised to read in the *News Line* of May 10, 1983 that "*The Workers Revolutionary Party proudly announces that it will stand 21 candidates in constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales*" — that is, just one-third the number of candidates it had put up four years earlier. However, no analysis was given of this major shift in the political strategy of the WRP.

The statements of the WRP throughout the election proved that it had learned absolutely nothing from the 1975-79 fiasco, and its line in May-June 1983 was even more eclectic and contradictory than in the previous campaign.

The May 10th issue the *News Line* carried a WRP Political Committee statement that was headlined "**Class Vote to Oust the Tories.**" It stated that if Thatcher was re-elected, she "*will set in train a program aimed at reversing history and sending Britain back to the early days of the 19th century.*" The statement further warned:

*"The tasks before the ruling class are the physical destruction of the trade unions, the imposition of a slave-wage economy, and the dismantling of the social services and the NHS.*

*"No political opposition can be tolerated. The Tories plan early legislation to abolish the Labour Party levy so that it will be starved of funds. At the same time, trade unions will be fined in the courts for strikes that are deemed 'illegal' and their funds confiscated."*

Incredibly, despite this analysis, the WRP leadership could not bring itself to issue a forceful call to return Labour to power. Instead, its central line amounted to a passive evasion of the immediate tasks confronting the working class dressed up with pompous rhetoric:

*"We say that the answer is the mobilization of the working class under the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party to smash the outmoded capitalist system and the establishment of a socialist Britain and a planned economy based on workers' control and management."*

It is difficult to determine whether the authors of this were idiots, cynics, criminals or a combination of all three. First, they spoke of mobilizing the working class under the leadership of the WRP under conditions in which the party's influence during the previous four years had declined so drastically that it was able to field only one-third the candidates it had run in 1979. Second, it was undeniable that the working class in its overwhelming mass was still politically dominated by Social Democracy. Thus, at a time when the WRP was warning of the imminent destruction of the labor movement should Thatcher win re-election — and was obviously unable to mobilize a significant section of the working class under its own banner to meet this threat — it

saw no urgent need to fight for the victory of the Labour Party.

In the fight against fascism in Germany, Trotsky fought against the ultimatism of the Stalinists in relation to the Social Democracy despite the fact that the Communist Party led several million workers. But under conditions in which the WRP led no more than a few hundred — of which only a few dozen occupied any positions within the trade unions at even a shop steward level — the WRP placed no demands upon the Labour Party.

This was the political idiocy of — in the case of Healy — senile leftism. But what should we make of the following statement?

**"The General Election cannot settle these historical questions. It takes class action under the revolutionary leadership of the WRP and the smashing of the capitalist state to achieve the aims of the socialist revolution.**

**"Nevertheless, the next four weeks will be decisive for the whole working class. They will be four weeks of intense political discussion throughout the workers' movement in which the Workers Revolutionary Party will use its democratic right to campaign to recruit and to build the circulation of the daily News Line."** (Emphasis in the original)

After warning that the existence of workers' organizations would be in imminent danger if the Tories won, the statement then casually asserted that its outcome was of no particular importance. Rather, the main thing was that the WRP would spend four weeks in intensive discussion. This was utter cynicism, for the WRP clearly did not take its own warnings seriously. What could they tell workers during the four weeks of discussion: "Your lives are in danger if Thatcher wins. But the results of the election don't matter!"

The only call given for a Labour vote appeared as a political footnote after workers in 21 select constituencies had been told vote for the WRP.

Let us consider the political content of the WRP line in the 1983 elections more closely. During the previous three years it had cultivated the closest relations among the Labour left in the London GLC and with sections of the trade union bureaucracy. In 1981 the WRP insisted that Labour control of Lambeth Council and the GLC was so crucial to the fate of the working class that strikes should be called off and rate hikes should be accepted so that these Labourites would not be forced out of office. The WRP insisted that the elected officials had to be kept in office so that they could lead the anti-Tory struggle.

And yet, in a national election in which the WRP warned of massive attacks on the labor movement if the Tories won, the election of Labourites was no longer of any importance.

Still stranger was the following paradox: Given the fact that the WRP was now in a de facto alliance with a significant section of the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy, why was it not calling for an all-out fight to oust the Tories — and, more importantly, demanding that Livingstone, Knight and their allies come to the fore to mobilize the masses on the basis of socialist policies.

Here we come to the criminal element in the policy of the WRP. As long as the Tories remained in power, the WRP's friends among the Labour left would be able to lead soft lives as critical critics of the government, disguising their own treachery and impotence with meaningless radical



sounding denunciations of the Tories. At the same time, the WRP would be free to pursue its opportunist relations with these parlor-pinks, without having to expose them in front of the masses. This mutually agreeable and cozy relationship would be threatened if Labour came back to power.

There is only one political conclusion that can be drawn: **In 1983 the WRP was not at all interested in seeing the Labourites returned to power. From the standpoint of preserving its reactionary centrist alliances with the left Labour reformists and various trade union bureaucrats, the victory of Labour would have been "an ill wind that bodes no good." It would have created a situation where the WRP would be forced either to openly challenge their friends among the lefts or risk being completely exposed in front of the entire working class.**

The victory of the Tories in June 1983 came as a relief to Healy. It allowed him to return to the old game of building up his anti-Tory alliance inside the GLC and sections of the trade union bureaucracy ... against the working class.

As soon as the election was over, Healy immediately returned to the bankrupt opportunist line which had been used between 1981 and 1983 to transform the WRP into an appendage of the labor bureaucracy of the GLC. A statement by the Central Committee of the WRP, entitled "The Only Way Ahead After the General Election" and dated June 11, 1983 declared:

*"The defense of jobs will combine with the struggle to defend the Greater London Council (GLC) and the six metropolitan county councils which the Tories have pledged to abolish. At the center of the Tory plan is the desire to eliminate the social services provided by local government and to sack the hundreds of thousands of council workers who provide them.*

*"It is also a political attack on the rights and living standards of the working class communities, in the big inner-city areas. Labour-controlled councils must take the lead in inviting unions and all local community organizations to form Community Councils to mount a class resistance to the Tory dictatorship of central government.*

*"Into this fight must come the trade unions whose basic rights are going to come under renewed and even more ruthless attack from the Tory government."* (News Line, June 13, 1983)

This was nothing less than a reformulation of the same old treacherous plan to subordinate all sections of the working class to the state and its agents among the Labour lefts. The reference to the trade unions was especially cynical; for as we have seen, when Healy spoke of the trade unions coming "into this fight," he meant — as was made clear in the case of the underground workers — that they should avoid any confrontation with the Labourite administrators of the capitalist state and abandon the defense of their members.

Finally, no account of the WRP election campaign would be complete if it did not include Alex Mitchell's unique contribution to an understanding of the nature of the Communist and Labour parties. In the course of a lengthy "think piece" on the problems which the WRP had confronted in the course of the "Peoples March for Jobs" — which took place in the midst of the 1983 election campaign — Mitchell made this profound discovery:

**"This brings us to the central political difference between**

**the Labour Party reformists and Stalinists. The social democrats (Labourites) betray the working class but the Stalinists do it consciously. They are a party of organized treachery against the interests of the working class."** (News Line, May 16, 1983, entire section appears in bold in the original)

This observation provides much food for thought. If, indeed, the Labourites do not betray consciously, was it not therefore possible that they could be convinced to fight for the working class if only they could be shown the error of their ways? And, as for the Stalinists, Mitchell's comment makes only more curious his passionate defense of the Communist Party's control over the *Morning Star* just three weeks later.

### **36. "Dizzy with Success" — The Sixth Congress of the WRP**

When the delegates to the Sixth Congress of the WRP assembled in the late summer in 1983 they could celebrate the results of eight harrowing years of disastrous errors. The party which had been formed just a decade earlier was already on its political death-bed, suffering from an incurable case of opportunism which not a single leader inside the WRP was willing to diagnose despite all the unmistakable symptoms.

The perspectives documents prepared for the Sixth Congress epitomized the almost unfathomable degeneration which the WRP and its principal leaders had undergone. They had already reached the stage where they were not only incapable of political analysis, but were totally unable to approach the work of their organization with a modicum of honesty. Healy, Banda and Slaughter were all consciously living political lies, attempting to conceal from the party ranks what they themselves knew to be the stark truth: that the WRP was a compromised and politically-corrupt organization whose leaders had betrayed all the principles for which they had once fought.

This entire document was characterized by a truly astonishing theoretical poverty. It was virtually without anything that could be seriously described as analysis. What passed for "perspective" was contained in a few opening paragraphs which stated that:

*"The contradictions of world imperialism have completely and irreversibly torn apart the world capitalist economy. This has precipitated a crisis of over-production and indebtedness which is plunging the world into the most devastating slump in history and is pushing the capitalist banking system toward imminent collapse."* (Documents and Resolutions of the Sixth Congress, p.17)

The specific and contradictory forms of this crisis were totally ignored. No analysis was made of the strategy being pursued by the bourgeoisie nor of the changes in the economic policies of the leading imperialist powers. Any concrete examination of the actual problems of the labor movements in Europe and the United States was avoided. In fact there was but a fleeting reference to the United States, the center of world imperialism, in the document. Combined with "imminent collapse," the main resolution claimed that "there arises before the working class of the advanced capitalist and colonial nations the prospect of decisive and



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*imminent revolutionary struggles for power ...*" (Ibid., p. 18)

In Section 2 on "The struggle for power," the resolution asserted:

*"In Britain the re-election of the Thatcher government on June 9 accelerates the economic, social and political crisis gripping British capitalism and vastly intensifies the class struggle.*

*"The working class faces a violent class-war government which is using its parliamentary majority to seize absolute powers to impose its ruthless slump policies."* (Ibid.)

No attempt was made to explain the relation between the imminence of revolutionary struggles for power and the re-election of Thatcher. Why, if a revolutionary situation existed in Britain, had the middle class swung in such large numbers behind the Tories? Was there any economic basis for this phenomenon?

The split inside the Labour Party and the formation of the Social Democratic Party was not assessed objectively from

the standpoint of changes in class relations. Instead, it was brushed aside as a purely subjective plan "to wreck the chances of Labour ever forming another government." (Ibid.)

The resolution continued: *"The Tories' siege measures signify a sharp new stage of the world slump and a rapid intensification of the class struggle."* (Ibid., p. 19)

In fact, the worst of the world slump was over by 1983. The continued stagnation in the British economy was in sharp contrast to the rate of growth in the United States. But this growth was characterized not by productive investment but by an enormous increase in fictitious capital and financial parasitism. Thus, the relative upturn was not accompanied by a significant fall in unemployment levels nor in a let-up in the bourgeois offensive against the labor movements of Europe and the North America. The unprecedented scale of mergers that were carried out from 1981 on — as well as the privatization measures implemented by Thatcher — represented a reorganization of capital to offset the declining rate of profit at the expense of a drastic increase in the rate of exploitation of the working

class, while temporarily providing financial sops for the middle class. But these changes were not referred to in the resolution, let alone analyzed and comprehended from the standpoint of the development of the class struggle and the tactics of the revolutionary party.

Rather than striving for concreteness, the resolution complacently remained at the level of theoretically-impooverished abstractions, such as:

*"Not a single basic problem facing the working class — jobs, wages, working conditions, the social services, housing education, health care or basic democratic rights — can be maintained or defended without the revolutionary struggle for power. This is the essential objective truth which flows from all the conditions of the present economic and political crisis." (Ibid.)*

As a historical perspective this is true — but this declaration was not sufficient as a perspective to guide the immediate practice of the Party. As Trotsky wrote: *"An idea, correct from the point of view of revolutionary strategy as a whole, is converted into a lie and at that into a reactionary lie, if it is not translated into the language of tactics. Is it correct that in order to destroy unemployment and misery it is first necessary to destroy capitalism? It is correct. But only the biggest blockheads can conclude from all this, that we do not have to fight this very day, with all of our forces, against the measures with whose aid capitalism is increasing the misery of the workers." (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, Merit, p. 135)*

The resolution asserted:

*"Occupations to prevent the wholesale destruction of shipyards, coal mines, factories and workshops must be backed by the formation of Community Councils, a revolutionary, Soviet-type organization to establish organs of working-class power." (Resolution, p.19)*

We have already exposed Healy's attempt to palm off his Community Councils — conceived as offspring of the capitalist state whose purpose is to defend one of its branches — as genuine soviets. But aside from this crucial fraud, the reference to soviets was utterly hollow without having established in serious theoretical terms the actual existence of a revolutionary situation.

The resolution then attempted to fill the theoretical vacuum with the traditional verbiage: *"The revolutionary tempo of events calls for the Workers Revolutionary Party to turn decisively and boldly to the broadest layers of workers, trade unionists and youth to build the party, to construct new branches and to expand the circulation of the daily News Line." (Ibid.)*

The resolution then asserted that the party's central objective was to increase its membership to 5,000 by the coming November. Later on, after the collapse of the WRP in October 1985, the International Committee would learn that the actual active membership of the WRP had never been higher, during the 1980s, than about 600 members. The thousands to which Healy referred — without ever being contradicted by Banda or anyone else — were the "dead souls" of the WRP. They existed solely as notations on pieces of paper, a form of fictitious human capital that demanded an ever-increasing rate of return from the real and declining membership of the WRP. The ultimate goal of all membership drives was not the physical increase of the

real number of workers inside the party, but rather the increase in the per capita paid by each branch to the London center. In other words, the membership figure of the WRP was an imaginary integer which while useless in determining the real strength of the party inside the working class was essential in calculating the weekly income from the branches.

This organizational charlatanism complemented the political charlatanism. The document attempted no examination of the work of the party inside the trade unions — an omission that reflected the fact that no systematic work had been conducted in that sphere since the split with Thornett. No less significant was the way in which the WRP attempted to smuggle in a change of line on the nature of local government without any examination of its work over the previous two years, which had been based on an incorrect definition of their class character.

Two incompatible perspectives were put forward within one document. Once again, the Community Councils were equated with Soviets:

*"The Community Council will be the equivalent of the Soviets developed by the Russian working class in its struggle for power. They must shoulder the immediate responsibility for defending the workers' occupations and protecting the essential social services of each community, housing the homeless and protecting the localities from the attacks of fascists, the racialists and the police.*

*"They will become the local, regional and national organs of workers' power and the foundation of a Workers Revolutionary Government based on the overthrow of the capitalist state by the working class under the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party." (Ibid., pp. 46-47)*

But the fraudulent character of this perspective was glaringly exposed in the very next paragraph:

*"The role of the Community Councils will also be historically decisive in mobilizing against the Tory government's planned abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) and the six Metropolitan County Councils." (Ibid.)*

In other words, the Soviets — organs expressing the existence of dual power — were assigned the decisive role in defending organs of bourgeois rule. Why should the GLC be of any importance once the working class has broken with parliament and established its own organs of power?

In reality, ultra-left tub-thumping disguised the most cowardly opportunism and non-revolutionary perspective. "Build Community Council to save the GLC" — or, had Lenin used this formulation in 1917, the rallying cry of the Bolsheviks would have been: "Build Soviets to defend the Provisional Government!"

Then the resolution undermined the previous passages. For the first time the WRP admitted that the metropolitan county councils were *"instruments of bourgeois class rule"* and conceded that the *"defense of social services and basic democratic rights is a class question. It can only be carried out by the working class, not groups of councillors." (Ibid. p. 47)*

However, no indication was given that this new conclusion was a correction of the previous line or that it required a re-assessment of the previous work that had been done by the party and of the type of relations it had established with the likes of Livingstone and Knight. In fact, the next paragraph demonstrated that this "correction" was

nothing more than a verbal accommodation to the undeniable fact that the GLC and the county councils are part of the capitalist state. Thus, to reconcile the old opportunist practice with the verbal genuflection to orthodoxy a new formulation was advanced:

*"We call on Labour-controlled councils to move out of the council chamber and into the communities to build massive local resistance through the establishment of Community Councils. By turning to the local community and initiating the demand for Community Councils they can provide the working class with new forms of organization to develop the independent strength of the class."* (Ibid.)

Just two months before, the WRP had virtually written off the Labour Party. Now it was claiming that the Labourites would provide the impulse for the independent mobilization of the working class against the capitalist state...by moving out of the councils! From this statement it was not at all clear that this was even being raised as a demand in order to expose the Labourites — nor was this appeal reconciled with the claim made repeatedly since 1981 that the fight against Thatcher required that the councillors remain inside their council chambers.

Every section of the document bore the stamp of a diplomatic office job. The cynical attempt to reconcile the WRP leaders' different sets of political books was illustrated in such empty declamations as:

*"Every single theoretical and political struggle since that time (1938) waged by the ICFI against reformism, Stalinism and revisionism represents an imperishable conquest for the world working class."*

*"The forms of these decisive struggles — the splits and discussions on fundamental questions of Marxism as the theory of knowledge of the working class — have preserved and deepened the continuity of the struggle for the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky in the working class and which were imperishably established in the 1917 Soviet Revolution."* (Ibid., pp. 20-21)

What a load of bombast. There was not a feather-weight of political content in these holiday phrases: What struggles? What teachings? What splits? What discussions? All these platitudes were dished up to the WRP membership in the section of the resolution: *"The crisis of working class leadership."* At best one might say that this section illustrated the crisis as it existed inside the WRP, but it certainly did not show how to solve it within Britain or anywhere else.

The two sections that followed — *"Defend the gains of October"* and *"The Struggle against Stalinism"* were equally bankrupt, consisting of few abstract references to the October Revolution and the founding of the Fourth International. Of the present crisis of the USSR and Stalinism, not a word was written. Afghanistan and Poland were not mentioned. There was no new information — not even some economic data — to demonstrate the necessity for the political revolution.

Despite the fact that the WRP was still in the midst of its frenetic campaign to reestablish Communist Party control over the *Morning Star*, there was no analysis of the historical and political roots of the crisis within the CPGB and the nature of the competing factions. All that was to be found was a pathetic boast that during a mass rally in London at the end of the People's March for Jobs '83, *"the WRP*

*distributed thousands of leaflets asserting the principle [!] that 'The Morning Star is the daily newspaper of the Communist Party.' It was addressed to Communist Party members as well as the wider labour movement to reaffirm our party's historical connection with the great gains of the Russian Revolution embodied in the nationalized property relations."* (Ibid., p. 40)

Now, it appeared that the historical continuity of Trotskyism in Britain was mediated through the Stalinist rag.

In the section on the danger of nuclear war, the resolution did not even call for the United Socialist States of Europe.

One of the largest sections of the resolution was devoted to a celebration of the march organized to observe the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx.

*"The Marx Centenary march was a decisive verification [?] of the Marxist method of dialectically-abstracted theory guiding dialectical practice. It proved Trotsky's oft-stated principle that 'Marxism is a method of historical analysis, of political orientation, and not a mass of decisions prepared in advance'."* (Ibid., p. 34)

In fact, the March had nothing whatever to do with the vindication of the Marxist method as defined by Trotsky. To start with, it was conceived originally by Healy as a means of exploiting the Marx anniversary to establish some connections with the Social Democrats and Stalinists in Western Europe, as well as reviving the flagging interest of various Middle Eastern regimes in the future of the WRP. That is why he selected *"Only the revolutionary socialism of Karl Marx"* as a slogan — a classic centrist phrase — in order to avoid having the march labelled as Trotskyist. There existed no political axis upon which the march was centered. It was not directed toward building new sections of the ICFI and establishing Trotskyism as the Marxism of our time. In practice, the marchers devoted most of their time trying to obtain food and lodging. None of the money raised by the marchers could be spent to meet their daily expenses. As a result, the marchers were at times reduced to the status of beggars.

The resolution continued: *"We assembled 130 young people from YS sections in eight different countries for the march which commenced on February 12, 1983. This in itself [?] signified the indissoluble historical link [?] between the revolutionary struggles of the working class today and the revolutionary philosophy of Karl Marx."* (Ibid.)

The connections established by Healy were purely imaginary, but perhaps the most revealing statement was the following:

*"The day-to-day experiences of the marchers brought them face-to-face with the capitalist slump: closed factories and steel works, out-of-work trade unionists and youth and the violent preparations of the capitalist state machine."* (Ibid., p. 35)

It isn't necessary to march through Europe to verify this. Any youth born in any capitalist country can see closed factories and out-of-work trade unionists every day of the week. The question is, what policies did the marchers fight for among the unemployed? Were meetings held on the role of Trotskyism, on the struggle against Social Democracy and Stalinism? The resolution offered no answers because it had nothing to report.

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party insists that only by*

uniting theory and practice in the way verified by the Marx March can a revolutionary leadership be built." (Ibid)

Here was Healy's "practice of cognition" in action: Cadres were brought "face to face" with the capitalist slump in their "day to day" experiences — while, of course, collecting a great deal of money for the WRP. In place of striving to give youth a theoretical insight into the nature of class society, Healy liquidated cadre training into blind and politically-destructive activism. Most of the youth who participated on the march left the sections of the International Committee when they returned to their countries.

The section which dealt with the recent national elections never rose above the level of journalistic impressions. Great emphasis was placed on the manner in which the Tories conducted the campaign, from which the most drastic and ridiculous conclusions were drawn:

*"The Tories mounted an expensive propaganda campaign costing more than £15 million during the three weeks of electioneering. They deliberately obscured the economic crisis, the growth of mass unemployment and the destructive impact of monetarism throughout British industry.*

*"In its place they deployed the techniques of advertising to create an unreal world of 'recovery' and 'security' and 'resoluteness'. Thatcher herself was packaged by the Tory*

*media men and given the image of 'invincibility'. The opinion polls were rolled into action not to test public opinion but to form it and to coerce the middle class into falling in line with Thatcherism...It boiled down to a gigantic electoral hoax which exposed [to whom?] the fraud of bourgeois parliamentary elections. The tradition of secret parliamentary balloting was replaced by mass coercion on a scale not seen in any previous election [!!]...[It] revealed Thatcher's desperate need to win an unassailable majority to seize powers of absolute Tory rule..." (Ibid., p. 41)*

Alex Mitchell's word-processor was clearly out of control. If, however, what he was saying was true, why didn't the leadership of the WRP take action to mobilize the working class against this mass intimidation to defend democratic rights — or at least campaign for a labor inquiry. In fact, this wild impressionism was part of the transition to the conception of Tory Bonapartism which was to become the obsession of the WRP within less than a year.

The perspective of Tory dictatorship was a political hallucination that exposed the utterly petty-bourgeois character of the WRP leadership and its prostration before Thatcher and the bourgeoisie. Minor incidents reported in the newspapers were seized upon and translated into world-historical developments. Thus, according to the resolution,



Mike Banda gives a speech at Marx's grave in London, at the end of the Marx March

the Tory seizure of absolute power "was confirmed within days of the election when Thatcher disbanded the Central Policy Review Unit, the so-called 'Think Tank', and brought it into her inner-office at Downing Street. [!!!] It was a major constitutional step [!] towards the establishment of presidential rule by executive order." (Ibid., pp. 41-42)

Just as King James II imagined that he could stop the completion of the bourgeois revolution by throwing the Great Seal into the River Thames, Healy concluded that 300 years of parliamentary democracy could be ended by reshuffling the offices of a few bureaucrats at 10 Downing Street. The vast implications of Thatcher's actions were expanded upon:

*"Instead of rule via Cabinet and parliamentary debate [as the good old days of Baldwin, Churchill, Macmillan and Heath], Thatcher and her close circle of monetarists intend to make policy, draw up legislation and then use parliament to rubber-stamp it. It brings to end rule by consent and consensus [!!! — a la Heath] and inaugurates [!!] a Tory dictatorship in which unelected and unaccountable figures from the backroom of Downing Street [rather than from the backrooms of Threadneedle Street] are the real power-brokers and law makers." (Ibid., p. 42)*

This was the hysterical language of frightened petty-bourgeois democrats, who transformed their morbid fears and phobias into universal truths. In the Second World War there was a group of rather pathetic revisionist emigres from Germany who declared that Hitler's victory had inaugurated a new historical epoch of barbarism. They thus concluded that the perspective of socialist revolution had been removed from the historical agenda for the foreseeable future. This gloomy perspective was repudiated by the Fourth International. Only Shachtman found it plausible. But it might be said in defense of the "retrogressionists" (as this tendency was known) that they were reacting to the most shattering defeats in the history of the workers' movement. But what can be said in defense of Healy and Banda, who were reacting hysterically to...the movement of Thatcher's "think-tank"?

After the Congress ended and the delegates returned to their areas, Healy was apparently concerned that someone might study the documents carefully and detect their utterly bankrupt character. So within a week he wrote up a document entitled "A Guide to working with the Resolutions adopted by the Sixth Congress" that was published as the foreword in the pamphlet in which the congress documents were reproduced. Normally in the Trotskyist movement, Congress resolutions are simply read by party members and evaluated on the merits of their content. They are tested against the objective development of political events. This normal way of doing things was too easy for Healy...and too dangerous. The resolutions had to be rendered more profound — so that anyone who raised differences with the WRP resolution could be quickly expelled for attacking dialectics. So Healy's "Central Committee Department" produced the following mumbo-jumbo:

*"The four resolutions adopted by the 6th Congress are what the Congress 'asserted.' In dialectical materialist terms they are the 'OTHER OF THE FIRST' (OTHER OF THE 6TH CONGRESS)..."*

*"From the 6th Congress decisions (assertion) to unity with immediate Being through contradiction (asserted). The*

*presence of the positive in the negative (absolute essence) will denote recognition of the changes which have taken place since the Congress was held. This denotes both Semblance and Absolute Essence which is negated in anti-thesis through negation of the negation into our 'theory of knowledge' consisting of the 'logical' and the 'historical' analysis of events.*

*"A synthesis is formed through essence in existence in which as a result of analysis those parts of Congress resolutions which have become most urgent, together with the 'changes' emerge as 'essence.' We must counterpose these same 'parts' which have changed in essence, sharply to one another in order to determine the essence of the changes which have taken place.*

*"Congress proceeding through the antithesis of negation of the negation, which establishes the synthesis, allows analysis firstly to establish more clearly the importance of the abstract nature of the 6th Congress Resolution becoming more clearly revealed in the apprehension of the movement of dialectical thought." (Ibid., pp. i-v)*

Within the WRP a full-blooded sacred language had been created to both mystify and sanctify the revisionist politics of the petty-bourgeois clique that ran the organization. For all its apparent eccentricity, this grotesque perversion of dialectics became an essential and conscious means through which Healy worked to disorient and destroy the cadre of the WRP. By now it was no secret to a substantial section of the WRP leadership that Healy's ramblings had nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism. Nearly one year had passed since both Slaughter and Banda had declared their agreement with the exposure of Healy's dialectics that had been made by the Workers League. But they continued to defend it in front of the membership, knowing full well that the whole purpose of the exercise was to create such an atmosphere of confusion that the right-wing line could be pumped into the party without the members even realizing it.

As if to flaunt their own cynicism, they supported a resolution which specifically described Healy's *Studies* as a "vital part" of the dialectical materialist training of cadre. The Political Committee clique, along with men such as Slaughter who continuously upheld its authority, embodied an organized conspiracy against the Party membership, which was denied any control whatsoever over the leaders. Healy himself, on a motion introduced by Cliff Slaughter, had been given absolute and supra-constitutional authority inside the WRP.

This state of affairs cannot be attributed to the whims of an individual. Within the WRP, a party that had emerged out of a long struggle for Trotskyism and which had gathered within it the most conscious elements within the British proletariat, a savage class struggle raged beneath the surface between the working class elements and the large layers of petty-bourgeois professionals and ex-students who had entered the party during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Healy rested more and more upon the latter, who tolerated and encouraged his grotesque abuse of authority — not only because he accepted for all the shouting and screaming, their middle class ways, but above all because they enthusiastically supported his opportunist line. A university lecturer like G. Pilling could disappear without an explanation for months at a time and abandon all political



responsibilities. But when he chose to reappear, there was always a warm seat waiting for him on the WRP Central Committee and even on the International Committee, where he would be used by Healy to denounce genuine Trotskyists who knew no other life but the revolutionary movement.

We have devoted considerable space to analyzing the main resolution of the Sixth Congress because it establishes that the WRP had been, by 1983, destroyed by opportunism. This resolution was the expression of the intense crisis within the WRP leadership, which had abandoned any serious struggle for Marxism in the working class. All that was now needed to complete its fall into the political abyss was a push from the working class. Healy and company had not long to wait.

### 37. The Beginning of the End: The WRP and the NGA Dispute

In December 1983 the eruption of the Messenger Newspaper dispute in Warrington produced a crucial confrontation with the Thatcher government and the trade union movement. The National Graphical Association (NGA) was hit with massive fines under the new Tory anti-trade union laws after it defied a court order and attempted to shut down the scab operation run by publisher Eddie Shah.

Having been working on the assumption that the central stage of the class struggle had shifted away from the trade unions and to the dispute between the Tories and local government, the WRP was taken by surprise by this develop-



Tony Dubbins

ment. To make up for lost time — having virtually abandoned systematic work inside the trade unions — the WRP immediately formed an uncritical and, by definition, unprincipled bloc with the NGA bureaucracy.

Between November 25 and December 12, the NGA organized mass picketing outside the *Stockport Messenger*, in defiance of a court injunction. A subcommittee of the Trades Union Congress voted to endorse industrial action in support of the NGA, but this decision was overturned on December 14, 1983 by a vote of 29 to 21 on the TUC General Council. The NGA Executive then voted to call off the 24-hour national strike that had been scheduled to begin that day. However, it declared that it would not pay the fines which had been imposed by the courts and called on workers to participate in a mass demonstration in Warrington in January.

The WRP Political Committee issued a statement on December 9, 1983 which declared:

*"The printing trade unions led by the NGA are now left with no alternative: they must organize a political strike to bring down the Tory government."* (News Line, December 10, 1983)

However, as soon as the NGA decided not to strike, the WRP immediately changed its line to accommodate the trade union bureaucracy. With the editorial published in the *News Line* on December 17, 1983, the WRP fell to a new political low. Denouncing the SWP [the British state capitalists] for criticizing the NGA's decision to call off its strike, the *News Line* wrote:

*"The SWP's 'policy' is typical of this bunch of political adventurers. They want the NGA to call an immediate all-out national strike. [Just as the WRP had demanded one week earlier] This is the kind of 'advice' that was given to the PLO when it was trapped in Beirut last year and surrounded by the Israeli air force, navy and army. It is a call on the NGA to commit mass suicide just so the SWP revisionists can organize a monster weep-in."*

It is hard to say what was worse in this statement: its grovelling before the NGA leaders or its nauseating pessimism.

They even denounced trade union leaders who attacked the TUC for having betrayed the NGA.

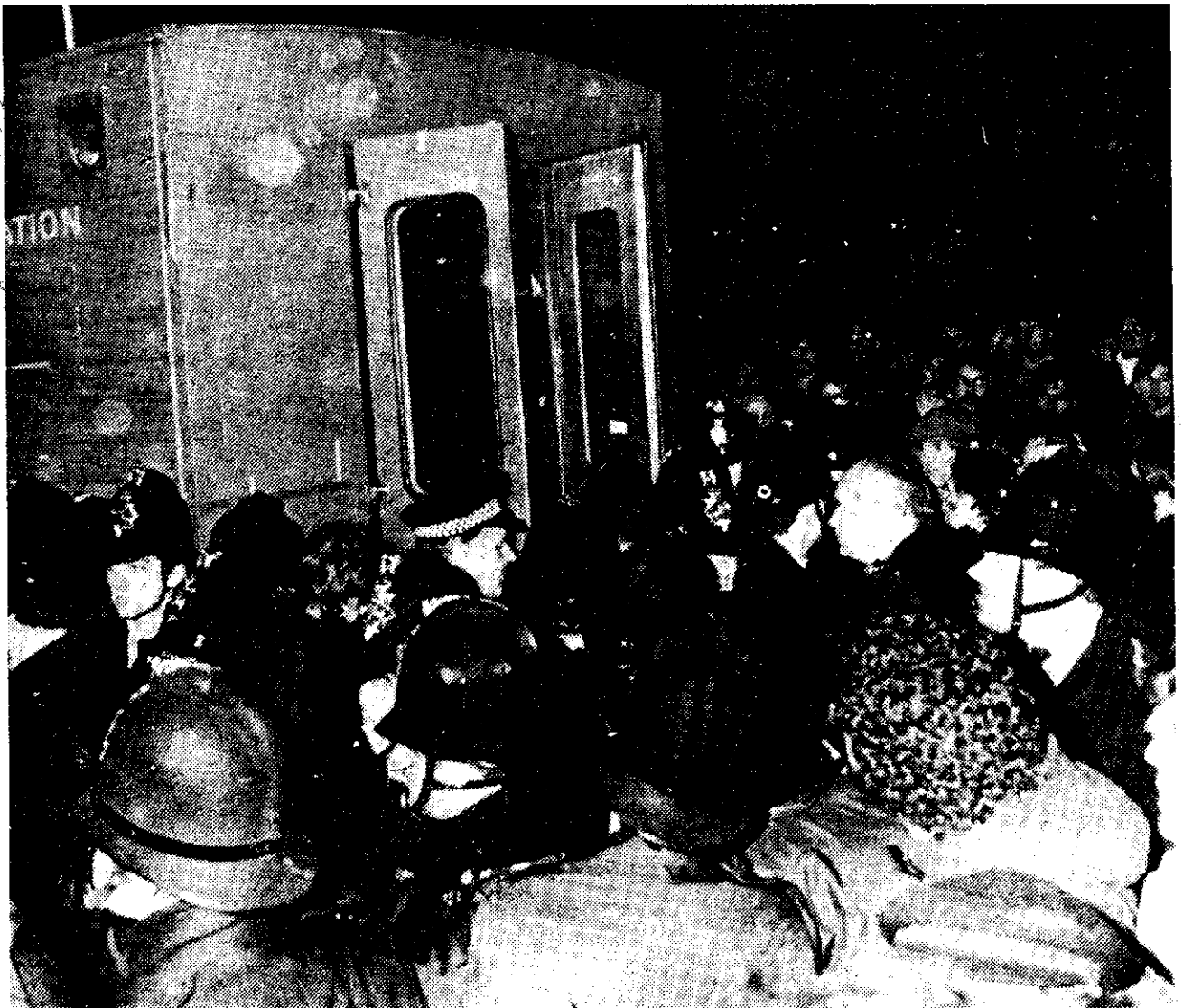
*"Unlike the revisionists, miners' leader Arthur Scargill is inexperienced [?] and doesn't understand the working class. He is another of those whose utter frustration leads them into fighting with their mouth."*

*"Scargill has claimed that the TUC decision not to support the NGA was the 'greatest sell-out by the TUC since the General Strike of 1926.' The implication is that it also means the greatest defeat of the working class as well."*

The WRP was now well to the right of a section of the trade union bureaucracy and was actually deflecting a fight against the TUC. It then offered a fantastic rationalization for this criminal policy.

*"But the 1983 betrayal by the TUC comes in advance of the General Strike situation. It is therefore to the political advantage of the whole working class because it exposes the treachery of the reformist leadership and provokes the all-important discussion on building the leadership necessary to conduct a political strike against the Tories which will win."*





**NGA printers clash with police during 1983 Warrington struggle**

A new political category had been discovered by Healy: the pre-emptive betrayal. This disgusting sophistry was answered in real life just a few months later when the miners went out — their strike weakened in advance by the TUC betrayal. It was therefore not surprising that Scargill was among the most vociferous critics of the TUC. This made Scargill, in turn, one of the chief targets of the WRP's back-handed defense of the TUC:

*"Scargill is another of those urging the NGA to go-it-alone into an indefinite strike. To follow this advice would be a recipe for disaster. It would lead to an employers' lock-out, astronomical claims for damages in the High Court, probably a split in the union and the victory of the class collaborationist line of Murray and the right wing.*

*"Those who strike with their mouths are advocating that the NGA comes out on its own, and takes on the full force of the capitalist state. This would be industrial suicide. Having thought very seriously about its struggle, the NGA knows very well that it could be wiped out as a union and that the support of the working class is its main line of defense."*

Healy's reasoning corresponded entirely to that of TUC General Secretary Murray and all his right-wing accomplices. Had Scargill accepted this position, there would have been no miners' strike. In fact, this statement was an argument against all strikes except those which begin with a money-back-guarantee of victory. All the arguments marshalled by the WRP leadership were those of wretched political and physical cowards who for all their talk of the great anti-Tory struggle lived in deathly fear of any struggle against the state. For Healy the party had become a means for securing a comfortable old age; for Mitchell it had become a career; for Vanessa Redgrave it was a chance to impersonate Isadora Duncan; for Slaughter it was, as it had been for years, a hobby; and for Banda it was a millstone around the neck. Their collective inner rejection of the revolution found its expression in the following craven comment:

*"The NGA...is a craft union of politically moderate opinion, not a revolutionary party as the revisionists seem to*

think. And under the exceptional circumstances of state persecution, we believe they are acquitting themselves extremely well."

Such an apology for a motley crew of Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucrats could only be made by people who had already given up on socialist revolution.

Moreover, despite their constant claims that a revolutionary situation existed in Britain, the WRP leaders' attitude to every struggle which erupted proved that they really did not believe it at all. While writing in their Sixth Congress resolution of the "revolutionary tempo of events" and insisting that "the revolutionary struggle for power...is the essential objective truth which flows from all the conditions of the present economic and political crisis" (Resolution, p. 19), they were convinced that any struggle which erupted was hopeless and doomed to failure.

In justifying the action of the NGA, the WRP worked out a line — which had already been used in 1980 to defend Sirs — that amounted to an automatic apology for the trade union bureaucracy. All trade union leaders who do not claim to be revolutionaries should not be criticized for acting as reformists!

Incredibly, the line being given inside the membership bore no relation to the position argued in public — thus demonstrating how the leadership maneuvered with the rank and file to maintain a left cover for its betrayals. Privately the WRP leadership was reassuring the membership that the NGA leaders were committed to continuing the struggle. A Political Letter written by Banda and Healy, also dated December 16, 1983, addressed to all Central Committee members and branch secretaries claimed that "There is now a definite split within the TUC" and promised that "The NGA will not call off the strike with the 'Stockport Messenger' group and other unions will, one way or the other, become involved. The support for the TUC right wing is by no means fixed and the ground between the two camps will be constantly changing." (Resolutions adopted by the Seventh Congress, Dec., 1984, p. 95)

The letter went on to stress the immense importance of the divisions within the TUC, claiming that the split on the NGA vote means that "the possibility for mass revolutionary work is now opening up for our Party." (Ibid., p. 96)

This letter served only to distract the membership, build up its illusions in the NGA and TUC bureaucracy, and cover up the right-wing line of the WRP leadership.

In January leaders of the NGA were brought on to the stage of the Young Socialist 33rd Annual General Meeting where they were hailed like conquering heroes. However, the NGA spokesman startled the delegates when he said that while the union was dead against paying the Tory fines, he was not sure how long that powerful conviction would last. Banda and Healy immediately fired off Political Letter Number 2, dated January 9, 1984, to set the disquieted party members at ease: "The question which was posed by the representative of the NGA to the effect that whilst the NGA would not comply with the courts and perjure (sic) itself, he was not certain about the future, is the question of questions for what is in effect a reformist trade union movement. The working class cannot any longer live with the Tory government and its class laws, which are designed to destroy the effectiveness of its trade unions. This is why there is a great political explosion building up within the working class. This

was reflected in the contribution of the NGA representative." (Ibid., pp. 98-99)

Ten days later the *News Line* reported without comment that the NGA had decided to purge its contempt of court by paying £675,000 in fines and agreeing to halt all industrial action against the *Stockport Messenger*. A few days later, the NGA made clear its intention to completely abandon the struggle against Shah by calling off the scheduled demonstration at Warrington. The *News Line*, without naming any names, issued a pathetic verbal protest.

"By calling off Saturday's rally the organizers have made a deplorable concession to the mood of doom and gloom which is permeating the circle of the petty-bourgeois revisionists, the Labour fake 'lefts' and the Stalinists.

"It tends to lower the militancy of the working class when everything must be done to intensify the class struggle against the Tory government, the anti-union laws, mass unemployment and the state." (January 25, 1984)

The NGA leaders might have replied that if they were suffering from doom and gloom, it came from having read the previous issues of the *News Line*. As a matter of fact, this very editorial did not exactly end on an optimistic note:

"The NGA might be able to purge its contempt in the High Court to live to fight another day. No one is sure."

Every aspect of the political line of the WRP on the NGA was contradicted by the actual course of events. In order to save face in front of the membership and pretend that everything had gone as expected, Healy produced an astounding analysis of the NGA struggle that was transformed into a unanimously-accepted Central Committee resolution. It proved that the events unfolded like dialectical clock-work in accordance with Healy's most beloved logical categories. He proved, with an irrefutable assertion, that "the semblance of the new political situation began with the picketing of the *Stockport Messenger* at the end of November 1983" and that "The transition to Appearance began when Murray on behalf of the right wing of the TUC General Council denounced the validity of the committee's decision on the morning of December 13, 1983."

Healy's dialectical locomotive was moving at full steam ahead. "Wednesday December 14, 1983 marked the negation of Semblance into Appearance when the General Council voted 29 to 21 to abandon the NGA and uphold the 1980 Tory Employment Act."

Fortunately, the vote didn't go the other way because it might have created a serious identity crisis for the categories, which had long before determined within the womb of the Absolute Spirit — which Healy alone could interpret — the necessary sequence of events:

"The Appearance manifested on December 14 continued to develop through a series of events which finally forced the NGA on January 19, 1984 to legally purge its contempt and pay the fine. At this point appearance as the unity of semblance and existence turns into actuality."

In other words, Healy firmly established that responsibility for the betrayal of the struggle rested not with the NGA bureaucracy but with Messrs. Semblance, Appearance, Actuality and Essence. As for poor Tony Dubbins, Bill Booroff, Len Murray and the WRP, they were merely innocent victims of these pro-Tory logical categories.

## 38. Conflict within the International Committee

Throughout 1983 Cliff Slaughter, working behind the scenes with Healy, laid the ground work for a political provocation against the Workers League, the organization of US Trotskyists which worked in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International. In April 1983 Slaughter seized on an editorial which had appeared several weeks earlier in the *Bulletin*, the American party's twice-weekly newspaper, to use philosophy as a pretext for attacking the Workers League. In a short statement noting the 100th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx and paying homage to his work, the editorial had failed to specifically mention the contribution of German classical idealism to the development of materialist dialectics. Though this was hardly a matter which should have aroused any special notice and though Slaughter knew that North, who had been in Britain when the editorial was published, had not written it, the IC Secretary wrote a grave letter to the Workers League suggesting that something was dreadfully wrong inside the American organization.

Three months later, protesting the fact that he had not received a written reply, Slaughter again wrote to the Workers League demanding that his criticisms be answered:

*"You will recall that I sent you a short letter, drawing your attention to certain sentences in a Bulletin editorial. This editorial wrote about Marx's theoretical contribution without the essential content of the dialectical method achieved by the 'negation' of Hegel's philosophy. Do I take it that you received this letter and that a reply can be expected."* (July 13, 1983)

Prior to these letters, Slaughter had not visited the North American continent in more than five years. At that time, he had supposedly come to attend a week-end meeting of the Workers League Central Committee, but missed half the sessions because he was more interested in browsing through New York City bookshops in search of Max Raphael's study of Pablo Picasso than in discussing the problems of the American movement. Then, before the CC meeting ended, he had to be rushed to the airport on Monday afternoon so that he wouldn't miss his scheduled lecture at Bradford University. For the cost of a round-trip trans-Atlantic ticket, paid for by the Workers League, the American comrades had the pleasure of his company for a few hours. Now, on the basis of an editorial which had not mentioned Marx's debt to Hegel, Slaughter was pretending that he had detected serious weaknesses inside the Workers League. It should be added that these two letters on the Marx editorial were the first the Workers League had received from Slaughter in six years and only the second in eight years.

In October 1983 at a meeting of the International Committee, North gave a lengthy report on the political situation in the United States and the plans of the Workers League to intervene in the 1984 Presidential elections on the basis of the fight for the political independence of the working class from the two main capitalist parties through the formation of a Labor Party based on the trade unions. In accordance with a plan that had been worked out with Healy prior to the meeting, Slaughter expressed alarm that North's report had failed to concentrate on the progress of the struggle for dialectical materialism in the United States. Banda then in-

tervened, after having glanced at the headline of the current *Bulletin*, which denounced Reagan's nation-wide speech justifying the US invasion of Grenada. Attacking the headline, "Reagan is a Liar," Banda declared that it should have read "Hands Off Grenada" and that this represented a complete repudiation of revolutionary defeatism. North rejected this attack, pointing out that Banda should have first read the newspaper before attacking the Workers League's position on the invasion. He then called to Banda's attention the fact that the headline preferred by Banda — "Hands Off Grenada" — in fact appeared in another part of the newspaper. When the meeting was over, Banda apologized to North and said that he would inform the IC delegates that he was withdrawing his criticism.

But following this meeting of the International Committee, Slaughter decided to press ahead with the attack on the Workers League — charging that further study of the *Bulletin* had convinced him that the Workers League had indeed failed to take a revolutionary defeatist position. Later, in the midst of the explosion inside the WRP, Slaughter would admit that this entire incident was concocted by the WRP leadership in order to hit back at the Workers League because of the criticisms it had made in 1982 (A transcript of his remarks is in existence).

In a letter to the Workers League that was received in early December 1983 (There was no date on it), Slaughter attacked the report that had been given by North at the October meeting, criticizing "its heavy emphasis on the 'political independence of the working class'" and warning that this "showed the dangers that we are not holding fast to these very basic lessons of Trotsky's last struggle and the whole struggle of the International Committee." He warned that an exaggerated emphasis on the independence of the working class "will become a weapon in the hands of all those who retain the mark of pragmatism, because it will be treasured by them as something more 'concrete' than the explicit struggle to develop and comprehend the categories of dialectics as the method for that life-and-death matter of grasping the rapid and all-sided development thrown up by the world crisis."

Once again the WRP leaders were at their old game of using pseudo-dialectical phraseology to create a provocation inside the International Committee and to attack the struggle of Marxists inside the working class. As has now been revealed, Slaughter had abandoned anything approaching systematic work inside his own section since the mid-1960's and was placed by Healy inside the leadership of the ICFI as a faithful retainer. He had degenerated into a theoretical charlatan and a political prostitute. Moreover, as his letter made clear to the Workers League leadership, Slaughter's attack on the fight for the political independence of the working class meant that he had abandoned Trotskyism and joined the camp of Pabloite revisionism.

North replied to Slaughter in a letter dated December 27, 1983. He rejected formal references to the dialectical method as a means of settling political disputes. "Of that any pragmatist is quite capable. What must be studied and developed is the correct application of the dialectical method and historical materialism. However, this is by no means undermined by 'heavy emphasis' on the 'political independence of the working class.' I believe that a serious study of all of Lenin's works — and, most explicitly, his

earliest economic and philosophical studies — will reveal the inner connection between his concentration on the correct application of the dialectical method and his 'heavy emphasis' on the 'political independence of the working class.'

"I must admit that I am disturbed by the very suggestion that an emphasis on the 'political independence of the working class' could be characterized as 'very heavy' within the International Committee — especially in relation to the report from a sympathizing section in a country in which the working class has not yet broken politically from the liberals. All the organizational, political and theoretical tasks of a Marxist party — above all, in the United States — are directed precisely toward the achievement of this political independence.

"While you suggest that this emphasis 'will become a weapon in the hands of all those who retain the mark of pragmatism', I see nothing that supports this conclusion. The whole fight against the SWP since 1961 — not to mention the entire history of the struggle of Bolshevism — has hinged on this very issue. Far from embracing the concept of political independence of the working class, it is under relentless attack by Stalinists and revisionists all over the world today. The neo-Stalinism of the SWP does not originate in the head of Mr. Barnes but is a very definite response of US imperialism to the new stage of the capitalist crisis and the revolutionary upsurge of the world proletariat. In this way Pabloism serves as a medium for the transmission of imperialist pressures into the workers' movement. As I have heard you insist so many times in the past, it is at precisely such a point that the International Committee must be on the alert for any trace of the revisionist outlook within its own ranks and at the same time intensify its political and theoretical assault against Pabloism. As you will certainly agree, this fight against Pabloism is by no means behind us.

"It is precisely for this reason that I believe that a clarification of the issues you have raised in your letter is very necessary."

The Workers League decided that the time had come to challenge the basic political and class line of the Workers Revolutionary Party — first and foremost its abandonment of the theory of the Permanent Revolution. Having received no answer from Slaughter, North addressed a letter to Mike Banda, dated January 23, 1984, in which he expressed concern "that the International Committee is now in danger of losing the gains of its many years of principled struggle" and that the Workers League was "deeply troubled by the growing signs of a political drift toward positions quite similar — both in conclusions and methodology — to whose which we have historically associated with Pabloism."

The letter stated that the ICFI was working "without a clear and politically-unified perspective to guide its practice. Rather than a perspective for the building of the sections of the International Committee in every country, the central focus of the IC's work for several years has been the development of alliances with various bourgeois nationalist regimes and the liberation movements. The content of these alliances has less and less reflected any clear orientation toward the development of our own forces as central to the fight to establish the leading role of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist struggle in the semi-colonial countries. The very conceptions advanced by the SWP in relation to Cuba and

Algeria which we attacked so vigorously in the early 1960s appear with increasing frequency within our own press."

The letter then reviewed the response of the *News Line* to the recent meeting of Arafat with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak following the PLO leader's forced evacuation from Beirut. While not attacking Arafat for having made this unauthorized trip to Egypt, North criticized the *News Line's* glorification of this desperate maneuver:

The *News Line*, in the course of denouncing George Habash's "slandorous accusation" against Arafat, had written:

"These verbal assaults are the product of limited minds and narrow outlooks. Arafat's talks with Mubarak do not constitute support for Camp David. On the contrary, Arafat's audacious diplomacy has helped to undermine the treaty between Egypt and Israel, not strengthen it.

"The essence of the Camp David conspiracy between Sadat, Beigin and Carter was to ignore the existence of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and to dismiss the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

"This is why the treaty was so vigorously opposed. But now Mubarak has welcomed Arafat in Cairo. This is not a meeting of individuals. It signifies the Egyptian government's recognition of the PLO, its legitimacy in the Middle East struggle, and its inalienable right to fight for the liberation of Palestine.

"Does this serve Camp David? Does it serve Zionist imperialism? Of course not. It is a severe diplomatic and political blow to the crisis-stricken Shamir regime and that is why Tel Aviv has been angrily denouncing the Arafat-Mubarak talks." (December 30, 1983)

In response the Workers League wrote:

"...Article after article in the *News Line* presents this visit as a strategical tour de force on the part of Arafat that has left his enemies confounded once again. Such an approach, however sincerely motivated by the determination to defend the PLO against its enemies, serves only to mislead and disarm our cadre and the readers of our press.

"As Marxists, our starting point in making political analysis is never the conscious intentions of political leaders; it must be the class forces they represent and the logic of the class struggle of which their actions are a necessary expression. The policies of Arafat reflect his class standpoint as a petty-bourgeois nationalist. He is maneuvering not only between different bourgeois regimes within the Middle East but also between the opposing class forces within the Palestinian movement. However great his personal courage and heroism, Arafat's policies cannot provide an answer to the great historic problems of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. While it is our duty to defend him and the PLO against the reactionary machinations of the Syrian Ba'athists, we are by no means obligated to hail his pragmatic turn to Mubarak as some sort of strategical master-stroke."

Challenging the *News Line's* claim that "Arafat has brilliantly managed to bring Egypt back into Middle Eastern calculations and, at the same time, to stay out of the clutches of both Damascus and Amman," North stated:

"The conception that the course of history is determined

by inspired acts of genius on the diplomatic chess board belongs to idealist bourgeois historiography and not to the materialist conception of history. Our calculations, if not Arafat's, are always based on an estimate of class forces and the potential of the working class for revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. For us, the salvation of the Palestinian Revolution does not lie in escaping from the 'clutches' of Syria by leaping into the clutches of Egypt, Morocco and, in fact, Jordan — with whose King the PLO is presently engaged in intense negotiations and with whom Mubarak is now scheduled to meet next month. Are we now to welcome and place confidence in this new round of diplomacy? Our strategical goal should always be the mobilization of the working class — supported by the peasantry — against the bourgeoisie in each and every Middle Eastern country."

North pointed out that the actual content of the WRP's claim that it supported the "political independence" of the PLO was uncritical support for its maneuvers. "As used here, the slogan of 'political independence' is reduced to an almost meaningless abstraction, which serves to cover up the danger that the political logic of the PLO's maneuvers — whatever Arafat's intentions — leads inevitably toward its subordination to the interests of the Arab bourgeoisie and world imperialism."

The letter continued: "By writing articles which serve only to justify what has already been done by Arafat and which paint in bright colors this or that pragmatic maneuver, the

danger arises that we are falling victim to a political outlook that calls into question the real necessity to build the Trotskyist movement in the semi-colonial countries and within the anti-imperialist national liberation movements. If Arafat, guided only by his intuition can successfully lead the PLO, what need is there for the training of Palestinian cadre as dialectical materialists? Involved here is not a single article or merely the Arafat-Mubarak episode. We now have gone through years of experiences since 1976 which have shown again and again that emphasis on the special qualifications of this or that leader paves the way for serious miscalculations, dangerous errors and intractable contradictions in our political line. Let us merely note that among the staunchest supporters of Arafat's meeting with Mubarak is Saddam Hussein, who we once enthusiastically supported but for whose overthrow we now regularly call, and that among Arafat's bitterest opponents is Muammar Gaddafi, who until recently received the same sort of praise we now bestow upon the PLO leader."

In conclusion the letter warned:

"We feel that the basic problem is that the International Committee has not yet drawn up a real balance sheet on its work over the last eight years. Surely we cannot simply go from alliance to alliance without making an analysis of each concrete experience through which the International Committee has passed. Without such an analysis we will face greater and greater confusion which inevitably, if not corrected, will produce political disasters within the sections."



Iranian Tudeh (Communist) Party members put on trial by Khomeiny regime

North called on Banda to help renew the "struggle against Pabloite revisionism — above all, against the manifestations of its outlook within our own sections. Let us begin this work by availing ourselves of the opportunity presented by the scheduled IC meeting to prepare the foundation for an exhaustive discussion on international perspectives, aimed at the drafting of a comprehensive international resolution... The time has certainly come for the International Committee to issue its reply to the attacks of the SWP neo-Stalinists on the Theory of Permanent Revolution and to demonstrate that it remains the indispensable scientific foundation for the building of the World Party of Socialist Revolution."

When the Workers League delegation arrived at the IC meeting that had been scheduled for the weekend of February 11-12, 1984, it discovered that the WRP had failed to contact several sections and arrange for their attendance. The delegate from Sri Lanka, the national secretary of the Revolutionary Communist League, who had been a member of the ICFI since 1968, was not informed of the meeting and knew nothing about the differences that had been raised by the Workers League since 1982. The regular delegate from the Australian Socialist Labour League was also not informed of the meeting. When the Workers League delegate asked why the regular Australian delegate's place had been taken by an inexperienced member of the SLL who was working in the *News Line* office for training, this objection was brushed aside. The Peruvian delegate had also not been informed of the meeting. As for the Greek delegation, one of its members was secretly engaged in an intimate personal relationship with Healy while the other, national secretary Savas Michael, had paid a visit to Iran on instructions from Healy and in clear violation of ICFI discipline. Moreover, his section was also profiting from these unprincipled connections with the national bourgeoisie. The WRP's unprincipled clique faction also included the delegate from Spain, who was later identified by Healy's secretary as another of his intimate associates. Moreover, as the Workers League learned later, the WRP leadership had initiated within the International Committee a slander campaign against David North, indicating darkly that he could not be trusted. "We don't know who North is," was the line.

Under these conditions, the outcome of the meeting was rigged in advance. Those delegates who were present at the meeting had not read North's letters to Banda and Slaughter before arriving at the IC meeting and there had been no discussion of the political differences on the central committees of the respective sections. In fact, none of them even knew about the differences.

North's report was delivered in reply to a draft of a perspectives resolution that had been prepared by Slaughter. This draft contained no analysis of any political or economic developments after 1971 and was confined to a sterile, formal and sketchy recapitulation of the history of the Trotskyist movement. Criticizing this draft for failing to make any assessment of the strategic experiences of the working class and the ICFI since 1971, North read through his report, which concentrated on establishing the identity of the international political line of the WRP and the American Socialist Workers Party. It reviewed the development of the WRP's alliances in the Middle East since 1976, noting that "by mid-1978 a general orientation toward relations with nationalist regimes and liberation movements was

developing without any corresponding perspective for the actual building of our own forces inside the working class. An entirely uncritical and incorrect appraisal began to emerge ever more openly within our press inviting the cadres and the working class to view these bourgeois nationalists as 'anti-imperialist' leaders to whom political support must be given."

The report went on to review the support given by the WRP to the execution of Iraqi CP members, its shifts on the Iran-Iraq war, the definition of Libya as a socialist state and the uncritical praise heaped by S. Michael upon the Khomeini regime. It then mentioned the WRP's line on the Malvinas War and concluded by raising questions about the orientation of the WRP toward sections of the Labour Party bureaucracy in Britain. The report called into question the WRP's evaluation of Livingstone and Knight and criticized its policy on the NGA.

The report noted that there had been a "long process of adaptation to petty-bourgeois forces," and then stated: "This does have definite theoretical roots — an empiricist method dressed up with Hegelian phraseology — but one which has absolutely nothing to do with Marxism. The glorification of sense perception and the rejection of historical materialism."

The report concluded: "We are worried by the depth of political and ideological differences. But we believe that the problems can be surmounted through serious and honest discussion. What is needed is a real discussion within the IC and the leaderships of the national sections. Documents should be prepared and circulated. This is the way to proceed. The IC can only emerge strengthened. The Workers League is very anxious to participate and to learn from this discussion. We treasure our collaboration with the British comrades and with every section of the IC. Let us set a definite timetable for this discussion and on this basis work toward an IC Conference."

The British delegation consisted of Banda, Slaughter and the inevitable Geoff Pilling, who one month later was to again desert the movement — but not before he was given another opportunity to denounce the Workers League. Healy himself, a political coward, refused to attend the meeting to defend the line of his organization. That he left to Banda and Slaughter. Their defense consisted of allegations that the Workers League had grossly distorted the position of the WRP and had made all sorts of unsupportable inferences from the statements which appeared in the *News Line*. This was attributed to, of course, American pragmatism which had led the Workers League to "shoot from the hip." The British delegates made it clear that they intended to split from the Workers League if the differences weren't immediately settled — that is, if the Workers League didn't withdraw its criticisms. The Greek delegate viciously denounced the Workers League in unashamedly chauvinist terms, declaring that North's criticism of the WRP was a manifestation of "American messianism." Not one of the delegates from the remaining sections present at the meeting expressed any agreement with the criticisms of the Workers League or suggested that they merited further discussion. The political climate within the meeting, especially on the part of Banda, became increasingly subjective and frantic. It was clear that there was not going to be any serious discussion of the issues, and that the ICFI, at that point, was unable to function as an international party.



Faced with this situation, the Workers League delegation decided to bide its time and reluctantly accepted the British demand that it withdraw its criticisms. The alternative was a split under conditions in which the positions of the Workers League would not have been known within the sections of the International Committee.

The sabotaging of discussion would not have been possible had it not been for the disloyal role of Banda and Slaughter. Under conditions in which Healy was so politically weak that he could not defend his views in person, they orchestrated a factional gang-up against the Workers League. One day after the IC Meeting concluded, on February 14, 1984, Healy sent Slaughter a "Dear Cliff" letter congratulating him for the "good political job" he had done. Healy boasted that "from the standpoint of the development of the dialectical materialist method we are strong enough to ideologically rout our most important and powerful imperialist opponents."

This incredible slander was then upheld with the usual dialectical crack-pot verbiage: "Our opponents metaphysically saw the opposites as mutually exclusive opposites so they pitched their section as a part of the world party against the World Party itself. Both became mutually exclusive opposites in their heads. To maintain the metaphysical illusion they employed the pragmatic selection of quotations without any real content, weilding (sic) them in a subjective idealist way against the political development of the International Committee.

"We, as dialectical materialists see opposites in their unity and reciprocal interpenetration, met the challenge head on, as it were, exposing the arguments of our opponents concretely in the conditions of the world revolution that exist today. For us the basis of struggle started from the unity of the IC as the core of the World Party and the world economic and political crisis of capitalism. This was, and is, the basis for our theoretical generalisations and their manifestation in our practise as a unity and identity of opposites. All structures and the processes that embrace them, arise from this unity and interpenetration of dialectical opposites. That is why we transformed the opposites into one another, with no holds barred, and emerged with a new unity and identity of opposites on a new and higher level. We have avoided the split which was posed by the metaphysical pragmatists and established instead this new unity and identity of opposites, of which they are still a part. We look forward to this state of affairs continuing, also if necessary with no holds barred."

Enraptured by the dialectical rotations of Healy's head, Polonius-Slaughter immediately replied to the letter in order to declare his admiration for the profundity of its analysis. Dated February 16, 1984, Slaughter's letter read:

"Dear Gerry

"Thank you for your letter of February 14. I believe that what you say does penetrate more deeply to the essential content of what took place at the IC of Feb 11/12. The attack from the US Section has as its content the need of the imperialists to destroy the IC. To defeat this attack means that the dialectical materialist training of the cadre in the last period has indeed been in line with the needs created by the most fundamental processes of revolutionary change in the objective world. This objective necessity at the heart of this interconnection could not have been grasped so clearly

and made consciously, the content of our response without the systematic work on Vol 14 as well as Vol 38.

"Not only that: we have to understand as your letter says in conclusion, that the newly established unity and conflict of opposites is not a completed and self-contained process but develops always anew in interconnection with the world revolution of which it is a part. Hence we go forward 'also if necessary with no holds barred.'

"Fraternally, Cliff"

These letters, which were unearthed by the International Control Commission, were of a politically-criminal character. Stripped of their fake-scientific trappings, they expose the contempt with which Healy and Slaughter viewed the Fourth International and their indifference to the political impact of their unprincipled factionalism upon the international workers' movement. They thought nothing of destroying Trotskyist cadre in the heart of world imperialism — built out of a decades-long struggle against revisionism — nor anywhere else in the world. Those who have read Slaughter's writings on Gramsci, Lucacs and Walter Benjamin might ask how this cultured English humanist could bring himself to write such disgusting flattery in response to a letter which was as depraved as it was intellectually bankrupt, and how he could especially declare his support for a "no-holds-barred" approach to the struggle against the Workers League. The answer lies in the reality of the class struggle. When confronted with the fundamental issue of social revolution, the middle-class philistines — many of whom call themselves Marxists — will make whatever compromises are necessary with their consciences and align themselves with those who defend the interests of their class. In the 1930's, there were to be found inside the British Communist Party men no less cultured than Slaughter, such as Palme Dutt and King's Councillor D.N. Pritt, who defended the Moscow Trials — for the same class reasons.

Of course, the philistine does not like that the origins of his treachery should be traced to its class roots. That is why Slaughter, in the aftermath of the crisis that has exposed all that was rotten inside the WRP, now insists that its cause should not be sought in class forces — but in a soothing psychological abstraction which he calls "The British dislike of theory."

### 39. The WRP Betrays the Miners Strike

The decision of Healy, Banda and Slaughter to sabotage all political discussion within the International Committee gravely undermined the work of all its sections, but it sealed the doom of the Workers Revolutionary Party. February 1984 was the last chance the WRP had to objectively confront the political and theoretical questions underlying its protracted degeneration during the previous decade. But the refusal to tolerate any discussion of its own work inside the International Committee meant that one month later, with the outbreak of the strike called by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the WRP was totally disarmed in front of the greatest class battle in Britain since the General Strike of 1926.

The political implications of the rejection of the struggle against revisionism was immediately revealed in the first few weeks of the miners' strike. Forgetting all the lessons of the 1953 struggle against the Pabloites in France as well as the



further lessons which it had extracted from the fight to correct the errors of the French OCI during the May-June events of 1968, the WRP pursued essentially the same revisionist line that it had once opposed.

In the *Open Letter* written by Cannon in 1953, he specifically cited the apology offered by the Pabloites for the refusal of the CGT — the Stalinist-controlled French trade union federation — to transform the August General Strike into a political struggle against the government. Fifteen years later, the Socialist Labour League sharply criticized the failure of the OCI to place political demands upon the Communist and Socialist parties during the May-June General Strike — specifically, the refusal of the OCI to demand that the CP and CGT take the power.

In its statement on the split with the OCI in 1971, the ICFI majority stated:

*"May-June 1968, with the French workers on General Strike, themselves striving for an alternative government, was the greatest testing time for the OCI. But what did the strike reveal? It revealed the theoretical bankruptcy and political impotence of the OCI whose leadership — guided by a superficial impressionist analysis of De Gaulle's coup in 1958 — had exaggerated the strength and viability of the Fifth Republic, abandoned its revolutionary perspective and written off the revolutionary capacities of the French working class... It is an undeniable fact that at no time during the General Strike did the OCI leadership advance a socialist program. Nor did it attempt to undermine the political credibility of the Stalinist leadership by critically supporting the demand of the Renault workers for a 'popular government' by advancing the demand of a CP-CGT government.*

*Instead, the OCI leaders tail-ended the working class and restricted the political scope of the strike by demanding a central strike committee. This was a complete evasion of the political responsibilities of revolutionary leadership.*

*"Is it necessary to remind the OCI leaders that one of the chief reasons for the definitive split with the Pabloites was their refusal to address political demands to the trade union bureaucracy and fight for a CP-CGT government in the French General Strike of 1953? Revolutionists do not abstain on basic political questions — only centrists and syndicalists do." (Trotskyism Versus Revisionism, Vol. 6, New Park, pp. 34-35)*

In 1974 this experience was recalled in the reply written by Pilling and Banda to the Blick-Jenkins tendency:

*"It is abundantly clear from the comparison of the OCI policy and the Transitional Program that the central strike committee demand was an evasion of political responsibility and a cowardly refusal to advance transitional demands and to build the revolutionary party through an implacable struggle to destroy the illusions of French workers in Stalinism and reformism by demanding that the Communist Party and Socialist Party take power and carry out socialist policies." (A Reply to the British Agents of the OCI Liquidationists, WRP, p. 31)*

These previous betrayals pale in comparison to the role played by the WRP leadership during the miners' strike. During a struggle that lasted for one year, the WRP never once placed a single demand on the mass political organization of the working class — the Labour Party. It never issued a call for the mobilization of the working class



British miners facing cops during their year-long strike

to force the resignation of the Tory government, new elections and the return of the Labour Party to power on a socialist program. All the tactical lessons of the miners' struggle of 1973-74, when the WRP, despite confusion and inconsistency, did fight for such a policy and won enormous support within the working class, were forgotten.

The WRP justified its refusal to place any demands upon the Labour Party by insisting that Thatcher could only be replaced by a Workers Revolutionary Government formed under the leadership of the WRP and based on Community Councils. Thus, its call for a General Strike was pitched outside the actual political development of the British working class and its relationship to its own traditional party. From the very start of the strike, the WRP insisted in its press and on public platforms that the Labour Party was irrelevant to the on-going struggle of the miners against the Thatcher government, for it could under no possible conditions replace the "Bonapartist" dictatorship.

In fact, the theory of "Bonapartism" was created to fill the gap between the WRP's refusal to demand that the TUC and the Labour Party bring down the Tory government and its propaganda campaign for a Workers Revolutionary Government. The claim that Thatcher had been transformed, in the course of March 1984, into a Bonapartist dictator provided the apriori substantiation for the WRP line that a full-blown revolutionary situation existed in Britain. From this came the further deduction that Thatcher could be replaced only by a Workers Revolutionary Government under the leadership of the WRP, and that any suggestion that there existed a number of intermediate links was a capitulation to reformism. The theory of Bonapartism was not derived from any analysis of the development of the class struggle and the relations between class forces in Britain, but was concocted to justify a political line that had already been worked out.

For all its left-sounding rhetoric, the line of the WRP throughout the miners' strike conveniently enabled the Healy clique to avoid any conflict with its opportunist friends in the Labour Party and with the Scargill leadership of the NUM. For all the talk of a revolutionary situation, the WRP leaders consciously ruled out any criticism of Scargill — thus exposing the fact that their own call for a General Strike was utterly hollow.

The criminally opportunist nature of the WRP's relations to the Labour lefts around the GLC and Lambeth was clearly exposed throughout the miners' strike. Not once did the WRP raise the demand that they mount a campaign within the Labour Party against Kinnock's collaboration with the Tories, using their position within the London workers' movement to organize mass strikes in solidarity with the miners around the demand for the resignation of the Thatcher government. This abstention from raising this central and essential political demand was the greatest favor the WRP could do for the Labourites, who dreaded nothing more than the prospect of coming to power in the midst of a mass mobilization of the working class around the miners' strike. A Labour government, brought back to power on the wave of a mass anti-Tory offensive, would have immediately faced demands to guarantee miners' jobs and reopen the closed pits, to abolish the anti-union laws, to restore social services, to create jobs, etc. — demands that the Labourites could not satisfy. The radicalization of the masses would have proceeded far more rapidly than in the aftermath of the Labour victory of 1974.

For all his talk about imminent revolution, Healy, who had degenerated into a petty-bourgeois windbag, had no idea at all about how to bring about a revolutionary situation. It was clear that the Thatcher government was determined not to make the "mistake" that Heath had made in 1974 — when he called an election to win a mandate to use military force to break the miners' strike. But the strike caused a shift within the middle class and the election went against Heath, who for several days desperately maneuvered to see whether there was some way to stay in office. Within sections of the bourgeoisie, the possibility of a pre-emptive coup was considered. The political situation was, as the WRP had correctly analyzed in 1973-74, on the knife-edge.

In the situation which existed in 1984, the central demand to bring the Tories down and return the Labourites to power on socialist policies would have had a powerful impact upon the mass movement, and created the conditions for the exposure of the Labourites. In so far as the Labourites, including and above all the Lefts, refused to support this demand and fight for it, their credibility within the working class would be shattered. On the other hand, if despite the sabotage of the Social Democrats, the Tories were forced to resign (or, for that matter, attempted to remain in power in the face of mass popular opposition), a pre-revolutionary situation could well have emerged in Britain.

But the objective role of the WRP was to create a diversion on the left in order to deflect attention from the Labourites and their allies in the TUC and NUM bureaucracy.

In late January, the Thatcher government had announced that it was abolishing trade unionism at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Cheltenham as of March 1, 1984. While this action was no doubt aimed at strengthening the state apparatus, it was used by the Political Committee clique to stampede the Party into accepting a complete revision of the Marxist conception of Bonapartism.

As employed by Trotsky and all the great Marxists, *Bonapartism* is not a term which is used to describe the various reactionary measures of a bourgeois government. Rather, it penetrates into the depths of the political situation and defines a particular state of class relations in a given country. The value of this concept lies in the fact that it focusses the consciousness of the Party on what is essential in the political situation, enabling the cadre to grasp its contradictory forms of appearance. It sharpens the Party's comprehension of the dynamics of the class struggle and enables it to take note of all critical shifts in the movement of class forces and changes in the state apparatus.

In his writings on Germany, Trotsky defined Bonapartism as a regime that arose under conditions in which society had been polarized into the two opposed camps of revolution and counter-revolution; in which neither the revolutionary working class nor the fascist hordes of the petty-bourgeois organized by Big Capital were as yet able to decide the issue of power; and in which, based on this temporary and unstable equilibrium, the government appeared to rise above class society and played the role of "arbiter" between the two hostile armed camps. As Trotsky wrote:

*"...As soon as the struggle of two social strata — the haves and the have-nots, the exploiter and the exploited — reaches its highest tension, the conditions are given for the*

domination of bureaucracy, police, soldiery. The government becomes 'independent' of society. Let us once more recall: if two forks are stuck symmetrically into a cork, the latter can stand even on the head of a pin. That is precisely the schema of Bonapartism. To be sure, such a government does not cease being the clerk of the property-owners. Yet the clerk sits on the back of the boss, rubs his neck raw and does not hesitate at times to dig his boots in his face." (*Germany 1931-1932*, New Park, pp. 223-24)

Trotsky repeatedly stressed the essential impotence of the Bonapartist regime, whose "strength" rests on an utterly unstable and temporary equilibrium:

*"The Papen government represents only the intersection of great historical forces. Its independent weight is next to nil. Therefore it could do nothing but take fright at its own gesticulations and grow dizzy from the voids appearing on all sides of it."* (*Ibid.*, p. 227)

Another form of Bonapartism analyzed by Trotsky was that which emerged in France in 1934 — the government of Doumergue. In analyzing different conditions and different forms in Germany and France, Trotsky placed central emphasis — in accordance with the dialectical method — on the **origins** of the regime. This was an approach never considered by Healy, who proceeded entirely from a surface examination of Thatcher's actions and thus derived Thatcherite Bonapartism from the arbitrary **self-transformation of the existing government**.

But in the case of Doumergue, what Trotsky considered decisive in establishing its Bonapartist character was that it **had come to power** through the extra-parliamentary actions of "several thousand Fascists and Royalists, armed with revolvers, clubs and razors" on February 6, 1934. (*Whither France*, New Park, p. 3) The elected government, despite its Parliamentary majority, immediately capitulated to this rabble. The Radical Socialist Prime Minister Daladier accepted his own political demise and gave way to an extra-parliamentary "arbiter," Doumergue, who was called out of retirement to form a new government. Trotsky analyzed this situation as follows:

*"In France the movement from democracy toward Fascism is only in its first stage. Parliament exists, but it no longer has the powers it once had and it will never retrieve them. The parliamentary majority, mortally frightened after February 6, called to power Doumergue, the savior, the arbiter. His government holds itself above Parliament. It bases itself not on the 'democratically' elected majority but directly and immediately upon the bureaucratic apparatus, the police and the army... The appearance on the arena of armed Fascist bands has enabled finance capital to raise itself above Parliament. In this consists now the essence of the French Constitution. All else is illusion, phraseology or conscious dupery."* (*Ibid.*, p.5)

The origins of the Thatcher government were elections (1979 and 1983) in which she won immense Parliamentary majorities, based largely on the rightward shift of broad sections of the middle class and the political paralysis of Social Democracy. As in every capitalist state — above all, in the United States — vast powers are placed in the hands of the chief executive. In that sense, the ruler's "person" — no matter how insignificant — is dressed up with various "Bonapartist," if you will, trappings. But do these trappings make a given regime Bonapartist?

Every sociological definition, as Trotsky insisted, is at bottom an historical prognosis. Terminological disputes are of no significance unless they lead — or have the potential of leading — to different political and practical conclusions. From the standpoint of describing the viciousness of the Thatcher government, what difference is there in referring to it as an extremely right-wing and anti-working class Tory government or as a Bonapartist dictatorship? What has been added to the political clarity of the working class if we utilize this more sophisticated term?

This can be answered if we examine the way in which the WRP arrived at this new definition of the Thatcher regime and the political conclusions which it was used to justify.

An editorial entitled "End of An Era" appeared in the March 3, 1984 issue of the *News Line*. It dealt with the failed attempt by TUC leaders to persuade Thatcher not to go ahead with her plan to abolish unions at GCHQ. "When they emerged from Downing Street," wrote the imaginative Mitchell, "they were ashen-faced and shaken men."

From this event the WRP drew the most awesome historical conclusions. It claimed that 150 years of collaboration between reformist trade union leaders and the ruling class had ended and entirely new class relations had been created:

*"Hitherto, the ruling class in Britain had ruled through the trade union bureaucracy. It has used the reformist labour and TUC leadership with utter cynicism since World War I when it acted as recruiting sergeant for the imperialist slaughter in the trenches of Europe.*

*"During World War II Labour Party and TUC leaders were again in the forefront of helping imperialism through its most mortal crisis. Bevan ran the strike-breaking Ministry of Labour for Churchill and the ruling class while Morrison was in charge of the anti-working class anti-union witchhunts organized from the Home Office.*

*"Last week Thatcher accused today's faithful reformist servants of being a bunch of subversives and potential traitors. She declared their trade unions to be incompatible with the state she's busy creating.*

*"Freed of trade unions, GCHQ and the whole of the security establishment can be transformed into a direct instrument of violent state conspiracy against the working class."*

There was as much confusion as there were words in this statement. First of all, on the question of the GCHQ, the abolition of this small union in the heart of the state security structure, was primarily an attempt by Thatcher to discipline the state apparatus in preparation for major confrontations with the working class. However, this action did not make her a Bonapartist ruler, any more than Reagan's far more significant firing of 12,000 air traffic controllers in 1981 — leading to the physical destruction of their union — transformed his Administration into a Bonapartist dictatorship.

A far more fundamental error, which had grave implications for the entire perspective of the WRP, was the claim that the GCHQ decision meant that the British ruling class no longer relied on the reformist bureaucracies of the workers' movement. This incredible claim, which provided the basis for a renunciation of any systematic struggle



**NUM President Arthur Scargill with miners**

against the Social Democrats, was the real foundation of the definition of the Thatcher regime as Bonapartist.

As for the sociological foundation of this phenomenon, none was given. Rather, the *News Line* attributed this transformation of Thatcher's parliamentary regime into Bonapartism to "the intransigence and ruthlessness of the Tory ruling class and the state machine."

Aside from this psychological factor of "ruthlessness" — hardly something new for the British ruling class — no actual shifts within the structure of class relations were hinted at or analyzed.

We must stress that the claim that Thatcher no longer relied on the Social Democratic bureaucrats was entirely false. One can assume that during the visit to Downing Street, the union officials, as they were served a cup of tea, were reminded by Thatcher of their responsibility to the British state, and warned of the dangerous consequences of trade union defiance of Parliamentary rule. She most likely referred darkly to dangers she faced on the right and pointed to their well-known dread of the masses gathering on the left. With the miners' strike due to begin within a few days, she begged the union leaders to stand firm against the storm and to see Britain through those trying days. And the TUC officials, in turn, said they would do the best they can, but warned her that they did not know how long they could maintain control over the class struggle. If they emerged from 10 Downing Street "ashen faced," it was not because they believed the government to be strong, but because they knew it to be very weak and that the defense of capitalism now rested on their none-too-sturdy shoulders.

On March 7, 1984, the *News Line* declared that "The Thatcher government is moving rapidly away from

*traditional parliamentary democracy in the direction of Bonapartist dictatorship. The introduction of political vetting for civil servants at the Ministry of Defence is a clear sign that the preparations for dictatorship by Thatcher and her ruling class advisers are well advanced."*

Except for the administrative dissolution of the GCHQ unions, which in no fundamental way changed the nature of class rule, the WRP could not point to a single action by the bourgeoisie that indicated a real break with parliamentary rule.

The *News Line* then made the following strange observation: "One of Thatcher's main objectives since 1979 has been to ensure that there will never again be another Labour government, since this would bring the political representatives of the trade unions into office."

Lest anyone forget, from 1975 on one of the major objectives of the WRP had been that there should never be another Labour government because the Social Democrats rest on the Tories. But that aside, this "analysis" of Thatcher's intentions explained nothing. The question was not one of Thatcher's intentions but the class policy of the bourgeoisie. If the WRP was suggesting that the ruling class was about to destroy the Social Democracy in Britain, this was wrong. Such an action could not be carried out without civil war, under conditions in which a mass fascist movement had been brought into existence by the bourgeoisie. But even within the framework of this paragraph, the statement amounted to nothing more than journalistic hyperbole. Had Kinnock been dismissed from the Privy Council? Was Thatcher on the verge of disbanding Parliament and arresting the leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition?

These questions are raised not to ridicule the suggestion that parliamentary democracy in Britain and throughout Western Europe is living on borrowed time. Indeed, it is. But the fact of the matter is that the bourgeoisie in Britain — contrary to the claims of the WRP — relied heavily on the Labour Party and TUC bureaucracies throughout the miners' strike, thus saving the ruling class the "expense" of experimenting with more dangerous and problematic forms of rule.

Another question should be raised: If Thatcher indeed intended to prevent any further Labour government, would this not have revolutionary implications for the working class. Moreover, the entire line of the WRP — that there cannot be another Labour government — meant accepting the Tory position.

By March 8, 1984, the *News Line* was claiming that the abolition of GCHQ unions meant that "Thatcher has already turned the calendar back beyond 1834. She has resurrected the Combination Acts which were repealed nine years before the Tolpuddle martyrs' trial."

The next day, the *News Line* carried an editorial entitled "Changing rules for dictatorship" which discovered, at last, the necessary changes in state form that established the demise of parliamentary rule:

*"The Tory government has approved important changes in Queen's Regulations to prohibit servicemen and women from taking part in political marches or demonstrations."*

This, combined with GCHQ, was cited by *News Line* to prove that "Thatcher is changing the form of capitalist rule — moving from the parliamentary democracy in the direction of Bonapartist dictatorship under her personal supervision."

One day later, in the March 10, 1984 issue of *News Line*, Michael Banda addressed a lengthy open letter to all trade unionists which attempted to substantiate the claims of Bonapartist dictatorship and ended without raising a single political demand, except to call upon workers to "Counter the threat of Bonapartist dictatorship by creating a workers' revolutionary government which will nationalize the economy and establish a planned economy."

This proposal was placed alongside calls for the defense of the "ties of the Labour Party and trade unions from state intervention" and for struggle against "the increase in parliamentary election deposits of candidates." What a muddle! The WRP combined calls for a revolutionary government with urgent appeals to defend the ties of the Labour party to the trade unions and to stop the increases in election deposits — but would not call for the bringing down of the Thatcher government, new elections and the return of a Labour government to **stop the moves towards Bonapartist dictatorship!**

The WRP told the masses to "create" a Workers Revolutionary Government but would not tell them to demand that the mass party with which they identified and which they created force the Tories out.

All these tortured arguments and calculated evasions served but one purpose: to avoid any struggle against the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy.

On March 14, 1984, after the miners strike had begun, the *News Line* carried an editorial entitled "On Kinnock" which criticized him on many points but which left out the most

important: his refusal to fight for the bringing down of the Tories.

The first days of the miners' strike witnessed the mobilization of thousands of police against the miners, but these developments were simply used to bolster the arguments about Tory Bonapartism, which had become the indispensable theoretical cover for the WRP's adaptation to the Labour and trade union bureaucracy's capitulation to Thatcher. With each passing day the rhetoric became more frenzied.

The completion of the historic transformation of the Thatcher regime was proclaimed in an editorial in the March 29, 1984 issue of *News Line* entitled "Bonapartism!" It declared:

*"Prime Minister Thatcher's Bonapartist regime has been irreversibly established over the last four months. It is a regime of acute crisis which no longer rests on parliament but on the armed national police force, the judiciary and the military..."*

*"It is the bankruptcy of British capitalism within the world capitalist crisis and the revolutionary striving of the working class led by the miners that has obliged Thatcher to sweep away parliamentary democracy as a form of capitalist rule and go over to openly dictatorial measures against the masses (rule by decree)."*

*"Central to this attack is the outlawing of trade unionism, the social being of the working class."*

Here was the wild impressionism of people who no longer were capable of serious political thought. But it would be wrong to say that it didn't have a political purpose. Its conscious use of grotesque exaggeration was aimed against any suggestion that demands for the bringing down of the Tory government could be addressed to the Labour Party. Instead, the WRP could use hollow left phrases which obligated no one to do anything, such as:

*"Thatcher's Bonapartist regime is the ante-chamber to civil war and demands the immediate mobilization of the working class behind the miners through the building of the Community Councils, practical organs of workers' power in the localities."*

*"The old bourgeois-democratic regime is being replaced by a Bonapartist dictatorship in which Thatcher and her clique of ultra-right cabinet ministers and fascist-minded extra-parliamentary advisers are elevated above parliament to carry out the class requirements of big capital."*

*"In front lies ever-sharpening class struggle in which the Bonapartist and fascist conspirators can be defeated only by the victory of the socialist revolution." (March 29, 1986)*

The very same issue of the *News Line* carried in its center pages a lengthy interview with Ken Livingstone entitled, "The start of Thatcher's overthrow." Those who turned to these pages after reading the editorial might have expected that the interview would deal with plans for an insurrection in London, led by the GLC leader. However, this intrepid leader offered a more docile perspective. Livingstone pointed to growing opposition to Thatcher...among the wets in the Tory Party and inside the House of Lords! He was increasingly hopeful that these forces would soon rally to the defense of the GLC and oppose Thatcher's plans for its abolition:

*"It's important to bear in mind that the Tory party and the*

*British ruling class are not a united body. There are strong differences between the groups around monetarist policies, like Thatcher and Tebbit, and the old tradition squirearchy which has its base much more in the House of Lords.*

*"It now does really begin to look that although it will be close, there is a very real chance the Lords will actually reject the proposal to abolish the elections for 1985 because of the constitutional implications..."*

*"There is a major prospect of a major split in the Tory party over the period of the next few months, not just on the question of abolition but on the whole direction and speed which Thatcher wishes to take Britain into a much more authoritarian, monetarist state..."*

*"For the first time since Thatcher came to power, you can see real prospects of the government being defeated..."*

*"The fight is far from over. I believe we are, in fact, at the beginning of the overthrow of the Thatcher government."*

*"It may take some years, but we'll see increasingly defeats for the government, climaxing in the removal of this government. I have no doubt about that whatsoever."*

What were *News Line* readers and the working class to think? What was the real perspective of the Workers

Revolutionary Party: power through Community Council and a Workers Revolutionary Government or...through splits amongst the Tories and support from the House of Lords? Indeed, the Livingstone interview, which was printed in the *News Line* without criticism, exposed the rotten cynicism of the WRP leaders, who were basing their political line on the most immediate needs of their unprincipled maneuvering.

This gave to the political line of the WRP throughout the miners' strike the appearance of schizophrenia. No demands were placed on the Labour Party, and the WRP coexisted comfortably with the lefts as these reformist traitors watched the miners' strike drag on month and after month. But for the miners, the WRP dished up as many ultra-left phrases as necessary. For example, the statement of the WRP Political Committee dated March 13, 1984 declared that the miners were fighting the "Thatcherite state" and therefore:

*"The very existence of the NUM has become a basic political issue which resolves itself into the question: which class is to rule Britain, through which government and through which party? This is the issue in the miners' strike."*

*"The reformist parties like the Labour Party and the Communist Party do not even pose let alone answer this question,*



A conference of the ATUA, the WRP's trade union section during the miners' strike

because they are completely tied to the reformist parliamentary collaboration and accept the framework of Tory rule.

**"The News Line and the Workers Revolutionary Party on the contrary declare categorically that the basic rights of the working class can be secured only through the struggle to expose, discredit and overthrow the dictatorial rule of the Tories and replace it with a workers' state based on Community Councils and a planned nationalized economy." (The Miners and the Case for a General Strike, WRP, p. 8)**

All these abstract propaganda phrases about the need for socialist revolution were without any concrete tactical proposal for breaking the collaboration of the Labour Party with the Tories — which, contrary to all the phrasemongering about the Thatcherite state — posed the greatest menace to the miners and the working class.

The WRP had totally abandoned the *Transitional Program* which insists:

*"Of all parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically with the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the program of the 'workers' and farmers' government'." (New Park, p. 39)*

The founding document of the Fourth International goes on to say:

*"It is impossible in advance to foresee what will be the concrete stages of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for in-*

*dependent politics, deepen the class struggle of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power." (Ibid.)*

By late April the WRP was demanding that the TUC call an indefinite General Strike — but this one slight concession to recognizing the existence of mass organizations of the working class was vitiated by the refusal to connect this demand to the proposal that the Tories be brought down and Labour returned to power. The 1984 May Day Manifesto epitomized the reactionary role of such sectarian propagandism in the midst of a critical struggle by the working class, where it is above all necessary to establish a firm connection between the revolutionary program and the movement of the masses. The call for a General Strike was now presented in the most ultimatic and apocalyptic terms imaginable:

*"The Workers Revolutionary Party calls on the British working class to mark this historic May Day 1984 by fighting immediately to transform the miners' strike into a General Strike to bring down the hated Tory dictatorship.*

*"Such a General Strike, waged by the whole of the working class and its middle-class allies, will involve the revolutionary struggle for power.*

*"Its outcome must be the overthrow of the historically-outmoded capitalist system, the smashing of the state machine, and the establishment of a Workers Revolutionary Government." (Miners, p. 53)*

Thus, the WRP informed the working class that it had to choose at once between Thatcher or...the sage of Clapham, G. Healy. To those who might have been thinking that a more plausible demand would be for the resignation of the government and new elections — which, after all, had been the line of the WRP during the last four years of the previous Labour government — it addressed a salutary warning:

*"No Labour government, whether led by Kinnock, Benn or any other reformist politician, can secure the basic democratic rights of miners, above all their right to a secure job." (Ibid., p. 56)*

As a general truth, this statement was indisputable. But that is precisely why the demand to bring down the Tories and return Labour to power was so important during the miners strike. It would have created the conditions in which masses of workers could see the treachery of Social Democracy and break decisively from it.

The statement went on to outline the program which the WRP would carry out once it had been placed in power by the working class — which, disconnected from any strategy to bring the workers into conflict with the Labourites, remained a politically-harmless sectarian fantasy.

The May Day Manifesto had only one thing to say that made worthwhile reading: *"The reformists of all shades become the bearers of panic, moods of gloom, fear and mud-dle-headed confusion on the question of capitalist parliament and the capitalist-state machine." (Ibid., p. 57)*

Unfortunately, the WRP leaders were describing themselves.

During the month of May as the miners prepared a mass demonstration in Mansfield, the WRP continued its agitation for a General Strike — which, bereft of any political strategy, differed in no essential way from the line



Scargill





**Young miner snatched by police during the National Union of Mineworkers strike**

of the OCI in 1968. It was a centrist evasion of revolutionary tasks.

However, the sincerity of the WRP's campaign was itself soon exposed. At Mansfield, on May 14, Scargill carefully avoided any appeal for wider action — precisely because he agreed with the refusal of the Labourites to transform the strike into a political struggle to bring down the Tories.

The *News Line* of May 15, 1984 was headlined: "**Scargill Avoids Wider Action**" — the first direct criticism the WRP had made of the NUM president. It was also the last. Healy was enraged by this disruption of the relationship that he was now hoping to cultivate with the NUM president, despite the unfortunate spat the previous September over Scargill's opposition to the Polish workers' Solidarity.

A statement by the Political Committee of the WRP which appeared in the May 16, 1984 issue of *News Line* made amends to the NUM leader. It noted "*the tumultuous ovation that greeted his speech*" in Mansfield and welcomed the growth of "*his prestige amongst miners and other workers.*" Within the party, Healy and Banda launched a campaign to justify the abandonment of any critical attitude towards the policy of the NUM leadership and its refusal to fight for the expansion of the strike throughout the labor movement. In *Political Letter 5*, dated May 21, 1984, Healy and Banda wrote:

*"At this stage in the miners' struggle, sectarian sectionalism enjoys a mass base amongst them, although not necessarily throughout the trade union movement as a whole. This means that the finite 'in-itself' sectional character of the strike has temporarily produced a coincidence between the outlook of Scargill who supports change through parliament and the miners who are embarked on a life or death struggle against the capitalist state for their future. We cannot jump over this finite stage with criticisms of the inadequacies of the NUM leadership." (Seventh Congress, p. 107)*

The WRP's campaign for a General Strike — compromised from the start by the absence of a clear political perspective upon which this struggle could be based — was rendered absolutely meaningless by the adaptation to Scargill. Throughout the miners' struggle, Scargill repeated again and again that he was not for the bringing down of the Tories. The campaign for a General Strike could only develop in a political struggle within the working class against this objectively reactionary line. It would have entailed an uncompromising day-to-day battle against Scargill's centrist politics, a clear analysis of the limitations of syndicalism, the exposure of Scargill's ties to the Stalinists, and an unequivocal denunciation of his refusal to fight for the immediate bringing down of the Tories. Only

along these lines could the WRP have built up within miners and the working class as a whole the **political** consciousness necessary for the General Strike. The WRP leadership, besotted with opportunism, was incapable of rising above a narrow syndicalist perspective — and, in this sense, its capitulation to Scargill, “the A.J. Cooke of the 1980’s,” was the final outcome of its betrayal of Trotskyism.

There was at least one leader in the WRP who was well aware that the party line was a complete betrayal of Marxism, and that was Cliff Slaughter. In a lengthy article which appeared in the May 25, 1984 issue of the *News Line*, entitled “*The General Strike and the United Front*,” Slaughter — in the midst of an article that upheld the general line of the WRP — wrote the following about Kinnock and Deputy Leader Hattersley:

*“He [Kinnock] and Hattersley are reported to have said that if they were Notts miners, they would be on strike. This is nothing but a deliberate and shameful evasion. They are not (and of course never were and never will be) miners. They are Labour Party leaders and they have a political responsibility.*

*“The workers who still support them including miners, who pay the political levy and vote Labour, expect that party to support them politically by leading the working class against Thatcher. Kinnock covers up his refusal to do this by shouting about what he would do if he was a miner...”*

*“The question remains: why does not the NUM leadership call upon the TUC to call a General Strike?”*

*“To do this would be an open challenge to the right wing on the most vital political question of all: the question of defeating the Tory government and the capitalist state and winning working-class power.”*

Every word was absolutely correct — which simply raises the question: why wouldn’t the WRP place any demands upon the Labour leaders, and, moreover, why didn’t C. Slaughter organize a fight along these lines against the policy of Healy? Rather, by the time he came to the end of his article — which contained, if one read between the lines, devastating criticisms of the whole course being pursued by the Healy leadership and a clear prediction that such a line would lead to the defeat of the strike — everything was reconciled with the policy of the WRP. For this reason, Slaughter’s criticisms, far from clarifying the party membership — which does not normally read between the lines — served to bolster their impression that the WRP was fighting for Trotskyism among the miners. It is for this reason that Healy permitted this article to be published in the *News Line* and even welcomed it. The sauce of centrism was never ruined by a few pinches of Marxism!

For the rest of the year — with Slaughter’s article consigned safely to the archives, to be cited only if someone dared to accuse Healy of betraying the miners — the WRP followed Scargill’s footsteps in the most slavish manner, building up his prestige among miners and Party members, implicitly suggesting that he represented some new type of trade union leader never seen before. A full-blown Pablo-style justification for this adaptation was written by Banda into the perspectives of the Seventh and final congress of the Healy-led WRP, held in December 1984:

*“What was important in the period prior to the strike was the consistent struggle against any tendency to impose sub-*

*jective images and ignore the real concrete developments within the mining industry and in particular the role of Scargill in relation to the development of new militancy amongst miners based on the fear of closures and sackings. Previous correct criticisms of the Scargill leadership on the Polish Solidarity trade union and the ballots of 1982 and 1983 could not obscure the changed relations between the classes in Britain and the impact of the miners on Scargill and other leaders...*

*“Any indulgence of the method of starting from preconceptions would have led directly to ultra-left gestures and adventurism which would have cut the party off from the miners. Despite our differences with Scargill on the perspectives of the overtime ban we defended the ban unconditionally against the opportunists and the potential strike-breakers. The ban, inadequate as it was, was an important factor in consolidating the unity of the miners and creating a closer relation with the Party.” (Ibid., pp. 69-70)*

The above passage served to sanctify the WRP’s liquidation of any independent political line in relation to the strike. A WRP Political Committee statement which appeared in the *News Line* on October 27, 1984 declared:

*“The Workers Revolutionary Party and the All Trades Unions Alliance completely endorse the policy of Arthur Scargill, his courageous defiance of the state and his stubborn defense of the NUM, the mining industry and its communities from Tory vandalism.*

*“His steadfast opposition to the Thatcher regime, the Tory press and the NCB has not only inspired millions, but it has also revealed in all its starkness the nature of the reformist maneuvers of the Stalinists on the docks and the retreats of the T&GWU and G&MWU in the steel, transport and power industries.*

*“Above all Scargill has shown up the TUC for the coniving, knee-crooking bureaucrats that they are.”*

In fact, Scargill was covering up for them on the central question of bringing down the Thatcher government. Never in the course of the entire strike did he directly ask the TUC to call a General Strike. Insofar as he called for the mobilization of the labor movement behind the miners, it was with the most cautious wording. For example, the *News Line* reported in its issue of November 2, 1984 that he had stated:

*“We believe that the time has now come to involve as much as possible in a public way the wider labor and trade union movement in a dispute which the Tories see clearly as a fight on the part of the Establishment against one individual union.*

*“And we are asking the trade union movement to respond accordingly and give the same sort of support to the NUM.”*

On December 5, 1984, the *News Line* reported that Scargill had called on the TUC to organize “*industrial action throughout the whole trade union movement*,” and quoted him as saying: “*We are not asking for moral support resolutions. We are asking now for practical assistance, and we have asked the General Council to be convened to mobilize industrial action in support of this union.*”

But two days later, after the TUC rejected this appeal and simply reiterated its support for earlier empty resolutions pledging solidarity, the *News Line* noted that Scargill “*welcomed the TUC leaders’ reaffirmation of all previous decisions in support of the NUM*,” and then managed to

present the situation in the most positive light: "*The fact that the TUC leaders could not openly repudiate the NUM and had to give certain guarantees of support is a tribute to the firm stand taken by Scargill and the NUM leadership.*"

As the strike, isolated by the TUC and Labour Party, weakened and the prospect of defeat began to loom, the WRP grew increasingly disoriented and hysterical. At the *News Line* 15th Anniversary Rally on November 18, 1984, Healy declared:

*"If the miners are defeated we will be illegal in Thatcher's Britain.*

*"She not only intends to press ahead to destroy the trade unions. She's going to make the most revolutionary elements opposed to her illegal."* (*News Line*, November 19, 1984)

However, despite the frenzied rhetoric, he still refused to call upon the Labour Party to campaign for the defeat of the government. He also took pains not to place excessive pressure on his friends in the GLC. With the fate of the miners' strike at stake, he was diplomatically vague on the question of unity between the miners' and those in local government opposed to Tory cuts:

*"I say to our comrades on the local councils involved in rate cappings and the great movement that is building up that we must be prepared to unify that movement, if necessary, with the miners' strike, with the organization of the General Strike."* (*Ibid.*) (Emphasis added) What mealy-mouthed political duplicity!

By the time of the Seventh Congress, the demoralization and hysteria that had gripped the WRP leadership as the miners' strike approached its end was apparent in the way in which the main resolution on British perspectives evaluated the Thatcher government:

*"For the British bourgeoisie it is no longer a question of trying to consolidate Bonapartism but of changing the form of the dictatorship. To smash the trade unions and establish state corporatist control over them the Tories must kick aside the parliamentary forms, i.e., destroy the parliamentary opposition of social democracy and replace it with the most extreme form of Bonapartism: fascism. This is the only way in which the world crisis of imperialism becomes the essence and motor force of the class struggle."* (*Seventh Congress*, p. 52)

These words could only have been written by petty-bourgeois politicians who had completely lost their heads. The growth of fascism was now seen as the driving force of the class struggle — a perspective that revealed utter despair. Moreover, to claim that Bonapartism had been consolidated would mean, in the language of Marxism, that the working class had been decisively defeated for an entire period. Later in the document, the WRP reproduced a quotation from Trotsky which made this very point — "*The Bonapartist regime can attain a comparatively stable and durable character only in the event that it brings a revolutionary epoch to a close...*" — but the Healy clique was so shattered by the class struggle that it didn't even realize that they were contradicting in one section of the perspectives document what they had written in another section!

The Seventh Congress confirmed that the WRP was, from the standpoint of Marxism, politically dead. This is substantiated by the examination of a document written by Healy and Banda just three weeks after the Congress, in which they

explained the "theory of knowledge" which guided the work of the Party:

*"The properties of Party practice and its needs which are the source of sensation are revealed in their interconnection with other things arising in the active objective role of the practice itself. This is the dialectical materialist process of cognition in which changes in the objective situation as it unfolds can be analyzed."* (*Op. cit.*, p. iii. Emphasis added)

This descent into solipsism — which declared the practice of the party and its needs to be the source of sensation — was a theoretical verification that the Party leadership was ruled in all its work by the most unrestrained opportunism, to the extent that it now defined the objective world on the basis of the practical needs of the "Party" — or to put it more correctly, the petty-bourgeois clique in its leadership.

Having been guided by a non-Marxist and centrist line that contributed directly to the betrayal of the miners and with its leaders close to panic as the strike neared its conclusion, the WRP entered the fateful year of 1985 on the verge of collapse. Hysteria reigned in the pages of the *News Line*. A statement issued by the WRP Central Committee on February 27, 1985 declared:

*"If the Tories defeat the miners with the aid of the right wing of the TUC and the scabs, then there is nothing to prevent Thatcher and her desperate gang from carrying through her program of monetarist barbarism and imposing a police-military dictatorship."* (*News Line*, February 28, 1985, Emphasis in the original)

Incredibly, the same statement also asserted that the "**exposure of the Congress House right wing strengthens the working class immeasurably; the conditions are favorable for the NUM to call on unions which back the miners to demand the TUC calls a General Strike.**" (*Ibid.*, Emphasis in the original)

One paragraph proclaimed the imminent destruction of the working class. Another paragraph declared that the working class had been "immeasurably strengthened." And there was yet another contradiction in a third paragraph: "*The Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party calls on all striking miners to stand firm behind Arthur Scargill and the NUM Executive.*" But to stand firm behind Arthur Scargill, who had still not demanded that the TUC call a General Strike, meant that miners should reject the most recently worked-out line of the WRP. And then, after calling on all miners to stand firm behind Scargill, the WRP indicated that Scargill himself was wavering, urging that the NUM reject "*defeatist calls*" for a return to work!

By March 1, 1985, a herd panic had seized control of the *News Line*. The front-page lead declared that a return to work by the miners will mean "*the end of free trade unionism in Britain.*"

Within the week the Miners Executive voted to end the strike — an event which left large sections of the WRP, especially its petty-bourgeois and declassed elements in the Party apparatus, totally bewildered, demoralized and resentful. They had been told for months that the strike would end either in social revolution or defeat, the smashing of the trade union movement and the illegalizing of the WRP. Now, the miners' strike had been defeated and, in as much as they were still legal, these tired petty-bourgeois began to think that capitalism's crisis was not as bad as they had been led to believe and that perhaps they were wasting their lives in a futile cause.

In this situation, the survival of the Party depended, at the very least, upon an honest appraisal of the lessons of the strike and its defeat. But the leadership of the WRP had already past far beyond the point where it was capable of honesty in any political question.

Instead, it tried to carry on as if nothing had really happened. The WRP was not even able to admit that the miners had been defeated, for that would have raised too many questions about its own policies. So articles appeared in the *News Line* which attempted to cover over reality by citing statistics which recorded the financial cost of the strike to the government.

Lacking policies of its own to restore the strength of the miners and prepare them for the bitter struggle against further pit closures, the WRP leadership hung on desperately to Scargill's trouser legs. This assumed pathetic proportions as Healy's main goal in life became a personal audience with Arthur Scargill — which he finally was granted one month after the strike ended. This event was recorded in a personal letter, dated April 29, 1985, from Healy to Scargill, uncovered by the International Control Commission, which shows the extent of his political degeneration as his leadership of the WRP approached its final days:

"Dear Arthur:

"This note is to express the most warmest fraternal thanks of myself and Comrade Aileen Jennings for the time yourself and your companions spent with us on Friday evening.

"All the resources and technical facilities which constitute the practice of our Party are at the disposal of the NUM and yourself as its President. If it is necessary we will print and publish anything which the union wants, for nothing, to the limit of our resources. If you wish to utilize our news-gathering facilities, then we will be only too happy to let you know our views, off the record, about what we understand is happening.

"A massive confrontation between the capitalist state and the working class, with the miners again in the forefront, is building up. Rest assured our Party will be by your side in the decisive days ahead.

"Rest assured that we will keep all the needs of the NUM in the forefront of our concerns in the coming most critical period. Just make the needs known and we will see what can be done.

"With our warmest handshake,

"[signed] Aileen Jennings, T. G. Healy"

The political significance of this letter — in which the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party placed at the disposal of a section of the trade union bureaucracy the full material resources of the Trotskyist movement in Britain — is that it irrefutably records the end of G. Healy's life as a revolutionary.

The political and organizational disintegration of the clique leadership in London now proceeded very rapidly. Under pressure from the party rank and file — especially those members working in Yorkshire among the miners — Healy and Banda groped for a new political line without, however, analyzing the work of the previous year. In an attempt to hold things together, the assistant general secretary in charge of organization, Sheila Torrance, proposed that the WRP mount a march in defense of the jailed miners. This proposal was initially opposed by Healy on the grounds that such an action could not be held under conditions in

which Britain was in the grip of a rising fascist movement. He agreed to the march only after the Central Committee approved a resolution granting him full power to intervene in the progress of the march and move its location immediately if it came under fascist attack!

The internal life of the WRP began to resemble the final days of the New Jewel regime in Grenada. The center in Clapham was the scene of vicious infighting and wild conspiracies. Every office became the seat of a secret faction, and each group was drawing up its list of potential enemies and possible allies in the coming showdown. The WRP headquarters became the battleground for electronic warfare as offices and telephones, including Healy's and Banda's, were bugged. No one trusted anyone. Political relations which had endured for 10, 20, and even 30 years were coming apart. Suddenly, Healy moved to get back at Sheila Torrance for having opposed him on the Political Committee by moving for her suspension from the Party at the Central Committee meeting of April 27, 1985. This action was opposed by one member, Stuart Carter, who was then immediately suspended for 60 days "for opposing the CC's authority to discipline its members and rule on their conduct at the meeting." (*Report on the Expulsion of Stuart Carter and Recommended Expulsions of His Clique*, p. 2) The report to the branches justifying his expulsion continued: "He was not suspended for any differences on policy or programme. Stuart Carter continued his opposition even after the CC member in question, Cde ST, corrected the procedural error." (*Ibid.*)

Carter, a leading member of the Young Socialists for six years, was expelled after he continued to defend his right to oppose the unconstitutional suspension of the WRP's assistant General Secretary. On June 21, 1985, a letter justifying the expulsion was written by Banda, who had physically assaulted Carter during the meeting at which he had been suspended. Denouncing this youth leader for "petty-bourgeois individualism and lumpen-proletarian backwardness," Banda asserted:

"The actions and statements of this reactionary clique and this constant harping on the theme of 'democracy' and counter-posing of the 'rights of individuals' to the centralised practice of the Party is a graphic example of the subservience to spontaneity, i.e. bourgeois ideology.

"It underlines again the vital importance of Lenin's struggle embodied in *What Is To Be Done?* and his warning that the slogans 'against dogmatism' and for 'freedom of criticism' constituted nothing more than the denial of the theory of class struggle, the rejection of the revolutionary party and the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is the essence of SC's opposition."

Under these conditions, the march to defend the jailed miners simply provided a public relations cover for the inner collapse of the Party. The leadership was now totally obsessed with Bonapartism, which it insisted was the key feature in the world situation. In a letter to Party members explaining the line of the march, dated May 8, 1985, Banda and Healy declared:

"This fight against Bonapartism must be up front of the practice otherwise we transform such demands as 'Defence of trade unions' and 'No scab labour scheme for youth' into Kantian images which idealistically confuse the five demands that constitute the revolutionary syllogism of the march itself.

*"These must be placed in the following order of the syllogism: 1) Release the jailed miners. 2) Reinstate all sacked miners. 3) Fight pit closures. 4) Smash anti-union laws. 5) No scab labour schemes for youth.*

*"The error behind our London May Day chairman's address arose out of routine Party practices which were guided by general propositions referring to the 'struggle of youth' and 'the defence of trade unions.' These omitted the central features of the international implications of Bonapartism as it is appearing now in Tory Britain, which should be in the forefront of the activation of the Party's practice, otherwise it lapses into generalized Kantian image-making.*

*"Such image-making, whilst formally correct, would be empty of Bonapartist content and consequently the source of sensation itself — hence its Kantian origin, and real danger for our work in Britain."*

During the previous December, the practice of the Party was made the source of sensation. Now the basis of all perception on a world scale was Bonapartism in Britain. This remarkable "insight" was elaborated in a theoretical innovation known as the five-part syllogism. All this proved the profundity of the ancient adage: "Those whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad."

Seven weeks later, on July 1, 1985, Aileen Jennings, Healy's personal secretary for 20 years, disappeared from London — leaving behind a letter, at the urging of Sheila Torrance, in which she denounced Healy for the gross abuse of a large number of female members of the WRP and the ICFI, and ignited an explosion that was to lead to Healy's expulsion and the final disintegration of the WRP. As Trotsky had predicted: *The great events that rush upon mankind will leave of outlived organizations not one stone upon another.*

#### 40. The 10th Congress of the International Committee

Two interconnected political facts dominated the 10th Congress of the International Committee of the Fourth International, held in January 1985, though neither of them were discussed. The first was the devastating political crisis within the Workers Revolutionary Party. The second was the suppression of the political differences which had arisen within the International Committee during the previous three years.

The political degeneration of the WRP was at the heart of the crisis inside the International Committee. Not only had the British section abandoned its responsibility to provide theoretical, political and organizational leadership to the world movement; it was now the main source of revisionist politics and disorientation within the ICFI. Its work inside the International Committee had assumed the character of a world-wide wrecking operation. For Healy the International Committee now existed only as a source of financial income and political prestige. Outside of these pragmatic considerations, he was opposed to its continued existence. As far as Slaughter was concerned, the IC was nothing more than an occasional diversion and a useful travel office for his summer vacations.

Neither Healy, Banda nor Slaughter — the main British delegates to the 10th Congress — had any up-to-date detailed knowledge of the international workers' movement nor the day-to-day political life of any IC section outside Britain. None of them systematically followed the press of

the IC sections or read their documents. In the course of the 10th Congress, it emerged that a major document produced by Canadian comrades had rested on Banda's desk for more than one year without being read. Correspondence from IC sections and sympathizers in other countries generally went unanswered. Healy, who had maintained an extensive correspondence with the Workers League between 1966 and 1974, wrote just two brief letters to David North during the following decade. On the other hand, Healy wrote regularly to various bourgeois nationalist leaders in the Middle East.

From 1975 the WRP leaders reduced their visits to the international sections to a bare minimum. Prior to the split with Wohlforth inside the Workers League, Healy had made regular visits to Canada in order to maintain contact with the leading members of the American organization. But after 1974 Healy never again visited the North American continent to meet with the Workers League Central Committee. On one occasion, in 1979, he flew to Alaska to visit Vanessa Redgrave on location during the filming of a pot-boiler called "Bear Island." A meeting with the Workers League had been scheduled to take place in Toronto during Healy's return to London. Deposits were put down by the Americans after suitable accommodations had been found. At the last minute, without any explanation, Healy cancelled the stop-over and flew directly back to London.

Relations with the other sections were no better, and, in some cases, even worse. The Bund Sozialistische Arbeiter (BSA), the German section of the International Committee, was not visited by Slaughter after 1975. Its leaders were not given the opportunity to conduct systematic political work within Germany; instead, they were used, year after year, to organize lengthy marches throughout Europe, which inevitably ended with rallies in London that served the immediate political needs of the WRP. The British section looted their reserves to the tune of tens of thousands of marks. In 1980 Healy turned up in Munich for a printing exposition and forced the young German comrades to commit their section to the purchase of a web-offset press costing several hundred thousand pounds. To meet their obligation, they were forced to organize massive loans that crippled the organization. In the end they were forced to default on the contract. The WRP, however, which negotiated the termination of the contract with the printing company, profited handsomely. As the International Control Commission later learned, Healy lied to the Germans about the sum of the final settlement with the Solna Company and skimmed about 35,000 marks (c. £10,000) off the top.

The Sri Lankan section, one of the oldest in the International Committee, having emerged out of the fight against the historic betrayal of the LSSP, was last visited by a political leader of the British movement in 1972. Later visits were made by Alex Mitchell and Corin Redgrave and their political value to the Sri Lankan Revolutionary Communist League was what might be expected. Correspondence from RCL leaders frequently went unanswered and they were not informed of IC work or even given advance notice of most of its meetings. As far as the WRP was concerned, the limited resources of the Sri Lankan Trotskyists did not justify claims on its time.

The Australian section was visited twice in the space of a decade — not counting the theatrical tour of Vanessa Redgrave in 1982, which proved immensely lucrative for the WRP but came close to bankrupting the Socialist Labour League. Moreover, Redgrave's tour poisoned the relations

of the Australian section with the Arab community, for she was seen by many as an opportunist who used the Palestinian cause as a fund-raising gimmick.

Promising sections in other countries were destroyed. A group of Portuguese members, who had come around the ICFI after the April 1974 Revolution, were lost without any explanation. The Spanish section, which at one point had several dozen active members in the political aftermath of Franco's death, was, by 1985, reduced to no more than three active members. The Irish group was simply abandoned. No less criminal was the attitude of Healy to the building of a movement in France. A devoted young comrade was instructed to spend all her time in France running a small business, on the grounds that this would create a secure foundation for the establishment of a section. This work was placed under Healy's personal supervision and could not be broached inside the ICFI.

Young comrades from different sections who showed promise were ordered to London were they were integrated into Healy's apparatus and kept in the country for years. Even worse, their activity was generally of a technical and apolitical character. When they were finally returned to their sections — usually after being denounced by Healy for one or another imaginary offense — these comrades were politically disoriented and most of them soon dropped out of the revolutionary movement.

These horrifying organizational practices were inseparable from the political sabotage carried out by the Healy-Banda-Slaughter leadership. Functioning as a clique within the IC — they never disagreed amongst themselves during meetings of the International Committee — they were either indifferent to the questions raised by the sections or they willfully intervened in their work to impose disastrously wrong political lines.

The ultra-left line devised by the WRP in 1975 was forced on all the other sections in Europe and Australia where there existed large Social-Democratic parties. The demand for the bringing down of Labor and Social-Democratic governments was transformed into a universal strategy, and this had a catastrophic impact upon the sections involved. The BSA was nearly destroyed by this policy, as the German working class responded with hostility to this ultra-left nonsense. The imposition of the same line produced political disorientation within the Australian SLL.

Special mention must be made of the role played by Banda — the self-proclaimed expert on the Theory of Permanent Revolution — in undermining the work of the comrades in Sri Lanka. In 1972 they were told by Banda that their position in support of the right of the Tamil nation to self-determination was wrong and had to be reversed. By 1977, after the Tamil national liberation movement had attracted mass support and established its legitimacy, the RCL's previous position was proved correct. Banda then suggested that the Sri Lankan section should change its line. However, when an openly Sinhalese chauvinist tendency emerged within the RCL in opposition to this necessary and belated correction, Banda lined up with the right-wing minority against the RCL leadership. Prior to the 10th Congress of the ICFI, the RCL submitted a lengthy perspectives document for discussion which was based on the Theory of Permanent Revolution. Banda denounced the RCL comrades for having imposed upon his time with a 50-page document — asking them sarcastically if they

thought they were preparing a doctoral thesis — and refused to circulate it amongst the international delegates.

After the Seventh Congress in 1977 — the last meeting of the ICFI that dealt at all with problems of international perspective — political discussion with the British became virtually impossible. Beginning with the Eighth Congress in 1979, every major gathering of the ICFI was made the occasion for disloyal provocations staged by Healy with the assistance of Banda and Slaughter. These provocations were used to prevent any discussion on the political documents and practical work of the sections, as well as to silence any criticism of the WRP's work that might be brewing within the ICFI. Petty incidents which were of no political significance were blown up to prove that one section or another was "hostile" to the WRP. Looking back on each of these experiences, it is possible to connect them to a very definite attempt to sabotage political discussion within the ICFI. Healy himself had no interest in political questions outside Britain. Except on rare occasions, when he was fishing for a pretext to launch a factional attack, he did not read the newspapers of any other section.

The attitude of the WRP leadership toward the International Committee was dominated by an almost unbelievable chauvinism that governed every aspect of its dealing with the sections. Exploiting the political authority that was based on their role in the struggle against Pabloism in the 1960's, they consciously subordinated all the work of the international movement to the immediate practical needs of the British section. Their own participation within the internal life of the ICFI was of a privileged and exceptional character. They prepared no political reports on their own work. The real nature of their relations with the Arab bourgeois was concealed and lied about. When attending sessions of the ICFI, their delegates came and went as they pleased. The only thing they did speak about at length were their astonishing organizational advances — sales of 17,000 *News Lines* per day; a membership approaching 10,000; and vast resources. The secret of their successes, or so they claimed, was summed up again and again with the phrase, "We know how to build," and this was counterposed to the problems of all the other sections. It took some time, due to the inexperience of the sections, but the ICFI finally learned what Healy had been building — a centrist dunghheap!

It must be stated that the political degeneration of the WRP during the 1970's had created a situation in which the ICFI could not develop politically as a homogeneous organization. None of the sections which were formed after 1973 came into the ICFI on the basis of a genuine agreement on questions of principle. The sections of the ICFI were not functioning on the basis of a common international program. From 1975 on, Healy worked consciously within the ICFI to prevent a genuine international clarification. When differences arose, they were settled bureaucratically. In Greece, the leadership which raised political differences — though incorrect — was expelled on bogus organizational grounds. The leader who replaced D. Toubanis was driven out as well, also without any discussion of his differences on the ICFI. Savas Michael was the unfortunate product of this process, which might be best described as the survival of the unfittest. Later on, as we have already explained, Healy and S. Michael worked out an international line in relation to the Iranian regime that directly contradicted the official programmatic position of the ICFI. The leadership of the Spanish movement, which had

been developed during the period of illegality, was also driven out after differences had been blown out of proportion. In this case, the maneuver was related to Healy's squalid personal affairs.

In the aftermath of the split, Healy and his associate Michael attempted to portray the opposition within the International Committee as an illegal rebellion against the decisions of the 10th Congress — in much the same way as Pablo denounced Cannon's *Open Letter* as an attack on the "historic Third Congress." Michael of the Workers International League and E. Romero of the Spanish group issued a "joint communique" which justified their refusal to attend a constitutionally-convened meeting of the ICFI by declaring "our loyalty to the Tenth World Congress of the ICFI as the highest body of the ICFI and its policies and resolutions can only be changed by another congress." They called upon "Comrade Gerry Healy as the historical leader of this movement and as the leader of the Tenth World Congress as well as the most outstanding fighter for its perspectives to call an emergency meeting of the International Committee of the Fourth International and we will not recognize any other factional meeting called fraudulently in the name of the ICFI."

History can mete out to Healy no punishment more terrible than for him to be remembered as the "most outstanding fighter" for the perspectives of the 10th Congress — which was, without any question, the most wretched document ever produced in the history of the ICFI. It would make the Draft Program of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern look like a masterpiece of Marxist literature.

The pedigree of this document was inauspicious. It was originally drafted by Slaughter for discussion at the February 1984 meeting of the ICFI and it was denounced then by the Workers League. An additional section — which supposedly dealt with the world situation — was tacked on the document in time for the Seventh Congress of the WRP, which passed it before the 10th Congress of the ICFI was convened.

This document was a living monument to the suppression of political discussion within the IC by Healy, Banda and Slaughter. Despite the fact that the last IC congress had been held in February 1981, this document could deal with none of the major developments in the world economic and political situation of the previous four years. All the strategic experiences of the international class struggle and of the ICFI and its sections went unmentioned. Between February 1981 and January 1985, there had been three major wars: the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Malvinas War, and the continuing conflagration between Iran and Iraq. The Indian subcontinent was in turmoil: there had been the assassination of Gandhi and the Punjab crisis, the bloody pogroms in Sri Lanka and the expansion of the Tamil struggle for self-determination, a series of coups in Bangla Desh and the mass demonstrations in Pakistan.

In Africa, there had been a coup in Nigeria, imperialist intervention in Chad, and, above all, the massive growth of the revolutionary movement in South Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there had been the downfall of the Argentine junta, the emergence of civilian rule in Brazil, the growth of the Sendero Luminoso guerilla movement in Peru, the US invasion of Grenada, and the continuing threats of imperialist aggression in Nicaragua. In Europe, Pasok remained in power in Greece and the Socialist Party won the

French election — but elsewhere the tendency toward right-centrist regimes predominated in the Common Market countries.

In Australia and New Zealand, the Labourites were returned to power; and in the Philippines the assassination of Aquino began the death agony of the Marcos regime.

The crisis of Stalinism within the USSR and Eastern Europe reached immense proportions with the suppression of Solidarity and the on-going crisis of leadership inside the Soviet bureaucracy, as the war in Afghanistan dragged on. In China, the post-Maoist leadership continued its right-wing economic policies and signed an agreement pledging to preserve capitalist rule in Hong Kong.

In North America, the conservatives came to power in Canada and Reagan was re-elected to a second term.

And last but not least, there was the British miners strike.

Most of these events were not even mentioned; and those that were, merited, at most, a sentence. There was not a single political development which was concretely analyzed — even in those countries where the ICFI has sections. The section of the document dealing with the objective world situation consisted of just under nine small printed pages — consisting of nothing but generalities, platitudes, banalities, and gross theoretical blunders.

The central thesis of the document was that there existed on the planet a universal and undifferentiated revolutionary situation "marked above all by the fact that the working class and all the oppressed masses have now entered upon a course of struggles against the capitalist state, under conditions where the necessity of revolutionary taking of state power is brought before these masses every day. From the proletariat of the capitalist countries of Europe to the workers in the United States, from the Latin American masses to those of South-East Asia, this common level of revolutionary class struggle is established." (*Resolution on International Perspectives*, p. 1)

This "analysis" was established not on the basis of any specific analysis or concrete examination of the class struggle on any continent. Rather, it was supported through further assertions, themselves based on abstract references to "the necessary working out of the objective laws and the accumulated historical contradictions of the world capitalist system." (*Ibid.* p. 2)

There was no concrete analysis of the economic crisis, based on a serious examination of world trade, industrial production, employment, the impact of technological developments, etc. Rather, the resolution simply declared that economic contradictions "have now broken through the 'dam' of Bretton Woods with irrepressible force, and the dam cannot be reconstructed. That is the key to the international situation and it is the content of the political struggle in every country." (*Ibid.* p. 3)

## 41. The 10 Stupidities of C. Slaughter

Any conception of the uneven development (from which the law of combined development is derived) of the world economy and the class struggle was denied. Thus, the resolution, which had been dashed off by Slaughter during a few spare hours, presented the following assertions:

1. "The objective laws of capitalist decline now operate



without hindrance. They have broken through." (*Ibid.*, p. 4)

This can only mean that all subjective factors — such as the conscious intervention of the bourgeoisie — have now been overwhelmed, and capitalist economy is plunging like a cascading waterfall into the abyss. However, as history has demonstrated and as Trotsky explained, the bourgeoisie is not a passive victim of "objective laws of capitalist decline" but intervenes within the objective process to counteract and influence the operation of these objective laws. It is only within the sphere of abstract scientific study — as in Volume One of *Capital* — that we can study the abstract movement, "without hindrance", of the objective laws of capitalist decline. In Volume Three, Marx already deals with the more complex forms through which these laws are mediated in capitalist society. In society the laws of capitalist decline operate through classes, which reciprocally act upon and influence their operation. It need only be pointed out that the most essential law governing the decline of capitalism — the tendency of the rate of profit to decline — itself does not operate "without hindrance" but is subject to a whole series of countervailing factors, of both an objective and subjective character. Thus, the statement quoted above, which constitutes, so to speak, the "theoretical" foundation of the entire document, is an absurdity — which arose out of the complete repudiation by the WRP of the need for any serious work on the development of Marxist perspectives.

2. "It is the open dominance of these objective laws of capitalist historical crisis, on a world scale, that characterizes essentially the political situation in every country." (*Ibid.*)

This statement was based on the first and provided the bridge to the following political conclusion:

3. "The capitalist class finds itself — and this is historically unprecedented — confronted by a working class which despite growing mass unemployment is making mass revolutionary experiences as an undefeated class. Along with the mass revolutionary struggles of the British miners and other European workers goes the mounting resistance of the masses of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, driven on by the same insoluble crisis." (*Ibid.*)

This is, indeed, historically unprecedented, because such a situation as that described in the above paragraph has never existed and never will. All the connections between different countries and their struggles were established purely through the power of the English language. In truly Olympian fashion, Professor Slaughter even decreed that unemployment was no longer a significant factor in the concrete conditions of the class struggle within each country.

4. "The reality is that the decisive revolutionary battles are already engaged." (*Ibid.*, p. 5)

This statement was presented as a universal truth, applicable to every country. It meant that those who take this document seriously would have to view any struggle, no matter how isolated or small, as one of the decisive battles of the revolution — that is, of immediate life and death significance. There is no essential difference, therefore, between a strike by gold miners in South Africa, mass demonstrations in Haiti, and strikes involving a small number of workers in the United States. Such a perspective could only lead those who based their political work upon it to the wildest and most fool-hardy adventures.

5. "Every single day is a movement of the revolutionary flux of developments — it is not a question of something 'building up' for the future." (*Ibid.*)

This meant that everywhere in the world the revolutionary situation was already in its "nine month," and the mass movement in every country had already attained its highest possible level of development.

6. "The political struggle — in which the working class and the International Committee sections are now involved — are struggles in which the question of state power is already directly posed and has to be answered." (*Ibid.*)

Slaughter could write these words, and — as Trotsky once warned about middle-class academics, put them back in his briefcase, forget about them and trundle off to Bradford University the next morning. But for those in different parts of the world who read these words, their meaning had far more serious implications. While producing these words cost Slaughter nothing but an afternoon at his writing desk, it could cost genuine revolutionists their heads.

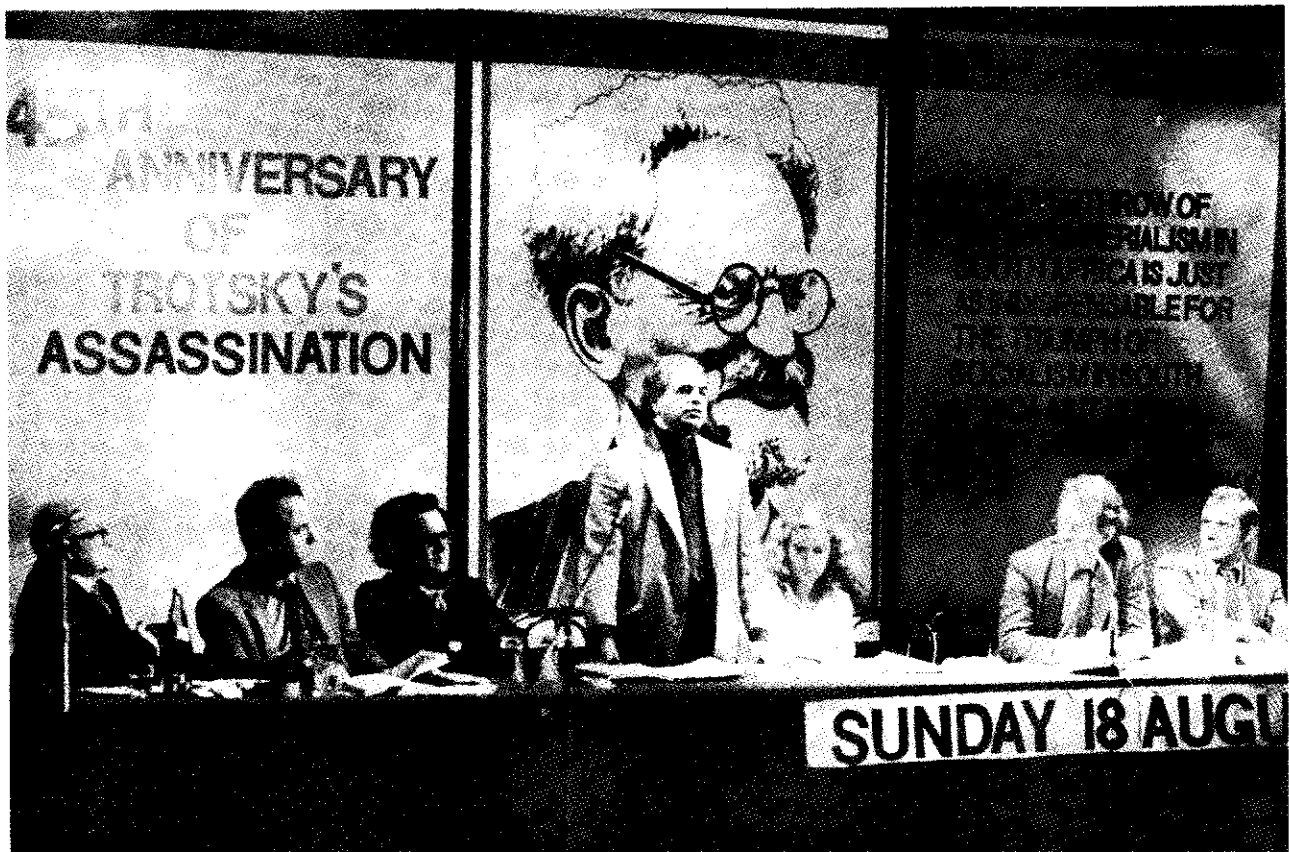
7. "The objective laws predominate and the struggle for power is on the agenda in every country, whether it be in the form of a development contained in the struggle to organize the General Strike in Britain or some other form." (*Ibid.*)

This sentence established the identity of every form of struggle, not only in disregard of its level of development, but, no less important for the strategy of the ICFI, of the class forces which predominate within it. With the phrase "some other form," a political identity was created between the struggle of different social strata. They were all endowed with the same historical weight and significance within the perspective of the International Committee. Thus, no distinction could be allowed between demonstrations of US farmers and strikes by Minnesota meatpackers; or between strikes by Indian railway workers and the occupation of the Golden Temple by the Sikhs; or the Brighton bombing by the IRA and the miners strike. All these struggles were presented as merely different "forms" of the same universal essence. Thus, the historical perspective of the ICFI was decisively shifted off its proletarian axis.

8. "The proletariat of the United States, undefeated, enters struggles of a revolutionary nature simultaneously with those of the rest of the world." (*Ibid.*, p. 7)

When these lines were written, the level of strike activity in the United States had fallen to its lowest level in the entire post-war period for the third consecutive year. There had not taken place a single mass demonstration of the working class since 1981. Trade union membership, beneath the impact of repeated betrayals by the AFL-CIO, had fallen to its lowest level in more than a generation. In mid-1985, a series of strikes — including the first steel strike in 25 years — began. They were largely of a defensive character, called to resist demands for wage cuts and other contract concessions. None were of a political character. Yet, the resolution placed the class struggle within the United States at the same level as that in South Africa, Brazil or Britain. If this were the case, the perspective of fighting for the formation of a Labor Party as the first step toward the establishment of the political independence of the working class would have to be thrown out — for there would be no need for the intermediate stage of development.

In fact, since 1983 the WRP had been placing pressure upon the Workers League to drop its demand for the for-



The platform at the WRP meeting commemorating the assassination of Trotsky, August 18, 1985

mation of a Labor Party in the United States. The central emphasis placed by the Workers League had been attacked by Slaughter in his December 1983 letter and in February 1984, without presenting any evidence to substantiate his charge. Healy alleged that the Workers League was transforming the demand for a Labor Party into a strategical goal and thus liquidating the fight for the building of the Workers League. What Healy and Slaughter really wanted was to force the American organization to abandon its proletarian orientation and turn it toward the bankrupt middle-class radical protest movement.

9. *"The revolutionary class confrontation, the struggle for power, the development of a whole series of interconnected, unevenly developed, but unified struggles for state power — is now joined, not anticipated merely."* (*Ibid.*, p. 8)

This sentence is merely a variation on the same theme, with a bit of confusion added. For the sake of his theoretical soul, Slaughter added — a few drops of ink — the words "unevenly developed." But once it is asserted that the unified and interconnected struggles for state power are **now joined** and not merely anticipated, the words "unevenly developed" can be nothing more than meaningless verbiage. At any rate, none of these statements were concretely illustrated with examples from either history or the actual living development of the class struggle. Thus, Slaughter did not explain the difference between a struggle for state power that is "joined" and one that is "merely anticipated." He did not establish the historical point at which the anticipated struggle for state power became transformed into one that was actually joined.

Slaughter's supra-historical abstractions, disconnected from the actual developments of the class struggle, were not merely the product of his own theoretical impoverishment. The WRP leadership needed this type of document precisely because it could not tolerate any concrete analysis of the strategical experiences of the party and the international class struggle during the previous decade.

10. *"All the political tasks of the International Committee and its sections flow from this revolutionary content of the struggles in which the working class is inescapably engaged."* (*Ibid.*, p. 9)

With these words Slaughter was attempting to cast a very wide net. While speaking of "All the tasks...." Slaughter failed to elaborate even one — for the International Committee, for a single section...or even for a branch. Although they attempted to transform Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* into a factional platform against the International Committee, none of the anti-Marxist charlatans in the WRP leadership were capable of genuine dialectical analysis. They could not understand why Lenin quoted appreciatively this "beautiful formula" from Hegel's *Logic*: "Not merely an abstract universal, but a universal which comprises in itself the wealth of the particular, the individual, the single..." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 99)

It is hardly surprising that in the aftermath of their split from the International Committee, Healy and his renegade clients in the Greek WIL should invoke the authority of the 10th Congress Resolution. It was the type of document that could furnish a petty-bourgeois demagogue with enough winged phrases to last him for a year. In its style and con-

tent, the 10th Congress Resolution bore a striking resemblance to those prepared by Pablo on the basis of the 1951 Third Congress:

*"The situation is prerevolutionary all over in various degrees and evolving toward the revolution in a relatively brief period."* ("The Building of the Revolutionary Party," SWP International Information Bulletin, June 1952, p. 35)

The 10th Congress document marked the climax of the anti-internationalist rampage of the Healy-Slaughter-Banda clique. The repudiation of this reactionary exercise in petty-bourgeois radical phrase-mongering was an elementary duty of the Trotskyist faction inside the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The 10th Congress was historic in this sense: it proved that the Workers Revolutionary Party had forfeited all right to the leadership of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Seven months after the conclusion of the 10th Congress, delegates of the International Committee were urgently summoned to London for a meeting held on August 17, 1985. It was chaired by Banda and addressed by Healy, Corin Redgrave and Dot Gibson, the WRP's treasurer. They claimed that there was a serious financial crisis caused by unexpected tax surcharges that had been levied by the government. No reference was made to the political crisis raging inside the Party — the desertion of Jennings, the allegations against Healy and the demand for a Control Commission investigation into his activities. Promising to repay all loans, the WRP collected £84,000 pounds in pledges. By now, as the crisis within the leadership approached its denouement, its relations with the ICFI had degenerated into extortion and grand larceny.

## 42. The WRP Breaks with Trotskyism

The sections of the International Committee learned of the crisis within the WRP at various times in September and October 1985. By the time all the sections knew what was taking place, charges for Healy's expulsion had already been brought before the Central Committee and had passed by 25 to 12. An attempt to expel all those who had opposed the expulsion motion was stopped solely through the intervention of several IC delegates who, having arrived earlier in London, emphatically opposed organizational measures to settle political questions.

The scene which the IC delegates confronted as they assembled in London for an emergency meeting in late October defies description. What had appeared to be a smoothly running machine had exploded and was discharging red-hot fragments in all directions. The old apparatus that served as the bedrock of Healy's despotism was breaking down into its constituent elements, setting into motion that most frightening of all social spectacles — the stampede of the enraged petty bourgeois. The terrible political degeneration of the WRP under Healy was mirrored most clearly in the political bewilderment and disorientation of those whom he had supposedly trained.

The ICFI sought to provide a principled basis for resolving the crisis within the Workers Revolutionary Party. But first it had to deal with problems within its own ranks. The Greek and Spanish sections had organized a separate factional meeting in Barcelona on October 21, 1985 and

declared that they would recognize no authority inside the ICFI except Gerry Healy. He alone, they claimed, had the right to call meetings. Thus, they refused to attend. By October 23, 1985, a majority of the IC sections were assembled in London. They correctly analyzed that the source of the crisis within the WRP had been the opportunist repudiation of Trotskyist principles and its refusal to subordinate itself to the International Committee.

After examining the evidence of Healy's gross abuse of authority the ICFI sections agreed that his expulsion was necessary — but its analysis of his degeneration was of an entirely different character than that which was being advanced by Slaughter and Banda. In an effort to prevent any political clarification within the WRP, Slaughter — consciously and cynically — set out to whip up a factional frenzy among the middle-class elements. The sexual aspect of Healy's degeneration was placed at the center of the discussion, and Slaughter introduced the theory that Healy and the minority were "near fascists." The implication of this theoretical monstrosity was that no further political analysis of the degeneration of the WRP was really necessary. In rejecting this position, the ICFI delegates recognized that Healy's crimes could only have taken place in an organization whose central leadership had abandoned Trotskyism and the struggle for Marxist principles inside the working class. Moreover, the ICFI delegates identified the refusal of the WRP to subordinate itself to the discipline of an international movement as the fundamental characteristic of its degeneration. The preliminary analysis of the ICFI was summed up in two documents drafted prior to the meeting of the International Committee on October 25, 1985. The first resolution dealt with the reasons for Healy's expulsion from the ICFI. We quote it in full:

*"The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) expels G. Healy from its ranks and endorses the decision of the Workers Revolutionary Party Central Committee to expel him from the British section.*

*"Healy grossly abused his political authority over a protracted period, using the cadre of the ICFI and the WRP for his personal purposes and violating their rights.*

*"In so doing he abused the political trust and confidence placed in him by all sections of the ICFI.*

*"The practices which he carried out constituted an attack on the historically-selected cadre of the Trotskyist movement.*

*"The ICFI has in its possession overwhelming evidence establishing the ground for Healy's expulsion.*

*"The ICFI is by no means unmindful of or indifferent to the political contribution made by G. Healy, but these abuses are so great that it is the duty and responsibility of the ICFI to take this course of action.*

*"There is no toleration of corruption within the ICFI. All leaders are accountable for their actions and cannot act outside the constitution of the Party.*

*"Healy has at no time made any attempt to contact the ICFI in order to try to refute the charges or to argue against his expulsion.*

*"On the contrary, in the recent period he conducted an unprincipled factional campaign within the ICFI exploiting personal contacts to portray himself as a victim of political conspiracy and to engage in a scurrilous slander campaign against leading members of the ICFI.*

*"In expelling Healy the ICFI has no intention of denying the political contributions which he made in the past, particularly in the struggle against Pabloite revisionism in the 1950's and the 1960's.*

*"In fact, this expulsion is the end product of his rejection of the Trotskyist principles upon which these past struggles were based and his descent into the most vulgar forms of opportunism.*

*"The political and personal degeneration of Healy can be clearly traced to his ever-more explicit separation of the practical and organizational gains of the Trotskyist movement in Britain from the historically and internationally grounded struggles against Stalinism and revisionism from which these achievements arose.*

*"The increasing subordination of questions of principle to immediate practical needs, centered on securing the growth of the party apparatus, degenerated into political opportunism which steadily eroded his own political and moral defenses against the pressures of imperialism in the oldest capitalist country in the world.*

*"Under these conditions his serious subjective weaknesses played an increasingly dangerous political role.*

*"Acting ever-more arbitrarily within both the WRP and the ICFI, Healy increasingly attributed the advances of the World Party not to the Marxist principles of the Fourth International and to the collective struggle of its cadre, but rather to his own personal abilities.*

*"His self-glorification of his intuitive judgments led inevitably to a gross vulgarization of materialist dialectics, and Healy's transformation into a thorough-going subjective idealist and pragmatist.*

*"In place of his past interest in the complex problems of developing the cadre of the International Trotskyist movement, Healy's practice became almost entirely preoccupied with developing unprincipled relations with bourgeois nationalist leaders and with trade union and Labour Party reformists in Britain.*

*"His personal life-style underwent a corresponding degeneration.*

*"Those like Healy, who abandon the principles on which they once fought and who refuse to subordinate themselves to the ICFI in the building of its national sections must inevitably degenerate under the pressure of the class enemy.*

*"There can be no exception to this historical law.*

*"The ICFI affirms that no leader stands above the historical interests of the working class."*

The second resolution outlined the political means through which the crisis could be overcome and the WRP saved as a Trotskyist organization. It sought to avoid a further split inside the British organization and create the conditions for political clarification:

*"The present political situation in the Workers Revolutionary Party has produced the biggest crisis in the International Committee of the Fourth International since its formation in 1953.*

*"What is in danger are all the achievements made in the decades-long struggle to build the Trotskyist movement in Britain and internationally. None of those gains would have been made without the protracted and difficult struggle against Stalinism and Pabloite revisionism in which the*

*leadership of the WRP and its predecessor, the Socialist Labour League played the decisive role.*

*"All the sections of the ICFI were formed as a result of the struggle by the British comrades against the attempt of Pabloite revisionism to liquidate Trotskyism.*

*"At the root of the present crisis which erupted with the exposure of the corrupt practices of G. Healy and the attempt by the WRP Political Committee to cover them up, is the prolonged drift of the WRP leadership away from the strategical task of the building of the world party of socialist revolution towards an increasingly nationalist perspective and practice...*

*"The first step towards overcoming the crisis in the WRP is the recognition by its leadership and membership that it requires the closest collaboration with its co-thinkers in the ICFI.*

*"In the past the WRP has correctly urged its international comrades to always begin from the needs of the world party and not from narrow national considerations.*

*"Now the ICFI calls on all leaders and members of the WRP, whatever their legitimate differences on perspectives and program, to subordinate themselves to the discipline of our international movement and uphold its authority."*

Therefore, the IC proposed three measures to resolve the crisis:

*"(1) The re-registration of the membership of the WRP on the basis of an explicit recognition of the political authority of the ICFI and the subordination of the British section to its decisions.*

*"(2) Full collaboration by every member of the WRP with an International Control Commission to investigate, but not limited to, the corruption of G. Healy, the cover-up by the Political Committee, and the financial crisis of the WRP.*

*"(3) All charges against members of either the minority or majority factions, which have arisen as a result of the eruption of the crisis in the Party shall be referred to the International Control Commission.*

*"All disputes are internal to the WRP and the ICFI, and must remain so..."*

*"We recognize that our British comrades work under enormous class pressures generated by the ruling class of the oldest capitalist country. These can be surmounted only on the basis of a truly internationalist practice.*

*"We again appeal to all members of the WRP to recognize their historical responsibility to the Fourth International, the international implications of their decisions, and to therefore accept these proposals."*

These resolutions make very clear that the ICFI had not been overwhelmed by the events, and that in the midst of subjective hysteria and turmoil it was able to understand and explain the crisis within the WRP in completely objective and Marxist terms. It could not be stampeded by the enraged petty bourgeois in both factions. This fact alone was a powerful confirmation that the International Committee had undergone a political development independent of the WRP. In asserting the authority of the Fourth International over the WRP, the International Committee was setting out to place the work of the British section upon, after so many years, a Trotskyist foundation.

At its meeting on October 25, 1985, the International Committee fought with the WRP delegation to accept the



The Friends Hall meeting, November 26, 1985

ICFI proposals for the resolution of the crisis. Of its four delegates, only Dave Hyland — the WRP organizer in South Yorkshire who throughout the summer had led the fight against the Political Committee's cover-up of Healy's abuses of cadre — supported them fully. While unable to present any political explanation for the crisis within the WRP nor elaborate the programmatic and principled issues in dispute, Banda, Slaughter and P. Jones strenuously opposed any clarification of the Party. They declared repeatedly that the only issue was Healy's sexual practices.

But what they opposed most of all was the demand that the WRP recognize the political authority of the ICFI over the British section. Neither Slaughter nor Banda were prepared to give up the national autonomy of the WRP to do as it pleased inside Britain and within the international workers' movement. The ICFI made clear that if the WRP would not accept the authority of the International Committee, then there would exist no basis for further fraternal collaboration. After many hours of discussion, Banda, Slaughter and Jones suddenly changed their position and declared their agreement. Later they would claim — and for once honestly — that their decision to accept the resolutions were dictated solely by tactical considerations related to their struggle against Healy's supporters.

The next morning the ICFI contacted a representative of the Healy faction, Ben Rudder, to inform him that it would meet with the minority to put before it a proposal to avoid a split and organize a discussion under the supervision of the International Committee. In reply, Rudder indicated that the pro-Healy faction no longer considered itself part of the International Committee. The ICFI set aside a time and place to meet with the minority, but it did not come. Instead, it issued a statement denouncing the ICFI and declaring a split. This action served only to prove that Healy's supporters would not work within the International Committee unless it could be used for their nationalist purposes. On the next day, October 27, 1985, the Special Conference of the WRP overwhelmingly, with no votes against and only a few abstentions, approved the ICFI resolutions.

However, it soon became clear that the Slaughter-Banda

faction had no intention of accepting the subordination of the Workers Revolutionary Party to the ICFI. It immediately violated the resolution by summoning the capitalist press to the center in Clapham to provide the bourgeoisie with a lurid account of the WRP crisis. It then, again without any discussion on the IC, terminated the daily newspaper. At the same time, a hate campaign was whipped up inside the WRP against the International Committee. It was a continuation of the same anti-internationalism that had existed under Healy. The lead in this campaign was given by Cliff Slaughter, who appealed to every chauvinist and backward element in the WRP and outside it. To win support for his campaign against the International Committee, Slaughter organized a public meeting in London, under the bogus banner of "revolutionary morality," in which he shook hands with a notorious Stalinist, Monty Johnstone, and called into question the entire history of the Fourth International.

As this was developing, the IC Control Commission gathered evidence documenting the WRP's unspeakable betrayals of the International Committee and its betrayal of fundamental class principles. The interim report of the Control Commission was presented to the ICFI on December 16, 1985. This report made clear that the WRP had entered into mercenary relations with bourgeois states in the Middle East and sold principles for money. On the basis of this evidence, the ICFI voted to suspend the WRP. Three of the four WRP delegates — Slaughter, Tom Kemp and Simon Pirani, voted against the resolution. Only Dave Hyland voted with the IC delegates from the other sections. The suspension was not simply a disciplinary action. The International Committee made clear that these betrayals had taken place because the WRP leadership had abandoned Trotskyism. Therefore, it could not function within the ICFI without terminating the unprincipled relationship which had existed under Healy during the past decade and re-establishing a genuine programmatic agreement with the world party, based on internationalism.

Thus, the ICFI put forward another resolution in which it called upon the British delegates to reaffirm their political



**Police called to keep Trotskyist minority out of the WRP 8th Congress**

agreement with the historical foundations of the Trotskyist movement. These foundations were identified in the resolution as *"the decisions of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International (1919-1922); the Platform of the Left Opposition (1927); the Transitional Program (1938); the Open Letter (1953); and the documents of the struggle against the bogus SWP-Pabloite reunification (1961-63)."*

The resolution concluded:

*"The ICFI and the Central Committee of the WRP shall now work closely together to overcome as quickly as possible the existing problems which are the legacy of the nationalist degeneration of the WRP under Healy, to reassert the basic principles of internationalism within the WRP, and on this basis restore its full membership in the International Committee of the Fourth International. The organizational structure of this relationship shall at all times be based on the Leninist principles of democratic centralism, which are elaborated in the statutes of the Fourth International."*

With the exception of Hyland, the WRP delegates — Slaughter, Tom Kemp and Simon Pirani — voted against this resolution. This confirmed that the degeneration of the WRP was, at essence, a repudiation of all the programmatic foundations of Trotskyism. It now became clear why the entire leadership had endorsed all the political betrayals that had been carried out by Healy. Furthermore, their vote against the resolution meant that they had no intention of correcting these positions and returning the WRP to the road of revolutionary Marxism. Finally, this vote established that the Workers Revolutionary Party had decided to formally split from the Fourth International. Far from having

broken with Healy, Slaughter and Banda were developing his anti-Trotskyist line to its inevitable political conclusion.

Five weeks later, on January 26, 1986, the WRP Central Committee passed two resolutions formally declaring its split with the International Committee of the Fourth International. Two weeks before the scheduled opening of its Eighth Congress, the Central Committee — with only Hyland and two other members of his minority tendency voting against — repudiated the resolution which had been adopted at the Special Conference of the WRP on October 27, 1985.

The first resolution declared that *"the IC is neither the World Party nor even the nucleus of the World Party"* and that *"the IC cannot claim political authority as an international leadership. Neither can sections be subordinated to an international discipline determined by the IC."*

The second resolution repudiated the re-registration of WRP members on the basis of recognizing the political authority of the ICFI.

These resolutions signified that the WRP had come full circle: it rejected all the internationalist traditions upon which the Trotskyist movement in Britain had been based. The analysis which the International Committee had made on October 25, 1985 was vindicated with stunning accuracy. We quote again: *"At the root of the present crisis...is the prolonged drift of the WRP leadership away from the strategical tasks of the world party of socialist revolution towards an increasingly nationalist perspective and practice."*

Two weeks later, the WRP called police to prevent the

pro-International Committee minority from entering the venue of the Eighth Congress. Mr. C. Slaughter entered the conference with a police escort. The political and moral collapse of what was once the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International was completed. The WRP and all its subsidiary and multiplying factions had become another nationalist centrist appendage of British imperialism.

Those who had been excluded from the conference because they defended the International Committee assembled at another location to convene the legitimate Eighth Congress of the British section. The following month, they formed the International Communist Party.

### 43. Conclusion

The examination which the ICFI has made of the political line of the Workers Revolutionary Party since its formation in 1973 has proved that the collapse of the organization in the summer and autumn of 1985 was the direct product of opportunism. The predominant expression of this betrayal of Trotskyism was the subordination of the interests of the world socialist revolution to the immediate practical needs of the British organization. The growth of chauvinism within the WRP expressed the direct pressure of British imperialism upon the party, above all its leadership. Healy, Banda and Slaughter came to look upon and treat the International Committee as if it formed part of a mini-commonwealth dominated by the WRP, to be used as a source of finance and to be manipulated in the interests of its own foreign policy.

By the 1980's the methods through which they dominated the International Committee began to resemble those practices used for centuries by the British ruling class: perjury by day and forgery by night — and we mean this literally. Even after their Political Committee had broken up into a political saloon of brawling factions, its members could still serenely collaborate in August 1985 in the extortion of tens of thousands of pounds from the International Committee.

It is, of course, not possible to ascertain the "moment" the degeneration began. At any rate, such processes do not proceed in a straight line. There are days when even a dying man displays a vigor that astonishes his family and friends. But there can be no doubt that the political decay of the WRP was inseparably bound up with its turn away from the international struggle against revisionism — the theoretical mainspring of building the world party — in the early 1970's.

The practical gains that had been achieved in Britain in the midst of the anti-Tory upsurge led the Socialist Labour League to neglect the essential theoretical and political struggle within the ICFI — above all, against the centrism of the OCI. At the very point when the mass movement required the heightening of the theoretical consciousness of the leadership and cadre, the British section was disarmed. The adaptation to the spontaneous trade union consciousness of the mass movement was then reflected programmatically in the founding documents of the WRP, which already indicated a serious opportunist deviation. Then, the political shifts within the labor movement following the election of the Wilson government produced differentiations within the WRP which the leadership could not confront objectively. The outcome of the factional warfare that erupted inside the Party beneath the pressure of the

powerful British Social Democracy resulted in a shift in the class axis of the Workers Revolutionary Party. The political line which followed — the violent oscillations between ultra-left adventurism and right-wing opportunism — expressed the growing domination of the middle class, whose political gyrations during the past 15 years in Britain would resemble, if measured, the fever chart of a malarial patient.

By 1979 the catastrophic blunders which had been committed by Healy and Banda during the previous five years had largely separated the WRP from the real life of the British proletariat. The political line reflected ever more faintly the needs of the working class. Healy's Political Committee had degenerated into a demoralized clique of yes-men, hand-raisers, and outright flunkeys — of which Mike Banda was merely the most distinguished representative. Realizing that the party was teetering on the edge of the abyss, Healy and Banda grabbed desperately to the rotten ropes of the trade union bureaucracy and various bourgeois regimes in the Middle East.

The next five years completed the transformation of the Party — from a proud Trotskyist movement into a corrupt appendage of the Social Democracy. No one expressed this transformation more completely and tragically than Healy himself. In the early 1970's he made the one mistake that is impermissible for a revolutionist: he became satisfied with small successes. And even worse, he forgot that the gains of the British movement were the product not only of his own work and that of his comrades inside the SLL, but that of the world Trotskyist movement as a whole. He forgot that nothing would have been possible without the struggles of entire generations of revolutionaries, whose life and death struggles all over the world were epitomized in the genius of Leon Trotsky and the principles he fought for.

Healy had come to believe that he could cheat history, and that he had found a tactical shortcut to the revolution. He had even conned himself into believing that he could lead two lives: preaching revolutionary discipline in public while indulging himself in private. But this grand illusion was shattered in 1985. All the gains that had been built up over a period of four decades lay in ruins. Never had the horrifying implications of opportunism been more glaringly exposed. Healy, who had thought that he could violate the precepts of genuine revolutionary morality secretly and with impunity, landed publicly in the gutter, besplattered with mud and slime. The man who had developed such contempt for the "small Trotskyite groupies" of the ICFI, was deservedly driven from his Clapham headquarters by enraged Party members with sticks and stones, and found asylum only in a secret bunker provided by Vanessa Redgrave.

Only one force could have pulled the WRP, and even Healy, back from the abyss — the International Committee of the Fourth International. Nowhere else could the problems of the British movement have been studied objectively and analyzed within the context of the international class struggle and the historical development of the Trotskyist movement on a world scale.

There was, no doubt, a legacy of uneven political development within the International Committee. From the 1950's on, opportunism — not isolation from the working class — had wreaked enormous havoc within the Trotskyist movement. Pabloism destroyed promising movements in countries all over the world. The desertion of the Socialist Workers Party in 1963 dealt a treacherous blow to the





**Trotsky**

Fourth International. For a few years the Socialist Labour League and the French OCI alone represented experienced movements which were deeply rooted in the history and traditions of Trotskyism. The other sections of the ICFI which were founded during that period consisted of very young leaderships with no previous or significant experience in the revolutionary movement. They were dependent upon the SLL and the OCI for their theoretical and political schooling. The split in 1971 meant that the British organization exercised overwhelming influence inside the ICFI.

It was natural that Healy and the WRP should, for a period, exercise their authority as "first among equals" within the ICFI. Their aim, however, should have been to overcome the unevenness and work for the creation of an internationally homogeneous leadership. Instead, the WRP leaders more and more consciously sought to exploit the uneven development. The WRP leaders thus transformed the outcome of an historic process into a purely negative factor. Its leaders forgot that the "unevenness" itself was relative, and could provide the dialectical source for the education of the International as a whole.

Even the most experienced section with the largest membership would inevitably stagnate and degenerate unless it was constantly studying the political and theoretical problems of the world movement. But the WRP ceased to concern itself in the slightest with the complex political problems which the other sections of the ICFI were compelled to confront each day. While the WRP leaders boasted incessantly of their material resources, they failed to take note

of the important theoretical work that was taking place within the IC sections. Unlike the WRP, which could cover up (for a while) its political crisis by drawing on big resources, the sections of the ICFI could only survive on the basis of a day-to-day struggle for a correct political orientation.

Moreover, the ICFI sections had another great advantage over the WRP. The center of their existence was internationalism. This applied not only to a handful of leaders but to the membership as a whole. Within the WRP, however, the axis of political life was British. Large sections of the WRP membership — in fact, the overwhelming majority — knew absolutely nothing about the internal life of their sister parties. As the ICFI learned later, the press of their sections was not circulated throughout the branches of the WRP. Even more damning was the fact that the leaders themselves knew virtually nothing about the work of the sections — except for factional tidbits which they sought to exploit when the need arose. This provincial arrogance permeated the entire leadership. When Tom Kemp came to the United States to lecture for one year at a university, he never once contacted the Workers League — which learned of his extended stay only after he had left. Later it was discovered that he was a contributing editor on a magazine published by American Stalinists.

In the aftermath of the split, Slaughter invented the theory that there had been an "equal degeneration" in all the sections of the ICFI. This vicious slander — which had been created solely for the purpose of covering up for the crimes of the WRP leadership as a whole — ran up against one problem. When challenged, neither Slaughter nor anyone else in the WRP was able to substantiate these claims on the basis of a real political analysis of the work of the sections. They would have hardly known where to begin. Moreover, the really serious errors committed by sections generally came as a direct result of the confusion created by the disloyal interventions of either Healy, Banda or Slaughter at meetings of the ICFI.

Throughout the 1980's there gradually emerged a recognition within the IC sections that something was seriously wrong inside the WRP. The fact that the WRP did not allow the criticisms of the Workers League to be properly circulated and discussed indicates that Healy, Banda and Slaughter suspected that its views would find broad support within the ICFI. This was historically confirmed: what appeared in 1982 to be the positions of a totally isolated minority became within three years, once the documents were carefully studied, the majority view of the leaders and cadre of the International Committee.

It is, nevertheless, a fact that the domination of the WRP continued within the ICFI for years after there were undeniable signs of political degeneration. In the best of all worlds, the ICFI would have promptly intervened and forced a discussion in the mid-1970's, or even earlier. In reply, it can only be said that anyone who is familiar with the history of the workers' movement knows how difficult it is to correct an old leadership — especially one that is identified with decades of struggles.

Moreover, the crisis of revolutionary leadership is not a phrase: It is an organic part of profound and complex historical processes within the political development of the international working class. Ultimately, the social impulse for the defeat of the Healy-Banda-Slaughter clique came from the upsurge of the class struggle in Britain — above all,

the miners' strike — which in the space of 12 months shattered the stability of the Healy apparatus and opened up the fissures through which the opposition within the ICFI and inside the WRP broke through.

From the standpoint of analyzing the class nature of the divisions which emerged within the WRP and the ICFI, it is highly significant that the center of principled opposition to the Healy-Banda-Slaughter clique within the British section emerged among the working class members in South Yorkshire and Manchester. This opposition was led by Dave Hyland, who had been deeply involved in the miners' strike. It was among these proletarian forces, along with the leadership of the Young Socialists, that the ICFI found a powerful and unflagging base of support. During the meetings of the ICFI in October 1985, the security of the IC meetings was guaranteed by these miners. On one occasion they directly warned Banda — still the general secretary of the WRP — that they would directly intervene if he attempted any further provocations against the ICFI members. Later, in the weeks leading up to the final break between the ICFI and the WRP, the leaders and supporters of the Slaughter-Banda faction could hardly restrain their class hatred of the Hyland tendency. It was as if the miners' strike was being refought inside the WRP.

The International Committee of the Fourth International has survived and defeated the most pernicious attack leveled against Trotskyism since 1953, and this is the most

powerful vindication of the principles upon which the ICFI is based. Despite the size of the WRP apparatus and huge resources at their command, Healy, Banda and Slaughter could not stamp out Marxism inside the International Committee. The lessons of the past 15 years, acquired through bitter and protracted struggle, are now being assimilated in every section of the ICFI and they will never be forgotten. They shall serve as the basis for the education of all those who enter into the Trotskyist movement. The gains of the past year are now being systematically consolidated. Within the sections and among them, the cadre are being unified on firm programmatic foundations. An uncompromising and merciless struggle is being waged against the liquidators and their poisonous skepticism and cynicism. The great liberating ideas of Leon Trotsky are again firmly entrenched within the International Committee of the Fourth International.

June 9, 1986

Peter Schwarz, Ulli Rippert (Bund Sozialistische Arbeiter, West Germany)

Keerthi Balasuriya (Revolutionary Communist League, Sri Lanka)

Nick Beams (Socialist Labour League, Australia)

Dave Hyland (International Communist Party, Britain)

David North (Workers League, United States, in political solidarity with the ICFI)

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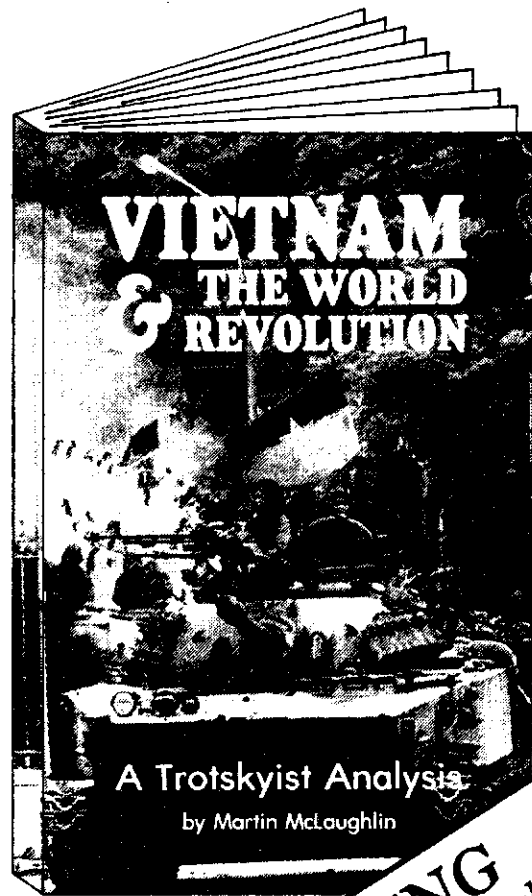
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Más de cien mil obreros y jóvenes en la manifestación contra el régimen de apartheid de Sudafrica, el 14 de junio en Nueva York.

# ¡HAY QUE ACABAR CON LA DICTADURA DEL APARTHEID!

POR CARLOS RIVERA

La represión policial del régimen del apartheid contra los obreros negros, contra la juventud y contra los opositores del estado racista sudafricano debe ser combatida con la acción decisiva del movimiento obrero norteamericano.

El primer día de la huelga general y de las manifestaciones masivas en conmemoración del decimo aniversario del levantamiento

de Soweto del 16 de junio de 1976, ocurrió bajo condiciones de un estado nacional de emergencia.

Millones de obreros sudafricanos se plegaron a la huelga a pesar de las medidas policiales que desde el nueve-

de junio, habían resultado en el empujamiento de más de 200 personas.

Incluidas en las medidas represivas, las actividades de la policía a los periodistas, a los estudiantes, a los obreros negros. No obstante, se sabe de una paralización de los centros laborales en los centros urbanos a raíz de la huelga. También, ha aparecido información de "cámpus" entre jóvenes y obreros negros y los fuerzas armadas del gobierno.

Las fuerzas de "seguridad" de gobierno de Buthe acordaron, entre otros, con el presidente del Congreso de los Estados Unidos, Ronald Reagan, y también a

Brigadas del Consejo de Simpatizantes (CUSA), Seth Cooper, presidente de la Organización Popular de Azania (AZAPO), y líderes del Frente Unido Democrático (UDF), fueron arrestados por la policía junto con cientos de jóvenes y obreros.

Unidades de la policía llegaron a las "zonas" de negocios y a los grupos anti-apartheid y de grupos anti-apartheid con perros de policía en los edificios en un solo día. La policía usó muchos manifestantes para atacar a los manifestantes que no habían llegado a la policía.

Después, como es de esperar, el gobierno con simpatizantes norteamericanos que el gobierno se esfuerza en

minimizar, reprimir a los obreros que sean reportados en los periódicos. La sublevación nacional del 76 ocurrió cuando jóvenes estudiantes de Soweto que estaban protestando contra la "educación bantú" fueron arrestados por las fuerzas del gobierno. Murieron más de 600 estudiantes durante la agitación.

Mientras que antes de acciones contra el apartheid, en las ciudades de color, muchos los sindicatos negros eran arrestados. Una realidad un millón más de su minutos con el presidente del Estado P.W. Botha.

Tanto en el idioma como "antagonismo" y en el lenguaje este mes es un lenguaje de solidaridad.

En su momento que el domingo y el lunes, será la más grande manifestación de masas en la historia de la policía y los indígenas. La policía y los indígenas se enfrentaron a una sublevación. La única forma en que se puede salvar es en un momento de sublevación en un momento de sublevación. Los obreros negros y los obreros blancos.

La continuación del D.D.



Miles de obreros de comunicaciones en huelga, piquetean en Manhattan

## Aumenta la Ola de Huelgas

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### EL ASESINATO DE TOM HENEHAN

El asesinato de Tom Henehan, un obrero irlandés que trabajaba en un taller de reparación de coches en el barrio de Manhattan, Nueva York, el 14 de junio de 1986, es un crimen que ha despertado la ira de los obreros de todo el mundo. Henehan era un miembro activo del Partido Comunista de los Estados Unidos y un defensor de la causa de la independencia de Irlanda. Su asesinato se produjo durante una manifestación en apoyo de la independencia de Irlanda.

Los hechos que rodean el asesinato de Tom Henehan son los siguientes: Henehan fue asesinado por un sujeto que se identificó como un miembro del IRA. El asesino fue arrestado inmediatamente después del crimen. Henehan tenía 38 años de edad y era un trabajador muy querido en su taller.



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