



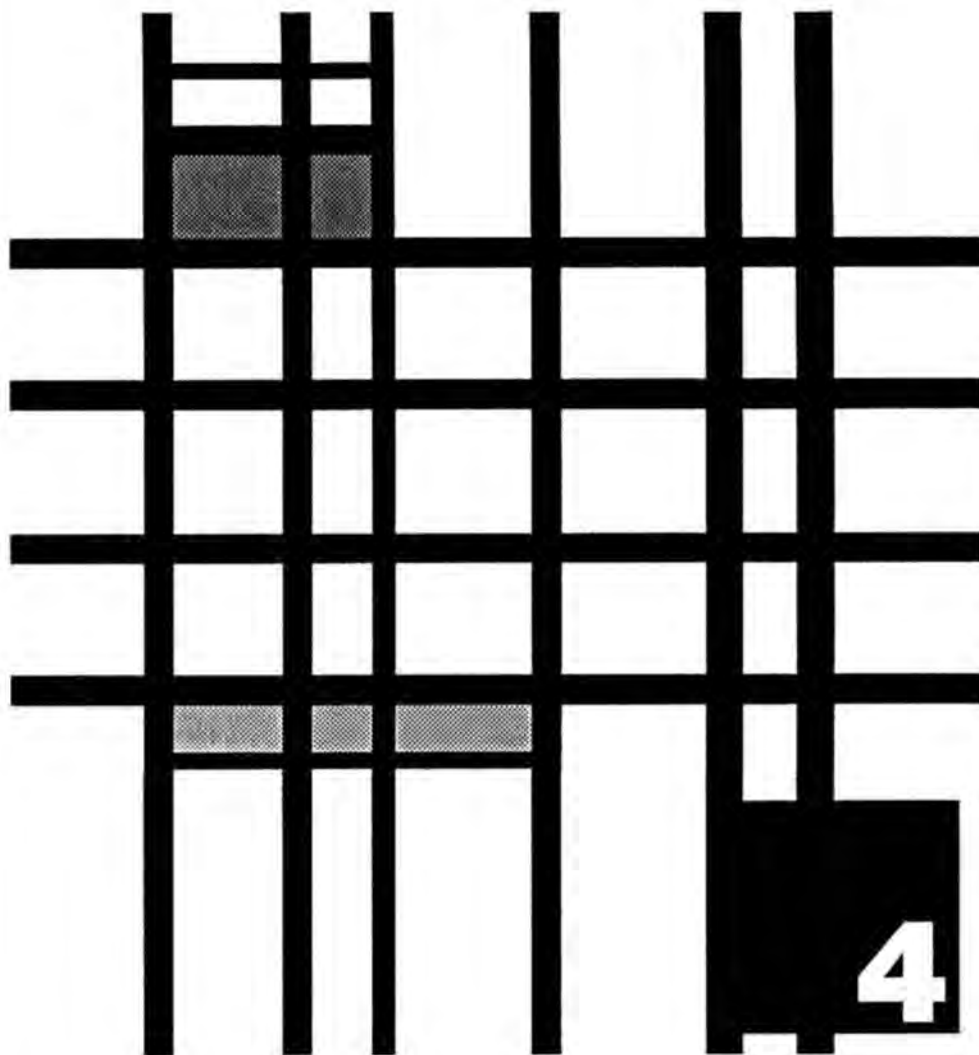
*for study
and research*

NOTTEBOOKS

The formative years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)



Daniel Bensaïd



number 9, 1988

£2.50, US\$4, 25FF

International Institute for Research and Education

The *Notebooks for Study and Research/Cahiers d'Etude et de Recherche* (NSR/CER) are sponsored by the International Institute for Research and Education/Institut International de Recherche et de Formation (IIRE/IIRF).

They include three series:

- A "lectures" series: these are edited transcriptions of classes given under the auspices of the IIRE (and sometimes other institutions). They include appendices and supplementary material in addition to the course itself.

- A "studies" series: these are systematic studies of either a particular experience in a given country or a particular theme.

- A "documents and debates" series: these are collections of documents, articles and interviews designed to update a controversial question.

The same texts appear in English under the title *Notebooks for Study and Research*, numbered according to the English publication sequence, and in French, under the title *Cahiers d'Etude et de Recherche*, numbered according to the French publication sequence.

Some notebooks are translated and published in other languages, particularly Spanish. Write for more information on their availability and price.

Readers are encouraged to send us their comments on the format and content of the NSR/CER at the following address:

IIRF/IIRE
Postbus 53290
1007 RG Amsterdam
Pays-Bas



NSR/CER TITLES

■ In English:

❖ Now available:

- No. 1 *The Place of Marxism in History*, by Ernest Mandel (study) (40 pp. 20 FF)
- No. 2 *The Chinese Revolution - I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook*, by Pierre Rousset (study) (32 pp. 20 FF)
- No. 3 *The Chinese Revolution - II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power*, by Pierre Rousset (study) (48 pp. 25 FF)
- No. 4 *Revolutionary Strategy Today*, by Daniel Bensaïd (lecture) (36 pp. 20 FF) *
- No. 5 *Class Struggle and Technological Change in Japan Since 1945*, by Muto Ichiyo (study) (48 pp. 25 FF)
- No. 6 *Populism in Latin America*, by Adolfo Gilly, Helena Hirata, Carlos M. Vilas, and the PRT (Argentina) introduced by Michael Löwy (documents) (40 pp. 20FF)
- No. 7/8 *Market and Plan in Postcapitalist Societies: the Experience of the So-Called Socialist Countries*, by Catherine Samary (lecture) (64 pp., 30FF)
- No. 9 *The Formative Years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)*, by Daniel Bensaïd (lecture) (48 pp., 25FF)

❖ Forthcoming:

- The Bourgeois Revolutions, by Robert Lochhead
- The Transition in Nicaragua, collected articles
- Strategic problems in Central America, by S. Rodriguez et al.
- The Cuban Revolution, by Janette Habel
- Marxism, Feminism and Labor, by Marijke Colle
- The Swedish Model of "Socialism," by Tom Gustaffson
- Marxism and Liberation Theology, by Michael Löwy

Also available in French:

All the above notebooks are also available in French, except for NSR no. 4, which is available as Part One of Daniel Bensaïd, *Stratégie et Parti*, Paris: La Brèche, 1987. CER No.4 is composed of two updated chapters of Michael Löwy's *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development*, available from New Left Books, London.

A note to our subscribers

Dear Friends,

Many of you have subscriptions which run from issue number 1 to issue number 9. It is therefore time to renew. We have changed our sub formula to make it easier for you to get the NSR regularly:

5 issues, surface mail: £10, or US\$16 or 100FF.

Add 20% for air mail.

All payments to P. Rousset.
See the form on the back cover.



Foreword

We had planned to publish a study on the formation of the Fourth International by Daniel Bensaïd since the launching of the Notebooks for Study and Research, two years ago. Unexpected delays and late submittals — due to the author's many commitments — forced us to postpone the date several times. But chance has served us well: 1988 is the fiftieth year since the founding of the International in 1938.

It is also the year when the verdicts of the great Moscow trials — held from 1936 to 1938 — were officially rescinded. The Soviet press has been progressively lifting the veil on this bloody chapter in the history of Stalinism. The purges ordered by Stalin hit not only prestigious leaders with unassailable revolutionary credentials, like Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev and Bukharin, but hundreds of thousands, perhaps a million, rank-and-file Communists. Bureaucratic arbitrariness ruled unchecked; torture had replaced judicial procedures.

The rehabilitation of the defendants of the Moscow Trials does not (yet?) directly concern Trotsky. A member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the former chief of the Red Army, he was condemned before these trials were held. Nevertheless, this new step in *glasnost* has demolished the concept of an "imperialist plot" on the basis of which he was framed up and denounced. Already other leaders of the Left Opposition ("Trotskyists") have been rehabilitated: Rakovsky, Piatakov, Radek...

What every historian knew and what every activist identified with communism should know, is now beginning to be officially admitted in the USSR itself. The recent Soviet Communist Party congress even decided to build a monument to the victims of Stalin.

This was the period in which the Fourth International was created. It was established by anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and communist activists who rejected this miscarriage of justice, this denial of all socialist legality and democracy; they chose instead to fight the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state which they had actively contributed to build and defend. Placed under rigorous ostracism by the official Communist Parties, decimated in the USSR and hounded beyond its borders, they were threatened with isolation and discouragement. Who would claim today that their fight was groundless?

The International Left Opposition was not the only anti-Stalinist Marxist current struggling for authentic communism. For a long time, efforts were made to regroup these diverse forces. These attempts were necessary, even indispensable, but as World War Two approached and pressure mounted, they ended in failure.

In reviewing this historical period, Daniel Bensaïd

(1) We have already published a lecture by Daniel Bensaïd: *Revolutionary Strategy Today*, Paris: Notebooks for Study and Research 4, 1987. The French version was published as Part One of D. Bensaïd, *Stratégie et parti*, Paris: La Brèche, 1987.

(2) Daniel Bensaïd and Alain Krivine, *Mai si! rebelles et repentis*, Paris: La Brèche, 1988.

(3) The Communist League (LC) most notably regrouped activists of the Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR) and Internationalist Communist Party (PCI-French section of the Fourth International), two organizations banned by the French government in June 1968. Documents from its 1969 pre-convention discussion

evaluates the methods used by those who fought against the current to create an internationalist movement. He brings out the very distinctive conditions under which the Fourth International was born, and attempts to delineate exactly what was at stake in the differences among the anti-Stalinist Marxist currents of that time on the question of the Fourth International. He traces, in particular, the several changes in organizational orientation implemented during those decisive years, presenting the reasons given for them at the time. He discusses what lessons revolutionary activists today can draw from this experience, concerning in particular the various possible policies for building a party.

Daniel Bensaïd is a regular collaborator of the activities of the International Institute for Research and Education. (1) A direct protagonist of the May 68 events in France — an exceptional convergence between a radical student revolt and a workers' general strike of unprecedented size —, he has just published, together with Alain Krivine, a study of these events and their aftermath. (2) He is one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the French section of the Fourth International. In that capacity, he has often considered the relationship between internationalism and the building of an International: in 1969, for instance, when the Communist League decided to affiliate to the Fourth International after a major internal discussion; (3) and again, more recently, when he contributed to the effort to assess the evolution of the Fourth International and its relations with various revolutionary currents around the world. (4)

His report was delivered in 1985 to an audience composed of members of the Fourth International. The written version published here for all readers of the Notebooks for Study and Research has preserved the activist tone of oral speeches ("we must know and understand the battles out of which we were created"). It has been supplemented by appendixes, including documents pro and con the foundation of the Fourth International, written at the time, and studies written more recently, in retrospect.

With this ninth Notebook for Study and Research, we hope to contribute — as the Fourth International enters its fiftieth year of existence — to a better understanding of the conditions in which it was founded. We also hope this study will stimulate the necessary reflection on the important and interconnected questions of the need for internationalism and for unity of revolutionary activists and currents today.

Pierre Rousset and John Barzman
July 4, 1988

were published in *Construire le parti, construire l'Internationale, extraits du débat préparatoire au congrès de fondation de la Ligue communiste. 2 - De l'internationalisme à l'Internationale*, Paris: Cahiers rouges-documents de formation communiste 8-9/Maspero, 1969. The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) founded in 1974, expresses the political continuity of the Communist League banned by the government in 1974.

(4) On this topic see "Resolution on the present stage of building the International" adopted by the January 1985 congress of the Fourth International, in *International Viewpoint*, special issue, 1985.

Chronology

	Major events	Trotskyist Movement	Trotsky
1929	beginning of the world economic crisis November: Bukharin expelled from CPSU	May: foundation of the Communist League of America in Chicago July: <i>Bulletin of the Opposition</i> (Russ) starts September: <i>La Vérité</i> (France) launched December: Blumkin executed in Moscow	February: Trotsky deported from USSR to Prinkipo, in Turkey <i>My Life</i> November: <i>Permanent revolution</i>
1930	January: fall of Primo de Rivera in Spain September: Nazis score success in German elections October: Vargas takes power in Brazil	foundation of the Spanish Left Opposition in Liège April: the conference of the International Left Opposition (ILO) in Paris elects an International Secretariat (IS)	Articles on German Nazism and Spanish revolution
1931	forced collectivization in the USSR April: abdication of Alfonso XIII in Spain November: Mao becomes president of the Soviet Republic of Jiangxi	Alfred Rosmer, a founder of French Communist Party, leaves the French section of the ILO	<i>History of the Russian revolution</i>
1932	January: Japan occupies Shanghai	popular pamphlets about Nazism in Germany are published	Trotsky stripped of his Soviet citizenship trip to Copenhagen and public speech by Trotsky
1933	January: Hitler appointed Chancellor February: Reichstag fire March: banks collapse and Roosevelt's "New Deal" is launched in the United States December: formation of the Workers' Alliance in Catalonia and the Asturias	February: international preconference of the ILO May: Trotsky comes out for a new party in Germany July: Trotsky comes out for a new International August: Declaration of Four for a new International	July: Trotsky arrives in France
1934	February: Socialist militia is smashed in Vienna July: SP and CP sign Pact of Unity in France Minneapolis strikes in the USA September: the USSR joins the League of Nations October: insurrection of the Asturias in Spain beginning of the Long March in China December: Kirov assassinated in Leningrad	February: Christian Rakovsky, Soviet Left Opposition leader deported to Siberia, capitulates June: Trotsky for the "French turn" August: French Bolshevik-Leninists enter the SFIO September: Nin's ICE rejects entryism in Spain December: formation of Workers Party in United States (merger of CLA and AWP)	July: Trotsky settles at Domène, in France November: <i>Whither France?</i>
1935	May: Laval-Stalin Pact between France and Soviets Ethiopia devastated by Italian armies August: strikes of Toulon and Brest in France 7th congress of the Communist International September: constitution of the POUM in Spain (fusion of Maurin's BOC and Nin's ICE)	June: French Bolshevik-Leninists expelled from SFIO August: "Open Letter for the Fourth International"	June: Trotsky in Norway <i>Young Lenin</i>
1936	January: Popular Front election platform is signed in Spain February: victory of the Popular Front in Spain May: victory of Popular Front in France June: general strike and sit-downs in France July: putsch and Civil War in Spain August: first Moscow Trial September: Popular Front governments are established in Madrid and Barcelona December: the POUM is excluded from the Catalan government	January: Trotsky breaks with French Bolshevik-Leninists who wish to postpone exit from SFIO crisis of the French section March: Workers Party-US enters the Socialist Party creation of the PCI in France July: first international conference for the Fourth International July-August-September: Trotskyist militants assassinated	<i>The Revolution Betrayed</i> August: Trotsky arrested in Norway December: departs towards Mexico
1937	January: second Moscow Trial May: Barcelona insurrection formation of Negrin government in Spain June: the POUM is banned, Nin is assassinated open war between China and Japan	competition from London Bureau	January: arrives in Mexico and settles in Coyoacan September: the Commission chaired by US philosopher John Dewey finds Trotsky and Leon Sedov not guilty of charges made against them in Moscow Trials
1938	February: Anschluss March: third Moscow Trial June: the PSOP leaves the SFIO Cardenas nationalizes oil in Mexico September: Munich conference November: protest general strike fails in France	January: Trotsky breaks with Sucevliet and Dutch RSAP July: Rudolf Klement assassinated September: founding conference of the Fourth International	February: Sedov, hunted by the GPU, dies in Paris clinic May: <i>Transitional Program</i> July: <i>Manifesto Towards a Free Revolutionary Art</i> (with Diego Rivera and André Breton)

The formative years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)

●
Daniel Bensaïd

Studying the formative years of the Fourth International, from 1933 to 1938 has a two-fold interest. The first is from the standpoint of history: it is part of knowing and understanding the battles which shaped us and the programmatic legacy on which we stand. The other is more practical: many of our current orientation and party-building problems grow out of the conditions under which the Fourth International was formed.

I will not go into the international developments of these years in this report. Nevertheless, the choices and steps that I will discuss were directly shaped by compelling events of the class struggle. These should be kept in mind at all times, referring, if necessary, to the chronology (see page 4).

We need only stress, to refresh our memories, that the fight to found the Fourth International took place in the brief interval between the victory of Hitler in Germany and the preparations for World War Two. In these few years, social convulsions and crises were precipitated with a speed that is hard to imagine today: the rise of Nazism in Germany and Austria, the Spanish Revolution and Civil War, the collapse of the People's Front in France, the bleak succession of the Moscow Trials and great purges in the USSR, the Long March and the beginning of the anti-Japanese liberation war in China, to mention only a few.

Within a few years, European societies and the political map of the world and of the labor movement were completely remodeled in a great upheaval. Whole traditions and cultures disappeared like former continents swallowed by the oceans. (1)

Bearing this background in mind, we will deal with the major political issues raised by the bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist International and the creation of a new minority revolutionary International:

1) **When?** On what the criteria did Trotsky and the leadership of the Left Opposition base their decision that the time had come to move from a fight to reform the Third International to proclaiming the need for a new International?

2) **On what basis?** What were the programmatic issues which drew the boundaries of a new international current of the organized labor movement, and how were they to be argued?

3) **How?** What method was used to attempt to gather the largest possible numbers around this project?

4) **With whom?** We will examine the complex relations between the building of national sections and the building of an international organization, as well as the different tactics used in the process: regroupments and fusions, "entryism," a workers party based on the trade unions, etc.

(1) On Central Europe between the two wars, see Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg, *Le Yiddishland révolutionnaire*, Paris: Balland, 1983.

(2) The controversy was reflected in the great debates held in the international socialist movement at the turn of the century, following the publication of Eduard Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899) and Rosa Luxemburg's answer, *Reform or Revolution?* (1900), republished in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York: Pathfinder, 1970. These debates had been preceded by a theoretical controversy over the "decomposition of Marxism" which can be considered as the first in the long series of the fashionable "crises of Marxism." Moreover, prominent leaders like David and von

I. From the fight to reform the Third International to the need for a Fourth International: the historic test

● 1) The Second International did not embrace chauvinism and "National Union" overnight, in August 1914. It had begun to degenerate much earlier. Signs of the process were not lacking. Theoretical and ideological symptoms were brought to light as early as the turn of the century, in the great controversy over revisionism (in which Luxemburg, Bernstein, Labriola and Sorel participated). Political symptoms too had multiplied, from the question of participation in bourgeois governments (raised by the Millerand affair in France) to the adoption of chauvinistic positions on the colonial question and war at international congresses. (2)

Nevertheless, to declare the Second International as such irreversibly failed, you needed more than counterposed motions in convention halls, however great the differences may have been, and more than an accumulation of alarming symptoms. You needed a trial in real life, a **crucial historical test**.

What could be more telling about an International than its position on war, when it has to choose between principle number one "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" and its exact opposite "Go and kill each other"? On August 4, 1914, when the large Social-Democratic Parties approved the general calling up of the troops and sanctification of national unity in their respective countries, they sealed the fate of the Second International finally, and brought forth the need for a Third International.

This was the unambiguous conclusion drawn by Lenin in his pamphlet, *The Collapse of the Second International*. He did not conclude that one could simply proclaim a new International, but that one had to set immediately to the task of building one, of creating the conditions for one. The international conferences at Zimmerwald and Kienthal were to be the first steps in that direction. But the ultimate historical event which redefined the axes around which the organized labor movement could regroup, in the heat of mass action, and which put the actual founding of the Communist International concretely on the agenda, was the victory of the Russian revolution.

● The Communist International was founded in 1919. But even then, there were some hesitations. A majority of the young German Communist Party was hostile to the move. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had just been executed. The objections of the congress delegates were only overcome thanks to the great authority earned by the Bolshevik leaders and to the last-minute news of the explosive situation developing in

Kol had put forward theses which emphasized the "civilizing role" of colonialism at congresses of the Second International (see Hélène Carère d'Encausse and Stuart Schram, *Marxism and Asia 1854-1914*, London: Allen Lane, 1969).

Austria-Hungary. (3)

The process of bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and Communist International also began quite early, in the 1920s. Trotsky dated "the beginning of Thermidor," that is, of the bureaucratic counter-revolution, in 1924. Nevertheless, before practical conclusions and organizational choices could be finalized, it was important to grasp fully the process, particularly the various changes in course and qualitative leaps that would define the new tasks.

It would have been irresponsible to pronounce a movement of such historical portent irremediably bankrupt light-mindedly. What was at stake was not just ideas, doctrines and principles, but a tremendous upheaval which had set millions of workers on the road to collective action under the impact of the first victorious proletarian revolution in a backward and rapidly isolated country.

As had been the case for the Second International, a crucial historical test was necessary.

In 1932, Trotsky still upheld the **line of reforming the Comintern** in a programmatic document entitled "The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods." He therefore defined the Opposition as a faction, not a full-blown future party. Nevertheless he sounded a warning:

"Such a historical catastrophe as the collapse of the Soviet state would, of course, sweep away with it the Third International too. Similarly, the victory of fascism in Germany and the smashing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policy." (4)

On March 5, 1933, barely a year later, the second of these major hypotheses was unfortunately realized. The German proletariat was smashed without a fight as a result of the criminal policy of its two leaderships, Social Democratic and Stalinist. Trotsky's conclusion was immediate. He summed it up in a striking formula: "The German proletariat will rise again, the German Communist Party never!" He proclaimed the consequence forthrightly: the need for a new party in Germany; but he did not yet bury the entire Comintern along with its German party.

At that point, in March 1933, and until July of the same year, the line that a new party was needed remained the exception, applicable to Germany, in the framework of a general line of "reforming" the Communist International and its sections.

Since our primary purpose here is to understand and assimilate the method used, we should stress how difficult these decisions were. The bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and Comintern was an international process. The young Communist Parties were not mere appendages of

(3) See *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestoes of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London/Atlantic Highlands: Ink Links/Humanities Press, 1980; and *Founding of the Communist International, Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919*, The Communist International in Lenin's Time, edited by John Riddell, New York: Pathfinder, 1987.

(4) "The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods" (December 1932), *Writings 1932-1933*, p. 54. This is one of the 14-volumes series of *Writings of Leon Trotsky*, covering the years 1929 to 1940, published by Pathfinder, New York, from 1969 to 1979, hereafter referred to as *Writings*.

the Comintern apparatus. Each had its own history and its distinctive trajectory. As a result, the process of degeneration was **uneven**. In some countries, Stalinization came early and smothered the nascent Communist movement in its infancy. This was the case in Spain, for example. In other countries, the implementation of the so-called "third period" adventurist line had already caused major major departures or splits in sections of the Communist International. This was true in Sweden where the majority of the local Communist Party, headed by Kilbom, had walked out of the Comintern. It was true too, though on a smaller scale, in Germany where the creation of the Brandler current (the KPD-O) was a similar development. Finally, the secession of the Catalan-Balearic Federation led by Joaquin Maurin in Catalonia also paralleled these splits.

Yet in other countries, the Stalinization of the Communist Parties and the subordination of their leaderships to the interests of Soviet diplomacy was only achieved after furious battles which lasted throughout the 1930s. In some cases, the process was never completed. Whereas Stalinist leadership teams were able to stabilize in France, around Maurice Thorez, and in Italy around Palmiro Togliatti, the Chinese Communist Party's leadership team around Mao was formed during the Long March in a struggle against the Wang Ming group supported by the Comintern. The Vietnamese CP maintained a certain autonomy and the Yugoslav CP leadership already clashed with the Comintern leadership on some issues before the war. In both cases, Georgy Dimitrov seems to have played the role of a conciliator. (5)

So it was only in July 1933, after noting that a reaction to the German tragedy had failed to materialize inside the Comintern, that Trotsky turned on the question of the International and pronounced for a new International.

It is of course possible to argue over the criterion which he chose to make decisive — the German defeat of 1933 — and wonder whether the fate of the Third International had not been sealed as early as 1927, with the tragedy of the Chinese revolution, the massacres in Canton and Shanghai, the first purges in the USSR itself. In subsequent articles, Trotsky showed he was aware of the question but recommended to leave it to historians. We should probably accept this bit of advice, and stick to the question of method: the idea that a real test was needed, one that involved the direct responsibility of the Comintern.

The test which was chosen, the rise of Nazism in Germany, was not just any old event. It consecrated the defeat of the most powerful Communist Party after that of the Soviet Union, in the very country where a new extension of the world revolution was deemed most likely after the victory of the Russian revolution. There can be no question that is represented a sharp change in the situation.

(5) This trajectory of the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Parties is discussed by Pierre Rousset in *Le Parti communiste vietnamien*, Paris: Maspéro, 1975, and *The Chinese Revolution, Part I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook*, and *Part II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power*, Paris: Notebooks for Study and Research, numbers 2 and 3, 1987. Wang Ming testifies to the scope of the clash inside the Chinese leadership in the 1930s in his memoirs, *Medio Siglo del Partido Comunista de China y la Traición de Mao Tse-tung*, Moscow: Progresso, 1975.

Nevertheless, there is a radical difference between the degeneration of the Second International and that of the Third International. It has to do with the existence of the Soviet state. For a long time Trotsky stumbled on a major difficulty: to call for the existence of a new international revolutionary party, including in the USSR therefore, would imply calling for a new revolution in the Soviet Union itself. But, at the start of the 1930s, he still did not conceive that such a call could be issued before the bureaucratic caste led to a collapse of the Soviet state as a workers' state. According to van Heijenoort, it was only between March and July 1933 that he envisaged a change of perspective to resolve this contradiction. (6)

In March 1933, the general line was still that of a reform of the Communist International and its sections, except in Germany where the need for a new party was on the agenda. After the Comintern meeting of April 1933 approved the policy it had pursued in Germany without any significant reaction or differences, Trotsky asked himself whether it was not necessary to call for a new International, except in the Soviet Union where the perspective would remain that of reform. In March then, the call for a new party for Germany was still an exception; by early July, it was the line of reforming the Soviet Union which was the exception.

These hesitations were the signs of a thorough rethinking in the face of the colossal events unfolding, particularly the enigma of the degeneration of the first state produced by a victorious proletarian revolution. The solution of the contradiction was found in the notion of "political revolution": a new revolution was indeed on the agenda in the Soviet Union, without waiting for the collapse of the workers' state and a return to capitalism. But it was a political revolution against the confiscation of power by the bureaucratic caste, one aiming to restore the rule of socialist democracy. The necessity of a new International then became a completely coherent answer, including for the Soviet Union.

● 3) Another difficulty flowed from the general context and very nature of the historic test represented by the German defeat. For social-democracy, August 4, 1914 completed an opportunist evolution that had been going on for many years, a gradual integration into municipal and parliamentary institutions, during which the parliamentary and trade-union bureaucracy of the big parties of the Second International definitively crystallized.

But in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the image of the Comintern, on which it recruited, was not that of institutionalized class collaboration, but on the contrary that of the "third period." It was a militant image, attractive to the most combative and devoted among the young generations of the proletariat galvanized by the Russian revolution. The books of Tillon, Valtin, Berger, Fourier contain valuable memories of this moment. (7) Isaac Deutscher rightly spoke of the "bureaucratized heroism" of the Third International in this period.

There are therefore good reasons for thinking twice before proclaiming the failure of this International which

(6) See Jean van Heijenoort's article in Appendix B, p. 34

sank, not into a debacle of generalized chauvinism, like its predecessor, when faced with the test of a war, but into the bureaucratic adventurism practised in Germany, where the future of the world revolution was at stake.

While the test was immediately relevant for the German party and Comintern as such, it was, logically, much less revealing and certain for parties which had much more distant and looser links with the Communist International, such as the Chinese party after the beginning of the Long March.

● 4) Despite these difficulties, the lesson in method is fundamentally correct and should be retained. This method takes as its starting point in judging the nature of an organization, big historical events, not subjective criteria. It starts from the facts (although the choice of "significant" facts is always subject to debate) and **not from predictions**.

In 1930, Trotsky wrote:

"It is obvious to what extent all these possibilities and probabilities [of our own native-born form of Bonapartism] reduce the likelihood of success for the road of reform. But the odds cannot be measured in advance.... In this fundamental sense, we remain on the road of reform."

In 1933, after the test took place, he wrote:

"Even if some of us had had the conviction, some time ago, that the Comintern would be doomed to ultimate defeat, it would have been impossible for us to proclaim ourselves a new International.... We conceived of a theoretical development in which the historic events explained in advance by us, with our criticism, could produce a radical change in the policy of the Comintern. These great events have taken place. There was China... There was Germany.... The road taken by the Comintern is now quite definite. It is doomed to defeat. The idea of reform is to be rejected, nationally and internationally." (8)

This method is fundamentally correct, including for small organizations. Of course, in the case of small organizations with only tenuous and fragile links to the mass movement, the weight of theoretical errors and programmatic drifts can be more immediate and catastrophic than in the case of mass parties. But even for the latter, the practical consequences of errors or theoretical revisions are revealed in short delay in the face of great events of the class struggle.

The Fourth International experienced a serious split in 1952-53. In retrospect, one can argue over whether Michel Pablo's, then a leader of the organization, positions on Stalinism and bureaucracy were dangerous or tended towards revisionism. But the decisive test was his political attitude towards the major event which followed, that is

(7) Testimonies on this period of Communism in French include: Charles Tillon, *On chantait rouge*, Paris: Laffont; Joseph Berger, *Le naufrage d'une génération*, Paris: Denoël, 1974; Jan Valtin, *Sans patrie ni frontières*, Paris: Lattès; and Elizabeth K. Portetsky, *Les Nôtres*, Paris: Denoël, 1985.

(8) The two quotes are taken respectively from: "Tasks in the USSR" (October 1, 1930), *Writings 1930-1931*, p. 53; and "For New Communist Parties and the New International" (July 27, 1933), *Writings 1933-1934*, pp. 26-27.

the 1956 Hungarian revolution, during which he gave unconditional support to the Budapest workers councils against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Anyone who concluded that Pablo had degenerated definitively in 1953, on the sole basis of the documents he wrote, would have had to reverse their position three years later on the basis of his practical commitments. (9)

Likewise, it was quite correct for the Fourth International to reunite in 1963 on the basis of agreement on such major developments as the rise of political revolution (the anti-bureaucratic movements in Poland and Hungary in 1956), the liberation struggle in Algeria and the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959. (10)

In truth, we should be even more cautious when judging or characterizing small organizations. The fact is that the limited scope of their activist roots and their lack of international relations mean that they do not have the sort of sensors that could enable them to make a fast and accurate judgement on all the developments of the world revolution. Before rendering peremptory and hasty verdicts on their nature, one should allow them time to gather the requisite information, think it over and correct their errors. Otherwise, every single major event can become a new continental divide. It is the fastest way to infinite fragmentation into a plethora of currents and chapels.

II. A new International: on what basis?

"It is not the party which creates the program, but the program which creates the party." Trotsky's formula stood in the direct lineage of the Bolshevik tradition. The program is the basis around which the party's boundaries are drawn, its members selected, and on which it educates its cadres. It is the synthesis of the major lessons of the class struggle.

In 1933, once the perspective of a new International was adopted, the mere reference to the *Communist Manifesto* and first four congresses of the Communist International was a necessary but no longer sufficient basis for a party's programmatic identity. In a mere ten years, the stormy development of the class struggle on the international level had brought forth new decisive experiences: the bureaucratic counter-revolution in the USSR, the victory of fascism in Italy and Germany, the tragedy of the Second Chinese revolution.

The lessons of these experiences are ably synthesized in *The Eleven Points of the International Left Opposition*,

(9) In 1953, on the basis of his view that a new world war was coming, Michel Pablo, at that time a leader of the Fourth International, foresaw a significant differentiation inside the Soviet bureaucracy as it was forced to defend the social foundations from which it drew strength against imperialist attack. His positions left open the hypothesis of self-reform by a sector of the ruling bureaucracy.

(10) The Fourth International was reunited at a congress held in 1963. Some of the documents of this discussion (1954-1963) can be found in *The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism*, New York: Education for Socialists, 1970. The two basic documents of the 1963 reunification congress dealing with the issues mentioned here are, *Dynamics of World Revolution Today* and *For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement*.

drafted in February 1933; this document, whose tenth point was revised in July of the same year, constituted the first programmatic bedrock of the new International.

It covers all the main points in a short statement:

1) Defense of the independence of the proletarian party under all circumstances. This was the lesson drawn from the subordination of the Chinese CP to the Guomindang, and more generally from the "workers and peasants' parties" theory that was the fashion in the second half of the 1920s in the Comintern.

2) The counterposition of the theory of permanent revolution to that of "socialism in one country" and, by extension, the reaffirmation of the international character of proletarian revolution.

3) The characterization of the USSR as a bureaucratically degenerated workers state and, therefore, the necessity to defend it against imperialism and any attempt at capitalist restoration.

4) Condemnation of the Stalinist economic policy and of the adventure of "forced collectivization."

5) The need to work in the reformist trade unions, which implies a condemnation of the sectarian policy of splitting trade unions carried out during the "third period."

6) Rejection of the concept of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" understood by the Comintern's leading circles as a separate stage from the dictatorship of the proletariat. Here too, the point was to draw the lessons of the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

7) The need to mobilize the masses around transitional slogans, and particularly around democratic slogans in the colonial countries and against dictatorial regimes. This point settled the long debate about slogans which unfolded at the fifth and sixth congresses of the Communist International, particularly the question of democratic slogans such as the call for a Constituent Assembly in colonial and dependent countries.

8) The need for a workers united front policy, as against both class collaboration and the divisive sectarianism of the "third period."

9) Condemnation of the theory of so-called "social-fascism" which equated Social-Democratic Parties with fascism.

10) Recognition of the need for an authentic revolutionary International.

11) The need for a democratic regime inside the party counterposed to the bureaucratic degeneration of the internal regime of the Communist International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

These eleven points have not become obsolete. They must be further clarified and enriched in the light of new experiences. This began to happen, in fact, some five years later, with the drafting of the *Transitional Program*, particularly on the question of political — anti-bureaucratic — revolution. There is always something to be learnt from experience, and programmatic conclusions to be drawn from new developments, as the first congresses of the Communist International drew from the Russian revolution and as Trotsky and the Left Opposition drew from the 1920s and 1930s. Our program is never complete. The *Communist Manifesto* was enriched twenty years later by the experience of the Paris

The "Eleven Points" and the Revised Point 10 of the International Left Opposition (July 15, 1933)

The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four congresses of the Comintern. This does not mean that it bows before every letter of its decisions, many of which had a purely conjunctural character and have been contradicted by subsequent events. But all the essential principles (in relation to imperialism and the bourgeois state, to democracy and reformism; problems of insurrection; the dictatorship of the proletariat; on relations with the peasantry and the oppressed nations; soviets; work in the trade unions; parliamentarism; the policy of the united front) remain even today the highest expression of proletarian strategy in the epoch of the general crisis of capitalism.

The Left Opposition rejects the revisionist decisions of the Fifth and Sixth World Congresses and considers necessary a radical restatement of the program of the Comintern, whose Marxist gold has been rendered completely worthless by centrist alloy.

In accordance with the spirit and the sense of the decisions of the first four world congresses, and in continuation of these decisions, the Left Opposition establishes the following principles, develops them theoretically, and carries them through practically:

1. *The independence of the proletarian party*, always and under all conditions; condemnation of the policy toward the Guomindang in 1924-1928; condemnation of the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; condemnation of the Stalinist theory of two-class (worker-and-peasant) parties and of the whole practice based on this theory; condemnation of the policy of the Amsterdam Congress, by which the Communist Party was dissolved in the pacifist swamp.

2. Recognition of the international and thereby of the *permanent character of the proletarian revolution*; rejection of the theory of socialism in one country and of the policy of national Bolshevism in Germany which complements it (the platform of "national liberation").

3. Recognition of the *Soviet state as a workers' state* in spite of the growing degeneration of the bureaucratic regime; the unconditional obligation of every worker to defend the Soviet state against imperialism as well as against internal counterrevolution.

4. Condemnation of the economic policy of the Stalinist both in its stage of *economic opportunism* in 1923 to 1928 (struggle against "superindustrialization," staking all on the kulaks) as well as in its stage of *economic adventurism* in 1928 to 1932 (overaccelerated tempo of industrialization, 100 percent collectivization, administrative liquidation of the kulaks as a class); condemnation of the criminal bureaucratic legend that "the Soviet state has already entered into socialism"; recognition of the necessity of a return to the realistic economic policies of Leninism.

5. Recognition of the necessity of systematic Communist work in the proletarian mass organizations, particularly in the reformist trade unions; condemnation of the theory and practice of the Red trade-union organization in Germany (RGO) and similar formations in other countries.

6. Rejection of the formula of the "*democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*" as a separate regime distinguished from the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, which wins the support of the peasant and the oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of the peaceful "growing over" of the democratic dictatorship into the socialist one.

7. Recognition of the necessity to mobilize the masses under *transitional slogans* corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under *democratic slogans* insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialistic dictatorship (fascism, Bonapartism, etc.).

8. Recognition of the necessity of a developed *united-front policy* with respect to the mass organizations of the working class, both of trade-union and political character, including the Social Democracy as a party; condemnation of the ultimatic slogan "only from below" which in practice means a rejection of the united front and, consequently, a refusal to create soviets; condemnation of the opportunistic application of the united-front policy as in the Anglo-Russian Committee (a bloc with the leaders without the masses and against the masses); double condemnation of the policy of the present German Central Committee, which combines the ultimatic slogan "only from below" with the opportunistic practice of parliamentary pacts with the leaders of the Social Democracy.

9. Rejection of the theory of *social fascism* and of the entire practice bound up with it as serving fascism on the one hand and the Social Democracy on the other.

10. Differentiation of *three groupings* within the camp of communism: the Marxist, the centrist, and the right; recognition of the impermissibility of a political alliance with the right against centrism; support of centrism against the class enemy; irreconcilable and systematic struggle against centrism and its zigzag policies.*

11. Recognition of *party democracy* not only in words but also in fact; ruthless condemnation of the Stalinist plebiscitary regime (the rule of the usurpers, gagging the thought and the will of the party, deliberate suppression of information from the party, etc.).

The fundamental principles enumerated above, which are of basic importance for the strategy of the proletariat in the present period, place the Left Opposition in irreconcilable hostility to the Stalinist faction which currently dominates the USSR and the Communist International. Recognition of these principles, on the basis of the decisions of the first four congresses of the Comintern, is an indispensable condition for the acceptance of single organizations, groups, and persons into the International Left Opposition.

Note

* The following year point 10 was amended in light of the Comintern's refusal to draw the lessons of the victory of fascism in Germany.

Reflecting the Trotskyist movement's determination that it was no longer possible to reform the Comintern and win it back to revolutionary politics, point 10 was amended to read:

"The struggle for the regrouping of the revolutionary forces of the world's working class under the banner of International Communism. Recognition of the necessity of the creation of a genuine Communist International capable of applying the principles enumerated above

[From *Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years 1933-1940*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 23-25.]

Commune. The soviets were a living experience of the working class in 1905 before becoming a programmatic conquest.

We can and must learn in the same fashion from international developments of the revolution, from its victories (China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Vietnam) as well as its defeats (Germany, Spain, Greece, Indonesia). We must learn today from Central America, the Philippines or Poland, as well as from all the mass movements in the developed capitalist countries: not only from the workers struggles, but also from the rise of the independent women's movement and from ecology and anti-nuclear struggles.

Fifty of years later, we can be more precise and tactically flexible. But the question remains: has there been an event of such portent, a programmatic innovation of such scope, as to require a radical revision, a qualitative change of the guidelines sketched in the *Eleven Points*?

At the risk of appearing conservative, we think that, on the contrary, they continue to condense, along with the first four congresses of the Communist International, the crucial programmatic questions of the day on which the great fundamental currents of the international workers movement — Social Democracy, Stalinism, revolutionary Marxism — have to take their stand.

Today, as a result of the crisis of Stalinism, the breakup of the international Communist movement, the victories of the revolution in China, Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua, the rise of liberation struggles in dependent countries and the nascent struggles against the bureaucracy, the international labor scene has become far more complex. All varieties of intermediate positions and hues have multiplied, been refined and subdivided.

Some currents vacillate between Stalinism and Social Democracy (the left socialist currents and the "Euro-communists"). Others vacillate between Social Democracy and revolutionary Marxism, or between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism. (11) What makes the Fourth International so relevant, compared to most currents which existed at the time it was formed and have since disappeared, is the continuing relevance of its general program.

The question of the united front may no longer be posed in the context of "third period"-style problems, as it was then, but it remains posed in the context of all the divisive and class-collaborationist policies pursued today. It is at the core of our debates with left Social Democratic and Euro-communist currents in Europe. The question of the characterization of the USSR, of the political

(11) It is obvious that the influence of Stalinism and Social Democracy owes a great deal to the weight of their large material base; the influence of revolutionary Marxism derives solely from the weight of its membership and ideas.

(12) OLAS was the Organization of Latin American Solidarity which met in Havana in 1967. The Cuban delegation to OLAS presented a report which openly criticized the traditional Stalinist theses on "revolution by stages" for Latin America. The same conclusions reemerged in the wake of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions in a document of Salvadoran Communist Party general secretary, Schafik Handal. For an examination of the extent and limits of his offering, see Daniel Bensaïd, "Révolution permanente et révolution par étapes en Amérique latine: l'autocritique timorée de Jorge Schafik Handal," (Permanent revolution and revolution by stages in Latin America: Jorge Schafik's Handal's timid self-criticism) *Quatrième Internationale*, 41st year, 3rd series, n°11, June-August 1983.

revolution, of our attitude towards the bureaucratized workers states, is posed inescapably in every major show-down of the international class struggle. The question of the permanent revolution (the fact that democratic struggles in dominated countries grow over in to socialist struggles) stands at the center of the lessons of the Cuban, Vietnamese and Nicaraguan revolutions, of the theses adopted by OLAS in 1967, of the debate surrounding the Argentine Communist Party's self-criticism, of the influence of Schafik Handal's theses on certain Latin American Communist Parties. (12) The question of building a mass revolutionary International and of the need for internal democracy inside revolutionary parties are posed as urgently as ever.

III. Towards a new International? How?

We have discussed two problems so far: 1) When and under what conditions should the question of a new International be posed? 2) On what programmatic bases should it be built? The third problem which still concerns us today is: with whom and how should it be built?

Trotsky's personality, his ideas, analyses and literary talents are widely praised and inspire respect in the most diverse quarters. But one thing does not go over in these quarters: the Fourth International. When the issue comes up, the chorus shifts from praise to lamentation: why did such a great man break his back in the last years of his life for such a mediocre purpose? Other critics choose another tack: they do not attack the need for a new International, but the method used to build it. They describe a Trotsky embittered by defeat, who had become brutal, hurried, ultimatic. The result, they allege, is a "self-proclaimed" International, doomed to a long isolation and minority existence, and therefore marked with the seal of this original sin.

We will not dwell on this notion of self-proclamation so dear to those who will vacillate forever. If we do not decide to go ahead and build the organizations which we feel necessary for our day-to-day practice and revolutionary perspective, no one will do it for us. The more important point, though, is that this view often reflects unfortunate ignorance of a rich experience hidden from view by the legend.

The reality is that for five years, from 1933 to 1938, the battle for the building of the Fourth International was an outstanding model of a political approach, at once patient, open and principled. Trotsky was already clearly convinced of the need for a new International in July 1933, as Lenin had proclaimed the need for a Third International as soon as he was convinced of the collapse of the Second. But once the goal was outlined, a five-year delay went by before the founding congress was held, five years which were devoted to dogged efforts to win new forces to the idea and program of a new International, to bring together forces which were either dispersed or hostile to each other. These five years constituted a fearsome race against the clock amidst the drama of the Moscow

Trials, the Spanish Civil War, the rise of Nazism, and the ever more definite threat of a new world war.

● 1) Two methods

In their introduction and notes to the French edition of Trotsky's works, Michel Dreyfus and Pierre Broué attempted a census of the forces of the International Left Opposition in the main countries in 1933. (13) They mention about 500 members for Germany, 800 for Czechoslovakia, 300 for Poland, 300 for France, one hundred for Belgium, 500 for the United States, 300 for Spain, 2000 for Greece divided into two groups. In addition, there was the Left Opposition in the USSR, a force of a few hundreds or a few thousands, scattered in Soviet camps and difficult to evaluate. Most of their figures seem quite optimistic.

Alongside these revolutionary Marxist nuclei, there existed other forces, often numerically much stronger, who were breaking or had broken with Social Democracy or the Communist International in its process of Stalinization.

Among the organizations originating in the Comintern, there were in particular the majority of the Swedish Communist Party led by Kilbom, the DNA in Norway, Sneevliet's RSP in Holland, Maurin's Workers and Peasants' Bloc (Bloque Obrero y Campesino-BOC) in Catalonia, the Urbahns (Leninbund) and Brandler (KPD-O) groups in Germany. Among the groups originating in Social Democracy, one should mention the majority of the German SAP, the OSP in Holland, the Independent Labour Party in Britain, the Italian "maximalists" in exile. (See the glossary page 46).

Beginning in 1933, two counterposed methods to overcome this situation emerged. The first was a tireless effort to build a new International on clearly delineated programmatic bases. The other aimed to establish mere coordinating committees on the basis of minimum agreement and diplomatic compromises. The two methods were embodied respectively in the battle for the Fourth International, and the vacillations and half-measures of the "International Working Community" (IAG), better known as the London Bureau.

When the Left Opposition abandoned the line of reform of the Comintern in favor of a line of building a new International, Trotsky turned to all the independent organizations with whom there had earlier been a difference on this issue. He argued that the point was no longer to decide who had been right yesterday or the day before, but to agree on the tasks of today and tomorrow. (14)

(13) See the "Introduction" to Léon Trotsky, *Œuvres 1 and 2*, Paris: ILT/EDI, 1978.

(14) This applied in particular to left socialist currents formerly outside the ambit of the International Left opposition's direct attention: "The consequences of a great catastrophe unfold very quickly, raise new questions, and demand a clear response. Above all, this applies to the development of the left Socialist organizations. They are also under the pressure both of the most recent events and of the masses, which impels them to seek the road toward political clarity. We can and must play an important part in this process and assist the left Socialist organizations in finding the truly Bolshevik path." ("A Plenum Is Needed to Deal with the Paris Conference" (August 7, 1933) *Writings 1929-1933 Supplement*, p. 265.)

● 2) The Bloc of Four (August 1933)

In August 1933, only three organizations (the German SAP, the Dutch RSP and the Dutch OSP) signed the call for the Fourth International along with the International Left Opposition (which had just changed its name to International Communist League - ICL). Their call included ten points:

- 1) Recognition of the failure of reformism and reaffirmed the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- 2) Defense of internationalism against the theory of socialism in one country.
- 3) Rejection of any wait-and-see policy which led to discarding opportunities for the seizure of power on a national scale on the grounds that one should wait for new advances of the world revolution.
- 4) A characterization of the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and of the failure of the Communist International.
- 5) Recognition that the test of fascism had confirmed the failure of Social Democracy.
- 6) The symmetrical recognition that the test of fascism had revealed the failure of the Comintern.
- 7) The need for a new International.
- 8) The need for strategic delineations including in particular the questions of the insurrection, of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the state form based on soviets or workers councils.
- 9) Defense of the USSR as a workers state despite its degeneration.
- 10) The question of democracy in the party.

Compared to the *Eleven Points of the Left Opposition*, these ten points are obviously far less complete and precise. They do not endorse as clearly the notions of permanent revolution, of class independence and the workers united front, of transitional slogans. Trotsky was fully aware that the *Declaration of the Four* was different than the program of the ICL. Nevertheless, he believed it constituted a sufficiently solid base to take the first steps towards the new International, to draft a Manifesto and strategic theses, and to prepare the new International organizationally together. It was therefore a compromise, in the positive sense of the word, that made possible joint work with currents of various origins — Zinovievists and Bukharinists — without demanding a balance sheet of the 1920s as an absolute precondition.

This approach was not ultimatic. To the contrary, its aim was to bring people together.

A few days after the formation of the "Bloc of Four," the London Bureau met, also in Paris. The meeting was attended by the Swedish CP, the DNA, the British ILP, the BOC, the SAP, the OSP, the RSP. The ICL participated in this gathering under its own name, to defend its position on the need for a new International.

The meetings adopted very general positions on the struggle against fascism and took a stand in favor of "organic unity" (a merger) of the Second and Third Internationals.

Trotsky ironically described this London Bureau as a new Second-and-a-Half International (the attempt of

The "Declaration of Four" On the Necessity and Principles of a New International (September 1, 1933)

In full realization of the great historic responsibility that devolved upon them, the undersigned organizations have unanimously decided to combine their forces for joint work for the regeneration of the revolutionary proletarian movement on an international scale. As the basis for their activity, they lay down the following principles:

1. The mortal crisis of imperialist capitalism, which has taken the props out from under reformism (Social Democracy, the Second International, the bureaucracy of the International Federation of Trade Unions), poses imperatively the question of the break with reformist policy and of the revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only means for the transformation of capitalist society into a socialist society.

2. The problem of the proletarian revolution bears, by its very nature, an international character. The proletariat can build a complete socialist society only on the basis of the world division of labor and world cooperation. The undersigned categorically reject, therefore, the theory of "socialism in one country," which undermines the very foundation of proletarian internationalism.

3. No less energetically must be rejected the theory of the Austro-Marxists, centrists and left reformists who, under the pretext of the international character of the socialist revolution, advocate an expectant passivity with regard to their own country, thereby in reality delivering the proletariat into the hands of fascism. A proletarian party that evades the seizure of power under the present historic conditions commits the worst of betrayals. The victorious proletariat of one country must strengthen its national dictatorship by socialist construction, which remains of necessity incomplete and contradictory until the working class has seized political power in at least a few advanced capitalist countries. Simultaneously, the victorious working class of one country must direct all its efforts to the extension of the socialist revolution to other countries. The contradiction between the national character of the seizure of power and the international character of the socialist society can be resolved only by courageous revolutionary action.

4. The Third International, which grew out of the October Revolution, laid down the principles of proletarian policy in the epoch of imperialism and gave the world proletariat the first lessons in the revolutionary struggle for power, fell victim to a chain of historical contradictions. The treacherous role of the Social Democracy and the immaturity and inexperience of the Communist Parties led to the breakdown of the postwar revolutionary movements in the East and in the West. The isolated position of the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country gave an extraordinary power the ever-more-conservative and nationally limited Soviet bureaucracy. The slavish dependence of the sections of the Comintern on the Soviet leadership led, in its turn, to a new series of grave defeats, to bureaucratic degeneration of the theory and practice of the Communist Parties and to their organizational weakening. More than that, the Comintern proved not only incapable of fulfilling its historic role but also became more and more of an obstacle in the way of the revolutionary movement.

5. The advance of fascism in Germany put the organizations of the working class to a decisive test. The Social Democracy once more confirmed the designation given to it by Rosa Luxemburg and revealed itself for the second time as "the stinking corpse." The overcoming of the organizations, ideas and methods of reformism is the necessary prerequisite for the victory of the working class over capitalism.

6. The German events revealed with no less force the collapse of the Third International. Despite its fourteen-year existence, despite the experience gained in gigantic battles, despite the moral support of the Soviet state and the plentiful means for propaganda, the Communist Party of Germany revealed under conditions of a grave economic, social and political crisis, conditions exceptionally favorable for a revolutionary party, an absolute revolutionary incapacity. It thereby showed conclusively that despite the heroism of many of its members it had become totally incapable of fulfilling its historic role.

7. The position of world capitalism; the frightful crisis that plunged the working masses into unheard-of misery; the revolutionary movement of the oppressed colonial masses; the world danger of fascism; the perspective of a new cycle of wars which threatens to destroy

the whole human culture — these are the conditions that imperatively demand the welding together of the proletarian vanguard into a *new (Fourth) International*. The undersigned obligate themselves to direct all their forces to the formation of this International in the shortest possible time on the firm foundation of the theoretical and strategic principles laid down by Marx and Lenin.

8. While ready to cooperate with all the organizations, groups and factions that are actually developing from reformism or bureaucratic centrism (Stalinism) towards revolutionary Marxist policy, the undersigned, at the same time, declare that the new International cannot tolerate any conciliation towards reformism or centrism. The necessary unity of the working-class movement can be attained not by blurring of reformist and revolutionary conceptions nor by adaptation to the Stalinist policy but only by combating the policies of both bankrupt Internationals. To remain equal to its task, the new International must not permit any deviation from revolutionary principles in the question of insurrection, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

9. By its class basis, by its social foundations, by the incontestably prevailing forms of property, the USSR remains even today a workers' state, that is, an instrument for the building of a socialist society. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of its most important tasks the defense of the Soviet state from imperialism and internal counterrevolution. Precisely the revolutionary defense of the USSR places upon us the imperative task of freeing the revolutionary forces of the entire world from the corrupting influence of the Stalinist Comintern and of building a new International. Only under the condition of complete independence of the international proletarian organizations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false methods before the working masses is a successful defense of the Soviet Union possible.

10. *Party democracy* is a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of revolutionary proletarian parties on a national as well as an international scale. Without freedom of criticism, without the election of functionaries from top to bottom, without the control of the apparatus by the rank and file, no truly revolutionary party is possible.

The need for *secrecy under conditions of illegality* changes completely the forms of the internal life of revolutionary party and makes wide discussions and elections difficult, if not altogether impossible. But even under the most difficult conditions and circumstances, the basic demands of a healthy party regime retain their full force: honest information about the party, freedom of criticism and a real inner unity between the leadership and the party majority. Having suppressed and crushed the will of the revolutionary workers, the reformist bureaucracy turned the Social Democracy and the trade unions into impotent bodies despite their memberships numbering in the millions. Having stifled inner democracy, the Stalinist bureaucracy also stifled the Comintern. The new International, as well as the parties adhering thereto, must build their entire inner life on the basis of *democratic centralism*.

11. The undersigned created a permanent commission of delegated representatives and assigned the following to it:

- to elaborate a programmatic manifesto as the charter of the new International;
- to prepare a critical analysis of the organizations and tendencies of the present-day workers' movement (theoretical commentary on the manifesto);
- to elaborate theses on all the fundamental questions of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat;
- to represent the undersigned organizations in the eyes of the whole world.

Signed:

E. Bauer — International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist)
J. Schwab — SAP (Socialist Workers Party, Germany)
P. J. Schmidt — OSP (Independent Socialist Party, Holland)
H. Sneevliet — RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party, Holland)

[From *Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years 1933-1940*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 56-59.]

socialist parties who had broken with the Second International but refused to join the Third, such as the Austrian socialist party, to revive between 1921 and 1923 a single united International, "like the one before the war"), or a Third-and-a-Quarter or Third-and-an-Eighth International. The SAP and OSP defended the *Declaration of the Four* at this conference but nevertheless signed the final resolutions. Trotsky considered this was a grave mistake but, far from losing patience, he proposed to the SAP that it merge with the German Left Opposition as fast as possible. In his mind, the point was to strike while the iron was hot, to seize the pendulum as it swung to his side and nail it down before it started in the opposite direction.

The future showed that he was right and that the question of the right time can be decisive in politics.

● 3) The Open Letter (1935)

Major new political developments occurred in 1934. In February, the uprising of the workers Schutzbund was smashed in Vienna and large fascist demonstrations were held in Paris.

Trotsky perceived with great acuteness the consequences of the rise of fascism for Social Democracy. In threatening parliamentary democracy, it threatened the very conditions of existence of Social Democracy, which fed on these institutional functions. The rise of this danger would lead to reactions of self-defense among the Social Democratic membership and these would foster a leftward radicalization and left currents. A few months later, the Spanish socialists participated in the insurrection of the Asturias, confirming this analysis.

Trotsky immediately drew political and organizational conclusions for Spain, Belgium and especially France, namely that the small forces of the Left Opposition should enter the Social Democratic parties. This orientation was known as the "French turn."

Whereas the previous sudden turn, the abandonment of the line of reform of the Comintern in favor of building a new International, had met with near unanimity in the membership of the International Left Opposition, this new tactical turn towards Social Democracy, hardly one year later, ran into many objections.

Again, one year later, in August 1935, the signing of the Stalin-Laval pact and the seventh congress of the Communist International which generalized the line of People's Fronts, changed the whole context. The Comintern's new orientation not only placed pacts with the anti-fascist bourgeoisie on the agenda, but also the perspective of organic unity of the socialists and communists (Dimitrov's report to the seventh congress). For Trotsky, this meant a bureaucratic unity of the party machines and would require a prior purge of revolutionary elements. Again, his prediction was confirmed only a few weeks later with the campaign to expel the "Bolshevik-Leninists" from the French Socialist Party (the SFIO).

The message was clear: a new change of direction was necessary towards giving absolute priority to the building of independent organizations.

In the next few years, the two methods described earlier were implemented by their respective advocates:

- In 1935, a new meeting of the London Bureau was held. To avoid taking a stand on fundamental questions — which might blow it apart — the confab decided it did not have time to discuss and adopt a resolution on principles. In the absence of the ICL which now refused to attend these conferences, the RSP and OSP again presented a motion for a Fourth International. But the SAP's pendulum had already swung back to the right.

- As for the ICL, the new turn in the world situation implied that new initiatives should be taken for the building of a Fourth International. Basing himself on the advances registered in Holland (where the merger of the RSP and OSP had just given birth to the RSAP) and the United States (where the Opposition's Communist League of America had just merged with Muste's American Workers Party (AWP) to constitute the Workers Party of the United States (WPUS)), Trotsky fought for the publication in August 1935 of an *Open Letter for the Fourth International*, signed by the International Communist League, the RSAP, the WPUS, the Canadian organization and the "Bolshevik-Leninists" of the SFIO.

In his correspondence, he complained that he had already lost two years because of the OSP's hemming and hawing. But he still agreed to the RSAP's dual membership: it remained affiliated to the London Bureau while signing the *Open Letter*, provided it really involved itself in the building of the Fourth International. In line with this, the Dutch were assigned to prepare the international conference scheduled for February 1936. On the other hand, Trotsky refused to postpone the distribution of the *Open Letter* to keep in good terms with the SAP and try again to get it to join the project. This would have been a sign of lack of self-confidence and determination: those who already now hesitate about building the Fourth International will hesitate on other crucial decisions in decisive moments of the class struggle.

Trotsky explained repeatedly that all the organizational initiatives of the ICL formed a coherent whole, beyond the apparently diverse national tactics — fusion with centrist groups moving in a good direction in Holland and the United States; entry in Social Democracy in France and Belgium; *Open Letter* for the building of the Fourth International and relentless battle against the vacillations and diplomatic politics of the SAP. In other words, its determination to achieve its goal and its intransigence towards the vacillators did not preclude tactical flexibility in its relations with the masses and openness to centrists seriously moving towards revolutionary positions.

● 4) The Movement for the Fourth International

But barely had the *Open Letter* been published, around the end of 1935, that the fight for a new International ran into a series of new obstacles and difficulties. In fall 1935, the French section underwent a split over the conditions and pace of a possible exit from the SFIO. In March 1936, the membership of the WPUS divided over the perspective of entering the Socialist Party of the United States. The Brazilian section was disorganized by the repression which

followed the 1935 revolt.

Most important though was the break, in January 1936, with Andres Nin and the majority of the Spanish Left Opposition for having signed, through their membership in the POUM, the Popular Front agreement for the February general elections. Finally, the Dutch began to move away again; they made their disagreement over the preparation of an "American turn" the pretext for their move, but the more fundamental motivation was their solidarity with the POUM and renewed sympathy for the London Bureau. They did not prepare the conference scheduled for February 1936. The conference could only be held in July 1936.

Trotsky's anxiety grew and he noted at the beginning of the new year that "*the high winds are now blowing against us.*" He was the first to realize the deep consequences of the bureaucratic counter-revolution in the USSR (he wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* at this time), of the rise of fascism and the ever more present threat of a new world war. He grasped perfectly the stakes involved in the race against the clock which now began. He understood that the events in France and Spain were perhaps the last opportunity. Everything had to be done to seize that opportunity, even if the chances of victory were very limited.

His keen awareness of the contradictions, the stakes, the delays fostered a measure of exasperation which came through more and more clearly in his writings. Now, many years in retrospect, one is sometimes shocked by the polemical tone and brutality of the arguments he used. Without justifying these in all cases, one must understand the context, his despair at the hesitations and inadequacies of those closest to him (like Nin and Sneevliet) in struggles that were so crucial for the future.

In July 1936, the Conference of the Movement for the Fourth International finally met. Nine organizations were directly represented: France, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the USSR and the United States. The French section was undergoing a crisis. The Germans and Italians were mainly refugees. The Soviet section was a section of deportees, scattered in Stalin's "isolators." As for the Dutch, they stormed out of the meeting before it ended.

Groups that were invited but could not attend included: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland and Greece. The minutes of the conference mention other countries where groups existed: Denmark, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Cuba, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Indochina, Australia and South Africa. Of these, the Chinese and Indochinese groups in particular were significant.

The conference adopted clear positions on the question of the Popular Front, on the characterization of the USSR, on work in the trade unions, on relations with the London Bureau.

Nevertheless, it still did not proclaim the Fourth International. In his book on the history of the International, and in his introduction to the first volume of the series on the congresses of the Fourth International, Pierre Frank states that Trotsky favored an immediate proclamation, at that point in time. Arguing that there is not the slightest evidence for such a proposal, either in the minutes of the meeting or in Trotsky's letters of that period, George

Breitman describes this version as a legend. (15)

The fact is that two years later, at the founding conference of the Fourth International, the delegates who almost unanimously supported the proclamation were at pains to explain why they had not done so two years earlier. Some claimed that it was because they still hoped to convince some centrist currents. Others explained that it would have been difficult to do so at a time when some sections were still involved in entryist experiences in Socialist Parties.

● 5) The founding conference of 1938

So it was in 1938, following Stalin's Great Purges and at a time when the defeat was nearly consummated in Spain and France, that the conference which constituted the Fourth International was held.

Eleven sections were directly represented: France, the United States, Italy, Great Britain, Holland, Greece, Brazil, the USSR, Poland, Belgium and Germany. Others were mentioned in the minutes: Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Austria, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, China, Indochina. All in all, the forces represented there were very weak.

The POUM and Marceau Pivert's PSOP (which had just left the SFIO) asked to attend the meeting. Their request was rejected for security reasons.

The founding conference adopted the document which came to be known as *The Transitional Program* and the statutes, which formalized the foundation of the Fourth International as the "world party of socialist revolution": a single worldwide organization subject to a common discipline.

Only three voices were raised against this decision. Their spokesperson was the Pole Hersch Mendel-Stockfisch, who basically argued the following: Marx, Engels and Lenin were careful not to found the First, Second and Third Internationals in periods of setbacks. They wisely waited for rises of proletarian struggles before doing so. In 1938, there was not a single mass party around which a new International could be built, whereas the First could base itself on a British section, the Second on a German and the Third on a Soviet. Creating the Fourth International in a situation of ebb, as a minority fighting against the current, risked spoiling the whole idea. It was better to simply advocate its necessity publicly, while avoiding to proclaim it. "It is the proletariat which will create the Fourth International," he concluded. (16)

The overwhelming majority of the delegates opted for an actual foundation. Simply upholding the perspective of a mass International and making it a watchword for the

(15) On this important historical question see George Breitman, *The Rocky Road to the Fourth International*, New York: Education for Socialists, 1979; the transcript of Pierre Broué's intervention at the Follonica (Italy) colloquium (*Rouge*, n°943, 6-13/11/1980); Pierre Frank's answer, "Un point d'histoire sur la fondation de la IVème Internationale," *Rouge* n°944, 14-20/11/1980), and Livio Maitan, "Le colloque international sur Trotsky," *Quatrième Internationale*, 39th year, 3rd series, n°3, Jan-Mar 1981, Paris.

(16) See the summarized interventions of Hersch Mendel and Stefan Lamed in Appendix F, page 44.

future without embodying this stand in an immediate organizational form, would have meant settling into a spirit of wait-and-see. What was needed, on the contrary, was to begin the nitty-gritty task of building this International with the forces available. Five years of patient efforts and overtures to the centrist currents had shown that it would be sterile to wait any longer for those who had proved unable to make up their mind in circumstances that were more favorable than the circumstances to be expected in the near future.

To continue to hesitate with them would mean adapting to their weaknesses instead of forging the instrument that would make it possible to face the great trials that the war, which now seemed imminent, would pose.

IV. From a cadre International to a mass International

The conditions in which the Fourth International was founded were absolutely unprecedented and particularly difficult. Trotsky was fully aware of this.

- It was a minority International, without a single mass section, a situation he described as that of a "cadre International."

- This International was born out of series of defeats of the world proletariat, including the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state.

- It came on the scene in an epoch when in many key countries, the labor movement was not virgin territory, but already massively organized and deeply divided into two currents, each fostering the other's flaws, namely the Social Democratic and Stalinist currents.

- The Stalinist current had a powerful and specific material base, that of the bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

Under these conditions, "moving in a straight line is not possible," Trotsky warned repeatedly. Those who wanted to bridge the gap between this minority International, which was an indispensable instrument for building the necessary mass International, and the latter, would have to look for every possible breach and base area. (17)

This approach was to be applied both on the international plane, with respect to the conception of the role of the new International, and on the national plane, in the approach to building sections.

Trotsky always believed that the Fourth International

(17) "The ICL cannot act as an independent party of the proletariat, it is only the instrument for the creation of independent parties. This instrument must be employed in accordance with the situation in each country.... And for this it is necessary to see oneself not as a makeshift for the new party, but only an instrument for its creation...it is necessary to free oneself radically from sectarian hangovers...." ("The Present Situation in the Labor Movement and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninists," Resolution of October 1934 Enlarged Plenum of the International Communist League, *Documents of the Fourth International, 1933-1940*, pp. 62-63).

One of the paths was the formula adopted by the WPUS constitution, Article III: "The Party, at its launching, is affiliated with no other group or organization in the United States or elsewhere. Its National Committee is empowered to enter into fraternal relations with groups and parties in other countries and, if they stand on the same fundamental program as its own, to cooperate with them in the elaboration of a complete world program and the

could include forces broader than the revolutionary Marxists alone; should this broader prospect materialize, they would become one of its components or a faction. This was the idea which guided the whole "Bloc of Four" approach. It was again the same idea which he had in mind when he wrote to Vereeken:

"The Fourth International will not be composed only of Bolshevik-Leninists. For my part, I am completely for accepting your admission. But you represent a different tendency from ours." (18)

And he still defended that perspective when he wrote this letter to Marceau Pivert:

"The Bolshevik-Leninists consider themselves a faction of the International which is being built. They are completely ready to work hand in hand with other truly revolutionary factions." (19)

This amounted to recognizing the possibility that other "revolutionary factions" could exist without agreeing with the entirety of the Bolshevik-Leninist program.

Trotsky had applied the same approach on the national plane already in 1933 when he argued, in explaining the turn to a new party in Germany: "The turn obviously does not consist in proclaiming ourselves the new party. There can be no question of that. But we declare the following: The official German party is politically liquidated, it cannot be reborn. The vanguard of the German workers must build a new party. We Bolshevik-Leninists offer them our collaboration." (20)

The same approach was applied in the United States in 1934, as the Trotskyist CLA tried to achieve fusion with the AWP. In his *History of American Trotskyism*, James P. Cannon, a leader of the US Trotskyist current, recounts the following:

"We wrote an editorial in a very friendly tone, recommending to them that at their convention they take note of our invitation to all independent radical political groups to discuss the question of forming a united party, and especially suggesting that they interest themselves in the question of internationalism."

Cannon waged a relentless struggle against the sectarians inside the CLA on this line. After the fusion and formation of the Workers Party, he repeated again:

"The unification of the Trotskyists and Musteites, the formation of the Workers Party indubitably represented a great forward step, but only a step. It soon became apparent to us — at least to the most influential leaders of the former Communist League — that the

speediest possible establishment of the new revolutionary International. Action on any organizational affiliation must be submitted to a National Convention of the Party." ((February 26, 1935) *Writings 1934-35*, p. 192) Trotsky considered that the fact that the WPUS had signed the *Open Letter* meant that they had committed themselves to build the Fourth International but according to the methods dictated by the objective conditions. Before a genuine International could be built, many sections would still be compelled to make many turns.

(18) "For Practical Steps Towards Rapprochement" (October 11, 1935), *Writings 1935-1936*, p. 151.

(19) Leon Trotsky, "Labels and Numbers" (On Marceau Pivert's Letter to the Expelled Young Socialist Comrades) (August 7, 1935), *The Crisis in the French Section [1935-36]*, New York: Pathfinder, 1977.

(20) "KPD or New Party?" (March 12, 1933), *Writings 1932-1933*, p. 138.

regroupment of revolutionary forces had only begun." "We cannot content ourselves with saying: 'Here is the Worker Party. It has a correct program. Come and join it!'...." (21)

Trotsky agreed:

"The Muste group called itself a party even before the fusion, but it wasn't one. The WPUS is not yet a party." (22)

The organization carried the name of Party, but it was not yet a Party in the eyes of the masses; it had to become one. That was indeed the whole problem.

The conditions in which the Fourth International was founded, that is, as a minority cadre International, determine yet another particularity. It is through qualitative and quantitative transformations, fusions, leaps, that it will succeed in becoming a mass International or in creating the conditions for the formation of a mass International. But its sections too must become mass parties in their own national reality. There is a relationship between the two processes insofar as the International has its own program of course, but this program is also the reflection of the reality of its sections.

But there is not necessarily an immediate and mechanical relation between the qualitative transformation of the certain sections and that of the International as a whole.

Depending on the national conditions of the class struggle, some sections could achieve breakthroughs towards a mass party, while the International as a whole might remain a minority International, with all the limitations this might imply for its overall attractiveness. After the defeat of the Paris Commune and with the development of the German party, the First International already experienced this sort of tension. According to Franz Mehring's account, this was one of the contributing factors in the crisis and self-dissolution of the Fourth International. (23)

These contradictions can produce many original situations and problems that one must prepare to solve on a case by case basis, maintaining at once firmness on the major principles for orientation and flexibility on organizational tactics.

The conditions in which the Fourth International was formed imply a permanent tension between the danger of adapting to larger forces by sacrificing its program to them, and the danger of sectarian fossilization. There is no grand highway between these two pitfalls, but only the unremitting, painstaking, tireless effort to find the mediations necessary for the building of a mass International. Already in the 1930s, the question of finding these mediations was posed in practice in the experiences of relations and fusions with centrist currents on the one hand, and in the experience of entryism in the Social Democratic parties on the other.

(21) James P. Cannon, *History of American Trotskyism*, New York: Pathfinder, 1972, pp. 123, 192 and 195.

(22) "A Crisis in the Workers Party" (February 6, 1936) *Writings 1935-1936*, p. 258

(23) See Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx, The Story of His Life*, Ann Arbor, 1962.

V. The question of centrism and fusion

Throughout these formative years, Trotsky devoted meticulous attention and several major documents to what he called "modern centrism." In the early 1920s, the leaders of the Communist International faced another form of centrism: that of massive currents breaking with Social Democracy and turning towards Bolshevism under the powerful impact of the October revolution. The most well known and significant case is that of the USPD, the German independent socialists, a party of several hundred thousand members, the majority of whom fused with the Spartakists to found the United Communist Party.

The "modern centrism" of the 1930s was different: the new crises in the Social Democratic formations and Stalinized Communist Parties had given birth to currents that were only a small minority compared to these large organizations. This centrism was difficult to nail down with a positive definition. In his documents, Trotsky wrote that never before had centrism "shone with more colors of the rainbow." His image was more prophetic than he could conceive at that point. For the organized labor movement had never experienced such a fermentation between the two poles of reform and revolution. This old spectrum was now further complicated by the Stalinist degeneration, so that all sorts of intermediate, unstable and fluctuating positions emerged.

Rather than giving a definition of "modern centrism," Trotsky preferred to describe its common features:

- the centrist likes to counterpose pragmatism to theoretical rigor, in the name of realism;
- he uses anti-sectarianism as an alibi for unprincipled diplomatic maneuvers;
- he turns a blind eye to decisive international problems;
- he empties the united front of any revolutionary content, turning it into an abstract principle, etc.

Trotsky therefore chose not put forward fixed categories or create a new classification of permanent species, but to recommend a few methods to be used in approaching centrist currents politically:

1) In the first place, one should not confuse the level of consciousness of real mass currents, with their limited, and sometimes deformed, reflection in organizations and leaderships: in other words, one should carefully distinguish the outlook of mass currents, which could evolve on the basis of new experiences, from the professional, crystallized centrism of certain leaderships for whom it had become a second nature.

2) It was crucial to grasp the trajectory, the direction of motion of a centrist organization. Seemingly equal differences could have different significance and practical consequences in reality, depending on whether they were held by an organization moving away from reformism towards revolutionary Marxism, or by a paralyzed organization, mired in confusion.

3) One should not confuse the struggle for the united front, that is for united action of the masses, with the struggle to bring together the forces necessary for the

building of a revolutionary party.

4) No potential ally, however weak, should be neglected, and such groups should be followed attentively and helped to progress, although without making concessions on content.

5) One should always have a clear idea of the next practical initiative to move things forwards in action.

The third point is important enough for our own practical experience to deserve some more attention. It deals with the distinction between a united front orientation and a party-building orientation properly speaking.

Trotsky made a first clarification of this question in a letter to the International Secretariat about preparations for the August 1933 London Bureau conference. A united front policy aimed to reach an agreement for joint work toward limited practical goals, and did not require general agreement on program and principles.

There should be a clear distinction between such episodic united front agreements and systematic work to build a party. A united front policy always presupposed a rigorous programmatic delineation. Struggling together did not mean diluting one's identity; this could only sow confusion. The 1933 London Bureau conference precisely dwelled in the confused area half-way between a united front agreement for anti-fascist action and the struggle for a new bargain-price International on a minimum program.

The project was doomed to fail in both arenas. It would not lead to a genuine united mobilization reaching out to the broad masses, the trade unions and majority parties of the workers movement. Nor would it lead to advances towards the building of a new International: the absence of solid programmatic principles condemned the London Bureau to vegetate on the basis of fragile compromises.

This key distinction between united front and party building was subsequently systematically reiterated and illustrated in many concrete experiences, from the smallest to the largest.

Thus, in 1936, Trotsky vigorously criticized Raymond Molinier's, one of his French followers, attempt to set a Revolutionary Action Group (GAR) in a Paris district. Trotsky felt this group was neither a mass action committee — a united front organ that could become a united territorial and pluralistic council — nor a programmatic regroupment on the path to building a party. It was an intermediate hybrid formation that only stabilized confusion and would act as a screen against united mass action as well as against the necessary programmatic clarification.

Likewise, to the Bolshevik-Leninists who were advocating a united front with the left tendency of the SFIO, Trotsky answered:

"Fundamentally this is an abuse of terminology. The united front implies mass organizations and you are only propaganda societies. If your conceptions are identical, you should merge...." (24)

On the other hand, if there were principled differences, then joint propaganda was a bad idea. It would foster confusion.

The same idea was repeated in relation to the British ILP. For Trotsky the "united front" between the British

Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party was non-sensical. Permanent united action committees of these two minority organizations would amount to nothing more than "propaganda soviets," he warned. He did not deny the possibility of limited punctual ("ad hoc") agreements:

"United fronts for certain specific actions could have been of some use, of course, *but the only important united front for the ILP is with the Labour Party, the trade unions, the cooperatives. At the moment the ILP is too weak to secure these; it must first conquer the right for a united front by winning the support of the masses.*" (25)

Finally, in a letter to Daniel Guérin in March 1939, Trotsky again wrote:

"A 'united front' has sense when it is a question of mass organizations. But that is not the case. Given the separate existence of organizations, episodic agreements on one occasion or another are, to be sure, inevitable. But what interests us is not isolated cases but the policy as a whole. The central task is work inside the trade unions, penetration of the Socialist and Communist Parties. This task cannot be resolved by a 'united front,' that is, by the diplomatic game of two feeble organizations. What is needed is a concentration of forces on a definite program in order to penetrate the masses with united forces." (26)

We have seen that, while he minimized their importance, Trotsky did not exclude the possibility of partial *ad hoc* united fronts between minority organizations. This is a complex tactical problem which we still face today, but which was a novel problem in the 1930s. United front policy was elaborated by the first congresses of the Communist International for use by mass Communist Parties, whereas the sections of the Fourth International, yesterday as today, are small organizations.

But some, though not yet mass parties, are no longer just "propaganda societies," to use the formula applied by Trotsky to the Bolshevik-Leninists in 1936. That is why in the two-fold battle for the united front and for a full-fledged place inside it, a series of intermediate situations can arise, calling for the greatest tactical flexibility from these sections. We all have experienced this sort of problems, always posed in new and specific forms, in relations between far-left organizations or between revolutionary organizations and fragments of the majority parties.

Even when they bring together only revolutionary and centrist organizations, they are practical agreements for action, not lasting compromises on the basis of the lowest common programmatic denominator. The concrete goals of these agreements correspond to the needs felt by the mass of the working class and therefore can also be proposed to the majority organizations of the organized labor movement.

(24) "Turn to the Masses" (November 25, 1935), *The Crisis in the French Section*, p. 79.

(25) "Once Again the ILP" (November 1935), *Writings 1935-1936*, p. 204.

(26) "Centrism and the Fourth International" (March 10, 1939), *Leon Trotsky on France*, New York: Monad, 1979, p. 213.

In this respect, we should note that electoral agreements always raise specific tactical problems that require a clear distinction between what stems from a united front approach, and what stems from a policy of building a party on a strategic program. There can be many different kinds of election campaigns. Depending on the circumstances, an election campaign can be a propaganda campaign (whose aim is to strengthen the party immediately), or an agitational campaign that tries to hammer away at only a few key proposals corresponding to the needs of the day and addressed to the broad masses. This means that in some campaigns, it is appropriate to march separately; in others it is possible to strike together (Trotsky reminded his readers of the agreement that the Bolsheviks passed with the Left Mensheviks for the Petrograd municipal elections in 1917). The election laws may affect the choice of tactic.

There is no general recipe here. One has to choose the tactic appropriate to each concrete situation. But while an election agreement can constitute a limited and partial form of united front and while it can constitute a step on the way towards organizational overtures, it would be dangerous to make it the exclusive starting point, independently of more substantial agreements in mass work, for a permanent front on a minimal platform that would be neither a party nor a united front.

We are often led to conclude partial united front agreements and the concrete cases are always more varied and complex than any instructions sheet can foresee. But this should not lead us to discard all plans in favor of boundless pragmatism, and especially not to give up the compass that should guide us in such affairs: the distinction between the united front and building the party.

This distinction does not imply any form of sectarianism towards centrist organizations. Quite the contrary, clarity on this point can make it possible to agree on the goal sought in establishing relations and allow for more audacity in the way they are conducted. If things change in a positive direction, if those involved move closer to each other in the field of practice, or on key programmatic questions, we can face the situation squarely and pose the real problem: is a common organization possible. Under what conditions? How can we bring about these conditions? Instead of stabilizing confusion on the basis of half-baked agreements that promote neither effective actions nor a clarifying propaganda (for lack of programmatic content), we propose to move forward together resolutely toward the building of a common party.

This regroupment and fusion approach does not start from a search for the lowest common denominator. It starts from practical, even limited, convergences and works its way back to the foundations and principles which are the indispensable bedrock of a solid and durable common party capable of acting collectively in the great tests of the class struggle. It therefore requires a serious in-depth programmatic discussion in full view of all.

Discussing the policy of merging with the German SAP, Trotsky wrote:

"Before deciding definitely on the possibility of our collaboration, which we desire to be the closest possible, it is necessary to be quite sure that we share the

same attitude towards the fundamental problems of proletarian strategy. Here are our opinions formulated at the end of the struggle in different countries. What is your attitude towards these problems? If you have not yet defined your attitude towards them, let us try to examine them in common, beginning with the sharpest and most burning political problems." (27)

Following the frankest and most thorough discussion, one can evaluate more precisely which agreements have been verified and how great the remaining disagreements are. The latter can be circumscribed and possible compromises found, in full knowledge and clarity of their nature: such compromises are the end result of a process and not a bad starting point in confusion.

The experience of the 1930s provided many examples of organizational flexibility once clarity on the major principled questions was achieved. This flexibility was applied both to the evolution of political forces in a single country and to the uneven development between national sections and the International under construction. Thus, Trotsky believed one had "to be ready for great sacrifices" to achieve a fusion of the RSP and OSP in Holland:

"Since we have no intention of forcing the OSP to affiliate directly with the Left Opposition, we accept that the RSP should renounce its organizational links with our International Secretariat. We consider that as a purely organizational concession." (28)

Later, concerning the proposed entry of the small British section into the ILP, Trotsky wrote:

"Since we propose to our English section that they enter the ILP it is clear that by this they will break the connection with us. We have everything to gain, and in the face of all this the withdrawal is a secondary question." (29)

During the merger of the Communist League (CLA) and American Workers Party in the United States, the CLA, although a majority, accepted a parity leadership and the suspension of discussions for six months to allow for some homogenization through practice. Trotsky agreed with this method and suggested three possible hypotheses on the international question: that the united organization should affiliate to the ICL, or to the Bloc of Four, or to both.

Finally, when the Communist Left (ICE) merged with

(27) "The Left Opposition and the SAP" (April 27, 1933) *Writings 1932-1933*, p. 213.

(28) The quote is translated from the French, "Plan d'action" (November 1933), *Œuvres 3*, p. 69. This text was found in the Sneevliet Archives in Amsterdam and is not included in the minutes of the ICL Plenum, (for which it seems to have been written); its existence is mentioned, however: "(Comrade Trotsky explains the action plan and a draft agenda for the conference of the Bloc of Four)" (*Writings Supplement 1929-1933*, p. 328.)

(29) "Minutes of the ICL Plenum" (November 18-19, 1933), *Writings Supplement 1929-1933*, p. 328. Nevertheless, Trotsky considered such an entry "inadmissible if the Central Committee of the ILP should demand from our friends that they should renounce their ideas, or the open struggle for those ideas in the party." ("Principled Considerations on Entry" (September 16, 1933), *Writings 1933-1934*, p. 86). Moreover, "in comparison with your small group; the ILP is a big organization. Your small lever is insufficient to move the Labour Party but can have a big effect on the ILP." ("The Lever of a Small Group" (October 2, 1933) *Writings 1933-1934*, p. 125.)

on the great strategic and international questions fosters a form of uptight sectarianism in tactics. Determination on the essential makes possible the most audacious organizational initiatives.

VI. The question of "entryism"

The very notion of "entryism" has acquired extensive applications over the years. It now covers very different realities and experiences. This is why it may be useful to briefly reexamine the original experiences and concrete case which arose in the 1930s.

a) the "French turn"

We have already mentioned the turn in the European situation in early 1934 with the smashing of the Vienna insurrection, the fascist demonstrations in Paris, the ripening situation in Spain, and the conclusions Trotsky drew concerning these events' foreseeable repercussions on the ranks of Social Democracy. In France, the response to the fascist demonstrations triggered a unitive dynamic among SP and CP members, which forced the Bolshevik-Leninists' young independent organization to try and fight for a place inside the united front that was being created, lest it become irreversibly marginalized.

"In particular, what place should be taken by the League, a small organization that cannot lay claim to an independent role in the combat that is unfolding before us, but that is armed with a correct doctrine and precious political experience? What place should it occupy in order to impregnate the united front with a revolutionary content? To put this question clearly is, at bottom, to give the answer. The League must immediately take its place *on the inside of the united front*, in order to contribute actively to the revolutionary regrouping and to the concentration of the forces of this regrouping. It can occupy such a place under present conditions in no other way than by entering the Socialist Party." (31)

At that point, he repeated ceaselessly that the urgent task was to smash fascism, lest we be smashed by it. For this, the relationship of forces had to be changed. While we could not pretend to an independent role, we could not either remain outside the fight. We therefore had to take our place in the united front as a faction and gain closer contact with the practical experience of the masses as well as the ability to subject our ideas to the test of actual practice rather than just propaganda, in exchange for a relative loss of organizational autonomy.

Moreover, this bath in the mass parties would constitute a form of shock therapy against the danger of sectarianization, against the development of the spirit of a small circle confined in a rarefied atmosphere, a fate which threatened all the new organizations of the International Left Opposition. Those who rejected the turn were, in Trotsky's eyes, those who refused to leave their narrow

the BOC to produce the POUM in the Spanish state, the first letter from Trotsky did not consider the political compromise or the affiliation of the united organization to the London Bureau inadmissible. What he criticized most vigorously was the total failure of the Spanish section to wage any political battle and the fact that it had renounced without a fight the right to form a faction which would have allowed it to pursue, as issues were raised by new events, the fight for its own international positions inside the united organization.

Note that these attempts at compromise ended in failure. Nevertheless, Trotsky stuck to the same approach in 1938 and 1939 when the Pivertist current left the SFIO in France to found the PSOP (Socialist Workers and Farmers Party). By that time, a new historic trauma had occurred: the Munich deal. In his correspondence with Daniel Guérin and Marceau Pivert, Trotsky noted that the PSOP was a new organization (with an estimated 10 000 members, but the figures are uncertain) and that everything should be done to help it move in the right direction. Once the decision was taken in the French section, Trotsky reformulated it in a radical and ultimatic fashion that would surprise many people today. In his letter to the POI (Internationalist Workers Party, the French section of the Fourth International at the time), he set a deadline of one week to enter the PSOP. One week! This was a hair-pin turn if there ever was one! And those who were not convinced would have two months, no more, to mull it over. (30)

All this, incidentally, raises a general problem of method. Trotsky was probably a genius when it came to feel a situation ripen, anticipate the grand political trends, find an appropriate organizational response to each turn in the situation. He drew the consequences of his analyses in organizational plans calculated down to the last millimeter. But one may wonder whether this flexibility, this tactical agility was not contradictory with the sort of policy necessary for building an organization.

Everyone knows that time is needed to bring an important decision to maturity, to explain it to the intermediate leadership bodies and membership, to begin to implement it in practice. Of course, when history becomes very turbulent, everything accelerates, including decision-making mechanisms.

But the fact is that Trotsky's followers in France went through five major tactical changes between 1932 and 1939: in 1932, they were to remain in the CP as a left opposition; in 1933, to leave it after the acid test of the victory of Nazism in Germany; in 1934, to enter the SFIO in anticipation of left currents appearing inside it; in 1935, to leave it to build an independent organization opposed to the bureaucratic unity of the party machines preparing for the Popular Front; in 1939, to enter the PSOP.... That is a lot, probably too much.

These examples illustrate that the greatest organizational flexibility is possible, but on one condition: programmatic firmness, political homogeneity, clarity about goals and self-confidence in the initial revolutionary group. Conversely, lack of firmness and self-confidence

(30) "Letter to the Political Committee of the SWP" (April 18, 1939) *Writings 1938-1939*, p. 312.

(31) "The Way Out" (August 1934), *Writings 1934-1935*, p. 86.

familiar street for wider horizons, yet were prepared "to adapt to the united front from the outside": scrupulous maintenance of organizational independence and intransigent propaganda were not always free of tail-endism in practice, particularly when the relationship of forces did not allow one to translate one's ideas into deeds.

Entering the SFIO was finally decided by a majority of the French section. It was done in mid-1934 under exceptionally favorable circumstances. It was an entry "banners unfurled," with the agreement of the Socialist Party leadership. *La Vérité* continued to be published openly as the "organ of the Bolshevik-Leninist group of the SFIO."

The Bolshevik-Leninists numbered about one hundred when they joined the SFIO. One year later, at the Assembly of the Seine Federation in June 1935, their motion on orientation obtained 1037 votes, to 2370 to the *Bataille socialiste* left tendency and 1570 to Léon Blum's motion in favor of the Popular Front. At the SFIO national congress in Mulhouse, a month later, the Bolshevik-Leninists obtained 105 mandates, as against nearly 800 to *Bataille socialiste*, and over 2000 to the majority motion for the Popular Front.

But expulsions had already begun. In the meantime, Trotsky had perceived a new turn in the international situation. The documents circulated for the seventh congress of the Communist International, the signing of the Laval-Stalin Pact, heralded a course of bureaucratic unity between the Stalinist and Social Democratic party machines, at the expense and even against the revolutionary currents. A wave of bureaucratic repression could be predicted. Trotsky therefore recommended a new tactical turn toward an independent organization. When it was constituted in 1936, the POI, the new French section, announced 615 members.

b) the "American turn"

Beginning in 1934, a rift developed and a left-wing current emerged in the US Socialist Party. In June 1935, Cannon and Shachtman proposed to the new WPUS's National Committee, in which they were a minority, a modest motion which asked only that the question of the Socialist Party be followed attentively in the press, that systematic contact be sought with its members and a fraction of some 30 cadres be sent into it.

In December of the same year, a split occurred in the SP. The right-wing left the party. You had to strike while the iron was hot. Cannon emphasized that one had to make a distinction between party patriotism and organizational fetishism, an outlook which could be fatal for a small organization which has to demonstrate and justify in practice its pretension to play a leading role in coming revolutions. (32) A race against the clock therefore began with respect to the Socialist Party. For Cannon, a rapid and resolute offensive towards its leadership was necessary before a bureaucratic crystallization or pro-Stalinist trend

(32) "Organizational loyalty and pride is an absolutely indispensable quality in a revolutionary movement. But organizational fetishism, especially on the part of a small organization which has yet to justify its right to leadership, can become a disorienting tendency." (James P. Cannon, *History of American Trotskyism*, p. 219.)

set in (similar to what occurred in Santiago Carrillo's Spanish Socialist Youth).

The conditions set by the Socialist leadership for the WPUS's entry in their party were far more drastic than in the "French turn": all independent press organs had to be abandoned and WPUS members had to apply to join the Socialist Party individually under the authority of the local leaderships of this party. Their aim was the pure and simple dissolution of WPUS members in the SP. The WPUS majority decided to accept these conditions and joined in March 1936, with the idea of rapidly winning over some local positions in the party and publishing local newspapers of the SP with a national outlook.

The current which originated in the WPUS was expelled after about one year and a half, in December 1937. The SWP was created on January 1, 1938. The balance sheet of this experience drawn by the American leaders was positive. But it was quite different from that of the "French turn," since the American Socialist Party was not a mass party. Its ability to absorb entering members was far weaker and conversely, the latter's power of attraction on the rest of the party membership far stronger.

Trotsky supported the majority line of the WPUS in favor of this turn and wrote:

"Naturally, certain European groups will seek to interpret the eventual entry as a departure from the Fourth International. But to these we should attach not the least importance. The problem is not to appear a little stronger, but to become much stronger." (33)

Despite the name it adopted, the Workers Party of the United States was not yet a genuine party; it had to find the means to become one.

c) Fractions, entryism, entry...

A clear distinction is needed between fraction work in an enemy organization, entryism properly speaking (which implies a shift in the organizational center of gravity towards the party in which it is carried out, and a coherent redefinition of the various areas of work, such as trade-union and youth work, in line with the new choice) and joining fraternal organizations that we wish to assist in a healthy direction in whole or in their majority. Stalinist and Social Democratic Parties are both unfit for a revolutionary perspective and unreformable, and therefore should not be presented in the revolutionaries' press as the instruments which the working class needs, even during an entryist experience.

Things are quite different when revolutionary Marxists are loyally working to build a mass workers party, as is the case with the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil today. They conceive of such a party as the instrument through which the class political independence of the proletariat can assert itself. Its programmatic definitions are made clearer not on the basis of predetermined ideological debates, but of the major orientation decisions it must make as the class struggle unfolds. Revolutionary Marxists may decide to build a class-struggle tendency on certain

(33) "For Entry in the U.S." (January 24, 1936), *Writings 1935-1936*, p. 252.

VII. The question of the mass workers party or labor party

This question has reappeared in discussions today, but often in rather disembodied fashion. When Trotsky put forward this perspective, he referred to historical antecedents: the Chartist Party in Britain in the 1840s, or the Knights of Labor in the USA in the 1880s, or the discussions about the Farmer-Labor Party in 1924, also in the USA. A working class which has begun to exist and act socially must be able to assert its independent political existence. What is important, far more than strategic and programmatic definitions, is that it should acquire a political organization independent of bourgeois or populist parties, that it present its own candidates in elections.

When Trotsky returned to this approach for the United States in the 1930s, as against the bourgeois Republican/Democratic two-party system, he was not putting forth an answer for all times and all places. He recalled that in 1924, under the impact of the Russian revolution, the possibility and the task was to build a Communist Party with mass influence. The question was posed in different terms in 1936. The economic crisis had broken out and given rise to a militant and radical trade-union movement, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which had no political representation or equivalent. This was what posed the need and possibility for a labor party based on these unions.

To revolutionary militants who asked him why they should contribute to founding a reformist party, he answered that the point was not to create a reformist party, but a class party, independent of the bourgeoisie. Beyond that, the future was open. What would happen to this party would depend on the class struggle, on the relationship of forces, on its experiences, on the intervention of revolutionaries inside it. To those who said: we must create a labor party with revolutionary bases, he answered that this was formal and abstract. In the context of the times, if 500 workers attended a public meeting and were prepared to understand that they needed an independent labor party, perhaps five, no more, would be prepared to understand that the state must be destroyed and Stalinism fought. These five could be recruited to the section of the Fourth International, and the 500 to the labor party. The two formulas corresponded to different levels of consciousness.

Beyond that, the field was wide open. Whether a revolutionary party or a reformist party would emerge, was a question that was not determined in advance and depended on many parameters. It was useless to try to characterize immediately a mass party born in a major experience of the class with a label. Such a party would represent a major step forward. Its identity would become more precise as it accumulated experiences and as it met the concrete tasks posed before it. Each new test would help to determine the character of the party.

This is precisely the spirit in which revolutionary Marxists in Brazil began to build the Workers Party (PT) in 1979.

Note that all these hypotheses refer to mass workers parties. In countries where the working class is

decisive issues, or if the majority orientation should, at some point, turn against the principles of class independence on which this party was originally founded. But they do not conceive their activity in the PT as activity in an enemy organization which has gone over to the camp of the ruling class. On the contrary, they try to build it and develop it to the best of their ability.

This approach would not be changed solely on the basis that disagreements, even severe ones, emerged in the party's internal debates. The party would have to commit grave mistakes and persist in them up to a final failure in decisive tests of the class struggle, for them to change their approach and attitude radically.

In such cases, one is always faced with concrete problems which require a precise analysis of the history and present situation of a given country. Historical analogies can help to outline the problem, but they never provide "models" or instructions to be followed. They simply encourage us to use our imagination, and confirm that intransigence on principles does not preclude tactical flexibility, but enhances it.

When Trotsky urged the small British Left Opposition group to enter the ILP, he criticized the comrades who wanted to maintain an outside nucleus at all costs, to publish an independent newspaper. You had to understand, he explained, the mistrust of ILP members towards this alien group arriving in their midst:

"This distrust can only be overcome if our people get into the ILP with the desire to influence the party as a whole and to become powerful there but not to work toward breaking away a small part from the whole party.... The publication of a small, monthly paper under the circumstances is senseless..." (34)

The comrades could in any case use the English language press of the international organization, and change their attitude, if necessary, in light of new developments of the situation. But it was important to remove any pretext for a misunderstanding, any obstacle to creating a bond of trust between activists, mutual respect in action, which would enhance the evolution of the party as a whole.

The point was for the Bolshevik-Leninists to defend their ideas inside the ILP, in the framework of its statutes, while participating fully in the building of the organization. Everything is relative. The ILP was not a mass organization but a group of a few thousand members who had undergone a positive evolution and could constitute a far more powerful lever to influence the Labour Party than the small Left Opposition group. In this case, Trotsky added for the British comrades:

"whether you will enter the ILP as a faction or as individuals is a purely formal question. In essence, you will, of course, be a faction that submits to common discipline." (35)

(34) "How to Influence the ILP" (September 3, 1933), *Writings 1933-1934*, p. 71.

(35) "The Lever of a Small Group" (October 2, 1933) *Writings 1933-1934*, p. 126.

traditionally massively organized at the political level, often in relation to a long parliamentary tradition, things are quite different.

Already in the discussion on the mass labor party based on the unions in the United States, Trotsky understood that while the future of such a party was open, it was also an eminently transitory phenomenon. As soon as it existed and had to act, it would be forced to define its positions on the great problems of the day: the economic crisis, the danger of war, the USSR and Stalinism. It all would happen very fast.

Thus, in our times, the Brazilian PT was defined initially around rather elementary points. But quite fact, it had to deal with elections: should it run its own candidates or not? What alliances should it seek? Should it enter a coalition with the bourgeois opposition to the dictatorship or not? It had to take a stand on trade-union independence and unity. It had to answer the problem of the foreign debt. It had to define its solidarity with Nicaragua, say something about Poland, decide its relations with Cuba, clarify its relations with the Church and international Social Democracy, establish contacts in the rest of the continent, etc.

In the beginning, the PT was a phenomenon of mass radicalization that grew out of the resistance to the Brazilian dictatorship on the part of a working class that had become more massive and younger as a result of the so-called "economic miracle," and for whom it was the first political experience, in a country which traditionally had not had a strong independent workers party competing with populism (despite the existence of a Communist Party). The PT was not, properly speaking, based on the trade unions, but the product of the radicalization of trade-union cadres who had run up against the trade-union structures imposed by the dictatorship's labor legislation.

How could such a dynamic arise in developed capitalist countries where the working class has a long, and often pluralistic, tradition of independent political and trade-union organization? Two possible scenarios have been suggested: a new workers party and "organic unity."

In the first, a historical gap opens between the masses and their traditional organizations, putting the creation of a "real" workers party on the agenda in practice. One can conceive of such a situation, but with difficulty. The links between the social movement and the traditional political and trade-union leaderships are indeed becoming more tenuous. But this process does not simply leave a vacuum to be filled by others. The existing machines still occupy the electoral and social fields.

Moreover, even if this process deepened sufficiently, it would not create the same dynamic for accumulating forces for the building of a revolutionary party as in the cases mentioned earlier. In this case, bargain sales on programmatic definitions would be particularly ill-advised, for in such a situation, a revolutionary force could not be assembled solidly and durably without providing answers to the major problems of orientation of the day and to the strategic projects of the existing — albeit weakened — mass parties vying with it in the labor movement. There can be discussions and compromises between revolutionary currents. But on the whole, a viable revolutionary current

cannot do without a clear identity counterposed to that of the existing major parties.

The problem is also posed for the advocates of the other scenario, the return to the "organic unity" of the labor movement, especially if what they intend is to rebuild a vast united Social Democracy, akin to the pre-1914 German Social Democracy. This perspective is advanced in France today by those who say that it is time to close the parentheses opened by the Tours congress which saw the Communist Party-Socialist Party split in 1920. It is not a new idea.

Indeed, the problem has already been raised in the past. Let us read from a document:

"Comrades, the development of the Communist and Social Democratic workers' united front for common struggle against fascism and the offensive of Capital also poses the problem of political unity, of the single political party of the working class.... But, while it is enough to agree on the struggle against fascism and the offensive of Capital and war to establish the united front of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties, the realization of political unity is possible only on the basis of a series of determined conditions of a principled nature. This unification is possible only

- first, on condition of complete independence from the bourgeoisie and a complete break of Social Democracy's bloc with the bourgeoisie;

- second, on condition that united action be achieved first;

- third, on condition that the need for the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the form of soviets, be recognized;

- fourth, on condition of a refusal to support the bourgeoisie of one's country in imperialist war;

- fifth, on condition that a party be built on the basis of democratic centralism which guarantees unity in will and action, the value of which has been demonstrated by the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks."

What revolutionary could disagree with the substance of this document? And who wrote it? Dimitrov, at the seventh congress of the Communist International in 1935. (36)

Trotsky has already envisaged this hypothesis of "organic unity" in 1934, as the possible crowning move of the battle for the united front. He had a positive, although somewhat reticent, view of it:

"We Marxists are obliged to recognize that for the moment fusion of the two parties would constitute an *advance*, not with respect to Lenin's slogans of 1914, nor with respect to the congress at Tours, but with respect to the present situation, such as it is. The fusion of the two parties would mean the opportunity to begin again. Therein lies everything. The workers movement has been thrust into a historic impasse.... The fusion of the two parties would unavoidably open the path to discussion, analysis, study, the struggle of factions on a grand scale, and at the same time to the

(36) Trans. from the French. See *L'internationale communiste et la lutte contre le fascisme et la guerre*, Moscow: Progress, 1980, pp. 189-190.

VIII. A few conclusions and some food for thought

In retrospect, it is clear that the process of formation of the Fourth International raised a series of issues which are often discussed inside and outside our ranks.

1) *In the first place, wasn't 1933 already too late to register the failure of the Third International and set out to build a Fourth?*

We have already emphasized the difficulties in answering this question in our report. Focusing on the two fateful dates of August 4, 1914 and March 5, 1933, which are supposed to symbolize respectively the final collapse of the Second and Third Internationals, gives a false impression of symmetry. The Comintern in the 1930s was not the pre-1914 Social Democratic International and the test of the victory of fascism in Germany did not act as a revealer on the entire international workers movement in the same way that the onset of World War One did. The existence of a bureaucratized workers state was also a new problem.

One can try to place oneself in that context and rewrite history with "ifs." But this is not very fruitful. The fact is that the Left Opposition already had its own political and public existence, expressed its positions and developed its answers to the great events even before 1933.

A different matter is whether the line "for the reform" of the Communist International and Communist Parties did not initially create an obstacle to the building of substantial independent parties in countries like Spain where the official Communist Party had become little more than a sectarian grouplet by the early 1930s. The line for the unity of Communists in a single section of the Communist International, including the Communist Party, the BOC and the Communist Left (ICE), might have been carried more effectively by the latter acting as an independent organization rather than a faction of a marginal and tiny Communist Party.

But the important point from the standpoint of the overall approach is the method which avoids acting lightly, on the basis of anticipations and prognoses, and seeks instead large-scale historical verifications.

2) *Was the Fourth International founded on the basis of erroneous prognoses concerning the probable outcome of World War Two and the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR?*

While it is true that Trotsky did make such prognoses on the outcome of the war, basing himself on an analogy with the situation at the end of World War One and the general recomposition of the organized labor movement which ensued, it is completely false that the Fourth International was created on the basis of these prognoses. To the contrary, the need for building it flowed from the relations between classes on an international plane, from the great tasks posed by the world situation and from the crisis of leadership of the workers movement on the eve of the war.

crystallization of a new revolutionary party, a section of the Fourth International.... The historic retreat — I repeat for emphasis — consists not only of the fact that the Stalinist bureaucracy is forced to adapt to the exigencies of the working class by fraternization with the Social Democrats, but also of the fact that this fraternization — which is trite, sentimental, without content — represents a tremendous step forward compared to the absolute impasse of yesterday.... [an] extraordinary dialectic...." (37)

Yes indeed, extraordinary dialectic. To the point that one wonders whether "this opportunity to begin again," to erase everything, to start all over from zero, is not in fact a historical abstraction, is not a case of wishful thinking. There may be a measure of despair in his acceptance of this dialectical trap.

A year later, harsh reality snuffed out the wishful thought. As the two large parties drew closer together, the matter became more concrete. Trotsky then responded in terms of concrete politics: in that context, organic fusion would be merely the bureaucratic preparation for national unity. To be rejected and fought at all costs, even if it meant losing the hope of "starting all over."

In fact, the hesitation between his first and second answers had to do with his evaluation of the social and international relationship of forces, and with the magnitude of the "historical regression" then underway, in the mid-1930s. A vast topic.

Let us note, to finish with this point, that there was often a spectacular criss-crossing of the positions of the various protagonists of these debates, depending on whether they were discussing entryism or regroupment and fusions with centrist currents.

- Thus, Sneevliet, Nin and Vereeken were always hostile to entryist operations, which they denounced as liquidationist undertakings. By contrast, they were always extremely open to attempts to regroup with centrist currents, which most often ended in fiascos. They were not "liquidated" by entryism, but by adventurous regroupments and fusions.

- Conversely, the currents which were viscerally hostile to centrism, which claimed to want to orient to the broadest masses, often ended in deep entryism in the large reformist parties, from which they sometimes never returned. This was true of the British Bolshevik-Leninist group which rejected entry in the ILP and buried itself in the Labour Party, two years later.

This is not meant as an allusion to the present. It is simply the rather bitter observation of an irony of history. In the terrible circumstances of the 1930s, it stemmed from a powerful, structural contradiction intrinsic to the relationship of forces and form which the crisis of the workers movements was taking. The grip of this contradiction has obviously loosened somewhat with the crisis of Stalinism, with the change in the relations between the masses and traditional apparatuses, with the renewal of the working class, etc. But it has not been abolished.

(37) "The Stalinists and Organic unity" (July 19, 1934), *Writings Supplement 1934-1940*, p. 504.

Should the Fourth International have been held in abeyance and left to wait for better days on the grounds that the war would not lead to socialist revolution in Europe and to the collapse of Stalinism? The question is rather abstract and fallacious. Every important historical juncture opens a range of possibilities. The war did not lead to a collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Nor did it end in mechanical fashion on a peaceful stabilization of capitalism and the bureaucratic system. Its aftermath was punctuated by revolutionary crises, by the structural assimilation of the Eastern European workers states by the USSR, by such trivial events as the Yugoslav revolution and especially the Chinese revolution, by the beginning of the crisis of Stalinism. In this world upheaval, the compass of an International was more necessary than ever.

The real questions for yesterday and for today are more direct and less speculative.

Is the idea of a revolutionary International obsolete? No. On the contrary, it is the necessary organizational translation of the proletarian revolution perceived as an international whole, of the rejection of chauvinism and the theory of socialism in one country, of the growing internationalization of the division of labor, of the process of production and of the productive forces. Without a permanent effort to translate and concretize this understanding in an attempt to build an organization, the most sincere internationalism cannot go beyond active solidarity and wishes of success. If existence determines consciousness, then international organizational existence determines an internationalist consciousness that strives to grasp the various dimensions of the class struggle on an international scale.

Is the program of this International, the Fourth, still relevant and operative, in light of the great events of the class struggle, or has it been an obstacle preventing our current from relating to the masses? Of course, the experience of the class struggle can always enrich and clarify a program, however refined. But the questions of permanent revolution, the united front, transitional slogans, the anti-bureaucratic struggle, the theory of the party, remain at the core of revolutionary strategy in our time. Developments during and after World War Two have confirmed the validity of this program. Far from being an obstacle to the understanding of new phenomena such as the formation of new workers states, the upsurge of the colonial revolution, the mutations of late capitalism, it helped to find one's way amid them.

Finally, has this International which exists, which was founded on a correct program that is still relevant today, not failed in practice despite this program? To answer such a question, one has to stick to the major tests thrown up by the international class struggle: the wars and revolutions. During the great chauvinistic debacle of World War Two, the International avoided both defeatism and sectarian neutralism in the countries occupied by fascist powers, and the chauvinistic delirium of national unity elsewhere. With its weak forces, it maintained an internationalist policy. It was in the forefront of the defense of the revolutions in Yugoslavia, Algeria, and Cuba, and now in Nicaragua, even when its members were persecuted, as in

Vietnam and China, by leaderships of these revolutions trained in the Stalinist school.

Our opponents sometimes admit that this is all very meritorious but add that it does not solve the question of the usefulness of the International: what use is an International that has not won striking victories. When we claim the legacy of the first historical victory, the October revolution, we are not being facetious. We are carrying on a political fight against the bureaucratic usurpers who would claim this legacy as their own, thereby identifying the socialist revolution with a bureaucratic counter-revolution that is a travesty and counterfeited revolution. But our answer does not stop at that. For in reality, in politics as in history, victorious revolutions are not the only victories. Some are less spectacular. We have won other victories, and no small ones. In particular we have won the victory of having been the first in the workers movement to launch the fight against Stalinism.

We know through many testimonies that the "Trotskyists" were often those who did not bend and capitulate to Stalinist terror. This was not a question of psychology or character, but of political consciousness and conviction: they were harder to break because they understood the mechanisms and logic of the situation. This is not just a symbolic or moral, but a full-fledged political victory. It has meant that the terrible history of our century can still be understood by the tools of Marxism; that we can still evoke the most monstrous events of this century without despairing of the working class and socialism. Without the continuity of this fight, all the quacks, small-time operators, new philosophers and new crusaders of imperialism would now have a monopoly over denunciations of the Soviet Gulag.

Thanks to the historic fight of the Left Opposition and Fourth International, the compass and plumbline of a Marxist opposition to Stalinism, from the very onset of the phenomenon, were developed and can now be put to good use.

If there is a need for an International, if an International exists, if its program is correct, if it has not failed, then one must fight to build and develop it. No one will do it for us.

A proof by the contrary of the relevance and usefulness of the Fourth International, is the patent failure of other attempts at international coordination that claimed to be more gradual, to start from the grassroots and to respect the real processes more closely. In the early 1930s, the London Bureau tried this method, and later, in 1938, the International Workers Front tried it again: both outfits were shipwrecked and lost. (38) Today, organizations like Lutte Ouvrière in France, or the Socialist Workers Party in Britain have chosen to keep a few affiliates alive, at best, and maintain episodic diplomatic relations with groups in other countries. Have they progressed more than we have thanks to this method? Far less in fact.

If adopted, the position of opposing the creation of the Fourth International but proclaiming its historical

(38) The International Workers Front (FOI) was a plan for an international organization against the war initiated by the left wing inside the PSOP between 1938 and 1940; it was to be organized from Norway by Daniel Guérin.

necessity, advocated by Mendel-Stockfisch at its founding conference in 1938, would, at best, have been a sleight of hand changing labels on the same article, and at worst, diluted the project at a time when the coming war required, on the contrary, a firm programmatic armament and clear delineation of its borders. The idea that it is the proletariat which will create the International has a share of historical truth, but it goes against one the great advances of Leninism, namely that the conscious action of a vanguard based on clear programmatic delineations is a means to enhance the proletarian struggle, not just a spontaneous product of the latter.

The Fourth International founded in 1938 entered the war with very limited forces. Only ten countries were represented in 1940 at the Emergency Conference held in the United States. A first crucial political test was the signing of the German-Soviet Pact and the outbreak of the war in Europe. One third of the American section and the majority of the International Secretariat then in office left the International. The French section went into the war divided. The outbreak of the Second World War also cut off communications between many sections and made the most elementary functioning particularly difficult, at a time when new and particularly complex orientation problems were posed (the interconnection of national problems with the imperialist war and war against the bureaucratized workers state). Regroupments which were not based on solid principles, like the London Bureau, blew apart and their main national organizations practically disappeared from the map. The Fourth International was able to weather the test and come out of the war true to its political positions and with its continuity unbroken.

3) Was the notion of centrism, which occupied such a large place in Trotsky's political thought in the 1930s, a politically useful one or a theoretical cover for sectarian reflexes?

Some people are shocked by the use of this notion which they consider almost an insult of little political use. We should dispel this impression. It is not an insult but a political characterization which does not prohibit political esteem, respect for commitments in action, and a fraternal exchange of views. It is obvious that an organization or current moving in a positive direction, with whom practical convergences are emerging, should not be dealt with on the basis of epithets. There is no point in questioning the sincerity of its perspective before any discussion. On the contrary, one should seek to check each side's respective answers to the key questions posed by the situation and try to bring their viewpoints closer.

Once again, it all depends on the organization at hand, how politically serious and active it is, in which direction it is moving. Certain crystallized groups can be obstacles on the road to building a revolutionary party. Others can evolve in a good direction.

If Trotsky thought the "modern centrism" of the 1930s was a many-hued spectrum, what should we say today of the "post-modern centrism" of our times? This new phenomenon is the product of the historic leadership crisis of the workers movement and of the advanced decomposition of Stalinism. On a world scale, it vacillates between far

more international poles than its predecessors: the Soviet bureaucracy and Social Democracy, of course, as in the 1930s, but now also the Chinese bureaucracy, the Castro leadership, the Vietnamese leadership. The notion of centrism includes groups that are sincerely revolutionary as far as their own country is concerned as well as groups that verge on being left reformist. There are organizations that are revolutionary on the question of the conquest of power in their own country, but have a campist position in international politics and align, at least partially, on the diplomacy of the Soviet bureaucracy.

At the time when the Third International was revolutionary, the currents referred to as centrist were those who, according to the hallowed formula, simply vacillated between reform and revolution. With the degeneration of the Communist International and the ensuing crisis of leadership of the world proletariat, the question has become more complicated. Those of us who refuse to recognize the existence of organizations that are revolutionary in their concrete activities in their own country but centrist in their positions in the international arena, and to admit that their international positions may have some real consequences on their domestic alliances and policy, stand in danger of being caught off guard. New developments can cause them to vacillate between sectarianism and opportunism, to leap from the former to the latter without transition. If we deny that these organizations are revolutionary at all, we underestimate them. And later, when we discover that such organizations can actually play a revolutionary role, as is the case in Central America and many other countries, lacking the ability to distinguish the shades between red and black, we see no difference between ourselves and these currents.

Towards such currents, the approach of the 1930s remains valid in its main lines: proposing united action as often and regularly as possible to develop a common experience; and at the same time, seeking a clear in-depth programmatic exchange to explore the possibility of achieving a common party.

4) Is it now possible to do better than before and move towards a mass International with other currents?

To answer this, we can repeat what Trotsky's answer: that we are prepared to be a minority current in a revolutionary International. (39) This means checking to what extent the currents in question are revolutionary, of course. But there is a prior, even more elementary criterion. To set out on this road, one must find partners who have met a first condition: they must actually want to build an International. It is not a question of will. It is, at bottom, a political and programmatic question. The commitment and involvement in building an International is itself a full-fledged question of program since it implies a demarcation from other currents of the organized labor movement on the major international problems. To commit oneself to building an international organization, you therefore need a solid programmatic agreement.

(39) "The Bolshevik-Leninists consider themselves a faction of the International which is being built. They are completely ready to work hand in hand with other revolutionary factions" (see footnote 19, p. 15).

If significant currents posed themselves the question of building an International, and building it with us, that in itself would be a sign of a crucial evolution of their positions. We would have to examine the new situation. But we are not there yet.

In the meantime, we can act as a genuine international current, conscious of the importance of its tradition and contribution, but open to dialogue and fraternal cooperation, to exchanges and joint activities with other currents of national, continental or international scope, who are also finding their way through the realignments now underway in the international workers movement. Compared to the 1970s, many forms of sectarianism have already subsided, many barriers have collapsed, and relations which would have been unthinkable yesterday have been established. This is the patient and cautious path to preparing the conditions for the rebirth of a democratic and pluralist mass revolutionary International.

5) Finally, is there not a danger of sectarian deformation in remaining a minority International for such a long time?

Of course there is. Fighting against the current can be a virtue. But it can also become a second nature and bad habit. What is the remedy against this danger? Is there a vaccine? The only weapon, which is not an absolute one, is the education of all members, leaders and rank-and-filers, in the spirit of the *Communist Manifesto* according to which genuine Communists have not interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat. We have never observed revolutions we did not lead as cynical commentators. Even when we criticized their leadership, we saluted their victories as victories of the proletariat as a whole.

Here too, we can stand by Trotsky's approach in the 1930s:

"I do not know at what stage the Fourth will arrive. Nobody knows. It is possible that we will have to enter again into a unified International with the Second and Third. It is impossible to consider the fate of the Fourth International apart from the fate of the national sections and vice versa. ... In this case, we must foresee situations without precedent in history. If we consider the Fourth International only as an international 'firm' which compels us to remain independent propagandist societies under any conditions, we are lost. No, the Fourth International is a program, a strategy, an international leadership nucleus. Its value must consist in a not too juridical attitude." (41)

Trotsky himself was intent on applying this principle in practice, to allay the danger of sectarian ossification, through the most audacious organizational initiative, the closest contact, despite unfavorable conditions, with the living experience of the mass movement. He was conscious of the distance between the goal of a mass International and mass party and the small initial nuclei, and of the need for mediations to that goal.

If one should ask a question, it is rather whether this concern was not pushed too far, whether the practice of answering every turn in the political situation tit for tat, to the extent of changing the tactic for building the organization five times in five years in the case of the French section between 1933 and 1938, did not inescapably cause organizational discontinuity and problems in consolidating a political and organizational tradition which, on balance,

cancelled the gains made in these initiatives.

6) Doesn't the very idea of a "world party of socialist revolution" constitute a myth doomed to disintegrate upon contact with reality?

Trotsky's heavy emphasis on the practical need for an International as a world party was motivated by the historical regression of internationalism which was to lead from the Stalinist theory of "building socialism in one country" to the pure and simple dissolution of what had been the Communist International in 1943, for the sake of the prepotent state and diplomatic interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

For Trotsky, the building of a world party was the most urgent political and organizational translation of a strategic project. It crowned his theory of uneven and combined development, his perception of the world as an articulated whole as a result of the generalization of commodity production, his theory of permanent revolution as the international extension of the proletarian revolution.

From this standpoint, the necessity for building a revolutionary International is no less urgent today than in his time. The internationalization of production, of capital, of the division of labor, of markets and now of services, has taken giant leaps forward. Bourgeois mechanisms for international consultation, military and financial pacts, international organizations have proliferated. By contrast, the organized labor movement, which in its initial stages had seen further and more clearly than its class enemy when it created the First International, is now lagging far behind not merely on the international plane, but even on the European plane.

The real problem lies elsewhere. The idea of a world party can be misleading if it suggests a party ruled by the same mechanisms as national parties, with a larger size and reach. This temptation is not purely theoretical. It found a practical translation in the severe centralization of the Third International, particularly after its fifth congress under the authoritarian hand of Zinoviev.

The fact is that the function of a national revolutionary party and a world party are not the same. The first has as its strategic task to guide the struggle for the conquest of power against a particular ruling class and state, based on specific revolutionary traditions. The second has as its task to foster a common consciousness about the major events and tasks of the international class struggle, and to enhance the perception of the common interests which exist beyond national particularisms.

From this fundamental difference in function stem differences in the internal regime and role of the leaderships. A national leadership is accountable for its decisions; it has the responsibility of implementing them. An international leadership can only pronounce on general questions of orientation; it has neither the mission nor the possibility of implementing a strategy on the ground. This is why, in our conception, the basic units of an International are not its members or cells, but the national sections who constitute its strategic units and are sovereign to determine their national tactics and choose their own leadership.

(40) "A Conversation with Maurice Spector" (February 8, 1936) *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1934-1940)*, p. 649.

Appendixes

Appendix A: The evolution of the Comintern (July 1936) by Walter Held*

1. The imperialist war of 1914-1918 was the clearest indication that the capitalist mode of production had become a fetter on the productive forces, and that conditions had become ripe for the victory of the proletarian revolution. However, the Second International, whose bureaucracy had adapted itself to bourgeois society during the long period of capitalist expansion, betrayed the interests of the proletariat at the decisive moment of the outbreak of war, and occupied the position of defense of the fatherland, i.e., defense of the frontiers of the bourgeois national state, which — together with the system of private property — had become a brake on the further development of productive forces.

2. Only a very small number of revolutionary Marxists drew from the shameful treachery and miserable collapse of the Second International the conclusion that a Third International was necessary. It is true, in most countries an opposition formed against the chauvinist standpoint of the Social Democratic parties, but such opposition had in the beginning mainly a pacifist-centrist character. At the international conferences of the opponents of imperialist slaughter at Zimmerwald (1915) and Kienthal (1916) the supporters of the building of the Third International remained in the minority and were termed by all centrists and social-imperialists as fanatics, utopians, and sectarians.

3. The victory of the Russian Revolution in October 1917 was the victory of the revolutionary principle of struggling against the enemy at home and of turning imperialist war into civil war, which since 1914 had been counterposed by the handful of revolutionary Marxists, and especially the leadership of the Russian Bolsheviks, to the principle of defending the fatherland. The Bolsheviks — after overcoming analogous tendencies in their own ranks — broke with the ambiguous centrist majority of Zimmerwald and raised the banner of the the Third International.

4. At the founding congress of the Third Inter-

* This document was written by Walter Held (Heinz Epe) for the first conference of the Movement for the Fourth International, in July 1936. It is reprinted from *Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years 1933-1940*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 113-131. Heinz Epe (1910-1941) was a member of the German Left Opposition. In 1933, he moved to Prague, and later to Paris where he published *Unser Wort*, the organ of the German Fourth Internationalists. He was in charge of the youth sector of the Fourth International during the 1930s. He was arrested and executed by the Stalinist police as he was traveling through the Soviet Union, on his way to the United States, in 1941.

national (March 1919) only the representatives of a few comparatively weak parties and groups met side by side with the victorious Bolshevik Party. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who would have deserved a place of honor at this gathering, had been murdered by the soldiery of the German Social Democrat Noske.

The First Congress [of the Communist International], took a very definite stand against the reactionary effort to rebuild the Second International in its prewar form (Berne Conference of the Social Democratic and independent parties in February 1919) and stood for gathering the vanguard in a homogeneous revolutionary International. The manifestos of the congress pitilessly exposed the treacherous pacifism of President Wilson and the illusion of a capitalist League of Nations, which was supported by the Second International. One of the most important results achieved by the congress was the restoration of the Marxist teachings on the state as an instrument of class rule and the exposure of parliamentary democracy as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Lenin's theses on "Democracy and Dictatorship," which were adopted by the congress, explain the counterrevolutionary, bourgeois character of the abstract slogans and principles of "pure," formal democracy ("liberty," "equality," etc.). They showed, by the example of the Russian experiences, the necessity of abolishing the bourgeois state apparatus and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship on the foundation of the soviet (workers' councils).

5. In 1919 the experience of the Hungarian revolution was also gained. There, owing to the complete deterioration and confusion of the bourgeoisie, power had fallen into the lap of the Communists and left Social Democrats. But from the start the Hungarian revolution had no real leadership. The Communist Party was assimilated in the Social Democratic Party and thereby showed that it was not a Communist party. The Hungarian revolution failed not only because of the unfavorable international situation, but also owing to the complete incapability of Bela Kun and Co.'s leadership (in regard to the agrarian question, apart from the question of party organization). The Communist International, only just recently formed, was not yet firm enough in an organizational sense to give a different direction to the Hungarian revolution.

6. The disastrous results of the war led to a powerful awakening of proletarian class consciousness among the masses. They began, to an ever-increasing extent, to clearly see through the treacherous role played by the Social Democratic parties. Under pressure of their rank-and-file, some of the old reformist and social-pacifist leaders (the German Independent Socialist Party, the Italian Socialist Party, the French Socialist Party, the British ILP, etc.) sought affiliation to the Comintern, without however revising their centrist positions. This danger of injecting opportunist tendencies into the ranks of the Comintern was counteracted by the Second Congress (1920), which adopted the 21 points, setting the conditions for member-

ship in the Communist International. These conditions declared implacable war against the ambiguousness, the wavering attitude, and the sterile social-pacifism of the centrists and demanded a complete break with all pacifist ideas and illusions (such as disarmament, League of Nations, international arbitration, etc.). To the governing principle of the Second International of maintaining loose contacts between parties nationally independent (and acting directly in opposition to each other) was counterposed the principle of the world party built on the foundation of common theory and practice, and the aim of realizing a common international leadership on the principles of democratic centralism.

7. Those centrist and conciliatory (towards the Second International) politicians, who had been hindered by the Second Congress from joining the Comintern, tried to form a Two-and-a-Half International (beginning of 1921), a go-between affair, midway between open social treachery and revolution (the Austro-Marxists, the German "Independents," the French Longuetists, the ILP, etc.). The Two-and-a-Half International proclaimed afresh — as Karl Liebknecht put it — "the unity of fire and water," the unity of revolutionists and social traitors in one International. But history had left no place for such a half-hearted solution. The Two-and-a-Half International was crushed in the struggle between the Second and Third Internationals. Its revolutionary elements turned to the Third International. Its bureaucratic tops reunited in 1923 (the Hamburg Congress) with the Second International.

8. Opportunist *centrism*, which did not lead the masses but wanted to be led by them, found its complement in *ultraradicalism*, which instead of winning the masses from within by cooperation in their organizations, their struggles, and experiences, put an ultimatum to them from outside. These ultralefts declared themselves against participation in parliamentary elections, for leaving the mass trade unions and forming "pure" revolutionary unions, and for isolated action of the vanguard. These tendencies led in Germany to the formation of the KAP (Communist Workers Party) in 1920. But even the official Communist Party of Germany had not been able to rid itself of adventurist tendencies. This was shown, above all, in the course of the March events (1921) when the party, instead of confining itself to defensive tactics against the provocative challenge of the Social Democrats in the government, led the isolated vanguard to an armed offensive and suffered shipwreck. But the greatest danger was that now a whole school of theorists had established itself in the party who transformed the tactics of March into a principle (Thalheimer, Froelich, Maslow, Koenen, etc.) The Third Congress condemned ultraleft adventures and issued the slogan, "To the masses," recognizing that the first great postwar wave (1917-1920) was now ebbing, and that a breathing space had occurred which it was necessary to utilize by preparing better and more thoroughly for the coming struggles. The strategy and tactics of the Communist parties were drafted in resolutions which remain models even today. The Congress adopted "Guiding Principles for the Organizational Development of the

Communist Parties, the Method and the Content of their Work," which, in spite of being too mechanical, "too Russian" (Lenin, at the Fourth Congress), give many valuable suggestions, particularly regarding the connection between legal and illegal work, the necessity of a quick switch-over from one to the other method of work, the organization of the press, the creation of factory cells, etc.

9. The Fourth Congress (1922) reaffirmed the lessons of the Third Congress and dealt with them more thoroughly and concretely. The NEP (New Economic Policy) of the Soviet Union, following "War Communism," which had to be introduced under the pitiless pressure of circumstances, supplied the immensely important experience of necessary tactical retreats even after the winning of power, an experience which most probably will have its validity not only for backward Russia, but also for more advanced countries.

The Fourth World Congress was able to look back on tremendous organizational results. In the course of three years, in all continents and in practically all countries, sections had been created, and apart from this, the Red International of Trade Unions and the Young Communist International had been built up. The Communist parties in a number of countries were at that time leading mighty revolutionary mass actions.

The defeat of the Italian proletariat in 1922 was not a defeat of the strategic and tactical methods of the Leninist Comintern, but of those of Italian Maximalism (Serrati), against which the Comintern since the Second World Congress had been continuously carrying on a hard struggle, without, however, being able to avert the catastrophe.

10. One of the greatest achievements of the Comintern of those years was the publicity given by it to the historical importance of national movements of liberation in the colonies and semi-colonial territories, and the support given by it to the struggle of enslaved nations against imperialist oppression, a task which the Second International had always neglected, and which, by its attitude in the World War, the Second International had absolutely betrayed.

Lenin's "Guiding Principles on the National and Colonial Question," at the Second Congress, were definitely directed against any attempt to fasten a communist label on revolutionary movements of liberation which were not in reality communistic. A temporary alliance with the national revolutionary movement was considered by these theses as necessary, but it was pointed out that the task of the Communists was not to amalgamate with these nationalist parties, but under all circumstances unconditionally to uphold the independent character of the proletarian movement.

11. The year 1923 represents a decisive turning point in the history of the Comintern. Owing to the development of new layers of exploiting elements in the Soviet Union as a consequence of the NEP and owing to the general exhaustion of the working class after the tremendous efforts and the fervor of the years of revolution

and Civil War, the bureaucracy of the party and state apparatus, which had meantime become very strong, was enabled to raise itself at an ever-increasing rate as an independent social force, as an arbiter over the classes. However, the bureaucracy could gain political power only by a struggle against the proletarian vanguard, against proletarian democracy inside the party and the soviets. This is the content of the struggle which began in 1923 between Stalinism and Trotskyism. The ascent of the bureaucracy coincided with the grave illness and forced political inactivity of Lenin who however in his last writings (especially in the article "Better Fewer, But Better" and in the so-called Testament) had clearly recognized and called for a struggle against the danger of bureaucratization and against Stalin as its main representative.

12. In Germany in 1923 a revolutionary crisis broke out afresh. The consequences of the [first imperialist] war, which had not been by any means overcome, the economic crisis interrupted only by slight boomlets, the occupation of the Ruhr territory by the French army, the organization and collapse of "passive resistance" of the German bourgeoisie against this occupation, the runaway inflation of German currency — all these causes led to an extraordinary sharpening of the class contradictions. Huge mass strikes took place. The shop stewards movement became a gathering point for the revolutionary masses. The workers organized themselves in *Hunderschaften* (bodies of 100) and commenced to arm themselves. In a number of large unions the Communists even obtained a majority. Social Democracy was in confusion; the bourgeoisie was split. The mass movement reached the critical point when decisiveness and practical initiative of the highest degree are required of the revolutionary leadership to push this movement further ahead to victory. But the leadership of the Communist Party (Brandler, Thalheimer, Walcher, Froelich, etc.) showed itself incapable of fulfilling its historical tasks and thereby proved that it was only a Social Democratic leadership, with a coating of Communist varnish. It stuck to the united front with the Social Democracy, without being able to grasp that the idea of the united front is to "step back in order thus to leap forward all the better"; without being able to grasp that at a certain moment the fight for winning the masses can be carried out only by a direct struggle for power. The leadership of the Comintern, which already showed signs of bureaucratic degeneration, also proved incapable of leading the CPG on to the correct road. When the German bourgeoisie at last gathered its forces, proclaimed a state of siege, proceeded to take the offensive, the CPG capitulated without a struggle. The consequence was a severe defeat of the German, and with it the European, proletariat, giving thereby European capitalism the possibility of stabilizing itself anew.

13. The defeat of 1923 led to a serious internal crisis in the CPG. A new "left" leadership (R. Fischer-Maslow) was chosen. This leadership, however, did not recognize that the October defeat was decisive in character. Instead of ordering a retreat, it proceeded along the path of adventurism and thereby increased the scope of the defeat.

In Bulgaria, the Comintern section of that country (under the leadership of Kolarov-Dimitrov) also let slip a highly favorable revolutionary situation and then endeavored to make up for it by putschist adventures in September 1923, thereby causing a fatal defeat of the Bulgarian proletariat.

After the German defeat, the Comintern adopted a policy of adventurism and extended this course to the entire International, the consequence being a further defeat in Estonia (uprising in Reval, December 1924).

14. To the extent that the German defeat had weakened the positions of the international proletariat and of its vanguard, to the same extent it acted to strengthen the tendencies of the Soviet bureaucracy to become an independent force. This accounts for the fact that the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern (1924) signifies above all the subjection of the Comintern to the yoke of the Russian bureaucracy. The Comintern itself became bureaucratized and was brought into complete dependence on the bureaucratic center in Moscow.

15. The theory of "socialism in one country," advanced by Stalin, the head of the bureaucracy, in the autumn of 1924 in glaring contradiction to the entire theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism, became for the newly formed social layers (bureaucracy, kulaks [well-to-do peasants], "spetses" [specialists], etc.) the ideological expression of their nationally-limited interests. Not the international proletariat but the bureaucracy was proclaimed as the bearer of socialism. The Comintern, created to be an instrument of world revolution, now became the tool for the national interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. This fundamental contradiction placed its imprint on the future policy of the Comintern, which from that point on became centrist — zigzagging, unprincipled adaptation to the reformist bureaucracy and bourgeois democracy on the one hand, and putschist adventurism on the other. All these traits became combined in its policy. The social basis of this type of centrism — the stable point in a world movement — is the Soviet bureaucracy.

16. The two methods adopted by the Comintern for handling the masses — on the one hand, unprincipled adaptation to existing circumstances and the bourgeois democratic and petty-bourgeois reformist parties; and on the other, the sudden, unprepared appeals to the revolutionary instincts of the masses — have their roots in the social position of the Soviet bureaucracy (the Comintern bureaucracy being its obedient appendage). Owing to its entire social character, the Soviet bureaucracy inclines towards adapting itself to the privileged and exploiting sections of Soviet society (kulaks, intellectual strata, labor aristocracy). However, as soon as the development has reached a critical point, when these strata become so powerful socially that they threaten the bureaucracy's position of political privilege, the latter saves itself by an appeal to the masses. In reality, it only stirs the proletarian masses (or more correctly merely small sections of these masses) by applying rigidly the whole force of state power (in particular, the GPU). On the international field, the Soviet and

Comintern bureaucracy feel themselves attracted by petty-bourgeois democracy. But whenever for national reasons or by the logic of events the Soviet bureaucracy finds itself in opposition to petty-bourgeois democracy, it endeavors all of a sudden to drive the masses to revolutionary action. But as the Comintern lacks the state forces required to enforce its ultimatums, the masses remain passive.

This explains, on the one hand, the pseudo-successes of Stalinist policy in the Soviet Union (which so impress the philistines of all shades, from the reactionary English Fabians, Webbs and Co., over to the Romain Rollands, and down to the "London Bureau" of the SAP-ILP); and on the other hand, the catastrophic failures of the Comintern.

17. The adventurist course of 1924-1925 found its opportunistic supplement in bureaucratic combinations, directed entirely against the interests of the proletarian vanguard. The formation of a Peasants' International (Krestintern), the flirtation with the Croatian Peasants' Party of Radich, and with La Follette in the United States (Federated Farmer-Labor Party), were examples of the endeavors by the Stalinist bureaucracy to use on an international scale the kulak tendencies as a counterbalance against the proletarian vanguard. The union with the Chinese Guomindang, in which the class differences were ignored, the hopes pinned on the English trade union bureaucrats, all these props of the adventurist course of 1924-25 became the most essential elements of the openly opportunist course of 1925-1927.

18. In the period from 1925 to 1927, the Chinese revolution had its gigantic outbreak. The initial events enabled the Chinese bourgeoisie and its party, the Guomindang, to take the leadership. The Comintern declared its complete solidarity with the Guomindang and its military leadership (Chiang Kai-shek). The Chinese Communist Party was forced to renounce an independent policy, and to join and to submit completely to the Guomindang. Thus, all the lessons of the Second World Congress were disregarded. This entirely Menshevik policy was justified by quoting a formula from the days of the 1905 revolution: "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants." For Lenin this formula was an elementary expression of the idea of a fighting alliance between the proletariat and the poor peasants against the aristocrats and liberal bourgeoisie. It was left to each concrete revolutionary situation to determine the concrete form which this *dictatorship* of the oppressed against the oppressors should assume. When, however, in the spring of 1917, opportunist tendencies within the Bolshevik party tried to hide behind this old Bolshevik formula, Lenin in his *Letters on Tactics* (April 1917) discarded it as having been rendered obsolete by living developments. However, in the hands of Stalinism, Lenin's slogan, which had been directed against the liberal bourgeoisie, served for the complete subjection of the proletariat to the liberal bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, in spite of the opportunist policy of the Stalin bureaucracy, crawling on its belly before the military bureaucracy and lacking confidence in the revolution-

ary power of the proletariat, the Chinese proletarian masses and poor peasants turned to Communism, imbued with the desire to carry out in their country the "October Revolution," the partition of the land, the expropriation of the expropriators, the destruction of the bourgeois-militarist state machine and its substitution by Soviets.

The Guomindang bourgeoisie, tied by finance capital to the landlords and the rich peasants, opposed with all its might the agrarian revolution. The Chinese Communists, thus tied by Stalinism to the Guomindang, were hindered from placing themselves at the head of the agrarian revolution. The peasants remained without revolutionary leadership and the Chinese revolution was deprived of its strongest lever.

In spite of the submissive policy of Stalinism, the Chinese bourgeoisie did not refrain from settling accounts with the potential danger created by the rising wave of Communism. The militarist leadership of the Guomindang made a counterrevolutionary coup d'etat; and, at a time when Chiang Kai-shek was still hailed in Moscow as the hero of the revolution, he ordered thousands of Chinese proletarians, who had already been deprived of power and arms by the Stalinist policy, to be shot. After Chiang Kai-shek's "treason" (not against the class interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie, but against Stalinist illusions), the Stalinist bureaucracy supported the alliance with the "left" Guomindang (Wang Ching-wei) and underwent with him the same bitter experiences as with Chiang Kai-shek. Only when the defeat was completed, did the bureaucracy appeal to the proletarian masses whose vast majority had just been crushed to the ground. The result was the Canton insurrection which — although bearing a putschist character and condemned to complete isolation and thus to defeat — again showed unmistakably in retrospect the class character of the Chinese revolution and the possibility and necessity of forming soviets and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and thereby underlined the criminal folly of the whole Stalinist policy.

19. In the other colonial and East Asiatic countries (British India, Dutch East Indies, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, etc.), Stalinism supported during this period the building of "Peasants' and Workers' parties" (of the Guomindang type) in direct contrast to Communist parties. This policy completely disorganized and demoralized the proletarian vanguard in those countries and — in conjunction with the catastrophic defeat of the Chinese revolution — is the main cause for the fact that in these countries no independent proletarian party has been formed to this day.

20. Parallel with the political alliance with the Guomindang, a political alliance was made with the English trade-union bureaucracy, the so-called "Anglo-Russian Committee" for the purpose of "preventing the war of intervention." Whereas the Leninist united front tactic has the aim of winning the masses to Communism, the Stalinist bureaucrats here did not come into contact with the English masses at all. The Anglo-Russian Committee confined itself to purely bureaucratic activities (conferences, banquets, and so on). The result was a strengthening of the authority of the reactionary trade-

union bureaucracy and the direct desertion by the Third International of the Minority Movement which at the time was developing favorably within the trade unions. This reactionary character of the Anglo-Russian Committee was exposed clearly during the English General Strike of 1926, which was miserably betrayed by the trade union leaders (covered by the authority of Moscow). The relations were broken off not by the Russian but by the English bureaucracy at a moment most favorable for the latter.

21. In 1927, the fight of the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard in the Soviet Union came to its sharpest clash. Due to the catastrophic results of Stalinist policy, which confirmed in all points the criticism of the Left Opposition (Trotskyists), the bureaucracy — in direct alliance with the kulaks and the other petty-bourgeois sections — took the sharpest measures against the Opposition, measures which were a denial of every principle of proletarian democracy. Expulsions from the party, ejections from office, imprisonment, exile, deportation, smuggling *agent provocateurs* into the ranks of the Opposition, counterfeit evidence, executions, cleared the road for the Bonapartist dictatorship of Stalin.

22. After having used the kulaks and the urban petty-bourgeois strata as a support in its fight against the Opposition, the bureaucracy itself was faced by the danger of becoming crushed by these strata. For reasons of self-preservation it was therefore now compelled to turn against the kulaks. On the international field, a continuation of the openly opportunist course had likewise become impossible owing to the attitude of the partners (termination of the relations by the British trade-union bureaucracy, counterrevolutionary coup d'etat of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei). So far as the German and French Social Democracy was concerned, contradictions existed which were mainly due to national and foreign policy considerations. These were the causes which led to the turn from bureaucratic adaptation to Social Democratic, trade-union and national-democratic (Guomindang) bureaucracies, on the one hand, to bureaucratic ultimatism and adventurism, on the other hand. (See Thesis 16).

23. The Sixth World Congress (1928), called after a lapse of four years, had an ambiguous, contradictory character. This congress was held during the period of transition from the ultraright to the ultraleft course and served the purpose of preparing for the expulsion of the right wing which had no desire to depart from the opportunist line adopted and applied from 1925 to 1927 (Bukharin, Rykov, Brandler, Thalheimer, Walcher, Froelich, Kilbom, Lovestone, etc.). The program adopted by the Sixth World Congress was based, from beginning to end, on eclecticism. It canonized the theory of socialism in one country, thus castrating the Comintern.

The program does not take as a premise the present day world situation of capitalism as an interlocked whole, from which must be deduced the necessity of world revolution, but it examines in a pedantically reactionary manner the possibility for each country "realizing socialism,"

thus opening wide the door for future social-patriotic degeneration of the Comintern. For the colonies and semi-colonial countries — with certain limitations, even for such countries as Spain, Portugal, Poland, etc. — the program issues the slogan of "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants," filling it with the same anti-Leninist content (fraternization of the classes) which had caused the collapse of the Chinese revolution. On the question of strategy and tactics, the program does not go beyond commonplaces. The real experiences gained by the October victory and the tremendous defeats of the proletariat in Germany, Hungary, China, etc., and the role and the importance of the revolutionary party and of its leadership are not analyzed.

24. Throughout the subsequent period, the Stalinist bureaucracy operated mainly, but by no means exclusively, through the other method at its disposal, i.e., that of issuing commands to the masses, issuing ultimatums, without any preparation. In the midst of the comparative social peace of the then still existing boom period of 1924-1929, a "revolutionary upheaval" was suddenly ordered uniformly on the international field (the so-called "Third Period"). The fatal policy of splitting the trade unions (propagation of the Red Trade Unions as independent organizations) was put in practice. Any pact with the Social Democracy, even one of merely temporary or practical-technical nature, was rejected. The theory of social fascism was promulgated ("Social Democracy and fascism are not antipodes, they are twins" — said Stalin) and every difference between parliamentary democracy and fascist dictatorship was denied. Whereas the "ultraleft escapades" — as Lenin put it — which occurred in the first postwar years, were at any rate caused by honest revolutionary desire, the Stalinist bureaucrats betrayed in scoundrel's fashion the interests of the proletarian masses.

25. The severe economic crisis originating in America in 1929-1930 shook to the core the existing regime, first and foremost in Germany, which fit the characterization given by Lenin to the Russian capitalism of 1917 as being the "weakest link of the capitalist chain." The policy of the German Social Democratic Party, adapting itself to declining capitalism (under the slogan of the "lesser evil"), and bureaucratic degeneration of the German Communist Party hindered the strengthening of the working-class movement in the crisis. The petty-bourgeoisie turned to demagogic fascism which preached civil war not against the oppressing bourgeoisie but against the proletariat; and the aim of which is to continue and intensify capitalist exploitation through the suppression of all democratic liberties. But even the rise of this dangerous enemy of the proletariat could have been employed as a lever for the revolution, if only the Communist Party of Germany had understood how to set all proletarian forces in motion against it. But the Stalinist bureaucracy did not even recognize the danger, to say nothing of being able to fight it. The absolutely insane estimation of the Social Democracy as "social fascism" led to rapprochement with real fascism (program of national and social liberation, support of the fascist referendum against the Social Democratic govern-

ment of Prussia in 1931, etc.). This program of adapting oneself to nationalist agitation, and the bureaucratic-cowardly evasion of a military struggle against the fascist opponent found its support in Soviet foreign policy which was solely governed by day-to-day considerations. This foreign policy saw its task in keeping alive German-French antagonism, in order thus to exclude an intervention from the west. Basically, Soviet foreign policy is, of course, absolutely justified in exploiting for its own ends the differences between imperialist powers. But it is an unheard-of-crime to sacrifice the interests of the proletarian revolution to day-to-day considerations of foreign policy.

The criminal, blind policy of the German Communist Party (for which the whole Comintern bears complete responsibility) led to the shameful defeat without a battle of the German proletariat. The miserable collapse of the German Communist Party (which was confirmed anew by the melancholy result of the Saar Plebiscite of January 1935) brought the final proof that the Comintern had become transformed from a subjective factor of the world revolution into an objective obstacle to the world revolution. From this fact derived the absolute necessity of building the Fourth International.

26. The policy of bureaucratic ultimatism found its complement in unprincipled combinations with bankrupt bourgeois politicians, pacifists, and novelists (Lord Marley, Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Heinrich Mann, etc.), as well as in the "Peace Congress" organized by the Stalinists, the League Against Imperialism, the Friends of the Soviet Union, etc. It is a policy which is the exact opposite of the Leninist united front tactic for winning the proletarian masses, a policy which reflects the bureaucratic admiration of "people in high positions," and the bureaucratic scorn of the revolutionary forces of the masses.

27. In 1927, a new turn of the Comintern policy was imposed by the domestic political situation of the Soviet Union as well as the foreign political situation, altered by the victory of fascism in Germany. Whereas the Leninist united front tactic in relation to Social Democracy had been previously regarded as "counterrevolutionary," now every opportunity presenting itself anywhere was used to make an alliance not only with Social Democracy, but also with its masters, the liberal bourgeoisie, and this treacherous capitulation to bourgeois democracy received the pompous name of "People's Front."

28. Stalin's declaration to the French Premier Laval (May 1935), that "he understood and approved completely the policy of national defense of France," signalizes the Comintern's desertion to the camp of imperialism. Soviet diplomacy, which in the meantime had joined the League of Nations, advocates "collective security" (i.e., the security of the imperialist robbers to continue to rob without hindrance), international arbitration, and the like. Thereby, the Comintern makes itself the prop for the oldest and most worn-out illusions with which imperialism deceives the masses and prepares them for the mass slaughter, and this at a moment when Italy's brutal assault on Abyssinia

demonstrates clearly the whole emptiness and shallowness of the lying phrases of collective security.

29. The Seventh World Congress, assembling at last in the autumn of 1935, signifies the break with the last remnants of Comintern traditions. "People's Front" and "National Defense," social betrayal, and social chauvinism are all that this Congress — a hollow theatrical performance of bureaucratic marionettes — had to offer to the world working class.

30. The Stalinists demand in all countries, in exchange for their willingness to defend the "Fatherland," only one price, i.e., that the foreign policy of the respective country should not be directed against the Soviet Union. The Franco-Soviet military agreement alone sufficed in order to transform the French Stalinists into the worst type of chauvinists, preaching national fraternization of all classes and of all political and religious denominations. The British Stalinists have no other aim but to get the British bourgeoisie to become a signatory to the Franco-Soviet agreement. Today, the American Comintern section already endorses a war of the United States against Japan "for the defense of the Soviet Union." Although a war of the USA against Japan — given a correct policy on the part of the proletarian party would offer tremendous possibilities for the proletarian world revolution, the American Stalinists are already preaching the renunciation of the revolutionary class struggle and the support of the American bourgeoisie, the mightiest and most dangerous imperialist bourgeoisie of the world. In China, the Stalinists are prepared to deliver the Chinese proletariat and poor peasants again into the hands of the counterrevolutionary Chiang Kai-shek if the latter only declares himself willing to turn his bayonets against Japan.

In the small European countries, the Stalinists already declare themselves defenders of "national independence." They forget completely that these countries are links in the imperialist chain and that they too carry on war with imperialist aims. So far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, a nation which is particularly dear to the hearts of the Stalinists, this is not a national state at all, but only a conglomeration of nationalities, held together by French imperialism. Poland, Rumania, Belgium, etc., are themselves oppressors of national minorities. Holland, Belgium, Portugal, and others have colonies of their own which they exploit with a brutality second to none of the great imperialist powers. The Austrian Stalinists declare that they are prepared to defend the "independence of Austria" — of this artificial creation, incapable of independent existence — if only the Austrian bourgeoisie (and Franco-English capital) will allow the Stalinists a certain amount of legality for their patriotic loyal propaganda. The German Stalinists in emigration have become inverted social-patriots, transforming themselves from nationalist champions against the Versailles Peace Treaty to defenders of the status quo created by this very same treaty. It follows from the present position of the German Stalinists that they will transform themselves into real social-patriots as soon as the fascist dictatorship in Germany is replaced by

another type of bourgeois regime.

As against this enormous betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, the organizations of the Fourth International adhere to the internationalist slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war; not the defense of the reactionary national frontiers, which decades ago became a brake on any kind of progressive development, but their abandonment; the creation of the United Soviet Republics of Europe and of the whole world is our aim.

31. Due to the social-patriotic transformation of Stalinism, all the differences between the Third International and the Second International, which owes its artificially prolonged existence only to the degeneration of the Comintern, have disappeared for all practical purposes. Thus, it is only logical that the problem of "organic unity" — the amalgamation of the Second and Third Internationals — is increasingly coming to the forefront. In those countries where reformism still has the monopoly power over the working-class movement (Britain, Scandinavia) the parties of the Second International oppose organic unity. In Belgium, the recent successes of the Stalinists and the failure of the Labor Party may probably have caused the latter to become more sympathetic to the idea of amalgamation. In France, however, the Communist Party, which is now growing at the expense of the Social Democracy, is delaying the matter. Nowhere, however, is there any principled, irreconcilable antagonism. What matters are only purely bureaucratic bargaining methods. But no matter whether "organic unity" is realized or not, the advanced worker must have no doubt that Stalinism and Social Democracy are "not antipodes, but twins." They both are the yellow agencies of rotting capitalism.

32. At present, the Comintern is experiencing a certain growth which is not to be underestimated, but as a social-treacherous and social-chauvinist, not as a revolutionary party. Faced with tremendous political tension, already signaling everywhere the approach of the new world war, the masses rush to the left and find there the only door known to them, that of the Comintern. Thus, at the last elections the French Communist Party was able to more than double its votes (its number of deputies increased sevenfold). Above all, the proletarian districts — Paris and suburbs — voted Communist. Also, the Belgian Communist Party, always very weak, was able to register in this year's elections a success which was not unimportant (more than 100 percent increase in votes, as against 1932 and a threefold increase in mandates). Certain successes may also be registered by Stalinism in Spain, in Switzerland, and partly also in Czechoslovakia. A growth of other sections (England, Holland, Scandinavia, America, etc.) is, if not certain, by no means improbable. But while the masses hope that the Third International will save them from the danger of a war, the Comintern is preparing itself to become the main political instrument in the coming imperialist war. Thus, the Comintern takes the place of the worn-out Second International in the service of bourgeois democracy and imperialism, but it carries within it tremendous

contradictions.

33. These recent successes of the Comintern are confusing above all the petty-bourgeois philistines who have united themselves in the "International Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Unity" (London Bureau), i.e. the SAP of Germany, the English ILP, the Socialist Party of Sweden, the Workers Party of Marxist Unity in Spain (Nin, Maurin), etc. Under the impact of the catastrophic defeat of the German working-class movement, some of the centrist parties were turning in the direction of the Fourth International. But the Stalinist turn of the autumn of 1934 pulled the hesitating Walchers, Maurins, Nins, etc. along with it into the swamp of People's Front policy, and the complete absorption of the London Bureau by Stalinism is now merely a question of time.

34. A convincing example of the contradictions connected with the present growth of the Communist Parties is the tremendous strike movement and factory occupations during the last weeks in France (embracing about two million manual and clerical workers), which started to the utter surprise of the French Communist Party. But while this fresh mass movement is commencing on the road to revolution, it finds everywhere obstacles put in its path by the fossilized apparatus of the Comintern. For instance, instead of placing itself at the head of the strike movement and putting forward revolutionary demands, the French Communist Party worked, from the very beginning, with the government and the employers in order to find a means of bringing the strike to an end. It may, therefore, be predicted with certainty: either the fresh movement of the proletarian masses in France will sweep aside the bureaucratic apparatus of the Stalinist traitors and create a new leadership — then the proletarian revolution will be victorious — or the treacherous bureaucrats will become masters of the situation — then fascism will triumph.

35. The contradiction between the militant masses who are pushing to the left and the new treacherous part played by the Communist Parties offers the organizations of the Fourth International great tasks and possibilities. Some of these organizations have, in the immediate past, joined the Socialist Parties and have won over the best elements there to revolutionary Marxism. In countries with tremendously accelerated inner-political developments (France, Belgium), this proved to be a short stage. In other countries (Poland, England) this experience is not yet completed. In others again (America) they are still at the beginning. But no matter whether the sections of the Fourth International are working independently or within the Socialist Parties, they must direct their attention to the fact that at present the Third International is attracting the workers from the Second International. Therefore, the most essential struggle against social-imperialism — socialism or Communism in words, imperialism in practice — is the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The most important task is to make clear to the workers the present day character of the Comintern as an agency of imperialism, to make it clear to them that a changeover

from the Second to the Third International means jumping from the pan into the fire.

36. The roads and methods of this work will be manifold and various, dependent on the whole development and the peculiarities of each country. It is of decisive importance to utilize every possibility to force the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy into open antagonism to its social supporters, the revolutionary working class. It is important everywhere to watch developments with open eyes, to collect material, to follow carefully all contradictory tendencies, in order to be able to act opportunely and effectively.

37. Of the theory and practice of the first four world congresses there is not a breath left in the existing Comintern. But the strategic and tactical teachings of the Comintern of Lenin and Trotsky, the Leninist reaffirmation of theoretical Marxism, are not forgotten. These teachings and experiences have been defended ever since 1923 by the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition against bureaucratic degeneration. The Leninist strategic teachings and experiences applied to the new events and phenomena, and the pitiless criticism of Stalinist mistakes and crimes from 1923 to 1936 have been used by the Opposition to educate new Bolshevik cadres throughout the world. Without a thorough study of the programmatic documents and writings of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition during this period, no proletarian revolutionary — who wants to deserve the name — can qualify for a leading part in the ranks of the proletarian vanguard.

38. By taking the strategic aim of the proletarian world revolution, adopted by the Third International of Lenin and Trotsky, but betrayed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, as the sole guiding line for its policy the Fourth International arms itself with the teachings and experience of almost a century of revolutionary struggles between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and reaffirms thereby the ideas and the life work of the great pioneers of the proletariat, Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Lenin.

Appendix B:

How the Fourth International Was Conceived (August 1944) by Jean van Heijenoort*

Our movement has the right to consider itself the representative and the historical standard-bearer of revolutionary socialism. It is at the end of a chain whose links were the Communist League of Marx and Engels, the International Workingmen's Association (First International), the Second International, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin, and the Communist International. But in order to establish the specific beginnings of our movement it is necessary to begin with the year 1923.

The Left Opposition

The October revolution established the first Workers' State, but remained isolated. "Without revolution in Europe," said Lenin repeatedly, "we shall perish." History verified the truth of his words, but in its own manner. Degeneration appeared in the apparatus itself of the new regime — the party that led the revolution to victory.

The resistance to corruption of the party came from Trotsky. The struggle began in the fall of 1923. On October 8th, he sent a letter to the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission denouncing the stifling of the right of criticism on the part of party members. This is the first document of our movement. It can be compared to what had been for Bolshevism the famous vote on the statutes of the party in 1902.

Beginning with the question of the internal regime of the party, the struggle grew progressively to include all problems of revolutionary tactics and strategy. Outside the USSR, opposition groups appeared in most of the sections of the Communist International. The connections of these groups among themselves, and with the Russian Opposition, remained precarious. Many of the groups arose in opposition to *one* of the aspects of Stalinist policy. Their political solidarity was far from complete. One group that proved of great importance for the future of our movement, the Left Opposition in the American communist party, appeared belatedly on the scene, in 1928.

The organizational cohesion of the International Left Opposition was not seriously undertaken until the time of Trotsky's expulsion from the USSR and his arrival in Turkey, in February 1929. The first international conference of the Left Opposition took place in Paris in 1930.

The policy of the Opposition in relation to the Communist International, both in its entirety as well as its various sections, had remained the same since 1923. In one word it was — reform. Although expelled by the faction in power, the Trotskyist groups considered themselves part of the International, its left faction, exactly as in each country each group considered itself a faction of the national Communist Party. Their objective was to convince the party membership of the correctness of their views, to win over the majority, and to set the organization on the correct course. Toward the Bolshevik Party in the USSR the policy was essentially the same as toward any other section of the International. The name of the movement, *Opposition*, expressed and symbolized this policy.

A political document of a programmatic character, entitled *The International Left Opposition — Its Tasks and*

* This article was first published in the August 1944 issue of *Fourth International*, published in New York; it is reprinted in *Leon Trotsky. The Man and His Work. Reminiscences and Appraisals*, New York: Merit, 1969. Jean van Heijenoort (1912-1986) became Trotsky's secretary in 1932, in Prinkipo, and followed him in his successive exiles in France, Norway and Mexico. Elected to the leadership of the Fourth International, he took charge of a provisional international center in the United States during World War Two and retired from politics shortly thereafter. He then became a noted astronomer. He helped to edit the French anthology of Trotsky's works from 1933 to 1940 (entitled *Œuvres*) after the opening of the Trotsky archives at Harvard University (USA).

Methods, was written, by Trotsky in December 1932, immediately after his return to Prinkipo from Copenhagen, where he had the opportunity of meeting about thirty of the most important leaders of the International Opposition. One chapter of this documents was entitled "Faction — Not a Party." The perspective outlined there was the same as in the preceding years, namely, the reform of the Communist International and of each of its sections. Nevertheless, a warning was sounded:

"Such an historical catastrophe as the fall of the Soviet State would surely drag along the Third International. Similarly, a victory of fascism in Germany and the crushing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its ruinous policy."

One of these two warnings was soon to become a terrible reality. On January 30, 1933, Hindenburg, the constitutional head of the Weimar Republic, elected with the votes of the Social Democracy, called on Hitler to form a new cabinet.

For three years, the Left Opposition had sounded the alarm at the rise of German fascism. In a series of articles and pamphlets, which in their clarity and revolutionary passion rank among the best products of his pen, Trotsky revealed the nature of fascism and showed the consequences of a fascist victory to the German workers, to the international labor movement, to the USSR, to Europe, and to the whole world. He also pointed to the means of combating this danger: the united front of the workers' parties, Communist and Social Democratic, for the active defense of workers' organizations against the Nazi vermin, a defensive struggle which, when successful, would become an offensive.

The Collapse of the German Communist Party

The leaders of the two official workers' parties vied with each other in their impotence in the face of the fascist menace. The Social Democratic leadership desperately grasped at a democracy which, in the midst of economic chaos and the sharpened social and political conflicts, was disowning itself. The Stalinists acted in line with the "genial" theory of their leader, that it was first necessary to crush the Social Democrats before fighting fascism. They had made common cause with the Nazis in the famous plebiscite in Prussia in August 1931. When the fascist menace became imminent, they clamored with bragadocio: "After them will be our turn!"

When Hitler formed his government on January 30, 1933, not all was lost. The workers' organizations were still intact. In the following weeks the Nazis acted very cautiously. In February, Trotsky stated in a conversation: "The situation in Germany is similar to that of a man at the bottom of an abyss facing a stone wall. To get out it is necessary to clutch at the rocks with bare and bloody hands. It is necessary to have courage and will, but it is possible. Not all is lost."

The official leadership of the workers' parties allowed the last chance to slip by. In the face of their passivity, Hitler became more brazen. He had never hoped to win such an easy victory. At the beginning of March, the

crude provocation of the Reichstag fire allowed him to definitely entrench his regime. The workers' organizations were swept away.

Trotsky's reaction was not long in coming. He wrote an article entitled *The Tragedy of the German Proletariat*. It was dated March 14, 1933 and had as a sub-title, "The German Workers Will Rise, Stalinism — Never!" The gist of the article was that, in Germany, the Communist Party failed in its historic mission, that it was doomed as a revolutionary organization. Thus, there was no choice but to give up the policy of its reform and to proceed to build a new German Communist Party. When Trotsky wrote that Stalinism would not rise again, he meant Stalinism in Germany. As to the Communist Parties in other lands, especially the Russian Bolshevik Party, and the Communist International viewed in its entirety, the line remained as before, that of reform.

In the weeks that followed other articles elaborated this position and answered the objections raised against it. In the ranks of the Left Opposition, these objections were minimal. They came mostly from certain comrades in the German section, the one most directly concerned. These objections remained secondary or sentimental in character: maybe it would be better to wait before speaking about a new party while the official one is under the blows of bloody repressions, etc. But the lesson of events was so clear that the need of a change in the old policy was not questioned seriously.

Yet when one's memory turns to that month of March 1933, it cannot be denied that the new policy was a surprise to the members of the Left Opposition. The daily activity of each of the sections was centered exclusively around the Communist Party; and to develop a new line, even if it were for only one of our sections, was to break with a tradition of ten years standing. The great authority of Trotsky made it possible to bring about the change in line rapidly and with cohesion. Without him, the lessons of the events in Germany would have surely been learned in our ranks, but after how many months of discussion?

The problem of the Third International in its totality could not fail to be posed. After the collapse of the German Communist Party, the executive committee of the International passed in April a resolution which declared that the policy followed by the German Communist Party "up to and at the time of Hitler's coup d'etat was fully correct."

This is not astonishing: the executive committee under the orders of Stalin merely covered Stalin, who imposed his fatal political line on the German Communist Party. But the decisive fact was that all the sections of the International accepted the Moscow resolution and thus became equally responsible for the historical catastrophe in Germany. The members who denounced the line that had been followed, or merely questioned it, were expelled. The policy of reform was losing all reality.

On July 15, 1933, Trotsky, under the pen-name of G. Gurov, addressed to the sections of the Opposition an article entitled, *It is necessary to build anew Communist parties and an International*. Here the perspective of reform was definitely abandoned. After the lessons of the events, the turn was decisive: "Talk of 'reform' and the demand of

readmission of the oppositionists into the official parties must be definitely given up, as utopian and reactionary," he wrote. And he took this opportunity to give general and valuable advice: "The most dangerous thing in politics is to become a prisoner of your own formula, which was appropriate yesterday, but is deprived of any content today."

On July 20th a second article entitled, *It is no longer possible to stay in the "International" with Stalin, Manuilsky, Lozovsky and Co.*, answered possible arguments against the new position.

The change in policy coincided with the change in Trotsky's residence. On July 17th, he left Istanbul, and on the 24th he landed in Marseilles. Next day he settled himself near Saint-Palais, on the Atlantic seaboard. It was a big change in his personal life. While on the island of Prinkipo, the arrival of a visitor was a little event every four or six months; in France, Trotsky was able in the following few weeks to meet with practically all leading members of the European opposition groups, and with quite a few from overseas.

When Trotsky landed in Marseilles, the translation of his first article on the need of a new International had hardly reached the leadership of the various sections. The leading Trotskyists of France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, etc., soon took the road to Saint-Palais, and there in Trotsky's study, or under the trees of the garden, participated in lengthy discussions. Opposition to the new orientation was practically non-existent. The turn to a new party in Germany three months before, had broken with a long tradition and opened new perspectives. The discussions did not deal so much with the need of a new International, but rather with the ways and means of bringing it about: how to build it, how to build new parties?

The New International

A few voices raised the question: haven't we waited too long? Shouldn't we have recognized the need of a new International much sooner? To this Trotsky answered: "This is a question we may well leave to the historians." He was undoubtedly profoundly convinced that the change in the policy would have been incorrect several years sooner, but he refused to discuss this question because it was no longer of practical and immediate interest.

One question that took up a large share of the discussion was that of the USSR. It is worth while examining how it was posed then. The document of December 1932 that we have already mentioned, and which still followed the line of reform, had stated:

"Sharper and brighter is the question [of reform] in the USSR. The policy of the second party there would imply the policy of armed insurrection and a new revolution. The policy of the faction implies the line of inner reform of the party and the workers' state."

In the article of April 1933 which pointed out the need of a new party in Germany, but at the same time retained the policy of reform in the Communist International, Trotsky wrote:

"If the Stalinist bureaucracy will bring the USSR to collapse, then... it will be necessary to build a Fourth International."

The problem was: how to discard the policy of reform of the Bolshevik Party and at the same time retain the perspective of reforming the workers' state? How to proclaim the Fourth International before the Stalinist bureaucracy has led the USSR to its collapse?

The problem of the USSR was the greatest obstacle in Trotsky's mind before reaching the conclusion that there remained no other alternative than to form a Fourth International. Shortly before his article of July 15, he said in a conversation at Prinkipo: "Since April, we have been for reform in all countries except Germany, where we are for a new party. Now we can take a symmetrical position, i.e., in favor of a new party in every country except the USSR, where we will be for reform of the Bolshevik Party." (This position, as far as I know, was never put into writing.) But it was clear to his listeners that his ideas on this matter were only in the process of formation and that they had not yet reached their conclusion.

The solution of this problem is, as is well known now, the distinction between a social revolution and a political revolution. This solution was already outlined in the first documents, in July, which speak about the need of a new International.

On the other hand, in the summer of 1933, the discussions around the nature of the USSR were numerous: not only was Stalinism bankrupt in Germany, but the first economic experiences of Hitler, Roosevelt, as well as the Italian corporate state, gave rise on all sides to theories of "State capitalism."

Trotsky then clarified his position toward the USSR in a long article entitled, *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, dated October 1, 1933. This article definitely eliminates the perspective of a peaceful removal of the bureaucracy, and clarifies the formulas used in the July documents on the new International. In the main this is the position we have maintained to the present. (On the question of an historical analogy with Thermidor, a correction was made in February 1935.)

Another question required a good deal of attention in the discussions at Saint-Palais: that of our relation toward other organizations. The Left Opposition had its attention focused exclusively on the various Communist parties. Our organization was made up, with a few rare exceptions, only of expelled members of Communist parties or Young Communist leagues. All our activity was subordinated to the perspective of reform. As early as June 15, 1933, that is, before the turn toward a New International, Trotsky addressed to the sections of the Left Opposition an article, *Left Socialist Organizations and Our Tasks*, in which he pointed out a new field of activity: the victory of German Fascism had brought a crisis to the Social Democracy. The Comintern was losing its power of attraction. We could expect that the centrist organizations of the left would turn toward us. It was therefore necessary to turn our attention and our efforts in this direction.

In fact, the whole political atmosphere, our orientation towards a new International, the arrival of Trotsky in France, actually attracted towards us the eyes of organizations which, in different periods and under different circumstances, had broken with the Second and Third Internationals. Numerous were the visits in Saint-Palais of

Appendix C: The Rocky Road to the Fourth International (1978) by George Breitman*

We now have come to the year 1934. In February, right-wingers and fascists tried to overthrow the French bourgeois-democratic government; also in February, the Bonapartist government of Austria crushed an armed uprising by the Social Democratic workers; and in October, the Spanish right wing government crushed an armed uprising led by the Socialist Party. Trotsky considered the French developments to be the most crucial. France is now the key to the international situation, he wrote in a manifesto published in March; he had used the same terms to apply to Germany in the 1930-1933 period. By this he meant that the center of revolutionary gravity in Europe had shifted to France; that a struggle decisive for the whole world had opened in that country; that a correct policy there could create the conditions for a revolutionary victory, with all the international repercussions that that would bring, and for a qualitative change in the growth of the movement for the Fourth International.

In keeping with his analysis of the potential situation in France, Trotsky threw himself and everything he had into trying to influence its development. He was hampered when the French press launched a big witch hunt against him in April and the government ordered him deported, because this meant he had to leave the metropolitan area where he had been able to attend IS meetings. Thereafter his direct participation was limited to what he could write or tell an occasional visitor to his home in a remote Alpine village. But his concern with the French section and its work never flagged.

The attempted coup d'etat in February 1934 brought a militant response from the French workers, first a general strike and then overwhelming sentiment for a workers' united front against fascism. This was so strong that first the Socialist Party and then, more slowly, the Communist Party had to consent to a united front. Along with this grew talk and pressure for a merger of these two parties. At this point, in June 1934, Trotsky, who was on the run from one place to another, and had not yet been granted permission to live in the French Alps, made an audacious proposal to the French section of the ICL: that it should formally dissolve and join the SP, which permitted tendencies inside the organization to exist and publish their own newspaper. This, he felt would enable it to avoid isolation outside of the new united front and put it in a position to make recruits to its ideas among the large

* From George Breitman, *The Rocky Road to the Fourth International, 1933-1938*, New York: Pathfinder/Education for Socialists, 1979. George Breitman (1916-1986) joined the Trotskyist movement in 1935 and was a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, an organization in support of the Fourth International in the USA, from 1939 to 1981; expelled from the SWP in 1984, he founded the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. He supervised the publication of the fourteen volumes of Trotsky's *Writings (1929-1940)* in English by Pathfinder Press and analyzed the dynamics of Black nationalism in *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary*, 1967.

leaders of these organizations (German S.A.P., English I.L.P., Dutch O.S.P. and R.S.P., etc.). The Dutch party of Sneevliet (R.S.P.) declared itself ready to join our ranks immediately.

The excitement provoked by the shameful bankruptcy of the two Internationals in Germany was so great that not less than fourteen organizations, belonging to neither of the two Internationals, decided to unite. Nevertheless, they were far from having a common program. To complain about the old official organizations in articles and speeches is one thing. To undertake to build a new International is another. Our organization decided to participate in the conference of the fourteen groups held in Paris at the end of August 1933. Our policy was clear: to draw our conclusions from events to the end, to propose our program of creating a new International, to denounce those who wanted to remain equivocal and ambiguous. Together with a few organizations which recognized the immediate necessity of a new International (S.A.P., R.S.P., O.S.P.), our organization signed a programmatic document known under the name of *Declaration of the Four*. Some months later the S.A.P. was to deny its signature.

The conference in Paris proved to be the maximum effort of which the centrist groups were capable. It remained without results. All the perspectives gradually revealed themselves to be empty, unrealistic, with the exception of one: to create a new International. The formal founding of the Fourth International took place five years later, in 1938.

Eleven years have passed since that summer of 1933 when the Fourth International was conceived. Its progress has been slow, always too slow for our hopes. It was born amidst the defeats provoked by the old official organizations of the working class. While a defeat will stir the best elements of the vanguard to examine its causes and to build a better organization, its effect on the class as a whole is one of disorientation, discouragement and passivity. It takes years and years to eradicate its marks; a new generation which has not known cynicism must raise its head.

We have found in our path the putrid corpse of the Comintern, an organization which has utilized the immense prestige of the victorious Russian Revolution precisely to disorientate, disorganize and crush, where necessary, the revolutionary emancipation of the working class.

Following defeats in a series of countries, a catastrophe has descended upon the peoples — a new world war. For five years now, hundreds of millions of men have been confronted with the terrors of war, but today the sound of the cannon can no longer drown out the melody of revolt. Throughout all Europe fists are clenching. Tomorrow tens and hundreds of millions will rise to demand an accounting from the old order which generated oppression, misery and wars. Gaining consciousness of their strength, they will case aside their false leaders, the perfidious agents of the enemy. They will need a stainless banner. There is only one: ours, the banner of the Fourth International, of the World Party of the Socialist Revolution.

number of left-wing SP members who had joined and become radicalized since Hitler's victory.

Trotsky was the initiator of this entry tactic or maneuver, which came to be known as the "French turn." And he had to explain and defend this proposal with all the vigor and eloquence at his command (7) because it met much bigger resistance in the French section (and elsewhere) than the call for the new International had received. After a heated discussion and a near split averted only by IS intervention, the entry proposal was adopted by a majority of the French section at a national conference held at the end of August. It was supported by one of the two principal French leaders, Raymond Molinier, and opposed by the other, Pierre Naville. Shortly after the conference, the Naville group split from the section, and although it later decided to enter the SP too, it refused for a long time to join the Bolshevik-Leninist Group in the SP, which was the name now taken by the members of the French section.

The entry tactic was an affront and a blow to everyone in the ICL who was tainted by formalism, schematism, sectarianism, routinism, and passivity, and hid these traits behind radical rhetoric about revolutionary principles and Bolshevik firmness. These traits all came gushing out now. Some were opposed to the entry proposal on the ground that it was impermissible in principle under any circumstances; others were against it on tactical grounds, like Naville; and still others were opposed on any and all grounds.

It can be argued that entrism was only a tactic, and one which applied only in very specific circumstances. This is true enough but in my opinion Trotsky's proposal was one of his finest contributions in the 1933-1938 period. Aside from other benefits produced, the discussion it provoked shook up a lot of people and led to the first major liberation of our movement from the diseases of dogmatism that had been carried over from the Comintern or had been reinforced by different waves of recruits from third-period Stalinism. It also helped to rid us of people who were hopelessly unassimilable and could only hamper the healthy growth of our movement.

The repercussions in the IS and ICL executive committee were bigger than those in the French section. Several members were opposed to the turn on various grounds, and most of them were incensed against Trotsky because he had taken the entry proposal to the French section before taking it up with the IS. Bauer, the IS secretary, denounced the proposal as a violation of Bolshevik principles and accused Trotsky of capitulating to the Second International. He could not even wait for the meeting of the ICL executive committee that was called for October to assess the French turn, but quit on the spot, and joined the German affiliate of the London Bureau. Sneevliet, the leader of the Dutch section, and Vereecken, the secretary of the Belgian section, were also opposed to the French turn, largely on tactical grounds, but Trotsky diplomatically persuaded them that even if they voted against the turn they should agree to let the French section, then already inside the SP, complete its experiment. The leadership of the Spanish section, long estranged from the ICL although still part of it, was vehemently against the French turn. The vote at the October meeting which

Trotsky could not attend, would have been closer if Bauer had not quit so quickly and if the Spanish had not boycotted the meeting. As it was, Sneevliet, Vereecken and Pietro Tresso, a supporter of the Naville group, voted against the resolution written by Trotsky, which was adopted by a vote of 6 to 3 (8). One of the supporters of the resolution was Cannon of the American section, who had come at Trotsky's urging and was given the assignment of meeting with Bauer, Naville, and others and trying to persuade them they should not split the movement over a tactical question. Another of the supporters of the resolution was Molinier, who favored its main parts but objected so strongly to a provision in it inviting the Naville group to return to the French section that he threatened to resign from the executive committee. And it was at this time, Cannon later reported, that Sneevliet tried to convince him the whole ICL should join the London Bureau in order to take it over and into the Fourth International. (9)

Thus this 1934 dispute accounts for the departure of two more members of the 1933 group of eight leaders: Bauer and Naville (although Naville's was to return before leaving for good in 1939). Bauer's defection to the London Bureau and Sneevliet's illusions about the London Bureau in 1934 also tell us something significant about the quality of their commitment to the Fourth International only a year after they became two of the four signers of the Declaration of Four.

Things began to pick up after the October meeting. The brightest spots were in France and the United States.

The American section had decided early in 1934 that the way to apply the new 1933 orientation in the U.S. was to propose a fusion with the left centrist American Workers Party, headed by A. J. Muste. (Contrary to the legends, this proposal originated with the American leaders, not Trotsky, who approved it; and it was made before the Musteites wrote a glorious page of labor history in the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and before the American section showed its revolutionary caliber in the Minneapolis Teamster strikes.) There had been attempts in 1933 to fuse the German and Dutch sections with centrist groups in the London Bureau but they had fallen through. So the fusion of the American section with the AWP around a month after the October ICL meeting was the first time that this particular merger experiment was carried through. And it was a successful experiment, uniting the American cadre with an important group of effective mass workers and integrating most of them into the movement for the Fourth International.

One notable feature of the fusion was that the new Workers Party of the United States did not have any international affiliation at its birth. This was because the AWP had not had such affiliations and was not ready to adhere to the ICL. But this was only a temporary arrangement; seven months later virtually the whole leadership of the Workers Party voted to join with the ICL in working for the Fourth International. The success of the American fusion was contagious, at least in Holland, where the Dutch section and a centrist group headed by Peter Schmidt finally merged a few months later, early in 1935.

This new Dutch party decided to belong to both the ICL and the London Bureau for the time being.

But the major advance took place in France, the key to the international situation. Within a few months, the Bolshevik-Leninist Group had tripled its membership and begun to influence thousands of left-wing Socialists; in the SP's youth organization they effected a bloc with the left-centrist leaders that soon had the reformist leaders worried. Even the die-hard sectarian Vereecken had to admit grudgingly that the Bolshevik-Leninists were doing good revolutionary work inside the French SP.

The Moscow bureaucracy finally began to junk its ultra-left third-period policies in the middle of 1934, when it gave permission to the French CP to form a united front with the SP. But neither Stalin, nor the French CP leaders, nor the French SP leaders, as it soon became clear, were interested in forming a united front of the workers against the capitalists. What they all wanted, for various reasons, was a front of the workers *with* some capitalists (bourgeois-democratic capitalists) against other capitalists (reactionary or fascist capitalists); that is, an alliance based on class collaboration instead of class struggle, which bore the name of People's Front when it came into existence. Stalin dropped the other shoe in May 1935 when he signed a non-aggression treaty with French imperialism and gave his blessings to French rearmament. What he was after was an alliance, in the name of "collective security," with peace-loving democratic imperialists (like France) against war-loving fascist imperialists (like Nazi Germany), and to get this alliance he was ready and eager to handcuff the French workers and deliver them into the custody of the French imperialists. That was the meaning of the People's Front that was organized by the bourgeois Radical Socialists, the Social Democrats and the Stalinists later in 1935.

All this put the French Bolshevik-Leninists in an extremely favorable position, precisely because they were inside the SP, to expose the real nature and aims of the People's Front and to rally the left wing workers to a revolutionary mobilization against the coming war. And this was also precisely why the SP leaders, egged on by the Stalinists, realized that they would have to expel the Fourth Internationalists from the SP and isolate them as much as possible as fast as possible.

Trotsky left France for Norway in June 1935, just as the SP leadership was preparing to move against the Bolshevik-Leninist Group. Sizing up the situation realistically, he advised the French comrades that their days in the SP were numbered and that they should orient quickly toward the construction of a new revolutionary party; for tactical reasons, they should take advantage of the democratic clauses in the SP's constitution to resist expulsions, expose the motives of the SP bureaucrats and solicit the sympathy of left wing workers, but all of this had to be subordinated to the political mobilization of an independent revolutionary party.

Trotsky also felt that the new social-patriotic policies of the Stalinists, which were universalized at the Seventh (and last) World Congress of the Comintern in 1935, and the worsening of the war danger, illustrated by fascist Italy's open preparations for the invasion of Ethiopia later in 1935, required an intensification of public work for the Fourth International, which had temporarily been

subordinated to the exigencies of the French turn in France, Belgium, Poland, and elsewhere. So he wrote the text of a new document, the Open Letter for the Fourth International, which reaffirmed the 1933 Declaration of Four and brought it up to date in the light of the new developments since then. This was published in the summer of 1935.

Unfortunately, an important part of the French leadership headed by Molinier, did not agree with Trotsky's views on what to do in France, and the rest of the leadership, following Jean Rous and Naville, proved incapable of providing decisive action toward the construction of a new French party. Molinier thought the SP experience was not concluded and that additional gains could still be won in the SP. He felt this so strongly that he violated discipline and began publishing his own paper. The French section was plunged into the worst crisis in its history. Molinier's group was expelled at the end of 1935 and set up its own party. Precious time was lost. Many of the new recruits and sympathizers gained inside the SP were demoralized by the factionalism and drifted away. The two groups were reunited in June 1936, and then split again a few weeks later. It was a real mess, and accounted in part for the insignificant role the French section played during the big 1936 strike wave that followed the electoral victory of the People's Front, and the reduced role it played inside the Fourth International from then until World War II. (11)

(...)

I didn't think I had to persuade this audience that revolutionary workers need to be organized internationally as well as nationally or that the founding congress of the Fourth International was necessary and progressive. But there is a corollary question that may need clarification here: Granted that the International had to be founded, why was its founding in 1938 so urgent, what difference would it have made if it had not been founded until later?

The main answer is World War II. It almost broke out in the Munich crisis the same month the conference was held, and it did actually begin just one year later. Next to revolution, war is the supreme test for revolutionary organizations. It submits them to overwhelming pressures, it often isolates them or isolates them further from their base, it strips them of illusions, it crushes the weak and wavering elements, it poses life-or-death challenges to the strong. Within weeks or months, World War II swept away the London Bureau and the remnants of the Brandlerite International like gnats in a hurricane.

The small and weak Fourth International was not immune to these destructive and disintegrative influences. On the European continent, the national sections were driven underground and reduced to a handful by ruthless repression. Some members of the 1938 International Executive Committee were murdered at their posts: Trotsky by a GPU agent in Mexico, Leon Lesoil by the Nazis in a concentration camp, Pietro Tresso by the Stalinists in France, Ta Tu Thau by the Stalinists in Vietnam. Others withdrew to the sidelines or defected. Pioneers like Shachtman, even before the United States entered the war, buckled under the weight of bourgeois-democratic opinion, rebelled against the perspectives of the Fourth

International they had voted for at the founding conference, and led a damaging split of the movement. Slowly, our heroic comrades were able to reknit some of the European sections and resume activity against their formidable enemies, but they took over four years of the war before they succeeded in reestablishing connections among themselves in the form of a European secretariat of the Fourth International.

So it is safe to say that if the International had not been founded in 1938, it would not have been founded during the war. Eventually, sooner or later, it would have been founded, but it would have been a different and politically weaker body than the one that was established in 1938 and managed to survive the war with its banner and tradition unstained.

During the war itself, the existence of the International — cribbed, cabined and confined as it was when the center was moved to the United States — was an enormous factor in maintaining revolutionary morale and ideological continuity in the midst of adversity. I can report personally how much it strengthened me as a youthful activist to know that the International and its partisans, even though cut off from each other, were continuing the struggle for our common ideas and goals. Later in the war, after I had been drafted into the army and sent to France, where political conditions were much more difficult than here, I had a chance to talk with many European comrades and to hear over and over again testimony about the unifying and inspirational effects that news (or even just rumors) about the existence and survival of the Fourth International had on the persecuted fighters in the concentration camps, prisons, armies and underground cells. They fought better because of this, and it would have been harder for them to keep on fighting without it. And without it, it would have been more difficult to establish the political and ideological homogeneity that was established soon after the war.

(7) Several articles on this subject are in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-1935)*, New York: Pathfinder, 1971.

(8) See "The Present Situation in the Labor Movement and the Tasks of the Bolsheviks-Leninists," *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years (1933-1940)*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973.

(9) See Cannon's 1945 speech, "The Workers Party and the Minority in the SWP," *The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century"*, New York: Pathfinder, 1977.

(10) See *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-1936)*, New York: Pathfinder, 1977.

(11) See *The Crisis in the French Section (1935-36)*, New York: Pathfinder, 1977.

Appendix D: Henk Sneevliet's Position* The anathema of Coyoacan (February 15, 1938)

The unavoidable has happened. It seems the document below is a solemn anathema. Here we are, expelled from

* The two articles above are translated from Fritjoff Tichelman's *Henk Sneevliet*, Paris: La Brèche, 1988, in French. They were originally published in *Nieuwe Fakkell*, March 13, 1938 and March 18, 1938. Sneevliet is presented in the glossary.

the fraternal community of the international secretariat of the Fourth International whose infallible leader is comrade Trotsky. We do not know whether the priests of the fraternal community held a council before judging and condemning the heretic. Such formalities are not customary in those circles.

There were many signs since July 1936 that this would be the outcome. That date was when the RSAP leadership left a conference (the first conference for the Fourth International, July 29 to 31) which was bound to miscarry due to the instructions received from Oslo, but nevertheless was given the significance of a founding congress of the Fourth International. This significance is unconditionally recognized by Trotsky's "international organization." Outside his international organization, not a single mortal is aware that this Fourth International now exists in any other way than as an idea which must still be born and develop because the Second and Third Internationals have become unusable as guides for the world proletariat in its forward march to socialism.

Leon Trotsky speaks of five years of contacts during which he was unable to convince Sneevliet and his co-thinkers to become "genuine supporters of the Fourth International" as he conceives it. The truth is this: there was no contact between the Dutch RSP and Trotsky's group before December 1932, even though our positions converged on several points and should have been cause for seeking contact. Trotsky's role in the proletarian movement and the Russian revolution, his words and deeds were sufficiently attractive to arouse a desire for contact. But at that point, Trotsky and his people were still busy trying to cure the Third International. We, in Holland, had already broken definitively with the Third International for some years. When we reached agreement in mid-1933 on the question of creating new revolutionary parties and a new International, personal contact was achieved between Trotsky and Sneevliet in Copenhagen and the RSP was put in touch with the Trotskyist formation. Right away, our concern was to make possible joint work to prepare the Fourth International on the basis of common positions. Normal organizational contact with Trotsky's center only lasted until the foundation of the RSAP in 1935. Following the merger, our party had links with both the Trotskyist center and the London Bureau. The highly abnormal conceptions of this Trotskyist center on the role and tasks of an international center, the organizational attitudes and sudden turns in the fields of tactics, policy and organization which prevailed in this Trotskyist center and its sections fostered a situation which led the RSAP delegation to withdraw from the international conference and consider that the RSAP was not bound by the results of that conference.

We will not examine the various items of the bill of indictment which in our opinion constitute the essence of the anathema at this time. For several weeks now, a party committee established by the party leadership has been working on the positions the party will adopt on international relations. Some of the items — points 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 — only raise question marks for us. We will not be able to judge until we have solid and clear evidence showing the correctness of the charges. The first item deals

with a real difference; this is also true of the fourth item. As far as we are concerned, we feel that on the question of the Spanish Civil War, the Fourth International was harmed by the International Secretariat, and, if it must be said, by Trotsky. Not a hair on our head would dream of denying Trotsky's many fine qualities as a revolutionary fighter. It is precisely because we feel these qualities are so important that we have always — for many years now — made Trotsky's articles available to the Dutch workers. We shall take the liberty to continue to do so in the future. But this estimate does not change one iota to the fact that experience has taught us that it was absolutely wrong to state that the Fourth International could be built "only in this way" and by a leadership known and decided only by Trotsky. We and other organizations around the world who recognize the need for the Fourth International will jointly set the framework for our own regroupment and decide the work which must be carried out for the Fourth International. Finally, there is a sentence of Trotsky's anathema with which we agree completely: "Everyone must be responsible for their political line." We assume this responsibility, including in accepting that a parting of the ways has become necessary, and in stating that we are apprehensive when we hear that a genuine workers party must be submitted to the "political education" of Trotsky's center.

RSAP Resolution on the Fourth International and Second International Conference of the Move- ment for the Fourth International (March 13, 1938)

The joint meeting of the Political Bureau, Central Committee and branch leaders held in Amsterdam March 12 and 13, 1938, after discussing the state of work on preparing the Fourth International, notes:

- that the party has never failed to give first place in its propaganda to the final collapse of the Second and Third Internationals, showing at the same time to the workers the need to regroup on the basis of a new, a Fourth International;

- that this position was confirmed by its deeds, such as the signing of the "Open Letter" of 1935, a document which flowed from the "Declaration of Four" of 1933, and that the party's life has always been infused with the ideas explained in these documents;

- rejects the assertion that the party or a part of its leadership has broken with this orientation and with the principles of revolutionary Marxism;

- notes that the so-called Center for the Fourth International has carried on a policy which tends to discredit the Fourth International even before it is born in the eyes of honest revolutionaries:

a) by having sections and organizations painstakingly put together undertake inadmissible experiences, dissolve and enter the Second International, and causing by this policy a large number of splits and the departure of a number of convinced comrades;

b) by creating, without serious preparation, a body which presents itself not only as the leadership of the Fourth International, but also as the center which holds

the whole Marxist truth and wants the right to intervene forcefully in the life of the different parties;

c) by creating a summit which strangles and suppresses the ideological life of the affiliated groups and organizes the representation of these groups at its conferences in such a way that it removes any real value from these conferences;

d) by creating an atmosphere conducive to rebellion against the party, to its weakening and to splits, anywhere it runs into resistance expressed by statements of party leaders;

e) by levelling accusations, insofar as the RSAP is concerned, against the party president, Sneevliet, in the same way it did against the well-known Spanish comrades, impugning his revolutionary honor, thereby harming not only the president but the whole party leadership and party itself. Moreover, the content of these charges is identical with that used by Stalinism against Trotskyism every day;

f) by using a certain number of methods reminiscent of the Comintern's harmful methods which therefore have nothing to do with a joint preparation of the Fourth International.

The meeting declares:

- that such actions and statements — as well as the attempts to undermine the party launched by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International — can have consequences that will require a vigorous and energetic response;

— that conferences with the international center to which the RSAP is invited are incompatible with the RSAP's dignity and are of no interest unless precise conditions are met.

To collaborate in the preparation of the Fourth International with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, considered as one of the forces which bases their policy on the need for the Fourth International, the meeting sets the following conditions:

a) the center must dissociate itself from the Dutch section of the Bolshevik-Leninists or dissolve it, and restore the honor of the party president and the RSAP leadership and membership;

b) it must assure that it will respect the decisions of the various parties and put abidance by international discipline on the agenda only after the definitive foundation of the Fourth International which will set its own rules on this topic;

c) the center of the Fourth International must assure that it will undertake the work of preparing the Fourth International jointly and involve the largest possible number of groups who state they agree with the fundamental principles of the "Declaration of Four" of 1933 and "Open Letter" of 1935.

The meeting decides not to attend the International Secretariat's conferences as long as these conditions are not met. It calls on all party members to persevere in propagating the idea of the Fourth International and working for it, while the party leadership will continue to seek and maintain relations with the parties and formations which are prepared to take part in this preparatory work and to create an international information service to help

the Fourth International that is being created.

For the RSAP the choice remains: the Fourth International or a fall into barbarity! Forward to revolutionary Marxism! Long live the world proletariat!

This resolution will be transmitted to the parties and groups outside the Second and Third International.



Appendix E: Twenty Years Later (1958) by Michel Pablo*

Why the Fourth International

Between 1933 and 1938, and at the very Founding Congress of the Fourth International, the question of a new International was often debated (2).

Patiently but firmly, our tendency with Leon Trotsky at its head, fought during this period against the centrists outside and the skeptics inside our own ranks as to whether it was opportune to create a new International. These arguments were in reality summarized in this one: *The revolutionary Marxist tendency is too isolated from the masses, who have not yet become conscious of the betrayal of the traditional leaderships and especially of Stalinism.* Consequently it is necessary to wait for more favorable conditions and avoid creating an International "artificially."

How did we answer these arguments, out of the mouth of the very Founding Conference of the Fourth International? By noting simultaneously three things: the bankruptcy of the traditional leaderships, proved by the historic defeats of the proletariat in Germany in 1933, in France and Spain in the years 1936 to 1938, defeats that produced no reaction of possible correction of the organizations led by the Social Democrats and the Stalinists; the incompatibility of our programme and doctrine with those of these leaderships; our factual existence as an international tendency fighting on the same programme. That is to say, our existence as an international organization was both an objective result, and a fact, an objective cause, which from then on was influencing developments. That the masses were not yet with us was a secondary aspect compared to our objective existence as an effectively international organization, created, consolidated, and inspired by a common programme, fundamentally distinct from any other tendency.

The Fourth International emerged as an international tendency opposed to the traditional leaderships, through the very development of the class struggle in the pre-war world, and of the inevitable differentiations which this

* From Michel Pablo, "Twenty Years of the Fourth International, 1938-1958. A History of Its Ideas and Struggles," *Fourth International*, Organ of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, Paris, No. 2, Spring 1958. Michael Pablo (Michael Raptis) (b. 1911) was a leader of the Greek Trotskyist group and became one of the leaders of the Fourth International after World War Two; he did support work for the Algerian National Liberation Front in the 1950s. He left the Fourth International in 1965 and leads the International Revolutionary Marxist Tendency since that time.

caused within the international communist vanguard.

From the point of view both of ideas, programme, and doctrine, and of cadres, the Fourth International was the result of the objective development, of the very evolution of the workers' movement, and nowise an "artificial" creation. The fact of its conjunctural isolation from the broad masses could not be evoked as an argument against its founding. Revolutionary Marxists have long since understood the concrete dialectic that exists among the class, the parties, and the leaderships. There is a fusion among these elements only at rare moments in history, only at culminating points of the revolutionary upsurge. The changing dynamics of the class struggle constantly disassociate these elements and bring them together again, without identifying them.

The party, furthermore, while being a fraction of the class, is distinguished from it by its ideological quality, by the fact that it constitutes a more homogeneous fraction, more enlightened than the class as a whole about the conditions and the goals of the class struggle. The programme and the doctrine, while being constantly worked up out of the elements of the class struggle, its actions and its experiences, are the party's own work, and not that of the class as a whole.

Similar relationships exist between the party as a mass organization and its leadership group. A party, a revolutionary leadership, can be very far in advance of the mentality and consciousness of the masses, just as they can sometimes fall no less colossally behind them. The history of the international workers' movement is full of examples.

What definitively counts for the quality of a revolutionary leadership is not the degree of its liaison with the class at any given moment, but its programme and its doctrine, as well as the continuity and consistency with which they are advocated by the revolutionary cadres. If the programme and doctrine effectively correspond, not to the conjunctural consciousness and mentality of the class, but to the objective situation; and if the organization advocates these ideas with consistency and perseverance, sooner or later it will bring about its junction with the masses set in movement toward it by the objective conditions that finally determine the struggle of the masses.

That is the basic reasoning that we find both in the act of founding the Fourth International and in its programme.

It was already known in 1938 that the new International was and would remain for a whole period isolated from the broad masses; even an aggravated isolation was foreseen at the time of the beginning of the war; nor was much confidence felt in the adults of that period, tired out and demoralized by the defeats and betrayals of the traditional leaderships. We staked especially on the new revolutionary period to which the upsets of the war would not fail to give rise.

Enemies of or renegades from our movement rarely miss the opportunity to remind us of the "prophecy" that had not been "fulfilled" contained in Trotsky's 19 October 1938 speech to the meeting held in New York to celebrate the founding of the Fourth International:

During the next ten years the programme of the

Fourth International will become the guide for millions, and these millions of revolutionaries will be able to move heaven and earth.

It is true that the evolution of the Second World War, by dividing the imperialist camp, presented a variant which aided the survival of the traditional leaderships. This in its turn complicated revolutionary developments and lengthened the respite. The fact remains, however, that millions, in spite of everything, have taken the revolutionary road in China and elsewhere, overthrowing capitalism and imperialism on a great part of the globe, and above all that a new revolutionary period has arisen from the war, the most extraordinary in upsets and dynamism. It is in fact the period of the triumph of the revolutionary programme of the Fourth International, as concerns both capitalism and Stalinism.

What is this programme?

The Transitional Programme

From the viewpoint of *political documents*, the main contribution of the Founding Conference of the Fourth International was unquestionably its adoption of the *The Transitional Programme*. (3)

Worked up principally by Leon Trotsky, this programme was subjected to full discussion before and during the Conference, in which the then principal cadres of our movement took part. This programme is naturally not *the* programme, i.e. its *total* programme, but only a part thereof, which covers "action from today until the beginning of the Revolution" (Leon Trotsky). In order for it to be complete, as Trotsky himself specified (4), it would have to have at the beginning a part that was more analytical from a theoretical viewpoint concerning "modern capitalist society in its imperialist stage."

We find this analysis in other writings by Leon Trotsky, such for example as the criticism of the programme of the Third International worked up by Bukharin on the occasion of its Sixth World Congress, and *The Permanent Revolution*. It is in these writings that there must be sought the fundamental characteristics of the imperialist period which determine the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary proletariat.

There would also have to be a final part concerning itself with "the social revolution, the seizure of power through insurrection, the transformation of capitalist society into the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of the latter into socialist society."

The programmatic ideas of our International in this more and more important and timely field must be sought in the writings of Leon Trotsky on the USSR and Stalinism, particularly in *The Revolution Betrayed*, as well as in the later documents of the Fourth International.

The goal of the Transitional Programme was and remains specific:

... to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution; to aid in thus surmounting "the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary situation" which characterizes our period, "and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard," due essentially to the policy of betrayal of the

traditional leaderships.

This bridge, the Transitional Programme specifies, should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

This is what distinguishes this programme, dialectical in structure, from the programmes of the Social Democrats and Stalinists, which set up an organic separation between their minimum programmes, limited to reforms within the framework of capitalist society, and their maximum programmes, promising for an indeterminate future the replacement of capitalism by socialism.

The *Transitional Programme*, modeling itself on the way the first Congresses of the Communist International (5) posed revolutionary tactics, wipes out this distinction and tries on the contrary to connect up organically the struggle for the immediate demands of the masses with the struggle for power.

The programme's *transitional*, that is, *dynamic and revolutionary, and not static and reformist*, structure is not, however, a mental trick, an intellectual abstraction. It is based, on the contrary, on the conviction that the orientation of the masses is in the last analysis determined by the objective conditions that characterize society.

If consequently the programme is worked out in adaptation, not to the conjunctural mentality of the masses, but to objective conditions, we can be certain that sooner or later the masses will adopt the leading lines and the slogans of such a programme. That is the meaning and the strength of revolutionary Marxism.

Naturally, objective conditions determine only the *content* of the programme. In order to decide on its *form*, the form of its slogans for action, the form of agitation or propaganda, a genuine revolutionary leadership in touch with the realities of the workers' movement will always take into consideration the exact mentality and consciousness of the masses. Sectarianism in such a case would consist in concerning oneself only with the content while neglecting the form capable of conveying it best, fastest, and in time, to the masses. On the contrary, opportunism would consist in sacrificing the content to the form so as supposedly to shorten the paths over which the ripening and revolutionary organization of the class pass.

The *Transitional Programme*, developed on the basis of such considerations, has successfully undergone the test of events and of time. Several of its fundamental slogans have been taken up throughout the world by immense masses, taught by their own experience. Such for example are the slogans: *sliding scale of wages and sliding scale of working hours, workers' control of industry, expropriation of certain groups of capitalists, strike pickets and workers' militias, factory committees and soviets.*

(2) More particularly by the Polish delegates.

(3) Its real title is *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*.

(4) Discussion on The Transitional Programme.

(5) Particularly the Third Congress (1921) in its "Theses on Tactics."

Appendix F: The Polish delegates at the September 1938 Conference*

Comrade V. [Pierre Naville] reported for the preparatory commission. A rough draft of the statutes was written. Its first article contains what has been referred to as the "proclamation" of the International. It would be more accurate to say its definite organization and the strictness of its discussion. This therefore is the key point on which the present discussion must focus. The discussion has already proceeded extensively in the Polish commission, which was attended by the German, Polish, British, US, French, South American and Greek delegations. We should remember that the rules adopted at the July 1936 conference referred to "the organizations associated on an international scale with the movement for the Fourth International." This is what now must be changed in the direction proposed by the transitional program.

Here is the proposed article: "All the proletarian revolutionary fighters of the world who accept the principles and program of the Fourth International unite in a single world organization, under a centralized leadership and with a common discipline. This organization has as its name ... and is ruled by the present statutes."

KA [Hersch Mendel-Stockfish]. We cannot deal with the question of the Fourth International outside the situation of the organized labor movement. The organized labor movement is going through a period of disintegration and depression. In the fascist countries, in the democratic countries, Stalinist pressure holds the workers back. We are the most advanced part of the working class. We can decide on the Fourth International only if the workers overcome their depression. The other Internationals were created during periods of revolutionary upsurge. The First International was built when the workers had recovered from the 1848 defeat, the Second when the movement had recovered from the defeat of the Paris Commune, and the Third was created after the victory of the Russian revolution and when a large number of Communist Parties had already been formed. Although in 1919, the Zimmerwald left was stronger than we are today, the Spartakusbund were against the proclamation of the Third. We do not have any big organizations. Our organizations do not have mass influence, especially in the trade unions. The First International created a mass movement which aroused terror in the bourgeoisie. The Second set tremendous masses in motion. The Third led mass revolutionary movements. But the situation has changed. The workers are suffering an enormous repression. We have no leadership over the masses. By proclaiming the Fourth International without

* This document is taken from Point III on Statutes of the Fourth International in the minutes of the founding conference, in "La conférence de fondation de la IVème Internationale," *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* 1, January 1979, Paris, pp. 45-50. Separate minutes were taken in French and English. The text here is a translation of the French minutes, except where the English were more extensive. Hersch Mendel (Stockfish) (1890-1968) had founded the Left Opposition in Poland in 1932. Stefan Lamed (b. 1914) was a member of the same group. At the time, they shared the views expressed here with Isaac Deutscher, another member of the organization; these views are reflected to a certain extent in the third volume of the *Trotsky* biography which Deutscher wrote after World War Two, *The Prophet Outcast*.

being sure of the workers' reaction, we will compromise the idea of the Fourth International.

The future of all humanity depends on the Fourth. We must not create a fiction, but a real International. Despite repression, the crisis of capitalism poses the question of the proletarian revolution. It is the proletariat which will create the Fourth International. We must enlighten the workers and prepare the movement. If we remain a propaganda group, the workers will not place big demands on us, but if we are an International, the workers will demand leadership, and we will be unable to guide them. They will be disappointed. The First International was based on the forces of the French and English proletariat. The Second on the forces of the German proletariat. The Third on the Russian, Balkan, Polish and German forces. As long as the Fourth does not have some mass parties, it cannot be proclaimed. This is why we disagree with Point 1 of the Statutes. (...)

Stephen [Stefan Lamed] supporting the Polish resolution, said that it is perfectly possible to have a definite program — we had just adopted the Transitional Program —, a clearly defined leadership and national sections without going to the length of formally proclaiming the Fourth. Such indeed had been our position since 1936, and there was no reason that it should not to continue until we had gained in strength and the opportunity was more favorable. The proclamation of an International was a gesture, and in the present circumstances such a gesture would lose its significance. (...)

Karl. Besides the general political considerations, the extreme smallness of our sections should dissuade us from proclaiming the Fourth. At the first congress of the Comintern, there were already large parties in Poland, Austria, Bulgaria, etc. We have nothing to correspond. The conditions now are far more difficult and disadvantageous than when any of the other three Internationals were proclaimed....

Votes

The Polish delegation proposes the following amendment: "The international Bolshevik-Leninist organization arises from great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause of these defeats is the degeneration and betrayal of the old leadership. The Third International as well as the Second are dead for the revolution. Long live the Fourth International! The Bolshevik-Leninists do not at this time form the Fourth International; nevertheless, they proclaim the need to create it. We will form the Fourth International when the objective conditions for its creation have ripened, that is above all when we become a mass movement, at least in some advanced countries."

Votes. On the amendment: For: 3, against: 19. Article 1 of draft of Statutes: For: 19, against: 3. Vote on the Statutes as a whole: For: 19, Abstentions: 3 (Karl, Stephen and Craipeau with reservations not indicated).

Declaration by the Polish delegation: Although the Polish section as a whole was firmly convinced that the proclamation of the Fourth International at this juncture was a grave political mistake, nevertheless the Polish section, having been defeated on this point at the World Congress undertakes to abide loyally by the discipline of the Fourth International and to carry out to the best of its ability the decisions of the World Congress.

Appendix G The problem of training cadre Pierre Frank (1978)*

We already indicated some of the difficulties which events placed in the way of the activities of the Trotskyist movement. To them should be added the fact that the movement was almost exclusively composed of youth without strong roots and experiences in the organized labor movement. The Communist International had inherited from the Second International and other currents (in particular, from revolutionary Syndicalism) many experienced cadres who then had to be reeducated for the era of wars and revolutions which opened in 1914. The first five years of the Comintern were insufficient to train leaders of really solid Communist Parties. Many of these cadres were absorbed into the bureaucratic degeneration. Of the remaining, who opposed it, most sought refuge in their former conceptions. In fact, only a handful of young militants joined Trotsky, beginning in 1929, and set out to build, with him, the movement that gave birth to the Fourth International. During the entire period covered by this volume [1933-1940], it was first and mainly Trotsky who, through his practically daily contributions, provided the impulse and vitality without which the Trotskyist organizations would have not only foundered, but probably sunk altogether. Trotsky, who had given much thought to the problem of the International, was aware of this and, during the last ten years of his life, dedicated the bulk of his efforts to breathing life into the young international organization. At a time when police harassment forced him to keep a diary for want of being able to express himself publicly, he wrote, among other things, on March 25, 1935:

"I need at least another five years of uninterrupted work to insure the transmission of the legacy [that is to arm the new generation with a revolutionary method]."

He saw this as "the most important work of his life," more important than what he had done in 1917 and during the civil war. "Another five years," he said in 1935 and he had these five years before an assassin hired by Stalin struck him with an icepick and deprived the Fourth International of its main leader. The International and its center were still very weak, but they were sufficiently strong to pass the test of the world war with dignity and then conscientiously fulfill their tasks in a completely transformed world. Trotsky died after having completed "the most important work of his life": the Fourth International lived and fought on after him.

*From "Préface", *Les Congrès de la Quatrième Internationale*, 1, Paris: La Brèche, 1978, pp. 31-32. A member of the Communist Party and CGTU trade union, Pierre Frank (1905-1984) served as editor of *La Vérité* in 1929, was elected to the International Secretariat in 1930, served as a secretary of Trotsky in Prinkipo in 1932 and was a leader of the French section. After a split in this section in 1936 and four years of interment in Britain (1940-44), he was elected to the central committee of the French section (successively the PCI, LC and LCR) and to International Secretariat and United Secretariat of the Fourth International from 1946 to 1979.

Glossary

Amsterdam congresses: a peace movement initiated by well-known figures who met in Amsterdam in 1932, then at the Salle Pleyel in Paris in 1933, at the behest of the Comintern.

Anglo-Russian committee: an alliance from 1925 to 1927 between the official leadership of the British TUC and Soviet trade unions based on the mutual exchange of favors.

Asturias insurrection: in October 1934, this working-class region of Spain organized a general strike and resisted the army sent against it (about 3000 people were killed).

Austro-Marxism: a left social-democratic current between the two world wars, inspired by the Austrian social-democratic party led by Otto Bauer and Karl Renner.

AWP (American Workers Party): a regroupment in the United States in the early 1930s around A. J. Muste; it merged with the CLA in 1934 to form the WPUS.

Bauer, Eugen (Erwin Ackerknecht aka) (b. 1906): a leader of the German section of the International Communist League and a member of the International Secretariat in 1932; he joined the SAP in 1934.

BOC (Bloque Obrero y Campesino): Workers and Peasants Bloc of Catalonia and the Balearic islands, linked to the Iberian Communist Federation founded by Joaquin Maurin; in 1935, it fused with the ICE to form the POUM.

Bordiguists: followers of Amadeo Bordiga (1889-1970), a founder of the Italian CP who, after his expulsion from the PCI in 1930, led an Italian Left Faction in the 1930s.

Brandler, Heinrich (1881-1967): leader of the German Communist Party from 1921 to 1924, then assigned to Comintern work; he was expelled in 1929 for so-called rightist deviations and founded the KPD-O (a German dissident communist organization) and the International Union of the Communist Opposition (IVKO-Internationale Vereinigung der Kommunistischen Opposition), known as the Brandler current, whose most notable affiliates were the groups of Kilbom (Sweden), Lovestone (USA) Maurin (Spain), Neurath (Czechoslovakia), M.-N. Roy (India) and others in Norway, Switzerland, Austria and Alsace-Lorraine.

Brockway, Archibald Fenner (1888-1988): prominent figure of the British Labour Party, editor of the *New Leader*, anti-colonial activist, he was elected chairperson of the ILP in 1933 and organized the IAG and later the London Bureau.

Bukharin, Nikolai (1888-1938): the leader of the so-called right wing of the Soviet Communist Party and Comintern in the late 1920s; his supporters outside the USSR formed national communist organizations in the 1930s.

Cannon, James P. (1890-1974): a leader of the early Communist Party in the United States and the founder of the American Trotskyist organization.

Carrillo, Santiago (b. 1915): a leader of the Socialist Youth in Spain in the early 1930s; following a trip to Moscow in 1936, he led his organization to fusion with the Communist Youth and became a leader of the Communist Party.

Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975): Chinese officer, he succeeded Sun Yatsen at the head of the Guomindang and became the head of the Chinese Republic in 1927; thereafter, he was alternately at war with the Communists and the Japanese.

CI: Communist International, also Comintern and Third International.

CLA (Communist League of America): the Left Opposition in the United States from 1929 to 1934, when it merged with the AWP to form the WPUS.

Coyoacan: a suburb of Mexico City where Trotsky settled in 1938.

CP: Communist Party

Dimitrov, Georgi (1882-1949): leader of the Bulgarian Communist party, assigned to Comintern work after the defeat of the Bulgarian insurrection of 1923, he was in Berlin when Hitler took power. Arrested and charged by Hitler with inspiring the Reichstag fire, he was acquitted. He then became a sort of anti-fascist hero of the Comintern and presented the report on the turn to the popular front line at the seventh Comintern congress in 1935.

DNA (Det Norske Arbeiderparti-Norwegian Workers Party): affiliated to the Second International, then to the Third from 1919 to 1923, it reunited with a Social-Democratic split-off in 1927 and participated in the launching of the IAG in 1932. It withdrew from the IAG in 1935, shortly before joining the government.

Fischer, Ruth (1895-1961): leader of the KPD from 1923 to 1925, expelled in 1926; in 1928, she formed, together with Maslow and Urbahns, the Leninbund, a left communist current ("Zinovievist") but withdrew from it shortly thereafter; exiled in Paris, she joined the International Communist League in 1933. She left it in 1936, in agreement with Sneevliet's criticisms.

Fourth International (FI): regroupment of parties and factions rejecting both reformism and Stalinism, founded in 1938.

Froelich, Paul (1884-1953): a leader of the German KPD, then of Brandler's KPD-Opposition and later of the SAP.

GR (Gauche révolutionnaire): left tendency of the SFIO founded in 1934 and led by Marceau Pivert; it was expelled in 1938 and formed the PSOP.

Guomindang (also **Kuomintang**): Chinese nationalist party founded by Sun Yatsen in 1912 and led by Chiang Kai-shek in the 1920s and 1930s.

IAG (Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft): International Working Community, a regroupment of left social-democrats, dissident Communists and centrists, founded in 1932 and later coordinated by the London Bureau, its more frequently used name. Its February 1933 conference was attended by: the British ILP, the Dutch RSP and OSP, the German SAP, the Polish NSPP, the Swedish Socialist Party, the Iberian Communist Federation (Maurin), the Austrian "Rote Front" group, the French "Les Amis de l'unité ouvrière" group of Jacques Doriot, the international bureau of revolutionary youth organizations, the Norwegian "Mot Dag" group and the Italian Socialist party (maximalist). The DNA left the IAG in 1935.

ICE (Izquierda Comunista de España): Communist Left of Spain, the name of the Left Opposition in Spain after 1932.

ICL: International Communist League/Bolshevik-Leninist, name adopted by the International Left Opposition in August 1933.

ILO (International Left Opposition): international regroupment of anti-Stalinist revolutionary communist currents beginning in 1929; gave birth to the ICL and Fourth International.

ILP (Independent Labour Party): founded in 1893 on a socialist platform, it became one of the constitutional components of the British Labour Party when the latter was founded in 1906; its leftward evolution led the Labour Party to "disaffiliate" it in 1932; it had five Members of Parliament at the time and served as the basis for the London Bureau.

International Secretariat (IS): the leadership body elected by the conferences of the International Left Opposition and its successors.

Kienthal: see Zimmerwald.

Kilbom, Karl (1885-1961): a founder and leader of the Swedish Communist Party and later of the Comintern (from 1924 to 1929), he was expelled for "rightist" deviations and transformed his party into a national Communist Party which took the name of Swedish Socialist Party in 1937.

KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands): the German Communist Party.

Labour Party: the "organic" party of the British working class founded in 1906 by decision of the TUC.

Liebknecht, Karl (1871-1919): organizer of the International Socialist Youth in 1907, he led the socialist opposition to war in Germany, called for the formation of a new International and founded the KPD in 1918; he was assassinated in January 1919, on orders of the Social-Democrat Noske.

Lovestone, Jay (b. 1898): leader of the Communist Party USA from 1925 to 1929; expelled in 1929, he founded a party linked to the Brandler current which became the Independent Labor League in 1933. In 1940, he dissolved his organization and became an adviser of the official AFL leadership.

Luxemburg, Rosa (1870-1919): leader of the left wing of the Polish Socialist Party and of the German Social Democratic Party beginning in 1898, she was imprisoned for her internationalist activities in 1916; she called for the formation of a new International and founded the KPD in 1918; she was assassinated in January 1919 on orders of the Social Democrat Noske.

Maslow, Arkadi (1891-1941): leader of the KPD from 1924 to 1926, he was expelled with Fischer in 1926 and followed her later political trajectory.

maximalists: a current of the Italian Socialist Party led in the 1930s by Angelica Balabanova; they advocated the unity of the Second and Third Internationals.

Maxton, James (1885-1946): British ILP Member of Parliament.

Maurin, Joaquín (1897-1973): leader of the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) and Communist Party of Catalonia in the

1920s; expelled in 1931, he founded the BOC, then the POUM.

Muste, Abraham Johannes (1885-1967): Protestant minister, organizer of unemployed leagues and leader of the American Workers Party; he merged with the Trotskyists in 1934 to form the WPUS. He quit this party in 1936 and evolved toward a popular Christian pacifism.

Naville, Pierre (b. 1904): one of the leaders of the Left Opposition in France from 1929 to 1940.

Nin, Andreu (1892-1937): leader of the Socialist Youth and National Confederation of Labor (CNT) in Catalonia, he advocated affiliation with the Third International; a member of the Russian CP during the 1920s, he was a leader of RILU; he was deported from the Soviet Union in 1930 and founded the Left Opposition of Spain which became the ICE in 1932 and fused with the BOC in 1935 to form the POUM. He was the Minister of Justice in the government of the Generalitat of Catalonia in 1936; he was assassinated by the GPU in 1937.

OSP (Onafhankelijk Socialistische Partij): Independent Socialist Party of the Netherlands, founded by P. J. Schmidt in 1932, following a left split from the Social Democratic Party; it fused with the RSP in 1935 to form the RASP.

PCF (Parti communiste français): French Communist Party.

PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano): Italian Communist Party.

Pivert, Marceau (1895-1958): French left socialist, a leader in the 1930s of the Seine (Paris region) federation and GR tendency of the SFIO, then of the PSOP.

POI (Parti ouvrier internationaliste): Internationalist Workers Party, the French section of the ICL, then of the Movement for the Fourth International.

POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista): Workers Party of Marxist Unity, the product of the 1935 fusion between the ICE and Bloc, it had a mass base in Catalonia.

Prinkipo: the small island near Istanbul where Trotsky was exiled from 1929 to 1933.

PSOP (Parti socialiste ouvrier et paysan): the French Socialist Workers and Farmers Party, founded by Marceau Pivert in 1938 after the expulsion of the GR from the SFIO.

Red International of Labor Unions (RILU): also known as Profintern, an international regroupment of trade unions and trade-union tendencies rejecting reformism, founded in 1921; it was Stalinized and dissolved in 1935.

Reichstag fire: after being appointed Chancellor on January 30, 1933, Hitler provoked a fire in the Reichstag on February 27 and blamed it on the communists to justify a massive repression of the KPD. Only then did he organize elections.

RSP (Revolutionair Socialistische Partij): the Dutch Revolutionary Socialist Party, founded in 1929 by Sneevliet on left communist and Syndicalist bases; it fused with the OSP to form the RSAP in 1935.

RSAP (Revolutionair Socialistische Arbeiders Partij): the Dutch Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, product of the merger of the OSP and RSP in 1935; it affiliated initially to both the London Bureau and ICL.

SAP (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands): the Socialist Workers Party of Germany, founded in 1931 after the SPD expelled its left-wing members of the Reichstag.

Schmidt, Petrus Johannes (1896-1952): Dutch left socialist, leader of the OSP.

Schutzbund: League for Republican Defense, the workers militia linked to the SP in Vienna from 1918 to 1934.

Second International: the Workers' International, a regroupment of political parties aspiring to become the single "organic" party of the working class, founded in 1889; during World War One, it divided into pro-Allied, neutral and pro-German parties; it was revived in 1923 by the reformist Social-Democratic parties, after the split with their revolutionary wings.

SFIO (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière): the French Socialist Party led by Leon Blum in the 1930s.

Shachtman, Max (1903-1972): leader of the Communist Youth (USA) then of the Trotskyist organization in the USA (CLA, WPUS, SWP), he formed a distinctive political current after 1940.

Sneevliet, Henk (1883-1942): Dutch left-wing trade unionist, he became a Communist and represented the Comintern in Indonesia, then China, in the early 1920s; upon his return to Holland, he led a small left-wing trade-union confederation; he was expelled from the CP in 1929, founded the RSP and worked for the creation of the Fourth International; he was arrested and executed by the Nazi occupation forces in 1942.

SP: Socialist Party.

Thalheimer, August (1884-1948): leader of the KPD, author of

Marxist textbooks, he became Brandler's chief associate in the 1930s.

Thermidor: a conservative reversal during a revolution, by analogy with the overthrow of the radical leader of the French revolution, Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor (July 27, 1794).

Third International: the Communist International (or Comintern) founded in 1919 as a regroupment of parties and factions rejecting reformism; it was Stalinized and dissolved in 1943.

TUC: Trades Union Congress, the British labor federation founded in 1868.

Urbahns, Hugo (1890-1946): leader of the KPD left, hero of the Hamburg insurrection of 1923, he was close to Zinoviev and thereby expelled from the KPD in 1928; he founded the Leninbund, a left communist organization. He 1933, he took refuge first in Czechoslovakia, then in Sweden.

USPD (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands): Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the antiwar split-off from the SPD in 1917; its majority fused with the KPD in 1920, and the rest rejoined Social Democracy shortly thereafter.

Vereeken, George (1898-1978) (formerly Vereecken, corrected the spelling to Vereeken after the war): a leader of the Belgian Communist Party, then of the Belgian Left Opposition, a member of the ICL International Secretariat in the early 1930s.

Walcher, Jakob (pseudonym: **Jim Schwab**) (b. 1887): leader of the KPD, close to Brandler, he broke with the latter in 1932 to join the SAP which he led from 1933 on.

A guide to further reading

The reader who wishes to pursue the subject further should turn to Trotsky's main books for this period: *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, *Leon Trotsky on France*, *The Revolution Betrayed* (on the USSR), *The Spanish Revolution (1931-1939)*, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (on revolutionary tactics and strategy) as well as the 14-volume series of his *Writings, 1929 to 1940*, published by Pathfinder, New York, 1969-1979, under the supervision of George Breitman. Also essential are the resolutions in *Documents of the Fourth International-The Formative Years (1933-40)*, New York: Pathfinder, 1973, and the French periodical *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, now edited in Grenoble by the Institut Léon Trotsky, whose 32 issues (since 1979) have carried biographies and unpublished articles which complement the above series. For accounts by participants in the activities and debates of the international movement, see: *Leon Trotsky. The Man and His Work. Reminiscences and Appraisals*, New York: Merit, 1969; Jean van Heijenoort, *De Prinkipo à Coyoacan*, Paris: Lettres nouvelles, 1978; Pierre Frank, *The Fourth International*, London: Ink Links, 1979; and Pierre Naville, *Trotsky vivant*, Paris: Julliard, 1962. On the effort to repudiate the Stalinist terror, see *The Case of Leon Trotsky. Report of Hearings on the Charges Made Against Him in the Moscow Trials*, by the *Preliminary Commission of Inquiry*, John Dewey, Chairman, New York: first edition: Suzanne LaFollette, 1937; second: Merit, 1968.

Several leaders of this period have written on the movements in their country discussed here, notably: Archibald Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left. Thirty Years of Platforms, Press, Prison and Parliament*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1942; James P. Cannon, *History of American Trotskyism*, New York, 1944; Yvan Craipeau, *Le Mouvement trotskyste en France*, Paris: Syros, 1972; Reg Groves, *The Balham Group*, London: Pluto, 1974; Hersch Mendel (Stockfisch), *Mémoires d'un révolutionnaire juif*, Grenoble: PUG, 1982; Andreu Nin, *Los problemas de la revolución española (1931-1937)*, Paris: Ruedo Iberico, 1971; Pantelis Poulitopoulos, *Keimena*, Athens: Protopori-ake Vivliotheké, 1979; Wang Fanxi, *Chinese*

WPUS (Workers Party of the United States): the product of the 1934 merger of the AWP and CLA; it decided to dissolve and enter the Socialist Party in 1936.

Zimmerwald: Swiss village where the first international socialist conference bringing together activists from both sides of the war since August 1914, was held in September 1915. The left wing of the conference led by Lenin advocated the creation of a Third International. It was followed in 1916 by another conference at Kienthal.

Zinoviev, Grigory (1883-1936): leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party, chairperson of the Communist International from 1919 to 1926, at which point he joined the United Opposition in the Soviet Union; he was expelled three times in 1927, 1932 and 1934, having been readmitted in 1928 and 1934 following "self-criticisms." Stalin had him shot in August 1936. His supporters outside Russia, particularly the Leninbund of Urbahns, Fischer and Maslow, in Germany were associated with his policy of so-called "Bolshevization" of the Comintern (1924-1925); they began to disperse shortly after his first "self-criticism," some joining the International Left Opposition.

August 4, 1914: the German Social Democratic Party, the pride of the Second International, voted the military credits needed for war.

January 30, 1933: Hitler was appointed Chancellor.

March 5, 1933: elections to the Reichstag were held in Germany under Nazi supervision after the KPD, the pride of the Communist International, was rendered helpless by massive repression.

Revolutionary, Oxford: UP, 1980.

There is also a growing number of biographies and studies of the various international dissident communist and revolutionary socialist currents of the 1930s, among which: the third volume of Isaac Deutscher's trilogy, *Trotsky. The Prophet Outcast*, Oxford: UP, 1963; Michel Dreyfus, "Bureau de Londres ou IVE Internationale: socialistes de gauche et trotskystes en Europe 1933-1940" (Ph.D. Thesis, Nanterre, 1978); Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky. A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought*, London: New Left Books, 1979. Other studies, of varying quality and outlook, focus on the national level: Robert Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America*, Stanford: Hoover, 1973; Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, *Against the Stream. A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-1938 and The War and the International. A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1937-1949*, London: Socialist Platform, 1986; Robert Dowse, *Left in the Centre. The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940*, London: Longmans, 1966; Jean-Paul Joubert, *Révolutionnaires de la SFIO. Marceau Pivert et le pivertisme*, Paris: FNSP, 1977; George Lerski, *Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon*, Stanford, 1968; Pelai Pagés, *El movimiento trotskista en España (1930-1935)*, Barcelona: Peninsula, 1977; Fritjof Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet*, Amsterdam: van Gennep, 1974 (also in French, Paris: La Brèche, 1988); Karl Hermann Tjaden, *Struktur und Funktion der "KPD-Opposition" (K.P.O.)*, Meisenheim: Hain, 1964; Reiner Tosstorff, *Die POUM in die spanischen Bürgerkrieg*, ISP Verlag: 1987.

Daniel Bensaïd's *Stratégie et Parti*, Paris: La Brèche, 1987, the first part of which was published as *Revolutionary Strategy Today*, Paris: Notebooks for Study and Research 4, 1987, is a useful complement to this report on the problems of party building. For an effort to think through the implications of the practice of internationalism today, see "The present stage of building the International - Resolution of the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International," *International Viewpoint* special issue, 1985, and the articles in *International Marxist Review*, fall 1988.

Notebooks for Study and Research

N°9 (ISSN 0298-7902) 1988



25FF, US\$4, £2.50

In the "lectures" series

The formative years of the Fourth International

Daniel Bensaïd

	Page
Foreword	3
Chronology 1929-1938	4
<i>The formative years of the Fourth International (1933-1938), Daniel Bensaïd</i>	
I. From the fight to reform the Third International to the need for a Fourth International: the historic test	5
II. A new International: On what basis?	6
III. Towards a new International? How?	7
Documents	
The Eleven points of the International Left Opposition (July 1933)	9
The "Declaration of Four" (September 1933)	12
IV. From a cadre International to a mass International	15
V. The question of centrism and fusion	16
VI. The question of "entryism"	19
VII. The question of the mass workers party or labor party	21
VIII. A few conclusions and some food for thought	23
<i>Appendixes</i>	
A. The evolution of the Communist International, Walter Held (1936)	27
B. How the Fourth International was conceived, Jean van Heijenoort (1944)	
C. The Rocky Road to the Fourth International, George Breitman (1979)	
D. The anathema of Coyoacan and RSAP resolution, Henk Sneevliet (1938)	
E. Twenty years after, Michel Pablo (1958)	
F. Position of the Polish delegates at the founding conference (1938)	44
G. The problem of training cadre, Pierre Frank (1978)	45
Glossary	45
Further reading	47

A new problem was posed to the movement for socialist democracy in the 1930s. To its fight against capitalism in imperialist and dependent countries, it now had to add a fight against Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. In this lecture, Bensaïd outlines the arguments which led part of this movement to found an independent international organization. He unravels the historical reasons, the conjunctural prognoses and the organizational choices, showing in particular that the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938 concluded a prolonged attempt to regroup many anti-Stalinist, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist currents, beginning in 1933. Due to the concrete conditions of the 1930s however, the regroupment failed to broaden significantly. The appendixes include selections from supporters and opponents of this approach.

Daniel Bensaïd was born in 1946. Directly involved in the French May 68 events and a leader of the LCR, the French section of the Fourth International since then, he has considered the relation between internationalism and building an International on many occasions. He teaches sociology at the University of Paris and is a regular collaborator of the IIRE. His latest book, written in collaboration with Alain Krivine, is *Mai si! rebelles et repentis* (Paris: La Brèche, 1988).

Order form

Name - First name:
Street number:
City: Zip code: Country:

Enclosed find the amount of for:

* a subscription to 5 issues of NSR (surface: £10; \$16; 100FF; air mail: add 20%) beginning with issue no.

* the following issues of NSR (see titles and prices on page 2; air mail: add 20%):

All payments to P. Rousset. Preferred: French francs payable in a bank located in France. Mail checks and orders to NSR, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Postal giros to CCP Paris 11 541 97 T. Next best: sterling payable in Britain and dollars payable in the US. Please indicate amount for NSR on combined payments.