

From the archives:

Trotskyism and the Chinese Revolution

Editorial of the Fourth International magazine
6 June 2019

The World Socialist Web Site is posting a series of articles and statements to mark 30 years since the Tiananmen Square massacre. The first posted on Tuesday was the International Committee of the Fourth International statement issued on June 8, 1989, just four days after the brutal crackdown, together with an introductory explanation. The second posted on Wednesday is the ICFI statement issued on June 22 appealing to workers internationally to come to the defence of the Chinese working class amid a reign of terror, including mass arrests and public executions.

Today we are republishing the editorial of the Fourth International entitled “Trotskyism and the Chinese Revolution” contained in the January–June 1989 edition of the magazine. The editorial is an indictment of the role of Pabloism, an opportunist tendency that emerged within the Fourth International in the aftermath of World War II and rejected Leon Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary agency of imperialism.

The ICFI was formed in 1953 to defend orthodox Trotskyism against the opportunist backsliding of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. In doing so, it came to the defence of the Chinese Trotskyists who were rounded up in 1952 and detained for decades by the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party regime that feared them coming to the leadership of a movement of the working class. Pablo denigrated the Chinese Trotskyists and blocked the publication of an appeal for their release.

The editorial also draws the line against the renegades of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP)—Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter and Michael Banda—who split from ICFI in 1985–86. Adapting to the same political pressures as the Pabloites, against whom they previously waged a principled fight, the WRP opportunists all solidarized themselves, in one way or another, with Stalinism.

As the editorial stated: “The massacre in Tiananmen Square has exposed once and for all the hoax that Maoism represented some new road forward in the struggle for socialism and against imperialism. Covered with blood, it stands exposed to all as a counter-revolutionary enemy of the working class.”

The subsequent restoration of capitalism in China, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics by the Stalinist bureaucracies has definitely confirmed Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary agency of imperialism, and exposed its Pabloite apologists as its secondary agents.

* * *

This issue of *Fourth International* goes to press amid reports from China of mass arrests, as the Stalinist bureaucracy of Deng Xiaoping carries out a nationwide manhunt against workers and students active in the revolutionary upheavals of the past weeks.

As plainclothes police fanned out in house-to-house raids, masses of combat troops and armored columns continued to hold Beijing under a military state of siege.

In Shanghai, the Stalinist authorities televised the death sentences of three workers accused of participating in the burning of a train which ran over and killed a group of demonstrators. Meanwhile, workers who

participated in strikes have become the focus of the police roundups. The wave of repression unleashed by the Beijing bureaucracy has emerged ever more clearly as a reign of counter-revolutionary terror against the Chinese proletariat.

While Deng praises the troops who massacred unarmed workers and youth as his “Great Wall of iron and steel,” the present wave of repression has by no means ended the political revolution of the working class against the Stalinist bureaucracy. As the statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, “Down with Stalinism! Long Live the Political Revolution in China!” published in this issue makes clear, this revolution is deeply rooted in the opposition of the working class to the deliberate attempts of the bureaucracy to liquidate the gains of the Chinese revolution and to restore capitalist property relations. The same movement toward political revolution is developing inexorably in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself.

These developments have provided the most thorough vindication of Trotsky’s fundamental evaluation of the future evolution of the bureaucratized workers’ state, advanced more than 50 years ago in the founding document of the Fourth International:

“Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers’ state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back into capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism.” These are precisely the battle lines which have been drawn in the streets of Beijing and virtually every other Chinese city over the recent period.”

Moreover, the International Committee itself anticipated the upheavals in China as part of the movement of the international working class into revolutionary struggle. In its perspectives resolution, *The World Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, adopted in August 1988, the International Committee wrote:

“Throughout Eastern Europe and in China, Vietnam and Laos, the bureaucracies are moving, even more rapidly than in the USSR, to the integration of their national economies into the structure of world capitalism. This process is most advanced in China. The corpse of Mao may still be embalmed for public display, but his legacy is already in an advanced stage of putrefaction. His successors have moved to dismantle whatever existed of the planned economy. Virtually all land collectivized after 1949 has been returned to private ownership, and, under the banner of the government-inspired slogan, ‘To get rich is glorious,’ capitalist relations are flourishing in the countryside. In the urban centers, virtually all restrictions on capitalist enterprise have been lifted and large portions of what was once state-owned industry is being auctioned off to foreign and native capitalists....

“The policies of the Chinese Stalinists, whose frenzied reintroduction of capitalism is driving the country into an economic catastrophe, must lead to a massive eruption by the proletariat. In the next revolutionary upsurge, it will be the Chinese working class who will take the leadership of the impoverished peasantry in a titanic struggle to cleanse the country of the

bureaucrats and the grasping class of capitalists spawned by Stalinism.”

The events in China have not only vindicated the perspective fought for by Trotsky against Stalinism on the fate of the Chinese revolution. As the statement of the ICFI elaborates, they also bring to a head the protracted struggle waged by the International Committee against opportunist revisionism within the Fourth International.

The struggle of masses of workers against the bureaucracy and its open policy of capitalist restoration has served to expose the counter-revolutionary role played by all these revisionist tendencies who capitulated to Stalinism and Maoism.

The International Committee was founded in 1953 to combat the opportunist tendency led by Michel Pablo, which threatened to destroy the Fourth International.

Pablo’s liquidationism arose as an impressionistic adaptation to the postwar imperialist settlement, with its restabilization of imperialism on the one hand and the apparent strengthening of the grip of the Stalinist bureaucracy on the other.

The response of the Pabloites to these developments was the working out of what amounted to an entirely different class line, based on the rejection of both the revolutionary role of the proletariat and the paramount mission of the revolutionary party in fighting for the development of socialist consciousness in the working class.

In particular, the Pabloites based their revisions on the conditions in Eastern Europe following World War II, in which the liquidation of private property had taken place not through the independent revolutionary mobilization of the working class, but as a result of the occupation of these countries by the Soviet Red Army.

The Trotskyists defined these new regimes established by the bureaucracy as deformed workers’ states. The basic attitude of the Fourth International toward these states was one of defense of the nationalized property relations against imperialism, while fighting for the construction of a revolutionary party to mobilize the working class in a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and the establishment of genuine organs of workers’ power.

Furthermore, those who defended Trotskyism recognized that whatever transitory inroads had been made against capitalism through the nationalization of property in Eastern Europe, these were far outweighed by Stalinism’s betrayal of the socialist revolution and collaboration with imperialism on a world scale.

This fundamental perspective had been anticipated by Trotsky in the struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party in 1939–40. In analyzing the significance of the social measures undertaken by the bureaucracy in Poland following the 1939 invasion of that country by the Red Army, Trotsky wrote:

“The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.”

Trotsky stated further: “The stratification of the means of production is, as we said, a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by ‘socialist’ measures can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic maneuvers, and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland” (*In Defence of Marxism* [London: New Park Publications, 1971], pp. 23–24).

It was this “evil” which was embodied in the development of Pabloite revisionism in the Fourth International.

Pablo made the property forms established by the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe the starting point for a whole new historical perspective. He advanced the conception that the abolition of capitalism would be carried out not through the proletarian revolution, as traditionally defined by Marxists, but by bureaucratic-military means. This outlook stated that the Stalinist bureaucracy, driven into military conflict with imperialism, would be compelled to extend nationalized property relations to ever new areas both through military means and by instructing the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries to lead revolutionary struggles.

According to this prognosis—which repudiated the entire theoretical heritage of Marxism—the struggle to develop Marxist consciousness through the construction of independent revolutionary parties in the working class had become entirely superfluous, as socialism, albeit of a deformed character, would be realized through the medium of bureaucracies and other nonproletarian forces, acting unconsciously under the pressure of events, as political surrogates for the working class. The practical conclusion to which this perspective inexorably led was the liquidation of the Fourth International.

In essence, Pabloite revisionism represented a petty-bourgeois rebellion against the entire Marxist perspective of proletarian revolution. Its response to the Maoist victory in 1949 was a variation on this same basic line.

In the case of China, the 1949 overthrow of the bourgeois Kuomintang regime was achieved by a peasant army led by the Stalinist Communist Party. Brushing aside the long-term historical problems that this would pose for the development of the socialist revolution in China, the Pabloites saw in Mao’s victory yet further proof that Stalinism could play a revolutionary role internationally.

The Pabloites attacked the Marxist axiom that the liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves and requires the development of Marxist cadres in the leadership of the proletariat. The Chinese Revolution, they insisted, demonstrated that the socialist revolution could be achieved not only without the benefit of a conscious Trotskyist leadership, but without even the independent intervention of the working class itself. Stalinist-led peasant armies could do the job.

The deadly implications of Pabloite revisionism found their consummate expression in Pablo’s contempt for the Chinese Trotskyists. The Maoist regime subjected these fighters to imprisonment, exile and execution in order to repress their struggle for the independent interests and mobilization of the Chinese working class.

In a letter addressed to James P. Cannon, then leader of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, S.T. Peng, the Chinese Trotskyist, described how Pablo systematically suppressed all discussion on the Maoist regime’s bloody repression of the Trotskyist movement in China.

In November 1952, Peng was finally allowed to report to the International Secretariat on the conditions facing the Chinese section. As he recounted in his letter to Cannon, Pablo dismissed the report, declaring that “the massacre of Trotskyists by Mao’s regime was not a deliberate action but a mistake, that is, the Trotskyists had been mistaken as Kuomintang agents; and that even if Mao’s persecution of Trotskyists were a fact, this could only be considered as an exception.”

Peng responded that the massacre was no mistake, but “originated from a deep-seated Stalinist tradition of Stalinist hostility towards Trotskyists, and was a systematic and deliberate attempt to exterminate the Trotskyists” and was no more an exception than Ho Chi Minh’s slaughter of the Vietnamese Trotskyists or the assassination of Trotskyists by the GPU during the Spanish Civil War.

At a subsequent expanded meeting of the IS in February 1953, Pablo opposed Peng’s attempt to present a report on the wholesale arrests of Chinese Trotskyists which had taken place in the previous two months.

“Compared with the achievement of the revolution of Mao Tse-tung, the arrest of a few hundred Trotskyists is insignificant,” Pablo declared.

Subsequent attempts by Peng to distribute “An Appeal for Aid from the Chinese Trotskyists” were systematically blocked by Pablo. “By suppressing this document,” he wrote, “Pablo not only deliberately deceived me and the Chinese comrades, but also committed two inexcusable crimes: (1) Objectively he helped the Chinese CP to conceal before the masses the most concrete and horrible facts of its persecution of the Chinese Trotskyists. (2) He has made it impossible for comrades of different countries, applying or about to apply the ‘entrism tactic,’ to learn the lessons from the brutal persecutions afflicted on the Chinese comrades.”

The recent events in China underscore the criminality of Pabloite revisionism’s adulation of Maoism on the one hand and its vicious abuse of the Chinese Trotskyists on the other. The liquidation of “a few hundred Trotskyists,” dismissed by Pablo as of no significance, deprived the Chinese proletariat of the conscious revolutionary vanguard which it so urgently requires to carry forward the task of overthrowing a bureaucracy bent on restoring capitalism.

The Chinese Trotskyists had fought under the most difficult conditions of both Kuomintang and Stalinist terror, as well as Japanese occupation. Unlike Mao and the other Stalinist leaders, who concluded from the defeat of the 1927 Revolution that it was necessary to base the building of the Communist Party on the peasantry, the Trotskyists—led initially by the heroic Chen Tu-hsiu—refused to give up the struggle to develop Marxist cadre in the proletariat. Whatever tactical errors they may have committed, their basic perspective was a correct one and has immense historical significance today. Pabloism’s depreciation of these revolutionary fighters was the clearest expression of its petty-bourgeois hostility to the proletarian revolution.

Equally decisive is the role played by Pabloism in aiding and abetting the confusion which Maoism sowed in the international workers’ movement. With the Sino-Soviet dispute, Communist parties throughout the world were split, with Maoist groups being formed, particularly in the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In these countries, Maoism falsely posed as a more revolutionary alternative to the “peaceful road to socialism” advocated by the Moscow-line parties. Basing itself on an eclectic combination of bourgeois nationalism, peasant radicalism and Stalinism, the parties which followed Beijing’s lead played a major role in blocking the construction of genuine proletarian revolutionary parties.

The Maoists led workers into disastrous defeats in country after country. Most notable of these was the catastrophe suffered by the Indonesian working class in 1965. There, the largest Beijing-line CP in the world, working on the basis of the Maoist ideology of the “bloc of four classes,” subordinated the working class to the bourgeois nationalist regime of Sukarno. This left the Indonesian proletariat politically disarmed in the face of a military coup, which led to the extermination of an estimated one million workers and peasants.

A few years later, the Naxalite movement inspired by Mao in India ended in bloody defeat. And, in Latin America, where the theories of peasant guerrillism and “from the countryside to the city” found a ready audience in the petty bourgeoisie, Maoism contributed heavily to the wave of defeats suffered by the working class in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Pabloite leadership, far from fighting to clarify the working class on Maoism, adapted itself totally to it. Mandel praised the Maoists as having “come close to the theory of permanent revolution.” In Latin America, the Pabloites supported the same ill-fated methods of guerrillism, liquidating entire parties and helping to lead thousands of youth to their deaths.

In so doing, the revisionists rejected any class analysis and spit on the entire theoretical legacy of Marxism. As the International Committee statement on China makes clear, Maoism was not some new revolutionary

current which had broken with Stalinism. On the contrary, it based itself on the explicit rejection of permanent revolution and the embracing of the Menshevik “two-stage revolution” and its corollary, “the bloc of four classes.” Mao never made a critique of the Stalinist policies of class collaboration which led to the bloody defeat of the Chinese working class in 1927. Instead, he turned his back on the proletariat, virtually transformed the Chinese Communist Party into a peasant organization, and wasted years and hundreds of thousands of lives in search of an alliance with “anti-imperialist” sections of the national bourgeoisie.

Lenin had theoretically combated the conceptions of the Narodniks who equated workers and peasants as “toilers,” equally interested in socialism. He fought relentlessly for the political independence of the working class from both the national bourgeoisie and the peasantry and for proletarian hegemony in the Russian Revolution.

Trotsky established in his theory of permanent revolution that the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, including the land question, could only be resolved through the working class—leading the peasantry behind it—seizing power in a socialist revolution and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. The establishment of this dictatorship would inevitably pose not only democratic, but also socialist tasks, which could be achieved only through the extension of the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries. This became the guiding perspective of the Bolshevik Party in carrying out the proletarian revolution of October 1917 and was the foundation of the revolutionary program of the Communist International before its Stalinist degeneration. Basing himself on this theoretical legacy, Trotsky had made a profound critique of the turn of the Chinese Communist Party to the peasantry in the aftermath of the 1927 Shanghai massacre. But in their frenzied attempts to overcome the “isolation” of Trotskyism, the Pabloites discarded these conquests of Marxism in order to better subordinate themselves to Stalinism and Maoism.

While the International Committee was built to wage war against Pabloite revisionism, it has repeatedly been compelled to combat the emergence of the same opportunist and liquidationist tendencies within its own ranks.

Thus, 10 years after it initiated the formation of the IC, the Socialist Workers Party of the United States broke with Trotskyism to reunify with the Pabloites. It contended that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 proved that the socialist revolution could be carried out through “blunted instruments,” i.e., petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrilla movements, without the participation of the working class or the leadership of a conscious Marxist vanguard party.

And the British section, the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), which for many years had spearheaded the struggle against Pabloism, underwent a protracted national opportunist degeneration, culminating in the 1985–86 split with the International Committee. By the mid-1980s, the British leadership of Healy, Banda and Slaughter had succumbed to the pressures of imperialism and was seeking to transform the ICFI itself into an accessory to the betrayals of Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism.

But the opportunist line of the WRP leadership was opposed by the majority of the sections of the ICFI, which based themselves on the firm foundations of more than three decades of struggle to develop and defend Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism.

The two tendencies which opposed each other in the 1985–86 split today find themselves on the opposite sides of the barricades in the Chinese events. The proletarian internationalist tendency represented by the International Committee defends the struggle of the Chinese workers and students in the name of international socialism and the political revolution. The petty-bourgeois nationalist tendency, represented by the renegade leadership of the WRP, above all, Healy, Banda and Slaughter, solidarizes itself, in one form or another, with the Stalinists.

This is not an accident. The degeneration of the British section had its

origins in an adaptation to Maoism, Stalinism and petty-bourgeois radicalism. For years, the right-wing clique of Healy, Banda and Slaughter blocked any principled discussion on the question of China within the IC. This was because the leadership of the British section had itself not fully broken from Pabloism.

As well, a rotten compromise existed within the leadership with Michael Banda, who became the general secretary of the WRP. Banda's views on Maoism were in all essentials the same as those of the Pabloites. Healy and Slaughter feared that a discussion in the International Committee on these issues would create a political crisis in their own section, disrupting practical work in Britain.

Thus, in the 1960s, Banda wrote statements praising Mao and the Red Guard movement and even conferring upon them the tasks of the Fourth International itself. In 1967, for example, he declared, "The dialectic of history is inexorably transforming the 'cultural revolution' into a political one." These revisionist positions left the British movement ideologically disarmed and vulnerable to powerful class forces, which began to bear down upon it during this period.

Within the wave of petty-bourgeois radicalization which swept Europe in the 1960s, reaching its high point with the student protest movement in France, Maoism exerted a major influence. These social layers gravitated to an ideology based on peasant communes and "people's war," precisely because of its essential antiproletarian content.

While these radicalized elements of the middle class were not about to repeat Mao's Long March on European soil, they found in Maoism the comforting assurance that they did not have to subordinate themselves to the proletariat, the sole consistently revolutionary class in capitalist society. Thus, Maoism offered the radicalized petty bourgeoisie in the advanced capitalist countries an ideological justification for its attempts to dominate and smother the independent revolutionary movement of the working class.

The failure to fight out the expressions of revisionism and the adaptation to these social layers within its own leadership was to have fatal consequences for the British movement. By the early 1970s, the party was rapidly developing in a centrist direction. Banda's adaptation to Maoism was soon joined by a whole series of positions in the WRP expressing capitulation to bourgeois nationalism, social democracy and the trade union bureaucracy.

At the time of the split, Banda joined with Cliff Slaughter—who today is the chief of one faction, still calling itself the WRP—in demanding the destruction of the International Committee and vilifying the whole history of Trotskyism. He was the author of the principal document justifying the split, "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried."

After the split, Banda proceeded to break explicitly from Trotskyism, calling it "an ideological weapon of world imperialism against the USSR." He praised Mao as the greatest of revolutionary leaders and likewise declared his unreserved admiration for Stalin and the Moscow bureaucracy.

Banda rejected Trotsky's definition of the degenerated workers' state in the USSR as transitional, leading inevitably to either the bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism or to the overthrow of this bureaucracy by the working class and the going forward to socialism. Instead, he declared the conquests of the October Revolution as well as the Chinese Revolution of 1949 to be "irreversible."

"If there was truth in Trotsky's prognosis then he would have been justified in calling for the political revolution led by a new party—the Fourth International—to prevent capitalist restoration," Banda wrote, "But this is certainly not the trend in the USSR, China, Yugoslavia or Indo-China."

Banda never bothered to deal with the massive evidence to the contrary. He ignored the wave of joint ventures, direct imperialist investments and wholesale restoration of private ownership already instituted in China and

rapidly growing in the USSR. Having renounced revolutionary Marxism and written off the revolutionary capacities of the international proletariat, Banda continues to believe in Stalinist invincibility, no matter how much it is contradicted by objective events. Banda shares this basic feature with all the renegades who split with the ICFI.

For his part, Gerry Healy, after 50 years in the Trotskyist movement, found his way directly to Moscow, as an official guest of the Gorbachev bureaucracy and the KGB at the ceremonies celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution. He and Vanessa Redgrave have since made repeated trips to the Soviet capital, where they have endeared themselves to Gorbachev by providing the bureaucracy with a "Trotskyist" cover for its political maneuvers.

The central thesis of Healy's misnamed "Marxist Party" is that Gorbachev is leading the "political revolution" in the USSR and therefore deserves unconditional support. There is no doubt that this miserable lapdog of the bureaucracy will likewise join Gorbachev in his support for the Beijing regime's bloody suppression of the masses. Just as in the USSR, so in China, the opposition of the working class to this "political revolution" carried out from above through capitalist restorationist policies represents, for both Healy and his new patron Gorbachev, the "counter-revolution."

Finally, there is Cliff Slaughter, whose splinter of the WRP has repeatedly denounced the ICFI's analysis of the policies of the Stalinist regimes in both Beijing and Moscow and insists that capitalist restoration is impossible. They have become uncritical supporters of *perestroika*.

Nowhere in the several statements on the Chinese events published in the Slaughter group's *Workers Press* is there even a mention of the danger of capitalist restoration or of the social inequality and oppression created by the bureaucracy's procapitalist measures, propelling the Chinese proletariat into political struggle.

In the May 20 edition of *Workers Press*, a statement entitled "Long Live the Chinese Revolution" declared: "The bureaucracy is deeply divided over how to deal with a situation it has never before experienced. Unlike the capitalist class, it lacks an independent stake in the means of production that can cement its interests."

This is nothing but a cowardly apology for the Beijing bureaucracy. It most certainly does have "an independent stake in the means of production." Through corruption and the protection of its extensive privileges, the bureaucracy has always manipulated these means of production for its own ends against those of the economy and the working class.

Today, the precapitalist economic "reforms" carried out by the Deng Xiaoping leadership over the last decade have given the bureaucrats and their families not only an "independent stake," but direct or indirect ownership over growing sections of the economy. Top level officials use their positions to provide supplies and contracts to these private enterprises, thereby enriching the private owners at the expense of the nationalized sector. It is these practices, grave threats to the conquests of the Chinese Revolution, that have brought millions of workers into mortal struggle against the bureaucracy. And it is this which Slaughter carefully covers up.

Cyril Smith, the London School of Economics professor, serves as the WRP's point man in this revisionist attack on Trotskyism. In an article published in the May 13, 1989 issue of *Workers Press*, in the midst of the China events, Smith wrote:

"They [the ICFI] see in Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika nothing but a deliberate and conscious move to bring back capitalism.

"They denounce any estimation of these changes as reflecting the attempt of one wing of the bureaucracy to defend itself against the movement of the Soviet working class."

This counterposing of capitalist restoration to the attempt of the bureaucracy to defend itself against the working class as some sort of

mutually exclusive opposites only expresses the Slaughter group's hostility to Trotskyism. It is precisely in order to defend itself against the working class that the bureaucracy seeks to transform itself into a genuine ruling class.

As Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed*, "We cannot count upon the bureaucracy's peacefully and voluntarily renouncing itself in behalf of socialist equality ... it must inevitably in future stages seek supports for itself in property relations.... It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class."

In an earlier article, the Slaughter group insisted that to oppose Gorbachev's restorationist policies meant to support the Ligachev faction in the bureaucracy.

Thus, the Slaughter faction has adopted what is essentially the same theory of "irreversibility" advanced by Banda and, like Healy, albeit in a somewhat more cautious form, backs Gorbachev's procapitalist program and insists that the Trotskyist movement cannot fight for an independent line in the working class, but only choose between one faction of the bureaucracy or another.

These two conceptions are inextricably linked in the politics of all three of the WRP renegades as they are in all those revisionist groups which base themselves not on proletarian Marxism, but petty-bourgeois opportunism. By insisting that capitalist restoration is impossible and denying that the bureaucracy plays a counter-revolutionary role within the workers' states, they either openly renounce political revolution, as in the case of Banda, or turn it into a code word for either explicit or tacit support for this or that section of the bureaucracy against the working class, as with Healy and Slaughter.

As the split in the International Committee approaches its fourth anniversary, it is clear that there are no principled or programmatic issues which divide these three former leaders of the WRP. All of them stand united against the ICFI and the fundamental principles of Trotskyism.

Under conditions in which the attempts of the Beijing bureaucracy to restore capitalism have provoked a massive revolutionary uprising of the Chinese workers, they together with all the Pabloite tendencies line up as direct agents and apologists for the bureaucracy.

The dramatic events in China have underscored that we live in a period dominated by the breakdown of the agreements and institutions upon which world capitalist relations have rested for the last four decades. This historic crisis is rapidly revealing the bankruptcy of all of imperialism's agencies in the workers' movement.

The massacre in Tiananmen Square has exposed once and for all the hoax that Maoism represented some new road forward in the struggle for socialism and against imperialism. Covered with blood, it stands exposed to all as a counter-revolutionary enemy of the working class. This follows on the heels of the explicit renunciation of socialist revolution by the Gorbachev bureaucracy and the capitulation to imperialism of one bourgeois nationalist leadership after another.

The developments in China mark a new stage in the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies as an integral component of the world socialist revolution. They have also demonstrated the enormous historical significance of the protracted struggle of the Fourth International to defend and take forward the perspective of proletarian revolution against Stalinism and its petty-bourgeois revisionist apologists.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact