1985-86: The victory of Trotskyism within the ICFI

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The following lecture was delivered by Chris Marsden, the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (UK), and Ula? Ate?çi, a leading member of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group) in Turkey, to the SEP (US) International Summer School, held between July 30 and August 4, 2023. All lectures to the school are available here.

This lecture deals with the most consequential struggle waged within the International Committee of the Fourth International against a determined attempt to destroy Trotskyism as a tendency. It involved what were then its most internationally respected leaders.

The very survival of the Fourth International was at stake. As was stressed in David North's opening remarks to the 2019 party school:

> Except for the International Committee, the movement founded by Leon Trotsky had been politically liquidated by the Pabloites. In all the countries where the Pabloites had been able to establish organizational control, they had destroyed the Trotskyist organizations by turning them into political appendages of the Stalinist, social democratic or bourgeois nationalist organizations. By 1985, the Workers Revolutionary Party, which had by that point capitulated to Pabloism, was close to completing the same wrecking operation.[1]

This lecture will explore in detail the observation by David North that follows:

> Of course, efforts would have been made to sustain and rebuild the Trotskyist movement. I am certain that there would have been in all the sections of the International Committee comrades devoted to Trotskyism who remained determined to rebuild the Fourth International. But their efforts would have been burdened by the disorientation that would have followed the collapse of the WRP, had there not been a highly developed analysis of the underlying causes of the 1985 crisis. In fact, it was the existence of the detailed written critique, developed by the leadership of the Workers League between 1982 and 1984, of Gerry Healy's theoretical charlatanry and the WRP's capitulation to Pabloite revisionism that refuted Cliff Slaughter's cynical lie that the WRP's political crisis was just one element of the "equal degeneration" of the entire International Committee.[2]

We will make clear why the attempt to destroy the ICFI failed and instead led to a decisive victory of the orthodox Trotskyists, providing the basis for a global renaissance of revolutionary socialism and confirming the ICFI is its sole contemporary representative.

Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter and Michael Banda had enormous political authority within the ICFI. Between 1961 and 1964 the British Trotskyists had led the struggle against the unprincipled reunification of the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP) with the Pabloites—producing documents that we still use to educate our cadre.

Reunification dealt a serious blow to the Trotskyist movement. Under conditions where the Pabloites were liquidating promising movements around the world and subordinating them to anti-Marxist tendencies, Trotskyist principles were defended primarily by the Socialist Labour League (SLL) in Britain, with the support of the OCI in France.

The subsequent political struggle of the SLL against Stalinism, social democracy, bourgeois nationalism and its Pabloite apologists laid the foundation for the Workers League in the United States and the Revolutionary Communist League in Sri Lanka. This was especially through the opposition to the historic "Great Betrayal" in Sri Lanka in 1964, when the Lanka Sama Samaja Party joined the bourgeois coalition government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

Previous speakers have explained how the SLL retreated from the fight against Pabloism. From around 1967, the British Trotskyists began to adapt themselves to the enormous political and social pressures bearing down on the movement. Under conditions where the political domination of social democracy, Stalinism, Maoism, Castroism and other anti-Marxist forces demanded relentless struggle against revisionism and for internationalism, the conception developed that prioritizing the building of a Trotskyist party in Britain, above all by establishing a daily paper to rival the Stalinist *Morning Star*, would provide the basis for building the world party.

We have defined this as a turn to *tactical opportunism*, an ahistorical and nationalist approach, and it proved to be disastrous. It meant focusing on national tasks and withdrawing from the fight against opportunism and revisionism and for the perspective of building the ICFI as the world party of socialist revolution. This led the WRP to an increasingly Pabloite orientation and threatened the very existence of the International Committee.

This was a long political process. As is explained in *How the WRP Betrayed Trotskyism:*

> It is, of course, not possible to ascertain the "moment" the degeneration began. At any rate, such processes do not proceed in a straight line. There are days when even a dying man displays a vigor that astonishes his family and friends. But there can be no doubt that the political decay of the WRP was inseparably bound up with its turn away from the international struggle against revisionism—the theoretical mainspring of building the world party—in the early 1970's.[3]

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The first serious political consequence of the SLL's withdrawal from the struggle against Pabloism was manifested in its response to the centrist degeneration of the OCI in France and the split that followed in July 1971. In the struggle against reunification in 1963, the SLL systematically addressed important questions of perspective and produced critical documents, assisting in the development of a pro-ICFI faction within the SWP. This time, the SLL moved quickly to an organizational break, citing differences over dialectical materialism rather than opposing the centrist political turn by the OCI.

Healy was reluctant to wage such an exhaustive struggle because he feared this would cut across the practical interventions of the SLL into the emerging crisis in Britain. His fears were amplified by the fact that positions like the OCI's had been voiced at the 1966 World Congress by Slaughter, who had initially supported the OCI's formulation on "reconstructing" the Fourth International. For his part, Banda had evinced a political fascination with figures such as Mao, Ho Chi Minh and Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Under conditions of a deepening crisis of world capitalism and an expansion of the party's membership, the failure to draw the lessons of the split with the OCI and to put the historical foundations of the Trotskyist movement at the center its work accelerated the SLL's national-opportunist orientation. The intensification of the class struggle in the early 1970s produced a major political adaptation to the anti-Tory movement by the SLL and a retreat from focusing on the building of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

As Comrades Evan Blake and Tom Mackaman have reviewed in detail, that period was a critical turning point in the different trajectories of the Workers League in the US and the British Trotskyists. Although the WRP leaders had supported the Workers League in the fight against Wohlforth, they had failed to draw the necessary lessons from this critical experience not only for the WL, but for the entire IC. This was reflected in the fact that the WRP did not write a single important statement on Wohlforth, as Comrade North emphasized. By contrast, the Workers League placed the history of the Trotskyist movement and the lessons of the struggle against Pabloism at the center of its political work.

Founding the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1973 was done based on national considerations, without any discussion with the International Committee. Its stated aim was to bring to power a Labour government pledged to socialist policies.

The WRP's past record of political struggle against Pabloism, including that which was positive and correct regarding the degeneration of the OCI, nevertheless continued to provide political inspiration internationally. This led to the formation of new sections in Germany and Australia. But its turn away from an internationalist axis and the intensification of collaboration with its political co-thinkers opened a protracted period of political disorientation. This was to give way to grotesque political opportunism and betrayal.

How the Workers Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism explains that, having founded the WRP on the struggle to bring down the Tories and return a Labour government, the party lost influence with the hundreds of workers attracted to it on that basis who had not been educated in Trotskyist principles.

Its leadership was compelled to redefine its program and placed renewed emphasis on its Trotskyist identity and opposition to Labour. But this met opposition from a substantial section of workers recruited on a centrist basis, led by Alan Thornett, the British Leyland car worker and secretary of the party's All Trades Union Alliance. This right-wing attack was led secretly by the OCI with the aim of removing Healy as leader.

The International Committee was not involved in the conflict with Thornett and he was dealt with through bureaucratic expulsions. The intervention of the IC would have fundamentally changed the political dynamic. By resuming the struggle against the OCI and the resurgence of Pabloite revisionism, represented by Thornett's right-centrist line, the WRP leadership would have politically rearmed the world movement in the face of the sharp shift that was emerging in the political situation internationally.

Instead, the WRP made an ultra-left turn, calling on the working class to overthrow the Labour government. Workers knew to do so could only result in bringing the Tories back to power. The call reflected and deepened a class shift taking place within the party. Having already lost a substantial section of its working class base, the WRP was making a fundamental programmatic break with the proletarian orientation it had historically fought for.

This found support within a leadership increasingly dominated by petty-bourgeois forces with no real connection to the party's history or political struggle, such as actors Vanessa and Corin Redgrave and *News Line* editor Alex Mitchell. They responded impatiently and without the necessary theoretical grounding to the political development of the working class.

The opportunist essence of this ultra-left deviation emerged most clearly in the abandonment of the Theory of Permanent Revolution and the strategy of world socialist revolution. In April 1976, the WRP signed an agreement with the Libyan government behind the back of the International Committee that began the transformation of the WRP into a paid propagandist and political agent of the Arab bourgeoisie.

Over the next years, the dangerous growth of the political influence of middle-class layers within the party leadership became a transmission belt for the penetration of alien class interests into the WRP. It was they who supported a series of political shifts from ultra-left ultimatism to grotesque adaptations to sections of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. They also provided a substantial source of revenue, not based on the struggle to penetrate the working class. This deepened the leadership's independence from and hostility towards the party's rank and file and hastened the destruction of the foundations of democratic centralism.

Its disastrous impact internationally is described in this remarkable passage from "How the Workers Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism":

> The predominant expression of this betrayal of Trotskyism was the subordination of the interests of the world socialist revolution to the immediate practical needs of the British organization. The growth of chauvinism within the WRP expressed the direct pressure of British imperialism upon the party, above all its leadership. Healy, Banda and Slaughter came to look upon and treat the International Committee as if it formed part of a mini-commonwealth dominated by the WRP, to be used as a source of finance and to be manipulated in the interests of its own foreign policy.
>
> By the 1980s the methods through which they dominated the International Committee began to resemble those practices used for centuries by the British ruling class: perjury by day and forgery by night—and we mean this literally.[4]

This political backsliding and toxic nationalism determined the WRP's response to the criticisms formulated by David North between 1982 and 1984, threatening the Workers League with a split and preventing their circulation and discussion in the IC.

February 1984 offered an essential opportunity for the WRP to objectively confront the political and theoretical questions underlying its decade-long degeneration, which it rejected. One month later, the miners' strike erupted. This was the greatest class battle in Britain since the General Strike of 1926, spanning an entire year. It saw 20,000 miners injured or hospitalised, 13,000 arrested, 200 imprisoned during brutal

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military-style police operations, two killed on picket lines, three killed digging for coal during the winter, and 966 sacked.

The National Union of Mineworkers' assets were sequestered and the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers set up in a state operation. The strike's defeat was followed by mass pit closures and the decimation of entire communities. It was a struggle that confirmed the utter political decay of the WRP and helped precipitate the explosion that followed.

The WRP's political line was a mixture of ultra-left rhetoric and rampant opportunism. It never once placed a single demand on the Labour Party. It substituted demands for a general strike to install a Workers Revolutionary Government for calls to mobilise the working class to force the resignation of the Tory government, new elections and the return of the Labour Party to power on a socialist program. This would have placed the party in a position to win thousands of socialist-minded workers to a revolutionary alternative.

To fill the gap between the WRP's refusal to demand that the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party bring down the Tory government and its propaganda campaign for a Workers Revolutionary Government, the party claimed that Margaret Thatcher's government had been transformed into a Bonapartist dictatorship. This supposedly meant that the ruling class no longer relied on the bureaucracy to police and suppress the class struggle. Instead, a revolutionary situation had supposedly emerged placing the WRP in a direct struggle for power without the need to break the grip of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy on the working class.

Granting dictatorial powers to Thatcher provided an apologia for the betrayals of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy that would prove to be the real source of the miners' defeat. The refusal of the WRP to challenge the TUC and Labour Party and instead urge only trade union militancy facilitated the party's subordination to the NUM bureaucracy, led by the Stalinist Arthur Scargill. It was Scargill who was tasked with insulating and protecting the labour bureaucracy from political challenge.

For a membership that was politically uneducated and involved every day in intense activity during the strike, it appeared for a time that the WRP was making great strides—especially in winning the support of the most militant miners. But with the strike's defeat, these apparent gains evaporated.

The WRP's response was criminal. To account for the failure of the strike's end to be followed by the imposition of fascist dictatorship, as predicted at the party's Seventh Congress in December 1984, the WRP proclaimed that the miners had been "betrayed but not defeated." In response to pressure from the membership, especially in the north, the Release the Jailed Miners marches were launched. The hope was to consume the membership in activism, with Banda referencing Mao's "Long March" and declaring that the party would be marching until the revolution.

The march won significant support among miners and other workers, indicating what would have been possible for the party to achieve had it sought to draw the lessons for the working class from this experience, rather than continuing to tail Scargill and the NUM.

None of this was enough to stem the crisis. The defeat of the miners' strike had left large sections of the WRP, especially the petty-bourgeois and declassed elements in the party apparatus, bewildered, demoralized and resentful. They had been promised a revolution, warned of fascism, and neither had materialised. Their conclusion was that all their efforts to date had been wasted. Capitalism could be lived with, and they could perhaps find a more comfortable berth within the existing social order.

The scene was set for the eruption of entirely unprincipled factional struggles at the party centre in Clapham (London).

Before dealing with the specific events of the split and its central lessons, some issues must be made clear.

The personal and political degeneration of Healy, Slaughter and Banda, who played a significant and even decisive role in the history of the Fourth International in ensuring the continuity of Trotskyism, has a tragic dimension. In all the struggles waged throughout 1985 and into 1986, the ICFI opposed the efforts of the WRP leadership to denigrate these historic struggles. The IC insisted that the central issue facing the WRP at a time of acute political crisis was to determine, "For or against the International Committee," whether to renew and deepen the political struggle that had once secured for the British Trotskyists their position as the political leadership of the world movement, or to continue their national opportunist backsliding.

The ICFI worked in a principled fashion, urging the WRP's leadership and membership to reverse course by accepting the political authority of the world party and working with their international co-thinkers. The ICFI was correct to do so.

The WRP had undergone a profound degeneration, but as a section of the IC it was an entirely different political entity than the pseudo-left groups. As David North said during a recent discussion, Healy on his worst day was better than the likes of Ted Grant of the Militant group and Tony Cliff of the SWP (UK) on their best.

The party had within it a cadre, even at the height of its degeneration, that believed in the revolutionary perspective Healy, Slaughter and Banda had once represented and could respond to an appeal to resume the fight for Trotskyism.

It turned out that the nationalist political degeneration of the WRP's central leadership had progressed too far to save the party as a whole. But that could only be determined by consistently posing the need for the resumption of the struggle against Pabloism and for the continuity of the ICFI within the structures of the world party.

The struggle waged demonstrated irrefutably that the ICFI represented the continuity of Trotskyism. As Trotsky said when founding the Fourth International, outside of its ranks there was no revolutionary party or cadre worthy of the name.

The critique elaborated from 1982 by David North could only have been formulated from within a tendency that had placed the assimilation of the historical experiences of the Trotskyist movement and the struggle against the revisionism of Pablo-Mandel at the centre of its work. It exposed the WRP's abandonment of the Theory of Permanent Revolution, its adaptation to bourgeois nationalism and the relationship between the WRP's political opportunism and Healy's subjective idealist distortion of dialectical and historical materialism. It made clear that the crisis gripping the WRP was the product of a protracted political degeneration and it offered the only basis through which this could be resolved.

Healy's refusal to discuss the serious theoretical and political criticisms of this drift back to Pabloism foreclosed the possibility of overcoming the mounting political problems inside the WRP. However, if one were to characterise the first months of the crisis within the WRP, this was a period in which that critique provided the basis for the crystallization of a new Trotskyist majority in the International Committee. It won the support of the Sri Lankan, German and Australian sections and a faction within the WRP that constituted a majority by the time of the final break with the Slaughter/Banda renegades.

As is explained in *How the WRP Betrayed Trotskyism*, the fact that the WRP did not allow the criticisms of the Workers League to be properly circulated and discussed indicates that Healy, Banda and Slaughter suspected that its views would find broad support within the ICFI. This was historically confirmed.

Because large sections of the international cadre had been drawn to the ICFI in the 1960s and early 1970s based on the British Trotskyists' defence of the internationalist perspective of Permanent Revolution, the criticisms advanced by the Workers League, once they became known, found overwhelming support. It was this that accounted for the rapid political realignment within the International Committee in the autumn of

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1985, which established a new basis for the work of the international movement.

To appreciate the significance of this critique, one must draw attention to the character of the political conflict that had erupted in the WRP and how it developed prior to the intervention of the ICFI, led by the Workers League.

On July 1, 1985, Aileen Jennings, Healy's personal secretary for 20 years, disappeared from London. She left behind a letter dated June 30 denouncing Healy for the gross abuse of female members of the WRP and the ICFI. It was a filthy letter that was sent out to the parents of some of those involved. Its general tenor is indicated by its opening paragraphs warning that "the running of Youth Training by a homosexual" raised the danger of a police provocation. This was how Jennings then raised events at "the flats at 155 Clapham High Street which also opens the Party to police provocation."

Together with a deliberately created financial crisis, the letter was a political provocation by a clique at the party's centre. Their aim was to force Healy to step back or retire and thereby speed up and reinforce the opportunist turn of the WRP. Whatever his more recent evolution, Healy's leadership of the party would never be acceptable to a pseudo-left that defined itself in opposition to everything he had historically represented.

For the next three months, the WRP Political Committee collectively, and whatever their differences, attempted to cover up the scandal. This meant lying to the ICFI and opposing efforts by Central Committee member Dave Hyland to demand a control commission investigation. The plan was that Healy would announce his retirement due to ill health, while still being allowed to give lectures at the College of Marxist Education.

Banda led this effort to manage the party's crisis, getting Healy to sign a letter stating, "In accordance with our agreement dated 5/7/85, I unreservedly undertake to cease immediately my personal conduct with the youth."

It failed. As is explained in *The Heritage We Defend:*

> In October 1985, the pent-up resentments of the middle class exploded inside the WRP. Disillusioned and bitter, fed up with years of hard work which had produced no rewards, dissatisfied with their personal situations, anxious to make up for lost time, and simply sick and tired of all talk of revolution, the subjective rage of these middle-class forces—led by a motley crew of semiretired university lecturers—was translated politically into liquidationism.[5]

By this term is meant:

> …that most reactionary wing of opportunism which has now broken with Trotskyism and is demanding the destruction of its organized expression, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its national sections.
>
> The class basis of this tendency is the petty-bourgeoisie in all capitalist countries, who have succumbed to imperialist pressures and who no longer believe in the viability of a revolutionary perspective based on the international proletariat.[6]

To emphasise the significance of the intervention led by comrade North, the faction calling for a control commission was conducting a principled response to the revelations made by Jennings, which found support among working class cadre in Yorkshire and Manchester and within the national leadership of the Young Socialists. But it developed under conditions of enormous political confusion among members who, because of the political degeneration of the WRP, had no basis for understanding the broader and more essential issues involved.

These were months in which every leading member of the party would loudly declare that the ICFI had either never been Trotskyist or had undergone equal degeneration with the WRP. Every enemy of the ICFI also came out of the woodwork to insist that their own rotten opposition to "Healyism" had been vindicated, such as the Spartacists, who published a pamphlet, "Healyism Implodes."

This term, indicating opposition to the struggle waged by the ICFI against Pabloism, was now being adopted by Banda, Slaughter and company.

Left to themselves, those involved in the fight for a control commission would have been incapable of orienting themselves politically and defeating the liquidationist drive of the central leadership of the WRP and their allies in the Pabloite and Stalinist swamp.

What was decisive was the ability to cut through the hysteria generated by Slaughter and Banda and present an analysis of the real issues underlying the WRP's degeneration, one that was rooted in a defence of the history and programme of the ICFI. Indeed, as David North explained, the very existence of this critique was a devastating refutation of the argument later put forward by Slaughter that the WRP and the IC had undergone a process of "equal degeneration."

One further important point: Slaughter and his followers repeatedly accused David North of political cowardice in withdrawing his critique of the WRP, saying it was comparable to their own silence in the face of what they insisted were political and organisational abuses for which only Healy bore responsibility. Events proved that North was correct to take actions that prevented the immediate expulsion of the Workers League, under conditions where his criticisms had been suppressed and concealed within the International Committee and the membership of the WRP.

The decision was taken just one year before the political crisis erupted in the WRP. It cannot be ruled out that the Workers League would still have been able to find a way to intervene in the ensuing struggle within the IC sections and the WRP's membership. But it can be stated with certainty that this would have proved to be far more difficult. And the existence and circulation of North's critique was the decisive factor in everything that occurred in 1985.

In his opening remarks to this school, David North noted how the American Trotskyist movement was founded as a result of James P. Cannon's visit to Moscow in 1928. At the time, Cannon was deeply involved in the factional struggles inside the American Communist Party. The rival Jay Lovestone and William Z. Foster-Cannon factions were both looking for support from Moscow in their internal political struggles.

However, in Moscow, Cannon, as well as Maurice Spector, chair of the Communist Party of Canada, was given a copy of Trotsky's *Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International,* which was later published in *The Third International After Lenin*. After reading this, he concluded that all the issues he was preoccupied with were fundamentally insignificant, and, together with Max Shachtman and Martin Abern, he went back to America to begin a struggle for the policies of the Left Opposition, for which he was expelled in October.

History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. This was replayed to a remarkable extent in 1985 in the WRP, and with great historical import. David North's 2014 tribute to Dave Hyland explains how in the middle of September [14-15], comrades Larry Porter and David North flew to England to find out what was really taking place within the organization. They had been told only that Healy was resigning due to ill health and old age.

On September 3, Banda had rung comrade North asking him to "resume the alliance." This was in reference to his broken agreement in October

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1982 to support a discussion on the false theoretical and political conceptions of the WRP. The Workers League's Political Committee had agreed unanimously that there would be no alliance with any leaders of the WRP who had repeatedly proved that they conducted themselves in a totally opportunist manner, and were now seeking to use the International Committee to regulate their factional disputes.

After meeting Banda in London, North reminded him of the political criticisms made in 1982 and 1984. Banda rummaged through his files and found a copy of the February 1984 report to the IC. He accepted that these criticisms had been correct and asked David to come with him to Yorkshire, where he planned to meet with Dave Hyland in Rotherham.

There, at the end of an unsatisfactory discussion, Banda impulsively and, for him, disastrously handed Hyland a copy of "A Contribution to a Critique of G. Healy's 'Studies in Dialectical Materialism'" and the 1984 report to the ICFI.

Dave read them, then called leading members of his faction over to his house to read it one after the other in his living room.

Reading the critique for all of us was a revelation, providing for the first time a political explanation of the split and making clear that this had met with opposition within the ICFI. Making a serious critique of Healy's Hegelianised version of dialectics on which so much of his political authority by then rested was fundamental. It was a lot to take in under these conditions, but it made understandable theoretically and politically what was being dismissed by others as mere gobbledygook.

After intensive discussions, on October 9, Dave rang the Workers League and asked to speak to David North. In comrade North's tribute, he cites a letter Dave Hyland wrote to him in 2005 in which he described reading these documents and phoning David as "the most important political decision of my life." It was the most important decision in many lives.

Later, on October 10, Comrades North and Larry Porter returned to the UK. They had been told of Dave Hyland's phone call the previous day while in Germany and had rung him back. As David states:

> I cannot overstate how critical and important that was. Until that moment, we were still on the outside looking in. It was as if we were political interlopers in an organization to which we had no access. But now there was someone who wanted to speak to us about the crisis inside the WRP and who was interested in the documents we had written.[7]

David, Larry and Uli Rippert, the national secretary of the ICFI's German section, the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter (BSA), arrived in the UK on October 10. They witnessed a party in a state of factional warfare, described in vivid detail in David's notes towards a November 2 report to the Workers League Political Committee.

Healy's supporters on the Political Committee had voted to invite him into the party centre and to prepare charges against Central Committee members and leaders of the Young Socialists, Julie Hyland and Dolly Short, for publicly demanding a control commission. This prompted a walkout by Banda's supporters, who had also shut down the party's newspaper, the *News Line*, and its print shop in Runcorn, Liverpool. Banda grandiosely described this as "The 18th Brumaire of Michael Banda."

At an initial meeting involving 25 leading members that night, and subsequently, Banda threatened the expulsion of all of Healy's supporters at an upcoming Central Committee meeting. He also indicated his belief that there had never been a Trotskyist movement in Britain, implying that the IC itself was not Trotskyist.

David, Larry and Uli decided to travel to Leeds in Yorkshire the next day, October 11. They secured Slaughter's agreement at a meeting also attended by Dave Hyland that he (Slaughter) would argue for minority rights for Healy supporters. Afterward, David North had his first discussion with Dave Hyland.

Hyland initially raised that there had never been a Trotskyist movement in Britain. But he was convinced after a lengthy review of the history of the fight against Pabloism by David North that the fight in the WRP had to be waged based on recognising and defending the continuity of the Trotskyist movement against the growth of Pabloism within the International Committee.

The next day, October 12, Slaughter, Banda and 23 other Central Committee members voted to expel Healy, but granted minority rights to his 12 supporters.

The Greek and Spanish sections issued an October 21 joint communiqu refusing to accept the expulsion of Healy. This called on Healy as "the historical leader of this movement and as the leader of the Tenth World Congress as well as the most outstanding fighter for its perspectives to call an emergency meeting of the International Committee of the Fourth International and we will not recognise any other factional meeting called fraudulently in the name of the ICFI."

On October 25, a plenum of the genuine ICFI was held at which two resolutions were passed. One expelled Healy from the ICFI, while opposing the position of the Slaughter/Banda faction that everything was all about sex. It instead stated, "The practices which he carried out constituted an attack on a historically selected cadre of the Trotskyist movement."

The resolution rejected all attempts to denigrate the past contribution of Healy and to attack the history and political authority of the ICFI.

It stated:

> In expelling Healy the ICFI has no intention of denying the political contributions which he made in the past, particularly in the struggle against Pabloite revisionism in the 1950s and the 1960s.
>
> In fact, this expulsion is the end product of his rejection of the Trotskyist principles upon which these past struggles were based and his descent into the most vulgar forms of opportunism.
>
> The political and personal degeneration of Healy can be clearly traced to his ever more explicit separation of the practical and organizational gains of the Trotskyist movement in Britain from the historically and internationally grounded struggles against Stalinism and revisionism from which these achievements arose.[8]

The accompanying *Resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International on the Crisis of the British Section* also affirmed:

> At the root of the present crisis which erupted with the exposure of the corrupt practices of G. Healy and the attempt by the WRP Political Committee to cover them up is the prolonged drift of the WRP leadership away from the strategical task of the building of the world party of socialist revolution towards an increasingly nationalist perspective and practice.[9]

It proposed "an International Control Commission to investigate, but not limited to, the corruption of G. Healy, the cover-up by the Political Committee and the financial crisis of the WRP," to which all existing charges against party members had to be referred.

Most significantly, it stipulated:

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> The re-registration of the membership of the WRP on the basis of an explicit recognition of the political authority of the ICFI and the subordination of the British section to its decisions.[10]

This was to become a central issue in the struggles that followed. This resolution was endorsed unanimously by the British delegation at the October 25 ICFI meeting and by the WRP Central Committee. Most significantly, it was accepted with no votes against by a Special Congress of the WRP held October 26 and 27.

David North's address on the first day of the Special Congress, giving a detailed explanation of the political history and causes of the degeneration of the WRP, was decisive in securing this outcome. It was a powerful confirmation of the political authority of the ICFI, which won the backing of almost all delegates and was applauded even by many of those who later became the most frothing opponents of the IC.

I must stress this. There are some moments that burn themselves in your memory. And this was one such moment. I can honestly say it was electric to watch and listen to. Prior to that Special Congress, the supporters of Mike Banda were going around discussing how they had come armed in case there was any bad business, or there was an attempt to block them from the building. They had grappling hooks and such things. Well, they were armed with grappling hooks, but Dave North armed us with Marxism and a Marxist analysis.

On October 26, the Healy faction held its own meeting at a different venue, proclaiming that a "necessary and long over-due split" with Banda and Slaughter "has been carried out successfully." They described themselves as the British section of the ICFI and David North as leader of "the rump ICFI." The Healyites rejected an offer by the ICFI to meet a delegation led by comrade North.

A November 9 letter to the Central Committee of the Workers Internationalist League in Greece on its refusal to attend the October 25 IC Plenum stated:

> Such a rejection of the internationalist principles on which our movement is based is essentially nationalism, expressing the pressure of the class enemy… The anti-internationalism which led to the refusal to attend the October 25 IC meeting must be rejected. If not, the WIL faces destruction as a Trotskyist party.[11]

This too was ignored. Its warning applied with equal force to the Banda-Slaughter faction who remained in the WRP and ICFI. They had only accepted the October 25 resolution as a tactical manoeuvre to win the support of the ICFI against the pro-Healy faction, and were intent on repudiating it at the earliest opportunity.

The membership's response to North's intervention at the Special Congress convinced them that they had to move quickly. They set out to oppose the subordination of the British section to the ICFI and to overturn the resolution, whipping up every manner of nationalist prejudice cultivated over years within the WRP membership.

This took the form of a combined insistence that the sex scandal was the fundamental issue in the split, which the ICFI was supposedly intent on minimising, and claims that the ICFI had undergone a process of "equal degeneration" to the WRP and was trying to prevent a fundamental break with "Healyism."

This was articulated by Banda, who in a November 2 *News Line* article, "Morality and the Revolutionary Party," declared:

> For the first time, and possibly the last, the party has been split not on tactical and *programmatic issues, but on the most basic question of revolutionary morality*. The split has taken place on the relation between the sexes in the party…[12]

On November 21, the Workers League Central Committee wrote to the WRP Central Committee, explaining:

> The basic source of our disagreement and the cause of increasing friction between us is that the Workers Revolutionary Party leadership is not prepared to acknowledge, except in a verbal and platonic form, the authority of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Precisely because it does not recognize that the most essential feature of Healy's political degeneration was his subordination of the international movement to the practical needs of the British section, the WRP leadership is in real danger of continuing, albeit in somewhat different form, the same nationalist-opportunist course.
>
> …In our opinion, the most important lesson of the present struggle that must be grasped by every cadre of the International Committee is the enormously reactionary practical implications of any retreat from the defense of Trotskyist principles and the struggle against all forms of revisionism.[13]

The WRP responded by stepping up its liquidationist offensive.

On November 26, at a meeting at Friends Hall in London reported in the *News Line* as "Revolutionary Morality and the Split in the WRP," Slaughter publicly called into question the historical foundations of the International Committee before an audience of its political enemies, infamously shaking hands with the arch-Stalinist Monty Johnstone. There is no such thing as "any old Stalinist," but Monty Johnstone was the go-to guy for the Stalinist movement in attacking Trotskyism. His pedigree not only includes three-part polemics against the Socialist Labour League in the 1960s, but also repeated attacks on Trotsky subsequently.

This prompted Comrade Peter Schwarz to send a letter to the WRP CC that stated:

> Made in front of the entire coterie of British revisionism by the secretary of the ICFI, I cannot help but take this speech as a clear indication that Comrade Slaughter wants to split with the ICFI altogether and rejoin the revisionist and Stalinist swamp.[14]

Four days later, on December 6, Geoff Pilling gave a public rebuttal in an article, "Nothing to hide ... or fear." He made an explicit call to the Stalinists, the Pabloite Alan Thornett "and all those who were victims of Healy's arbitrary and anti-communist methods…" to join "the most open and wide-ranging discussion" encompassing "every aspect of the movement's history, from the time of Trotsky's death onwards."

The second major plank of the WRP's attack on the ICFI was elaborated in a November 26 letter from Slaughter to North, insisting that the entire ICFI had undergone a process of "equal degeneration" and repudiating on this basis its entire history and present-day political authority.

In response, a letter from the Workers League Political Committee was sent on December 11 to the WRP CC. It is the most comprehensive contemporary account of the political issues that gave rise to the split and the character and extent of the WRP's liquidationism and anti-Trotskyism.

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It contained the following crucial warning clearly defining the central issues raised by the WRP's nationalist degeneration:

> The great danger that we now confront is that anti-internationalism is being encouraged by the leadership. The national autonomy of the Workers Revolutionary Party is being counterposed to the authority of the International Committee as the leading body of the World Party of Socialist Revolution. This is the real meaning of Comrade Slaughter's assertion, in his letter to North, that "Internationalism consists precisely of laying down ... class lines and fighting them through." But by what process are these "class lines" determined? Does it require the existence of the Fourth International?...
>
> Compare Comrade Slaughter's definition of internationalism ("laying down class lines and fighting them through") with that of Trotsky: "Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of the world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle." (*Permanent Revolution*, New Park, p. 9) Herein lies the foundation of proletarian internationalism and the necessity of its organized expression in the World Party of Socialist Revolution. No national organization, no matter how loudly it proclaims its allegiance to Marxism, can develop and maintain a revolutionary perspective except through constant contact and collaboration with international co-thinkers. … Those who rail against the subordination of national sections to the international movement upon which these statutes insist ignore the fact that the price of "independence" is subordination to the pressures of the national bourgeoisie and world imperialism.[15]

Slaughter had described North's speech to the October 26 first session of the WRP's Special Conference as "one-sided and misleading." It gave "a picture of a WRP and WRP leadership corrupted to such an extent by Healy that no one in the WRP could or would raise a criticism of Healy's anti-Marxist writings and practices, while D. North, on the other hand, had, since 1982, taken up arms or correct positions against Healy."

The Workers League replied:

> …the criticisms which North made at the Special Congress were by no means directed against the WRP cadre in general. When [North] spoke of an unprincipled clique within the Political Committee, he was referring only to those who subordinated questions of Trotskyist principles to the pragmatic needs of the practical work within the British section. Comrade Slaughter was an important part of that clique leadership.[16]

The letter makes an extensive defence of the Workers League and its history. It explains how its founding and subsequent practice were rooted in the struggle against Pabloism and the abandonment of proletarian internationalism by the Socialist Workers Party and how this struggle was continued and deepened by a tendency decisively oriented to the working class. The following essential points are made:

> Theoretical work is not the activity of the isolated individual contemplating the universe. It is inseparable from revolutionary practice. The driving force of the "positive and theoretical work" done by Dave North and the Workers League was the struggle against revisionism, about which Slaughter says precisely nothing, a struggle which was carried out both against the Socialist Workers Party and against revisionism within the IC and WRP…

Moreover:

> The struggles of the Workers League inside the American working class were conducted simultaneously with an unprecedented level of international work. The investigation into Security and the Fourth International, culminating in the Gelfand case, produced a wealth of historical knowledge for the world Trotskyist movement and the international working class about the joint conspiracies of Stalinism and imperialism against the revolutionary movement.

It continued:

> What took place at Friends Hall was not a meeting; it was a perspective. What was revealed at that meeting is a move toward what the SWP once called "regroupment"—that is, the abandonment of Trotskyism in favor of unprincipled alliances with radicals, revisionists and Stalinists of all description.
>
> …In the present situation, the WRP leadership's resentment of the efforts of the International Committee to establish international collaboration on the basis of democratic centralism expresses a desire to break free of the political restraints imposed upon the British section by membership in the World Party of Socialist Revolution.[17]

On December 16-17, the International Committee met to hear an interim report prepared by the Control Commission established at its meeting of October 25. The report presented detailed evidence that the WRP under Healy had established politically corrupt relations with bourgeois regimes in the Middle East, had cynically used the Palestine Liberation Organization to further money-raising schemes, and its leaders had lied systematically to the sections of the IC and to the British working class. Based on this interim report, the ICFI declared:

> The ICFI does not seek to blame any individual leader but holds the entire leadership responsible.
>
> In order to defend its principles and integrity, the ICFI therefore suspends the WRP as the British section until the calling of an emergency Congress of the ICFI no later than March 1, following the 8th Congress of the WRP.
>
> That emergency ICFI Congress upon hearing the full report of the Control Commission on all the facts concerning these unprincipled relationships will determine the relationship between the ICFI and the WRP.[18]

The British delegates to the IC, led by Slaughter, voted against the resolution. This confirmed that the real content of the degeneration of the WRP was the repudiation of Trotskyism by the entire WRP leadership.

A December 17 ICFI Statement detailed what had to be done to restore the membership of the British section, calling on it to reaffirm its agreement with the programmatic foundations of Trotskyism, "embodied

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in the International Committee as the sole historically-established leadership of the World Party of Socialist Revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938."

The ICFI pledged to "re-educate and re-arm all the cadres of the world movement on the principles and program of Trotskyism." The statement declared:

> We re-affirm our implacable hatred of Stalinism, from which our movement is separated by a river of blood. Alongside the social-democratic bureaucracies, Stalinism is the principal agency of imperialism within the international workers' movement, "counter-revolutionary through and through."
>
> We stand for the political revolution against the degenerated and deformed Stalinist bureaucracies as a component part of the World Socialist Revolution…
>
> While defending the semi-colonial masses against the onslaught of imperialism, we stand at all times for the independent revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat, based on the strategy of Permanent Revolution, through the construction of new sections of the ICFI…
>
> The ICFI and the WRP reaffirm the historical correctness of the struggle against Pabloite revisionism upon which the continuity of the Fourth International, preserved and embodied in the International Committee, is based. As the national committee of the Socialist Labour League stated in 1961, Pabloite revisionism does not represent and cannot be regarded "as a trend within Trotskyism."[19]

The resolutions on the WRP's suspension were endorsed by statements from the Workers League, the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter, the Socialist Labour League in Australia, and the Young Socialists in Britain.

The Slaughter-Banda group treated this as a de facto declaration of a split. They could not tolerate a situation in which there would be weeks of discussion on the IC resolution leading up to the party congress, and set about making this impossible. Slaughter knew that, if not, he would lose the leadership of the WRP to what was by then a clear majority position in the membership—and control of the substantial assets of the WRP.

Slaughter gathered around him a group of other academics—Tom Kemp, Cyril Smith and Geoff Pilling—dubbed "The Four Professors." They began preparing the party's middle-class members for a split. This also included disoriented full-timers at the Runcorn printshop, led by Mike Banda's brother Tony, who was to describe Trotskyism as "a rotten rope," and workers who had secured positions within the trade union apparatus, such as Dave Temple, who wanted an end to "sectarianism" and more of the opportunist "alliance building" seen during the miners' strike.

Mike Banda had by then deserted his post in the leadership of the WRP to return to Sri Lanka. There he wrote his "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried." Banda revealed that he had not been a Trotskyist for at least a decade and regretted the years he had delayed his break with the International Committee. He denounced the entire history of the Fourth International as "an uninterrupted series of splits, betrayals, treachery, stagnation and confusion, declaring, "It must be stated emphatically, nay, categorically, that the FI was proclaimed but never built." He attacked the International Committee, of which he was a member for 32 years, as "a grandiose illusion, a contemptible manoeuvre and a disgusting charade."

Banda also resumed personal contact with members of the anti-Trotskyist LSSP—discussions that led to him being invited to join.

Slaughter's appeal was based on a toxic mixture of nationalist prejudice against "foreign interference," the stroking of collective egos praised for having mounted a heroic crusade for "revolutionary morality," and holding out the prospect of being welcomed into the "left" swamp, of no longer being treated as pariahs by the WRP's pseudo-left and Stalinist opponents—putting an end to "isolation" and hard political struggle in favour of a comfortable, less exacting lifestyle. This included the chance to get on with their various careers, under conditions where their contemporaries were busy making money at the height of the Thatcherite-Yuppie era.

Security and the Fourth International, as has already been detailed, was a key target of this campaign. The statements produced in response, such as "In Defense of Security and the Fourth International" by comrade North, February 2, and, post-split, "The Case Against the SWP - What the Facts Show," are essential reading. Aside from immediate factional considerations, the purpose of this attack was (1) to facilitate a political rapprochement with the Pabloite allies of the Socialist Workers Party (US), and (2) to work toward the political rehabilitation of Stalinism for the purpose of justifying collaboration with the agents of the Soviet bureaucracy.

To counteract his minority support within the party and shift the political axis of the WRP, Slaughter also declared that the WRP had been so degenerate that those who had left political activity were "healthier" than those who stayed, and were welcome to return. Faces not seen for decades, such as Kemp, reappeared or were catapulted to national prominence, along with the appearance of individuals of unknown and dubious political pedigree.

The ICFI Defends Trotskyism reproduces a February 7, 1986 *Workers Press* article, "For a Public Discussion on Healy's IC," by Dave Good. He was a supporter of Banda no one had ever heard of before, and acted as Slaughter's attack dog against the IC and its supporters. Like several of Banda's small group of 13 supporters, he subsequently joined the Communist Party.

"27 Reasons" had arrived in Britain in mid-January, but it was not shown to the membership of the WRP or the IC. Instead, it was published in the *Workers Press*, edited by Good, on the eve of the WRP's 8th Congress.

Banda's document was the political basis for two resolutions carried by the majority of the WRP Central Committee on January 26, 1986, overturning the October 27 Special Congress resolution mandating the re-registration of the WRP membership based on an explicit recognition of the authority of the ICFI. The political and practical content of these resolutions was to declare a split with the International Committee.

Resolution 1 stated:

> That the IC, under the leadership of Healy and the WRP, has undergone a political, theoretical, moral and organizational degeneration…
>
> That the IC is neither the World Party nor even the nucleus of the World Party…
>
> That the perspectives, theory and organization of Trotskyism can only be elaborated in a fierce struggle against all aspects of Healyism… [and]
>
> that the IC cannot claim political authority as an international leadership. Neither can sections be subordinated to an international discipline determined by the IC.[20]

Resolution 2 declared:

> We therefore withdraw the registration form of 11-8-85 issued in the name of the general secretary.[21]

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These resolutions were opposed by the Central Committee minority led by Dave Hyland. On January 27, the Workers League Central Committee sent "A Letter to All Sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International and to the Members of the Workers Revolutionary Party." This stated:

> The two resolutions passed on January 26, 1986 by the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party are a declaration of split with the International Committee of the Fourth International and an open renunciation of the history and principles of the Trotskyist movement. The twelve members of the Central Committee who voted for this resolution, along with Michael Banda, who deserted his post in the midst of the crisis within his own organization, are renegades from Marxism who have capitulated to the pressures of British imperialism and are placing themselves in the service of the class enemy…
>
> The resolutions explicitly repudiate the entire history of the struggle for Marxism since 1940—declaring, in effect, that through the assassination of Trotsky the Stalinist bureaucracy achieved its political victory over the Fourth International.[22]

The Workers League appealed to the WRP membership to reject the splitting actions of Slaughter and Banda and warned the sections of the IC to guard against their attempts at political sabotage—in Australia through a faction led by Phil Sandford and Robert Buehler. It concluded:

> Unlike Banda, Slaughter and Healy, the sections of the ICFI will not turn their backs on the past struggles for Trotskyism in which these ex-leaders once played outstanding roles. We will never forget the lessons which they taught us and in which they once believed. But let the dead bury their dead. The betrayal of the WRP renegades has not destroyed the ICFI. Without them and against them, the struggle for Trotskyism, for the development and expansion of the International Committee of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution, goes forward.[23]

On February 8, the supporters of Banda and Slaughter met to formalise their split with the ICFI. Their 8th Congress was a shameful political fraud. Duly elected delegates supportive of the IC were barred from entering while "guest" representatives from other tendencies were present. The gates outside the conference hall were locked, and 25 police stood guard outside. Slaughter entered the building under police escort.

Reports from within the WRP following the split confirm why this despicable action was necessary, confirming that the WRP's membership had by then declined to just 70.

The Slaughterites passed a resolution declaring that "the International Committee of the Fourth International does not represent the continuity of the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938," and hailing "the Workers Revolutionary Party's principled struggle against Healyism."

It called for a regroupment of "all those in the International Committee sections who are fighting to defeat Healyism" and a public discussion preparatory to "an international pre-conference of all those who stand on the Permanent Revolution, *The Transitional Programme*, the first four Congresses of the Communist International, before the end of 1986."

The barred delegates, elected in accordance with the decision of the WRP Special Congress of October 26-27, moved to another location, where they convened the legitimate 8th Congress of the WRP (Internationalist). The congress agreed a resolution stating:

> This duly-constituted congress, based on the decisions of the Special Congress of October 26-27, 1985, declares that the renegades' resolutions represent a break from all the historic gains and theoretical conquests of Trotskyism which are embodied in the ICFI and an attempt to liquidate the Trotskyist cadre.[24]

It made a special point of affirming that "the struggle carried out for over 10 years on *Security and the Fourth International* and continued by the Workers League with the Gelfand case represents an historic gain in the fight against Stalinism, revisionism, and for the training of a cadre against state attack."[25]

The struggle against the WRP renegades continued internationally, leading to the break by the Sandford and Buehler faction from the Socialist Labour Leage (SLL) in Australia following a March 4-5 party congress. The SLL wrote, "In answering this call for regroupment, the Sandford-Buehler renegades are not breaking from 'Healyism' but from the principled struggle waged by the ICFI against Pabloite revisionism," and are "regrouping with those who attack its principles."

On June 2, the ICFI issued a statement on the renegacy of the Peruvian Liga Comunista (LC). It said that the LC openly advanced a neo-Stalinist, pro-Maoist and petty-bourgeois nationalist opposition to Trotskyism, rejecting the theoretical, political and programmatic foundations of the Trotskyist movement entirely, including "the theory of Permanent Revolution, the strategy of world revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat," and ceded "the leadership of the struggle against imperialism to the corrupt and venal national bourgeoisie in Peru and throughout Latin America."

This was the basis for the LC's own call for a public discussion with all "Peruvian and Latin American Trotskyists," including such revisionists as Hugo Blanco, Ricardo Napuri, Nahuel Moreno and the Posadasites, for a regroupment based on a "break with an entire period of the Trotskyist movement in an irreversible way," and the "orientation towards a revolutionary practice, the likes of which were indicated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, the first four Congresses of the III International, as well as the later revolutionary experiences in China, Vietnam and others in Latin America."[26]

The entire history of the Trotskyist movement was eliminated at the stroke of a pen, with the "revolutionary experience" following Lenin's death attributed to Stalinism, Maoism, Castroism and other forms of bourgeois nationalism.

Before addressing the aftermath of the split and summarising its enduring political significance, another essential lesson should be drawn from the intervention by the International Committee in 1985.

The factional infighting within the WRP was intense and over a highly emotive and explosive issue. The atmosphere of accusation and counter-accusation was poisonous and the demands for an organisational reckoning overwhelming within the party leadership and cadre. The Central Committee had lost all political authority and democratic centralism was a dead letter.

Within this crisis, the ICFI refused to accept the political narrative advanced by any faction, basing its intervention on fundamental issues of programme and perspective. It insisted on the resumption of democratic centralist norms of conduct not only within the section but above all within the international.

The historic victory in 1986, and the extraordinary attention to the development of international perspectives within a world movement that conducts itself in the most open and collaborative fashion, has enabled the

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ICFI to achieve and maintain an extraordinary degree of poltical agreement and homogeneity. As a result, there has never been any similar eruption of factional conflict, let alone the development of wildly subjective antagonisms.

However, in the course of the explosive political period we have now entered, amid the growth of the party membership in every section and the attraction of new and inexperienced forces internationally from outside our political tradition, it would be politically naïve to assume that such conflicts will never emerge. Educating our members and leaders in how they must be dealt with begins with the assimilation of the lessons of the 1985 struggle: To focus at all times on the fundamental programmatic issues and, even amid the most intense conflicts, to maintain the discipline and politcal authority of the world party of socialist revolution.

In the *Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (United States)*, "A Further Comment on the Cause and Significance of the Split in the ICFI" explains:

> As in 1953, the split in the International Committee that developed between 1982 and 1986 anticipated enormous changes, which were to shatter, in the last half of the 1980s, the structure of world politics as it had existed in the four decades following the end of World War II…
>
> The crisis of the WRP was part of a broader process that was sweeping through all the mass parties and trade union organizations based historically on the working class. Whatever their differences in organizational structure and political allegiances, the Stalinist, Social-Democratic and reformist organizations were all based on a nationalist program.[27]

Fundamental developments in technology associated with the microchip resulted in the globalisation of capitalist production. This rendered the national-reformist perspectives of the post-World War II era obsolete. Fundamental changes in world economy and their impact on the international class struggle were reflected within the International Committee and, in the final analysis, led to the split.

The collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracies, based on policies of national autarky, was the most developed expression of a broader crisis that gripped every nationally based organisation in the bureaucratised workers' movement, from the Stalinists to the reformists and the anti-communist AFL-CIO bureaucracy in the US.

It was in the orientation of the various fragments of the WRP to these nationalist bureaucracies, above all to Stalinism, that their ongoing degeneration found full expression, mostly ending in political extinction.

Gerry Healy became convinced that Mikhail Gorbachev was leading a political revolution in the Soviet Union. He split with Sheila Torrance on this basis to form the Marxist Party in 1987, together with Vanessa and Corin Redgrave.

Healy then wrote three articles concerning the political revolution as "a process of contradiction," including "Skeptics and the Political Revolution," published in November 1989 shortly before his death on December 14.

He denounced in September 1988, the "dogmatists" who "present the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky through abstract references which immediately become transformed into lifeless dogma," and the "skeptics" for whom "Gorbachev is another Stalin, preparing to introduce capitalism as quickly as he can into the USSR."

Healy and Redgrave proclaimed themselves co-thinkers of the Memorial Union, an organization of a faction of the bureaucracy explicitly supporting the restoration of capitalism. He made four trips to the USSR. Healy wrote in November 1988:

> Perestroika and the struggle for Glasnost, (democratisation), are the everchanging forms which contain the historical content of the struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International for the political revolution.[28]

It would be wrong to end on such a sorry note in dealing with a man who played such an exceptional role in our movement for so many years, and under such difficult conditions. One must instead recall the very moving tribute by David North in concluding his obituary, *Gerry Healy and His Place in the History of the Fourth International*:

> For a long and difficult period, Gerry Healy was a crucial human link in the historical continuity of the Fourth International. For decades he fought against Stalinism and opportunism. In the end, he broke beneath the pressure of this tremendous struggle. But the best of what he achieved in his long political career lives on in the International Committee of the Fourth International; and the resurgent international revolutionary workers movement, learning both from his achievements and failures, will not fail to pay proper tribute to his memory.[29]

Corin and Vanessa Redgrave wound up the Marxist Party in 2004, founding an organization modeled on the much earlier proposal for a Basic Rights Party, the now disappeared "Peace and Freedom."

Savas Michael-Matsas and his Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) in 2018, together with the Partido Obrero (PO) in Argentina and the Revolutionary Workers' Party (D?P) in Turkey, proclaimed a mission to "refound" the Fourth International through a regroupment that included the rabidly pro-Stalinist United Communist Party of Russia (OKP). It has continued this orientation ever since.

Sheila Torrance's Workers Revolutionary Party, frozen in political aspic, still publishes the *News Line* as a daily newspaper, with barely any members but with some undisclosed financial backer. The WRP propagandizes for bourgeois nationalist regimes and parties in the Middle East and still insists that there are degenerated or deformed workers states in Russia and China.

The fate of the Slaughter/Banda faction is no less sordid. Less than a year after Banda wrote his "27 Reasons," he wrote, "What is Trotskyism? Or Will the Real Trotsky Please Stand Up?" *The Heritage We Defend* describes this as "a frantic denunciation of Trotskyism, a belated tribute to Joseph Stalin and a declaration of political allegiance to the Kremlin bureaucracy." This is detailed extensively in the closing three chapters under the general heading, "M. Banda embraces Stalinism." Banda's political career until his death in 2014 was as a stooge for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), led by Abdullah Öcalan.

In September 1986, orienting towards a regroupment strategy, Cyril Smith wrote in Slaughter's *Workers Press* that "the term 'revisionist,' once a term with scientific significance for Marxists, has now become just a term of abuse. We should stop using the designation 'Pabloite' in talking about the organizations associated with the United Secretariat. It can only foul up the discussion."

Slaughter's turn to the Pabloites and Stalinists led in 1987 to a failed attempt to form a so-called "international" with the Argentinean Morenoites, who had collaborated with the Stalinists for decades. This is detailed in the March 1987 ICFI Statement, "No to Stalinism and the Popular Front! Build the Fourth International!" written jointly by comrades North and Keerthi Balasuriya.

The statement brought to bear all the accumulated experiences of the split, explaining:

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> The International Committee has repeatedly warned that the political trajectory of the Workers Revolutionary Party would inevitably land it in the camp of the class enemy. Moreover, we have warned that Slaughter has been working with a political perspective which he refused to discuss with the ICFI prior to the split and which he has kept concealed from the WRP membership itself. Without having ever divulged his long-term plans, he has now brought the Workers Revolutionary Party within inches of a unification with a political party whose leaders are working inside a popular front formation with the Argentine Stalinists.
>
> From the standpoint of the history of the Workers Revolutionary Party, its dissolution into the centrist swamp of Morenoism will signify an irrevocable break with Trotskyism and the rapid transformation of this organization into an agency of imperialism.[30]

The objective significance of such a betrayal of Marxism for the workers' movement was explained many years ago by none other than Cliff Slaughter:

> As imperialism (not "neo-capitalism"!) moves rapidly into its worst-ever economic and political crisis, it must desperately suck away these middle-class elements to some *centrist* political force to deal with that phase of the crisis when new masses are thrown into political struggle.
>
> Such centrist forces cannot be sucked out of nothing as it were. Mandel is hatching out the kind of politics to fit the bill. Of course, imperialism uses the centrists in this way only as a short step on the road to the eventual fascist and dictatorial repression." (*Fourth International*, Summer 1972, p. 215, emphasis in the original)[31]

This is only one of many documents produced by the ICFI directly addressing the split in 1985-86 and deepening the struggle against the WRP that are fundamental to the political education of our cadre. Many are collected in the *Fourth International* magazine, centring around post-split plenums of the ICFI: *The Tamil Struggle and the Treachery of Healy, Banda and Slaughter*, by Keerthi Balasuriya; *Michael Banda: Stalinist*, by David North; *G. Healy: Enemy of Permanent Revolution*, by Bill Van Auken; *The Greek WRP Attempts a Political Fraud*, by the Workers League Political Committee; *Healy renounces the Permanent Revolution*, by Keith Jones; *An Open Letter from the Revolutionary Communist League to the Workers Revolutionary Party*, by Keerthi and many others that must be studied, along with the most essential work that has informed every aspect of this school, *The Heritage We Defend*.

By the end of 1990, Slaughter had also explicitly rejected Trotskyism, writing: "Marxists, having fought for many years, sometimes their whole political lives, to refute in words and deeds the lie that Stalin and the Stalinists were the heirs of Lenin and Bolshevism, find themselves in a situation where this issue seems to be irrelevant."

He enthusiastically supported the US-NATO imperialist intervention in Bosnia and later acted as a cheerleader for the Kosovo Liberation Army. He repudiated the Leninist-Trotskyist conception of the revolutionary party and Marxism in 1996, declaring, "The idea of providing a party and program 'for' the working class must be completely discarded."

For the ICFI, the split was a turning point that made possible a global renaissance of Marxism. As *The Historical and International Foundations of the SEP (US)* states:

> The opposition of the Workers League to the national opportunism of the WRP was in theoretical alignment with social and economic processes that were already in an advanced stage of development, and which were about to blow apart the existing structures and relations of world politics…
>
> The subsequent development of the ICFI was the conscious response of the Marxist vanguard to the new economic and political situation. The reorientation of the movement was based on a systematic struggle against all forms of nationalism, a reorientation that was inextricably tied to the development of an international perspective.[32]

From July 21 to 27, 2019, the US SEP hosted an international Summer School on the historical origins and political consequences of the ICFI's split with the WRP. This centred on a series of lectures on the history of the ICFI from 1982 to 1995, leading up to the decision to transform the leagues of the ICFI into the Socialist Equality Parties.

It was an intensive review detailing the development of the ICFI's analysis with regards to the impact of globalisation that substantially changed our position on fundamental historical issues. This included:

- How capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy
- The relationship between this and the corporatist transformation of the old labour bureaucracies
- A reappraisal of the defence of the right of nations to self-determination in light of the emergence of numerous bourgeois and petty-bourgeois separatist movements, often based on ethnic exclusivity, seeking the break-up of existing states to secure direct access to the world market the right to exploit the working class.
- The political phenomenon of renunciationism and our appraisal of the pseudo left tendencies
- Above all, how globalisation was exacerbating the fundamental contradictions within world imperialism—between the world economy and its division into antagonistic nation states and between socialised production and private control of the means of production. How this was spurring the imperialist powers, led by the US, towards a new division of the world through trade and military war, while driving the working class objectively towards social revolution.

David North's opening lecture, "The Political Origins and Consequences of the 1982–86 Split in the International Committee of the Fourth International," identified four distinct stages in the history of the Trotskyist movement until 2019.

The first two stages consisted of the 15 years from the formation of the Left Opposition in October 1923 to the founding congress of the Fourth International in September 1938; and then from the founding congress of September 1938 to the split with the Pabloites and the formation of the ICFI in November 1953.

The third stage has been the essential subject of this school: From the publication of Cannon's Open Letter to the suspension of the WRP in December 1985 and the final severing of all relations with the British national opportunists in February 1986.

From this presentation I want to draw comrades' attention to an essential explanation of the relationship between the objective development of the class struggle and the world socialist revolution. This is conceived of as an evolving process, rather than merely an end point. North stressed, and this is the final, fundamental and vital lesson to be drawn from the split:

> The opposition of the Workers League did not arise automatically out of the developing crisis of Stalinism, Social

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> Democracy, bourgeois nationalism, and the global restructuring of world capitalism. Certainly, this created a new relationship of social forces and a more favorable environment for the orthodox Trotskyists and contributed to the victory over the anti-Trotskyist opportunists and renegades.
>
> However, the defeat of the WRP and the ejection of the opportunists from the International Committee was not a pre-ordained and automatic process. It was a struggle that was undertaken consciously and deliberately.[33]

This understanding of the objective significance of revolutionary practice is the essence of the Leninist-Trotskyist theory of the party on which the ICFI is based. We have insisted repeatedly that it is impossible to understand, to make a correct analysis, and to grasp the revolutionary potential in any given situation if the active role of the revolutionary party is excluded.

The fourth stage, which began in 1986 and which North said, in 2019, had come to an end, covers a 33-year period following the split that saw a vastly strengthened International Committee make extraordinary political advances. All of these were only made possible by the historic victory over the WRP leadership. They consisted of rebuilding the world party on an internationalist foundation, elaborating the international strategy of the ICFI, defending the historical heritage of the Fourth International, converting the leagues of the International Committee into parties, and establishing the *World Socialist Web Site*. These advances have made possible a vast expansion in the political influence of the International Committee and a significant growth of its membership.

The lecture stressed:

> In all this work, the fundamental political principle that guided our efforts was that of Marxist internationalism. We insisted upon the primacy of world strategy over national tactics, and that the appropriate response to problems that arise within the national sphere could be derived only on the basis of an analysis of global processes.[34]

The split with the WRP and the extraordinary political work conducted since then is the essential political foundation for the present, fifth stage of the work of the ICFI. This was defined as "the intersection of a new revolutionary upsurge of the international working class with the political activity of the International Committee. The world crisis that we are analysing is one in which the International Committee is an increasingly active and direct participant."

Our work is being conducted amid a deepening crisis of world imperialism, characterised by the descent into war and social and political reaction and the initial eruption of a new global wave of struggle by the working class with objectively revolutionary implications, which we must lead and provide a revolutionary orientation and leadership.

In every major struggle waged by workers, the impact of the ICFI is being felt. The formation of a network of rank-and-file committees has vindicated the decision taken just two years ago to form the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. It has, as we intended, created a path to coordinate workers' struggles in different factories, industries and countries in opposition to the ruling class and the corporatist unions, and provides the means for breaking the stranglehold of the bureaucracy and mobilising workers on a revolutionary internationalist perspective.

Our fight to build a new mass, anti-war movement centred on the younger generation of the working class is a unique response to NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine, the advanced preparations for conflict with China and the escalating danger of a new world war. It stands at the centre of the fight to mobilise the working class for socialism and will establish the ICFI and the IYSSE as the revolutionary leadership of the working class all over the world.

However, we understand that the political trajectory of the International Committee and all that we have accomplished depended on the political and theoretical fight waged against the nationalist degeneration of the WRP—its adaptation to bourgeois nationalism, imperialism and its bureaucratic agencies and their pseudo-left appendages, and in defence of the ICFI as the organised expression of Trotskyism.

Today, no organisational advance we have made lessens the necessity for relentless ideological, theoretical struggle against pseudo-left, semi-anarchist and other petty-bourgeois tendencies that seek to tie the working class to the bourgeois order. Nor from the internal struggle against theoretical or practical manifestations of alien class pressures on the party.

We will develop a genuine socialist consciousness in the working class, build our party and take forward the world socialist revolution only through the struggle for the programme and perspective of Trotskyism waged at the highest level. The assimilation of the lessons of 1985 therefore has been, is, and will continue to be essential in arming our party and its cadre and enabling them to meet the complex challenges ahead.

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