

## 2025 Summer School Lecture 8 Part 2

# The assassination of Comrade Tom Henehan

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*This is the second part of the lecture “The Security and the Fourth International investigation deepens,” delivered by Evan Blake and Josh Andrews to the 2025 Summer School of the Socialist Equality Party (US) on the history of Security and the Fourth International. To accompany this two-part lecture, the WSWS is publishing three supplementary texts: “The Murder of Comrade Tom Henehan: Martyr of the Fourth International,” “The Investigation Must Continue,” and “The SWP, Edward Heisler and the Assassination of Tom Henehan.” These documents are essential reading for the education of Trotskyist cadre today.*

The second part of this lecture will examine the life and death of Tom Henehan in the context of the investigation into Security and the Fourth International. Far from being a mere forensic exercise, this effort was the qualitative deepening of the life-and-death struggle against Stalinism, which took on an increasingly complex form in the protracted fight against Pabloism.

Tom Henehan was born March 16, 1951 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was one of five children born to Mary Elise and Schuyler Henehan. Both of his parents were supporters of the Second Vatican Council, which they saw as a progressive reform of the Catholic Church. His father died in 1968 when Tom was just 17, placing immense responsibilities on him.

His family moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he attended high school. After graduating, he attended Columbia University in New York City, where he would meet the Trotskyists of the Workers League, the predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party (US), in 1972.

The year Tom entered university, 1969, was politically tumultuous. The year before had seen the May-June 1968 general strike of millions in France, with factory occupations and street battles. In the United States, the civil rights movement and student radicalism against the Vietnam War raged. These were major experiences that shaped Tom’s generation.

Tom entered politics under conditions of the breakdown of the whole post-World War II capitalist restabilization. January 1973 witnessed the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, followed a little more than two years later by the fall of Saigon, an event marking the defeat of the largest US military intervention since the Second World War.

The end of the draft and the end of the vastly unpopular conflict in Southeast Asia helped bring about a sharp decline in the wave of student radicalism that had prevailed in the late 1960s. The following year, President Richard Nixon was forced to resign as a result of the Watergate scandal. Meanwhile, anti-colonial struggles raged throughout the world, from the Palestinian resistance in the Middle East, to the overthrow of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique and Angola, to the armed struggles in Zimbabwe and Nicaragua.

At this time the Soviet Union and the Communist parties, responsible for the greatest betrayals of the working class in history, still appeared to the impressionist to be permanent features of political life, directly commanding vast material resources and one-sixth of the earth’s land surface, as well as the allegiance of millions of workers across the globe.

Bourgeois nationalist movements based themselves on maneuvering

between the Soviet bureaucracy and imperialism in order to extract the best deals possible without challenging the world imperialist order. Opportunist “left” movements in the advanced countries oriented themselves towards the “self-reform” of the Stalinist bureaucrats.

Tom, however, was deeply dissatisfied with the prevailing culture of campus radicalism, which while using Marxist-sounding phraseology, ascribed the task of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism to any force besides the working class. He rejected the anti-Marxist theories then floating around at the universities that placed subjective experience and personal identity above class, theories to which the revisionists such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) adapted themselves.

Tom first met the Workers League at Columbia in 1972, where comrades were speaking. He purchased pamphlets and had discussions with party members. He took up a serious study of the history and theory of the Trotskyist movement and did not take the decision to join the party lightly. But when he did, he was fully committed. After joining in February 1973, he plunged himself into the work of the party, particularly with the Young Socialists.

Tom conducted vital political work, traveling to the coal mines in West Virginia in 1974, where his efforts, particularly in selling the *Bulletin*, made the Workers League well-known among miners. Between 1974 and 1977, he would make numerous visits with comrade David North and others to the mines in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky. He visited workers in their homes and fought tirelessly to recruit them. In 1975, he traveled to London as a leader of the Young Socialists delegation to the founding of the International Youth Committee of the Fourth International (IYCFI).

A crucial area of Henehan’s political responsibility was the Brooklyn Navy Yard. For three years prior to his death, he was familiar to the workers there, selling the *Bulletin*, visiting and fighting to recruit them, helping to issue leaflets and bringing party campaigns to workers. In January 1977, he was elected to the Political Committee of the Workers League, taking on increased responsibilities, particularly in the party’s press and trade union work.

But Tom’s contribution to the party was not limited to industrial interventions, as important as they were. In Comrade North’s address to the memorial meeting held by the Workers League for Tom one week after his death in October 1977, he noted:

Comrade Tom began to make great political strides forward and emerge as a true party leader at precisely the time when the Workers League had to conduct a struggle against the renegacy and betrayal of Wohlforth. It was when the party faced its greatest challenge, when it was fighting for its life, that the fighting qualities of Tom emerged.

He recognized at once that the struggle against revisionism was inseparable from a turn by the party toward the industrial working

class and the youth. And Tom was determined to lead and fight for that turn.

The four and a half years that Tom was in the party constituted a crucial period in the history of the Workers League. It encompassed the break with Tim Wohlforth in 1974 over his reckless endangerment of the security of the movement and the political degeneration that lay behind it, which led to the very launching of the Security and the Fourth International investigation. A key element of this qualitative development in the political work of the Workers League was a physical and theoretical turn to the working class, which Tom helped to lead.

## **Background to the assassination**

The assassination of Tom Henehan took place two and a half years into the investigation into Security and the Fourth International. As reviewed in Part 1 of this lecture, the investigation had made two key advances in 1977:

First, in May 1977, the ICFI interviewed Sylvia Franklin, the Stalinist GPU agent who served as personal secretary for party leader James P. Cannon from 1938 to 1947. This further exposed Franklin, whom SWP leader Joseph Hansen referred to as an “exemplary comrade.” It was in response to this revelation that Hansen wrote the article in which he threatened “deadly consequences.”

Second, on July 29, 1977, the IC published documents obtained from the federal archive through a Freedom of Information Act request revealing Hansen’s role as a double agent, first for the Stalinist GPU and then for American imperialism.

These developments threw the SWP into a deep crisis. It had been frantically making false allegations of violence against members of the Workers League, including David North. These were exposed as lies in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

The political attacks and slanders by the revisionists coincided with an increase in the power and criminality of the intelligence agencies of the imperialist state. In the period leading up to Tom’s assassination, the FBI had engaged in provocations and outright crimes. Gary Thomas Rowe Jr. participated in the murder of Detroit civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo and the beating of Freedom Riders at the Birmingham bus depot as an FBI agent inside the Ku Klux Klan.

## **The role of the SWP’s Ed Heisler**

Not known at the time, but soon revealed through the continuation of the Security investigation, was the role of one Ed Heisler in the machinations of the SWP in the lead-up to the assassination of Tom Henehan. In June 1980, during the SWP lawsuit against the FBI, Heisler, a member of the SWP’s Administrative Secretariat—a key subcommittee of the Political Committee unknown to most members of the SWP—exposed himself as an FBI agent. Information that came out during the lawsuit disproved the claim of SWP Political Committee member Larry Seigle—made to that party’s membership—that, in the period leading up to his exposure, Heisler was a “political dead fish.”

Despite the fact that Heisler could have provided compelling evidence as to the FBI’s infiltration of the SWP, its leadership purposely avoided calling Heisler to the stand. After initially telling SWP members that

Heisler would serve as a key witness in the case, the party’s leaders used the excuse that he lived more than 100 miles outside New York City and therefore could not be compelled to testify.

However, when the government called Heisler to the stand, it was revealed that he had agreed in a private letter to SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and SWP attorney Margaret Winter to cooperate with the lawsuit.

Before revealing he was an FBI agent in his June 1980 letter to the SWP, Heisler had been a member of the organization for 20 years, rising to its highest leadership levels. In 1977, Heisler was the SWP’s lead public spokesman. He acted as the trade union chairman of the 1976 presidential campaign. He led work among steelworkers, coal miners and postal workers.

Heisler’s systematic elevation reached a high point at the SWP’s National Convention in Oberlin, Ohio in 1977, where he was elected to the Political Committee.

Directly after the convention, numerous SWP members from different parts of the country moved into jobs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York City. As noted, this was the center of Tom’s political work for the previous three years. In the fall of 1976, he had organized a highly successful rally at the Navy Yard as part of the Workers League’s election campaign in the Bushwick (Brooklyn) congressional district.

In a pamphlet the Workers League put out in August 1981, titled “Edward Heisler, the SWP, and the Assassination of Tom Henehan,” we noted that

SWP members quickly found numerous jobs at the Navy Yard, despite the fact that the yard was in continual financial crisis with frequent layoffs. This has been the case throughout the FBI SWP’s “turn to industry,” as SWP members found an open door in key plants throughout the country, regardless of economic conditions, layoffs, or waiting lists of other applicants for jobs.

Heisler coordinated this mobilization through his position on the Administrative Secretariat. As he testified on June 18, 1981, this body “would discuss possible assignments or reassignments of personnel in various departments or branches of the SWP.”

It should also be noted that in the period immediately leading up to Henehan’s murder, Heisler was relieved of his duties as the SWP’s lead public spokesman and his role in covering trade union questions in the *Militant*, despite his previously prominent role. Within two months of the killing, Heisler moved to Los Angeles, a city where he had never lived, while continuing to work behind the scenes in the SWP and even receiving large cash loans from the SWP National Office.

## **Details of Tom Henehan’s assassination in October 1977**

The following sequence of events was established shortly after the assassination:

The dance where Tom was assassinated, a benefit for political prisoner Gary Tyler held at the Ponce Social Club in New York City, began at 9:30 p.m. on the evening of October 15. The Workers League had hosted dances and social events of this kind before, including at the Ponce Social Club, without incident. The evening began like any other, albeit with a scuffle at the door over an unknown man attempting to enter without paying the 75 cents for a ticket. Jacques Vielot, a member of the Workers League who was chaperoning the youth event with Tom, repulsed

multiple attempts to enter by this individual, whom we would later discover was named Edwin Sequinot.

The owner of the club and her son, Mrs. Ponce and Louis Ponce, had had to calm down Sequinot and two youth who were with him, 17-year-old Angel Rodriguez and a 15-year-old, confiscating a large stick from one of them, in the half-hour leading up to the shooting of Henehan. At about 12:30 a.m., these three entered the pool room adjoining the dance hall. A table stood in the doorway between the two rooms. Vielot watched from the dance hall side and at this point requested Tom to send two extra stewards for assistance.

It was then that Angelo Torres, known to the others as "T," entered the dance hall. Jacques heard Sequinot refer to Tom as "El blanco" (which can mean either "the white man" or "the target" in Spanish). Sequinot then pointed at Jacques and said, "This is the man who grabbed me." Torres walked over to Jacques and proceeded to punch his head. As Jacques tried to defend himself, he was grabbed from behind by the other two men. When Tom rushed to his defense, he was shot by Torres multiple times in the neck, chest and shoulder. The gun was a "bluish" .38 caliber pistol with a brown or burgundy butt. This piece of information would later become important.

When Jacques tried to get to the gunman, he was shot multiple times in the abdomen by Sequinot. When he reached Torres, the latter put the gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. There was only a click. The gun was empty. The assassins fled the scene.

Tom was still conscious as Jacques rushed him to Wyckoff Heights Hospital despite his own injuries. Despite massive blood transfusions, Tom Henehan died at 2:50 a.m. on the morning of October 16. Jacques Vielot would remain in the hospital for two weeks.

### **The ICFT's investigation into Tom's assassination**

A discussion of the political and logistical elements that led to Tom's death must be based on the fact that from a medical standpoint his death once he reached the hospital was not unavoidable.

Tom arrived at the hospital no later than 1:15 a.m. and did not die until some 90 minutes later. The surgeon on call the night of Tom's death was general surgeon Dr. Sangjin Lim, who would testify at the trial of Angelo Torres three years later. He graduated from the National University in Seoul, South Korea in 1964. From 1967 to 1968 he interned at the Bronx Lebanon Hospital in New York City. From 1968 until 1973, he was a surgical resident at Wyckoff Heights Hospital. In 1973 and 1974, he served as surgical fellow at then-LaGuardia Hospital in Queens. When the prosecutor asked Lim how many operations he had performed throughout his career he replied, "Over about 2,000." At this time, South Korea was under the rule of the anti-communist dictatorship of Park Chung Hee.

At the trial, Lim was asked only one question about Tom Henehan: what time he had died. From a legal standpoint, this was inexplicable. The charge of second degree murder requires that it be proved the wounds inflicted were certain to cause death.

The prosecutor did seek to establish that Jacques Vielot faced "substantial risk" of death without treatment of his wounds. In response to questioning along these lines, Lim stated, "We had to operate. There is no way we could not operate and wait and observe in this case." Why was this not the case for Henehan, the more seriously injured of the two?

In a 1981 pamphlet reviewing the case, the Workers League wrote:

The autopsy report submitted at the trial does not indicate that the bullets fired by Torres destroyed either any major organ or

major artery.

The autopsy report refers to three bullet wounds. It states specifically that the bullet to the neck "passes that area not hitting any of the vital organs." (Court Transcript, p. 262)

In fact, the autopsy did not provide an actual cause of death but only lists wounds: "GUNSHOT WOUNDS OF THE NECK, CHEST, WRIST, HYOID BONE, LUNG, MASSIVE INTERNAL HEMORRHAGE: HOMICIDE."

The most serious of these wounds was caused by the bullet that entered Tom's chest and pierced his left lung. Doctors contacted by the Workers League were astounded that Henehan had died in the emergency room and that surgery had not even been attempted. The standard procedure for such a case is a thoracotomy (opening of the chest) as soon as possible.

The Workers League noted in the above-mentioned pamphlet the medical parallel between the wounds sustained by President Ronald Reagan in the March 30, 1981, attempt on his life and those which, left untreated, led to Tom's death. We quoted an article in the *U.S. News & World Report*, which suggested to us that Reagan's injury had been quite similar to Tom's. The piece went into detail on the proper method of treatment, which was afforded the wounded US president.

Attendants moved fast. A tube was quickly inserted in his chest to expand the lung and drain off blood pooling inside the chest cavity.

Reagan never went into shock, but his blood loss was so great that emergency surgery was essential. He was given a transfusion of 2 ½ quarts of blood, nearly half the normal volume of blood in the body.

Roughly 40 minutes after arriving at the hospital, Reagan was in the operating room...

Although the operation is considered a major one, Reagan's surgery was neither extraordinary nor rare.

The pamphlet further notes that Wyckoff Heights Hospital did, in fact, have the necessary facilities to treat Tom's wounds and that many of the patients admitted to hospital were treated for gunshot and stab wounds, with a high risk of death. It remains an unanswered question why Tom was not given adequate medical treatment that could have changed the outcome of the assassination.

### **The response of the police**

The New York Police Department, and the lead detective on the case, John Mohl, had initially conveyed a desire to apprehend and punish the perpetrators, telling comrade David North, "This shouldn't happen in America regardless of your political beliefs. This is a democracy."

This professed concern quickly wore off and the NYPD refused to take action against the killers, despite knowing their identities. During an October 25, 1977 phone call, Mohl told North, "We know who you are. You print a red newspaper," referring to Henehan as "just another dead commie."

From the beginning, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the police and district attorney insisted the murder was a random act of violence without political motivation. As North noted in a letter to Eugene Gold, district attorney of Kings County (Brooklyn), dated May 11, 1978,

this was “because the ‘theory’ of the non-political and ‘senseless crime’ would conveniently permit the police to conclude their investigation before even starting it.” The police further insisted there was only one assassin, despite eyewitness testimony and forensic evidence, as this would immediately suggest a conspiracy.

The assassination of Tom Henehan was blacked out in the bourgeois press, with only minor reports promoting this “senseless killing” narrative. The only paper in New York City to carry an article on the murder was the *New York Post*, four days after the murder and far from the front page. On October 23, 1977, a week after the assassination, the *Daily News* carried an article headlined, “Murder in New York: A Case by Case Look at the Week’s Slaughter.” Featured as the fifth of these so-called “senseless killings” was that of Tom Henehan, referred to in the article as “Heneham,” with as many factual errors as there were words. It got his name and address wrong. The details of the assassination were inaccurate. More fundamentally, it mischaracterized the event as a “private gathering” and omitted Tom’s political affiliations. It falsely claimed that Tom and Jacques were members of the Ponce Social Club. As North pointed out in the abovementioned letter to the DA, all the information obtained by the newspaper would have been from the police.

Doctors at Wyckoff Heights Hospital extracted a bullet from Violot’s body. It was measured at Violot’s request and was found to have been smaller than those fired from Torres’ gun that killed Tom Henehan. Doctors told Violot the bullets would have to be handed over to the police. Yet the latter would initially claim they knew nothing about this. Other physical evidence was ignored.

### **Tom’s memorial meeting**

But the Workers League knew that the bourgeois state would do nothing to bring the killers to justice. Rather, the fight in the working class to expose the killers and the killing was part of the class struggle against the state.

A week after the assassination of Tom Henehan, on October 22, 1977, the Workers League held a memorial meeting in his honor. Comments were delivered by leading members of the Workers League and by Mike Banda, General Secretary of Workers Revolutionary Party, at that time the British section of the ICFI.

Tom’s family was also in attendance. In particular, his mother Mary Elise was a source of strength in this difficult time. At the 20th anniversary memorial meeting held in 1997, David North would recall pondering how he could comfort Marie Elise when she arrived. But upon her arrival, she immediately comforted him. The character of this woman illuminated how such a dedicated and idealistic person as Tom took shape. Many family members would also attend the 1997 meeting, some traveling thousands of miles to be there.

All speakers at the 1977 memorial meeting testified to Tom’s dedication and persistence in fighting to build the Workers League and Young Socialists. They emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was not primarily to mourn Tom’s death but rather to redouble the devotion of the cadre to the principles for which Tom had fought and was killed.

David North, then secretary of the Workers League, explained:

Tom was party. What stands out about Tom, what everyone who really knew him recognizes, is that he had within the space of just four and a half years bound his own existence entirely with the struggles of the party.

He explained Tom’s ability to speak to workers and youth, flowing from his unflinching devotion to Trotskyism. He also elaborated on the contradictions contained in the person of Tom:

Naturally, this brought him problems as well. Very much the man of action, he would at times give insufficient attention to the theoretical side of work...

But even in this “individual” problem Tom expressed all the contradictions of the working class itself. It is a class which, though slow in coming to Marxist theory, will come to revolutionary theory with unprecedented force through the weight of immense historical experiences.

North explained the significance of Tom’s death for the movement:

Tom was murdered because imperialism knows no way out of its insoluble crisis other than to strike ferociously against the working class and, above all, its revolutionary leadership.

The WRP gave important support to the Tom Henehan campaign. Gerry Healy, in particular, encouraged comrades in the Workers League to pursue the investigation as an initiative in the working class. WRP leaders helped organize and spoke at the memorial meeting.

However, signs of the WRP’s opportunist drift had already begun to emerge. As David North noted in his remarks at the 20th anniversary memorial meeting in 1997:

In fact, at the memorial meeting held after Tom’s murder in October 1977, we listened with a mixture of surprise, alarm and dismay as Mike Banda, the general secretary of the WRP, transformed what had begun as a eulogy of Tom into an unabashed tribute to the Palestine Liberation Organization! Praising the politics of Arafat, Banda declared that in the pursuit of the goal of a democratic and socialist Palestine, the PLO leaders “were not trying to take any shortcuts, any pragmatic expedients.

### **Working class support for the investigation into Tom’s assassination**

The memorial meeting touched off a protracted struggle within the working class and youth to demand the killers be arrested and punished.

The ICFI won broad support among trade unionists, civil rights activists, workers and young people for the Tom Henehan campaign. A petition demanding that the police apprehend Torres and Sequinot collected tens of thousands of signatures. Dozens of articles were written in the *Bulletin*.

William Winpisinger, then International President of the International Association of Machinists, was the first member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council to support the campaign. Numerous representatives of the United Auto Workers union signed on to support the campaign, including Marc Stepp, UAW vice president in charge of Chrysler; Tim Andrews, president of UAW Local 740 at Kalamazoo Stamping and Die; and Paul Couch, president of UAW Local 1663. Civil rights activists and academics also gave their endorsements.

Many wrote letters or gave messages of support, including Gary Tyler, an African American youth falsely imprisoned in 1974 and only released

in 2016. Tom had been deeply involved in the struggle for Gary's freedom, which was spearheaded by the Workers League. In his tribute to Tom, Gary said:

Tom Henehan, the brother who was assassinated by this capitalist system, really fought for what he believed in and died for what he believed in. What happened to him should make us stronger.

He was educated in the struggle. He was influenced by a lot around him. He was well experienced and he knew that in order for the people to be educated about this system, that he and others had to get out there and pass literature, publish papers and talk about this system."

The Socialist Workers Party, however, along with every other Pabloite organization around the world, violated the most basic principle of solidarity among workers' organizations of defending another group, regardless of political differences, from provocations by imperialism. Neither the Stalinist Communist Party, nor any other "left" tendency, published one word on Tom's assassination.

### **Apprehension of the killers and the continuation of the investigation**

It was not until exactly three years after Tom's assassination that Angelo Torres was arrested, on October 15, 1980. Detective Frederick Nelson of the 90th precinct, who informed the Workers League of the arrest the following day, painted a picture of a harrowing hunt for the perpetrator. It was suggested in the course of the "investigation" that Torres may have fled the country. However, when he testified before the Brooklyn Supreme Court on July 21, 1981, Nelson said the police did not even begin the official search for Torres until days after Henehan's death.

From the beginning, the police knew Torres' address. As it turned out, he had lived at this location for the entire three-year period of the investigation. What's more, he had been arrested for a separate crime in neighboring Queens County and subsequently released, despite the assurances of the detectives to the Workers League that he had been entered into a nationwide database so that local police anywhere in the country could find him and turn him over.

After the arrest of Torres, the police obstinately stuck to their "one-man" theory of the killing. Edward Sequinot, who was on a weekend work program from prison the night of the killing, was paroled three months after the death of Henehan. District Attorney Gold did not order he be taken into custody until December 1980, despite having all the information that would be brought forth at the trial, by October 20, 1977.

Finally, on July 12, 1981, Angelo Torres and Edward Sequinot were convicted for the murder of Tom Henehan and attempted murder of Jacques Vielot. Judge Sybil Hart Cooper imposed on Angelo Torres consecutive terms of 12 ½ to 25 years for the attempted second degree murder of Vielot and 25 years to life for the second degree murder of Henehan, with a concurrent term of 7 ½ to 15 years for criminal possession of a deadly weapon. To Sequinot, she allotted two consecutive terms of 12 ½ to 25 years for first degree manslaughter in the death of Henehan and attempted second degree murder in the shooting of Vielot.

As the Workers League noted in a November 1981 pamphlet titled, "The Investigation Must Continue," the trial

would never have been held and the convictions would never have been obtained had it not been for the mass support within the labor movement mobilized by the Workers League and the Young Socialists behind the demand that the killers of Tom Henehan be apprehended.

But as the title suggests, for the Workers League the conviction of Torres and Sequinot concluded only the first stage of the investigation. The hitmen had been brought to justice, but it remained necessary to expose and hold accountable those who put them up to it. While the office of the Brooklyn district attorney maintained its "senseless killing" narrative, claiming there was nothing left to investigate, the evidence set forth in the trial by the prosecuting attorney, Barbara Newman, suggested conspiracy. It was established that the two men acted "in concert." This was the legal basis for the jury finding Torres and Sequinot mutually responsible for each other's actions.

The Workers League continued to campaign within the working class for justice for Tom. Workers, including many who knew the party through Tom's work, supported the campaign and donated generously to fund it. In total, this campaign raised over \$112,510.68 in the span of just six months, the equivalent of over \$550,000 today. The campaign surpassed its goal of raising \$100,000 by May Day, when the total was announced on the front page of the *Bulletin*.

### **The enduring significance of the life and death of Tom Henehan**

In turning ourselves to a study of Security and the Fourth International at a time when the stakes are higher than ever in the struggle against capitalism, that is, the struggle for the future of humanity, we are deepening our commitment to the principles for which Tom lived and died. Tom Henehan's life, as is the case with the Security investigation as a whole, represents a crucial link in the continuity of the Marxist movement.

Tom fought for an orientation to the working class against the twin pressures of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the one hand, and imperialism, on the other, which manifested themselves in the Trotskyist movement as Pabloism. He swam against the stream in refusing to adapt himself to the seemingly invincible Stalinist bureaucracy, as every tendency besides the International Committee had done. The launching of Security and the Fourth International was the highest expression of this struggle.

David North explained at the 20th anniversary memorial meeting that Tom had been vindicated. Referring to the treacherous Stalinist and social democratic parties, Trotsky foresaw that history would "not leave of these outlived organizations one stone upon another." By 1997, this had been realized. As North explained:

The Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union imploded. The Maoist regime in China presides over a system of brutal economic exploitation that has become one of the linchpins of globalized capitalist production. Fidel Castro, deprived of Soviet subsidies, stakes the fortunes of the Cuban economy on the promotion of a tourist trade that is already recreating in modern form the squalor and corruption of the Batista era.

Tom helped lay the groundwork for our movement to be able to respond to these developments. The final betrayal of the Soviet bureaucracy in

dissolving the first workers' state in history did not take us by surprise. We were armed with the theory of Trotsky. Our orientation to the working class allowed us to steer clear of the rubble left behind by all the radical and nationalist movements that had based themselves on this parasitic caste.

Because of this political struggle, the Workers League was well equipped to respond in a principled fashion to the descent of the WRP into national opportunism in 1982. Then, having preserved the perspective of orthodox Trotskyism, in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, we were able to make great strides with our analysis of globalization, the transformation of the leagues into parties, and the launching of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

But none of this was predetermined. While the internal contradictions of capitalism lead to its destruction and raise the objective possibility of socialism, history requires that individuals assimilate and act on these forces. Subjective characteristics such as bravery and determination both reflect and drive forward these processes.

North explained at the meeting, "What we mourn in the death of Tom Henahan is the loss of not only a comrade and friend, but a precious and irreplaceable instrument of social enlightenment and human progress."

Pabloism, on the other hand, denigrated the independent historical role of the revolutionary party. It did not take the revolutionary role of the working class seriously, therefore it did not take the lives of the cadre seriously and therefore did not take security seriously. This attitude effectively invited agents into their ranks.

Today, as our work increasingly intersects with the growing radicalization of the masses, we must follow Tom's example. He showed us what it means to be a cadre. Permit me to conclude by quoting at length from David North's tribute to the 20th anniversary memorial meeting in 1997, when he posed the question:

What was it that attracted Tom Henahan to the Workers League? Just as the character of a person is expressed in the philosophy he adopts, an individual reveals, in the choice of a party, the forces, ideals, principles and aims that motivate him at the most profound level of his intellectual and moral being.

But the relation between the party and the individuals of whom it is composed is a complex one. It is undoubtedly true that an individual must choose the party that he wishes to join. But in a broader historical sense, it is still truer to say that the members of a party—and especially a Marxist party—are themselves the product of a historical selection...

The revolutionary movement is a great fisher of men and women. It seeks out those who have the capacity to rise to the level of the most difficult of historical tasks, who are prepared to devote to the socialist cause not merely months or even several years, but decades and even a lifetime. It demands of its members exceptional powers of intellectual and moral endurance.

Those who are seeking only superficial answers to the problems of this world will choose a party that makes few demands upon their intellect, that offers easy and reassuring answers to complex problems, that adapts to the prevailing prejudices of public opinion and so-called common sense, and that denies the depth of commitment, intensity of struggle and theoretical labor required for the revolutionary transformation of society.

Superficial organizations attract superficial people. Of all the words that could be used to describe Tom Henahan, superficial is the last that would come to mind.

Tom was drawn to the Workers League by its concern for problems of theory, its study of Marxism as a science, and the profound sense of history that permeated its perspective and

program. Tom's decision to join the Workers League expressed an essential seriousness of thought and purpose.

Thank you, comrades.



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