

40 years since the split with the WRP

VIDEO: London meeting marks a milestone in the history of the Fourth International

Our reporter
18 March 2026

The *World Socialist Web Site* is publishing here the video of the public meeting held on March 14 in London, marking the 40th anniversary of the historic struggle against the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) leadership, which led to its expulsion from the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The meeting was addressed by a panel of speakers, including David North, chairperson of the *World Socialist Web Site* and of the Socialist Equality Party of the United States. As the leader of the US Workers League, forerunner of the US SEP, North played the leading role in the struggle against the political degeneration of the WRP leadership.

At stake was the survival of Trotskyism, of revolutionary Marxism as an organised political tendency.

For several decades, the British Trotskyist movement, led by Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter and Mike Banda, had enjoyed great political authority because of their defence of Trotskyism from the tendency known as Pabloism, which had sought to liquidate the sections of the Fourth International into the Stalinist, reformist and bourgeois nationalist tendencies that dominated the working class. By the 1980s, however, after a protracted period of political backsliding of an opportunist and nationalist character, they had abandoned and then betrayed the key theoretical conquests and principles of Marxism and Trotskyism.

The ICFI majority's struggle against the WRP, led by the Workers League, prepared the way for a renaissance of Marxist thought, including an unparalleled analysis of globalisation, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism, and the

wave of anti-socialist renunciationism which swept across the social democratic parties and trade unions. It laid the foundations for the founding of the Socialist Equality Parties and the production of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

In his presentation, Chris Marsden, National Secretary of the SEP (UK), explained the protracted degeneration of the Healy, Slaughter and Banda leadership and the emergence of a Trotskyist opposition within the International Committee with the critique elaborated by David North between 1982-84, and how this won the support of a proletarian tendency within the then British section, led by Dave Hyland.

Peter Schwarz, the Secretary of the ICFI, described the intervention against the WRP's degeneration led by North, and how this clarified the essential political issues at stake in the conflict at a time when the WRP was whipping up hysteria among middle-class layers within the membership.

The victory of the ICFI, he explained, anticipated the political collapse of all the political forces that kept the working class and the oppressed masses under control in the post-war period, to which the WRP had capitulated: Stalinism, social reformism, petty-bourgeois nationalism and pseudo-left tendencies such as Syriza, Podemos, Die Linke and the Corbynite left in Britain.

In his closing remarks, David North explained that the defence of the perspective of world socialist revolution against the WRP's capitulation to Stalinism, social democracy, the trade union bureaucracy and bourgeois nationalism is the only basis on which the working class, especially the younger generation, can wage a struggle against imperialism's present descent

into barbarism.

Mass repression in the United States and the launching of the criminal war against Iran had the same aim: to abolish the revolutionary social and political gains of the 20th century. He told the meeting, “We are living now in a historical period in which either the working class comes to power and puts an end to capitalism, or capitalism will put an end to the world... We are in a revolutionary period. We are in a counter-revolutionary period. Which of these two tendencies in the world will predominate? As Trotsky said so well in 1932-33, against the shadow of approaching fascism, struggle will decide.”



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