The Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada): Part 8

Socialist Equality Party (Canada)
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Delegates to the Socialist Equality Party's founding congress held in Montreal from August 22 to 24 unanimously adopted a comprehensive document outlining the party's Historical and International Foundations. *It is being published on the* World Socialist Web Site *in ten parts. Click here to access the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh parts, respectively.*

The WSWS previously published a report on the congress, which marked a major milestone in the struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution, as well as the SEP Canada's Statement of Principles.

Capitalist globalization and world socialist revolution

169. The ICFI's defence of proletarian internationalism against the neo-Pabloite WRP animated its response to the globalization of production. Representing a qualitatively new stage in the structure of world capitalism, globalization raised to a new pitch of intensity the contradictions at the heart of the profit system, above all the contradiction between the global character of production and the division of the world into rival nation states. The emergence of transnational corporations employing workers and producing goods on a global scale coincided with the loss by the United States of its hegemonic economic position, signified in its transformation from the world's largest creditor into its biggest debtor. Point 117 of the ICFI's 1988 perspectives resolution *The World Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Fourth International* emphasized the revolutionary implications of globalization, declaring, "The absolute and active predominance of the world economy over all national economies, including that of the United States, is a basic fact of modern life. Advances in technology associated with the invention and perfection of the integrated circuit have produced revolutionary changes in communications which, in turn, have accelerated the process of global economic integration. But these economic and technological developments, far from opening up new historical vistas for capitalism, have raised the fundamental contradiction between world economy and the capitalist nation-state system, and between social production and private ownership, to an unprecedented level of intensity."[121]

170. In the process of a careful analysis of the economic, social, and political implications of the emergence of transnational corporations with the ability not only to distribute, but plan and produce commodities on a world scale, the ICFI explained that the working class was objectively more unified than ever before. In its 1988 resolution, the ICFI emphasized, "It has long been an elementary proposition of Marxism that the class struggle is national only as to form, but that it is, in essence, an international struggle. However, given the new features of capitalist development, even the *form* of the class struggle must assume an international character. Even the most elemental struggles of the working class pose the necessity of coordinating its actions on an international scale. It is a basic fact of economic life that transnational corporations exploit the labour power of workers in several countries to produce a finished commodity, and that they distribute and shift production between their plants in different countries and on different continents in search of the highest rate of profit. ... Thus, the unprecedented international mobility of capital has rendered all nationalist programs for the labor movement of different countries obsolete and reactionary."[122]

171. The organizations rooted in the national framework, including the trade unions, and social democratic and Stalinist parties, reacted to these developments by renouncing "even the elementary conceptions that the proletariat exists as a distinct class in society and that it must defend its independent interests against capitalist exploitation."[123] The objective foundations were being laid for a necessary growth in the influence of the International Committee. As David North stated in a political report to the 13th congress of the Workers League in August 1988, "We anticipate that the next stage of proletarian struggles will develop inexorably, beneath the combined pressure of objective economic tendencies and the subjective influence of Marxists, along an internationalist trajectory. The proletariat will tend more and more to define itself in practice as an international class; and the Marxian internationalists, whose policies are the expression of this organic tendency, will cultivate this process and give it conscious form."[124]

172. The ICFI warned that the raising of world capitalism's contradictions to a new pitch of intensity also increased the danger of world war. This point was elaborated in the 1988 world perspectives document: "The global character of capitalist production has tremendously sharpened the economic and political antagonisms between the principal imperialist powers, and has once again brought to the forefront the irreconcilable contradiction between the objective development of the world economy and the nation-state form in which the whole system of capitalist property is historically rooted. Precisely the international character of the proletariat, a class which owes no allegiance to any capitalist 'fatherland,' makes it the sole social force that can liberate civilization from the strangulating fetters of the nation-state system."[125]

173. The main obstacle to the mobilization of the international working class to liberate human civilization from capitalist barbarism were the national opportunist politics advanced by all the organizations that continued to base their political activity on and strategically orient to the nation state. As the document continued, "Revolutionary internationalism is the political antipode of opportunism. In one form or another,

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opportunism expresses a definite adaptation to the so-called realities of political life within a given national environment. Opportunism, forever in search of shortcuts, elevates one or other national tactic above the fundamental program of the world socialist revolution. Considering the program of 'world socialist revolution' too abstract, the opportunist hankers after supposedly more concrete tactical initiatives. Not only does the opportunist choose to 'forget' the international character of the working class. He also 'overlooks' the fact that the crisis in each country, having its essential origin in global contradictions, can only be resolved on the basis of an internationalist program. No national tactic, however significant its role in the political arsenal of the party … can preserve its revolutionary content if it is elevated above or, what amounts to the same thing, detached from, the world strategy of the International Committee. Thus, the central historic contribution which the sections of the International Committee make to the workers' movement in the countries in which they operate is the collective and unified struggle for the perspective of world socialist revolution."[126]

The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and the split in the UAW

174. An important expression of the sharpening of inter-imperialist antagonisms identified in the ICFI's 1988 world perspectives document was the interconnected eruption of trade war conflicts and the emergence or strengthening of regional economic blocs. In January 1989, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, which was subsequently expanded into NAFTA, came into force. In 1993 the European Economic Community was transformed into the European Union. Conflicts over markets, pools of labour to exploit and resources like those that had riven the world economy during the 1930s in the run-up to the second imperialist world war were increasingly dominating economic and political life.

175. Historically, the Canadian bourgeoisie resisted domination and absorption by the dynamic dollar republic to the south by maintaining a close association with Britain and its empire and employing high tariffs to secure its domination of the home market. The abandonment of its century-old National Policy in 1988-89 represented a major shift in its class strategy and provoked a major political crisis, which sharply posed the urgency of the working class advancing its own socialist-internationalist solution to the global capitalist crisis.

176. The trade unions and the NDP, with the full-throated support of the Stalinists, joined with the federal Liberal Party and weaker sections of capital that feared they would not survive in a continental market in vehemently opposing the FTA. This included shrill accusations that the FTA's proponents were "betraying" "our Canada" and conniving in a US plot to effect its takeover. In reality, it was the most powerful sections of Canadian capital that initiated and championed the push for closer economic ties with the US, which already accounted for 78 percent of all Canada's exports—a full quarter of all goods produced in the country annually. They argued that assured access to a much larger market was vital under conditions where the world economy was fracturing into regional blocs, even as it became far more globally integrated, and where the US, in response to the growing power of Japanese and European, especially German, capital was turning toward protectionism. Without such access and the "economies of scale" that it would provide, Canadian companies would be unable to retool under conditions of rapid technological change, soon threatening even their position in the tariff-protected home-market.

177. In opposition to both camps, the Workers League and its US sister party fought for the unity of the North American working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program. "The debate over free trade is a dispute within the Canadian ruling class over how best to defend its profits in the face of a mounting world economic crisis…," explained the Workers League of Canada in an October 1987 statement, "No to Protectionism and 'Free Trade'! For a workers' government!". "To say that the working class must choose between supporting one or the other wing of the bourgeoisie in this dispute, is like arguing, as so many employers have in recent years, that workers must choose between accepting savage concessions or joining the unemployment lines. Neither free trade nor protectionism can serve as the banner of the labour movement because they are both strategies for the defence of capitalism, not jobs and workers' living standards. …

"The alliance the NDP and CLC have formed with important sections of big business to oppose the Canada-U.S trade agreement," the statement continued, "is a trap for the working class, the antechamber to a Liberal-NDP coalition government. Should the Liberal-labour alliance succeed in scuttling the free trade pact, the labour movement will be scapegoated when Canada is ravaged by trade war. Should the trade pact stand, [NDP leader Ed] Broadbent and [CLC President] Shirley Carr will argue that the threat of US competition makes it imperative that workers sacrifice their wages and boost productivity to ensure 'our' Canadian bosses continue to make healthy profits."[127]

178. At the head of the union bureaucracy's alliance with the anti-free trade wing of the ruling class was Bob White and the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW). In 1985, the CAW, under White's leadership, had split from the UAW, rupturing the bonds of joint struggle that US and Canadian autoworkers had forged in the mass struggles for industrial unionism in the 1930s and 1940s. The split was a reactionary maneuver, carried out by White on an expressly Canadian nationalist basis and with the aim of insulating the bureaucracy on both sides of the border from massive rank-and-file unrest in the face of historic job and wage cuts. The Workers Leagues of the US and Canada stood alone in opposing this betrayal, warning of its dangerous implications, and fighting for a joint struggle of North American auto workers against all concessions and job cuts. The split, they warned in a December 1984 joint statement, would open "the way to a competitive bidding war between" the rival American and Canadian unions, "each seeking to undercut the other by offering lower labor costs and higher profits to the auto companies."[128] It did not take long for this analysis to be vindicated. Over the past four decades, the UAW and the CAW (now Unifor) bureaucracies have systematically pitted workers against each, whip-sawing wages, jobs, and conditions back and forth across the 49th parallel, while pouring out Canadian and American nationalist bile.

Capitalist restoration in the USSR and its implications

179. The Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 provided the final vindication of the nearly seven-decade struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement against the bureaucracy. The liquidation of the USSR confirmed Trotsky's appraisal of Stalinism as the gravedigger of the revolution. It was the outcome of the failure of the reactionary autarchic program of "socialism in one country," which became an ever-greater hurdle to the development of the Soviet economy as its complexity grew. Defending the strategy of world socialist revolution against the Stalinist program of "socialism in one country" in the 1920s, the Left Opposition had argued that the development of the Soviet economy depended upon gaining access to the resources of world economy, which ultimately could be realized only in two ways. Either the working class would conquer power in the main capitalist centres and secure global collaboration between workers' states on the road towards socialism, or

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the Soviet economy would be reintegrated into the world capitalist economy at the cost of all the conquests made by the working class in 1917.

180. The Stalinist bureaucracy, headed by Gorbachev, consciously pursued the second of these alternatives. It turned to the restoration of capitalism to protect its privileges from the prospect of a revolutionary upsurge of the working class aimed at returning the USSR to genuine Soviet democracy. This threat had been underlined in a series of working-class rebellions against Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe over the preceding decades, including the eruption of Poland's Solidarity movement in the early 1980s. By anchoring its wealth and power in capitalist property relations, the bureaucracy sought to transform itself into a new Russian bourgeoisie that could forge a new relationship with imperialism to secure Russian capitalism's access to the world market and place among the great powers.

181. The ICFI was the only political tendency able to identify the Stalinists' drive to restore capitalism and fight for a political revolution to preserve the gains of 1917 against their destruction by the bureaucracy. Basing itself on the analysis of Stalinism made by Trotsky in the 1930s, the ICFI warned as early as 1986 that capitalist restoration was the logical outcome of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika. In a March 1987 statement entitled "What is Happening in the USSR?", the ICFI wrote, "The Fourth International unconditionally defends the Soviet Union and the gains of October against imperialism. It unequivocally states that this defense is only possible through the world socialist revolution, which includes as one of its component parts the political revolution to overthrow the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy presently headed by Mikhail Gorbachev…

"The 'democratic' pretensions of the bureaucracy are in fact aimed at politically dissolving the working class into the population as a whole and manipulating class antagonisms which continue in the Soviet Union in order to bolster its own rule. Gorbachev proposes to introduce 'democratic' elections within the ruling party. But the CPSU is not a party of the working class but the political machine of the bureaucratic apparatus. Soviet democracy means the democratic control by the working class of their own dictatorship over Soviet society. This requires workers' control of their trade unions, factory committees and the local, regional and national soviets themselves."[129]

182. The Stalinists ultimately succeeded in devouring the workers' state before the working class could advance its own conscious response. This was due above all to the devastating counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, which through state terror—the high point of which was the political genocide of the 1930s directed against the Trotskyists and all those who embodied the traditions of the October Revolution—and a mountain of lies and falsifications had cut generations of workers off from genuine Marxism and socialist consciousness. It was also the product of the reactionary role of the labour bureaucracies in the imperialist centres of Europe and North America, which were themselves turning sharply right and suppressing a series of militant working-class struggles that pointed to the commonality in conditions facing workers in East and West. As the national framework upon which they based their reformist programs was pulled from under their feet, all of these bureaucratic organizations were repudiating any association with class struggle in a process the ICFI labelled "renunciationism."

183. The dissolution of the USSR was a major defeat for the working class and the ensuing capitalist "shock therapy" resulted in the residents of the former Soviet Union having to endure the greatest peacetime decline in living standards. However, the ICFI emphatically repudiated the global bourgeois triumphalism that represented this event as the end of socialism and to which the "left" middle class surrendered wholesale. What had failed was not socialism, but Stalinism, which like the reformist programs of the social democratic and trade union organizations in the Western countries was based on a reactionary nationalist outlook. The ICFI made clear that the liquidation of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the USSR were an expression of the breakdown of the post-Second World War equilibrium, opening up a new period of deepening capitalist crisis and revolutionary struggles by the proletariat around the world. Not even the largest national bureaucracy in the world, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR, could on the basis of its autarchic economic policies resist the pressures unleashed by the globalization of production. The intensification of the irreconcilable antagonisms of world capitalism caused the system to break at its weakest link. It ushered in a renewed drive by the imperialist powers to redivide the world and reintroduce forms of direct neocolonial domination by waging imperialist wars of plunder, the first of which was the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf.

184. The ICFI exposed the role of the Pabloites and state capitalists in abetting capitalist restoration. They embraced Gorbachev as the embodiment of their bankrupt perspective that the bureaucracy could be pressured into self-reform and worked to tie the working class to the capitalist restorationist bureaucracy and the middle-class "democratic" opposition which was similarly hostile to the nationalized property relations and oriented to the imperialist powers. Having based their entire political project on an orientation to the Stalinist, social democratic, and trade union bureaucracies and the bourgeois nationalist movements, these political tendencies were taken completely by surprise by capitalist restoration. They were quickly swept up in the imperialist triumphialism of the 1990s, with many of their leading theoreticians and spokespeople rapidly emerging as cheerleaders for imperialist wars and parties of the political establishment.

Globalization and the trade unions

185. The nationally-based, pro-capitalist trade unions in North America and around the world proved utterly incapable of providing any progressive response to the globalization of production. The bureaucratic labour apparatuses, which in an earlier period had been able to extract certain limited concessions for the working class within the framework of the nation-state, were transformed during the 1980s and 1990s into open tools of the corporate elite and appendages of the capitalist state. Rather than fighting for wage increases and improvements in conditions for workers, the union bureaucracies enforced job and wage cuts and rollbacks in working conditions in the interests of "their" own ruling elite. As globally mobile corporations scoured the world for the highest rates of return, the union bureaucracies became virulent proponents of protectionism and nationalism, working to pit workers in one country against those in another in a race to the bottom in wages and conditions. Under these conditions, to continue to describe the unions as "workers' organizations" and enjoin workers to "capture" them and transform them into auxiliary instruments of the revolutionary party in the struggle for workers' power would have blinded the working class and its class-conscious vanguard organized in the ICFI to objective reality.

186. In tandem with the unions' corporatist transformation, social democratic parties the world over, including Britain's Labour Party, Germany's Social Democrats and the CLC-sponsored NDP, explicitly abandoned their national reformist programs, and increasingly lost the mass support they had once enjoyed in the working class. They emerged as right-wing bourgeois parties virtually indistinguishable from their conservative and liberal rivals. Bob Rae's 1991-95 NDP government in Ontario typified this transformation, as it oversaw wage cuts and lay-offs for public sector workers, privatizations, and austerity that provoked

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widespread opposition throughout the working class. As David North explained in the immediate aftermath of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, "What has occurred in the former Soviet Union is a manifestation of an international phenomenon. All over the world the working class is confronted with the fact that the trade unions, parties, and even states which they created in an earlier period have been transformed into the direct instruments of imperialism.

"The days are over when the labor bureaucracies 'mediated' the class struggle and played the role of buffer between the classes. Though the bureaucracies generally betrayed the historical interests of the working class, they still, in a limited sense, served its daily practical needs; and, to that extent, 'justified' their existence as leaders of working-class organizations. That period is over. The bureaucracy cannot play any such independent role in the present period."[130]

187. The qualitative change in the relationship between the working class and its traditional organizations and parties required that the supporters of the IC in Canada, as around the world, make corresponding changes to their tactics. Since its formation, the Workers League of Canada had called on workers to demand that the trade unions and social democrats fight for an NDP government pledged to socialist policies, that is fight for a workers' government. Through this demand, the party sought to expose the contradiction between the objective needs of the working class and the counter-revolutionary character of the mass organizations to which the more militant and politically-advanced workers gave their allegiance. Under conditions where there a was a huge wave of militant collective bargaining struggles in the 1970s, one whose reverberations continued well into the next decade, the demand that the unions and NDP unite workers' disparate struggles into an independent political movement for workers' power also served as an important counterweight to powerful syndicalist influences within the working class.

188. However, to have clung to this tactic under the changed conditions of the 1990s would have impeded the political clarification and reorientation of the working class. The change in the party's tactical approach to social democracy was elaborated in a 1992 perspectives resolution, which drew an historical balance sheet of the NDP. "The NDP has never been a workers' party, has never been a vehicle for the struggle for socialism. It is, and has always been, a capitalist party, with a bourgeois program and a leadership tied materially to capitalism. … In line with the new requirements of their bourgeois masters, the NDP and the other social democratic parties have renounced even their traditional reform programme … To defeat the offensive of capital, the working class must break with the NDP, fight to mobilize its independent political strength to drive out the Tory government in Ottawa, and the NDP regimes in the provinces, and fight for the establishment of a workers' government based on socialist policies. The International Workers Party rejects the call of the petty bourgeois radicals for a return to the 'socialist traditions' of the CCF-NDP. The NDP's current leadership and program are the logical outcome of the 'socialist traditions' of the CCF-NDP that is, of the 'tradition' of nationalism and class collaboration."[131]

The National Question and Self-Determination Demand

189. The ICFI's defence of the program of Permanent Revolution through the split with the WRP, its analysis of globalization and of the concomitant political upheavals of the 1980s and early 1990s—which included an eruption of ethno-national conflicts and a proliferation of "new national" movements—impelled it to undertake a critical reexamination of the national question and the self-determination demand.

190. As they competed for the spoils of capitalist restoration, rival factions of the former Stalinist ruling apparatus in the former USSR and Yugoslavia stoked national-ethnic conflicts. In most cases, the imperialist powers fanned these conflicts, seizing on them as a means of advancing their geo-strategic interests. In Asia and Africa, numerous ethno-secessionist movements had emerged out of the manifest failure of the independent capitalist states established through post-Second World War "decolonization" to secure genuine independence from imperialism or resolve any of the other fundamental problems of the democratic revolution. Even the continued existence, at least in their current form, of long-established imperialist nation-states, including Canada, Italy, UK (Scotland), Belgium, was being placed in question by the emergence of movements advocating regional secession.

191. The ICFI adopted a critical and indeed hostile attitude toward these movements which were invariably of an exclusivist character and oriented to imperialism. It demonstrated that a major factor in the emergence of the new national movements was globalization. Globalization, the IC explained, provided "an objective impulse for a new type of nationalist movement, seeking the dismemberment of existing states. Globally-mobile capital has given smaller territories the ability to link themselves directly to the world market. Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan have become the new models of development. A small coastal enclave, possessing adequate transportation links, infrastructure and a supply of cheap labor may prove a more attractive base for multinational capital than a larger country with a less productive hinterland."[132]

192. As part of this re-examination, the ICFI exposed how the Stalinists and Pabloites had systematically distorted and falsified Lenin's approach to the national question and advocacy of the "self-determination" demand, transforming him into a vulgar democrat, so as to justify their popular frontist politics. Moreover, they ignored and opposed the central lesson of the Russian Revolution—that in the imperialist epoch the tasks historically associated with the democratic revolution, including national emancipation and unification, can only be secured through working class-led socialist revolution.

193. Lenin always approached the national question from the standpoint of the struggle for world socialism and securing the "self-determination of the working class"—that is, its political independence, unity, and hegemony. Self-determination was not a promissory note that obliged the working class to support any and every "national demand," including for the establishment of new capitalist nation states, but a weapon in the fight to free the working class from the political influence of the bourgeoisie of both the oppressor and oppressed nation. It was advanced by Lenin in the struggle to unify the working class of various nationalities living under the Tsarist regime, which was rightly characterized as a "prison house of nations." Lenin conceived of it as a means of combatting "Great Russian" chauvinist oppression, while demonstrating to the workers of the national minorities that their social and democratic aspirations, including freedom from all forms of national oppression, could only be realized through a joint struggle with the Russian working class for socialism.

194. Writing at the beginning of the 20th Century and basing himself on the teachings of historical materialism, Lenin recognized the limited progressive role of national movements, which was associated with a specific stage of social evolution, the rise and consolidation of capitalist nation states. And even as he did so, Lenin drew attention to the importance of capitalism's "world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to *assimilate* nations." He characterized this tendency as a universal law of capitalism, and "one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism."[133]

195. By the early 1990s, the world had undergone a vast socio-economic transformation, with many parts of the world which in Lenin's day were only seeing the first stirrings of capitalist development, now largely proletarianized. Furthermore, the working class and oppressed masses had

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gone through a vast and bitter experience with national movements and the creation of new capitalist nation-states. It was the abject failure of the national movements that gained "independence" after World War II to resolve basic democratic tasks that was spawning new separatist tendencies based on ethnicity, religion and language. Comparing national movements in different historical periods, the ICFI wrote: "In India and China, the national movements posed the progressive task of unifying disparate peoples in a common struggle against imperialism—a task which proved unrealizable under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. This new form of nationalism promotes separatism along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines, with the aim of dividing up existing states for the benefit of local exploiters. Such movements have nothing to do with a struggle against imperialism, nor do they in any sense embody the democratic aspirations of the masses of oppressed. They serve to divide the working class and divert the class struggle into ethno-communal warfare."[134]

196. It has often been the case in the history of the Marxist movement that changes in socio-economic conditions or the development of the class struggle invest formulations and slogans that had a progressive and revolutionary content in one period with an entirely different meaning in another. The self-determination demand—whose meaning has been systematically perverted by the Stalinists and Pabloites to imply support for virtually any ethno-nationalist or religio-communal separatist movement and which the imperialist powers have frequently themselves invoked to further their own strategic aims—is precisely such a case.

197. The International Committee's clarification of the significance of the self-determination demand, and its struggle against bourgeois nationalism and its petty-bourgeois apologists, contributed immensely to the strengthening of the revolutionary internationalist foundations of the Fourth International. It provided the theoretical-political orientation for the IC's Sri Lankan section, whose experiences and principled struggle played a major role in the ICFI's reconsideration of the self-determination demand, to formulate a revolutionary, socialist-internationalist response to the ethnic civil war that was provoked by the dominant Sinhalese faction of the bourgeoisie and convulsed the island for over a quarter-century (1983-2009). The Revolutionary Communist League/Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka indefatigably opposed the racist war, calling for the immediate withdrawal of all security forces from the island's Tamil-majority north and east, while exposing the inability of the separatist and national-exclusivist LTTE, which appealed to India and the imperialist powers for support, to secure the democratic rights of the Tamils. Under conditions of state repression and violent attacks on its cadre by both the LTTE and the Sinhala chauvinist JVP, the RCL/SEP fought for the program of permanent revolution: only through the mobilization of the working class, Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim, in the fight for the United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam could the fundamental democratic and social rights of the workers and toilers be realized.

198. The ICFI's critical re-examination of the national question and self-determination demand greatly assisted in the political clarification of the Canadian supporters of the ICFI. In discussions with the Workers League of Canada, the ICFI stressed that while it was appropriate and necessary to counter the false analyses of the development of Canadian imperialism and its state used to depict Quebec as an oppressed nation, our opposition to the Quebec separatist program is first and foremost rooted in and based upon our conception of the nature of the epoch and the world tasks of the proletariat. The experiences of the masses in the twentieth century—from Kurdistan and the Indian subcontinent to the former Yugoslavia—had shown that national oppression and national frictions cannot be overcome, and genuine equality among peoples established, within the framework of the capitalist nation-state system.[135]

199. Under conditions of intensifying capitalist crisis, the bourgeoisie will undoubtedly ratchet up all manner of reaction, including a bellicose Canadian nationalism and Anglo-chauvinism. But this same crisis has placed the working class objectively in a powerful position through its unprecedented global unification to counterpose to chauvinism and reactionary nationalist mythmaking the fight for world socialist revolution. Democratic rights can be defended and secured only through the fight for working-class power, not by trying to prop up foundering bourgeois democracy. As Trotsky affirmed in the final major document he wrote on behalf of the Fourth International, "Just as the only genuinely revolutionary force of our era is the international proletariat, so the only real program to liquidate all oppression, social and national, is the program of permanent revolution."[136]

The founding Congress of the International Workers Party/Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste

200. The founding congress of the International Workers Party/Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste in April 1992 codified in two resolutions the key programmatic gains made by the ICFI following the break from the national opportunists of the WRP and elaborated their implications for the struggle to win the working class in Canada to the program of world socialist revolution. The founding of the IWP was a turning point in the fight for Trotskyism in Canada. It brought to an end an almost 30-year period in which the Pabloites succeeded in blocking the emergence of a Trotskyist party within the Canadian working class. With its formal request for recognition by the ICFI as its Canadian section, the congress marked a significant advance in the struggle to reconnect the Canadian working class with the historical continuity of the fight for Trotskyism conducted by the ICFI against all varieties of revisionism since its founding in 1953.

201. Taking place a mere three months after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, the congress represented an expansion of the IC's struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution. The two perspectives resolutions passed at the congress, "The World Historic Significance of the Fourth International" and "The Perspectives and Tasks of the International Workers Party: The Class Struggle in Canada," refuted the triumphalism of the bourgeoisie whereby it sought to convince itself of its invincibility and intimidate the working class. As the resolution on the historic significance of the Fourth International put it, the founding of the IWP was a nodal point in a "fundamental change in the balance of forces between opportunism and revolutionary Marxism within the working class itself."[137] This change was rooted in the intensification of the capitalist crisis, with globalization shattering the national economic framework on which the labour bureaucracies rested, and in the offensive for Trotskyism mounted by the ICFI in the aftermath of its defeat of the neo-Pabloite WRP.

202. Basing itself on the ICFI's insistence that a new period of war and revolution was opening up with the breakdown of the post-war equilibrium of world capitalism, the IWP's resolution argued that in the coming period it would be presented with unprecedented opportunities to win the working class to Trotskyism. Changes in Canadian social life unprecedented since World War II, including the rapid growth of social inequality, the rise in poverty, a deepening crisis in bourgeois rule as the elite sought to aggressively assert its global imperialist interests through a revival of militarism, and a collapse in the authority of the traditional workers' organizations, were creating the objective conditions for a substantial audience for Trotskyism. "The specific task of the IWP is to bring the program of world socialist revolution to the working class of Canada," argued "The World Historic Significance of the Fourth International." "The fight for this program requires a merciless struggle against the labor bureaucracy which seeks, by promoting Canadian and

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Quebec nationalism, to prevent the Canadian working class from establishing its political independence and uniting with the international proletariat."[138]

203. This fight required the bringing forward of the entire history of the Trotskyist movement's struggle for proletarian internationalism against all forms of national opportunism since its founding in 1923. Drawing on these lessons, and particularly the gains made by the movement internationally following the split with the WRP renegades, the IWP declared, "The opportunist renegades from Trotskyism all came to believe that the struggle for a correct political line is a diversion, indeed a barrier, to the struggle to build revolutionary leadership. In fact, it is the inner-party struggle, the ongoing resistance to imperialism's attempts to fashion from within the ranks of the revolutionary party its last line of defence, that enables the Fourth International to generate the strength to wage war on all forms of opportunism within the labor movement. 'Nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism,' wrote the pioneer American Trotskyist James P. Cannon, 'is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers' organizations including the party'."[139]

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Pivotal to the establishment of the Turkish section of the ICFI in 2022 was its defining of the proletarian internationalist program and perspective on the Kurdish question, in opposition to both Kurdish bourgeois nationalism and the international pseudo-left. Time and again, Kurdish bourgeois nationalist organizations have led the Kurdish people into a blind alley, with devastating consequences, by aligning themselves with imperialism and/or one or another bourgeois regime in the Middle East. The international pseudo-left has invoked the ongoing oppression of the Kurdish people to promote bourgeois nationalism as a supposedly "progressive" force, oppose the struggle for working-class political independence and socialism, and legitimize support for imperialist regime-change (as in Syria). These issues are discussed at length in *The Historical and International Foundations of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal* (Socialist Equality Party—Fourth International].

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[135] Pivotal to the establishment of the Turkish section of the ICFI in 2022 was its defining of the proletarian internationalist program and perspective on the Kurdish question, in opposition to both Kurdish bourgeois nationalism and the international pseudo-left. Time and again, Kurdish bourgeois nationalist organizations have led the Kurdish people into a blind alley, with devastating consequences, by aligning themselves with imperialism and/or one or another bourgeois regime in the Middle East. The international pseudo-left has invoked the ongoing oppression of the Kurdish people to promote bourgeois nationalism as a supposedly "progressive" force, oppose the struggle for working-class political independence and socialism, and legitimize support for imperialist regime-

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The Historic Syria). These issues are discussed at length in *Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal* (Socialist Equality Party—Fourth International].

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