The formative years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)

Daniel Bensaïd
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Foreword

We had planned to publish a study on the formation of the Fourth International by Daniel Bensaïd since the launching of the Notebooks for Study and Research, two years ago. Unexpected delays and late submittals — due to the author's many commitments — forced us to postpone the date several times. But chance has served us well: 1988 is the fiftieth year since the founding of the Fourth International in 1938.

If we have already published a lecture by Daniel Bensaïd: Revolutionary Strategy Today — I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook, by Pierre Rousset (32 pp., 25 FF), (2) we have also had the chance of publishing the English version of No. 3, The Chinese Revolution — II: The Mao Project Tested in the Struggle for Power, by Pierre Rousset (48 pp., 25 FF). (3)

No. 4, Revolutionary Strategy Today, by Daniel Bensaïd (lecture) (36 pp., 20 FF)

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No. 8, The Formative Years of the Fourth International (1938-1938), by Daniel Bensaïd (lecture) (48 pp., 25 FF)

Forthcoming:

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Also available in French:

All the above notebooks are also available in French, except for NSR no. 4, which is available as Part One of Daniel Bensaïd, Stratégie et Parti, Paris: La Brèche, 1987. CER no. 4 is composed of two updated chapters of Michael Löwy's The Politics of Union and Combined Development, available from New Left Books, London.

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Chronology

Major events

1921
November: Bolsheviks expel from CPU

1922
January: full of Primo de Rivera in Spain
February: arbitration in Helsinki

1923
January: Trotsky arrested in Norway
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain

1924
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1925
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1926
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1927
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1928
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1929
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1930
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1931
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1932
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1933
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1934
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1935
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1936
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1937
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

1938
February: Trotsky set to travel in Spain
March: Trotsky arrested in Norway
April: Trotsky expelled from the CPU

Trotskyist Movement

May: Foundation of the Commemorative League of America in Chicago
July: Bulletin of the Opposition (Rosa) starts
September: The Verge (Pravda) launched
December: Rokosov exiled in Moscow

Trotsky

February: Trotsky departed from Mexico, in Turkey
My Life
November: Permanent banishment

Articles on German Nazism and Spanish revolution

History of the Russian revolution

Trotsky stripped of his Soviet citizenship

Trip to Copenhagen and public speech by Trotsky

Studying the formative years of the Fourth International, from 1933 to 1938 has a two-fold interest. The first is from the standpoint of history: it is part of knowing and understanding the battles which shaped us and the programmatic legacy on which we stand. The other is more practical: many of our current organizational and party-building problems grow out of the conditions under which the Fourth International was formed.

I will not go into the international developments of these years in detail. Nevertheless, the following general respects that I will discuss were directly shaped by compelling events of the class struggle. These should be kept in mind at all times, referring, if necessary, to the chronology (see page 4).

We need only stress, to refresh our memories, that the fight to found the Fourth International took place in the brief interval between the victory of Hitler in Germany and the preparations for World War Two. In these few years, social convulsions and crises were precipitated with a speed that is hard to imagine today: the day the rise of Nazism in Germany and Austria, the Spanish Revolution and Civil War, the collapse of the People’s Front in France, the black succession of the Moscow Trials and great purges in the USSR, the Long March and the beginning of the anti-Japanese liberation war in China, to mention only a few. Within a few years, European societies and the political map of the world and of the labor movement were completely remodelled in a great upheaval. Whole traditions and cultures disappeared like former continents swallowed by the oceans.

1) Bearing this background in mind, we will deal with the major political issues raised by the bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist International and the creation of a new minority revolutionary International:

1) Where? On what criteria did Trotsky and the leadership of the Left Opposition base their decision that the time had come to move from a fight to reform the Third International to proclaiming the need for a new International?

2) On what basis? What were the programmatic issues which had dissolved the Third International and made it necessary for the organized labor movement, and how were they to be regarded?

3) How? What method was used to attempt to gather the largest possible number around this program?

4) With whom? We will examine the complex relations between the building of national sections and the building of an international organization, as well as the different tactics used in the process: recruitment, relations, “army,” workers party based on the trade unions, etc.

The formative years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)

Daniel Bensaid

1. From the fight to reform the Third International to the need for a Fourth International: the historic test

1) The Second International did not embrace chauvinism and “National Union” outright, in August 1914. It had begun to degenerate much earlier. Signs of the process were not lacking. Theoretical and ideological symptoms were brought to light as early as the turn of the century, in the great controversy over revisionism (in which Luxembourg, Bernstein, Labriola and Sorel participated). Political symptoms too had multiplied, from the question of participation in bourgeois governments (raised by the Milandre affair in France) to the adoption of chauvinistic positions on the colonial question and war at international congresses.

Nevertheless, to declare the Second International as such irrevocably failed, you needed more than counterposed motions in convention halls, however great the differences may have been, and more than an accumulation of alarming symptoms. You needed a trial in real life, a crucial historical test.

What could be more telling about an International than its position on war, when it has to choose between principle number one “Proletarians of all countries, unite!” and its exact opposite “Go and kill each other!”? On August 4, 1914, when the large Social-Democratic Parties approved the general calling up of the troops and nationalization of national unity in their respective countries, the leaders of the Second International, finally, and brought forth the need for a Third International.

This was the unambiguous conclusion drawn by Lenin in his pamphlets, The Collapse of the Second International. He did not conclude that one should simply proclaim a new International, but that one had to act immediately to the task of building one, of creating the conditions for one. The international conferences at Zimmerwald and Kienthal were to be the first steps in that direction. But the ultimate historical events which redrew the axes around which the organized labor movement could regroup, in the heat of mass action, and which put the actual founding of the Communist International concretely on the agenda, was the victory of the Russian revolution.

The Communist International was founded in 1919. But even then there were some hesitations. A majority of the young German Communist Party was hostile to the move. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had just been executed. The objections of the congress delegates were only overcome thanks to the great authority earned by the Bolshevik leadership and to the last-minute news of the explosive situation developing in Poland had put forward those who emphasized the “universal role” of the International congresses of the Second International (see Hilferding’s book) and Schum’s book, Revolution and Arau 1846-1914, London: Allen Lane, 1969).
Austria-Hungary. (3) The process of bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and its predecessor also began quite early in the 1920s. Trotsky described the “beginning of Thermidor,” that is, the bureaucratic counter-revolution, in 1924. Nevertheless, before practical conclusions and organizations, anything of the sort had been achieved, it was important to grasp the process, particularly the various changes in course and qualitative leaps that would define the new tasks.

It would have been impossible to pronounce a movement of such historical portent irremediably bankrupt lightenedly. What was at stake was not just ideas, dic­tions, or methods, but the starving upheaval that had set millions of workers on the road to collective action under the impact of the first victorious proletarian revolution in a backward and rapidly isolated country. A new International, a crucial historical test was necessary.

In 1932, Trotsky still upheld the line of reforming the Comintern in a programmatic document entitled “Internal Revolutionary, Its Tasks and Methods.” He therefore defined the Opposition as a faction, not a full-blown future party. Nevertheless, he sounded a warning:

“Such a historical catastrophe as the collapse of the Soviet state would, of course, sweep away with it the Third International too. Similarly, the victory of fascism in its own land and the smashing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policy.” (4)

(3) See Theses, Resolutions and Manifestoes of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International, London: Left Books/Humanities Press, 1980; and Founding of the Communist International, London: Left Books/Humanities Press, 1980, p. 34. This is one of the necessary conditions for the existence of a new line of “reforming” the Communist International and its sections.

In the late 1920s, it was necessary to understand and assimilate the method used, we should stress how difficult these decisions were. The bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and Comintern was an international process. The young Communist Parties were not mere appendages of the Comintern apparatus. Each had its own history and distinctive trajectory. As a result, the process of degeneration was uneven and the nascent Communist movement in its infancy. This was the case in Spain, for example. In other countries, the implementation of the so-called “third International” policy was more revealing and certain to grapple with the particularities or splits in sections of the Communist International. This was true in Sweden where the majority of the local Communist Party, headed by Kibom, had walked out of it in 1930 on a small scale, in Greece where the creation of the Brandler current (the KPD) was a similar development. Finally, in the Italian Communist Party led by Giorgio Maurin in Catalonia also paralleled these splits.

Yet in other countries, the Stalilinization of the Communist Parties and the subordination of their leaderships to the interests of the Soviet Union, in the very country where a new extension of perspective to resolve this contradiction. (6)

So it was only in July 1933, after noting that a reaction to the German tragedy had failed to materialize inside the German proletariat, that Trotsky decided to support the Comintern leadership. This was a certain anomaly and the Yugoslav CP leadership already clashed with the Comintern leadership on some issues before the war. In both cases, Georgy Dimitrov seems to have played the role of a mediator between the Comintern and (Political) revolution: a new revolution was indeed on the agenda in the Soviet Union, without waiting for the collapse of capitalism. But this was a political revolution against the confiscation of power by the bureaucratic caste, one aimed to restore the socialist state. The necessity of a new International then became a completely coherent answer, including for the Soviet Union.

(4) Another difficulty flowed from the general context—very nature of the heroic test represented by the German defeat. For social-democracy, August 4, 1914 completed an opportunistic evolution that had been going on for many years, a gradual integration into municipal and parliamentary institutions, during which the parliamen­tary and trade-union bureaucracy of the big parties of the Second International definitively crystallized. While the test was immediately relevant for the German Social Democrats, it would have been impossible for us to proclaim the collapse of the Comintern without perceiving a theoretical development in which the historic events explained in advance by us, with our criti­cism of a radical change could have been affirmed by the Comintern. These great events have taken place. There was China... There was Germany.... The road taken by the Comintern is now quite definite. It is doomed to defeat. The idea of reform is to be rejected, nationally and internationally.” (8)

(5) This method is fundamentally correct, including for small organizations. Of course, in the case of small organiza­tions with only amenable and fragile links to the mass movement, the weight of theoretical errors and programmatic drifics can be more immediate and catastrophic than in the case of mass parties. But even for the latter, the practical consequences of these theoretical revisions are revealed in short delay in the face of great events of the class struggle.


(7) See Jean van Heijenoort's article in Appendix B, p. 34.

(8) Daniel Bensaïd.

Nevertheless, there is a radical difference between the degeneration of the Second International and that of the Third. The process was uneven and the degeneration was quite early in the Soviet state. For a long time Trotsky stumbled on a major difficulty: to call for the existence of a new international revolutionary party, including in the USSR then­ever, the “third International” policy was more revealing and certain to grapple with the particularities or splits in sections of the Communist International. This was true in Sweden where the majority of the local Communist Party, headed by Kibom, had walked out of it in 1930 on a small scale, in Greece where the creation of the Brandler current (the KPD) was a similar development. Finally, in the Italian Communist Party led by Giorgio Maurin in Catalonia also paralleled these splits. While the test was immediately relevant for the German party and Comintern as such, it was, logically, much more revealing and certain for parties which had much more distant and weaker links with the Communist International, such as the Chinese party after the beginning of the Long March.

Despite these difficulties, the lesson in method is fundamentally correct and should be retained. This is the method of testing an event in advance by an organization, big historical events, not subjective criteria. It starts from the facts (although the choice of "significant" facts is always subject to debate) and not from predictions.

In 1930, Trotsky wrote:

“It is obvious to what extent all these possibilities and probabilities [of our own native-born form of Bon­apartism] reduce the likelihood of success for the road of reform. But the odds cannot be measured in ad­vance... In this fundamental sense, we remain on the road of reform.”

In 1933, after the test took place, he wrote:

“If even in some of us had had the conviction, some time ago, that the Comintern would be doomed to ulti­mate defeat, it would have been impossible for us to proclaim the fall of the Comintern as cruelly received by the Comintern as our own.”

These hesitations were the signs of a thorough re­thinking in light of the facial collective events unfolding, par­ticularly the exigency of the degeneration of the first state produced by a victorious proletarian revolution. The solution to the weakness of the Second International was to conceive of a theoretical development in which the historic events explained in advance by us, with our criti­cism of a radical change could have been affirmed by the Comintern. These great events have taken place. There was China... There was Germany.... The road taken by the Comintern is now quite definite. It is doomed to defeat. The idea of reform is to be rejected, nationally and internationally.” (8)

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The Fourth International experienced a serious split in 1952-53. In retrospect, one can argue over whether Michel Pablo's, then a leader of the organization, positions on Stalinism and bureaucracy were dangerous or tended to­wards revisionism. But the decisive test was his political attitude towards the major event which followed, that is...
II. A new International: on what basis?

“It is not the party which creates the program, but the program which creates the party.” Trotsky's formula stood in the direct lineal of the Bolshevik tradition. The program is the basis around which the party's boundaries are drawn, its members selected, and on which it educates its cadres. It is the synthesis of the major lessons of the class struggle.

In 1933, once the perspective of a new International had been adopted, the mere reference to the Communist Manifesto and first four congresses of the Comintern International was a necessary but no longer sufficient basis for a party's program. The Comintern's leading circles, in response to the degeneration of the bureaucratic regime; in the colonial countries and against dictatorial regimes. This point set the long debate about slogans which unfolded at the fifth as the fifth and sixth congresses of the Comintern. This was the first major event of international character of the proletariat. Here too, the point was the mixture of slogans provided for the Constituent Assembly in the Soviet Union, and for the Communist International.

1. The independence of the proletarian party, always and under all conditions; condemnation of the policy of the Communist International and the German Social Democratic Party.
2. The need for workers united front policy, as against both class collaboration and the division sectarianism of the "third period."
3. Recognition of the theory of so-called "social-fascism" which equated Social Democratic Parties with fascism.
4. Recognition of the need for an authentic revolutionary International. The "Eleven Points of the International Left Opposition, 1933."
5. The need for a democratic regime inside the party, counterposed to the bureaucratic degeneration of the International regime of the Communist International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
6. The need for a democratic regime inside the party, counterposed to the bureaucratic degeneration of the International regime of the Communist International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
7. The need for workers united front policy, as against both class collaboration and the division sectarianism of the "third period."

The "Eleven Points" and the Revised Point 10 of the International Left Opposition (July 15, 1933)

The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four congresses of the Comintern. This does not mean that the Bolshevik Party was always right before each of these congresses, many of which had a purely conjunctural character and had been contradicted by subsequent events. But all the essential principles (in relation to the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to democracy and more generally from the "workers and peasants" party) were already the fashion in the second half of the 1920s in the Comintern.

The point settled the long debate about slogans which unfolded at the fifth and sixth congresses of the Comintern. This was the first major event of international character of the proletariat. Here too, the point was to establish the following princi-

I. The independence of the proletarian party, always and under all conditions; condemnation of the policy of the Communist International and the German Social Democratic Party.

2. The need for workers united front policy, as against both class collaboration and the division sectarianism of the "third period."

3. Recognition of the theory of so-called "social-fascism" which equated Social Democratic Parties with fascism.

4. Recognition of the need for an authentic revolutionary International.

5. The need for a democratic regime inside the party, counterposed to the bureaucratic degeneration of the International regime of the Communist International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

6. The need for workers united front policy, as against both class collaboration and the division sectarianism of the "third period."

7. The recognition of the necessity to mobilize the masses under transitional slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country. All the more so far as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialist dictatorship.

8. The recognition of the necessity of a developed united-front policy with respect to the mass organizations of the working class, both of trade-union and political character, including the Social Democratic Party of Germany; condemnation of the ultramontane slogan “only from below” which in practice means a rejection of the united front and, consequently, a refusal to create soviets; condemnation of the opportunistic application of the united-front policy as in the Anglo-Russian Committee (a bloc with the leaders without the masses and against the masses); double condemnation of the policy of the RGO (and for the purposes of the party opposition), which combines the ultramontane slogan “only from below” with the opportunistic practice of parliamentary parties by the leaders of the Social Democracy.

9. The rejection of the theory of social fascism and of the entire practice bound up with it as serving fascism on the one hand and the Social Democracy on the other.

10. The observation that within the camp of communism: the Marxist, the centrist, and the right; recognition of the impermissibility of a political alliance with the Social Democracy; support of the Social Democrats against fascism; irreplaceable and systematic struggle against centrism and its zigzag policies.

11. Recognition of party democracy not only in words but also in fact and practice, as the platform of a proletarian regime (the rule of the usurpers, gauging the thought and the will of the party, deliberate suppression of information from the proletarian vanguard).

The fundamental principles enumerated above, which are of basic importance for the strategy of the proletariat in the present period, are the Left Opposition's in opposition to the Bolshevism in Germany which complements it (the platform of “national liberation”).

3. Recognition of the Soviet state as a workers' state in spirit, despite the degeneration of the bureaucratic regime; the unconditional obligation of every worker to defend the Soviet state against imperialism as well as against internal counter-revolution.

4. Condemnation of the economic policy of the Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution in 1928 to 1929 (the “five-year plan”, Governmental program, and, on the kuleks) as well as in its stage of economic adventurism in 1928 to 1932 (overscheduled tempo of industrialization, 100 percent collectivization, administrative terror, liquidation of the kulaks as a class); condemnation of the criminal bureaucratic legend that “the Soviet state has already entered into socialism”; recognition of the necessity of a return to the realistic economic policies of Leninism.

5. Recognition of the necessity of systematic Communist work in the proletariat mass organizations, particularly in the reformist trade unions; the theory of practice particularly on the question of political — anti-bureaucratic — revolution. There is always something to be learnt from experience, and programmatic conclusions to be drawn from it. As the first congresses of the Comintern International drew from the Russian revolution and as Trotsky and the Left Opposition drew from the 1920s, so the program is new and ever complete. The Comintern Manifesto was enriched twenty years later by the experience of the Paris Commune.

Note

* The following year point 10 was amended in light of the Comintern's refusal to draw the lessons of the victory of fascism in Germany.

Reflecting the Trotskyist movement's determination that it was no longer possible to reform the Comintern and win it back to revolutionary policies, point 10 was amended to read:

"The struggle for the regrouping of the revolutionary forces of the world's working class under the banner of International Communism. Recognition of the necessity of the creation of a genuine Communist International capable of applying the principles enumerated above."

III. Towards a new International? How?

We have discussed two problems so far: 1) When and under what conditions should the question of a new International be posed? 2) On what programmatic bases should it be built? Which problem still concerns us today is with whom and how should it be built?

Trotsky's personality, his ideas, analysts and literary talents are widely praised and inspire respect in the most diverse quarters. But the question, they allege, is a "self-proclaimed" International, doomed to a long isolation and minority existence, and therefore marked with the seal of this original sin.

We will not dwell on this notion of self-proclamation so dear to those who will vacillate forever. If we do not decide to go on ahead and build the organizations which we feel necessary for our day-to-day practice and revolutionary perspective, no one will do it for us. The most important point, though, is that this view often reflects an ignorance of a rich experience hidden from view by the perspective.

The reality is that for five years, from 1933 to 1938, the battle for the building of the Fourth International was an outstanding model of a political approach, at once patient and stringent. The Fourth International at that period was already clearly convinced of the need for a new International in July 1933, as Lenin had proclaimed the need for a Third International as soon as he was convinced of the collapse of the Second. The most important point is that this viewpoint often reflects an ignorance of a rich experience that has been hidden from view by the perspective.

The model of the Fourth International, in its attitude towards the bureaucratically run workers' state, posed insurmountably in every major showdown of the interwar period, the question of the permanent revolution (the fact that democratic struggles in dominated countries grow over in to socialist struggles) stands at the center of the lessons of the Cuban, Vietnamese and Nicaraguan revolutions, as adopted by OLAS in 1967, of the debate surrounding the Argentine Communist Party's self-criticism, of the influence of Schaffik's International of Latin American Communist Parties. (12) The question of building a mass revolutionary International and of the need for internal democracy inside revolutionary parties are posed as urgently as ever.

1) Two methods

In their introduction and notes to the French edition of Trotsky's works, Michel Dreyfus and Pierre Belfort attempted a census of the forces of the International Left Opposition in the main countries in 1933. (13) They mention about 300 members in France, 400 in Czechoslovakia, 300 for Poland, 300 for France, one hundred for Belgium, 500 for the United States, 300 for Spain, 200 for Greece divided into two groups. In addition, there was the Left Opposition in the USSR, a few in a few hundreds or a few thousand members, scattered in Soviet camps and difficult to evaluate. Most of their figures seem quite optimistic.

Alongside these revolutionary Marxist nuclei, there existed other forces, often numerically much stronger, who were breaking or had broken with Social Democracy or the Communist International in its process of Stalinization.

Among the organizations originating in the Comintern, there were in particular the majority of the Swedish Communist Party led by Kibom, the DNA in Norway, Smollett's DSP (Deutsche Sozialistische Partei) in Germany, the Swedish SAP, the Dutch RSP and the Dutch OSP, the SAP, the German RSP and the Dutch OSP, the SAP, the German RSP and the Dutch OSP in the communist world.

Between 1933 and 1936, two counterposed methods to overcome this situation emerged. The first was a tireless effort to build a new International on clearly delineated programmatic bases. The other aimed at building a new International on the basis of minimum agreement and diplomatic compromises. The two methods were embodied respectively in the battle for the Fourth International, and the vacillations and half-measures of the "International Working Community" (IAG), better known as the London Bureau.

When the Left Opposition abandoned its line of revenge for the war with currents of various origins — Zinovievists and Bukharinitists — without demanding a balance sheet of the 1920s as an absolute prerequisite. This approach was not universal. To the contrary, it was the basis for building a new International. A few days after the formation of the "Bloc of Four," the London Bureau met, also in Paris. The meeting was attended by the Swedish CPP, the DNA, the British ILP, the BPC, the SAP, the Dutch RSP, the Social Democratic Workers for Czecho-Slovakia, the Dutch RSP and the Dutch OSP. The ICL participated in this gathering under its own name, to defend its position on the need for a new International.

Trotsky ironically described this London Bureau as a new Second-and-a-half International (the attempt of OLAS
The “Declaration of Four” On the Necessity and Principles of a New International (September 1, 1933)

In full realization of the great historic responsibility that devolved upon them, the underigned organizations hereby declare, combine their forces, and commit themselves to work for the regeneration of the revolutionary proletariat movement on an international scale. As the basis for their activity, they have, from the theoretic and strategic principles laid down by Marx and Lenin...

1. The mortal crisis of imperialist capitalism, which has taken the props out from under reformism (Social Democracy, the Second International, the International Working Union movement), imposes imperatively the question of the break with reformist policy and of the revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

2. The problem of the proletariat revolutionary bear, by its very nature, an international character and requires a complete socialist unity only upon the basis of the world division of labor and world cooperation. The undersigned categorically reject, therefore, the theory of socialism in one country which underlines the very foundation of proletarian internationalism.

3. No less energetically must be rejected the theory of the Austro-Marxists, centrists, and left reformists who, under the pretext of the international character of the socialist revolution, advocate an expectant policy in the epoch of imperialism, a policy which, in its essence, means a bureaucratic unity of the party machines and a split and political fragmentation of the world proletariat. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of its most immediate tasks the defense of the Soviet state from imperialism and international counterrevolution. Precisely the revolutionary defense of the USSR places upon the imperative task of freeing the entire world from the control of the Stalinist Communist International and of building a new international. Only under the condition of complete independence of the national proletarian organizations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false instructions, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

4. The Third International, which grew out of the October Revolution, laid down the principles of proletarian policy in the epoch of imperialism. It was the first lesson to the revolutionary struggle for power, and it yielded a barrier to a chain of historical contradictions. The treacherous role of the Social Democracy and the imperialism on the one hand, and their treacherous role in the break-down of the postwar revolutionary movements in the East and in the West, on the other hand, demonstrate the necessity of the immediate and unconditional break with reformism and the bureaucratic unity of the party machines. The international character of the socialist revolution requires the welding together of the proletarian vanguard into a new international that will combine their forces for joint work for the regeneration of the revolutionary proletariat movement on an international scale.

5. The advance of fascism in Germany put the organizations of the Third International, which generalized the line of the Comintern and of the Fourth International, on the verge of losing patience, they proposed to the peasantry of the East and in the West, the undersigned organizations have unanimously decided to...

6. The problem of the proletarian revolution bears, by its very nature, an international character and requires a complete socialist unity only upon the basis of the world division of labor and world cooperation. The undersigned categorically reject, therefore, the theory of socialism in one country which underlines the very foundation of proletarian internationalism.

7. No less energetically must be rejected the theory of the Austro-Marxists, centrists, and left reformists who, under the pretext of the international character of the socialist revolution, advocate an expectant policy in the epoch of imperialism, a policy which, in its essence, means a bureaucratic unity of the party machines and a split and political fragmentation of the world proletariat. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of its most immediate tasks the defense of the Soviet state from imperialism and international counterrevolution. Precisely the revolutionary defense of the USSR places upon the imperative task of freeing the entire world from the control of the Stalinist Communist International and of building a new international. Only under the condition of complete independence of the national proletarian organizations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false instructions, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

8. Ready to cooperate with all the organizations, groups and factions that seek to use their activity, the undersigned organizations have, from the theoretic and strategic principles laid down by Marx and Lenin...

9. By its class basis, by its social foundations, by the inconsistently prevailing forms of property, the USSR remains even today a state, that is, an instrument for the building of a socialist society. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of its most immediate tasks the defense of the Soviet state from imperialism and international counterrevolution. Precisely the revolutionary defense of the USSR places upon the imperative task of freeing the entire world from the control of the Stalinist Communist International and of building a new international. Only under the condition of complete independence of the national proletarian organizations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false instructions, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

10. Party democracy is a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of revolutionary proletarian parties on a national as well as international scale. The new international must strengthen its national dictatorship by socialist construction, must fight any conciliation towards reformism or centrism. The necessary conditions that imperatively demand the welding together of the proletarian vanguard into a new international are, in the first place, the question of insurrection, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

11. Under the signed agreement created a permanent commission of delegates representatives and assigned the following tasks:
   a. to elaborate a programmatic manifesto as the charter of the new international
   b. to prepare a critical analysis of the organizations and tendencies of the present-day workers' movement (theoretically commented on the manifestation)
   c. to elaborate those on all the fundamental questions of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat;
   d. to no longer consider the undersigned organizations in the eyes of the whole world.

Signed:
   E. Bauer — International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist)
   J. Schmidt — SAP (Socialist Workers Party, Germany)
   P. J. Schmidt — RSAP (Revolutionary Socialist Party, Holland)
   H. Souvenel — RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party, Holland)

The Stalinist current had a powerful and specific manner. It came on the scene in an epoch when in many key nations: the USSR, Spain, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Cuba, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Austria, China, Indonesia. The war of fascism and the ever more present threat of a new world war. He grasped perfectly the stakes involved in the race against the clock which now began. He understood that the events in France and Spain were perhaps the last opportunity. Everything had to be done to seize that opportunity, even if the chances of victory were very limited. His keen awareness of the contradictions, the stakes, the very inconvenient process of exaggeration which came through more and more clearly in his writings. Now, many years in retrospect, one is sometimes shocked by the polemical tone and brutality of the arguments he used. With this, other cases, he did not understand the context, his despair at the hesitations and inadequacies of those closest to him (like Nin and Snesvlet) in struggles which were so precious for the revolution. In July 1936, the Opposition for the Movement for the Fourth International finally met. Nine organizations were directly represented: France, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the USSR and the United States. The French section was undergoing a crisis. The Germans and Italians were mainly refugee. The Soviet section was a section of deportees, scattered in Stalin's "islands." As for the Dutch, they stormed out of the meeting before it ended. Groups that were invited but could not attend included: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland and Greece. The meeting took place in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, where groups existed: Denmark, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Cuba, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Indochina, Australia and South Africa. Of these, the Chinese and the Spanish were in particular significant. (16)

The conference adopted clear positions on the question of the Popular Front, on the characterization of the USSR, on work in the trade unions, on relations with the Left Opposition. Nevertheless, it still did not proclaim the Fourth International. In his book on the history of the International, and in his introduction to the first volume of the series on the congresses of the Fourth International, Pierre Breitman states that Trotsky favored an immediate proclamation, at that point in time. Arguing that there is not the slightest evidence that the delegates, either in the minutes of the meeting or in Trotsky's letters of that period, George Breitman describes this version as a legend. (15)

So it was in 1938, following Stalin's Great Purges and at a time when the defeat was nearly consummated in Spain and France, that the conference which constituted the Fourth International was held.

Eleven sections were directly represented: France, the United States, Italy, Great Britain, Holland, Greece, Brazil, the USSR, Poland, and Germany. Others were mentioned in the minutes: Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Austria, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, China, Indonesia. All in all, the forces represented were very weak.

The Fifth International was born out of series of defeats of the world proletariat, including the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state. It came on the scene in an epoch when today's current for the world situation. Everyone was surprised by the victory, but already massively organized and deeply divided into two currents, each fostering another's flag, namely Social Democratic and Stalinist currents.

The conception of the Fourth International was the meeting before it ended. Their spokesperson was the Pole Jersch Mendel-Steinlich, who basically argued the following: Marx, Engels and Lenin were careful not to found the First, Second and Third Internationals in periods of setbacks. They wisely waited for rises of proletarian struggles before doing so. In 1938, there was not a single mass party around the world already in 1933 when he argued, in explaining the foundation of the Fourth International as the "world party of socialist revolution": a single worldwide organization subject to a common discipline.

Three voices were raised against this decision. Their spokesperson was the Pole Jersch Mendel-Steinlich, who basically argued the following: Marx, Engels and Lenin were careful not to found the First, Second and Third Internationals in periods of setbacks. They wisely waited for rises of proletarian struggles before doing so. In 1938, there was not a single mass party around the world already in 1933 when he argued, in explaining the foundation of the Fourth International as the "world party of socialist revolution": a single worldwide organization subject to a common discipline.

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The fact is that two years later, at the founding conference of the Fourth International, the delegates who allocated their unreservedly supported the proclamation were at pains to explain why they had not done so two years earlier. Some claimed that it was because they still hoped to convince the other centrist currents. But it would have been difficult to do so at a time when some sections were still involved in entryist experiences in Socialist Parties.

To continue to hesitate with them would mean adapting to their weaknesses instead of forging the instrument that would make it possible to face the great trials that the war, which now seemed imminent, would pose.

IV. From a cadre International to a mass International

The conditions in which the Fourth International was founded were absolutely unprecedented and particularly difficult. Trotsky was fully aware of this:

- It was a minority International, without a single mass section, a situation he described as that of a "cadre International." This conception was born out of series of defeats of the world proletariat, including the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state. It came on the scene in an epoch when in many key conflicts, the stakes were so high and the outcome so uncertain, but already massively organized and deeply divided into two currents, each fostering another's flag, namely Social Democratic and Stalinist currents.

- The conception of the Fourth International was the three-voice argument of the POUM and Mareauey's PSOP (which had just left the SFIO) to attend the meeting. Their request was rejected for security reasons.

The founding conference adopted the document which came to be known as the "Declaration of Victory," which formalized the foundation of the Fourth International as the "world party of socialist revolution": a single worldwide organization subject to a common discipline.

Three voices were raised against this decision. Their spokesperson was the Pole Jersch Mendel-Steinlich, who basically argued the following: Marx, Engels and Lenin were careful not to found the First, Second and Third Internationals in periods of setbacks. They wisely waited for rises of proletarian struggles before doing so. In 1938, there was not a single mass party around the world. (17)

This approach was to be applied both on the international plane, with respect to the conception of the role of the new International, and on the national plane, in the approach to building sections.

Trotsky always believed that the Fourth International could include forces broader than the revolutionary Marxism of the Stalinists alone, and that this broader perspective would become one of its components or a fraction. This was the approach which the leadership of the Fourth International in France would use.

The official German party is politically liquidated, it cannot be reformed. The vanguard of the German workers must build a new party. We Bolshevik-Leninists offer them our collaboration." (20)

The same approach was applied in the United States in 1934, as the Trotskyist CLA tried to achieve fusion with the AWP. In his History of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon, a leader of the US Trotskyist current, recounts the following: "We wrote an editorial in a very friendly tone, recommending to them that at their convention they take note of our invitation to the American Revolutionary Political Group to discuss the question of forming a united party, and especially suggesting that they interest themselves in the question of internationalism. Cannon waged a relentless struggle against the sectarian inside the CLA on this line. After the fusion and formation of the Workers Party, he repeated again: 'The unification of the Trotskyists and the Stalinists, the formation of the Workers Party' 'united the Trotskyists' represented a great forward step, but only a step. It soon became apparent to us — at least to the most influential leaders of the former Communist League — that the unification possible establishment of the new revolutionary International. Action on any organizational affiliation must be submitted to a National Congress of the Fourth International. (Writings, 1934-35, p. 192) Trotsky considered that the fact that the WFI had signed the Open Letter could be taken as a measure of the Fourth International's future international influence. The Trotskyists were themselves in the process of creating a new party. (Writings, 1932-33, pp. 62-63.)

One of the paths was the formulation adopted by the WFI's constituent congress of the Fourth International in London in October 1934. (Writings, 1932-33, pp. 62-63.)

To achieve this goal, it was necessary to build a new party. We Bolshevik-Leninists offer them our collaboration." (20)

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regroupment of revolutionary forces had only begun."

We cannot consent ourselves with saying, "Here is the Worker Party. It has a correct program. Come and join it!"... (21)

Trotsky agreed: "The Working Group called itself a party even before the fusion, but it wasn’t one. The WPUS is not yet a party." (22)

The organization carried the name of Party, but it was not the party in the eyes of the masses, it had to become one. That was indeed the whole problem.

The conditions in which the Fourth International was founded, that is, as a minority cadre International, determinate in the present was through adjustments and quantitative transformations, fusions, leaps, that it will succeed in becoming a mass International or in creating the conditions for the formation of a mass International in some of the major centers of organized labor. There is a relationship between the two processes, insofar as the International has its own program of course, but this program is also the reflection of the reality of the sections.

But there is not necessarily an immediate and mechanical relation between the qualitative transformation of the central sections and that of the International as a whole.

Depending on the national conditions of the class struggle, some sections could achieve breakthroughs towards a mass party, while the International as a whole were only a small minority compared to these large organizations. It was now further complicated by the Stalinist degeneration of the Fourth International in 1933. This old spectrum was now further complicated by the Stalinist degeneration, so that all sorts of intermediate, unstable and fluctuating positions emerged.

Thus, in 1936, Trotsky vigorously criticized Raymond Molinier’s, one of his French followers, attempt to set a Revolutionary Action Group (GAR) in a Paris district. Trotsky felt this group was neither a mass action committee nor a programmatic clotheshorse for the International Secretariat about preparations for the August summit. It was through qualitative united front policy aimed at reaching an agreement for joint work toward limited practical goals, and did not require general agreement on principles.

The concrete goals of the united front agreement for anti-fascist action and the struggle for a new bargain-price International on a minimum program. The project was doomed to fail in both arenas. It would not lead to a genuine united mobilization reaching out to the masses. Trotsky felt this group was neither a mass action committee nor a programmatic clotheshorse for the International Secretariat about preparations for the August summit.

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The "French turn"

We have already mentioned the turn in the European situation in early 1934 with the smashing of the Vienna revolution, the fascist demonstrations in Paris, the re-opening situation in Spain, and the conclusions Trotsky drew concerning these events' unforeseeable repercussions on the ranks of Social Democracy. In France, the response to the fascist demonstrations triggered a series of events among SP and CP members, which forced the Bolshevik-Leninists' young independent organization to try and fight for a place inside the united front that was being created, lest it become irreversibly marginalized.

"In particular, what place should be taken by the League, a small organization that cannot lay claim to an independent role in the combat that is unfolding before us, but that is armed with a correct doctrine and precious political experience? What place should it occupy in order to impregnate the united front with a revivifying socialist content? To put this question properly, we should ask: that the League must immediately take its place on the inside of the united front, in order to contribute actively to the revolutionary re-grouping and to the concentration of the forces of this regrouping. It can occupy such a place under present conditions in no other way than by entering the Socialists Party."

At that point, repeated ceaselessly that the urgent task was to smash fascism, lest we be smashed by it. For this, the relationship of forces had to be changed. While we could not pretend to an independent role, we could not either remain outside the fight. We therefore had to take our place in the united front as a faction and gain closer contact with the practical experience of the masses as well as the ability to subject our ideas to the test of actual practice rather than just propaganda, in exchange for a relative loss of organizational autonomy.

Moreover, this bath in mass parties would constitute a form of shock therapy against the danger of militant fragmentation of our organization, against the danger that the core of a small circle confined in a rarified atmosphere, a fate which threatened all the new organizations of the International Opposition. Those who rejected the turn, were Trotsky's eyes, those who refused to leave their narrow...
familiar street for wider horizons, yet were prepared "to adapt to the united front from the outside": scrupulous maintenance of organizational independence and interna-
gent propaganda were not always free of tail-endism in
practice, particularly when the relationship of forces did
not allow one to translate one's ideas into deeds.

Established by a majority of the French section. It was done in mid-1934 under excep-
tionally favorable circumstances. It was an entry "banners unfurled," with the agreement of the Socialist Party lead-
ship. Lo Volté continued to be published openly as the "organ of the Bolshevist-Leninist group of the SFIO."

The Bolshevist-Leninists numbered about one hundred whole time full-time workers. One year later, at the Assembly
of the Seine Federation in June 1935, their motion on
orientation obtained 1037 votes, to
make a distinction between party patriotism and organiza­tionally favorable circumstances.

the iron was hot. Cannon emphasized that one had to
allow one to translate one's ideas into deeds.

Beginning in 1934, a rift developed and a left-wing
fraction, entryism, entry ...

(32) "Organizational loyalty and pride is so absolutely
inevitable quality in a revolutionary movement. But
organizational factionalism is a small organization which has
yet to justify its right to leadership, can become a disastrous

set in (similar to what occurred in Santiago Callillo's
Spanish Socialist Youth).

The conditions set by the Socialist leadership for the
WPUS's entry in their party were far more drastic than in
the "French turn": all independent press organs had to be
abandoned and WPUS members had to appy to join the
Socialist Party in sympathy with the authority of the loca-
leaders of this party. Their aim was the pure and
simple dissolution of WPUS members in the SP. The
WPUS majoretly dissolved in the SFIO and joined in March 1936, with the idea of rapidly winning
over some local positions in the party and publishing lo-
nal newspapers of the SP with a national outlook.

The current while written in December 1937, at the Assembly
of the French section. It was done in mid-1934 under excep-
tional circumstances. Historical analogies can help to outline the problem, but they never provide
"models" or instructions to be followed. They simply en-
courage us to use our imagination, and confirm that in
transience on principles does not preclude tactical flexi-
bility, but enhances it.

When Trotsky urged a small Britis Left Opposition group to enter the ILP, he criticized the comrades
who wanted to maintain an outside nucleus at all costs, to pub-
lish an independent newspaper. You had to understand, he explained, the mist of ILP members towards this alien
group arriving in their midst:

"This distrust can only be overcome if our people get
into the ILP with the desire to influence the party as a whole and to become powerful there but not to work
in the name of that party, its ideas, its papers. The pump would work toward breaking away a small part from the whole par-
ly... The publication of a small, monthly paper under the circumstances is senseless..." (34)

The comrades could then use the English lan-
guage press of the international organization, and change their attitude, if necessary, in light of new developments
of the situation. But it was important to remove any pre-
text for a misunderstanding, any obstacle to creating a
bond of trust between activists, mutual respect in action, which would enhance the evolution of the party as a
whole and to become powerful there but not to work

The point was for the Bolshevist-Leninists to defend
their ideas inside the ILP, in the framework of its statutes,
while participating fully in the building of the organiza-
tion. They were not a mass or
organization but a group of a few thousand members who
had undergone a positive evolution and could constitute a
far more powerful lever to influence the Labour Party than
the small Left Opposition group. In this case, Trotsky ad-
ded for the British comrades:

"whether you will enter the ILP as a faction or as in-
dividuals is a purely formal question. In essence, you
will, of course, be a faction to submit to common
discipline." (35)
there existed and had to act, it would be forced to define its positions on the great problems of the day: the economic crisis, the inter-war, the USSR and Stalinism. It would all happen very fast.

Thus, in our times, the Brazilian PT was defined initially around rather elementary points. But quite fast, it had to abandon the utopia of running its own candidates, or not? What alliances should it seek? Should it enter a coalition with the bourgeois opposition to the dictatorship or not? It had to take a stand on trade-union independence and on the question of the problem of the foreign debt. It had to define its solidarity with Nicaragua, say something about Poland, decide its relations with Cuba, clarify its relations with the Church and international Social Democracy, establish contacts in the rest of the continent, etc.

In the beginning, the PT was a phenomenon of mass radicalization that grew out of the resistance to the Brazilian military dictatorship, a class which had become more massive and younger as a result of the so-called "economic miracle," and for whom it was the first political opportunity. It, a movement which, traditionally has not had a strong independent workers party competing with populism (despite the existence of a Communist Party). The PT was not, properly speaking, based on the tradition of the mass radicalization of trade-union cadres who had run up against the trade-union structures imposed by the dictatorship's labor legislation. How could such a dynamic arise in developed capitalist countries where the working class has a long, often pluralistic, tradition of independent political and trade-union organization? Two possible scenarios have been suggested: a new workers party and "organic unity." The first, a historical gap opens between the masses and their traditional organizations, putting the creation of a "real" workers party on the agenda in practice. One can conceive of such a situation, but with difficulty. The links between the social movement and the traditional political and trade-union leaderships are indeed becoming more tenuous. But this process does not simply leave a vacuum to be filled by others. The existing machines still occupy the electoral and societal arena.

Moreover, even if this process deepened sufficiently, it would not create the same dynamic for accumulating forces as the situation in which the parties as mentioned earlier. In this case, bargain sales on programmatic definitions would be particularly ill-advised, for in such a situation, a revolutionary force could not be assembled and deployed doubly without providing answers to the major problems of orientation of the day and to the strategic projects of the existing — albeit weakened — mass parties vying with it in the labor movement. There can be differences, but not contradiction between revolutionary currents. But on the whole, a viable revolutionary current cannot do without a clear identity counterposed to that of the existing major parties.

The problem is different.

Already in the discussion on the mass labor party based on the unions in the United States, Trotsky underlined that condition of the union: it was a party as it was a party was open, it was also an eminently transitory phenomenon. As soon as it existed and had to act, it would be forced to define its positions on the great problems of the day: the economic crisis, the inter-war, the USSR and Stalinism. It would all happen very fast.

Thus, Sneevliet, Nin and Vereeken were always such a situation, a revolutionary force could not be assembled for the building of a revolutionary party as in the cases of electoral and social fields. Would not create the same dynamic for accumulating political experience, in a country which traditionally had countries where the working class has a long, and often decisive role in the formation of trade unions, but the product of the radicalization of the continent, etc.

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The problem is different.
Should the Fourth International have been held in abeyance and left to wait for better days on the grounds that it was too early to sound a note of revolution in Eu-

te and to the collapse of Stalinism? The question is

rather abstract and fallacious. Every important historical

juvenile opens a range of possibilities. The war did not

lead to a socialist revolution anywhere. Nor did it

end in mechanical fashion on a peaceful stabilization of
capitalism and the bureaucratic system. Its aftermath was

produced by the international class struggle, by the structural

simulation of the Eastern European states by the

socialist regimes, by tragic events in the world beyond the

USSR, by such trivial events as the Yugoslav revolution

and especially the Chinese revolution, by the beginning of

the Cold War. In this world upheaval, the

compass of an International was more necessary than

ever.

The real questions for yesterday and for today are more
direct and less speculative.

Is the idea of a revolutionary International obsolete?

No. On the contrary, it is the necessary organizational

translation of the proletarian revolution perceived as an

international whole, of the rejection of chauvinism and the

theory of socialism in one country, of the growing inter-

nationalization of the division of labor, of the process of

production and of the productive forces. Without a perma-
nent revolution to translate, the theory of the understanding in

an attempt to build an organization, the most sincere in-

ternationalism cannot go beyond active solidarity and

wishes of success. If existence determines consciousness, then

internationalism exists. If determination determines con-

sciousness that strives to grasp the

various dimensions of the class struggle on an

international scale.

Is the program of this International, the Fourth, still

relevant and operative, in light of the great events of the

class struggle, or has it been an obstacle preventing our

current from relating to the masses? Of course, the experi-

ence of the class struggle can always enrich and clarify a

program, however refined. But the questions of permanent

revolution, the united front, transitional slogans, the anti-

bureaucratic struggle, the theory of the party, remain at

the core of revolutionary strategy in our time. Develop-

ments during and after World War Two have confirmed the

validity of this program. Far from being an obstacle to the

understanding of the new agents, to the formation of the

new workers states, the upsurge of the colonial revolu-

tion, the mutations of late capitalism, it helped to find

one's way amid them.

Is the Fourth International which exists, which

was founded on a correct program that is still relevant to-

today, not failed in practice despite this program? To answer

such a question, one has to stick to the major tests shown up by

our experiences in the 1930s and 1940s, the wars and revolu-

tions. During the great chauvinist debacle of World War

Two, the International avoided both defeatism and sectari-

anism in its various territories occupied by fascist powers, and

the chauvinistic distortion of its history.

With its weak forces, it maintained an international policy,

It was in the forefront of the defense of the revolu-
tionary movement in Spain, in China, and Cuba, and as late as in

Nicaragua, even when its members were persecuted, as in

Vietnam and China, by leaders of these revolutions

trained in the Stalinist school.

Our opposition to Stalinism was not an obstacle, but its historical

necessity, advocated by Mendelssohn in his founding conference in

1930, has been a salut for the workers, even when it meant

even if hand changing labels on the same article, and at worst, di-

luted the project at a time when the coming war required,

on the contrary, a firm programmatic armament and clear
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truth, but it goes against one the great advances of Lenin-

ism, namely that the conscious action of a vanguard based

on clear programmatic delineations is a means to enhance the

proletarian struggle, not just a spontaneous product of the

latter.

The Fourth International founded in 1938 entered the world as

the party of workers in class struggle. Only two contemporary
events are comparable with such a historical

victories. When we claim

we are not being facetious. We are carrying on a

fight, without despairing of the working class and socialism.

The real questions for yesterday and for today are more

difficult, and involve a full-fledged political vision of the

future.

Is the idea of a revolutionary International obsolete?

Yes. On the contrary, it is the necessary organizational

translation of the proletarian revolution perceived as an in-

ternational whole, of the rejection of chauvinism and the

theory of socialism in one country, of the growing inter-

nationalization of the division of labor, of the process of

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difficult, and involve a full-fledged political vision of the

future.
If significant currents posed themselves the question of building an International, and building it with us, that in itself would be a sign of a crucial evolution of their positions. We would have to examine the new situation. But we are not.

In the meantime, we can act as a genuine international current, conscious of the importance of its tradition and contribution, but open to dialogue and fraternal cooperation, to exchange activities with other currents of national, continental or international scope, who are also finding their way through the realignments now under way in the international workers' movement. Compared to the 1970s, many forms of social democracy have already subsided, many barriers have collapsed, and relations which would have been unthinkable yesterday have now been established. But we have not become complacent. We must continue to prepare the conditions for the rebirth of a democratic and pluralist mass revolutionary International.

5) Finally, is there not a danger of sectarian deformation in remaining a minority International for such a long time?

Of course there is. Fighting against the current can be a virtue. But it can also become a second nature and bad habit. What is the remedy against this danger? Is there a vaccine? The only weapon, which is not an absolute one, is the education of all members, leaders and rank-and-file. It is essential that the Fourth International, which genuine Communists have no interests separate from, to exchanges and joint activities with other currents and sections and vice versa. In this case, we must forecast the principle of conserving the fresh and dynamic elements of the Fourth International apart from the fate of the national section and vice versa. In this case, we must forecast the principle of conserving the fresh and dynamic elements of the Fourth International.

Trotsky himself was intent on applying this principle: He spoke of the importance of the Comintern in 1938, for the sake of the common interests which he saw in the need for mediations to that goal. The evolution of the Comintern

The Fourth International apart from the fate of the national sections and vice versa. In this case, we must forecast the principle of conserving the fresh and dynamic elements of the Fourth International.

From this standpoint, the necessity for building a revolutionary International is no less urgent today than in his time. The internationalization of production, of capital, of the division of labor, of markets and of new services, has taken giant leaps forward. Bourgeois mechanisms for international consultation, military and financial pacts, international organizations have proliferated. By contrast, the organized labor movement, which in its initial stages had seen its fate and more clearly than its class enemy when it created the First International, is now lagging far behind not merely on the international plane, but even on the European plane.

The real problem lies elsewhere. The idea of a world party can be misleading if it suggests a party ruled by the same mechanisms as national parties, with a larger size and reach. This temptation is not purely theoretical. It has found a practical translation in the severe centralization of the Third International, particularly after its fifth congress under the authoritarian hand of Zinoviev.

The fact is that the function of a national revolutionary party and a world party are not the same. The first has as its strategic task to guide the struggle for the conquest of power against a particular ruling class and state, based on very specific revolutionary traditions. The second has as its task to foster a common consciousness about the major events and tasks of the international class struggle, and to enhance the perception of the common interests which exist beyond national particularism.

From this fundamental difference in function stem differences in the internal regime and role of the leaderships. A national leadership is accountable for its decisions; it has the responsibility of implementing them. An international leadership can only pronounce on general questions of orientation; it has neither the mission nor the possibility of implementing an initiative on the ground. This is why, in our conception, the basic units of an International are not its members or cells, but the national sections which do not immediately reproduce the organizational discontinuity and problems in consolidating a political and organizational tradition which, on balance, cancelled the gains made in these initiatives.

6) Doesn't the very idea of a "world party of socialist revolution" constitute a myth doomed to disintegrate upon contact with reality?

Trotsky's heavy emphasis on the practical need for an International as a world party was motivated by the historical regression of internationalism which was to lead from the Stalinist theory of "permanent revolution in one country" to the pure and simple dissolution of what had been the Communist International in 1943, for the sake of the pro-systematic and imperialist interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

For Trotsky, the building of a world party was the most urgent political and organizational translation of a strategic project. It is not sufficient to contain and combine development, his perception of the world as an articulated whole as a result of the generalization of commodity production, his theory of permanent revolution as the long period of capitalist explosion, betrayed the interest of the proletariat at the decisive moment of the outbreak of war, and occupied the position of defense of the fatherland, i.e., defense of the frontiers of the bourgeois national state, which — together with the system of private property — had become a brake on the further development of productive forces.

2. Only a very small number of revolutionary Marxists drew from the shameful treachery and miserable collapse of the Second International the conclusion that a Third International was necessary. It is true, in most countries an opposition split off from the majority of the international's followers. But in the German Independent Socialist Party, the Italian Socialist Party (with Mazzini's followers), the German Social Democrats, the French Socialists, the German Independent Socialists (led by Karl Kautsky), the Italian Socialists, the French Socialist Party, the Russian Bolsheviks, to the principle of defending the fatherland. The Bolshevists — after overcoming analogous tendencies in their own ranks — broke with the ambiguous centrist majority of Zimmerwald and raised the banner of the Third International.

3. The victory of the Russian Revolution in October 1917 was the victory of the revolutionary principle of struggling against the enemy at home and of turning imperialist war into civil war, which since 1914 had been counterposed by the handful of revolutionary Marxists, and especially the leadership of the Russian Bolsheviks, to the principle of defending the fatherland. The Bolsheviks — after overcoming analogous tendencies in their own ranks — broke with the ambiguous centrist majority of Zimmerwald and raised the banner of the Third International.

4. At the founding congress of the Third Internationa...
ship in the Communist International. These conditions declared implacable war against the ambiguous, the wavering, the disoriented, the sterile social-pacifism of the cen-trists and demanded a complete break with all pacific ideas
and illusions (such as disarmament, League of Na-
tions, international arbitration, etc.). To the governing prin-ciples of the Second International of maintaining loose contacts between parties nationally independent (and act-
ing directly in opposition to each other) was counterposed the
principle of the world party built on the foundation of com-
mon theory and practice, and the aim of realizing a com-
mon international leadership on the principles of
democratic centralism.

7. Those centrist and conciliatory (towards the Sec-
ond International) politicians, who had been hindered
by the Second Congress from joining the Comintern, tried to
form a "Third International" (beginiinging of 1921)
ago-between affair, midway between open social treachery
and revolution (the Ausro-Marxists, the German "Inde-
pendants," the French Longuetists, the ILP, etc.). The
two-and-A-half International proclaimed alack—as Karl
Liebknecht put it—"the unity of fire and water," the
unity of revolutionists and social traitors in one Interna-
tional. But history had left no place for such a half-hearted
solution. The led in German "International was created to
bridge the struggle between the Second and Third Internationals.
Its revolutionary elements turned to the Third Interna-
tional: its bureaucratic tops reunited in 1923 (the Hambur-
g Congress) with the Second International.

8. Opportunists cenrism, which did not lead the
masses but wanted to be led by them, found its comple-
ment in "intraduralism," a theory which instead of winning
the masses from within by cooperation in their organiza-
tions, their struggles, and experiences, put an ultimatum to
them from outside. These ultralists declared themselves
genuinely revolutionary and based their support on
the mass trade unions and forming "pure" revolutionary
unions, and for isolated action of the vanguard. These
tactics were adopted by the Comintern, but of those of Italian Maximalism (Serra-
ta), against which the Second International of Trades Unions and the Young Communist
International had been built up. The Communist parties
in a number of countries were at that time leading mighty
revolutionary waves, which were neglected, and which, by its at-
titude in the World War, the Second International had abso-
lutely betrayed.

9. One of the greatest achievements of the Com-
intern of those years was the publicity given by it to the
historical importance of national movements of liberation
in the colonies and the anti-imperialist element, for leav-
ing the mass trade unions and forming "pure" revolutionary
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Lenin's "Guiding Principles on the National and Colo-
nial Question," which were adopted in the March events (1917-1920)
directed against any attempt to fasten a communist label
on revolutionary movements of liberation which were not
in reality communist. A temporary alliance with the na-
tional revolutionary movement was considered necessary, but it was pointed out that the task of
the Communists was not to amalgamate with these na-
tionalist parties, but under all circumstances unconditional-
ly to uphold the independent character of the proletarian
movement.

10. The year 1923 represents a decisive turning
point in the history of the Comintern. Owing to the de-
velopment of new layers of exploiting elements in the
Soviet Union as a consequence of the NEP and owing to the
general exhaustion of the working class after the xer-
nemous efforts and the fever of the years of revolution

and Civil War, the bureaucracy of the party and state ap-
ard, which had meant some become very strong, was
enabled by the bureaucratic frequency of the inde-
pendent social force, as an arrier over the classes. How-
ever, the bureaucracy could gain political power only by a
scrupulous fight against the independent proletarian,
and practical the fight for winning the masses can be carried out
ly Russian bureaucracy. The Comintern itself became bu-
earthacized and was brought into complete dependence
the bourgeois bureaucracy in Moscow.

11. In Germany in 1923 a revolutionary crisis broke out between the Social Democracy,
which had not been by any means overcome, the econom-
ic crisis interrupted only by slight booms, the occupa-
tion of the Ruhr territory by the French army, the organi-
cation and collapse of "passive resistance" of the German
bourgeoisie against this occupation, the runaway infla-
tion of German currency—all these causes led to an ex
traneous sharpening of the class contradictions. Huge
masses without platform to shop-strewed movement be-
came a gathering point for the revolutionary mass. The
workers organized themselves in Hunderschaften (bodies of
100) and in numerous individual groups, in which,
and of large unions the Communists even obtained a majori-
ty. Social Democracy was in confusion; the bourgeoisie
was split. The mass movement reached the critical point
when the decisive battle of the new revolution was at hand: the
requirement of the revolutionary leadership to push
this movement further ahead to victory. But the leadership
of the Communist Party (Brandl, Thaelheimer, Walcher,
Froelich, etc.) showed itself incapable of fulfilling its
historical tasks and thereby proved that it was only a Social
Democracy leadership, with a coating of Communist var-
mish. It stuck to the united front with the Social Democra-
y without being able to grasp the historical tasks above
the United front, it is not step back in order to leap forward all the
better; without being able to grasp that at a certain mo-
ment the fight for winning the masses can be carried out
ly by a direct struggle for power. The (ED) when the Com-
intern, which already showed signs of bureaucratic
deregeneration, also proved incapable of leading the CPG
on to the correct road. When the German bureaucracy at
last got its courage to take the offensive, the CPG capitulated
without a struggle. The consequence was a severe defeat of the German
and, with it, the European proletariat, giving
thereby European capitalism the possibility of stabilizing
itself anew.

13. The defeat of 1923 led to a serious internal crisis in the CPG. A new "left" leadership (R. Fischer-Maslou)
was chosen. This leadership, however, did not recognize
that the October defeat was decisive in character. Instead of ordering a retreat, it proceeded, to pass a
offensive path of adventurism and thereby increased the scope of the defeat.

14. After the German defeat, the Comintern adopted a poli-
icy of adventurism and extended this course to the entire In-
nernational, the consequence being a further defeat in
Estonia (uprising in Raevail, December 1924).

15. The theory of "socialism in one country," ad-
vanced by Stalin, the head of the bureaucracy, in the
autumn of 1924 in glaring contradiction to the entire theory
and practice of Marxism-Leninism, became for the newly
formed social layers (bureaucrats, kulaks [well-to-do peas-
ants], "petites" [specialists], etc.) the ideological expres-
sion of their nationally-limited interests. In number
of large unions the Communists even obtained a majori-
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and, with it, the European proletariat, giving
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itself anew.

16. The two methods adopted by the Comintern for handling the masses—on the one hand, unprincipled ad-
venturism in the name of national interests and the dem-o-
cratic and petty-bourgeois reformist parties; and on the
other, the sudden, unprepared appeals to the revolutionary
insists of the masses—have their roots in the social
position of the Soviet bureaucracy (the Comintern bureau-
cracy being its obedient appendage). Owing to its entire
social character, the Soviet bureaucracy inclines towards
adapting itself to the interests and exploiting the
Soviet society (kulaks, intellectual strata, labor aristoc-
rahy). However, as soon as the development has reached a
critical point, when these strata become so powerful so-
cially that they threaten the bureaucracy's political
privilege, the latter saves itself by an appeal to the masses.
In reality, it only stirs the proletarian masses, or
more correctly merely small sections of these masses), by
applying rigidly the consequences and the bourgeois dem-
ocratic policy. However, as soon as the development has reached a
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In reality, it only stirs the proletarian masses, or
more correctly merely small sections of these masses), by
applying rigidly the consequences and the bourgeois dem-
ocratic policy.
The adventurist course of 1924-1925 found its opponent in the bureaucratic-combination policy directed entirely against the interests of the proletarian vanguard. The foundation of a Peasants' International (Krestintern), the flirtation with the Caucasian Peasants' Party of Radich, and with La Follotela in the United States (Federated Farmer-Labor Party), were examples of the endeavors by the Stalinist bureaucracy to use on an international scale the kulak tendencies as a counterbalance against the proletarian vanguard. The union with the Chinese Guomindang, in which the class differences were ignored, the hopes pinned on the English trade union bureaucracy, all these props of the adventurist course of 1924-1925 became the most essential elements of the Stalinist bureaucracy, counterrevolutionary coup d'état; and, at a time when Chiang Kai-shek was still hailed in Moscow as the hero of the revolution, he ordered thousands of Chinese proletarians, who had already been deprived of power and arms by the Stalinist policy, to be shot. After Chiang Kai-shek's "treason" (not against the class interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie, but against Stalinist illusions), the Stalinist bureaucracy, in alliance with the Guomindang (Wang Ching-wei) and with under him the same biter experiences as with Chiang Kai-shek. Only when the defeat was completed, did the bureaucracy appeal to the proletariat whose vast majority had just been crushed to the ground. The result was the Canton insurrection which, although bearing a picturesque character and condemned to complete isolation and thus to defeat, again shockingly retrospect the class character of the Chinese revolution and the possibility and necessity of forming soviets and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and thereby underlined the criminal folly of the whole Stalinist policy.

19. In the other colonial and East Asiatic countries (British India, Dutch East Indies, Japan, Korea, etc.), Stalinism supported during this period the building of "Peasants' and Workers' parties" (of the Guomindang type) in direct contrast to Communist parties. This policy completely disregarded the elementary exigencies, especially in those countries wherein the discovery of a fighting alliance between the proletariat and the poor peasants against the aristocrats and liberal bourgeoisie. It was left to each concrete revolutionary situation to determine the form in which this dictatorship of the oppressed against the oppressors should assume. When, however, in the spring of 1917, opportunist tendencies within the Bolshevik party tried to hinder this program by Lenin in "Letters on Tactics" (April 1917) discord as it having been rended obsolete by living developments. However, in the hands of Stalinism, Lenin's slogan, which had been directed against the colonial bureaucracy, became an elementary subjectivity of the proletariat to the liberal bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, in spite of the opportunist policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, crawling on its belly before the military bureaucracy and lacking confidence in the revolution-

20. Parallel with the political alliance with the Guomindang, a political alliance was made with the English trade-unions (Bunyan's "English-Russian Committee") for the purpose of "preventing the war of intervention". Whereas the Leninist united front tactic had the aim of winning the masses to Communism, the Stalinist bureaucracy ultimately reached into contact with the English masses at all. The Anglo-Russian Committee confined itself to purely bureaucratic activities (conferences, banquets, and so on). The result was a strengthening of the authority of the reactionary trade-

21. In 1927, the flight of the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard in the Soviet Union came to its shameful conclusion. For Lenin this formula was an elementary basis to turn to the "apparatchiki" and the rich peasants, opposed with all its might the agrarian revolution. The Chinese Communists, thus tied by Stalinism to the Guomindang, were hindered from placing themselves at the head of the agrarian revolution. The peasants remained without revolutionary leadership and the Chinese revolution was deprived of its strongest lever.

...
26. The policy of bureaucratic ultimatism found its complement in unprecedented combinations with bankrupt bourgeois politicians, pacifists, and novelists (Lord Marjory, Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Heinrich Mann, etc.), as well as in the betrayal of the Left International, the League Against Imperialism, the Friends of the Soviet Union, etc. It is a policy which is the exact opposite of the Leninist united front tactic for winning the proletariat, which reflects the bureaucratic admiration of "people in high positions," and the bureaucratic scum of the revolutionary forces of the masses.

27. In 1927, a new turn of the Comintern policy was imposed by the domestic political situation of the Soviet Union as well as the foreign political situation, altered by the victory of fascism in Germany. Whereas the Leninist united front tactic for winning the proletariat, which reflects the bureaucratic admiration of "people in high positions," and the bureaucratic scum of the revolutionary forces of the masses.

28. Stalin's declaration to the French Premier Laval (May 1935), that "he understood and approved completely the policy of national defense of France," signaled the Comintern's new policy of imperialistic cooptation. Soviet foreign policy, which in the meantime had joined the League of Nations, advocates "collective security" (i.e., the security of the imperialist robbers to continue to rob without hindrance or interference), and the like. Therefore, by the Comintern makes itself the prop for the oldest and most worn-out illusions with which imperialism deceives the masses and prepares them for the mass slaughter, and this at a moment when Italy's brutal assault on Abyssinia demonstrates clearly the whole emptiness and shallowness of the lying phrases of collective security.

29. The Seventh World Congress, assembling at last in the autumn of 1935, signified the break with the last remnants of Comintern traditions. "People's Front" and "National Defense," sexual betrayal, and socialist chauvinism are all hollow theatrical performances of bureaucratic marionettes — had to offer to the world working class.

30. The Stalinists demand in all countries, in exchange for their willingness to defend the "Fatherland," one only price, i.e., that the foreign policy of the respective country should be subordinated to the Soviet Union. The Franco-Soviet military agreement alone sufficed in order to transform the French Stalinists into the worst type of chauvinists, preaching national fractionalization of all classes and of religious denominations. The British Stalinists have no other aim but to get the British bourgeoisie to become a signatory to the Franco-Soviet agreement. Today, the American Comintern section already endorses a war of the United States against Japan "for the defense of the Soviet Union." Although a war of the USA against Japan — given a correct policy on the part of the proletarian party would offer tremendous possibilities for revolutionary development, the American Stalinists are already preaching the renunciation of the revolutionary class struggle and the support of the pro-imperialist government. In France, however, the Stalinists realized or not, the advanced worker must have no doubt that Stalinism and Social Democracy are "not antipodes, but twins." They both are the yellow agencies of Great Capitalism.

31. At present, the Comintern is experiencing a certain growth which is not to be underestimated, but as a social-trachexious and social-chauvinist, not as a revolutionary party. Faced with tremendous political tension, already signaling everywhere the approach of the new world war, the masses rush to the left and find there the only door known to them, that of the Comintern. Thus, at the last elections the French Communist Party was able to more than double its votes (its number of deputies increased sevenfold). Above all, the proletarian districts — Paris and suburbs — voted Communist. Also, the Belgian Communist Party, always very weak, was able to register in this year's elections a success which was not foreseeable. France, Belgium, and others have colonies of their own which they exploit with a brutality second to none of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the world. In China, the Stalinists are prepared to deliver the Chinese proletariat and poor peasants again into the hands of the counterrevolutionary Chiang Kai-shek and in this latter case himself willing to turn his bayonets against Japan.

In the small European countries, the Stalinists already declare themselves defenders of "national independence." They forget completely that these countries are links in the imperialist chain and that they too carry on war with imperialist aims. So far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, a nation which is the true representative of the bourgeoisie of the world, the Stalinists, this is not a national state at all, but only a conglomeration of nationalities, held together by French imperialism. Poland, Rumania, Belgium, etc., are themselves oppressors of national minorities. Holland, Belgium, Portugal, and others have colonies of their own which they exploit with a brutality second to none of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the world. This is the reason why they are prepared to defend the "independence of Austria" — of this artificial creation, incapable of independent existence — if only the Austrian bourgeoisie (and Franco-Sovietism, English capitalism) will promise certain amounts of legality for their patriotic loyal propaganda. The German Stalinists in emigration have become social-patriots, transforming themselves from nationalist champions against the "national question" into merely the defenders of the status quo created by this very same treaty. It follows from the present position of the German Stalinists that they will transform themselves into real-social-patriots as soon as the fascist dictatorship in Germany is replaced by another type of bourgeois regime.

32. As against this enormous betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, the organizational task of the Fourth International adheres to the internationalist slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war; not the defense of the reactionary national frontiers, which decades ago became a brake on any kind of development, but their abandonment; the creation of the United Soviet Republics of Europe and of the whole world is our aim.

33. Due to the social-patriotic transformation of Stalinism, all the differences between the Third International and the Second International, which owes its artifici-
The Left Opposition

The October revolution established the first Workers' State, but remained for the most part a revolution about thirty of the most important leaders of the International Opposition. One chapter of this document was entitled "FacIon - Not a Party." The perspective outlined there was the same one of the preceding years, namely, the reform of the Communist International and of each of its sections. Nevertheless, a warning was sounded. "Such an historical catastrophe as the fall of the Soviet State would surely drag along the Third International.

Outwardly the Russian Opposition, remained precarious. Many of the groups arose in opposition to one of the aspects of Stalinist policy. Their political solidarity was far from complete. One group that proved of great importance for the future of our movement, the Opposition in the American communist party, appeared belatedly on the scene, in 1928.

The organizational cohesion of the International Left Opposition was not all bad. The struggle against the Workers' Opposition - that was a fact. Many of the members of the Left Opposition took place in Paris in 1930. The policy of the Second International accepted the Moscow resolution and thus brought to the ranks of the Left Opposition, these objections were not seriously undertaken until the time of its new line, especially in the political Bolshevik Party, and the Communist International viewed in its entirety, the line remained as before, that of reform.

The collapse of the German Communist Party

The leaders of the two official workers' parties vied with each other in the attempt to level the head of the Fascist menace. The Social Democratic leadership desperately grasped at a democracy which, in the midst of economic chaos and the sharpened social and political, was disarming itself. The Social Democratic leadership had the "genial" theory of their leader, that it was first necessary to crush the Social Democrats before fighting fascism. They had made common cause with the Nazis in the famous plebiscite in Prussia in August 1931. When the Fascist menace became imminent, they clamored with brag-gadocio: "After them will be outturn!" When Hitler formed his government on January 30, 1933, not all was lost. The workers' organizations were still intact. In the following weeks the Nazis acted very cautiously. In February, Trotsky stated in a conversation: "The situation in Germany is similar to that of a man at the height of passion. To gain one's heart. To get out it is clutched at the rocks with bare and bloody hands. It is necessary to have courage and will, but it is possible. Not all is lost."

The official leadership of the workers' parties allowed the last chance to slip by. In the face of their passivity, Hitler became more brazen. He never hoped to win such an easy victory. At the beginning of March, the crude provocation of the Reichstag fire allowed him to definitely entrench his regime. The workers' organizations were swept away.

Trotsky's reaction was not long in coming. He wrote an article entitled The Tragedy of the German Proletariat. It was dated March 14, 1933, and had as a sub-title, "The present crisis is the leading event in the history of our movement, the first document of our movement. It can be compared to what had been for Bolshevism the famous vote on the statutes of the First Congress."

Appendix B: How the Fourth International Was Conceived (August 1944) by Jean van Heijenoort*

Our movement has the right to consider itself the representative and the historical standard-bearer of revolutionary socialism. It is at the end of a chain whose links were the Communist League of Marx and Engels, the Internationale (First International), the Second International, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin, and the Communist International. But in order to establish the specific beginnings of our movement it is necessary to begin with the year 1923.

readmission of the oppositionists into the official parties must be definitely given up, as utopian and reactionary."

On July 20th a second article entitled, it is no longer possible to stay in the "International" with Stalin, Malinovsky, Lozovsky and Co., answered possible arguments against the new position.

The change in policy coincided with the change in Trotsky's residence. On July 17th, he left Istanbul, and on the 20th he landed in Marseilles. Next day he settled himself near Saint-Palais, on the Atlantic seaboard; another big change in his personal life. While on the island of Prinkipo, the arrival of a visitor was a little event every four or six months; in France, Trotsky was able in the following week to call a meeting of practically all leading members of the European opposition groups, and with quite a few from overseas.

When Trotsky landed in Marseilles, the translation of his first article on the need of a new International had hard­

The problem was: how to discard the policy of reform of the Bolshevik Party and at the same time retain the perspec­tive of reforming the workers' state? How to proclaim the Fourth International before the Stalinist bureaucracy had led the USSR to its collapse?

The problem of the USSR was the greatest obstacle in Trotsky's mind because the policy of reform there remained no other alternative than to form a Fourth International. Shortly before his article of July 15, he said in a conversation at Prinkipo: "Since April, we have been for reform in all countries except Germany, where we are for a new party. Now we can take a symmetrical position, i.e., in favor of a new party in every country except the USSR, where we will be for the reform of the Bolshevik Party." (This position was later expressed in a program of creating a new International, to denote those who wanted to remain equivocal and ambiguous. Together with a few organizations which recognized the immediate necessity of a new International (S.A.P., R.S.P., O.S.P.), our organization signed a programmatic document known under the name of Declaration of the Four. Some months later the S.A.P. was to deny its signature. The conference in Paris proved to be the maximum ef­

The New International

A few voices raised the question: haven't we waited too long? Hasn't the whole political atmosphere, our orienta­tion, our position toward the French workers, united front against fascism. This was the response of the Socialist Party and then, more slowly, the Communist Party had to commit to a united front. Along with this new political atmosphere, there was a new political climate. Sharpener and brighter is the question (of reform) in the USSR. The policy of the second party there would imply the policy of armed insurrection and a new revolution. The policy of the third party would involve the line of inner reform of the party and the workers'.

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Trotzky wrote: "If the Stalinist bureaucracy will bring the USSR to collapse, then... it will be necessary to build a Fourth International."

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Trotzky wrote: "If the Stalinist bureaucracy will bring the USSR to collapse, then... it will be necessary to build a Fourth International."
number of left-wing SP members who had joined and become radicalized since Hitler's victory.

4. The situation of this stage tactic or maneuver, which came to be known as the "French Turn." And he had to explain and defend this proposal with all the vigor and eloquence at his command (7) because it met much opposition from the French section (and elsewhere) as well as the call for the new International had received. After a heated discussion and a near split averted only by IS intervention, the entry proposal was adopted by a majority of the French section at a national conference held at the end of August. It was supported by one of the two principal French leaders, Raymond Molinier, and opposed by the other, Pierre Naville. Shortly after the conference, the Naville group split from the section, and although it later agreed to enter the SP, it refused for a long time to join the Bolshevik-Leninist Group in the SP, which was the name given to the members of the French section.

5. Thus this 1934 entry proposal was a blow to everyone in the ICL who was tainted by formalism, sectarianism, sectarianism, and passivity, and it helped to rid us of people who were opposed on one hand and on the other.

6. It can be argued that entrism was only a tactic, and one whose value was specific to the circumstances; that this particular merger experiment was carried out in 1934 in true enough but in my opinion Trotsky's proposal was one of his finest contributions in the 1933-1938 period. Aside from other benefits produced, the discussion it provoked and the controversy that led to the first major confrontation of American CP leaders, egged on by Stalin at the time, gave rise to a very real liberation of our movement from the diseases of dogmatism that had been carried over from the Comintern or had been reinforced by different waves of recruits from third-period Stalinism. It also helped to rid us of people who were hopelessly unassimilable and could only hamper the healthy growth of our movement.

7. The repercussions in the IS and ICL executive committee was very intense in the French section. Seventy members opposed the turn on various grounds, and most of them were incensed against Trotsky because he had taken the entry proposal to the French section before it took up the IS. But the IS secretariat, denounced the proposal as a violation of Bolshevik principles and accused Trotsky of capitulating to the Second Internationalist elements, and the IS executive committee that was called for October to assess the French turn, but quit on the spot, and joined the German affiliate of the London Bureau. Sneevliet, the secretary of the Dutch section, and Vannero, the secretary of the Belgian section, were also opposed to the French turn, largely on tactical grounds, but Trotsky diplomatically persuaded them that even if they voted against the proposal they could let the French section vote after all, which was voted 6 to 3 (8). One of the supporters of the resolution was Pierre Naville, a supporter of the Naville group, who had not participated in the recent conference. It was this 6 to 3 vote that gave Trotsky the confidence he sought to proceed with the entry proposal with all the vigor and eloquence at his command. And it was at this time, when the Trotskyist group took its first steps towards what is now known as Trotsky's "revolutionary committees," that Bernays, a Trotskyist leader in the IS, later described how Trotsky convinced him to help with this work, which was the beginning of the Trotskyist movement in the IS.

8. The repercussions were immediately felt in the French section, which was the key to the success of the entry proposal. The entry proposal was adopted by the French section at a national conference held at the end of August. It was supported by one of the two principal French leaders, Raymond Molinier, and opposed by the other, Pierre Naville. Shortly after the conference, the Naville group split from the section, and although it later agreed to enter the SP, it refused for a long time to join the Bolshevik-Leninist Group in the SP, which was the name given to the members of the French section.

9. Trotsky could not attend, would have been closer if Bauer had not quit so quickly and if the Spanish had not boycotted the meeting. As it was, a large number of left-wing Socialists in the SP's youth organization they formed a bloc with the left-centrist leaders that soon had the reformist leaders worried. Even Stalin, who had admitted wholeheartedly to subscribing to the Trotskyist-Leninist position that the Bolshevik-Leninists were doing good revolutionary work inside the French SP.

10. The Moscow bureaucracy finally began to junk its ulterior motives. Anti-comintern or had been carried over from the Comintern or had been reinforced by different waves of recruits from third-period Stalinism. It also helped to rid us of people who were hopelessly unassimilable and could only hamper the healthy growth of our movement.

11. But the major advance took place in France, the key to the international situation. Within a few months, the Bolshevik-Leninist Group of the SP had begun to influence thousands of left-wing Socialists; in the SP's youth organization they formed a bloc with the left-centrist leaders that soon had the reformist leaders worried. Even Stalin, who had admitted wholeheartedly to subscribing to the Trotskyist-Leninist position that the Bolshevik-Leninists were doing good revolutionary work inside the French SP.

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International they had voted for at the founding conference, and led a damaging split of the movement. Slowly, our Trotskyist center had been forced to testify to the futility of trying to cure the Third International. We, in Holland, had considered that the anathema at this time. For several weeks now, a number of leaders, impugning his revolutionary honor, thereby harmed the party, to its weakening and to splits, anywhere that it will undertake the work of preparing the Fourth International, notes:

- that the party has never failed to give first place in its propaganda to the final collapse of the Second and Third Internationals, showing at the same time to the workers the need to regroup on the basis of a new, a Fourth International;
- that this position was confirmed by its deeds, such as the signing of the "Open Letter of 1935, a document which flowed from the "Declaration of Four" of 1933, and that the Trotskyist center in its relations with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, has carried on a policy which tends to discredit the International. But this estimate does not change one iota to the fact that experience has taught us that it was absolutely wrong to state that the Fourth International could be built "only in the manner of a leadership known and decided only organization." Outside its international organization, not a single moral is aware that this Fourth International new exists in any other way than as an idea which must be born and developed. Since the Fourth Internationals have become unusable as guides for the world proletariat in its forward march to socialism.

Leon Trotsky speaks of five years of contacts during which he was unable to convince Sweezy and his co-workers to think being "genuine supporters of the Fourth International" as he conceives it. The truth is this: there was no contact between the Dutch RSP and Trotsky's group before December 1932, even though our positions converged on several points and should have been cause for seeking contact. Trotsky's role in the proletariat move- ment and the Russian revolution, his words and deeds were sufficiently known to the Dutch Trotskyists. But at that point, Trotsky and his people were still busy trying to cure the Third International. We, in Holland, had already broken through the traditional conceptions of the Fourth International had on the persecuted fighters in the concentration camps, pri- sons, armies and underground cells. They fought because of their desire to be hardened for them to keep on fighting without it. And without it, would have been more difficult to establish the political and ideologi cal homogeneity that was established soon after the war. (7)

(7) Several articles on this subject are in the Writings of Leon Trotsky (1941-55), New York: Pathfinder, 1971.
(9) See Cannon, 1945 speech, "The Workers Party and the Minor­ ity in the SWP."

Appendix D: Henk Sweezen's Position* The anathema of Coyoacan (February 15, 1938) The unavoidable has happened. It seems the document below is a solenn anathema. Here we are, expelled from

* The two articles above are translated from Fröjdlig Tidning's Henk Sweezen, Porte: La Befte, 1988, in French. They were originally published in Nieuw Fakke, March 13, 1938 and March 14, 1938. Sweezen is presented in the glossary.

"with a real difference; this is also true of the fourth item. As far as we are concerned, we feel that on the question of the Fourth International whose infallible leader is comrade Trotsky. We do not see a summit which stands united and preserved as a whole. The more so when the center of the Fourth International had a council before judging and con demning the heretic. Such formalities are not customary in these circles.

There were many signs since July 1936 that this would be the outcome. That was when the RSAP leadership left a conference (the first conference for the Fourth International, July 29 to 31) which was bound to have had a substantial impact on the life of the Fourth International had a council before judging and condemning the heretic. Outside its international organization, not a single moral is aware that this Fourth International now exists in any other way than as an idea which must be born and developed. Since the Fourth Internationals have become unusable as guides for the world proletariat in its forward march to socialism.

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the Fourth International that is being created.
For the RSAP the choice remains: the Fourth International or a fall into barbarism! Forward to revolutionary Marxism! Long live the world proletariat!

This resolution will be transmitted to the parties and groups outside the Second and Third Internationals.

Appendix E: Twenty Years Later (1958) by Michel Pablo

Why the Fourth International

Between 1933 and 1938, and at the very founding Congress of the Fourth International, the question of a new International was often debated.

Patiently but firmly, our tendency with Leon Trotsky at its head, fought during this period against the centrisms outside and the skeptics inside our own ranks as to whether it was opportune to create a new International. These arguments were in reality summarized in this one: The revolutionary Marxist tendency is too isolated from the masses, who have not yet become conscious of the betrayal of the traditional leaderships and especially of Stalinist revisionism. Consequently it is necessary to wait for more favorable conditions and avoid creating an International "artificially."

How did we answer these arguments, out of the mouth of the very Founding Conference of the Fourth International? By noting simultaneously three things: the bankruptcy of the traditional leaderships, proved by the defeat of the proletariat in Germany in 1933, in France and Spain in the years 1936 to 1938, defeats that produced no reaction of possible correction of the organizations led by the Social Democrats and the Stalinists, the incompatibility of our organizational demands with those of these leaderships; our factual existence as an international tendency which could sometimes fall no less colossally behind them. The history of the international workers' movement is full of examples.

What definitively counts for the quality of a revolutionary leadership is its fusion with the class at any given moment, but its programme and its doctrine, as well as the continuity and consistency with which they are advocated by the revolutionary cadres. If the programme and doctrine effectively corresponded, not to the conjunctural consciousness and mentality of the class, but to the objective situation; and if the organization advocated these ideas with consistency and perseverance, even if it were having to struggle about its junction with the masses set in movement toward it by the objective conditions that finally determine the struggle of the masses.

This is the basic meaning that we find both in the act of founding the Fourth International and in its programme.

It was already known in 1938 that the new International was and would remain, a transitional international organization, created, consolidated, and inspired by a common programme, fundamentally distinct from any other tendency.

The Fourth International emerged as an international tendency opposed to the traditional leaderships, through the very development of the class struggle in the pre-war world, and of the inevitable differentiations which this...

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Appendix F:
The Polish delegates at the September 1938 Conference

Conradt V. [Pierre Naville] reported for the preparatory commission. A rough draft of the statutes was written. Its first article contains what has been referred to as the “proclamation” of the International. It would no more accurately say its definite organization and the strictness of its position in the future, nor would it be possible to say its definite organization and the strictness of its position in the future, nor would it be possible to say the proclamation of the Fourth International. We must enlighten the workers and prepare the movement. If we remain a propaganda group, the workers will not place big demands on us, but if we are an actual party, they will demand leadership, and we will be unable to guide them. They will be disappointed. The First International was based on the basis of the International. It was the basis of the International. The Second International was on the basis of the forces of the German proletariat. The Third on the Russian, Balkan, Polish, and German forces. As long as the Fourth does not have some mass parties, it cannot be proclaimed. This is why we disagree with Point 1 of the Statutes.

Stephan [Stefan Lamed] supporting the Polish resolution, said that it is perfectly possible to have a definite program — we had just adopted the Revolutionary Program — a clearly defined leadership and national sections with going to the length of formally proclaiming the Fourth. Such indeed had been our position since 1935, and there was no reason that it should not continue until we had gained in strength and the opportunity was more favorable. The proclamation of an International was a gesture, and in the present circumstances such a gesture would be of significant value.

The Polish delegation proposes the following amendment: The international Bolshevik-Leninist organization arises from great events: the greatest defeat of the proletariat in history. The cause of these defeats is the degeneration of the old leadership. The Third International at the time of the revolution was already weakened before the revolution. The Fourth International is a mass movement which arose out of the Third International. The Second set tremendous masses in motion. The Third led mass revolutionary movements. But the situation has changed. The workers are suffering from enormous repression. We have no leadership over the masses. By proclaiming the Fourth International without being sure of the workers' reaction, we will compromise the idea of the Fourth International.

The future of all humanity depends on the Fourth. We must not create a fiction, but a real International. Despite repression, the crisis of capitalism poses the question of the proletarian revolution. It is only by creating the Fourth International that we can enlighten the workers and prepare the movement. If we remain a propaganda group, the workers will not place big demands on us, but if we are an actual party, they will demand leadership, and we will be unable to guide them. They will be disappointed. The First International was based on the forces of the German proletariat. The Second International was on the Russian, Balkan, Polish, and German forces. As long as the Fourth does not have some mass parties, it cannot be proclaimed. This is why we disagree with Point 1 of the Statutes.

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The Future of all humanity depends on the Fourth. We must not create a fiction, but a real International. Despite repression, the crisis of capitalism poses the question of the proletarian revolution. It is only by creating the Fourth International that we can enlighten the workers and prepare the movement. If we remain a propaganda group, the workers will not place big demands on us, but if we are an actual party, they will demand leadership, and we will be unable to guide them. They will be disappointed. The First International was based on the forces of the German proletariat. The Second International was on the Russian, Balkan, Polish, and German forces. As long as the Fourth does not have some mass parties, it cannot be proclaimed. This is why we disagree with Point 1 of the Statutes.

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Maximilans: a leader of the German Left Opposition in France in 1929 to 1930.

Mosse, Abraham Johannes (1885-1967): leader of the Socialist Party of Sweden, he was expelled for "self-criticism," some joining the International Left Opposition (b. 1887): 

Muste, Abraham Johannes (1885-1967): leader of the Socialist Party of America, he was expelled in 1933 to join the Socialist Party of Mexico, he worked for the creation of the Fourth International; he was arrested and interned during the Spanish Civil War.

Muscov, Daniel (1909-1975): leader of the Spanish Communist Party from 1933 to 1943, he was expelled in 1936 by the Comintern.

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The formative years of the Fourth International
Daniel Bensaïd

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II. A new International: On what basis?
III. Towards a new International? How?

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IV. From a cadre International to a mass International
V. The question of centrisms and fusion
VI. The question of "entryism"
VII. The question of the mass workers party or labor party
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E. Twenty years after, Michel Pablo (1958)
F. Position of the Polish delegates at the founding conference (1938)
G. The problem of training cadre, Pierre Frank (1978)

Glossary

Further reading

A new problem was posed to the movement for socialist democracy in the 1930s. To its fight against capitalism in imperialist and dependent countries, it now had to add a fight against Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. In this lecture, Bensaïd outlines the arguments which led part of this movement to found an independent international organization. He unravels the historical reasons, the conjunctural prognoses and the organizational choices, showing in particular that the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938 concluded a prolonged attempt to regroup many anti-Stalinist, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist currents, beginning in 1933. Due to the concrete conditions of the 1930s however, the regroupment failed to broaden significantly. The appendixes include selections from supporters and opponents of this approach.

Daniel Bensaïd was born in 1946. Directly involved in the French May 68 events and a leader of the LCR, the French section of the Fourth International since then, he has considered the relation between internationalism and building an International on many occasions. He teaches sociology at the University of Paris and is a regular collaborator of the IIRE. His latest book, written in collaboration with Alain Krivine, is Mai sti rebelles et repentis (Paris: La Brèche, 1988).

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