The 1953 split in the Fourth International

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Forty years ago, the Fourth International (FI) was rent by a substantial political debate over perspectives and orientation. A number of important sections (Britain, France, USA) set up the "International Committee of the Fourth International" in November 1953, in opposition to the majority "International Secretariat".

The split still reverberates today. Some of the international organisations which call themselves Trotskyist can claim to be the direct descendants of one or the other side, and virtually all of them have a clear view on the split. The split has become part of the mythology of Trotskyism, presented as a principled defence of "orthodox Trotskyism" against a political deviation led by one man ("Pablo") or as a damaging split which led to the subsequent and lasting weakness of the International.

In fact, it was neither of these things. Neither side represented the continuity of Trotsky's FI for the simple reason that the whole of the International had already adopted a series of centrist positions which distorted the Marxist analysis of Stalinism, petit bourgeois nationalism and the nature of the political period.

These positions were never at issue in 1953 or afterwards. And yet they provide us with the key to understanding the nature of the split, and the reasons for the decades long break in revolutionary continuity which has hampered the world working class so much.

When Trotsky founded the FI in 1938 it was in the clear expectation that during the revolutionary crises which would mark the coming war, the International would be able to place itself at the head of mass struggles. Trotsky considered that if capitalism survived the war it would inevitably be massively impoverished and unstable and that the Stalinist bureaucracy would collapse because of its inability to defend the USSR politically or militarily.

This perspective contained serious weaknesses, both in its methodology and in its material basis.' Imperialism and Stalinism both came out of the war reinforced and strengthened, whilst the International remained weak and divided.

The war years had taken their toll. Some militants left the movement, overwhelmed by the enormity of the task; many more stayed at their posts and were killed by the fascists or the Stalinists.

Even before Trotsky's death the International leadership had been severely weakened by Stalinist assassination (Rudolf Klement, Leon Sedoff) and by the split of the Shachtmanites. During the war the International leadership, transferred to the USA, had very little influence on the life of the sections, most of which were in Europe and which generally came to be dominated by young and inexperienced militants who were isolated as international communications ceased.

Apart from the grave political mistakes which this led to with regard to the war (notably in France), this situation also meant that the International had to create a new leadership. As the war came to an end, the European sections built such a leadership, centred on Michel Raptis ("Pablo") and Ernest Mandel.
The twin tasks they faced were those of restabilising the International and of elaborating an understanding of the new post-war situation, in particular the expansion of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China.

Despite their devotion, they failed both these challenges. The political positions they developed were increasingly distant from the method adopted by Trotsky, whilst the organisational methods they adopted to enforce them opened the road to bureaucratic degeneration. They strove to preserve as much of the letter of Trotsky's old perspective as possible.

But in doing so, over a period of five years they gradually altered its entire spirit.

In 1948, ten years after its foundation, the FI held its Second Congress. The documents insisted that the 1938 perspectives upon which the International was founded retained their validity and that the international collapse of capitalism was imminent.

The opposite was in fact the case. The Congress further argued that no abolition of capitalism had taken place in Eastern Europe and that none could take place unless these states were "structurally assimilated" (that is, absorbed) into the USSR, as had happened to Poland in 1939.

Although this analysis was fundamentally mistaken it enabled the FI to remain in favour of building independent revolutionary parties and of regarding Stalinism as a counterrevolutionary force, However, as the FI leadership's world view became increasingly at variance with reality, so their "orthodoxy" became ever more fragile.

All that was needed to dislodge the FI from the correct programmatic positions it held until 1948 was a sharp twist in world events.

That twist came almost immediately after the Congress.

In the summer of 1948 the Tito-Stalin split was made public.

The Yugoslavian Communist Party (YCP) was expelled from the Cominform and was denounced as "Trotskyist" and "fascist". Because, as the Second Congress had argued, Stalinist parties were defined as being entirely subordinate to "the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Soviet bureaucracy" in breaking with the Kremlin the YCP had de facto broken with Stalinism. The "crisis of Stalinism" predicted since 1938 was allegedly coming to fruition.

In fact the FI's position ignored Trotsky's 1927 prediction that, on the basis of "socialism in one country", the Comintern would "split along national lines", Stalin and Tito had no strategic political differences: both were concerned to maintain their own bureaucratic dictatorships.

But for Stalin, the very existence of a Yugoslavian degenerate workers state imperilled his plans for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism: hence the Kremlin's hostility to the YCP. All this was lost on the FI, which immediately made a "turn" towards the YCP. An Open letter from the International Secretariat (IS) requesting attendance rights at the YCP Congress of July 1948 declared:

"We understand exactly the tremendous responsibility weighing upon you, and . . . we consider it our communist duty to assist you in resolving the present crisis in communism along proletarian and Leninist lines." 3 The split prompted the IS to re-examine the case of Yugoslavia and to effectively rewrite the Congress positions which had been so recently adopted. Pablo now analysed the Yugoslav partisan war
(1942-1945) as a "proletarian revolution"; by 1951 this position was accepted by the whole of the FI leadership.

The IS further argued that from the beginning the state established by this "revolution" was a workers' state. Moreover this state was held to be suffering only from bureaucratic deformations. This was no randomly chosen term.

It was taken from Lenin's last writings on Russia and clearly identified Tito's Yugoslavia with the relatively healthy USSR rather than with the degenerate workers' state of Stalin, The fact that there had never been any workers' and peasants' councils was of minor importance. For the Ft the key question was that the YCP had "broken with Stalinism".

In this Alice in Wonderland world Tito's parasitic bureaucracy was not a counter-revolutionary factor but a centrist force which had "made a revolution" and which needed the FI's comradely advice-not its intransigent revolutionary opposition-in order to complete its democratisation by reform, As was later to happen with Cuba and Nicaragua, members of the FI participated in work brigades and delegations to "revolutionary Yugoslavia". The very idea of political revolution or of the need for a revolutionary party in was never mentioned.

This centrist capitulation by the International leadership-enthusiastically taken up by the sections-together with the oft-repeated 1938 perspectives which took on an increasingly catastrophist colouring, were to be the undoing of the FI. Over the next years they undermined and revised the key positions of the Trotskyist movement: on the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism, on the necessity of a revolutionary party in a revolutionary crisis, the nature of the permanent revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and on the tactic of entryism.

In 1948-51, the IS, now expanded to include representatives of the SWP(US) and the French PCI, deepened their centrist errors. At the heart of their proclaimed "new Trotskyism" was a fundamental break with the Marxist method.

Using the Yugoslavian events as their guide, the leadership argued that economic and political crises spontaneously produced mass struggles which would inevitably push the leaderships to the left. The "World Revolution" appeared repeatedly in different forms, manifesting itself here as the establishment of a Stalinist dictatorship, there as an "antiimperialist" bourgeois nationalist regime, elsewhere as the election of a left social democratic government. Spontaneous mass pressure could thus convert the most unpromising parties and leaderships into agents of the proletarian revolution.

This led inescapably to the diminution of the role of conscious revolutionary leadership-of the FI itself. Instead of its absence or presence being the decisive factor at the turning point of each revolutionary crisis, instead of the party armed with the programme of transitional demands being the essential instrument of proletarian revolution, the "process" could continue for a whole phase under its existing leaderships.

Worse still, if these existing leaderships seemed timid or reticent they could best be encouraged by abandoning revolutionary criticism and encouraging them to be more resolute. This in turn necessitated revolutionaries abandoning the old "sectarian" method of counter posing themselves to these leaderships and their mass movements.

An essential component of this analysis was a revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism. that it is invariably a counter-revolutionary force. Even where Stalinists, against their will, have found themselves obliged to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform property relations they have inevitably done so in a
counter-revolutionary fashion, preventing the working class from taking political power, and indeed crushing its independent organisations.

In the political report to the Third Congress (1951) Pablo stated that, "the CPs are not exactly reformist parties and that under exceptional conditions they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation, i.e. of seeing themselves obliged to undertake a struggle for power." This characterisation, which was a complete revision of Trotsky's characterisation of the Stalinist parties as counter-revolutionary, was intended to determine a new tactical orientation to the Stalinist parties:

"...subordinating all organisational considerations of independence or otherwise, to real integration into the mass movement wherever it best expresses itself in each country." This "real integration" was generally to take the form of "entrism". In the 1930s Trotsky had argued for revolutionaries to enter leftward-moving reformist parties to win over centrist workers.

This tactic involved fighting openly for a revolutionary programme, was necessarily of limited duration and was entirely linked with the creation of an independent Leninist combat party. The version put forward by Pablo was very different: he himself termed it "entrism sui generis"—of a special kind, The new tactic required revolutionaries to hide their programme and principles and to imitate the politics of the left wing of the "mass movement". The secret Trotskyist nucleus would eventually emerge when the historical evolution had made the time ripe for its conscious expression of what the mass party was doing or had already done unconsciously or objectively.

Intimately connected with this adaptation in the field of party building was an analysis of the world situation which argued that such was the imminence of the revolution that there was no time to build independent organisations.

In a grotesque "improvement" of Lenin's theory of imperialism as the epoch of wars and revolutions, Pablo put forward a position that was ridiculous both as an immediate perspective and as a description of a defining feature of the epoch:

"It is the conception of Revolution-War, of War-Revolution which is emerging and upon which the perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest." The Third Congress took this a step further, arguing that the "dominant general tendency" on a world scale would be "an international civil war",?

These positions were a direct consequence of the International's failure to reconsider the 1938 perspectives.

Rather than seeking to re-elaborate the revolutionary programme in the light of changed events, the FI merely repeated the old "orthodoxy". The results were ludicrous, and yet not one voice was raised in opposition to them. Two of the main tendencies which were to form the International Committee (IC) - the SWP(US) and the French majority both made minor criticisms, but they accepted the fundamental basis of the IS analysis of the nature of Stalinism and of the YCP.

Thus despite wishing to reorient the perspectives towards developments in the major imperialist countries, the SWP(US) agreed entirely with the imminence of a global war and argued with regard to the CPs that:

"If such parties go along with the masses and begin to follow a revolutionary road this will inescapably lead to their break with the Kremlin and to their independent political evolution. Such parties can then no longer be considered as Stalinist, but will rather tend to be centrist in character, as has been the case with the
Bleibtreu, the leader of the French PCI, correctly argued against Pablo's division of the world into two "camps" (capitalism and Stalinism) but repeated the Second Congress "orthodoxy" that Stalinism was not a political programme (indeed that there was no such thing!), "but only. . . its leadership's subordination to orders from the Kremlin bureaucracy". This led him to argue that Mao's Chinese revolution was the "negation" of Stalinism and to attack the Chinese Trotskyists for not entering the Chinese CP!

The PCI leadership capitulated to what were in reality completely Stalinist parties and then-to reconcile this with an "orthodox" hostility to the Kremlin and its French stooges insisted that the Yugoslav CP (YCP) and the Chinese GP were not Stalinist parties at all.

In explaining at the Congress why the French majority would vote against the perspectives document, Bleibtreu argued that the Chinese CP had become a "centrist party" and claimed that world war was only temporarily prevented "by the dynamic of the revolutionary movement". This was hardly a break with Pablo's method! It was further illustrated by his insistence that the war would be: "... a class war. From this point of view, we should reject any formula about the 'transformation of the world war into a civil war’, because it would be by definition a civil war." 11

Bolivia 1952: Acid test of the FI's centrism

Prior to and during the 1952 Bolivian revolution, the FI section, the POR, led by Guillermo Lora, had a substantial influence on the masses. Its disastrous strategy and tactics in the revolution' had their own domestic roots, but they were encouraged and approved by the FI leadership.

The 9 April revolution was a mass uprising of the miners and factory workers, led in many cases by POR cadres. It brought to power the MNR, led by Victor Paz Estensorro.

His capitalist government presided over a situation of dual power, where armed workers' militias confronted a very weak police force, the army having disintegrated.

Victor Paz had to rely on the conciliatory bureaucracy of the miners' union to retain power. The question of working class power was thus directly posed.

A determined independent revolutionary policy could have won the masses to the Trotskyists and away from the MNR, in whom they certainly had illusions.

The central task was to turn the vanguard and then the masses against the bourgeois government and to fight to turn the COB (the Bolivian union confederation) into a network of workers' and peasants' soviets. With its armed militias the COB was an organ of dual power but not a developed network of workers' councils with elected and recallable delegates. Throughout the revolutionary period it remained in the hands of Juan Lechin, leader of the MNR's left wing.

The POR remained in a rotten block with Lechin and occupied key posts on the COB's national leadership and Indeed its bureaucracy, carrying out a completely different line to that of the Bolsheviks in 1917. The POR called for "worker ministers" in the capitalist government and even accepted minor ministerial portfolios!

The POR could not call for a workers' and peasants' government based on soviets and a militia, nor demand that the COB leaders break with the MNR government and take the road of struggle against it. How could they when they themselves were sitting in a bourgeois ministry?
As a centrist cover for their capitulation the POR called for a workers' and peasants' government but only as a future "natural emanation" of the left wing of the MNR and the workers' organisations. This would follow on from the present "prelude" (in other words, stage) of an MNR government.

The FI wholeheartedly supported the POR's centrism. The IS and the IEC praised their work. None of the sections voiced the slightest criticism. The SWP published regular articles explaining the POR's actions and refused to give any hearing to the small Vern-Ryan oppositional grouping which began to criticise the POR's policy.

The POR's Menshevism coincided entirely with the FI's view that Stalinists, social democrats or bourgeois nationalists could be "pushed" down the road to revolution. Whilst in most cases this centrist recipe did not leave the printed page, in Bolivia it was actually put into practice. The Bolivian masses, led down a centrist impasse, are still paying the price.

On none of the key questions was the voice of revolutionary Marxism heard. The Congress adopted a resolution on Yugoslavia which summed up the positions held by the IS and the IEC from mid-1948 onwards. None of the sections opposed the IS's adaptation; only the Swiss delegate voted against, because he considered that Yugoslavia, like the USSR, was state capitalist. From this point onward, the FI employed a consistently centrist method. All its sections agreed with a false analysis and perspective, and with the programmatic conclusions which flowed from that. The criticisms which were raised were partial and did not break with the common method. The failure of the whole of the International to deal with the real political and programmatic challenges of the post-war world had borne bitter fruit. The revolutionary FI had been destroyed by its own members.

The thorough-going opportunism towards the Stalinist parties which "made revolutions" and towards "anti-imperialist" bourgeois nationalism, propelled the FI rapidly along a right centrist course. In 1951 Pablo characterised the Peronist movement in Argentina as "anti-capitalist". Following hard on the heels of Bleibtreu, the IS soon claimed that the Chinese CP, like the YCP, had become a revolutionary factor. In Britain, the left reformist Aneurin Bevan became a "left centrist".

1952 was to prove a watershed as in both theory and practice, the International was proving its centrism in Bolivia and in France. France was the key testing-ground for the new regime and political line confirmed at the Congress because the issues were more sharply posed in the Stalinist dominated French labour movement and because the IS was located in Paris.

In the months after the Congress, the leadership of the French section expressed its willingness to apply the Congress decisions, unanimously adopting a perspective which argued for a priority orientation to the French CP (PCF).

However differences soon arose with the IS over trade union work.

Most of the PCI's trade unionists had been expelled from the Stalinist-led CGT union federation (many of them, like Pierre Lambert, for having applied the FI's line on Yugoslavia) and had joined the right wing split from the CGT, Force Ouvriere and publishing /'Unite, a joint bulletin with other forces. Unable to come to an agreement over tactical differences, the PCI leadership asked the IS to adjudicate.

They did not like the answer they got: the IS argued that the PCI's anti-communist bedfellows around l'Unite were preventing them from orienting correctly to the CGTs recent "left" turn and that the PCI members should fight to support the action proposals of the CGT leadership.

However, whilst many of the IS's criticisms were correct, in an accompanying letter they made clear what
would happen if the PCI refused to apply the line. Under these circumstances, "the IS would raise with the IEC the question of a definitive decision on the leadership of the French section". By their heavy-handed impatience, the IS managed to consolidate the PCI leadership. Bleibtreu's differences were re-raised whilst Lambert, who had previously played no part in the differences with Pablo but who led the trade union work, was thus pushed into an oppositional stance.

At the beginning of January 1952 the IS went further, instructing the PCI to carry out entry work in the PCF, whose internal regime was probably the hardest Stalinist tyranny outside a degenerate workers' state. Again, bureaucratism replaced politics as a way of convincing the majority of the organisation. Thus the IS insisted that only they could interpret the Third Congress line and that discussion within the PCI could only take place around how to apply the line, not as to its correctness. Furthermore, only the IEC was allowed to criticise the IS. In February 1952 the IEC supported the IS's disciplinary actions against the PCI majority, called for a PCI conference and installed a new leadership, with Mandel having the decisive vote. Over the next few months the PCI majority campaigned against both the content of the IS's proposals and the bureaucratic manner in which they were being imposed on the section. Their pleas fell on deaf ears.

In June 1952, when the majority of the PCI rejected the IS position, the Pablo-Mandel-Frank minority acted quickly; the PCI's centre was rifled and all the equipment removed, whilst the IEC decided to expel those who voted against the IS line.

There was little response inside the International. When the French majority explained Pablo's manoeuvres to Cannon in February 1952, he replied icily:

"I think that the Third World Congress made a correct analysis of the new post-war reality in the world and the unforeseen turns this reality has taken. . . It is the unanimous opinion of the leading people that the authors of these documents have rendered a great service to the movement for which they deserve appreciation and comradely support, not distrust and denigration." Moreover, Cannon was not inclined to dispute the political questions, given his firm adherence to a "non-aggression pact" inside the International.

As to Healy, as a member of the IEC he had actually voted for the expulsion of the French majority! Politically he and John Lawrence had actually pioneered the "new' type of entrism in the Labour Party from 1947 onwards. Their strategy was based on a perspective of an economic crisis which would push the left reformist movement led by Bevan into centrism.

Despite the absence of a massive crisis, by 1950 both Healy and Pablo agreed that the Bevanites were centrists. Under Bevanite leadership a mass movement had to be encouraged into eventually forcing the removal of the right reformist leaders. The task of Trotskyists was to fuse with this Bevanite left and assist in its development. To do this required the quiet shelving of the full programme of transitional demands or any mention of the need for a Leninist party. It meant abandoning any public organ for revolutionary propaganda.

This policy was put into practice by Healy before and after the collapse of the British Revolutionary Communist Party in 1949. The British section was turned into a highly secret faction-"The Club". The broader, public grouping.

Within the Labour Party known as the Socialist Fellowship included Labour MPs and union bureaucrats, gathered around newspaper Socialist Outlook, This organisation declared its strategic loyalty to the jour Party with a sickening "improvement" on the famous quotation from the Communist Manifesto that they "had no hosts apart from or separate to the Labour Party", Pablo warmly approved of this tactic and
explicitly referred to it en advocating his generalisation of "entryism sui generis."

Given this profound political agreement beaten the IS and the British and American sections, how did split come about? Quite simply because Pablo and the turned their attention to these sections, and set to work to orient them towards the Stalinist movements in their respective countries. In fact, the split, announced in 1953, was not the work the IC, It was declared by the SWP with its publication of *Letter to Trotskyists Around the World*, on the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the SWP. And whatever the mythology that has sprung up around it, the true motivation the split was clearly a response to the IS's "interference" the internal life of the American section through the encouragement of the Cochran-Clarke faction which wanted a preferential orientation to the American Stalinists.

Since Trotsky's death the SWP would neither take its ~re of responsibility for leading the FI, nor submit to the leadership or discipline of those who did. Prior to the emergence of the Cochran-Clarke faction in the SWP Cannon d believed that his long term support for Pablo ensured the SWP would never be subjected, to IS intervention. That intervention had been alright for the RCP in Britain or the PCI in France. In these cases Cannon had agreed to majority leaderships being deposed or expelled. But this was not how veterans of the SWP expected to be treated.

Cannon regarded the Cochran-Clarke faction as being directed from Paris and aimed at imposing a Pablo-loyal leadership on the SWP. Possibly, Pablo intended to make the SWP carry out entry into the beleaguered American CP.

The SWP had always been somewhat Stalinophobic and preferred to orient to AFL-CIO trade unionists whose political sympathies were with the left wing of the Democratic Party, identify any more closely with the CP at the height of the McCarthy witch-hunt would alienate their shrinking base of support in these unions.

As was his habit, Cannon criticised the faction and their degeneration from a largely sociological standpoint: the Clarke group were petit bourgeois intellectuals; the Cochran group were older and tired trade unionists in retreat because of the Cold War offensive. They were united only in seeking liquidate the party.

All of these features were true and Cannon was right point them out. But he was wrong to conclude that liquidationism in the organisational sense-especially the liquidation of the FI as an international organisation-was ! key problem or the essence of "Pabloism". It meant that failed to go to the heart of the methodological and problematic errors of the IS and the Cochran-Clarke faction.

When it became clear within a year or two of the split that Pablo had not liquidated—that is, organisationally dissolved-the FI, the road back to the Pablo-led IS was again open.

Much the same process took place in Britain. By 1953 John Lawrence, supported by the majority of the IS, was pushing for a pro-Stalinist orientation. Healy's long term orientation to the anti-communist Bevanites conflicted with this turn. In September 1953 the IS put Healy under a nonexistent "IS discipline", forbidding him from opposing its line within the British section, whilst at the same time freeing the Lawrence minority from section discipline, enabling them to pursue the pro-Stalinist orientation.

Healy responded by agreeing to set up factional coordinating committee with the French and the Swiss, to prepare for the upcoming Fourth Congress (1954). Like Cannon, Healy had the cheek to accuse the IS of "liquidationism"!

The SWP replied by announcing that they were going to publish an open letter and arguing that Healy
should transform his committee into the new centre of the FI. With the World Congress a few months away, the SWP were effectively running away from the fight. They explicitly ruled out the idea of a fight at the Congress, preferring to set up a new International.

The "Open Letter" contains some correct criticisms of the IS leadership but it was unable to break with the political method which lay at the heart of the centrism of the whole of the International (including of the sections of the IC) nor to provide a clear explanation of its political degeneration. It also displayed a characteristic Stalinophobia and exaggerated the scale of the IS's betrayals, especially in its treatment of the French trade union question.

The opposition in America, Britain and France that emerged in 1952-53 was subjectively committed to opposing Pablo. However, they have to be judged not by their impulse but by their politics. Their "orthodoxy" was both sterile and based on the commonly agreed post-war centrist revision of Trotskyism.

The IC groupings had no distinct and thorough-going political alternative to Pablo-Mandel and, therefore, they remained immobilised in a position where polemical heat was a poor substitute for political light. Of course, the IC was able on occasion to make isolated valid criticisms of the IS - e.g. on East Germany 1953, or on the limits of Kruschev's "deStalinisation". However, such criticisms virtually never went beyond a sterile defence of "orthodoxy".

Their strongest point was their defence of the independent party organisation against the "permeation" of alien class tendencies. But in reality their much vaunted "orthodoxy" was a melange of economic catastrophism, Stalinophobia and an associated adaptation to social democracy-a mixture that Cannon, Bleibtreu-Lambert and Healy had long been practicing.

The IC refused to take the fight to the forthcoming World Congress due to be held in 1954. Neither did they proclaim themselves the legitimate leadership of the FI and summon a world congress to restore the revolutionary programme and the democratic centralism of the FI. They acted like factionalists with a guilty conscience, uncertain whether to make a definitive split on principle or to accept the decisions of the International congress and the leading bodies it elected.

The IC also embodied the national isolationism of its three largest components, each of which only opposed Pablo's bureaucratically centralised drive to implement the perspectives of the 1951 Congress when it affected them. In the IC itself they rejected democratic centralism outright.

Moreover, by not going beyond the framework of a public faction, they refused to wage an intransigent fight against Pablo-Mandel. Thus, having denounced "Pabloite revisionism" in terms which seemed to preclude any reconciliation, within a year or two unity overtures were being made. By 1963, ten years after the split, reunification took place on the basis of a common adaptation to the Cuban revolution. Only the Healyites and the Lambertists refused to join the USFI, for different sectarian factional reasons.

We cannot view - either component of the 1953 split as the "continuators" of Trotskyism. Both were centrist. The IC did not constitute a "left centrist" alternative to the IS. The IC, itself developing in a rightward direction (e.g. Healy's work in the labour Party), was distinguished from the IS by the pace of its development. It recoiled from the most blatant expressions of liquidationism issuing from the IS, but not from the right centrist documents that underpinned that liquidationism.

The split of 1953 was thus both too late and too early.

Politically it was too late because all the IC groups had already endorsed and re-endorsed the liquidation of the line in the period 1948-51.
The key political issues were thus obscured. It was too early in the sense that it came before any fight within the framework of the centrist FI to win a majority at the following congress. Indeed, the decision to move straight to a split aborted such a fight.

The lessons of the split and of the decades of political and organisational confusion which followed are clear. The inability to re-elaborate the political programme and perspectives of the International led to confusion, opportunism and isolation.

The political collapse of the International was masterminded by the whole of the FI's leadership; the subsequent inability of the FI and its fragments to understand the true dynamics of Stalinism and petit bourgeois nationalism, or to intersect with major sections of the working class or revolutionary youth in struggle were not due to "Pabloite revisionism" or to the split in 1953, but because of the centrist method adopted by the International in the post-war period.

The struggle for revolutionary programme is of greater importance than loyalty or sentimental attachment to any organisation or individual.

The Fourth International tragically proved itself to be unable to meet the tasks of the hour. Our challenge today is to overcome the revolutionary vacuum created by the centrist degeneration of the Fourth International and to complete the work begun so long ago for a new revolutionary International.

**Endnotes**

1 See "Revolutionary Theory and Imperialism", Permanent Revolution 8, Spring 1989

2 For more details of our analysis of the Yugoslavian revolution see The Degenerated Revolution, Workers Power and Irish Workers Group (London 1982)

3 Fourth International, August 1948, p181

4 Fourth International, November-December 1951

5 ibid.

6 "Where are we going?", International Secretariat Documents 1951-1954 (New York 1974) Vol1 p7 (original emphasis)

7 "Theses on Orientation and Perspectives", ibid, p25


9 "Where is comrade Pablo going?", Bleibtreu-Favre, June 1951. ibid., p12

10 ibid., p16

11 Les Congres de la Quatrieme Internationale, Vol 4, pp297-9

12 Internationallnformation Bulletin, December 1951

13 Les Congres de la Quatrieme Internationale, Vol 4, p390

14 Ibid, p406

16 For a fuller account see Workers Power 39 and 40, February and March 1983

17 For more details, see "The SWP (US) in the 'American Century-', Permanent Revolution 7, Spring 1988

18 International Committee Documents 1951-1954, Vol 2 p124

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