



The Death agony of the Fourth International

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Death Agony of the Fourth International, published by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group in 1983. It analyses the historical development of the Fourth International from its foundation in the context of the struggle against Stalinism and for a revolutionary programme. It then shows how in the years following the Second World War the Fourth International moved away from those revolutionary foundations degenerating into centrism. The pamphlet concludes by arguing that a radical restatement of the revolutionary Marxist programme is vital to the building of a communist international.

[Trotsky's defence and development of the communist programme, 1933-1940](#) [1]

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At its foundation in 1938, the Fourth International was the only consistent revolutionary communist tendency in the world. Other tendencies emerging from the degenerating Comintern either collapsed into reformism like the Right Opposition (Bukharin, Brandler, Maurin, Lovestone), or locked themselves up in ossified sectarianism (Urbahns, Bordiga). Many of the leading figures of the International Left Opposition - prominent founders of Comintern sections - failed to resist the pressures arising from the terrible defeats of the working class in the 1930s. [Read more...](#)

[1]

[The epigones destroy Trotsky's International, 1940-1953](#) [2]

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The general decimation of cadre before and during the war (including the loss of some 40 per cent of the SWP(US) in the split with the Shachtmanites) was paralleled by a series of opportunist and sectarian deviations that politically weakened the forces of Trotskyism. In the USA the SWP, led by Cannon, distorted Trotsky's proletarian military policy when faced with the actual entry of the US into the war in late 1941. [Read more...](#) [2]

[The degenerate fragments of the Fourth International, 1953 -1963](#) [3]

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The principal tendencies that emerged from the 1953 split failed either then or subsequently to raise themselves out of the centrism into which the FI as a whole had sunk. Neither the international Committee nor the International Secretariat, nor any of the tendencies claiming continuity with them, have proved capable of regenerating a democratic centralist international based upon a transitional programme reelaborated to encompass the new circumstances and tasks of the last thirty years. [Read more...](#) [3]

[After the splits the splinters, 1961-1983](#) [4]

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Since the early 1960s various splits from the IC and USFI have attempted to found international tendencies. The slogans of each tendency with regard to the Fourth International differed, but all shared a fundamental error. The calls to "reconstruct", "reunify" or even "for the rebirth of" the Fourth International, were all based on the premise that the continuity of Trotskyism had been safeguarded by one of the two sides in the 1953 split. Thus, each tendency inevitably defended the tradition that they had emerged from up to the point at which they broke from it. [Read more...](#) [4]

[A radical re-statement of programme is necessary](#) [5]

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We have characterised the principal forces who lay claim to Trotskyism as centrist. This term has been abused, distorted or ignored by these forces. As Trotsky said centrists hate to be called by their real name. It is important therefore to understand what centrism is, and how it can be fought. [Read more...](#) [5]

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