

# Trotskyism in the Twenty-First Century

League for Fifth International Fri, 14/02/2014 - 12:19

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Founding principles

1. The League for the Fifth International regards itself as a Leninist-Trotskyist international tendency fighting to build a Fifth International based on the Marxist foundations of the previous four Internationals. Our programme is rooted in the programmatic conquests of the Communist League and the International Working Men's Association, the orthodox Marxist and revolutionary wing of the Second International (1889-1914), the Iskra and Bolshevik factions of Russian Social Democracy and the Bolshevik party of 1917, the first four congresses of the Third International and the first two congresses of the Fourth International. From the theory and practice of the founders of classical Marxism we have drawn the following essential principles.

2. The revolutionary programme constitutes the overall strategy for struggle within capitalist society, the seizure of power, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, the international spreading of revolution. On such a programme all national parties and an International Party must be built. As well as national and international programmes, which codify the perspectives and principal strategies as they apply to relatively extended periods of time, the transitional method, most fully developed by Trotsky in the 1938 programme,

should also be used to formulate more conjunctural ?action programmes? as the basis for intervention into specific, short lived crises in particular countries or even into more restricted arenas such as the trade union movement.

## The Revolutionary Party

3. The revolutionary party organises the vanguard fighters of the working class, the cadres of present and future class battles up to and beyond the seizure of power. It must combine internal democracy (freedom of criticism for individuals and groupings, factions and tendencies, election of all leading bodies in legal conditions) with strict discipline in carrying out the agreed policies and tactics of the party.
4. The party must be the tribune of all exploited classes, oppressed strata and peoples, taking up their key demands for freedom and integrating them into the workers' movement and struggles.
5. The party cannot either neglect, or limit itself to, immediate demands (demands realisable under capitalism) whether economic or political. It must link such demands to those which pose a challenge to capitalist ownership and control of production and to the state?s coercive powers.
6. It must seek to agitate in every struggle for those tactics that best advance the consciousness, morale and levels of organisation of the workers involved, even if they are as yet unrecognised by the mass of the participants. It must reject the method of tail-ending spontaneous struggles or restricting the posing of strategic and tactical goals to those that accord with the (supposed) present consciousness of the working class. It must raise those slogans and ideas that are objectively posed by the class struggle. In the words of the Communist Manifesto ?The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.? It must propose forms of organisation (e.g. mass meetings, strike committees, committees of action, pickets and defence squads) that not only better assure victory but point the way to higher levels of struggle, including the winning and holding of state power.
7. A small revolutionary nucleus must not confuse itself with a party. It must fulfil the tasks of revolutionary propaganda and exemplary involvement in the class struggle until it can fuse with the mass proletarian vanguard. Various tactics developed by the classical Marxists lead in that direction (principled unity between revolutionary propaganda groups, entry into a mass reformist or centrist party to fight for leadership, participation in the formation of a Labour Party in order to do the same).
8. The higher forms of the class struggle, both tactical and organisational, (general strike, workers' council, workers' militia, armed uprising) have to be fought for in their embryonic forms in every struggle (solidarity strikes and days of action, strike committees and councils of action, picket defence squads etc.) In a word, we recognise the actuality of the revolution in every serious struggle and thus prepare the working class and ourselves for it.
9. Internationalism must not remain a lofty aspiration or, at best, occasional solidarity with the struggles of workers in other countries. It must be given organisational form in the struggle for an international party of social revolution based on democratic centralism. Since the previous four Internationals collapsed or degenerated, the task is to build a new International ? a Fifth.
10. We reject the argument that an International can only be built once strong national parties have been established. On the contrary, nationally-based parties inevitably reflect only their ?local? experience of the class struggle and are prone, therefore, to one-sidedness and adaptation to the national terrain. The best defence against this is provided by an internationally developed programme and supervision by an

internationally democratic centralist leadership. The instrument for building this is a programmatically based, democratic centralist, international tendency. Below, we outline what we regard as the essential lessons that have to be recognised by forces committed to the founding of a Fifth International.

## The Fate of the Fourth International

11. The Fourth International's degeneration and disintegration was distinct from the fate of its two immediate predecessors. It collapsed into centrism, not into social patriotism or reformism. This was because it never attained a mass character; it did not have the opportunity to play a decisive leadership role in major revolutionary struggles. With a few partial exceptions (in Vietnam, Bolivia and Sri Lanka) most of its sections never transcended the stage of fighting propaganda groups or at best small cadre parties. It stood or fell on its ability to fulfil its specific historic task of defending Trotsky's programme against Stalinism, for a political revolution against the bureaucracies in all the degenerated workers' states. In this task it failed.

12. The root cause of this failure was programmatic. Already disoriented by the outcome of the Second World War, which did not conform to Trotsky's perspectives, the leadership of the FI responded to the expansion of Stalinism and the formation of new degenerate workers' states by revising both the analysis of Stalinism and the revolutionary programme. Equating Stalinism with loyalty to Moscow, they concluded that, having broken from Moscow, Tito had become a centrist and that the bureaucratic overthrow of capitalist property relations had established a workers' state that needed reform, but not political revolution and was, in that sense, a healthy workers' state.

13. This accommodation to Tito's version of the programme of Socialism in One Country, which was endorsed by all the main leaders of the FI at its Third Congress, opened the way to full scale revision not only of the programme for political revolution but of the entire methodology of the Transitional Programme. The ability of a Stalinist party to overthrow capitalism was explained as a consequence of its being forced to take revolutionary measures by 'the objective revolutionary process' and subsequently it was accepted that the same process could also force other non-proletarian agencies to lead revolutions.

14. Although different leaders of the FI later accommodated to different political currents, including not only Stalinists like Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh but petty-bourgeois nationalists or military juntas, none upheld Trotsky's programme of political revolution in the Soviet bloc or permanent revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

15. An equal but opposite error was committed by a minority in the International who concluded that, because the working class had played no role in these overturns, no social revolutions had taken place and no workers' states of any sort had been established. Although presented as a defence of the essential role of the working class in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, this normative method actually rejected Trotsky's recognition that there could be a counter-revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in which, despite the overthrow of capitalist property relations, the working class was denied any political power. Trotsky himself had witnessed such an overturn at the time of the invasion of the Baltic States. Rejection of Trotsky's analysis and method resulted either in denying that capitalism had been overthrown, as with the 'state capitalist' analysis of Tony Cliff, or the assertion that it had been replaced by a new form of class society, such as 'bureaucratic collectivism', that was no more progressive than capitalism. The programmatic conclusion from both these analyses was a rejection of defence of the 'Stalinist states' in any clash with imperialism.

16. The Third Congress of the Fourth International, in 1951, carried Pablo's theses on Yugoslavia unopposed and thus collapsed into centrism. The 1953 split between the International Secretariat, IS, and

the SWP (US) and its supporters, who referred to themselves as the International Committee, IC, did not result from disagreements over the programmatic revisions of 1951 but rather over the proposed tactic of ?entrism sui generis? (a ?unique form of entrism?) into the Stalinist parties. The split was unprincipled since it was undertaken in advance of the planned 1954 Congress at which the issues could have been presented to the highest body of the International. Neither grouping represented continuity with Trotsky's International. Indeed, since both upheld the decisions of the 1951 Congress, there was no fundamental programmatic or principled difference between them. While the IS maintained an organisational coherence and continuity, and the IC made some partial but correct criticisms of IS errors, both were guilty of repeated opportunist deviations that were rooted in the incorrect decisions of the 1951 Congress.

17. On the basis of the methodology adopted in 1951, both the IS and the SWP/US accommodated opportunistically to the Cuban Revolution after 1959, regarding the Castro leadership as another agent of the ?historical process? that had been forced, in effect, to implement the strategy of permanent revolution, even if it failed to develop the ?forms of proletarian power?, that is, workers' councils. This established the basis for the Unification Congress of 1963 which led to the founding of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. This also drew in the main Latin American component of the IC, led by Moreno. The major European sections, led by Lambert and Healy, remained outside but no more organisationally united than before. Subsequently, when the USFI made a turn towards guerillaism, this was opposed by both Moreno and the SWP/US. Further disagreements over the USFI majority's accommodation to the Sandinista government in Nicaragua resulted in a split. Such developments, together with the continued divergence of the currents led by Lambert and Healy, confirmed the disintegration of what had been the international Trotskyist movement.

#### Re-elaborating the Programme

18. Sixty years after the splitting of the FI, today's revolutionaries need to re-elaborate the revolutionary programme just as Lenin had to in 1917, as the Revolutionary Comintern began to in its first four congresses and as Trotsky did in 1938.

#### Imperialism

19. In the imperialist epoch, the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution, (liquidation of pre-capitalist forms of exploitation in the agrarian question, democratic rights, national independence, economic development) cannot be resolved in the historic interests of the toiling masses except under the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, the rule of workers' and, where appropriate, peasants', councils. Any attempt to restrict revolutionary struggle to the establishment of a ?democratic stage? would, in reality, guarantee the restabilisation of capitalist society via the repression of the working class and its allies. Equally, any support for, or call for, a government of mass-based parties that does not base itself on workers' councils and begin a programme of expropriation of capital, on the grounds that it represents ?the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry? is an opportunist deviation that fails to recognise the programmatic advance made by the Bolsheviks in April 1917. Although it is an objective necessity, the permanent revolution is not an ?objective process? it is, rather, a strategy that expresses both the needs and the potential of the working class. As such, it can only be realised as the conscious goal of working class struggle when the class is led by a party committed to this strategy.

20. The collapse of the Soviet Union and, more recently, the relative decline of the United States, have both prompted and encouraged the struggle for national liberation by oppressed peoples previously imprisoned in ?multi-national? states or denied national independence by imperialism's various regional gendarmes. We recognise the right of such movements to obtain the means of pursuing their struggles from whatever sources are available to them, including from imperialist powers. In a ?unipolar world?, and

one in which imperialist rivalries are deepening, to deny this would be to condemn such movements to defeat. However, we oppose the subordination of legitimate national struggles to the predatory strategies of any imperialist power, demanding that aid be given 'without strings' and under workers' control.

21. We defend the tactic of the 'anti-imperialist united front' as developed and applied by Lenin, Trotsky and the revolutionary Comintern. As long as imperialism supports or installs regimes compliant with its wishes in the semi-colonial countries, and as long as it economically exploits them, broad strata of non-proletarian classes, the peasantry and the urban petit bourgeois, will be driven into struggle around slogans of nationalism and democracy. The proletarian vanguard must seek unity in action with such forces, or even bourgeois forces, if they are in actual combat against imperialism's military, political or economic oppression and exploitation of the semi-colonial and colonial countries. Such support is necessary and principled even where an anti-imperialist movement seeks, or is given, support from a rival imperialism. We demand that such aid be given 'without strings' and fight for it to be brought under the control of the anti-imperialist forces. As a matter of principle, we oppose any imperialist interventions, such as occupation or 'no-fly zones' which objectively enhance the control of any imperialist power. However, the fact of such intervention does not, in itself, alter the character of the liberation struggle. Throughout all such operations, the working class forces must maintain their absolute class independence, observing the principle 'march separately, strike together'. The Leninist position of 'unconditional but critical support' means unconditional support for all those fighting against imperialism combined with the duty to politically combat the overall strategy and methods of struggle of these movements.

### Workers' and Peasants' Governments

22. The only workers' and peasants' government to which it is possible for communists to give political support or, under certain circumstances, to participate in, is one which emerges out of a period of victorious mass struggles and is based on armed working class and peasant organs of struggle. It must be a government committed to defending the workers' organisations and solving the political and economic crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie. However, we reject the proposition that such governments are a necessary or inevitable 'stage' before a revolutionary workers' government can be established. Equally, we reject the characterisation of governments of bourgeois workers' parties as 'workers' governments'; while it is legitimate for revolutionaries to call on the masses to put such parties to the test of power, we always make clear that they remain bourgeois governments.

### Immediate and Transitional Demands

23. It is necessary to mobilise the masses under immediate and transitional slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country. The transitional programme consists of an interlinked series of demands which, in its entirety, constitutes an overt and direct challenge to capitalist rule. These demands address the fundamental objective needs of the masses, including the need to develop forms of working class organisation that can form the basis of the organs of struggle necessary to smash the capitalist state and form a workers' state. Their validity is not dependent on their acceptability to the existing consciousness of the masses, nor are they invalidated if the capitalists or bureaucrats are forced to grant them. Because all transitional demands incorporate an extension of working class control against the capitalists, any successful struggle can be expected to be met at some point by more determined efforts by employers and their state to reverse their defeat. This likelihood of an increased tempo in the class struggle, however, does not mean that there is some 'logic' within transitional demands that automatically drives forward the revolution. At all stages, revolutionaries have to warn against complacency and promote the ability of the class to build on its gains even in the face of such counter-attacks.

24. Wherever the ruling classes attempt to deny democratic rights, we mobilise around revolutionary

democratic slogans. The mobilising power of demands such as the sovereign constituent assembly, universal suffrage, secret ballot, full equality for women, have been proven time again, most recently in the Arab Spring. Within the democratic struggle, however, we argue for the independence of working class organisation, supplementing democratic slogans with transitional demands and forms of organisation such as supervision of balloting by workers' councils and their protection by workers' militia. The need to combine revolutionary democratic demands with transitional demands is equally true in struggles against pre-capitalist property relations on the land, against national oppression and against dictatorship and bonapartism, whether military or civilian, Right or ?Left?, and fascism. At the same time, we reject any equation of the Constituent Assembly with the goal of working class power, that can only be based on workers' councils.

## Workers' Councils

25. The crowning slogan of the programme of transitional demands is the call for a government based on workers' councils. Workers' councils draw in representatives of all those groups and strata fighting for the revolution, and co-ordinate their struggles. They are the highest organisational form of the class struggle and are embryonic organs of working class power. The fight for workers' councils and, where appropriate, peasants' councils, is a central task in developing revolutionary situations. Where the class struggle throws up new, embryonic forms of working class organisation such as strike committees, district coordinating committees, factory councils etc., we do not counterpose to them fully-fledged workers' councils but, rather, propose their development into council-style bodies via, for example, recognition of the principle of recallable delegates, incorporation of all other workers' organisations, and the extension of their responsibilities. Within workers' councils, we stand for the freedom of all political currents that are supported within the working class, excluding fascists who, by definition, oppose the independent organisation of the class as divisive of the nation/race/faith for whose untrammelled supremacy they fight. We oppose all attempts to present organisations that are actually controlled by other agencies, be they the state or the trade union bureaucracy, as the equivalent of workers' councils. Only bodies genuinely elected by the rank and file of the workers (or peasants) can be called workers' (or peasants') councils.

26. We defend the Leninist-Trotskyist strategy of achieving working class power through an armed insurrection led by armed forces loyal to the workers' councils. Only this strategy can ensure that defeat of the armed forces of the bourgeois state is simultaneously the establishment of a new form of state power, the revolutionary workers' state based on workers' councils. We counterpose this strategy to all forms of putschism or guerillanism which separate the defeat of the existing state institutions from the formation of the workers' own institutions of government. For the insurrection to succeed, the revolutionary party must win the support of the peasants, the urban poor and the rank and file of the army.

## Trades Unions

27. Trades unions are the fundamental defence organisations of the working class as regards pay, rights and working conditions. Against the social power of the capitalists, individual workers are powerless, their only strength is their numbers, and it follows that trades unions need to organise as much of the workforce as possible. The economic struggle between workers and employers over the division of the value created by the workers generates two tendencies within trade unionism. One accepts the need to accommodate capital's priorities including, in extremis, the sacrifice of workers' interests in order to maintain capitalist production. The other, seeking to maximise the share going to the workers, threatens the survival of capitalist production by eliminating profit altogether. However, that potential can only be realised if the unions are led by a consciously revolutionary leadership. Organisationally, our goal is the maximisation of the organisational strength and resilience of workers through the formation of mass-based, democratically

controlled industrial unions. Politically, we are for the winning of the unions to a socialist programme, using class struggle methods to develop their ability to play a role in the overthrow of capitalism and in the introduction of socialist planning.

28. The achievement of these goals depends on systematic communist fraction work within the trades unions. By fractions we mean organisations of union members who actively support the party's programme as applied to the union, including those who are not party members. We are for the construction of alliances of rank and file militants to oust the reformist bureaucrats in the struggle to democratise the trades unions, turn them into fighting industrial unions and unite them into one confederation of class struggle trades unions. Communists must struggle for revolutionary leadership with the avowed aim of transforming the trades unions into organs of struggle against capitalism.

29. We are for maximum trade union unity, both to strengthen the workers' bargaining power and to ensure revolutionaries are not distanced from the mass of workers by bureaucratic exclusions. However, where democratically chosen workers' leaders are expelled, or militant sections are prevented from taking necessary action, we are prepared to defy bureaucratic leaders, if necessary up to the point of forming new unions. However, even then, we place responsibility for the division where it belongs, with the bureaucrats, by proposing unity in action and re-unification on a democratic basis. We oppose the formation of 'red unions', as developed during Stalinism's 'Third Period', because these have the effect of separating the communists from the mass of workers who then remain under reformist, or worse, leadership.

#### United Front

30. Where reaction, in any form, threatens the rights and interests not only of the working class but also of other classes, we are in favour of united campaigns and actions around democratic demands but not at the cost of working class interests or political independence. We, therefore, oppose the 'Popular Front' strategy, which requires the surrender of working class interests in order to ensure, or even merely to encourage, participation by bourgeois forces. Where such popular fronts are brought into existence, we give them no political support but are prepared to work within the mass working class organisations for a break with bourgeois forces, using all the variants of the united front tactic to achieve this. Although strategically committed to the defeat of bourgeois forces, we are tactically prepared to suspend hostilities where a more immediate threat, such as invasion or reactionary coup, requires this and the working class is not yet able to seize power itself.

#### Fascism

31. Fascism is not just any form of bourgeois reaction, any military or Bonapartist regime. It is a mass movement of the plebeian classes, the reactionary petit bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat, maddened by a prolonged political and economic crisis of capitalism and the inability of the proletariat to resolve it because of its reformist or centrist misleadership. This movement is utilised by the bourgeoisie to smash the workers' movement and to atomise the proletariat. An essential factor in the ability of fascist leaders to create such a movement is the ability to 'control the streets', that is, to physically intimidate their opponents, breaking up strikes and demonstrations, terrorising entire districts and murdering key leaders. As a product of capitalist crisis, the only strategic answer to fascism is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. The anti-fascist struggle must be waged with the methods of working class struggle and with the conscious aim of an uninterrupted struggle for workers' power.

#### Bourgeois Democracy

32. Democratic institutions, parliaments, municipal councils, etc., are part of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Their purpose is to deceive the masses into believing that the exploiters' rule is 'the government of the people, by the people, for the people'. Revolutionaries participate in elections whilst the masses still entertain illusions in them, to shatter these illusions and to prepare the overthrow of the bourgeois state including its parliamentary institutions. Wherever materially possible, revolutionaries put forward candidates on their full action programme for working class power. We reject all suggestions that we should limit campaigns to demands for 'immediate' reforms or stand on programmes that merely represent limited agreements between various small sects.

33. Wherever the forces of revolutionary communism are too weak to stand candidates, and the masses still put their confidence in reformist or centrist workers' parties, we can utilise the tactic of giving critical support to such candidates at the polls. We do not express any political support for their programme or the slightest confidence in their future actions in government. Our purpose is to put these parties to the test of office and to mobilise the workers to put class demands on their leaders and to resist their attacks when and if they become the bourgeois government. Even such support would be impermissible where the proletariat and its vanguard are in open and direct conflict with the reformist party and the latter is seeking an electoral mandate to crush the workers. Where workers have to choose between different reformist or centrist parties, we advise critical support for whichever has the strongest base of support among the most combative and militant sections of the class.

### Social Democracy and Stalinism

34. The social democratic and Stalinist parties in the imperialist countries are bourgeois parties: more precisely, bourgeois workers' parties. Their leadership, programme and organisations have a bourgeois political character, but these parties are organically linked to the working class through their proletarian origins, through trade unions/co-operatives, or through mass working class membership or electoral support. It is these links that distinguish these parties from purely bourgeois parties but they also allow a range of united front tactics to be used to exploit the contradiction between the working class base and the leaders of these parties and to break the rank and file away from the reformist leaders and programme. These include work within such parties. Whether this takes the form of a limited entry, in which a public revolutionary organisation is maintained alongside a revolutionary fraction within such a party, or 'full entry', in which the entire revolutionary organisation enters the bourgeois workers' party in order to intervene in an extreme crisis, the revolutionary programme remains the basis of the intervention. We oppose the 'entrism sui generis' undertaken by the centrist FI, in which revolutionaries enter a bourgeois workers' party whilst concealing their politics in order to ensure long term activity within that party.

35. We reaffirm Trotsky's position that Stalinism is a counter-revolutionary force within the world workers' movement. The fact that Stalinist or Stalinised armies, parties or popular front movements were able to overthrow capitalism in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba does not invalidate Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary, nor does it prove that those who overthrew capitalism were not Stalinists.

36. These overturns were qualitatively different from the October Revolution. They were bureaucratic social overturns that had an overall counter-revolutionary character: the working class was excluded from political power from the outset. Using the institutions of a bourgeois state, a parasitic caste prevented any development of the independent organs of working class power, workers' councils and militia, that are prerequisites for any advance towards socialism and world revolution. Without a political revolution, that is the overthrow of bureaucratic rule by the working class and its allies, the Stalinists inevitably led these states to collapse, even playing a key role in the restoration of capitalism.

37. Stalinism is the twin of social democracy; historically it was the ?agent of world imperialism within the workers? state? (Trotsky). Its social origins lay in the ruling bureaucracy within the degenerate workers? states whereas those of social democracy lay in the labour aristocracy of imperialist countries and some developed semi-colonies. Stalinism?s programme, ?Socialism in One Country? originated in revisionist Social Democracy but its characteristic forms of government and party organisation were established during the degeneration of the Soviet Union, culminating in the Great Purges of the 1930s. Because of the usurped prestige of the October Revolution, the economic gains made despite the regime of bureaucratic planning and the military victory over Nazism, these degenerate forms of organisation can still be mistakenly seen as models for socialist movements. Against this, Trotskyism maintains the centrality of the formation of workers? councils and workers? militia as the instruments both of the overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

38. We reject Stalinophobia ? a differential hostility to Stalinism over social democracy or other alien class influences. With its emphasis on Stalinism?s supposedly monolithic nature (?counter-revolutionary through and through?) this policy has led to softness and accommodation to social democratic reformism. We also reject Stalinophilia, the notion that Stalinism has a ?dual nature?, that sometimes it acts in a revolutionary manner and sometimes in a counter-revolutionary manner, and that for specific stages or specific tasks (e.g. defence of the workers? states) it can be relied on or accorded a leading role.

#### The Crisis of Stalinism and the Restoration of Capitalism

39. The caste rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy rested on a dictatorship over the working class and the systematic plunder of the planned property relations. The mismanagement of the planned economies of the USSR and Eastern Europe resulted in declining growth rates and eventual stagnation. Attempts to dynamise these economies by ?market reforms? succeeded only in disrupting them further, while discrediting economic planning and generating pro-market restorationist forces. This was the background to revolutionary crises in the period 1989-92 in which proletarian political revolution was the only alternative to social counter-revolution. As Trotsky had predicted, these crises began with mass movements against privilege and for democracy. In the absence of any revolutionary leadership capable of relating to the mass movement and linking its demands to the programme of political revolution, the initiative was taken by the restorationist forces, but their triumph was not assured or inevitable.

40. In China, however, restoration of capitalism took a different form. There, major steps towards the privatisation of agriculture and the creation of a free market in the countryside, together with the creation of Special Economic Zones to attract overseas capital, combined to undermine the planned economy throughout the 1980s. Maintenance of planning in state industry and foreign trade created a highly contradictory system of production and encouraged widespread corruption. In response, a movement for democracy developed that culminated in the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in May and June 1989, and also gave rise to new, independent workers? organisations. Faced with rapidly growing mass opposition, fraternisation with troops and deepening splits in its own ranks, the leadership of the party around Deng Xiaoping opted for brutal repression to maintain their regime. In the aftermath, the leadership decided, in 1992, to restore capitalism under its own continued dictatorship by a planned dismantling of the planned economy. The state?s resources were variously privatised, transformed into state capitalist trusts or closed down entirely, while the rights of workers were removed by decree.

41. A political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy was necessary in all the degenerate workers? states. Integrally combined with this task was the defence of the planned property relations against restorationist forces. Independent working class parties with a Leninist-Trotskyist programme would have had to be constructed to accomplish this successfully. This required revolutionaries to side with the

masses against bureaucratic dictatorship while advancing the programme of political revolution. It was an error to equate the bureaucracy's attempts to secure its own survival with defence of what was progressive in the degenerate workers' states. While it was necessary to demand such rights as freedom of assembly, legalisation of oppositionist parties and free trades unions, it was an error to equate calls for 'pluralist democracy' with the demand for workers' democracy or parliamentary institutions with workers' councils. Similarly, it was an error to tail workers' self-management schemes and fail to call for the working class to defend and take control of planning. The task of the political revolution was to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat by destroying the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. In Cuba and in North Korea this remains the central task today.

42. Irrespective of the particular restorationist strategy taken, the crucial point in the political revolutionary crises was that at which the regime began to use the state, always bourgeois in form, to restore capitalist property relations. After this point, states could no longer be characterised as degenerate workers' states, even if elements of planning or state monopoly were temporarily maintained, or Stalinist parties remained in office, and revolutionaries could no longer defend them unconditionally should they be attacked by capitalist states.

43. The collapse of all but two of the world's degenerate workers' states in the 1990s, the restoration of capitalism in them and the development of Russia and China into new imperialist powers, plus the shrivelling or collapse of many Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries, ended the world order established after the second world war. Although the manner of their collapse conformed closely to the spectrum of possibilities outlined by Trotsky, this took most of the forces of international Trotskyism and the fragmented Fourth International completely by surprise, disorienting them for a whole period and in many cases it accelerated their further political degeneration. This in itself is further confirmation that the Fourth International no longer existed as the revolutionary, anti-Stalinist, International founded by Trotsky.

44. The victory of the 'Western' imperialist powers (USA and EU) in the cold war represented a historic defeat for the forces of the labour movement and anti-imperialism worldwide. This was so not because those states represented the 'early stages of socialism', let alone 'really existing socialism', but because they had been obliged to overthrow capitalist property relations and exclude imperialism from a large proportion of the globe. The restoration of a near universal capitalist world not only allowed its ideologists to declare victory over communism/socialism, claiming to have proved them a reactionary utopia, but provided gigantic new resources and huge populations for capitalist exploitation.

### Imperialism in the 21st Century

45. Lenin's theory of imperialism and Leninist-Trotskyist tactics faced with imperialist war are still fully valid. The essential features of imperialism, as characterised by Lenin, the revolutionary Comintern and Trotsky's Fourth International, still exist, despite the dissolution of the formal empires of Britain and France and changes in the pattern of investment and the relative development of certain non-imperialist countries. The capitalist economy is now fully global and is dominated by finance capital, the export of capital in its various forms far outweighs the exports of commodities and a small number of imperialist powers dominate the economies of the remaining countries which are, in effect, reduced to semi-colonies. The imperialist powers repeatedly intervene around the world to set up political regimes favourable to the extraction of imperialist super-profit.

46. In wars between imperialist powers, revolutionaries must adopt a defeatist position. In wars and conflicts between imperialist powers and semi-colonial countries, it is the duty of revolutionaries to be defeatist in relation to the former and defencist in regard to the latter. While it is legitimate for revolutionaries to enter into anti-imperialist united fronts with non-proletarian forces, even including

bourgeois forces where they actually participate in the anti-imperialist struggle, they should give no political support to 'their' bourgeoisie. Indeed, in order to transform the war into a consistent anti-imperialist war, it will be necessary to overthrow the bourgeois rulers, although this objective is subordinated to defence of the country from imperialism.

47. In wars between semi-colonial countries, waged for the economic, political or strategic aggrandisement of a national bourgeoisie, the proletariat must take a defeatist position. Defencism is permissible only if one country in particular is acting as an agent for imperialism or is attempting to violate the national self-determination and independence of another. In this case, the task of the proletariat is international solidarity with its class brothers and sisters in the 'enemy' country not the spreading of nationalist slogans and demagoguery.

48. Against imperialist war, only the proletarian class struggle and its victory can end the threat of nuclear annihilation. War is endemic to imperialism. With the development of atomic weapons, capitalism discovered the means to destroy civilisation. The choice facing humanity is, in the most literal sense, 'socialism or barbarism?', perhaps the total extinction of our species. This fact does not transform the war question into an all-class or non-class issue to be answered by a special ideology or movement 'pacifism'. This ideology, and these movements, remain what they were pre-1914, or in the 1930s, petit bourgeois. They are incapable of the objective they set themselves, persuading the imperialists to lay down their arms and live peacefully or, more recently, persuading the 'superpowers' to give up their nuclear arsenals. We reject the characterisation of 'peace movements' as 'objectively anti-capitalist'. This is an excuse for refusing to confront petit bourgeois pacifism with proletarian anti-militarism. The two cannot and must not be elided.

#### National Self-Determination

49. Lenin's position on the right of oppressed nations to self-determination is completely valid today. It is obligatory for the proletariat of the oppressor nation to defend this right up to and including secession. It is their duty to support liberation struggles morally and materially without placing any prior conditions (such as the ultimate goal of their struggle or the class character of their leadership). Conversely, the duty of the proletariat of the oppressed nation, alongside striving to lead the struggle for liberation, is to maintain the closest bonds with the workers of the oppressor nation. Likewise, for both sections of the working class, it is vital to maintain or achieve unity in the common struggles of workers (in both the trades unions and the workers' parties) and not for a moment to yield to nationalism as a bourgeois/petty bourgeois ideology.

50. The right of nations to self-determination is a bourgeois right. Nevertheless, the proletariat must continue to support this right even in those states where it has seized power in order to win the proletariat of the oppressed nationalities to support for the creation and the extension of the workers' state. Recognition of this right is applicable throughout the entire transition period. The victorious proletariat can, as Engels said, 'force no blessings on another nation'. However, the military necessities of revolutionary uprising, civil war or imperialist intervention may necessitate the temporary violation of this right.

#### Social Oppression

51. Communists champion the liberation of women, youth, lesbian, gay and transgender minorities and the racially oppressed from the often brutal oppression they suffer in capitalist society. Whilst racism had its origins in the early colonial forms of capitalist expansion, in the imperialist epoch it has continued to serve to divide the working class and its allies by creating the illusion of a shared superiority between all the classes of the dominant 'race'. This ideology of superiority, often reinforced by marginal privileges, then allows the increased exploitation of all the workers and peasants.

52. The other forms of social oppression, however, all have their roots in the bourgeois form of the family and the social and sexual stereotypes based upon it. It is these roots that ensure the persistence of these forms of oppression that are reproduced in every generation to one degree or another. Although the family has lost its former role in the production of food and clothing and other necessities of life, it has retained responsibility for the production and reproduction of the workforce and, thus, of the commodity labour power. Taking over the subordinate role of women from earlier class society, capitalism has made this crucial task the private burden of the woman. Even where women are also drawn into the paid workforce, the ideological primacy of their responsibility for the family ensures lower pay rates, less certain promotion and a general restriction to jobs seen as extensions of their roles as wives and mothers. As with racism, the advantages enjoyed by working class men, from higher wages and a wider range of opportunities to the higher status of 'male' roles, while real enough to the individual, are ultimately a means of increasing the exploitation of all.

53. We support campaigns and individuals fighting all such social oppression and do all in our power to win the organised labour movement (trades unions, workers' parties etc.) to do likewise. Our goal is to help build working class movements of the oppressed, including caucuses in the organisations of the workers' movement, to campaign for their rights. We argue that these movements whilst democratic and autonomous (self-governing) should be as closely integrated into the political and trade union movement as possible. We reject the model of politically autonomous, multi-class movements and ideologies (e.g. feminism, queer theory etc.) as the road to liberation. Instead, we fight to bring the working class to the head of the forces fighting discrimination and oppression.

#### The Environment

54. Capitalism destroys the environment and the health and welfare of the working masses. Limited safety measures can be imposed by the class struggle but only working class power can abolish the perpetual menace to the environment posed by the existence of capitalism. The root of this threat is the inherent drive to maximise profit within capitalism. From the petty capitalists, who enforce dangerous working conditions and pollute the environment rather than 'waste' capital on improved processes, to the multinationals, which maintain environmentally damaging industries to maximise returns on past investments, short term and immediate advantages repeatedly outweigh long term and social interests.

55. Only a democratically planned and international economic order will be able to organise production to achieve optimum output. That is, production on a scale to meet human need compatible with sustaining the environment on which all life depends. For this reason, while united fronts with non-proletarian movements, such as environmentalists, over specific issues can be principled, we reject the view that protection of the environment is an issue above class and, therefore, to be fought for by non-class or cross-class organisation. It would be equally wrong to postpone such issues indefinitely as only soluble 'under socialism?'. Instead, all the issues involved should be integrated into the working class? programme of transitional demands, focusing on asserting workers? control of production.

#### The Revolutionary Party and its Development

56. A Leninist vanguard party is indispensable not only for the insurrection and seizure of power but in all phases of the class struggle. Such a party must be based on an international transitional programme which links historic goal and principles to fundamental tactics in an overall strategy for working class power. Only the proletariat can create a healthy workers? state. The revolutionary party has to be rooted in this class and express its historical aims. We reject all proposals for the formation of 'worker-peasant? parties or for parties formed by opportunist fusions between revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries. Equally, we reject the idea that left reformist or centrist 'broad parties? can serve as adequate parties for the working class

for an indefinite period. This position, held by various Fourth Internationalist currents since 1951, was rightly rejected by the revolutionary Comintern which concluded from the experience of the Second International that such long-term cohabitation of revolutionaries and reformists in the same party could only lead to disaster at critical moments of the class struggle. Likewise, we oppose the characterisation of small propaganda groups as 'parties', which not only debases the very idea of a working class party but also disorients the revolutionaries themselves with regard to their own tasks and priorities.

57. The core of the Marxist strategy for the achievement of socialism has always been recognition of the need to fuse the theoretical conquests of the socialist movement, which historically were developed by intellectuals, with the leading elements of the working class' own organisations and movements. Distinct stages or phases can be seen historically in the development of this fusion; from very small numbers of revolutionary intellectuals committed to the working class cause who form an ideological current and first begin the task of promoting the revolutionary programme within the working class, through propaganda groups able to take the first steps in developing working class cadres and then cadre parties, predominantly composed of working class activists and constituting a recognised political current within the working class. The achievement of a mass revolutionary party is then a product of the successful intervention of the cadre party in a situation of severe social crisis in which it is able to secure the leadership of the leading sections of the whole class.

58. The tempo of this development is necessarily linked to the tempo of the class struggle which can also mean that some of the tasks of one stage may need to be undertaken in another or, in the face of defeat, be repeated, as happened in the aftermath of the Second World War and again after the collapse of the degenerate workers' states. In each of these phases of development, the task of the revolutionary current is, in effect, the struggle for leadership of the class against other currents that, in their politics, express the influence of other classes within the working class. Just as leadership is decisive in any sectional expression of class conflict, when capitalism's crises threaten the future of society as a whole and further progress is dependent on the overthrow of capitalism, the ability of the revolutionary forces to gain leadership becomes decisive or, as Trotsky himself put it with regard to the period immediately before the outbreak of World War Two, 'The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership'.

59. Although a variety of organisational forms; discussion circles, study groups, networks and conferences can provide arenas in which revolutionaries can clarify their programme and recruit to their ranks, these are never more than means to serve the end objective, which is the next appropriate stage in the development of a revolutionary party. Similarly, where broad political parties or alliances encompassing a wide spectrum of political currents from reformism to left centrism are formed, revolutionaries may need to enter them in order to try to win them to the revolutionary programme. However, the formation of such broad parties is neither an objective in itself nor a necessary stage through which the building of a revolutionary party has to pass.

60. Democratic centralism in the tradition of Lenin remains the only possible basis for revolutionary parties and for the revolutionary International. Federalism within an international or a national party grants effective autonomy to sections or regional organisations. It negates democratic centralism and creates potentially antagonistic blocs that will inevitably clash and split, as shown by both the IC and the USFI. For democratic centralism to be maintained, it must be based on a revolutionary programme that defines the strategy and tactics of the organisation through which the leadership can be held accountable. By disciplined implementation of policy, and democratic review and development of the programme, the democratic centralist party organisation maximises its own effectiveness and integrates its collective experience of the class struggle. By this means, errors can be corrected, new experience be assimilated

and new cadres be trained. Within democratic centralism, the right of groups of comrades to form factions or tendencies is necessary to ensure systematic and thorough discussion of differences. However, the existence of permanent factions would indicate fundamental differences of programme or, worse, the formation of cliques. In such a situation, only the most principled and thorough examination of the issues can return the organisation to health, if necessary by organisational separation, that is, a split.

## Centrism

61. All of today's major 'Trotskyist' currents are centrist. An intransigent struggle against them is necessary. Some may be more left than others but there is not a stable or consistent left wing of Trotskyism with whom to re-unify, reconstruct or even refound the Fourth International. Trotsky himself would have been scornful of the idea of refounding an International which has been dead as a revolutionary force for sixty years but active, even in fragments, in spreading centrist confusion for all that time. The task is to found a new International, a successor and continuer of the work of the previous four, on a newly elaborated Leninist-Trotskyist programme - a Fifth International.

62. Centrism oscillates between reform and revolution. The degeneration of revolutionary organisations produces a rightward moving descent into centrism. Revolutionary crises and struggles engender leftward movements from reformism which, if they do not immediately come over to the communist movement, can constitute left centrist organisations. We must combine a merciless struggle against right centrism, which is moving away from Marxism, with a serious attempt to win leftward moving centrist organisations towards consistent communism, towards a reborn Trotskyist organisation.

63. Each specific centrism bears the marks of its origin. To centrism of a social democratic and Stalinist origin has been added centrism of a Trotskyist origin. This has generally taken the form of an "ossified centrism", isolated from the mass struggles of the working class, unable or unwilling to test its politics in struggle, and relatively impervious to change. Centrism of a 'Trotskyist' origin is not inherently more progressive than any other form. In the massive upheavals which followed the collapse of Stalinism, all forms of centrism were put to the test and were found wanting. We reject any notion of the automatic, spontaneous evolution of centrism into revolutionary communism. The fight against centrism must be conscious and result in a break from it and a recognition of it as a past condition of an organisation or current: a self-critical balance sheet must be drawn. As Trotsky said, 'centrism hates to hear itself named'.

## Globalisation and its Crisis

64. Whatever the claims of capitalism's apologists, the final collapse of the degenerate workers' states did not herald an entirely new epoch for it, let alone 'the end of history'. Although it meant the definitive elimination of the remaining advances achieved by the Russian Revolution, it did not mark the end of the 'Epoch of October' if by that is meant the principled division between the reformist and revolutionary forces. It did, however, create powerful countervailing forces that allowed imperialism, above all US imperialism, to postpone the onset of a crisis of over-accumulation and falling profit rates that had been developing since the early 70s. The period of 'globalisation' was a period within the epoch of imperialism. It was characterised in particular by an increase in the reach of US finance capital. Enforcement of the 'Washington Consensus' and the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF removed tariff barriers and privatised state sectors around the world, enabling US capital to amass profits without fundamentally addressing falling profit rates in its economy.

65. The USA's achievement of absolute global supremacy, however, did not mean a global 'Pax Americana'. On the contrary, US aggression, both economic and military, generated a variety of hostile movements all around the world, including in the USA itself. These ranged from military conflicts to mass

popular movements and, taken as a whole, created an opportunity for the Left to regenerate itself on a scale not seen since the late 60s. The major established forces within the working class, however, had no programme that could give leadership to these new movements in their struggles against capitalism. The Stalinist parties were not only demoralised by the collapse of the Soviet bloc but had long begun to disintegrate, with the majority transforming themselves into social democratic parties, while the 'traditional' social democratic and Labour parties were now committed to presenting themselves as the preferred agents of neo-liberal policy. Such leaderships, together with the centrist currents which refused to break from them, were still powerful enough to prevent the new movements waging effective struggles against capitalism, creating a 'crisis of leadership' comparable to that described by Trotsky in the Thirties.

66. A Trotskyist party worthy of the name would have been able to intervene into these movements using all the principled tactical adaptations necessary to relate to a burgeoning, but politically inchoate, generation of activists. Instead, a minority of centrists of Trotskyist origin retreated to sectarian positions that allowed them to stand aside from real struggles, for example, by claiming that the national question had now been superseded or that trade unions had become entirely bourgeois organisations committed to the deception and misleadership of the workers. The majority, however, uncritically accommodated to the multiplicity of petty bourgeois programmes spawned by the new movements.

67. True to form, imperialism's most extravagant boom, fuelled by credit and a seemingly endless supply of cheap goods from China, proved to be the prelude to its most dramatic crisis. Increasingly unable to make an adequate return on investment in production, US capital created greater and greater volumes of fictitious capital in the form of increasingly complex derivative instruments. The 'credit crunch' of 2007 signalled the recognition that, despite their nominal value, most of these were in fact worthless and the institutions holding them, therefore, were potentially bankrupt. Actual bankruptcies, of previously major finance houses such as Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, followed in due course. The ensuing recession brought with it a worldwide onslaught on working class living standards as capitalist states 'bailed out' the banks or financed stimulus programmes and then forced workers to pay the cost through wage cuts, service reductions and increased taxation.

68. In country after country, despite evident working class willingness to resist this attack, government policies have been forced through because of the refusal of the established leaders of workers' organisations, union and party, to allow a determined and effective fight back. All too often, those leaders have actually connived at the implementation of such policies in an attempt to preserve their own privileged positions and, at best, some relative advantages for a minority of labour aristocratic workers. In these circumstances, it should be the highest priority of revolutionaries to fight for the formation of revolutionary working class parties around an action programme of immediate and transitional demands. Yet, none of the parties that characterise themselves as Trotskyist have pursued this strategy. At most, they have promoted the formation of new parties on inadequate programmes, uncritically tailing 'leftist' leaders rather than placing demands on them and encouraging their followers to act despite and, if necessary, against, them.

69. Nonetheless, imperialism and big capital have not been able either to engineer a sustained recovery or to inflict historic defeats on the working class on a scale that would allow a real restoration of their rates of profit. Consequently, more and bigger battles lie ahead and these will stimulate the growth of new political currents, both within and beyond the 'Trotskyist' milieu, committed not only to effective resistance but to the overthrow of the system that creates such crises. This is the context in which an international revolutionary current must take the lessons of the four revolutionary Internationals into the ongoing struggles of the class, as they happen, and build a Fifth that can finally settle accounts with capital.

Adopted by the 9th Congress, April 2013

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