

# Some problems of the Fourth International – And the tasks involved in rebuilding it

By *Balazs Nagy*, August 2014

To approach this multi-faceted subject, which ranges over an extremely wide variety of topics, and to bring out the essential points, we have to go a long way back and examine certain decisive problems in the history of the Communist movement. Without a rigorous and objective reckoning, even an incomplete one, of the historical activity of the Fourth International, it is impossible to establish correctly what the real problems are or define the tasks involved in rebuilding it.

We cannot here get into detailed consideration of the process by which Communist Parties were set up during and just after World War I, but we can, and should, be clear that, apart from the Bolshevik Party, not a *single* one of these parties conformed to the image of the kind of real Marxist Communist party that the general revolutionary situation required. For all its break with Menshevism, even the Bolshevik Party had to undergo a profound crisis on the way to its political and theoretical rearmament by adopting Lenin's April Theses in order to arrive in the leadership of the revolution.

In fact, history teaches us that revolutionary parties have to undergo a more or less lengthy longer or shorter crisis-studded periods in order to arrive at the Marxist maturity needed to accomplish historic tasks. The whole Leninist Third International was an enormous construction-site-cum-school for understanding and assimilating these tasks by passing on the experiences of the Bolsheviks. But hardly had this process started when Zinoviev took it off course and then Stalinism

completely falsified the development, lending it a content, direction and methods at first wrong and then reactionary. One could say that this was in a certain sense the revenge of the opportunist, Menshevik line defeated by the April Theses.

We should note that one consequence of this was that even the Opposition's struggle against Stalin evoked only a relatively lukewarm response on the international scale, and that a large part of even this got lost in the blind alley of opportunism or ultra-leftism.

In any case, Eleazer Sointsev's report in a letter to Trotsky in the autumn of 1928 depicted a weak, motley and chaotic opposition in Europe and the USA. This letter reported that there "indubitably existed the beginnings of the formation (sadly only the very beginnings) of a left wing in the Communist International" whose "process (of development) will be long, difficult and very painful". He then rounded out this warning with the following statement: "It is ... premature to hope to have a united left (in the CI) within the near future". He went on to state that the cause of this diversity was "many groups to which we have given our label have come into opposition by such varied and with good reason different paths that you have to expect the most unexpected combinations and groupings".

We know that in fact, when he was at first in exile, Trotsky started his activity by drawing the line rigorously. Over the course of those first years of line-drawing and new groupings, the forces of the Marxist Opposition lost many experienced old cadre (who went over to the right or the left wings of the workers' movement) and the new forces were mainly drawn from inexperienced young people. Together with Zinoviev's "bolshevisation" of the CI, this whole wide-ranging process of selection pushed the international Opposition to the periphery of the working class and its movement and, incidentally, led to a deterioration in its social composition in favour of the petty-bourgeois intellectual. The triumph of Stalinism

accentuated this evolution even more.

Trotsky was fully aware of the great weaknesses of the international Opposition; its serious inadequacies in Marxist education and its lack of experience, as well as its organisational shortcomings. The movement as a whole lacked practically any really Communist continuity.

Again at the beginning of 1936, Trotsky wrote that: "even today, the Fourth International already possesses its biggest, most numerous and best-tempered section in the USSR", at a time when it was severely decimated and almost all its members in prison and the camps.

Thus Trotsky's entire struggle concentrated on an incessant activity of transmitting Bolshevism and its teachings in every possible form to the young, and sometimes not-so-young cadre and activists of the nascent Fourth International, because he knew all the flaws and the politically immature character of the majority of these young people. On 25 March 1935 in France, he noted in his diary: "I believe the work that I am doing at this moment ... is the most important in my life, more important than 1917, more important than during the Civil War, etc." And further on he added: "what I am doing now is in the fullest sense of the word 'irreplaceable' ... the collapse of the two internationals had posed a problem which none of the chiefs of these internationals has the slightest ability to deal ... it is a task which no-one apart from myself is able to fulfil..." Then he estimated how long it would take to fulfil this historical task: "I need at least another five years of uninterrupted work to make sure this heritage is transmitted".

We know that he had barely five years before he was assassinated, but subsequent developments showed that he had not been able to pass this Bolshevik heritage on, that the leaders he was teaching had only understood it very imperfectly and had not assimilated it.

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In retrospect, there is no doubt that the big split in the Fourth International in 1952-1953 marked a much more significant event than a frank and open break with the revisionists contained in the orientation and practices of Pablo and co. In reality it marked a historic turning point, a point of demarcation after which the Fourth International definitively entered its phase of rapid fragmentation, decomposition and disintegration into sects, many of which no longer even claim its name.

At the root of this dispersion and decline was the inability of these anti-Pabloite leaders to take their criticism right through to the end, the incomplete nature of the act. It was confined – and that was in itself an important positive fact – to a critique of Pabloite revisionism as it appeared, without deeply examining the conditions which, in the course of the Fourth International's history, had fostered this revisionism and made it possible to such an extent that the sudden emergence of Pabloism took everybody by surprise, including its opponents, whereas the conditions and specific features of that history had long since accompanied, fermented and prepared all kinds of deviations, including Pabloism.

However, it was the incomplete, partial character of the criticism which made it possible for the American SWP – followed by several other organisations – to return to the bosom of international Pabloism, thus blocking any further process of clarification. We know that this volte-face on the part of the SWP and others, signifying their refusal to take this criticism (not to mention any more consistent criticism) onboard, was in the last analysis the basis and profound reason for the complete degeneration and almost complete

disappearance of this SWP and others.

On the other hand, the great historical merit of Pabloism's two main opponent organisations, which later became the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) in France and Socialist Labour League (SLL) in the UK, joined together in the International Committee of the Fourth International, resides not only the fact that, in breaking with it, they provided a Marxist analysis of Pabloism, but that they also undertook in part the job of studying and correcting the conditions which favoured its development.

That is how they arrived at the determination that one of the roots of the appearance of Pabloism lay in the fact that the Trotskyist organisations were not adequately rooted in the working class. This shortcoming reflected and expressed an unfavourable, particularly petty-bourgeois, social composition in Trotskyist organisations, particularly in France. It is certain that taking account of this problem, which Trotsky denounced several times, and the steps taken to remedy it, constituted an immense step forward which we should not only recognise but develop further.

But steps to ensure the working-class composition of organisations, and their implantation in the class as well as in the workers' movement, essential as they are for the International and its organisations – and we still have a long way to go in order to achieve it – do not of themselves guarantee anything, since they are a matter of the organisation and how it functions, without defining its content. In such a way that even solving these problems, indispensable as they are for a Marxist organisation, could – and indeed can – serve various ends, some of them in contradiction with the interests of the working class. The Stalinist organisations made up of workers furnish various examples of this.

So it is necessary to go further and confront the fundamental

political shortcoming which was, in my view, at the root of all the inadequacies in the activity of the Fourth International and formed the basis for all deviations which have arisen in the course of its history, including Pabloism but also many others.

This was the inability to understand what the Fourth International is, its mission and its task, and, thus, its nature. Right through the history of the International Opposition and then the FI, this lack of understanding was omnipresent and appeared clearly in the difference, not to say opposition, between Trotsky's views on this matter and all the leaderships and cadres of the International.

This fundamental and important difference has run through the entire history of the Opposition and the FI and surfaced very frequently. To present Trotsky's views, I merely refer to two of the most significant texts. The first (38 pages) is "War and the International" of October 1934 (note in passing how characteristic of Trotsky's approach it is that he spoke about the Fourth International – and not the Opposition – well before the FI was formally proclaimed.)

Having established that "without a proletarian revolution, a new world war is inevitable" – a judgement unique in its far-sightedness at the time – Trotsky specified that "This fact alone makes the attitude towards the coming war the *key question* of proletarian politics." (my emphasis, BN).

Here he clearly and without the slightest equivocation defines the task of the Opposition: "*The transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war* constitutes the general strategic task to which the whole work of a proletarian party during war should be subordinated." (Emphasis in original).

For Trotsky, the central objective was therefore the proletarian revolution and its preparation, and, let us note, quite apart from the limited strength of the ranks of the

Opposition (later the FI). That is why he says, in the same text, "He who tomorrow will capitulate in the face of fascism and war, who will fall silent on the task of arming the workers, is not a revolutionary, but an impotent parasite" – consequently he here broadly developed what was involved in this arming! Then he stated: "If the working class turns out to be unable to prevent a war by means of a revolution – and that is the only way to prevent a war – working people, along with the whole people, should *participate in the army and in the war.*" (Emphasis in original).

And he finishes with these words: "Even if the real revolutionaries should be in a tiny minority at the start of a new war, we should not doubt for an instant that this time the move of the masses to the path of revolution will occur more rapidly and more decisively and relentlessly than during the first imperialist war. A new wave of insurrections can and should win throughout the capitalist world."

We have to say that the war as a whole and the Yugoslav Revolution in particular – despite the Stalinist leadership forced upon it by circumstances – provide a stunning confirmation of this strategy, backed up by the revolutions which broke out in Greece and Italy, for example, channelled and stifled by the Stalinist and others.

Another basic text (of 51 pages) of May 1940 analysed the same task central task even more concretely. Written for the so-called "emergency" international conference in New York, even its title formulates the matter very urgently: "Manifesto on imperialist war and the world proletarian revolution". Here one can read: "Our policy (that of the FI) in war is merely the pursuit in a more concentrated form of our policy in peace." And this programme "is formulated in a series of documents available to all. Two words sum up its substance: *proletarian dictatorship.*" (Emphasis in original). In other words, the aim is proletarian revolution. So it should be abundantly clear that for Trotsky the immediate aim of the

International was to prepare this revolution.

Now the leaderships both of the FI and its sections saw this aim as at best a more or less distant perspective, and in no way as the task of the moment. And this significant deviation became brutally evident in the course of World War II.

(It was precisely during my investigations on the development of the world revolution during and just after World War II and the process by which it was channelled and strangled that this tragic reckoning appeared to me more clearly. This study constitutes vol. 2 of my work: *Marxist Considerations on the crisis*).

This historical event faced the Fourth International with a test which exposed and violently accentuated its principal weakness. This is what impeded the development of the International Opposition right from the start. All in all, this general lack of understanding (confusion, wrong and/or limited understanding of tasks, etc.) of the Fourth International and building it severely hampered its development and, in the end, not only threw it back but formed the basis of profound change in its objective and hence its nature. It was this relatively slow change – delayed by the contradiction with the pressure of the working class transmitted by militants resting on it – which formed the precise content of its impotence, which went to the very threshold of extinction.

To bring out this veritable opposition between Trotsky's view of the Fourth International's mission and that of its leaders and cadres, it suffices to see how the latter – a mere few decades later – saw the reason why it was proclaimed and was born. In his pamphlet *The Fourth International*, published by Maspero in 1969, Pierre Frank refuted the arguments of those who opposed its proclamation saying it was "premature" with a statement that was no less strange. According to him "...he (i.e. Trotsky) did not see it as a question of numbers of



forces, (etc.), but first and foremost of political perspective and continuity." To further back up this misunderstanding approximating to mystification, he stated that: "In hindsight ... one can see that if we had gone into war without the Fourth International having been proclaimed, that would have allowed all the alien pressures and centrifugal tendencies ... to act a hundred, a thousand times more intensely." And he baldly hurled at us his false conviction: "By proclaiming the Fourth International Trotsky aimed mainly at ensuring this continuity in a period full of dangers".

In this Frank was expressing a view widely-held by leaders and cadre of the Fourth International who saw in the Fourth International – and still do – a sort of talisman of supernatural power which will protect against all the threats of a dangerous environment.

So how did Frank's anti-Pabloite adversaries in 1952/1953 see the Fourth International's raison d'être in opposition to his view of his? The standard-bearer of the anti-Pabloite struggle in France and for a good part internationally, Pierre Lambert, published a pamphlet in 1970 under the promising title *Some Lessons of Our History*. (It is worth pointing out that, although he was the unchallenged leader of his group, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [OCI], he did not venture to state in public his paternity of the pamphlet). Nevertheless, on page 29 of this pamphlet we can read the opinion, to which he often laid claim, i.e. that Trotsky thought " ... they had to proclaim the Fourth International with the aim, precisely, of allowing the vanguard ... to stand up to the terrible pressure World War II was about to inflict on them..." He went on: "... it was precisely because defeats and setbacks ... were inevitably going to grow with the new imperialist war ... that the Fourth International had to be proclaimed." Let us follow Lambert as he wanders off into fantasy: "Proclaiming (it) was the only way to allow the working class to secure the heritage of October and resolve

positively the contradictions ..." and so on, followed by a long, confused and scarcely understandable list. So he invoked precisely the same "arguments" as his Pabloite adversary Pierre Frank and thus confirmed that they were profoundly in agreement over this point, specifically that the enemies of Pabloism did not take their criticisms right through to the end because they were and remained standing on the same terrain of negating the mission of the Fourth International which after all, had allowed Pabloism to arise and fostered its progress.

A rigorous and detailed examination of the intimate interdependence and close kinship between pabloism and its adversaries reveal very clearly and obviously their common refusal to take on an open and direct commitment to the Fourth International in order actually to prepare the proletarian revolution. Pabloism has proved itself to be one of the more finished forms of this refusal, while the Lambertists who criticised and denounced it represented and still represent one of its more subtle, concealed variants. It is essential to take this analysis further and enrich it. But for the moment, we should continue our examination, which merely sketches out the main lines of a critique in order to assist the assimilation of the true lessons of our history with a view to reaching conclusions able to re-orientate our activity.

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During World War II this terrible contradiction between Trotsky's view of the immediate mission and objectives and that of the leaders of that same international became an actual antagonism. Moreover, and Trotsky's assassination assisted, this disagreement swelled immeasurably and culminated during the war in the paralysis of the international for which the sporadic positive actions of this or that section of its activists compensated hardly or not at

all.

As we have seen Trotsky saw the war as a significant matrix of the proletarian revolution, a fertile ground for its preparation, something that nourished everything that he wrote, whereas the leaders and cadres of the International only saw in the war an inter-imperialist conflict – which of course it was! – in which they had nothing to do beyond speaking for and defending the proletariat just as they did in peace. From the incontestable truth that the war was between two imperialisms and was not their war, the overwhelming majority of leaders drew the false and formal conclusion that Trotskyists had nothing to do with this war. In general – apart from the British and the Americans – they rejected military involvement, identifying it with serving the interests of Anglo-Saxon imperialism. Above all, from the outset they all rejected the armed struggle for power which presented itself then in the specific form of taking up arms alongside the partisans. By doing so, they placed an enormous question mark over Marxism, specifically the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky about the epoch as one of “wars and revolutions”.

Thus the Fourth International turned itself from being an instrument of imminent revolution into a sort of sacred icon heralding a radiant future. The tragic scorn its pontiffs had for its objective softened the sharp edge of this potent instrument of struggle to turn it into an amulet. And like ancient peoples in the distant past, they firmly believed – as many still do – that it would protect them against whatever accidents befell them and against all disease and deformation.

One of the powerful sources of this perception was to be ignorance of Lenin’s teachings on imperialism, a sketchy and superficial knowledge of the death-agony of capitalism, its definitively declining nature. They were thus blocked by a partial and incomplete understanding of this imperialist decadence as the basis of the immediately revolutionary role

of the International.

In fact, with the exception of the Bolsheviks, the whole international workers' movement had been fed reformist traditions transmitted and reinforced through a thousand channels. Still in his *Diary in Exile*, Trotsky noted as early as March 1935: "After the World War, Blum" (Leon Blum – BN) "considered, (and still in fact considers) that conditions were not ripe for socialism. What naïve dreamers were Marx and Engels, who from the second half of the nineteenth century expected the social revolution and prepared for it! ... For Blum there exists ... who knows what absolute 'ripeness' of society for socialism, a maturity determined in itself by objective symptoms alone ... I have conducted the struggle against the mechanically fatalist conception since 1905 (cf. "A Balance and Prospects").

One can measure the ravages of this objectivist lack of understanding by the dreadful fact that even after World War II the period of thirty years of fake prosperity of capitalism was attributed by the whole of the Pabloite Fourth International to capitalism's supposed ability to develop the productive forces. The contamination caused by this speculative perversion advanced by the Pabloite economist Ernest Mandel was so great that even at the start of Workers' International we were obliged to conduct a sharp discussion against this conception supported by the Argentinian Comrade Garmendia and the Italian "Gruppo Operario Rivoluzionario" (a group which, as far as I know, has disappeared into the catacombs of the workers' organisations in Italy). Be that as it may, the belief in the ability of imperialism to regulate its contradictions and regenerate is so persistent that today it forms the basis for the general platform of petit-bourgeois currents and renegades from Marxism who call for a return to the Keynesian measures of the so-called "thirty glorious years".

The profound influence of this anti-Marxist view does not just

come directly from the old reformism but from the way it has been adopted and "contributed to" by Stalinism. Stalinism's reactionary nationalism, asserting the possibility of socialism in a single country, assumed that capitalism would go on developing in the rest of the world. This distortion of Marxism also rested upon another aspect of the reformist conception which viewed the world capitalist system not just in its organic entity but as a sort of adding together of countries with different systems. This is an overall view whose source was and is ignorance of the nature, role and functioning of the world market which long since unified the world on the basis of capitalism. The *Communist Manifesto* already said: "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country." And further on: "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations." It could not be clearer. However, that has not prevented the widespread and frequent expression of reformist views of a fragmented world such as that expressed above. However, I shall not dwell on this question. Suffice it to say that in her analysis of imperialism, even Rosa Luxemburg fell into the error of suggesting that for the realisation of surplus value there had to be a market external to capitalism. We know how lively was Lenin's reaction in his critical notes to this unexpected back-sliding on Luxemburg's part into the platitudes of the Narodniks, for all that she had rejected them. Suffice it to say that, despite this error of a reformist kind, Luxemburg did not follow the revisionist trajectory of this conception, but asserted herself as a true revolutionary.

We have seen how, in criticising Blum's blinkered view that capitalism was somehow not yet ripe (whereas it had already entered its phase of decline into decay), Trotsky made reference to his work *Results and Prospects* published in 1906. On the morning after the 1905 Russian Revolution and on the

basis of rich experiences, he reached, in this work, the conclusion that after the great developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the dynamics of the class struggle would lead the proletariat, even in the more backward countries, to take power before capitalism had completely matured. Consequently the proletariat would be pushed by its struggle into accomplishing the bourgeois revolution while continuing its struggle for socialist objectives. So Trotsky wrote in opposition to the fatalists of so-called objective development:

“But the whole point lies in the fact that the processes which are historically pre-requisite for socialism do not develop in isolation, but limit each other, and, reaching a certain stage ... undergo a qualitative change, and in their complex combination bring about what we understand by the name of social revolution”. (*Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, Leon Trotsky, New Park Publications Ltd., 1962, p. 219.)

I do not see any point recapitulating the whole theory of permanent revolution here, but must just say that this remarkable conception enabled Trotsky put the class struggle with all its inner driving forces, elements and combinations back in the centre as the main agent and pivot of historical development. By doing so he relegated all those who punctiliously weigh the various signs of levels of capitalist development into the ranks of all the other dogmatists.

Without any fear of exaggeration one can say that these two works which absolutely complement each other: Lenin's *Imperialism* and Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*, constitute a real renewal and fundamental enrichment of Marxism. It is no accident that all of today's vulgar reformists and renegades – even the ones who try to hide behind Marx – carefully avoid facing up to these two theoretical monuments.

Obviously we should not compare supporters of Trotsky with

vulgar reformist like Blum. Even if their understanding of Lenin's analysis of imperialism (in particular its outmoded, decadent nature, its decay and parasitism) is very summary and superficial, they wanted to overthrow capitalism and sincerely believed in the socialist revolution. It's just that this belief, even certainty, remained at the level of a scientific conviction and political hope, but never became the diligent practice of concretely preparing it. Besides, an old prejudice approaching superstition laid hold of most Trotskyists and held them in a strange passivity in this domain.

They were, rightly, convinced that it is the working class which makes the revolution, and so were hostile, also rightly, to any adventurist idea of "making the revolution" themselves. But from this correct understanding, they drew the general, false and anti-dialectical conclusion that all they needed to do was to wait for the working class to make the revolution. But in 1902 Lenin devoted a whole book to the struggle against such a submission to the spontaneity of the proletarian masses, writing, for example: "... the spontaneous working-class movement is trade unionism ... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie." (Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Pekin, 1975, p. 49.)

For all that, the influence of this spirit of spontaneity on the members of the Opposition was so strong at that time that Trotsky thought it necessary to return to the question. In 1935 he wrote a significant article, "Luxemburg and the Fourth International: Cursory Remarks on an Important Subject" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, Pathfinder, New York 1977 p. 29.) It is necessary to quote from this at some length. First of all, one reads that, "... the preparatory selection of the vanguard, in comparison with the mass actions that were to be expected, fell too short with Rosa; whereas Lenin ... took the advanced workers and constantly and tirelessly welded them together into firm nuclei ..." (p.30.)

And it was precisely here – against spontaneity! – that he

first put into words: "Without the slightest exaggeration it may be said: the whole world situation is determined by the *crisis of revolutionary leadership*." (P. 31, emphasis in the original!)

And then he explained: "great actions require a great leadership. For current affairs, the workers still give their votes to the old organisations. Their votes – but by no means their boundless confidence. On the other hand, after the miserable collapse of the Third International, it is much harder to move them to bestow their confidence upon a new revolutionary organisation. That's just where the crisis of the proletarian leadership lies. To sing a monotonous song about indefinite future mass actions in this situation, in contrast to the purposeful selection of cadres of a new international, means to carry on a thoroughly reactionary work". (p.31.)

He concluded: "The crisis of proletarian leadership cannot, of course, be overcome by means of an abstract formula. It is a question of an extremely prolonged process. Not of a purely 'historical' process, that is, of the objective premises of conscious activity, but of an uninterrupted chain of ideological, political and organisational measures for the purpose of fusing together the best, most conscious elements of the world proletariat beneath a spotless banner, elements whose number and self-confidence must be constantly strengthened, whose connections with wider sections of the proletariat must be developed and deepened."(p.32). I believe we should think about every sentence in this text in order to assimilate the message, which is entirely valid for our activity today.

But despite all these warnings of Trotsky's and all his efforts, he could not put right a general tendency towards spontaneity which strongly marked the activity of the Fourth International. After his assassination, the international leaders completely by-passed his recommendations. To be more



exact, they interpreted them in their own way, just as they understood them in their own schematic, formalist and anti-dialectical way. Thus, during the war – since Trotsky had predicted there would be a revolution – they expected it with the fervour of the Jewish people awaiting the Messiah.

And the revolution did arrive. But the revolutions of 1943-1946 in Europe, lacking an appropriate leadership and therefore unable to attain the pinnacles of mass mobilisation and intensity of struggle that were seen in the revolution of 1917, emerged in barely-sketched outline. Then they started to recede rapidly. And then many deeply-disappointed Trotskyist revolutionaries expressed their bitterness: “There was no revolution!” They were so deeply disillusioned that a whole series of leaders turned their backs and deserted the organisation, leaving the field to younger people, complaining that “Trotsky deceived us” and “Marxism cannot explain anything”! Not one of them realised that the revolution is not inevitable and does not fall out of the sky. It does not even arise necessarily and inevitable from the action of the masses, – if conscious revolutionaries do not, like good midwives, prepare the way for it, facilitate its progress and organise its tools – but turn their backs on it, abandoning the armed struggle against fascism and the rickety states in its pay. There is no rise of the revolution without conscious revolutionaries!

For there is a relationship, a dialectical inter-dependence between, on the one hand, the revolutionary action of the masses, and on the other, the conscious vanguard of the revolution. Without the latter, the spontaneous movement of a mass revolution can bring down a hated regime, but without the corresponding activity of a revolutionary vanguard, its inevitable ebb will only bring another hated regime to power. A whole number of revolutions testify to this truth, most recently the history of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. The incontestable fact that these revolutions have yet to

utter their final word does not change that.

In fact the leading Trotskyists back then did not at all understand Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach", or to be more precise they understood them the wrong way. Nevertheless, these Theses condense the whole Marxist philosophy into a few words as "revolutionary practice", concluding with the famous assertion: "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it".

In any case a good number of these Trotskyist leaders of the first period of the Fourth International (1938-1946), convinced that there was no revolution, deserted the struggle. Trotsky's dramatic prediction anticipating such a serious result rings prophetically. In the 1940 Manifesto quoted above, he wrote: "If bourgeois rule emerges unscathed from this war, all revolutionary parties will degenerate". Not only did this extremely grave prognostication become terrible reality, it also described that reality's cause and content.