

From the archives: The Greatest Danger is Sectarianism by Balazs Nagy, Feb–April, 1995

Comrade Balazs Nagy wrote “The Greatest Danger is Sectarianism” between February and April 1995, and asked comrades in London to check his English. He then went to Hungary, On his return he was sent the anglicised version for final approval but, owing to a French postal workers’ strike it took six weeks to reach him. In the meantime an unfinished version of the document was distributed at the WRP (Britain) Central Committee meeting on 8 May. Copies of the completed text were sent out on 21 June to members of the International Executive Committee to avoid any further delay before its final production in this:

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The Greatest Danger is Sectarianism by Balazs Nagy

There were many valuable lessons to be learned from the last Congress of the Workers Revolutionary Party (Britain) on 11-12 February 1995. Here, however, I take only one of them which, in my opinion, has to be laid bare and analysed because of its decisive importance for the whole International. As all the participants of the congress witnessed, there is a tendency which does not want or dare to define itself politically as such, but on every occasion loudly expresses its ‘criticisms’.

It would be wrong to consider that this is a problem only for the WRP. On an international level it is impossible to remain silent. As I said at the congress, we have to engage in an international process of clarification. I would like to contribute to this clarification with the following remarks.

Introduction: On a certain political behaviour

Above all let us look at see three major facts of the congress which, in their stark reality cannot be avoided and, still less, denied. Therefore they must be fully understood.

The first one, well observed by everybody, is that certain comrades, particularly cde. Simon Pirani and cde. Janos Borovi, fought for more than a year against the orientation towards a new party outlined proposed by cde. Cliff Slaughter and supported by the majority of the Executive Committee of Workers International and of the WRP. All members know of and have read the various documents written by these comrades struggling against this proposed line.

The second fact is that now, surprisingly, all these comrades suddenly agreed with the very same orientation presented to the congress. (Simon alone presented some amendments beforehand which were accepted by cde. Slaughter.) All the others voted for this orientation without any discussion, without any effort (or claim) to present their arguments against it. They just gave up! In his notes about the congress (13 February 1995) cde. Slaughter wrote that '... Janos polemicised for months in 1994 against what he [cde. Slaughter] wrote on the significance of the collapse of Stalinism and on the question of the new party ... If Janos had changed his mind, good. But why? What are the lessons to be learned from this salutary exercise of changing one's mind? And having changed your mind why not fight to enthuse the party and the new forces with the conclusion to which you have fought your way, instead of complaining, as Janos did, that "the discussion is too nice" and we must voice the criticisms

and weaknesses. This is not the way to build the International but to destroy it.

Thirdly, as cde. Slaughter pointed out (above) instead of defending their line at the Congress – a line which during the year was opposed to the proposal – these comrades advanced all kinds of criticisms directed against the international ‘leadership’ (forgetting that the main critic, cde. Borovi, also belongs to this leadership) – criticisms which very often did not have the slightest relationship to the principal matter being discussed. In his notes, cde. Slaughter says that Janos’s interventions ‘were directed largely to showing the weaknesses, faults, “lack of centralisation”, etc. of the International’ and characterising such an attitude, cde. Slaughter added: ‘This is a farce, though not very amusing.’

The congress had to fulfil its task. It did so thanks to its ability to avoid this diversionary trap. But it would be a great error to think that we can go ahead tacitly agreeing to this kind of political behaviour and its motivation. Without a careful examination and clarification of what happened we are in danger of breaking up the party in the very near future.

It goes without saying that we can all change our minds. It is indeed a sign of personal development. So, for example, cde. Borovi cannot be criticised because he abruptly fell into line with cde. Slaughter and expressed his agreement with the proposed transformation of the party, however conditional that agreement may be. However, such a conversion requires a condition which is even more important. For we are a political party – as Trotsky said the ‘vanguard of the vanguard’ – and not a kind of discussion circle. One of the differences is that the members of the latter can proclaim everything which passes through their heads as being an eternal truth and so can be ready to change their minds afterwards without difficulty. In the party, however, we have to put forward our ideas and comments seriously and with responsibility for the whole. Precisely for this reason, we cannot get rid of them by

waging a magic wand when they cease to serve our purpose. Mistaken thoughts and opinions must be overcome critically.

To overcome the erroneous or false ideas would have meant at least two things. First, that cde. Borovi should have expressed clearly exactly what his previous opinion was, as opposed to that of the proposal. Second, that he should have explained and analysed why he changed his previous ideas or withdrew them, and how he arrived at the same conclusion as the proposed resolution (which he had previously attacked). This is the only possible method of seeing if there really is a common understanding. Any other way – in particular that of simply giving up the previous position without any mention – indicates that there is only a temporary retreat motivated by tactical considerations – but the essential suspicion, if not opposition, remains so that it can be raised again on the first possible occasion

In practice, after the Congress we could see that cde. Borovi was still on the same ground (look at his suspicious attitude towards the Bosnian trade-union delegation which determined his previous opposition). But before making a closer examination of it, let us consider this real avalanche of criticisms developed by cde. Borovi and others, with a seriousness equal to the passion with which they were presented.

In his notes comrade Slaughter rightly says, that all Janos's interventions 'were directed largely to showing the weaknesses, faults, lack of centralisation, etc. of the International. Why?' And: 'it is impossible to know what Janos meant by his first sentences: "The discussion is too nice. There are differences on the new party." He did not say what these differences are ...' Let me answer this question. Because, after his quarrelsome statement, Janos deliberately abandoned the political discussion, dangerous for him in the given circumstances, choosing the ground of frivolous criticisms – ground which is always easy, requires no theoretical or

political arguments, and on some occasions can play to the gallery.

So he tried to change the whole discussion. It can be said that he did not intend to replace an important discussion involving the problems of the new party by one on the methods of the international leadership. Yet, as everybody knows, in politics we don't discuss intentions. Anyway, this method in itself, regardless of intentions, has nothing to do with the working-class movement. It was always typically petty bourgeois behaviour. Let us remind ourselves of Trotsky's fight against petty bourgeois opposition in the American SWP in 1939-40. At the end of this article I will return to these problems. But even now, here, I must stress that 'In Defence of Marxism' remains an invaluable text for understanding the 'criticist' tendency appearing now in our party life, as well as its relative popularity, not only among those who have some tendency towards petty bourgeois behaviour, but also among those who approach the new tasks with all kinds of sectarian apprehension and conservatism. 'In Defence of Marxism' is of valuable assistance for us to better understand these tasks themselves.

Concerning the method of discussion, cde. Borovi and also cde. Pirani could study with great profit this warning of Trotsky: comrades dissatisfied with the "regime" (of the party) have had in my opinion a false political attitude. The regime must be an instrument for correct policy and not for false. When the incorrectness of their policy becomes clear then its protagonists are often tempted to say that not this special issue is decisive but the general regime. During the development of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International we opposed such substitutions hundreds of times. When Vereecken or Sneevliet or even Molinier were beaten on all their points of difference, they declared that the genuine trouble with the Fourth International is not this or that decision but the bad regime.; (A letter to Sherman Stanley,

'In Defence of Marxism', London, New Park Publications, 1971, p. 44).

This was exactly the way these comrades suddenly abandoned their defence of their policy opposed to the new party orientation. A political line was irremediably lost, and they replaced this line by an attack against the organisational weaknesses and even 'bureaucratisation' of the international leadership. How strikingly like all sectarians! And what a dangerous similarity with the Shachtmanite petty bourgeois opposition!

All of us witnessed at the congress this diversion of the discussion by cde. Borovi. He picked some real or supposed weaknesses of our work at this very difficult moment for the International (bad methods, insufficient centralisation, but also bureaucraticism, etc.) demonstrating not only his great dismay in view of the horrific fact that – what a shame comrades! – the International didn't even elect a delegation to the congress!! (When and how, cde. Borovi?) Fortunately the congress didn't follow him onto this unprincipled terrain. But a group was formed more or less spontaneously on that basis. Cde. Borovi appeared as its leader and led these comrades away from politics towards an unprincipled criticism. Some of them went even further than the leader himself. The members of this heterogeneous group, thanks to Borovi, perhaps thought that they were waging a real fight against – bureaucratism (!) by raising personal observations. Unfortunately, this is not the case. That is why a lengthy treatment of these problems is necessary, and also in order to help them to make a real clarification.

Does the grip of Stalinism over the working class still exist?

I didn't openly participate in the discussion which lasted more than one year on the proposal to form a new party. So certain comrades thought, as I saw even at the congress, that I agreed with cde. Borovi. While expressing my difference with

him, I should also explain my silence.

When he started his crusade against comrade Slaughter's proposal, I was surprised. First of all because of its hostile, aggressive and pretentious tone. Instead of trying to clarify the intentions of this proposal, to make its content clearer, or to ask for explanations, to propose corrections, etc. He immediately developed a wholesale attack on the entire project as well as on its theoretical and political foundations. So, his aim was not to make the subject clearer for him and for others in order to measure its real content and meaning. No, he was at once resolutely against with considerable, hostile opposition.

My surprise was even greater because, some years ago, when I proposed to go forward in Hungary towards the preparation of a workers' party with all the activists around us, not only had he expressed no objection, but he took part in the work to try to bring this about. Yet between this attempt and the 'new party' orientation in Britain there is no difference in kind. And, knowing his limited preparation for such a battle, I was amazed at his great confidence in his position. (This confidence came a cropper in the light of cde. Slaughter's first answer to him – International Internal Bulletin, 26 March 1994.)

For all these reasons, not willing to give more importance to the dispute, I was convinced that this 'misunderstanding' – although a disturbing one – would be quickly resolved. I was wrong. Then I had to go to Hungary for several months. When cde. Borovi came there I told him that I totally disagreed with his criticisms. In the meantime comrade Slaughter, cde. Geoff Pilling and others replied to the criticisms and answered the attacks delivered by cde. Pirani and more and more – cde. Borovi. I do not intend to repeat these answers, but will simply underline some aspects of them which are, in my opinion, the most important ones because I observe that these answers have had no effect on a certain mode of thinking

and acting – at least in cde. Borovi's case. On the contrary, these comrades, especially cde. Borovi develop their criticisms, their false political arguments; they carry on handing out lessons and advice to everybody.

Comrade Slaughter's proposal is based on a theoretical analysis of the situation – more exactly, on the new conditions in the international class struggle. Many, comrades sincerely think that there is a common understanding in the party – a complete agreement, concerning our appreciation of the objective situation. But is it true that we all agree on the characterisation of the situation? The fight waged against the proposals shows that there is an important disagreement with a group of comrades precisely on the main theoretical source of the proposal for the 'new party'. That is why the theoretical rearming of the party is the principal requirement needed to carry out the turn now required.

In fact the dispute starts at the point of the different estimations and significance given to the collapse of Stalinism. Cde. Borovi vigorously denied – and still does – that the collapse of Stalinism would mean its end. This contention is not simply the expression of hesitation or fear in the face of an unequivocal, definite conclusion which often frightens hesitant people lacking self-confidence in their observations of knowledge. Yet comrade Slaughter tried to explain the fundamental change in the situation as a result of this collapse, its concrete meaning in relation to the situation. To no avail. Cde. Borovi affirmed, in February 1994 that: '... the grip of Stalinism on the working class still exists, under different form, with a modified content'. (J. Borovi: Some reflections on 'The end of Stalinism'...) And today, in his amendments to the Constitutive Points of Declaration for the LIT-WI Liaison Committee, in February 1995, he proposes to delete from the characterisation of the situation after the collapse of Stalinism, the formulation: these are new and favourable conditions' etc. by the following

neutral one: '... .an entirely new, unprecedented and contradictory situation. Leaving aside a purely linguistic or semantic analysis of the vague and empty content of 'entirely new', or 'unprecedented' – the words are there only in order to 'prove' the author's readiness to recognise a situation as being effectively new – let us notice that they have no real significance at all concerning the distinctive nature of that situation, its definite character. If you affirm, on the one hand, that Stalinism has collapsed and, on the other, that its grip 'on the working class still exists, under different forms, with a modified content' -- then the whole affirmation says nothing; it is not worth mentioning. Still less, if you don't even analyse exactly what is meant by these abstract formulations like 'different form' and 'modified content'.

Cde. Borovi characterises the present situation as 'contradictory'. But all situations are always and everywhere 'contradictory'. So, believing that he is saying something very dialectical', he simply states the obvious. Apparently cde. Borovi considers all contradictions to be dialectical ones and also that contradiction in dialectics excludes the definite character of things and developments. But clearly, in reality, this is not the case. All developments, like that of Stalinism, or more exactly of our investigation, its relation to the historical crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the working class, being always contradictory, go through moments when their previous characteristics change qualitatively.

These leaps in dialectical development do not at all mean that all the features of the previous situation, all its manifestations, facts and phenomena disappear without trace. A great number of elements of the previous conditions continue to exist and even to some degree influence the situation after this qualitative change, its 'disappearance', the intensity of which depends on the concrete circumstances of the change itself. It is well known, for example, that after the

qualitative change of feudal society into capitalist society, the remnants of the former lived on for a long time with greater or lesser intensity. This fact was used by the Stalinist representatives of 'Marxism' to characterise east-European so-called 'Prussian-type' capitalism as if it were a semi-feudal society: this in order to support 'theoretically' their orientation towards capitalist democracy in opposition to socialism. (The famous 'theory' of 'two stages'.)

The same kind of reasoning still governs today the way of thinking of those who claim to be Trotskyists, but, in the past, considered that the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states state-capitalist countries because of the continued existence of the law of value, that of the wage-earning system, etc. Instead of characterising this clearly as a transitional society and not a capitalist society, a hesitating but shameful 'state-capitalist' author would perhaps have described it as an 'entirely' new, and 'unprecedented' and 'contradictory' society...

But let us go back to Stalinism. Borovi does not see the recent change as a qualitative one – namely the historical end of Stalinism. In opposition to this characterisation he puts forward a view from which he expurgates all notions of qualitative change. In his picture of the world, Stalinism is still alive in 'different forms'. Pointing to France, to the new parties in general, to China, to Vietnam, to Cuba etc. there is for him only a quantitative change: Stalinism is now weaker than before, its crisis is deeper.

Thus he does not seem to understand that its collapse is not just a fall; a kind of defeat which could be reversed; a break-up into bits that could not be put back together again. The reason for his blindness is seemingly his limited knowledge of the real nature of Stalinism.

He considers Stalinism as if it were an independent political current which can be analysed in itself. It is true, he says,

that for this or that reason it now becomes weaker but, given the fact that here or there it retains some important positions, we cannot speak of its end. That kind of reasoning, consequently, presupposes also the independence of the Soviet bureaucracy, the social basis of Stalinism.

However, Trotsky wrote in 'Revolution Betrayed' (for e.g. in the chapter: 'Social Reasons of Thermidor') that already from the beginning the bureaucracy was a 'bourgeois organ of the working class'. Later on, this 'bourgeois organ' emancipated itself from the masses and became an 'autonomous factor' in defence of its privileges. Its function was (is) to settle the explosive contradictions of the transitional society according to its own privileged interests which, naturally, led (leads) towards the re-establishment of capitalism. By its bourgeois nature, by its social function – not only by its counter-revolutionary policy and methods – the Stalinist bureaucracy is this 'mechanism of transmission' of the world bourgeoisie's pressure of which Trotsky speaks 'In Defence of Marxism'. But at the same time, and in opposition to bureaucracy – like the reformist bureaucracy in the trade unions – the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot be separated from the historical conquests of the October Revolution. It was its parasitic nature which gave it its strength, power and privileges from these conquests. For this reason, i.e. in order to keep its power, this bureaucracy defended, in its own way and with its own methods, the gains of the October Revolution. But, like all parasites – I repeat – at the same time it constituted the mortal enemy of those gains.

Precisely this exclusive position enabled Stalinism to assume its counter-revolutionary role inside the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states, as well as on a world scale as the major factor of the bourgeois order in the world-wide class struggle. On several occasions Trotsky explained that the Communist (Stalinist) International and its parties took their influence and prestige from the fact that the working class

considered them to be the genuine guardian, continuator and successor of the October Revolution. This was the basis of Stalinism's overwhelming strength in the international working-class movement, strength which was used to defend bourgeois society.

Therefore it is impossible to understand and analyse Stalinism in itself in this or that country, in its specific national form, as if it could be independent from the world bourgeoisie and from the conquests of the October Revolution. We can understand its nature, function and role only in its intimate relationship to the world bourgeoisie and, on the other side, in its parasitical relation to the October Revolution.

Once these objective conditions of Stalinism have radically changed, as is now the case with the ex-workers' states, or it is separated from these specific relationships, Stalinism no longer exists. Even less if you give it an independence, and want to characterise it according to some superficial and external appearances. It is precisely by using this method that cde. Borovi arrives at the monstrous declaration that 'Stalinism... is a bureaucratic degeneration of a new current of the working class: the Bolshevism...'?!!

Trotsky found it necessary to write a whole pamphlet against such a perfidious assertion based on superficial formalism. In 1937 he wrote in 'Stalinism against Bolshevism': '... in a formal sense Stalinism did issue from Bolshevism. Even today the Moscow bureaucracy continues to call itself the Bolshevik party. It is simply using the old label of Bolshevism the better to fool the masses. So much the more pitiful are these theoreticians who take the shell for the kernel and the appearance for the reality'. Thus, characterising cde. Borovi's method a long time ago, he went on: 'The present purge draws between Bolshevism and Stalinism not simply a bloody line but a whole river of blood', and (the annihilation of Bolsheviks and youth) '...shows not only a political but a thoroughly physical incompatibility between Bolshevism and

Stalinism. How can this be ignored?'

How, cde. Borovi? By using a method which doesn't enable one to understand the class nature of Stalinism.

The collapse of this latter means a qualitative change: it marks the end of this whole counter-revolutionary system. The transformation of degenerated and deformed workers' states – even if capitalism has not yet succeeded – deprived Stalinism, as the parasite on these states, of its fertile soil – even more so because Stalinism was their foremost gravedigger.

The growing discontent and various movements of the masses under conditions of increased bourgeois pressure, transmitted and even managed by the bureaucracy, destroyed not only its dictatorship but also, in the absence of a strong Fourth International, the workers' nature of the Soviet Union – even its existence as such – and of the great majority of these states. In these circumstances the Stalinist bureaucracy could no longer exist: this whole process also caused its explosion. The decisive element here is the fate of the soviet bureaucracy because its direct relation to the gains of the October Revolution, and therefore its prevailing place in the international safety-device of the world bourgeoisie, were the determining factor of Stalinism. By its explosion the whole of international Stalinism was not only profoundly weakened or shaken, but finished. Even in the countries in which the bureaucracy still has complete power, it cannot be characterised as Stalinist: its relationship to the gains of the October Revolution or an extension of it has radically changed, since it is no longer their defender but rather their conscious enemy.

What is even more important: the collapse of Stalinism, its end, means that the world bourgeoisie has lost the main pillar of its order, one that nobody can rebuild. Here also is a qualitative change – in this sense too we see the end of Stalinism. No other, still existing bureaucracy in power –

even as mighty as the Chinese bureaucracy – can replace this system. Rather all of them are the remnants of Stalinism (which has ended, but nobody says that it has completely disappeared!) – condemned in the more-or-less near future to the same explosion which finished Stalinism generally. At the international level they do not have any position, influence or the possibility of making any impression on the working-class movement, of establishing a grip over it. Speaking of 'grip', let us remind ourselves of cde. Borovi's words: '... the grip of Stalinism on the working class still exists'. But in the light of our previous analysis the first thing we can say is that Stalinism no longer has this grip and the second is that in this or that country, if such a grip still exists, it is only the fragmentary residue of a recently powerful international ideology, policy and apparatus, a whole system of control over the international working class – which has now ended.

In the main, the question is to know on what ground we consider the separated and isolated states and parties. If we consider them in themselves and/or judge them from external appearances, we could certainly say that Stalinism is not finished. With such a view one could also foresee a rebirth of international Stalinism (after all China has nearly 1,000 million inhabitants). But only on the ground that Stalinism is finished can we understand these states (parties) as remnants of a historically finished system, marching towards an unavoidable explosion and transformation.

Thus cde. Borovi doesn't see a qualitative change in the conditions of the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class, which has been brought about by the end of Stalinism. The immediate political consequence of this false understanding is the strengthening of a wrong conception of our programme, a conception which is already in itself erroneous. He strongly insists that 'Bolshevism against Stalinism' – this has been the essence of the Fourth

International. Is it still true today? Comrade Slaughter suggests an answer: 'no. I do not agree with this. I think there is an urgent necessity to launch a debate on this question.' And later: '...the rebuilding of the Fourth International proceeds in the fight, Bolshevism against dispersed, weakened Stalinism in deadly crisis.' (J. Borovi in his above-quoted text, emphasis in the original.) Does he want to debate this question? Then let us proceed to debate.

The essence of the Fourth International was never constituted by the antagonism between Bolshevism and Stalinism – sharp and important as that certainly was. The Fourth International always defined itself in relation to the international class struggle between world imperialism and the proletariat. Only on this basis and in this framework did the Fourth International oppose and confront Stalinism, as it opposed and confronted all other counter-revolutionary or petty bourgeois comments and organisations – even if Stalinism was the most important one of these organisations. It is enough to study the Transitional Programme. Its very title eloquently states: the tasks of the Fourth International in relation to the death agony of capitalism. Although the fight against Stalinism and Reformism is always present in the pages of this programme, it never assumed such a central, quite exclusive place as cde. Borovi imagines. There is only one chapter on the Soviet Union, which today has become obsolete, and this is understandable. The main problems of humanity – even if it is true that 'the historical crisis of humanity is reduced to that of the revolutionary leadership' – is how to solve the terrible alternative: socialism or barbarism. From this point of view the crucial question of leadership is put forward as the most essential basis of the class struggle, and not as in itself an opposition between Bolshevism and Stalinism. To put it another way: to solve the crisis of leadership we have to develop Marxist policy and organisation for the emancipation of the whole working class. As Trotsky pointed out in his discussion with the American comrades on the Transitional

Programme: 'although it is 'only' an 'action programme' it is, nevertheless, a scientific one '... based on an objective analysis of the objective situation'.

There is no reference at all to Stalinism in the overwhelming sense that cde. Borovi attributes to it. The Fourth International never determined its fight in relation to Stalinism, never adapted its 'essence' (in cde. Borovi's words) to changes in that fight. Here we have another example of an over-estimation of Stalinism, as if it were a mighty, objective and independent force and not an appendage of the world bourgeoisie grown out of an isolated, backward workers' state.

While on the one hand cde. Borovi establishes a direct relationship between Bolshevism and Stalinism – this latter is a degenerated Bolshevism – on the other hand he now dissolves the essence of the whole Fourth International into a fight against Stalinism. How could anyone understand this? Such a totally confused picture is the natural result of his metaphysical and formalist method of thinking.

All these obscure, uncertain and contradictory (non-dialectical!) beliefs and solemn but entirely untrue proclamations on Stalinism involve very dangerous, direct, political consequences. The first one is almost an obsession: for if the essence of the Fourth International is the fight against Stalinism, it must be vital for it to have this enemy, albeit in its deadly crisis. This view overestimates Stalinism and, by the way, underestimates the revolutionary readiness and capacity of the proletariat. The second immediate political result is carelessness, a blindness towards the objective situation, which includes the condition of the international class struggle. Effectively, cde. Borovi embraces both consequences. They motivate his hostility towards the 'new party' orientation as well as his general tendency to sectarianism. Consequently, according to him – and let me draw attention to his own formulations – the present-

day situation has the following characteristics:

(a). '... the reconstruction of the Fourth International still remains the fight against Stalinism and in the framework of what remains from Stalinism' [Let me say that this 'what remains' hardly corresponds to a 'grip' over the working class! _ B.N.]

(b) Then (criticising cde. Slaughter's analysis on the new forces of the working class) he says: "... the problem is that actually I do not see such a real movement for a new workers' party'. Later, he repeats this: 'Where are these workers who "see their struggles not as a thing in itself but as a moment of the socialist revolution?" (J. Borovi: Once more on the "new party" – emphasis in the original.)

And so, we have come full circle...

Dialectical development against Sectarian paralysis

The end of Stalinism deprived the world bourgeoisie of its principal support. The whole counter-revolutionary edifice, based on the international class collaboration provided by Stalinism, has now collapsed. This happened despite the great efforts of the bourgeoisie, as was seen by its attempts to help preserve Gorbachev's regime and Yugoslavian 'unity'. Later, it openly claimed to stand for a new world order – which could not be anything else but a move towards chaos and barbarism – revealing that their attempt to restore Stalinism, or to replace it, is unsuccessful.

But if you affirm that Stalinism still has its grip over the working class; or even if it is simply in a 'deadly' or 'unprecedented crisis', the meaning of this whole change completely escapes one's notice. For it prevents anybody from grasping that the collapse of Stalinism aggravates the crisis of the world bourgeoisie and stops one from understanding the character and depth of this crisis. Yet the increasing crisis of imperialism, and its present aggravation has not only an

economic character flowing from its economic contradictions. Those who don't see the end of Stalinism cannot grasp that now, having lost its main pillar, the social and political crisis of world imperialism is greatly aggravated. It has become a deeper and more generalised political crisis. The content of this deepening is that in the worldwide relation of class forces a shift has taken place in favour of the international proletariat. This objectively positive character of the change remains completely hidden and unknown to those who ignore its qualitative nature.

Unfortunately cde. Borovi cannot see this aggravated crisis of imperialism because he denies that Stalinism is dead. So he refuses to acknowledge this positive shift in international class relationships in favour of the working class. This is why he is so sceptical about the 'new forces' of workers and youth whose appearance is understood by comrade Slaughter. It is this deep scepticism that is behind cde. Borovi's underestimation of the revolutionary spontaneity and capacity of the working class and, at the same time, leads him to overestimate the bureaucracy's strength. This scepticism leads also to a distortion of the real relationship between the classes.

Of course this objective change, this favourable shift, doesn't exclude the fact that at the same time enormous difficulties remain or even arise in the subjective conditions, precisely because international class consciousness lags behind the situation. This is the great contradiction of today's class struggle. We have seen how cde. Borovi likes to invoke the present situation as a 'contradictory' one, opposing this empty formulation to a concrete characterisation. But after having uttered his pompous words, he is not really interested in positively identifying the genuinely opposed elements in such a contradiction. At the very most, he simply mentions, in a banal way, some 'opposites' whose gradual evolution are not

(and cannot be a new product of a dialectical development of the dynamic of reality but remain only the simple regular succession of already-existing 'factors'. Thus the living contradictions of reality are turned into repeated banalities. Or, to put it another way: the crisis of imperialism is 'deeper'; Stalinism is in a 'deadly' crisis, the situation is 'contradictory' because of Stalinism's grip over the working class. But it is not even clear what are the contradictions in cde. Borovi's 'contradictory situation' other than some sterile, contrasting facts.

So, instead of understanding that we should turn openly towards the working class, cde. Borovi insists upon the dangers of such a turn as if we were in a square bristling with bayonets, surrounded by massive hostile forces. In place of new forces' he suspiciously detects only inappropriate, adverse or even alien elements. 'Where are these new forces?' – this is his repeated question. Thus he came close to seeing an adversary in the trade union delegation from Tuzla – whose tour in France and Britain proved a considerable success, and has made a contribution to strengthening the international solidarity of the working class. But for a while cde. Borovi was paralysed by the fact that members of this Tuzla delegation declared themselves in favour of the 'market economy'.

But in the countries recently liberated from the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy everybody is more or less for the 'market economy'. In the consciousness of workers, peasants and intellectuals the state ownership and the planned economy became identical to hateful Stalinism, while the 'market economy' means for them everything which the working class obtained in the most advanced countries – known as the gains of the 'welfare state': high wages (in comparison to those in Eastern countries), social gains, democratic rights. Only on the basis of painful experiences do the masses in the ex-Soviet Union and Easter Europe now begin to recognise the real

content of the market economy. Even so, many people still think that in their countries a kind of 'savage capitalism' is developing and they reject this in favour of a really good' one. In my polemic against Garmendia's position, two years ago, I tried to explain this contradiction – one expression of the low level of class consciousness due to past Stalinist domination – but obviously cde. Borovi didn't understand any of this and in his pragmatic everyday work in Hungary he tried to adapt his sectarian view to reality. But how can we convince these people except by working in close contact with them engaged in a common fight on a principled basis? How to separate them from bourgeois ideas and policies? ...Exactly how?. ... There is no answer from the Sectarians.

This sectarian behaviour is unable to define any alternative to the 'new party' orientation. In actual fact, those who cannot see the favourable situation created by the death of Stalinism, and so also do not see the 'new forces' appearing in this situation, are condemned to paralysis, to conservative behaviour. They cannot oppose any other line to that of the 'new party' orientation. The sectarians, like cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani, even if they are speaking of an 'entirely new' situation of a deeper crisis of Stalinism, are totally powerless in drawing any adequate conclusion from their own analysis of the situation. cde. Borovi already clearly formulated this dead-end in his first paper: 'We have to change, we are in the process to change. The discussion is not on that. But how and what to change? In my opinion these changes go today through the type of fight we have with the convoy and not by a proposal for a vague "new party"

Is there any need to comment? Let me here make only one point, to which I shall return. Stripped of any alternative orientation, the Sectarians are reduced to paralysis and negative criticisms.

The metaphysical way of thinking which sustains this sectarianism distorts our strategic line: that the

reconstruction of the Fourth International proceeds through that of the working-class movement and that the latter is possible only through the reconstruction of the Fourth International. Here we have a dialectical relationship between the working-class movement and its Marxist vanguard as well as of their inter-dependent development. The 'new party' orientation in Britain, as I understand it, is an attempt to apply our strategy concretely in this country by a dialectically unified – i.e contradictory – answer to the present stage of development and that of our party. It is possible to launch and achieve the new party precisely because of the present favourable conditions brought about by the end of Stalinism. The 'new party' line corresponds precisely to this new situation aiming as it does to raise the consciousness of the working class concretely at a higher, a political level, so that the contradiction can be overcome, resolved at a higher level. (In Hegel's expression: 'aufhebung'.)

But for a sectarian it is enough to repeat from time to time our strategic line which, in this manner, becomes an empty formulation. Thus cde. Borovi doesn't establish any bridge between this general truth as a method and a goal, on the one hand, and the present-day situation, on the other. It seems that for him this reconstruction is not a dialectical process going through various stages but only a kind of sudden transformation, a single act. Or at least if a process were involved it would be valid for the workers' movement but not for the party. Even in this case we are asked by cde. Borovi to wait for a time when the workers themselves will ask us massively to create a new workers' party. Please don't do anything before the rank and file ask you to, is his erudite warning.

It is quite embarrassing to recall that not such a long time ago – for example at the time of the second congress of Workers International – cde Borovi was ready to consider a

'new party' in Britain. Now, it's got to be one thing or the other: either he doesn't take it seriously, or he thinks of it as if it only involves a change of name. Perhaps for him the party, as the highest expression of working-class consciousness is already in existence; it needs only a gradual increase in its numbers, in its capacity and its influence, changing its name accordingly. Obviously he never understood it as a fusion of the vanguard of the class with the 'vanguard of the vanguard'. These two 'vanguards' – assuming they actually have a place on the sectarians' map – must have their separate lives until the point is reached where members of the 'less developed one' reach the level of the 'more developed', as a natural product of the equally natural expansion of the latter. This over-simplified, schematic and mechanical view, one that so often goes hand-in-hand with sectarianism, simply neglects ... life. Theoretically, it separates the development of the workers' movement from that of the party – in our main orientation both are bound together in unity – by conceding that the first may be a dialectical one but the second has to pass through only a gradual evolution.

Let us suppose, however, that cde. Borovi is against the 'new party' orientation because, as he occasionally says, the conditions are not yet ripe for it. Yet he never examines these conditions seriously, neither the problems of the objective development of the class struggle, nor those of the unions, parties and the mass movements. Instead of such analysis which would at least show a certain seriousness, he launches the question: 'where are these new forces who want such a new party?' This theatrical question put forward evidently as a serious argument against such a fantastic proposal as a new party, lacking any support of the 'rank and file'! ... but cde. Borovi has no chance: he finds himself against the opinion of Trotsky, who already had to answer precisely the same question in relation to his proposal concerning a Labour Party in the USA in 1938. In a second discussion on this matter with several leaders of American SWP

(31st May 1938), Trotsky replied to some comrades who said that there was no proof for any wide backing for such a Labour Party.

'I cannot judge whether sentiment for a labor party exists or not because I have no personal observations or impressions; but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of the trade unions or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a political party... We can measure the mood by action only if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that the objective situation is absolutely decisive.' (Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme for the Socialist Revolution* Pathfinder, New York, 1975, p. 163.

And a little later:

'I say here what I said about the whole programme of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks that are determined by objective facts and not by psychology. The same is absolutely correct for this specific question on the labor party. If the class struggle is not crushed, replaced by demoralisation, then the movement must find a new channel, and this channel is political. That is the fundamental argument in favor of this slogan.

'We claim to have Marxism or scientific socialism. What does "scientific socialism" signify in reality? It signifies that the party which represents this social science departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and with demands adequate to the objective situation, and only after this can we adapt these demands and slogans to the given mentality of the masses. But to begin with this mentality as the fundamental fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventuristic policy.' (*ibid*, pp. 163-64).

Comment would be superfluous.

Let us note only that here too, as in the question of Stalinism, cde. Borovi starts from everyday facts in their vulgar immediacy. I shall return later to this dull pragmatism. But now we have to summarise briefly, the main elements of those objective conditions which determine the orientation towards a 'new party'.

It is usually taken for granted today that world imperialism and specifically its British section is in a deep crisis which even in the recent period of so-called economic growth or recovery not only remains unable to overcome its fundamental crisis and resolve the great evils flowing from it, but this alleged recovery itself became the generator of this self-same crisis. This means that instead of a general boom, we will have to face (in the more or less near future) an aggravation of the crisis, an exacerbation of economic and social contradictions. The spread of barbarism in the form of the savage war of extermination in ex-Yugoslavia, or in Chechnya, in Rwanda and Burundi, etc., the spread of fascism everywhere, or the bourgeoisie's permanent inability to unify Europe where almost each step made by it for this purpose transforms itself into that of its disintegration, indicates clearly this universal trend. In these conditions, as Trotsky said, the trade unions '... on the basis of declining capitalism (already in 1938 in the USA!) ... are constrained to turn towards political action'

Today even more, when Stalinism is dead, its British party too is decimated. This aggravates the general crisis, for the workers' movement cannot be domesticated as before by this counter-revolutionary force. Besides, the Labour Party bureaucracy, adapting itself more and more to the ruling class, tries to free itself from all its 'constraints' which – even formally – link it to the working class, and to socialism. The Soviet bureaucracy and its peers 'liberated' themselves from the 'constraints' of the workers' state. By

doing so, they have lost their Stalinist 'soul'. The Labour bureaucracy risks the same fate: the final cutting of the last, weak and slender thread which links it to the working class.

Here we have to examine the discussion on the famous 'Clause Four' which is developing in Britain and in the pages of Workers Press. Its importance lies less in the discussion itself but more in the broader perspective of the class struggle, the above-mentioned move of the parties and unions, the gathering together of the working class. Concerning this problem too, cde. Slaughter tried to explain in Workers Press, what is at stake in the Labour leaders' aim of removing Clause Four for nationalisation from the party programme. In the discussion on these explanations and on the party's move for the defence of Clause Four we can observe a whole range of views and conceptions: from sincere worry of some comrades and workers, as for example cde. Nick Brown, about a possible slide towards the Labour bureaucracy, to nonsensical sectarian rantings. What a pity that comrades Pirani and Borovi didn't give their verdict on this important question by a comprehensive explanation!

Be that as it may, the sectarians don't understand the meaning of nationalisation, its relation to the class struggle. Or if they do understand it intellectually, in practice they deliberately position themselves outside of it as 'fine' observers in their splendid isolation. But the workers cannot isolate themselves from the class struggle: they have to take part for or against nationalisation, ie. for or against the suppression of Clause Four. Certainly our nationalisation programme is completely different from that of the Labour Party and all other bureaucracies. We reject the payment of any compensation and buying back. What is much more important, our nationalisation will be, must be, carried out, not by the state apparatus, but by the workers themselves in and through their mobilisation, through their committees or councils!

Nevertheless, all nationalisations weaken the bourgeois class, or at least are the expression of its weakness. Even if the ruling class recovers it by its own state which nationalises, the class enemy accedes to partial nationalisations only in order to save what it considers to be essential: state power: So nationalisation is above all a class question, however its is carried out. The high compensation paid for eventually unprofitable branches of enterprises do not change the class character of nationalisation. Such compensation only makes it easier for the bourgeoisie to accept this temporary retreat in exchange for a greater loss. In Workers Press (1 April) Terry Brotherstone put this question in an even finer context. He explained how Clause Four was the result of a compromise between the working class and its reformist leaders, who acted on behalf of the ruling class.

If nationalisation is not a class question how can we understand Thatcher's privatisation programme and the whole liberal wave in her tracks all over the world? It is so profoundly a class question that it stands higher than the limits of a single party. Opposing the defence of the nationalisation programme, the sectarians reveal themselves as neutral observers in the fight against it, if they reject the extension of this struggle.

Of course, they reply, everybody should wage a battle against privatisation, but, they continue, nobody should be allowed to confuse our party with that of the Labour bureaucracy. Yet without in any way making such a confusion, if some bureaucrats are ready to defend nationalisation, why on earth should we not fight alongside even them? Only obstinate sectarians can reject such a fight.

Some comrades, like cde. Nick Brown, are honestly perturbed that a struggle in defence of Clause Four could raise illusions about the bureaucracy's or the Labour Party's capacity for genuine socialist, working-class policies. Raising this problem, Nick is absolutely right: such an

opportunistic danger exists (coming precisely from sectarians who, at the first sign of self-adapting bureaucrats, surrender in front of them and declare that a victory has been won.) But a timorous opinion based on illusions puts a brake in practice on the fight for the new party – even unwillingly – which objectively helps the sectarians, independently of the enormous gap between them and every disturbed party member. On the other hand, far from creating illusions, defence of Clause Four helps to disillusion all those workers who have such illusions. We do know that nobody can prevent the Labour Party from having a more and more bourgeois policy. But the great mass of workers inside and outside the Labour party are not yet convinced of this. Our task is not to get lost in vain and futile quarrels with them on this problem, but to undertake a common fight and go together in order to help them to emancipate themselves from the treacherous Labour bureaucracy's leadership. They will be convinced only in that way.

Here we get back to the new party. Not only are the moves in both these cases exactly the same, but the themes, the content are organisationally linked, they complement one another. We propose to all disillusioned workers and Labour Party members, even 'bureaucrats'! to form a new party which achieves the aim that cannot be imposed on the Labour leadership.

As a whole, our commitment to a new party is a general orientation. It is an axis. The fight waged around it and for it arranges all our interventions in the class struggle. It links one to the other: the struggle towards and in the unions, towards (eventually in) the Labour Party, towards the ex-Communist Party members, etc. as well as unmasking the centrist leaderships by winning their honest members. This tactic is at the same time our overall strategy in Britain – perhaps also elsewhere – over the coming months or years for reconstructing the Fourth International.

The most important, decisive problem concerning the new party

is, without doubt, its programme (an action programme for us, the programme of this new party) and its international character. For this reason the most urgent and considerable task seems to me to be the working out of such an action programme incorporating the experiences and lessons as well as the aims of all struggles waged in a more or less separated way (against pit closures, WAB, against racism and fascism, in defence of various pensions and rights etc. etc.) ending up with the workers' government, the natural purpose of the new party. An overall discussion must follow with all those who will join with us, in the new party. And it seems to me consistent with such a programme that the new party belongs to the Workers International which is itself a stage in the movement towards the reconstruction of the Fourth International. It is true that all these tremendous moves based on the crisis of imperialism and the end of Stalinism disorientate and confuse the working class. But at the same time, and this is much more important, they force it to free itself from the treacherous bureaucracy's leadership – and oblige us to take this leadership.

A gigantic world-wide re-grouping of the working class is taking place under generally favourable conditions. Despite the great delay and dangers resulting from its unadapted, delayed consciousness, the decisive side in this contradiction is the first one! We have to base our policy on this situation, taking our inspiration from (and on the basis of) this colossal move for the conquest of leadership of this proletariat. In these historically decisive circumstances the principal danger is the conservative, narrow-minded sectarianism which, willingly or unwillingly, under the cover of defending sterile 'principles', tries to isolate us from this movement, or at least condemns us to drag behind it. If we measure accurately today's objective and subjective conditions, we cannot escape from the duty of drawing adequate conclusions from it, to bring an overall answer to it. The turn towards a new party in Britain is a correct answer that

corresponds to that situation.

But the sectarians have no answer. They put forward only their pointless and pretentious, stupid and negative criticisms. Thus cde. Borovi who – together with cde. Pirani – doesn't even know what Stalinism is, as we have seen on several occasions, including his reaction to the Liaison Committee's document. Nor is cde. Borovi familiar with our history. It seems he is writing a great deal, without: reading anything. So he doesn't seem either to study Lenin's arguments against sectarians in Left Wing Communism or at the Second Congress of the Comintern. Trotsky's explanations against the sectarians of the entry tactic in the 1930s are equally unknown to him, as well as the whole discussion on the Labour Party for the USA in 1938. How could we reach any other conclusion after reading his astonishing howlers against cde. Slaughters explanations? Cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani want to teach everybody, without learning anything. Strange ambitions!

For a class policy against ultimatism, dim 'workerism' and empty boastfulness

I have already quoted above cde. Borovi's odd proposal: instead of preparing a new party, it would be better to organise convoys for Bosnia. This only alternative opposed to the 'new party orientation is in itself lamentable. In the first place these are complementary and not opposed activities. Second, and mainly because our international campaign is opposed here to a general, party-building orientation which includes and politically centralises all campaigns. This doesn't perturb cde. Borovi who uses the WAB campaign – reduced here to its final organisational form, the convoy – as a means of dissolving the highest political expression of the development of class struggle. But if we are at this point, we must also speak of the convoys. This is of the utmost importance, because it throws a light on an important feature of the sectarian's political action.

In accordance with his attacks on the new party orientation, last summer cde. Borovi proposed an important resolution to the International Secretariat concerning our Bosnian campaign. Its importance was underlined by cde. Borovi himself who did not hesitate to qualify it as a new stage in our campaign. So, it had to be taken seriously and discussed thoroughly also by the IEC. If cde. Borovi really thought that the rules of democratic centralist functioning of leadership must be observed – as he proclaims on every occasion against the leadership (of which he is a member!) – he would have asked for a wide-ranging discussion. Instead of such a democratic manner – to which in other respects he is always vehemently referring against cde. Dot Gibson – he put forward his proposal, surprising the Secretariat, who voted for this apparently very ‘worker-oriented’, ‘workers’ democracy’ resolution. It was this hasty, thoughtless hurry, concerning such an important matter, that I immediately criticised. Then cde. Borovi urged the IS to transform this resolution into reality. But some comrades of the IEC were against it. I myself found it quite absurd. Cde. Bob Myers, principally responsible for the whole Bosnian campaign, was against it, characterising cde. Borovi’s resolution as a sectarian one. How to neglect his opinion? In this case cde. Borovi was not so anxious about the ‘democratic functioning’ of leadership. Why this excitation and hurry to implement this so-called ‘new stage’ when several members of the IEC, including the comrade mainly responsible of the campaign, were against it?

Before answering this interesting question let us examine the resolution itself. It maintained, in substance, that given the great importance of the black market we cannot have confidence that the union bureaucrats will avoid it, assuming that they are not directly involved in it. Therefore the distribution of goods delivered by Workers Aid must be put under workers’ control. So the principal task, from today onwards would be the organisation of workers’ control in Tuzla in a straight line by the Workers Aid convoy. Thus the latter’s whole

activity would reach a 'new stage' by the immediate organisation of the Tuzla workers.

At first sight this idea is a very confused one. Obviously Cde. Borovi doesn't understand what Marxists call workers' control. It seems that he has never understood that at a certain (high) level of mass mobilisation the working class tends to organise, and effectively settle its control over production and distribution by its own elected organs that spring up in and during the very same mobilisation. The belief that anyone could replace this class mobilisation and its instruments by some individuals reveals not only a silly aberration but also a very dangerous view. On what class-political basis should we select these individuals, separated in this context from the class struggle, without even knowing their language? Must those who shout the loudest be co-opted? If not, who else? Here we see a serious perversion of the very idea of workers' control, and the great risk that it will be discredited in the eyes of the working class. By the same act, intervening in the day-to-day fight from the outside, we would have substituted ourselves for the Bosnian revolutionaries.

More important is that an appeal for such 'workers' control' and its organisation would have meant that the convoys, indeed the whole WAB campaign impose stringent conditions on their international solidarity. Cde. Borovi's proposal implied that we are only too ready to help you, Tuzla workers, provided that you break away from your leaders (the bureaucrats!) and create, with us, your 'workers' control'. This is an ultimatum to the workers of Tuzla, linking elementary workers' solidarity to an important condition: they must change their leaders! How shameful! Cde. Borovi doesn't understand that we don't place conditions on our solidarity and help for oppressed peoples led even by petty-bourgeois leaders or governments. He should read the whole Marxist literature on this subject. Here for example is what Trotsky wrote on the conflict between Ethiopia and Italy, (17th July 1935):

'Far too little attention is paid to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by our sections, especially by the French section. This question is highly important, first for its own sake, and second from the standpoint of the turn by the Comintern. Of course, we are for the defeat of Italy and the victory of Ethiopia, and therefore we must do everything possible to hinder by all available means support to Italian imperialism by the other imperialist powers, and at the same facilitate the delivery of armaments, etc. to Ethiopia as best we can.

'However, we want to stress the point that this fight is directed not against fascism, but against imperialism. When war is involved, for us it is not a question of who is "better," the Negus or Mussolini; it is a question of the relationship of classes and the fight of an underdeveloped nation for independence against imperialism' (L. D. Trotsky, The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict' Writings, 1935-36, New York, Pathfinder, p.41.)

Trotsky wanted to send weapons even to the Negus without calling the soldiers to organise a so-called 'soldiers' committee'! I think Trotsky was right against cde. Borovi's ultimatum, so I follow Trotsky and criticise cde. Borovi. Look at Trotsky's articles in which he unconditionally defended Mexico in 1938, including its 'courageous president' Cardenas who nationalised the oil industry against British imperialism. Trotsky did so without putting conditions on the way and methods of this nationalisation. (These articles are highlighted today by the odious blackmail of the American bourgeoisie offering its financial 'support' to Mexico on condition that the oil industry be leased back to it. Cde. Borovi's comparison to the approach of the Bolsheviks to Kerensky at the time of Kornilov's attack is of no relevance whatsoever, as his own long quotation from Trotsky's work proves. (J. Borovi's letter to IS, 29 January 1995.) It only puts cde. Borovi in a ridiculous position.

On the other hand, in his hurry cde. Borovi didn't see that we

are part of this campaign. A decisive one, but only a part of it, in which we organise together with various organisations and individuals. Among them we find many unions which participate with their leaders (awful bureaucrats, according to cde. Borovi), We cannot impose on them this so- called 'new stage' of the campaign, that so exercises cde. Borovi's brains. Here too we have to deal with the same ultimatism which we observe in relation to the Tuzla workers. Yet, given their common basis, ultimatism is a consistent expression of sectarianism in action. Both have a view and behaviour which ignores all mediations between the starting point and the final one – as we have seen in the 'new party' question. They know only the straight line and the colours black and white, thus excluding all dialectical intermediary situations as well as the colour grey. They are both equally nurtured by a harmful political impatience towards classes and individuals

But above all, this would-be 'new stage' resolution was intended, even unwillingly, to change the political line of the Workers Aid to Bosnia campaign. According to provide the necessary material help, we wanted to restore workers' international solidarity as one of the principal elements of class consciousness almost entirely destroyed mainly by the Stalinist but also the Reformist leaderships. We undertook this common international action which links workers of capitalist countries to those who, cut off from them in the past, are emerging from long Stalinist domination, thus re-establishing a real internationalism, for so long stifled by Stalinism. We decided to reconstruct this international workers' solidarity as political and moral support for the Tuzla workers to defend their country – and all ex-Yugoslav peoples – against the Stalino-nationalist and fascist Serbian forces and their imperialist UN-NATO masters. We wanted to call the international working class to rise up as a class against world imperialism and fascism as the only real help and solution for Bosnia, the whole ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

We worked patiently for this goal and we had some important, although very uneven and partial successes: among Bosnian workers, international youth, workers, intellectuals and also some unions. At the time of the visit of a union delegation from Tuzla in France and Britain we were able to mobilise important sectors of workers and their unions. Finally, we are preparing for July a considerable international working-class convoy in which the unions are directly involved, even its preparation is taken in hand by them. This is something we could not say two years, or even six months ago.

This extraordinary political development was directly threatened by cde. Borovi's 'new stage' torpedo. His resolution would have changed the axis of the campaign: from the construction of international class solidarity into a local organisational fight. He cannot say that this so-called 'workers' control' would have been only a complementary action. Cde. Borovi insisted upon the high significance of his proposal. In fact it was intended to replace our campaign. Its achievement would have certainly prevented the organisation of a trip by any union delegation from Tuzla! Such an adventure would have opposed some Tuzla workers to their union leaders not on the most important political basis but on a secondary, humanitarian aid one. It would have opposed also the union leaders (bureaucrats.!) in all countries (nevertheless called on for help by cde. Borovi – among others) to this 'workers' control' which would have stood up against their fellow-'bureaucrats' in Tuzla. In these conditions how could we address allworkers – including their elected leaders!" – and try to reconstruct international workers' solidarity?? Clearly, this resolution threatened to break the united front opposed to fascism and imperialism. It's enough to put these two orientations side by side to reject cde. Borovi's line.

That was how the IEC reacted – by withdrawing it. Its first decision at the 26-27 November 1994 meeting was: 'The main line of the Workers Aid for Bosnia report was agreed

unanimously. This supersedes the International Secretariat's resolution, "For a New Stage in the Fight of Workers Aid for Bosnia"'. This was the end of cde. Borovi's resolution. But not the end of its history ...

Let me add some remarks on an important feature of cde. Borovi's ultimatist line in close relation to his opposition to the 'new party' orientation. This is his insistence on the necessity of addressing 'real' workers, the 'rank-and-file', on the antagonism between 'ordinary workers' and their leaders, between organised workers and the supposed 'true', 'immaculate' ones. Reading this is like reading Gorter, leader of international sectarianism during the early years of the Third International. I recommend Cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani read him – and also Lenin's Left Wing Communism... Because the sectarians were always particularly attracted by 'true' workers against frightful bureaucrats or petty-bourgeois intellectuals. They are fascinated by 'true' workers, the best elements for them being those who in their majority are not yet contaminated by an organisation. If they deign to look for the organised ones, they fall into downright rank-and-fileism. We can see it in its palpable expression when cde. Cde. Borovi asks how many rank-and-file workers are for a new party, making his approval of it dependent on this 'voice of people', or when he is looking for 'real' workers in the streets of Tuzla to organise his 'workers' control'.

The main trouble with this 'workerism' flowing directly from a pragmatic approach – and it was always so in the history of the workers' movement – is that it encourages workers to desert the mass organisations led by bureaucrats, more exactly, to avoid the everyday as well as the long-term fight against them, leaving the masses under their leadership, bearing in mind that a vehement hue and cry or even valid but fruitless assertions are hardly enough to defeat them. Such sectarian 'workerism' or 'rank-and-fileism' is in fact an abdication from the struggle against them, only a fig leaf to

conceal opportunism towards the very same bureaucrats.

Last August cde. Pavlovic also criticised the French Workers Aid, asking the question: "lurking sectarianism in Workers Aid?" He noticed that this majority (of French Workers Aid accuses Olivia of activism and 'forgetting' (?) the proletarian line (workers' control!). because of her collection of money from the teachers' union for a Bosnian school! He remarked that: '...even our own comrade Janos was against giving merchandise to the school heads and other bureaucrats!' Afterwards cde. Borovi rejected this critique saying that it '... constituted the "foundation" of the polemics against a so-called line of workers' control ... I would like to know on what basis... the comrades can prove the existence of this so-called "line"?' It is interesting that he raises the question of 'workers' control' by defending it, in relation to sectarianism. As to the question that if 'the comrades can prove the existence of this so-called "line"?' I consider that even on the one issue of 'workers' control' the preceding pages constitute a proof of the existence of another line, whether ode. Borovi is conscious of it or not. We have had many discussions in the leadership and at meetings at which cde. Borovi always protests against 'accusations' about his 'so-called different line'. Since then, he himself declared, for example at the WRP congress, that 'two conceptions' exist. Anyway, if he didn't see in the past or doesn't see it now, it is no proof of his clear-sightedness on this question

As mentioned above, the great majority of the IC (in November 1994) voted for the Report on Bosnia, prepared by cde. Myers, in opposition to the resolution on 'workers' control' previously voted, wrongly, by the IS. Two months later (29 January 1995) cde. Borovi wrote a letter – in many respects a very interesting letter to the Secretariat. It deserves a long analysis but, unfortunately, I can here pay attention to only some aspects of it.

In this letter he attacked the Secretariat, in reality cde Dot

Gibson, because among other things '... I have not been consulted if I agree or not with the manner the IEC has been presented by the IS.' Obviously this comrade waited for a request presented by cde. Dot Gibson to him [cde. Borovi] asking his permission to draft this document. Reading this, you think you are dreaming! Apparently he is unable to discern the difference between the party and a discussion club. Should I explain that such outgrowth of personality – not to say selfishness – is not exactly what we know as salutary modesty in our ranks? Anyway, the striking fact is that he rejected the majority's decision and continued, not only to maintain his opinion, to which he has a right, but to agitate, jumping at all occasions (or without occasion) to attack the majority decision, preventing the comrades from working, creating suspicions and tensions. The worst thing is that he believed that he was fighting whereas in fact he was doing the opposite

Then he explains in his letter how and why he doesn't accept the resolution of the IEC which 'supersedes' the IS (his) resolution. His argumentation is highly enlightening. We learn in it that '...for me the problem is that we don't have an orientation on WABand we lost a very precious time (and money) with very few results. This is the problem. The following weeks events show how this method of working is fruitless' (emphasis in original). As we know, the 'following weeks' were not exactly 'fruitless' because they prepared the Tuzla union delegation's visit with its great success. I didn't see, after this visit, when and how cde. Borovi corrected his 'fruitless' prophecy? He passed it over, as usual.

Everybody should note also in his words the continuous fight for the application of our line brought only the loss of 'precious time (and money) with very few results'. Here is an impressive example of what I meant above by political impatience. (Cde. Borovi then wrote an enthusiastic article on this union delegation's visit (horrible bureaucrats!) to France, which is in striking contradiction to his resolution

and previous battles. If, as it is a little bit understandable, he doesn't say anything in this article on how and why he changed his mind, the elementary honesty would have inspired him to advise the IS on this important change. Or should cde. Borovi have two different lines: one for inner-party discussions and another for the public? This kind of schizophrenia cannot be accepted, previous mistakes – creating some trouble – must be clearly stated.)

The most astonishing (underlined) statement is that, according to him, we 'don't have an orientation on WAB'! Evidently he regards our political line as useless claptrap, a line that arouses no feeling in him because, perhaps, it cannot be immediately converted into a direct organisational action with 'real' workers. More than one year's work – in which he actively participated – was not enough for cde. Borovi to discover our political line in relation to Bosnia. Referring to our resolution he goes farther by writing in his letter: 'What is this "main line", which is still not written two months after the November IEC? Does the comrades really think that we can "supersede" a resolution of the IS by an unwritten "main line"?' Is it necessary to add anything to this astounding question? One can only shrug one's shoulders... Probably for this reason he was, so to speak, obliged in this 'vacuum' to propose his resolution ...with the aim to deepen the independent apparition [appearance?] of the WI in Bosnia'. Undoubtedly such a 'deepening' would have been not only 'independent' but quite opposite to all others. Cde. Borovi does not yet understand that we can and must deepen this 'independent apparition' [appearance?] first of all politically, on the ground of the international working-class solidarity opposed to nationalists, fascists, Serbian (and other) forces and their imperialist supporters, as well as all those bourgeois (and bureaucrats) who are (or who are moving to) their side! That is the sense of what Marx and Engels wrote: '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 the movement.' In the movement and not outside of it, or opposed to it!

After the majority resolution cde. Borovi continued to be agitated at every moment for his rejected resolution, as if the majority decision were non-existent, because his Highness found it wrong! A curious conception of democratic centralism ... But how to convince him? Everybody can read all documents written by him (and he writes much) but nobody can find anywhere even half a page which could be considered as a reflection or as the expression of some doubts, mediations in response to the arguments developed by other comrades. In most cases he doesn't deign to answer on the precise problem – which makes it very difficult to discuss. After a painful and fruitless discussion at the November 1994 session of the IEC he wrote a quarrelsome letter, but never showed any sign of having considered the arguments opposed to his resolution. One cannot think of any other reason for this behaviour than an unbridled belief that he must always be right. What else could motivate cde. Borovi's arrogance – an arrogance which is so manifest in all of his letters, so evident in his discussions, one that sometimes reaches an unbearable degree, as we saw at the last WRP congress or at the last session of the IEC. Moderation or restraint certainly will not suffocate him. Here is the reason why he was in such a hurry to pass his resolution into reality, while neglecting cde. Myers' opinion, without a proper discussion by the IEC on this matter.

His papers and letters contain plenty of criticisms, advice and lessons given to comrades: it's no good forming a new party in Britain; how to build the WRP; how to strengthen this party's work; Workers Press is no good; how to improve it, and so on and so forth. In general all advice must be welcomed. But groundless criticism and pretentious lessons become unbearable arrogance if one looks at the teacher's own record. Over the long years he has been in France as a member of the

international leadership, we have never had the chance to read a single word of cde. Borovi on the following very important subjects: What are the conditions of party-building in France? How should we orientate the building of the party in France, along what kind of strategic line? How can we launch, even a small and limited paper in France? How to recruit new members for the Wl and to grow beyond our (two?) comrades in France? And, without making mischief, I could also add: how to prepare 'workers' control' – precisely in France? He never wrote anything, neither has he proposed or said a single word concerning party-building in France! Isn't it a somewhat inadequate achievement for so worried a party-builder – in Britain and Tuzla?... When cde. Dot Gibson wrote to him in reply to his criticism on the supposed paralysis of the leadership concerning Bosnia, that 'There is nothing to stop you sending in a report, political explanation and discussion piece', cde. Borovi answered: 'This is not serious'... I repeat: is it necessary to comment?

Unfortunately, the pretension and arrogance know no bounds; they exceed every limit, venturing in all unknown lands. That is how cde. Borovi made his excursion into political economy. How surprised I was to discover a letter to Workers Press with his critical remarks on cde Pilling's article on world economy. What had got into him? I asked myself, being well aware of his unpreparedness on this question. It is as if I had written, for example, a treatise on marine biology. Having read these critical notes (Workers Press 21 January 1995), I felt embarrassed for him. It would be hard to commit more errors in so short a letter.

Cde. Bob Archer, then cde. Pilling himself, finally Richard Farnetti (author of a very useful and interesting book on the decline of British economy: Le declin de l'economie britannique de Victoria a Thatcher, Paris, 1991 pp. 354) have already answered Borovi's pitiful letter. I agree with them and don't want to repeat their observations. So, let me make

only a few comments.

First of all, the strange move of comrade Borovi. Cde. Pilling is, as everybody knows, an outstanding Marxist economist having important contributions on his record in the form of many books and articles on political economy and economic history. But we don't know cde. Borovi's books or articles on economy. And for good reason! Of course one cannot know everything This is not a crime, not even a mistake. But if cde. Borovi, reading cde. Pilling's article, had some doubts and would have wanted to establish the truth on this subject, and did not wish to discuss merely for discussion's sake, or to prove his personal capacity in the eyes of the public, he would have done what everybody on such occasions would have done: written a letter to cde. Pilling asking him for more clarification. Choosing the path of public criticism in Workers Press, cde. Borovi unavoidably appeared as a teacher or corrector in a field he doesn't know. At the same time, he exposed himself to harsh, even ferocious criticisms. But who is responsible for that?

The second comment concerns the method of discussion. Cde. Borovi 'appreciates' cde. Pilling's article, then declares its 'one-sidedness' and introduces Lenin's polemics against Kautsky's opinion (more exactly what cde. Borovi thinks to be Kautsky's opinion.) He never criticises cde. Pilling directly. He is 'only' speaking in the same short letter of cde. Pilling's 'one-sidedness' and Kautsky's faults. Nobody could say that he attacks cde. Pilling directly. Even less, because he allows that 'Perhaps' he evokes'..the old Kautskyist theory' with its reformist and ex-Stalinist defenders. By the way: there are no Stalinists any more?) This method must be condemned. It avoids direct confrontation of ideas while linking a comrade to the worst opportunist by an 'innocent' insinuation.

Thirdly, cde. Borovi is heavily mistaken about the subject of the article. Obviously he supposes it is an article about

international speculation and not what is today called the 'globalisation' of capitalism of which speculation is only an aspect.

He is even more mistaken about the axis of Lenin's criticism on Kautsky and this latter's real opinion. The main dispute between them was not about a supposed ultra-imperialism without national conflicts (Kautsky), against which Lenin would have opposed an absolute inability of capitalism '... to emancipate itself from national boundaries'. Lenin opposed Kautsky because this latter tried to eliminate the inner contradictions of imperialism, dreaming about a peaceful capitalism not 'simply' between strong and weak nations, as cde Borovi thinks, but first of all between monopolies which, in their competition are not determined by national boundaries (even if these borders are obstacles for them.) Cde. Borovi's misunderstanding about what Lenin (and Kautsky) really said leads him to overestimate the national limitations of capitalism. He writes: '... it is not the speculators or the multinationals which predominate but the fight of the national bourgeoisie of each imperialist country for a new division of the markets'. But what really determines the drive of these national bourgeoisies? Certainly not a national feeling, neither some 'national' monopolies. The move for the European unification and its failure by the bourgeoisie are determined by the complex development, concentration and fight of the monopolies (most of them international) and not the nations' contradictory tendencies. If this fight takes the form of national oppositions, one cannot take for the content what is only the form. Briefly, cde. Borovi doesn't see the international concentration and centralisation of capital with its inner contradictions but only nations fighting against each another. In reality, he doesn't agree with the analysis of globalisation, i.e. the growing concentration and centralisation at a world level, which seems to him to be one-sided. He opposes the inner contradictions (but only in their national form) to counterbalance globalisation's 'one-

sidedness'. This is the same anti-dialectical view that we have seen concerning Stalinism's end which he wanted to replace with the phrase 'contradictory situation'. It is not surprising that he was able to write in his letter of 29 January: 'In this discussion the IC could hear, from a warm supporter of the (Bob Myers) resolution the incredible affirmation: Dialectic is one-sided'. (Underlined by cde. Borovi.) All these things are far from flattering for our teacher's knowledge of economics or of dialectics.

Moreover, cde. Borovi didn't understand cde. Pilling's article which concretely points out that this 'increasing globalisation of capital ... far from creating the conditions for a smoothly operating world economy, as some day-dreamers hope, was itself a response to the intensifying contradictions of the capitalist world economy.' (Workers Press, 17 December 1994) Analysing the globalisation development, which cde. Borovi seems to deny or neglect, cde. Pilling very clearly states on several occasions in the same article that 'imperialism, in its own way, unites world economy while at the same time breaking it up'.

So, against what and whom exactly is cde. Borovi quarrelling?

It is difficult to give an answer because he never replied to his critics. He didn't react to cde. Archer's valuable remarks on the world-wide character of imperialist economy. After cde. Pilling's observations noting also the non-scientific, non-Marxist feature of his criticism, cde. Borovi sent an angry letter (Workers Press 18 March 1995) protesting against cde. Pilling's description of his method. But not a single word on the matter of the discussion! He promises only that 'I'll try to contribute to this discussion in the future too.' When? I am really curious to know. Even more now after R. Farnetti's letter (Workers Press 1 April 1995) when, instead of a reply he ran to cry on cde. Slaughter's shoulder, complaining that Workers Press gives space to a letter which accuses a party member to be "nearly a slanderer"! How awful!

But where is the answer to the many criticisms on the subject of his letter? Once again there is no answer at all. Here, solemnly, in front of all comrades I challenge him to answer his critics. Please, give a straight answer on the matter without humming and hawing about 'insults'. Will cde. Borovi reply, perhaps, that I push him and sharpen contradictions?...

On democratic centralism

It is absolutely necessary, finally, to deal with democratic centralism as a substantial and organic part of Marxist theory. Being a vital element of the character of the party, it is at the crossroads of theory and practice, just at the point where both turn into unity in and through the party. The well-known fact that cde Borovi and cde. Pirani as well as some of those who follow them are evoking it constantly requires also some clarification.

Their papers and letters are, in the name of democratic centralism, full of virulent and harsh criticisms of the bad methods of the leadership, its wrong functioning, the lack of democracy (?), 'unjustified attacks' (?) on them, etc., etc. Very often these criticisms exceed the limits which can be accepted in the party. In fact, as everybody can notice, they are concentrated on heavy attacks against cde. Dot Gibson. As a matter of fact, she is the real target, behind this often anonymous and mysterious word 'leadership' – of which, in any case the most active censors are full members. If one examines this fact more closely, one rapidly discovers that – what a coincidence! – as Secretary of Workers International elected by the IEC, she is at the centre where the everyday fight for all decisions and resolutions of Workers International, is concentrated, where Workers International really lives as an international organisation. In many respects this is true also of the WRP. She is put in charge of leading the fight to carry these resolutions into reality; for establishing their respective place in the entire activity of the party; to improve them on the basis of experiences accumulated in the

same fight; to represent the leadership inside and outside the party; thus to convince all comrades not only of the correctness of decisions – eventually enriching them – but also of the absolute necessity, urgency and readiness of doing everything in order to fulfil them – a really immense and all-sided theoretical and practical task. If we consider – as we must – the great disparity between our aims and organisational, financial capacities (lack of money and material resources, very limited number of experienced cadres, etc.) we are obliged to recognise that cde. Gibson carried out this difficult task without any noticeable fault. And this is a real performance given the extremely hard conditions of the still prolonged crisis of the Fourth International with its (sometimes) heavy legacy. That cde. Gibson makes mistakes? ... What a completely new and illuminating discovery!

Now, from the time of its foundation the WI and its leadership tried to establish and improve the centralisation of our International. Several times the leadership discussed its necessity, asserted it in verbal and written forms. Since the very existence of the party as well as its development depend on – besides its programme – the centralisation of its work and fight, nobody never contested this necessity. Precisely for this reason, after the 2nd congress the IEC wanting to strengthen this centralisation elected a Secretary in the person of cde. Dot Gibson.

Ever since then she has been in a real crossfire of attacks. And this is not an accident, given the great, sometimes unconscious, resistance to centralisation. Everybody has read – or must read – these letters and papers in which she is accused of being non-democratic, aggressive, arbitrary, irresponsible – and that's not all! In his above-cited letter cde. Borovi attacks the leadership (?) for almost everything, even for the absence of sessions of IEC (he very well knows about our lack of money!!): 'where is the leadership...? ... why the party, the WRP, the IS leadership avoid its

responsibility?' All this accusative questioning because cde. Gibson wrote to him that the Tuzla delegation visit is the affair of the ITUSC comrades. Obviously cde. Borovi is not interested about whether she could convince the ITUSC comrades, nor is he interested in the real difficulties. The important thing being here to launch a heavy attack! When cde. Gibson tried to convince cde. Pirani to come to the rare sessions of the IEC, the always missing cde. Pirani (who nevertheless always attacks the bad functioning of the leadership!) she received an unspeakable answer. Cde. Pirani arrogantly asked in it: who do you think you are? It is understandable that in such an atmosphere other comrades having some inclination to confound democratic centralism with all kinds of criticism, follow these leaders. Cde. Rex Dunn, for example, didn't hesitate to speak of her behaviour as 'bureaucratically heavy-handed' and 'manipulative'. He rectified these accusations in his letter of 23 March 1995 by saying that 'on reflection, this was too subjective'. Perhaps?... Surely! As are those accusations which he still holds to: "arbitrary" and 'abuse of power.'

The first important circumstance here is not only the would-be 'impersonal' character of these attacks hidden behind the 'neutral' word 'leadership', or even the directly formulated attacks of a personal nature. The fact is that they were, and are, systematically developed at just the time we decided to strengthen the centralisation of the International. Each time when cde. Gibson stresses the necessity for centralisation – and thus the necessity for discipline – she is attacked not for this but because of her 'aggressiveness', 'lack of democracy', even 'bureaucratism', etc. And inversely, each time these attacks are developed in the name of democratic centralism there is nothing said or written for centralisation, absolutely nothing but everything for some kind of unlimited so-called democracy which is in reality taken here only as an individual attribute.

Yet party democracy – if we, arbitrarily, tackle it without its necessary counterpart, centralisation – is a totality of rules, moods and methods by and in which the party lives and moves; defines its political line, elects and removes its leadership, regulates and controls the discussions, assures the rights of declared tendencies or minorities. It has nothing to do with criticisms voiced by persons here and there on every occasion and at all times. Asking the right to this is an individualism which has its place in many petty bourgeois circles but not in a workers' party. Unless your fight for 'party democracy' doesn't attack a real (or supposed) arbitrariness or insult in the conduct of party discussions (dismissing papers, non-publication of internal bulletins, etc.), in the election of leadership, or prevents the formation of declared oppositions, etc., in summary acts against the rules – your criticisms express only individual feelings and resentments or hostilities and antipathies. It has nothing to do with party democracy, even less with democratic centralism.

It is quite understandable that many comrades have some difficulties in understanding this. There are various reasons for it, not the least being the hard emancipation from the legacy of previous (Healyite, Lambertist, or other) leadership's bureaucratic centralist methods wanting at the same time to smash also the individual character of comrades. But this individual character of all human beings cannot be confused with petty bourgeois individualism. The resistance to the Healyite methods required a fight for real, not formalist, democracy. In and after this fight every kind of expression appeared a democratic action and all moves for centralisation became suspicious. The famous 'stick' has been bent too much to one side ... something that arose from the need [missing Ed,] all those problems in a healthy way only by mental reflection. But the time is now ripe for us to accelerate the process of settling these problems, while the whole of our present fight for clarification provides the necessary

material for overcoming them in a positive way. Far from being a tragic, disastrous event, on the contrary, this fight constitutes a salutary clarification. It takes place at a moment when, given its immense tasks, the party is obliged to clarify these until-now unresolved problems if it wants to go forward and not be thrown back. If our political analysis is correct, we are just at the crossroads.

So let us get back to the question of centralisation without which there can be no party democracy. It requires, once the political line is fixed, a 'complete unity in action' under the conduct of the leadership in a disciplined way. This disciplined unity means that, yes, cde. Dot Gibson, as Secretary, has the full right to lead comrades, even giving orders to the recalcitrant ones, even more outside the party, and all of us must carry them out with great discipline – if they correspond to the political line of the party and aim at the accomplishment of resolutions and decisions. Naturally, everybody has the right to protest if the leadership (leader) goes beyond these limits, or uses inadmissible means.

But put aside obviously alien methods (beating, etc.) every individual protest must be carefully examined. In our present case all criticisms against comrade cde. Dot Gibson are put forward by comrades who, by accident, have an opposed political opinion to the majority resolutions and, consequently, that of cde. Dot Gibson on all important problems under discussion (the end of Stalinism, the 'new party' question, 'workers control' in Tuzla, democratic centralism, the accomplishment or reject(ion? SB) of tasks, etc.). I draw the attention of all members of our International to the following facts: cde. Dot Gibson is struggling for the centralisation – and she is attacked in the name of 'democracy' which appears, in reality, as a petty-bourgeois individualism; she wages a sharp fight for the leadership's decisions, for the accomplishment of the tasks – and she is attacked also in the name of democracy to 'freedom'

of opinion and even freedom of action (?!) refusing to execute them or choosing them arbitrarily. What a strange coincidence! Let me quote once more Trotsky's words: 'The regime (in the party) must be the instrument for correct policy and not for false', In Defence of Marxism, quoted above.)

But the essential characteristic of all this cry for democracy is that the comrades, surprisingly, don't give any explanation of such – according to them – dangerous bureaucratism or deviation of the leadership or of its Secretary. They don't try at all to characterise such a bureaucraticism or deviation and examine what it represents politically, what social forces could constitute its basis. Such a careful analysis, self-evident for Marxists, doesn't even cross their mind. They find the supposed non-democratic, bureaucratic manners as the result of personal faults and shortcomings, just as party democracy appears to them as if it were a collection of personal rights.

Here we have a curious separation of form from content, unusual and hardly permissible for Marxists, even a complete disappearance of the content. Concerning their own action, the comrades repeatedly declare that the criticisms are only remarks or proposals designed to improve the functioning of the leadership, its methods, including cde. Dot Gibson's work, her behaviour (??), etc. Clearly, these comrades don't yet understand that a Marxist criticism has to examine the framework and the social ground of the criticised leadership's (cde. Dot Gibson's) methods, a method that goes farther than endlessly repeated and thus futile, empty and superficial labellings. Then on this ground it has to develop a different conception of leadership opposed to the supposed wrong one. Finally, one should fight for the leadership or change it in the case of those criticised. This is how Marxists have always acted, that is what we learn from Lenin and Trotsky, from the whole history of the workers' movement – not only of our party! Because the form (democracy) is nonsense without its

corresponding content. If the comrades don't want or dare to define this, they have to cease their senseless criticisms. Otherwise their anti-dialectical approach takes its revenge as already it did it. So their criticism appears as it really is: unprincipled and systematic petty-bourgeois denigration which would destroy – even unwillingly – all centralisation, consequently, the whole party. Unfortunately I am not exaggerating here.

Let us remind ourselves how Trotsky tackled such problems in relation to the American SWP. In his 'Open Letter to Bumham' (7 January 1940) he wrote about the methods of the Burnham-Schachtman minority which are very similar to those of cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani:

'you ... seek an ideal party democracy which would secure forever and for everybody the possibility of saying and doing whatever popped into his head, and which would insure the party against bureaucratic degeneration. You overlook a trifle, namely, that the party is not an arena for the assertion of free individuality, but an instrument of the proletarian revolution... You do not see that our American section is not sick from too much centralism – it is laughable even to talk about it – but from a monstrous abuse and distortion of democracy on the part of petty-bourgeois elements.' Then he explained: 'A worker spends his day at the factory. At the meetings he is interested in learning the most important things: the correct evaluation of the situation and the political conclusions... petty-bourgeois... elements... vegetate in an artificial and shut-in environment. They have ample time to dabble in politics or its substitute. They pick out faults, exchange all sorts of titbits and gossip concerning happenings among the party tops'. They always locate a leader who initiates them into all the 'secrets'. Discussion is their native element. No amount of democracy is ever enough for them. For their war of words they seek the fourth dimension. They become jittery, they revolve in a vicious circle, and

they quench their thirst with salt water. Do you want to know the organisational programme of the opposition? It consists of a mad hunt for the fourth dimension of party democracy. In practice this means burying politics beneath discussion; and burying centralism beneath the anarchy of the intellectual circles. When a few thousand workers join the party, they will call the petty-bourgeois anarchists severely to order. The sooner, the better.' (Trotsky' In Defence of Marxism' Merit Publishers, New York, 1965, p 92).

For more than two years, cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani have repeated that they make criticisms about various questions in order to improve the party's line and work, its functioning. When other comrades invite them to clarify their position by uniting its obviously connected various elements (criticisms on the 'end of Stalinism', on the 'new party', on Workers Press, on the 'functioning of the party', 'for workers' control' in Tuzla, etc.) into a coherent and declared political line – as a democratic centralist settlement and cast of mind must do, which everybody quite naturally expects – they cry out against such violations of their rights and personality! Nevertheless, cde. Borovi himself has spoken of 'two conceptions', several times he complained because of the existence of 'two lines' on 'workers' control' in Tuzla. Yet they react almost hysterically when other comrades ask them to define their line, to declare a tendency in order to establish an organised and regulated discussion. Their answer IS invariably: 'don't push me', 'nobody can be forced to form a tendency', wailing the incredible complaint that 'one, sharpens the contradictions when they dare to formulate criticisms'. This is unbelievably childish behaviour, alien to a workers' party.

In any case, who initiated the sharp attacks on the 'end of Stalinism', on the project of a new party presented by cde Slaughter? Who multiplied the sometimes violent attacks on the leadership, on cde. Dot Gibson's work, methods and psychology'

(!)?

In the first line of the above-cited letter, cde. Borovi writes: '... we are facing actually [at present] a political crisis' and then he asserts that the first step must be 'to recognise the existence of this crisis'. (Emphasis in the original) Saying this, how could this comrade protest against a so legitimate and even obligatory call to declare a tendency? We do indeed recognise that there is a serious problem: how is it that cde. Borovi doesn't himself feel and recognise his own elementary duty – if he considers himself as a Marxist – to summarise and generalise his criticisms, characterise them and set forth to the party? How can he call on us to recognise a crisis while at the same time he refuses our right to ask him to declare it politically and openly? Why does he refuse to fight for his view by openly organising a tendency? Certainly, nobody can force him and others to do so. But everybody can – and should – have an opinion on such strange behaviour.

If, according to him, there is a crisis, cde. Borovi has to analyse the political outlines as well as its social foundations. One cannot use this severe general characterisation of the situation as if it were only a meaningless word in a lively discourse. But it is remarkable that neither cde. Borovi nor cde. Pirani ever says or writes anything about the political or social characterisation of the leadership's wrong policy and methods. Remaining true to themselves, they don't sum up their own criticisms in a comprehensive general explanation and political line. In both cases the spine is cruelly missing, the form is lacking a content and thus unveils itself as an empty shell. Again let us consult Trotsky. In 'A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party' (In Defence of Marxism, p 60, – at December 1939) he wrote: 'Before they began their bitter struggle, the leaders of the opposition were obligated to ask themselves this question: What non-proletarian class influence

is reflected in the majority of the National Committee? Nevertheless, the opposition has not made the slightest attempt at such a class evaluation of the divergences. It sees only 'conservatism', 'errors', 'bad methods' and similar psychological, intellectual and technical deficiencies. The opposition is not interested in the class nature of the opposition faction just as it is not interested in the class nature of the USSR. (Exactly as cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani are not interested in the class nature of Stalinism.) This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate the petty-bourgeois character of the opposition, with its tinge of academic pedantry and journalistic impressionism'

Certain comrades might ask: why am I so harsh and intransigent against what seems to them only mistaken opinions and errors? On the contrary, those who are being harsh are cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani. According to the former, we face a political crisis; while in my opinion it is he, cde. Borovi who is in crisis and not as yet the situation. Nevertheless the case is very serious and can develop rapidly into a deep crisis. That's why I stand up so sharply, since I want to prevent the International from entering a deep crisis; this will need now an uncompromising clarification and fight against not only isolated mistakes and errors but a tendency which, after more than one year's 'critical' activity, begins to crystallise into an international group.

Unlike some comrades, I am convinced that opposed to the turn of the party required by the new situation, these 'critical' cdes. prevent the party from moving forward. As Trotsky put it in 'From a Scratch to Gangrene' (Ibid p. 144): '... with the transition of the party from one period to the next those elements which played a progressive role in the past but who proved incapable of adapting themselves with timeliness to new tasks have drawn closer together in the face of danger and revealed not their positive but almost exclusively their negative traits.'

There is a non-declared but very active tendency to restrain the party from moving forward, which makes serious, concentration more difficult. Those comrades who think that it is possible to convince cdes. Borovi and cde. Pirani mentally, by theoretical or political conversation alone, have a great illusion because we have here a definite (but not self-defined) tendency which has to be fought. In such a situation each concession in the fight for clarification – waged of course in a comradely atmosphere and by correct methods – the slightest conciliatory attitude in order to appease what one cannot pacify, strengthens petty-bourgeois arrogance and gives it the false impression that it is right. No conciliation and compromise with petty-bourgeois views and methods! Still less can we have a kind of Christian tolerance towards this tendency with foolish arguments that severity can break them (!)! The comrades putting forward such “arguments” should ask themselves if the ‘severity’ of the critics does not break the party or some loyal and devoted comrades? ... They have to ask themselves this question!

One of the many proofs of the urgent necessity and harshness of an answer to this question is the constant and regular attacks of cde. Borovi and cde. Pirani on Workers Press. I don't want, and unfortunately have no space here to analyse in detail the numerous letters and papers in which they don't criticise but attack our newspaper. Look only at their letters published by the paper! In them cde. Pirani defends cde. Thurley, cde. Borovi and himself: the latter defending himself against our newspaper. While in each case!! they initiated the public attacks in WP on certain comrades. In each case also they defended anti-Marxist opinions, policy or even persons – against the Workers Press ‘and its collaborators’ articles or answers! Everybody can see this. And all comrades are well aware of the fact that always, (I repeat: always) cde. Borovi or cde. Pirani, protesting childishly against ‘attacks in public’, were the very ones who started this kind of correspondence in the paper. At the same time, they never

answered the content, the subject of the discussion!! Here too they carefully avoid the discussion, speaking only of 'bad methods', 'insults', and so on. Once again: in what kind of organisation do they think they're in?... As Trotsky taught us, this irritation and fright is also very characteristic of this kind of tendency.

Speaking of tendency, it must be said that they protest against this designation. What is worse, their mutual defence in Workers Press and elsewhere lacks any political argument, any line or tendency. They develop only personal criticism against a line, the leadership, cde. Dot Gibson, or Workers Press. But nowhere do they oppose one definite line against another, as Marxists must. Thus their alliance and mutual defence is an unprincipled line; it is not an openly declared political agitation. It has a name in our tradition: this is, an unprincipled clique.

I am calling them an undeclared tendency. They are nervous and furious about this name, as if it were an insult. But I think I have given enough proof – and could have given more – to say that we have in the party an undeclared but very active sectarian-ultimatist political tendency. Its main characteristic is a constant opposition to the analysis of the changed, new world situation and of the new tasks flowing from it. That is why – and not only because by its very nature it is inclined to political paralysis – it attracts the conservative elements in the international which, not recognising its true social and political nature, preach conciliation with the comrades who represent it.

The foregoing pages give plenty of ground for declaring that this tendency reflects a petty bourgeois pressure on the party for [sic] give up its necessary transformation. Without any risk of making a mistake, Trotsky's words on the Burnham-Shachtman-led opposition remain valid for 'our' sectarian-ultimatist tendency too: 'Like any petty-bourgeois group inside the socialist movement, the present opposition is

characterised by the following features: a disdainful attitude toward theory and an inclination toward eclecticism; disrespect for the tradition of their own organisation; anxiety for personal 'independence' at the expense of anxiety for objective truth; nervousness instead of consistency; readiness to jump from one position to another; lack of understanding of revolutionary centralism and hostility toward it; and finally, inclination to substitute clique ties and personal relationship for party discipline...' (A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition, *In Defence of Marxism*, p. 43.)

The class nature of this tendency is clearly a petty-bourgeois one. Certainly these comrades will protest vehemently against this characterisation. But this is not an insult, since the class nature of this tendency is not determined by their personal natures. Let me cite, once again, Trotsky. In a short article published in the Internal Bulletin of the French Bolshevik-Leninist Group, he wrote (in November 1934, in French): 'That does not mean to say that the comrades in question are "petty bourgeois"; they can be excellent proletarian revolutionaries, but the best revolutionaries make mistakes, and Marxism always obliges us to seek the social origin of any error; it is a question of the influence of petty bourgeois intellectuals on a proletarian revolutionary.' (Trotsky Oeuvres. vol. 4, p.255). I can hardly add anything to characterise the petty-bourgeois tendency which appears in our party.

Is that to say that this tendency of, these comrades personally, have no place in the party? Absolutely no! Nobody can oblige them to give up their opinions. They can, as a tendency, fight for it inside the party, according to its rules. Our duty is to convince them. But the petty-bourgeois criticisms must cease immediately because they break the discipline, undermine the authority of leadership, denigrate comrades, especially our Secretary. Everybody can distinguish between such criticisms and a harsh but principled and loyal

theoretical political and organisational criticism based on a declared political line.

Balazs Nagy,

February-April 1995