

Supplementary Material to International Bulletin

January 28th, 2019

Contents

Formation of a faction in the CWI - an explanation for Scottish NC memberspg 02

By Philip Stott (Scotland) -- December 10th, 2018

A crisis in the international – why we disagree with the IS faction.....pg 08

*By Andros Payiatsos (Greece), Vincent Kolo (China-Hong Kong-Taiwan) and Bryan Koulouris (US)
December 19th, 2018*

Statement by the International Faction for a Workers' and Trotskyist CWI pg 18

January 7th, 2019

Resolution by Greek EC in relation to the crisis of the International pg 20

January 4th, 2019

Preparation of our forces for the 2020s pg 39

By Shahar Benhorin and Yasha Marmer (Israel-Palestine)

January 12th, 2019

In Defence of a Working-class Orientation for the CWI pg 54

By Peter Taaffe -- January 14th, 2019



Formation of a faction in the CWI - an explanation for Scottish NC members

By Philip Stott

December 10th, 2018

A major dispute/differences on, in my view, fundamental issues arose at last weeks' IEC meeting. A range of documents and correspondence on these issues is available and is essential reading for comrades.

Much of it relates to issues arising from before the IEC and not what happened at the meeting. I want to explain from my point of view what took place at the IEC and why a faction has been formed involving a section of the international leadership, which I have joined and fully support. (See declaration below)

Declaration of a faction 'in defence of a working class Trotskyist CWI'

Following a week of intense discussion and debate it is clear that there are now two trends emerging within the CWI. Following the majority leadership of the Irish section breaking with the democratic principles of our party, fundamental differences have emerged, including methods of building and character of a revolutionary party and international based on democratic centralism.

There are differences on programme, tactics, united front methods, the national question, orientation to the working class, how we intervene in the women's movement and orientate in particular to working class women and youth.

All of these issues need to be fully discussed to clarify these questions. We will produce a platform explaining in more detail our approach to these questions and in defence of the traditions and methods of the CWI in preparation for future storms.

We appeal to all IEC comrades and members of the CWI to discuss all these questions. Should comrades agree with the main issues and methods being defended by this faction then we invite them to support and join us to defend the methods and traditions of the CWI.

The discussion throughout the CWI should be discussed out in a principled and structured manner through the structures of the CWI and its sections.

Signed by full IEC members and alternate members:

Weizmann Hamilton, Michael Koschitzki, Philip Stott, Clare Doyle, Peter Taaffe, Sascha Stanicic, Hannah Sell, Judy Beishon, Shaun Arendse, Barbara Areal, Juan Ignacio Ramos, Victor Taibo, Miriam Municio, Miguel Campos, Felix Martinez, Christine Thomas, Jagadish Chandra, Niall Mulholland, Ravi Chandren, Srinath Perara, Siri Jayasuriya, Bob Labi, TU Senan, Tony Saunois

The IEC meeting agreed a period of structured debate through the sections of the CWI, culminating in a world congress in January 2020. There were two different resolutions put forward on this which comrades will see in the documents. I supported the one which was narrowly lost but which made clear our view that these differences are fundamental. The alternative resolution said they're not serious differences.

Divergences

The divergences, in one sense, began over a crisis that arose in Ireland over the summer/autumn period. The reprehensible actions of a comrade was responded to by a small group in the Irish leadership who carried out an investigation. The comrades involved did not inform their leading body, the NEC. Nor, crucially, did they inform the International Secretariat, even though they had significant evidence of who was responsible by mid-July. By not seeking democratic authorisation and oversight for their actions they broke with the democratic norms of the CWI and set a very bad precedent.

It was not in fact until September that the comrades informed the IS of the situation, seeking support for their actions. To make matters worse, in presenting a report to the IS in September they made clear that part of their investigation was to find evidence of an "undisclosed opposition group" in the party. They believed at that stage that a leading NEC comrade had also been involved and was part of a "clandestine group" that was hostile to the party. This turned out to be baseless.

Such behaviour by leading comrades in Ireland is completely alien to the methods of the CWI. If there is a grouping you think is operating in the party, ask for a discussion with the comrades involved. Ask them to engage openly in a discussion on their differences. Comrades who have differences should also openly declare them and be encouraged to do so.

The IS, the elected leadership body of our international, did not support the actions of the Irish

majority leadership and said so. This led to an escalation of the differences. The IS asked to raise its concerns at the Irish NC meeting in October, which I also attended along with a number of IS comrades. Both myself and the IS condemned unreservedly the actions of the comrade who carried out the original attack on the party.

At that meeting a case was put forward by the leading Irish comrades in defence of the actions of the Irish NEC majority. The debate was not just about the serious incident but also touched on the mistakes I believe have been made in Ireland on programme, how we intervene in movements, elections, identity politics, the united front and so on.

More worryingly was the way many leading comrades intervened at the NC meeting to support the leadership by leaning on the success of the party in Ireland. That the NEC majority comrades in Ireland could not be making mistakes because of our achievements in elections, the water charges struggle, the Repeal movement etc. This shocked me and reminded me of the methods used by the Scottish Militant Labour majority (our then CWI section) during the Scottish debate between 1998 and 2001.

We cannot forget that Militant in Scotland and SML also achieved stunning success for a period. It led a mass movement during the poll tax battle and had tremendous electoral achievements on its CV. Yet the mistakes made by the leadership led to the collapse of our section in Scotland and also, eventually, the ruination of the SSP which they led into a reformist and nationalist dead-end. There is an element of the Scottish situation also being present in this debate and the dangers of adapting to opportunist pressures in a complicated objective situation.

The NC in Ireland voted by a large margin to support the Irish NEC majority. It was agreed that a debate on identity politics and the role of the CWI in the developing women's movement - again asked for by the IS - would take place at the November NC meeting

in Ireland. Documents on this debate are also available. The IS, as is normal in our international, asked for the situation in Ireland and Identity Politics to be placed on the agenda of the IEC.

During the run-up to the meeting, IEC comrades from Sweden, Belgium, Greece and the US, in a coordinated move, in my retrospective opinion, expressed their opposition to the IS and the way they were handling the situation - which is their right to do so.

They claimed the IS was pushing for a split in the CWI, or that the IS had over-reacted to the situation. In fact the IS was proposing no action against the Irish leadership of any kind. When I arrived at the IEC it rapidly became clear that a grouping was operating in opposition to the IS. Many meetings and sidebar discussions were taking place and as the IEC began the issues began to crystallise.

In essence, as well as a majority of the Irish IEC members, the comrades from the already mentioned sections supported the Irish leadership. They raised little or no opposition to the clear breaches of democratic centralism that had taken place in Ireland. The same unprincipled method they also applied to the obvious mistakes in Ireland over programme and how we have intervened in the women's movement.

Political roots of this crisis

Every time a major debate has opened up in our sections and/or international it has always had political roots. This equally applies to the collective history of the revolutionary movement. Political clarification is essential to ensure the sharpening of our tools; programme, tactics, strategy and sticking firm to our central orientation - which is to the working class and its organisations. Our debate will centre on these questions, along with how we build our party and on what layers as well as in defence of democratic centralism.

The political foundations of the debate in the CWI are rooted in the objective situation we are in. The delay in

the emergence of a distinct socialist outlook by broad layers of the working class and youth, or even its advanced section, following the 07-08 crisis has applied opportunist pressures on the forces of revolutionary socialism.

Many so-called Marxist organisations have taken to the road of dissolving themselves in broader movements or have adapted to the prevailing consciousness, including the watering down of their programme. We are not immune from these pressures. The current debate reflects the reality of these pressures. And in particular the delay in the working class moving in a mass and sustained way to challenge austerity and capitalism.

The fact that the working class entered the crisis a decade ago still impacted by the consequences of the collapse of Stalinism, and without being armed with even a broad socialist outlook, or in most cases a party of its own, has impacted on our international and our sections. In some cases, and this was clear from the IEC, some of our sections have adapted in a negative way to these pressures. As a result the working class and revolutionary character of the CWI and its sections is part of this debate

Ireland

Our Irish section has achieved many outstanding victories over decades. It has been rightly held-up as an example across our international. This should be fully recognised. The successes of the Irish section are not under debate. What is under debate are the mistakes that have been made recently. I participated in the general election campaign in the south of Ireland in 2016. During my visit, and again after the election, I raised with the leading Irish comrades a series of criticisms, including about the lack of a socialist programme in our election material.

I wrote to the IEC comrades in Ireland in early March 2016. "As you know I raised questions over the approach we adopted through the AAA on programme during the election campaign. Essentially, in all of our

election materials and the majority of our media appearances, we put forward to a mass audience the central demand for tax rises on the corporations and the rich. In general there was no call for public ownership and the wider measures that need to be taken to deal with the inevitable steps that the capitalists would take in Ireland and Europe against such a government. Especially important following the experience of Greece.”

“The idea that tax rises and a fairer distribution of wealth - in effect a more progressive capitalism - would be a solution to the economic and social crisis in Ireland was pronounced. I think this was a mistake and should be recognised as such....In essence did we not made too many concessions to what we might see as the “current consciousness” and ended up by, objectively speaking, arguing for a fairer capitalism? (My 2016 letter is also attached as part of the documents)

The comrades responded in a negative way to these criticisms initially. However, after discussions initiated by the IS the comrades said they accepted mistakes had been made. Although they said it was due to pressure of work in a very frenetic election campaign. No doubt this may well have been a factor. However, the comrades dismissed the idea that they had adapted to opportunist pressures of electoralism and of watering down our programme. Yet this tendency is still evident today, with Solidarity leaflets in some of our key areas still not putting forward a clear socialist position and an absence of demands for public ownership.

electoral pressures

One of the other issues I raised in my letter was fears over the lack of party profile and the evident distortion in how reliant we are in the south of Ireland on the public positions. “The huge pressure of electoral work, which is almost all-encompassing, has, as the comrades know, led to a very large part of our apparatus and cadre being consumed with this work, the public positions etc.”

What was evident at the IEC was just how reliant we are on the elected positions. We have 25 full timers - soon to be 27 – and half of the full timers are linked to the work in the Dail, council positions. This means we are dangerously over-reliant on whether we can keep the elected positions to fund the party. Moreover, our subs-paying base is only just over 100 comrades in the south of Ireland. This means that full time comrades have a far too great a specific weight compared to a narrow base of active party members. And that FT comrades play a disproportionately large role in the NC, compared to non-FT members and workers.

This reality can and is leading to a tendency that adapts our programme to a far lower level than is acceptable – especially when we are intervening in mass campaigns like elections. This tendency was also evident in the intervention we made in the historic victory over the right to abortion earlier this year. None of the posters in the election campaign we produced were in the name of the party. They were all in the name of Rosa and Solidarity.

Rosa – our socialist feminist platform - was the main vehicle through which the Irish comrades participated in the movement. Yet the primary Rosa campaign leaflet was completely devoid of any mention of socialism, capitalism or even of the working class. It did not include any of Rosa's anti-capitalist and anti-austerity demands, or explain how the fight for a woman's rights to choose is also a class issue and is linked to the fight for better childcare, healthcare and a living wage etc.

This tendency to downplay class and socialist demands is evident again and again in the Irish comrades material when they engage in mass campaigning. Rather than use the mass audience they have to raise consciousness as to the tasks the working class face in the struggle against capitalism – there is a tendency to do the opposite. These were the issues I and the other comrades who subsequently formed the faction were challenging.

What we faced, as I have said, was an opposition tendency in the CWI who wanted to shield the Irish leadership from criticism. To cover up the extent of the problems that exist in the Irish section and the evident dangers we face if this goes unchecked. When I spoke at the IEC I concluded by explaining that if the Irish leadership did not change their approach, the revolutionary character of the section in Ireland would be diminished.

Working class orientation

The title of the faction statement is “in defence of a working class Trotskyist CWI”. Why do we say “working class”. Perhaps the most shocking development arising from the discussions was the extent to which the idea that the CWI orientates consistently to the organised working class has been undermined in practice.

One Irish comrade intervened in the discussion to say that the comrades in the south had drawn the conclusion in 2009 that the mass anger at austerity would not be reflected in the trade unions because of the sell out by the leaders. Another leading comrade from Ireland said they had taken a turn away from the unions, with a plan to return later, and equated it to the open turn away from the bourgeoisified Labour party that we executed in the early 90s.

Frankly, this is breathtaking in its mistaken approach. The trade unions, and this includes in Ireland, even with their pro-partnership approach, are still mass workers' organisations. Unless we have a plan, an organised, consistent and patient approach to the workplaces and trade unions, we will fail as a revolutionary organisation.

Even if we begin to build our sections amongst young people, we must always turn them to the idea, in practice, of orientating to the working class. That the working class is the decisive force that will change society. In reality the comrades in the south of Ireland have had no consistent work in and around the unions for years. This can and has led to a miseducation, especially of young comrades as to the tasks of our

party and who we base ourselves on and why.

It became clear at the IEC that some comrades who support the Irish NEC majority and opposed the IS' criticisms have also made similar mistakes. Not necessarily consciously. Perhaps because of the low level of struggle and the objective difficulties in building. Nevertheless, the pressure of the period was evident when comrades began to criticise the IS for failing to take up properly the issues of the women's movement, refugees, LGBTQ+ oppression etc.

The CWI as a whole, including the comrades who support the faction, have a very good record of orientating and intervening in these types of movements. Our only insistence is that when we do we raise our programme, linking the fight against oppression to system change and socialism, and point to the working class and its organisations as the decisive force in achieving this in a transitional way. This approach is not widely accepted in these cross-class movements where ID politics and PB ideas are quite widespread. There is more on this in the debate on Identity Politics, which comrades must read, alongside the article on socialist feminism in the current issue of Socialism Today.

The IS have argued that there is an element of Mandelism in the approach of some IEC comrades. This is the idea that while basing yourself on the working class in words, in practice there is increasingly an emphasis to orientate to cross-class movements, including on issues of oppression, without raising a clear Marxist programme. The faction in the international is arguing in favour of intervening, building from and taking initiatives in these movements, but in a way that does not result in the diminishing of either our transitional programme or its primary orientation which is to the working class as a whole.

Democratic centralism

The breaches of democratic centralism in Ireland by the leadership is one thing. The attempts to defend

their actions by some IEC comrades during our meeting is another thing altogether. One leading comrade, in moving the alternative resolution on how to proceed, even went as far as to say that the IS should have accepted the decision of the Irish NC in October and move on. Just imagine if the IS has just accepted the 1998 Scottish conference decision of SML to effectively begin steps to dissolve our revolutionary organisation. If it had not launched a struggle against this and gone to the World Congress decision in 1998 to get support for its position. Where would we be now?

The CWI is not a federation of parties and groups. We are a democratic centralist revolutionary international. The leadership bodies don't turn a blind eye to serious mistakes or errors. And certainly not if they threaten the viability of our revolutionary forces. From its formation, the CWI has been based on mutual learning and, where necessary, criticism.

We elect leadership bodies to take care of and develop the international between congresses. Most often to handle the day-to-day work, draw up analysis on fast-

moving events and for liaising with our sections. Sometimes, like now, to fight to correct mistakes before they have even more serious consequences.

We have a duty to seek to correct mistakes. The CWI and its membership must now use the period of debate that will open up to examine all of the questions under debate. Not to score cheap points and argue over secondary questions but to fight for the future direction of the CWI. To ensure our international sharpens our instrument for the next stage. One which will see the working class emerge as the decisive force to take on capitalism and fight for a socialist future.

Two tendencies have now emerged. This is not unusual in the history of the Marxist movement. The one represented by the newly formed international faction, I believe, has the correct orientation that will allow us to successfully face up to the challenges of the next period.

Philip Stott
IEC member Scotland

A crisis in the international – why we disagree with the IS faction

By Andros Payiatsos (Greece), Vincent Kolo (China-Hong Kong-Taiwan) and Bryan Koulouris (US)

December 19th, 2018

This material has been written to defend the majority decision of the International Executive Committee (IEC) in Nov-Dec 2018. This important decision, passing a resolution clearly opposing “any threat of a split”, has unfortunately been misrepresented and called into question by the IS and comrades supporting the newly formed minority faction who voted against this resolution. The IEC resolution, the defeated resolution of the IS faction, and the faction’s statement are enclosed at the end of this statement.

The IEC meeting of the CWI which took place between 25 November and 1 December 2018 saw an unprecedented and shocking situation arise within the international. The position of the International Secretariat (IS) was defeated in a vote by 24 full IEC members to 21 (seven of whom were IS members). This was after a week of intense and sometimes sharp debate. This vote was a clear signal that the majority of the IEC – the highest elected body of the international between world congresses – did not endorse the position and approach of the IS in relation to the crisis in the Irish section, which has become a major crisis in the international.

Unable to convince the IEC, and meeting with opposition from leading comrades from a large number of national sections (IEC comrades from 14 sections voted against the IS, as against ten in support) the IS took the step of forming a minority faction – the first international faction since 1991. The formation of a faction in this manner was in our view hasty and premature.

The IS comrades claim they have set up a faction to defend democratic centralism and to fight a political trend (“Mandelism”) among “some sections” (!) of the CWI, to turn away from the organized working class and the methods of Trotskyism. We do not agree with these arguments. In a number of written contributions,

supporters of the minority faction are repeating that, as Philip Stott argues, “some of our sections have adapted in a negative way to these pressures”, i.e. watering down the program, making opportunist concessions or dissolving into broader movements. The comrades assert that this became “clear” from the IEC discussions. But still – despite this apparent clarity – they give no factual examples to back up this serious accusation: Which sections? Which mistakes or “negative adaptations”? The only case the comrades have given is Ireland, which was discussed extensively at the IEC, with a majority then rejecting the approach adopted by the IS.

Neither do we accept as justification for launching a faction the supposed existence of an “undeclared, unprincipled anti-IS faction”. The real reason the faction was set up in such an extremely hasty manner was to disregard the majority decision of the IEC

Unfortunately, in written reports of the IEC meeting circulated by faction supporters, for example by Philip in Scotland and Sascha/Michael/Angelika in Germany, even the IEC vote and resolution ‘Concerning the IEC 2018’, moved by the Greek comrades, which was carried against the opposition of the IS faction, is reported ambiguously and played down

The CWI now finds itself in the regrettable and potentially dangerous situation where a majority of the IS, our day-to-day leadership, has itself formed a faction. Members of course have the democratic right to form a faction. However, as well as defending a clear set of political ideas, the creation of a faction is generally intended in the history of the Marxist and Trotskyist movement to defend the rights of a minority to put forward its political ideas in opposition to a leadership, which enjoys these rights automatically. The statutes of the CWI, paragraph 31, say: “Members have the right to form factions around specific issues

and ideas where disagreements exist, after exhausting all possible procedures for discussion” (our emphasis in italics). What is unprecedented is for the leading body itself to set up a faction in this way.

A key problem in the current political controversy, and a reason why the IEC exercised its right to check/correct the approach of the IS on this issue, is the extraordinary haste shown by the IS majority (two IS comrades, DB and CG, oppose this) in this crisis, and a tendency towards over-reaction and over-polarization on the issues under discussion.

As shown in the chronological account below, this began before the IEC convened to hear the different arguments. In the period before the IEC meeting, many IEC members perceived that IS comrades were pushing towards what would have been a premature and unnecessary split in the CWI. This is an approach completely at odds with the traditions of our international – to raise the threat of a split at the start of a debate where the areas of disagreement are still being explored. The sudden formation of a faction by the IS comrades is further evidence, unfortunately, of an impatient and excessively confrontational approach.

To understand how the current crisis developed we need to see how events unfolded.

First half of November

Less than a month before the IEC meeting, on 2 November, the IS proposed an IEC agenda with two debates which they saw as focusing on the Irish section, politically and organizationally. These debates – “Identity politics” and “Ireland” – were first scheduled for five and a half hours on Wednesday and four hours on Friday respectively. The IS document, “Women’s oppression and Identity politics – our approach”, arrived in IEC mailboxes together with the agenda.

On 6 November, the material for the debate on Ireland was sent out. It included all documents circulated to the Irish NC over a serious incident that occurred in the

section, plus an exchange of letters between the IS and the majority of the Irish NEC. On 14 November, IEC members received, “A response to the IS document, ‘Women’s Oppression and Identity Politics...’”, written by the Irish NEC majority.

From the material circulated and phone calls from IS members to IEC members it was clear that the IS was not only criticizing the Irish leadership’s handling of the internal incident, but important aspects of the Irish section’s work in general. This included its orientation, work among women, party building, and political profile, as well as issues such as the national question, how to view Sinn Féin and program.

In this period, many IEC members also contacted Irish IEC members to get more information. The debate at the Irish NC 20-21 October, attended by four IS members and an IEC member supporting them, was described by all attending as two days of polarized debate. There were four lead-offs and 40 contributions. The proposed resolution from the NEC majority, which the IS opposed, was carried by 25 votes against 4.

14-22 November

This development raised concerns among many IEC members because based on the letters and material IEC comrades had been given to evaluate the situation, the IS approach seemed to be excessively belligerent. These concerns were further heightened by the verbal reports from IS members to IEC members, raising sharp criticism of the Irish section’s work over many years, issues that had never been discussed at the IEC.

On 14 November, two IEC members from Belgium and Sweden sent a letter to the IS to be circulated to the IEC, describing the IS approach in regard to Ireland as “an overreaction which has complicated and polarized the necessary discussions on important political issues”. They particularly questioned an IS letter sent after the Irish NC debate, in which the IS said the debate had not been fair, with contributions of leading comrades “alien to the traditions of the CWI”.

On 19 November, the IS circulated the letter of the two IEC comrades with a reply, describing the letter as a “rush to focus your criticism onto the IS” and adding the accusation of “methods of Grant and Woods” to their previous comparisons with Mandelism and the Scottish Socialist Party aimed at the Irish leadership.

The weekend before the IEC, 17-18 November, the Irish NC met to debate ‘identity politics’. After a full day of debate, the three IS representatives who attended did not get support for their criticism and conclusions about the work of the Irish section in the women’s movement from the vast majority of Irish NC members.

The following day, Monday 19 November, one week before the IEC, the IS proposed a new IEC agenda, changing the debate on Ireland to one session on Tuesday and moving ‘Identity Politics’ to two sessions on Friday. The Irish NEC responded with a proposal to give ‘Identity Politics’ two sessions on Tuesday and Ireland two sessions, Friday and Saturday.

Before and also during the IEC meeting IS members posed a split as an imminent reality in discussions with IEC comrades from Greece, the US, China and other sections. This needs to be underlined because IS comrades are now apparently claiming they never said this. But this was in no way ambiguous; it was explicit. Here are just two of many examples: Peter T said to a US EC member, “there will be a split” because the Irish section “was no longer a revolutionary organization”. In discussion with a comrade from the Chinese section he said the IS, “did not want endless discussions running into the sand,” as had been the case in the US factional struggle (which lasted for around 16 months).

If IS comrades had not introduced the threat of a split in this way, the crisis would not have developed in the way that it did. The discussion would have had another character. And why, if a split was never threatened, did the IS/faction’s resolution, during a whole series of redrafts in which it copied large parts of the majority “Greek” resolution, not also include the specific

rejection of “any threat of a split”?

Comrades rejected these threats of a rapid split as a form of pressure injected into the discussion. It was particularly shocking as it runs against the patient, measured and scrupulously democratic attitude shown by the IS in previous international debates, for example in the Scottish debate of the late 1990s or much more recently the dispute in the US section which led to a small split in 2018.

Before the IEC meeting, in a sharp discussion with Greek IEC members, however, some IS comrades initially agreed to de-escalate and agreed to the election of an IEC committee to liaise with the Irish section and look into the details of the conflict.

23-24 November

The agreement between Greek IEC members and IS members held for less than 24 hours. The IS informed the Greek IEC members by email that the proposal for an IEC liaison committee, made up of IS and IEC members, proposed as a way to avoid aggravating the crisis, had been rejected by the leading Spanish comrades.

On Friday, three days before the IEC meeting, the IS proposed that the IEC agenda be: “completely restructured... Given the dominance of the issues which have arisen from the Irish discussion we therefore propose that the discussion on Ireland be taken as the first item on the agenda on Monday. This discussion should then run for as long as is necessary and be followed by the session on ‘Identity Politics’”.

This agenda proposal was followed by more letters to the IS and IEC. IS members DB and CG declared their “concern with the excessively belligerent approach of the IS”. The second letter stated, “The Greek and Cyprus members of the IEC unanimously, absolutely and most determinedly disagree with IS in relation to the tactics it applies as regards the crisis with the Irish section”. A third came from the EC of the US section, stating they were “very concerned to hear that the

likelihood of a 'split with the Irish' has been raised by IS members in discussions with IEC members".

The US letter also proposed an alternative to the latest IS proposal for the IEC agenda, arguing the meeting should start with World Perspectives.

Rather than take on board the views of these comrades, and note the widespread concerns within the wider leadership of the CWI, the IS unfortunately continued to escalate. Their position focused even more on allegations of "Mandelism", a "new Scotland" etc., aimed at the Irish section. Today, the minority faction cites the letters from IEC members as proof of an organized attempt to undermine the IS, but in reality these initiatives by IEC comrades were an attempt to prevent the IS comrades from making a huge mistake, at great cost to the international, completely misreading the attitude of the IEC and many section leaderships in the process, and thus damaging their own authority.

For a number of IEC members it became clear that the key task of the IEC meeting was to block a seemingly imminent split and instead propose political debates in the democratic traditions of the CWI. Today, supporters of the faction accuse the majority of acting as a "shield" to protect the Irish section from criticism. This is completely false. The "shield" or "wall" to paraphrase one comrade was to protect the CWI and its democratic traditions, insisting the political discussions take place without the threat of a split hanging over them. Comrades who disagreed with the IS approach repeatedly stated they were not issuing "blank checks" and made a number of criticisms of the work in Ireland, while also stressing the need for a sense of proportion.

This was reflected in the agenda debate on the first day of the IEC, where many IEC comrades supported the US proposal because they had misgivings about why the IS was pushing to bring 'Ireland' forward as the main discussion. When asked on the eve of the meeting, one IS comrade implied a split was even

possible during the week of the IEC itself.

The first day, 26 November

The first item was a debate over the agenda, between the IS proposal to debate 'Ireland' first, or the US comrades' proposal to start with World Perspectives. The fact that 21 comrades spoke in a discussion on the agenda showed how seriously the issue was regarded. IEC members supporting the IS proposal already in this discussion stressed that the 'Ireland' debate was about how to build the international and its character, issues of decisive importance for the IEC. The US comrades and others stressed the importance to start with world events and politics, to frame the week's discussions, which is the tradition of the CWI, as well as allowing some IEC members who had not yet had a chance to study the 'Ireland' question to read the documents.

Several IEC members stated their surprise and shock over the intensity of the agenda discussion, showing that the IEC as a whole was far from having made up its mind on the issues at hand. The vote ended with 22 full IEC members voting for the US proposal and 21 for the IS proposal.

One day of discussion followed on World Perspectives. At the end of an intense week, it's worth underlining that the statement on World Perspectives, including a number of amendments from different sections, was agreed unanimously (with one abstention). This reflected a common view on a) an unprecedented economic, political, social and environmental crisis of capitalism with growing inter-imperialist tensions, b) key events in Brazil, Nigeria, China and many other countries and c) the main political challenges for Marxists and the labor movement.

Debate on "Ireland"

In the debate on Ireland, the IS and some comrades supporting them stressed it was about crucial, fundamental principles and methods in party building, orientation and strategy, summarized in the assertion that the Irish section had turned away from the working class. But the IS comrade's lead-off also made

clear that the debate went well beyond Ireland, saying there was a divergence over fundamental methods regarding issues including the role of the IS, methods of building and the character of the international. This lead-off said a central issue was the criticisms of the IS, which it claimed, was being portrayed by some IEC members as out of touch, old, lagging behind political developments and not understanding new features.

In addition to previous references to ‘Mandelism’ and ‘a new Scotland’, comparisons were made during this discussion to the 1903 split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Accusations were also made of a clique running the Irish section and an “anti-IS clique” in the IEC. Others speaking in support of the IS position paraphrased Trotsky’s analyses from the debates in the US SWP during the 1930s, “from a scratch to the danger of gangrene”.

In this discussion, which lasted two days, there were more contributions raising concerns about how the IS had dealt with the controversy, than those speaking in support. In particular, comrades took issue with the repeated escalation of the crisis by IS comrades and an exaggeratedly factional approach. Comrades asked the IS to take any threats of a split off the table. IS members, while not repeating statements about an inevitable split made in informal discussions, answered formally, from the platform, that they “could not exclude a split”.

Furthermore, in replying to this discussion, the IS proposed a world congress to take place in July 2019, which would allow just half-a-year for the pre-congress debates. This proposal was heavily criticized by IEC members and subsequently withdrawn. It was another example of an excessively hasty approach on the part of the IS.

Despite the headline ‘Ireland’ it became clear during the meeting that the issues under discussion covered much more than Ireland. Put any section under a microscope and we will find as many weaknesses and mistakes as we want, comrades said. Nevertheless, all

comrades including comrades from the Irish leadership agreed that mistakes have been made in our outstanding work in Ireland, and that dangers are inherent in this situation.

The conditions in which comrades in Ireland are operating, leading successive and successful mass campaigns and under intense pressure from the working class and broad activist layers to be seen giving a lead, need to be factored into our evaluation of these mistakes, and what the Irish leadership is doing to address weaknesses and mistakes. A number of proposals and suggestions were made by leading Irish comrades during the meeting to address these issues, in relation to the building of the party, electoral strategy, work in the trade unions and other aspects.

On the specific incident in Ireland, comrades from the majority in the Irish NEC accepted a number of criticisms – these are mentioned in the final IEC resolution [redacted paragraph]. There was a general view in the IEC that the leading comrades in Ireland had made mistakes in their handling of this incident. However, the argument of the IS majority and faction supporters that this amounted to a fundamental break with the methods of the CWI, and was evidence of an undemocratic internal regime in the Irish section, was not accepted by most comrades.

Debate on women and Identity Politics

Between the discussions at the IEC on ‘Ireland’ and ‘ID politics’, the IEC discussed Latin America and the US. In these sessions there were no contributions from any IS member, or any comrade who spoke in favor of the IS’s approach in the other debates.

The debate on women and Identity Politics was a long overdue discussion in the IEC. Important questions had been raised already in the three documents, which were not voted upon. In many ways, this was not a separate debate, but a continuation of the previous debate on ‘Ireland’, while dealing with international processes.

The main theme of the IS comrades was to send out a

warning, asserting that the Irish section had put too much into ROSA (our socialist feminist campaign), thereby risking that we would miss mightier movements of the working class. This in our opinion overstated the “dangers” of intervening in the women’s movement, while understating the significance of these struggles and the possibilities to build among the working class by taking a clear and bold position in relation to these new movements. The need for a bold working class, socialist approach in our work in these movements, distinguishing clearly our class struggle feminism from the bourgeois and petit bourgeois leadership of these movements, and emphasizing the united struggle of the working class for socialist change, was not questioned by any comrade in the discussion.

Criticism of the Irish section focused on claims the section had not put pressure on the trade union leaders or raised class demands in the abortion campaign. Irish comrades replied to these specific points, showing the work that had been done in these respects in the campaign that secured a historic victory, the biggest defeat for the Catholic Church since the foundation of the state. Even the term “historic” was challenged by IS comrades and comrades supporting their position. The Irish comrades who spoke explained how their campaign had focused on working class neighborhoods. They gave detailed figures showing support for the yes vote was significantly higher in working class areas.

Irish comrades also showed how they for many years have been in constant debates and battles with defenders of identity politics and bourgeois feminists. The root of these ideologies is an incapacity to understand the role of united struggle by the working class, meaning they are in practice against building a movement of effective struggle.

Many comrades with criticisms of the IS position spoke in this discussion, underlining women’s movements and radicalization among young women in many countries. In recent years this has also included strike

actions and international links between different movements. An objective reason for the sea change in attitudes in Ireland and other countries is the massive entrance of women into the labor market in recent decades. Another is the crisis of capitalism and rise of right-wing reactionary forces, and in some cases authoritarian forces, with a counter-revolutionary position towards the working class, towards the rights of women and minorities.

IS speakers stressed austerity as a main factor behind the victory in the Irish referendum. While this was an important factor, movements for political change and revolution do not only stem from economic issues. Most that voted for change did so for the issue itself, the right to abortion.

The position of the IS, in putting its main emphasis on “future class battles” in contrast to this historic battle taking place today, runs a certain risk of overlooking important opportunities around newly radicalized layers present or developing in today’s situation. Turning boldly towards such movements or currents when they emerge has nothing to do with neglecting or diminishing the central role of the working class. A flexible approach in emphasis and tactics can on the contrary give us huge inroads and increase our weight and intervention in future trade union and working class battles.

IS speakers rejected criticism they had not given enough attention or a sufficient lead to interventions in women’s struggles. They described the struggle for abortion rights as a “cross-class” movement in contrast to a working class movement, which formally speaking is correct. However, other comrades replied showing similarities with other movements and phenomena: climate, anti-war, opposition to the European Union, LGBT+, democracy, anti-racism, refugees and more.

While in many cases bourgeois and petit bourgeois parties and groupings play an overly influential role in these struggles as a reflection of the complexity of this period, the decisive force behind the abortion rights

victory, Brexit etc., was the working class. Marxists have to intervene skillfully in these movements, differentiating along class lines, offering concrete proposals to develop mass struggle and linking this to our socialist program.

In the debate, IS comrades and supporters of the faction portrayed the work of the Irish comrades and ROSA as a lowering of our socialist profile and failure to put a clear socialist program in the section's interventions in feminist and women's struggles. This criticism is answered in quite some detail in the written reply of the Irish comrades to the IS document on Identity Politics. Also, other speakers pointed to other material plus filmed public speeches of comrade Ruth C where the issue of socialism and class struggle is clearly and skillfully posed. Irish comrades accepted that improvements could be made to the content of some ROSA material, something that could also apply to similar campaigns in other sections.

Roots

The faction insists that fundamental political differences have emerged, but most IEC comrades at the meeting believe the IS did not present clear arguments and examples of this. On the contrary, differences which do indeed exist, and have always existed on various levels and on certain issues, which is natural and healthy in the international, risk being blown out of proportion to justify the creation of a faction.

As the resolution carried by the IEC makes clear, the majority view is that the assertion of fundamental differences and "two trends" has not been substantiated. While there are certain differences on issues of orientation (again something natural in an extremely complex period with features of revolution and counterrevolution) questions of program, our approach to broader campaign initiatives, etc., the existence of fundamental differences that distinguish the practical work of sections that disagreed with the IS approach, and those supporting it, are far from clear. The discussion on these issues, if handled in the

correct way, can be fruitful for the whole International. It is therefore particularly regrettable that exaggerated terminology such as "Mandelism", "liquidationism" and "turning away from the working class", has been inserted into the discussion – and moreover from the start, before the debates, political documents, etc., have clarified what the differences are and to what extent they actually exist.

The period since the 2008 crisis has been extremely challenging for Marxism. Capitalism confronts an unprecedented crisis, characterized by economic instability, sharpening global tensions, the rise of modern day left reformism and far right populism, plummeting confidence in bourgeois democratic systems, and a climate catastrophe.

The radicalization of the working class, women and the youth is a clear trend but it has not yet taken the form of the development of mass organized left and socialist parties in most countries. Massive movements have erupted, with a clear anti-establishment profile but often lacking the decisive imprint of an organized and politically conscious workers' movement. Most have tended to be short-lived movements.

Sections of the CWI have engaged in numerous innovative and unique campaigns and struggles, by comparison with other left forces, but very few of these, due to the complications of the objective situation, have led to decisive breakthroughs in growth. Almost all sections report increased pressure on relatively few comrades and problems in developing enough new cadres.

Frustration over these difficulties and the pressures this puts on our forces and the leadership are undoubtedly a key factor in the internal crisis that became apparent at the IEC meeting. The need for a leadership that engages in real dialogue, is attentive to the issues raised by sections and by the IEC, does not presume it has all the answers, and in this way keeps up to date with political processes is crucial in this period.

This is not a negation of the role of leadership in a democratic centralist organization. On the contrary, an attentive leadership that takes account of issues raised by comrades in the sections, and shows a willingness to be open and accountable, is a precondition for building the international in this period.

Politically, this also means offering analysis and guidance in struggle using flexible tactics regarding important issues such as trade union work, environment and climate, women and socialist feminism, refugees and anti-racism. These important areas of work in no way contradict, but rather complement, as Lenin explained, Marxism's overriding orientation to the organized working class movement. Moreover, if the organized working class does not take up and provide the lead in these issues, the unity that is needed for the working class to carry out its historical mission to change the world will be much harder if not impossible to achieve.

The CWI is the largest revolutionary international, having established a potentially powerful position through impressive mass work in England and Wales, Ireland, the Spanish state, the US, and other sections. This makes us a pole of attraction for the tsunami of political radicalization that will come. We are concerned that these precious gains that can serve as a springboard in the next historical period, could now be jeopardized by the premature decision to form an IS faction and to exaggerate the gravity of political differences in the international.

We all agree that the CWI needs a leadership that can intervene decisively, take political and organizational initiatives, and give clear direction to the work of the whole international. But the leadership must also be able to admit when it has made mistakes, and be prepared to listen to the views of the IEC, which is the highest body of the international between world congresses. The IEC elects the IS and its role is to check the IS and disagree when necessary. The IEC comrades who voted against the IS approach to this crisis came from the following sections: Australia, Austria, Belgium,

Brazil, China-Hong Kong-Taiwan, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Israel-Palestine, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Sweden and the US.

As democratic centralism has been raised as a key issue by the comrades of the faction, alleging that other comrades who disagree with the stance of the IS are challenging, or wish to ignore democratic centralism, it is necessary to emphasize that the IEC's decision is formally now the position of the CWI.

The resolution that was passed says, "We reaffirm the democratic tradition of debate and discussion in the international and oppose any threat of a split". The specific rejection of the threat of a split was one of the main differences between the successful resolution and the resolution of the IS faction which was voted down.

The IEC resolution goes on to say, "The IEC believes the IS and the leading comrades in the sections should review their responses in this particular situation to help ensure any lessons are learned."

Unfortunately, rather than accept this majority view and de-escalate the factional conflict, the IS majority, after declaring a faction, has blamed this on the existence of an "undeclared and unprincipled anti-IS faction" which it claims was working behind the scenes even before the IEC meeting convened to undermine the IS. This is completely false and raises worrying questions about the IS attitude to criticisms. The right of IEC comrades to discuss informally and exchange ideas has been condemned and misrepresented. This also goes against the position of the IS comrades themselves, in their advice to the Irish leadership in a letter on 1 October (seven weeks before the IEC):

"Declaring, as the comrades do, that two interventions at the NC in June were 'disruptive' and that they were evidence of a 'coordinated opposition group' is not a healthy response from a leadership. If two interventions were not correct politically then answer them. However, comrades have a right to raise points

at the NC meeting which the leadership might take exception to. If so answer them politically.” [IS Letter to Socialist Party NC, 1 October 2018]

Rather than an “anti-IS bloc or secret faction”, the IEC members from the above-mentioned sections voted against the IS because its approach to the underlying political and organizational problems lacked patience and a sense of proportion, and as such threatened to tip the international towards an extremely damaging, unwarranted split in which any real political differences would have remained unclear and unsubstantiated.

We hope that in the coming discussions throughout the international the IS comrades will stand back and re-examine their approach and recognize that mistakes have been made in this affair. In this way these discussions, even where important differences arise, can lead to a strengthening of our forces and principled unity to face the challenges ahead.

Further escalation

A key issue in relation to democratic centralism is the role of informal discussions, and when it is permissible or not for political problems to be discussed outside the formal leadership structures of the organization. This was raised in relation to the incident in the Irish organization, and comrades from the Irish NEC majority accepted that this was a problem and things should, and in future would, be handled differently.

It is also an issue with the IS faction’s accusation that IEC comrades discussing informally, in some cases in the weeks before the IEC meeting, amounts to an “undeclared faction”. It is nothing of the sort. The right of comrades within any elected body to confer privately and discuss concerns or areas of disagreement needs to be protected as a democratic right, without undue pressure coming from the leadership to form a faction, which in most cases would represent an artificial acceleration of differences, not helpful for the conduct of discussions. The IS has named their faction “In defense of a working class Trotskyist CWI” which clearly and directly implies

that all those who do not agree with the IS are abandoning the working class and Trotskyism.

The alleged abandonment of the working class is an example of the faction using the ‘straw man’ method, to swiftly knock down. Where is the evidence – concrete examples – of a turning away from the working class? The website report of the well-attended 2018 convention of the US section, for example, reports significant successes for Marxists in a number of trade unions. In the Irish comrades’ reply to arguments from the IS on work around ROSA and in the referendum campaign, there are a number of examples of their initiatives towards the unions. The Irish comrades also explained they had intervened in all, even the smallest, of the country’s recent labor disputes.

Further discussions and debates

The IEC resolution passed at the meeting laid the basis for the year up to a world congress in January 2020 in Belgium: “The IEC agrees on the need for a plan of democratic discussions, with documents, throughout the international on the issues of difference raised at the IEC, relating to our perspectives, orientation and interventions, questions of program, methods and building.” We welcome the fact that Congress Organizing Committee, agreed in this resolution and composed of three comrades from the faction and three who are not, has begun to meet and discuss how the debate should be structured.

Here are some of the issues that need to be discussed, alongside the political questions –national question, identity politics, Brexit etc. – raised at the IEC meeting:

PERSPECTIVES: In the last days of the IEC, some IS faction supporters raised perspectives as an issue of controversy, for example in relation to a Corbyn government in Britain. While we do not at this stage see what is controversial about this issue, this should be discussed, with proper documents. Despite claims from faction members, the role of the working class is central for all of us. We need deeper

discussions on perspectives for the unions, new structures in different struggles and new left formations.

Linked to the debates are also perspectives for women's struggles and movements, climate struggle, youth struggles, anti-fascist struggles, refugees and migration, and our LGBTQ+ program and interventions. There is a need for material drawing out lessons from our interventions in different movements. Also we should return to the debates in the 1990s, the open turn and the Scottish debate, where the CWI showed a skillfulness and flexibility in tactics. The programs of our broader campaigns should also be discussed: ROSA, LyC, SE, YRE, CADV etc.

PARTY BUILDING METHODS: There has been a shortage of discussion on party building at IEC and CWI events in recent years. There is also a lack of facts presented from many sections on recruitment, education, paper and website, finance etc. The CWI has a very strong tradition in this field and we must continually struggle to re-establish it.

THE INTERNATIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM: Supporters of the IS faction are claiming that the majority which criticized them want a "federal" international, in line with accusations of Mandelism. No contributions whatsoever advocated such a turn. It is the right and duty of the IS to raise points and criticism, including to intervene in sections to discuss and address problems. But this needs to be done in a democratic way, based on concrete evidence, as our long tradition shows, without threats of splits or denunciations of comrades who raise doubts or disagreements about the approach of the leadership.

The faction is focusing on an alleged plan to undermine the IS and diminish its role, but in so doing it diminishes the role of the IEC and its decision, which was to check the leadership and to vote down the IS resolution. The role of the IEC is also an important question for discussion; including how the IS works with the IEC, and the need to bring problems and internal debates to its attention in a timely fashion. To be in favor of democratic centralism does not mean to uncritically support the actions of the leadership and not speak up when mistakes are made.

What lessons? How to go forward?

We believe it is imperative for the IS to now take note of the majority view in the IEC and re-consider their approach to these issues.

Now, we need full democratic political discussions to prepare the international for coming events. We appeal to all comrades to take a patient approach to this debate, listen to all sides, including to the serious concerns and objections raised by the majority of the IEC and the ECs of a substantial number of CWI sections. In our opinion there is no basis for any split, with an ultimate weakening of the forces of the international, based on the political differences that have emerged.

We have discussed many contentious issues in the past – the euro, China, the anti-globalization movement, tactics towards Syriza in Greece – with no hint that these differences would cause a schism in our ranks. The same responsible and comradely attitude is needed today, avoiding actions that unnecessarily sharpen and polarize the debate. A calmer, more balanced and less factionalized debate and discussion can benefit and ultimately strengthen the whole International, by educating and clarifying.

Statement by the International Faction for a Workers' and Trotskyist CWI

January 7th, 2019

To all CWI sections and comrades;

Dear Comrades,

Since the November/December meeting of the IEC, the debate in the CWI has developed further and vindicated the views and conclusions of the comrades who initially formed the 'International Faction for a Workers' and Trotskyist CWI'. The declaration of a faction was politically necessary and justified, as events since the IEC have demonstrated. Representatives of the 'non-faction, faction', who had opposed the IS majority at the IEC, argued that there were no clear fundamental political differences reflected in the debate and that it was mainly the question of how the IS had handled the Irish crisis.

However, now, Kevin McL, the leading Irish comrade, in response to the invitation from the English and Welsh EC to debate the criticism of the IS majority of the methods and policies of the Irish majority, and other related issues, at the next English and Welsh NC, writes: "However, at its heart this dispute is about much more than these [the initial crisis between the Irish majority and the IS majority] or the Irish section. It's all about the political issues, including those that emerged at the IEC, which are of international significance; it's about the IS and how it has operated; it's about the IEC and the situation in the CWI broadly, in particular now that an international faction has been established..."

At the Irish NC in December past discussions in the CWI on China, the euro, Syriza were also raised by representatives of the Irish NEC majority. This is now echoed by the resolution from the Greek EC which raises all of these issues and also Kazakhstan as alleged evidence of the "mistakes" of the IS. None of these comrades produced alternative material to the IS at the time of these debates.

The leaders of the Irish section, together with the leaders of some other sections, backed a motion at the

2018 IEC, which whilst making criticism of the methods used by a group of the Irish leadership supposedly against a secret hostile faction, redacted this critical part of the resolution, (although they agreed it could be verbally reported) which contained no threat to security. It was effectively a gagging order to avoid the issue being centrally featured in reports to the membership of the CWI. Such methods are not in the traditions of the CWI. This critical aspect of the actions of the Irish leadership, in the resolution adopted by the IEC, was not mentioned in the verbal report given by representatives of the Irish NEC majority to the December 9th Irish NC meeting. Now, weeks later, the Irish comrades have proposed that a slightly amended version of this redacted paragraph should be included in the written version.

It is precisely because of the serious political issues and methods used for party building that it was justified and correct to form a faction in order to clarify the differences which have developed and continue to emerge. This admission by Kevin McL that there are political issues "of international significance", at the root of the dispute, adds further weight to the decision to form a faction.

Since the IEC and the publication of the political platform by the faction there has been a marked reluctance by the leadership of the "five coordinating sections" to engage in debate about the political issues that have emerged in this dispute.

At some of initial reports given to the NCs in some sections there has not been a reports involving comrades from both sides in this dispute. In the US section, a report of the IEC meeting was presented to a phone NC, with no representative of either the faction or the IS majority invited to participate. At the Belgian NC, the IS was represented only following a protest from the IS majority and a request made for it to attend. A report was given to the Greek NC, with no representative of the IS majority or the faction asked

to attend or participate (a further meeting has been arranged for January with the IS majority/faction invited). At the December Irish NC, no representative of the IS majority or the faction was invited to attend although a report was presented from the minority in the Irish NEC.

In sections where some or all of the leadership are in the faction, open debate has been encouraged and initiated. At the report given to the December English and Welsh NC, DB from the IS minority, and as part of the “five co-ordinating sections”, was invited to present a counter report with the same length of time to open and reply as the IS majority faction and his supporters were given the opportunity to argue for their point of view. It has also been agreed that at the German NC representatives of the Irish section and the “five co-ordinating sections” will attend. At the Spanish CC, DB, as a minority on the IS and as one of the spokespersons of the ‘non faction faction’ of the COC, has been invited to attend.

The comrades of the “five coordinating sections” have protested that there was no factional activity to oppose the IS in the run up to and during the IEC or since. However, the facts tell a different story. Kevin McL, in his same response to the English and Welsh EC, admits this when he states: “We think it is necessary to have two speakers each, that is a comrade from the IS, a comrade from the NEC majority, someone from the international faction and someone from one of the five sections that co-operated at the IEC in opposition to the approach of the IS”.

Since then, from the three authors of the document, ‘A crisis in the international – why we disagree with the IS faction’ - Bryan K (USA) Vincent K (Hong Kong/China/Tawain) and Andros P, (Greece) - informed the English and Welsh EC that they have agreed that Bryan K should attend the English and Welsh NC (This was communicated to the England and Welsh EC by Bryan K in an email) All of these facts clearly show that an undeclared “non-faction faction” is operating within the CWI. It is sheer hypocrisy on their part to denounce those who have openly formed a political faction while they are clearly engaged in factional activity.

The comrades from these “five co-ordinating sections” seem consistently to refer to themselves as the IEC “majority”. The narrow majority of three votes for one resolution which was mainly procedural, accepted that important differences of approach exist but rejected the argument that these were “fundamental differences of principal”, with a number of IEC members unable to attend the meeting, does not constitute a majority of the CWI on other issues.

Moreover, it is evident that these comrades are circumventing the democratic structures of the CWI and, in particular, the International Secretariat, and are breaking from the democratic centralist methods that the CWI has defended and practiced historically. For example the China/Hong K/ Taiwan section organized a school, inviting comrades from Israel and Malaysia, with no reference or discussion with the IS and no invite for the IS to participate. These methods are unacceptable in a Trotskyist democratic centralist international, like the CWI.

Again this vindicates the arguments of the International Faction for a Workers’ and Trotskyist CWI, which defends the methods of democratic centralism, as opposed to a loose federal structure.

The methods being used by the ‘non-faction faction’, at the initial stages of this debate, are completely against the traditions of the CWI and its history. We appeal to all comrades to engage with the political issues posed in this debate, in relation to political programme and party building methods, as defended by the International Faction for a Workers’ and Trotskyist CWI, and outlined in the platform that we have circulated.

Resolution by Greek EC in relation to the crisis of the International

January 4th, 2019

The Greek section has been one of the sections that, apart from the Irish section, has found themselves in the epicenter of the crisis in the International.

It is a fact that the leadership of the Greek section, its EC and its IEC members, fought with determination against what we saw as a disproportionate attack by the IS majority on the leadership of the Irish section and the threat of a split in the International, based on weaknesses or mistakes of the Irish section which the IS unjustifiably characterized as “fundamental differences of principle” and as a breach with the working class orientation and Marxist analysis of the CWI.

This is what caused the breakdown in relations between the IS and the Greek leadership but also and much more importantly, a generalized threat of a split in the International!

One month after the IEC, we still have not seen the fundamental differences between the two divergent trends in the CWI that the faction speaks and writes about (including in its Platform). This lack of fundamental political differences was also characteristic of the discussion on world perspectives, on the first day of the IEC, reflected in the World Perspectives document, which was voted unanimously (with one abstention).

Many serious allegations have been made against the Greek leadership by the faction and we have no option but to reply. This will be done in the first part of this document. In the second part we will take up, briefly, some of the political issues in this debate. Finally, at the end there is an addendum with the transcribed lead off of comrade Andros P., which has been used by minority supporters to claim that he spoke against the intervention of the IS in the sections and in favor of a federal CWI.

Part A

On democratic centralism and the right of the IS to intervene in sections

Perhaps the most staggering of all allegations against the Greek leadership, is the one that claims that we are against democratic centralism, against the IS intervening in the sections where mistakes are being made and in favor of a “federal” CWI!

The allegation is based on a fabrication: supposedly, comrade Andros, in his lead off in support of the resolution which was voted for by the majority and thus became the official position of the IEC on the last day of the IEC, Saturday December 1, said that if the IS meets opposition by the National Committee of a section it should accept it and retreat – full stop.

This is not true! This is not our position and this is not what was said!

Once the Greek EC realized that this story was being spread internationally by the faction, cde Andros sent a refutation to comrade Phillip Stott and then to the IS. In this he explained his (and our) real position, reminding the comrades of what he actually said at the IEC and proposing that the IS transcribes the recordings so that any kind of misunderstanding would be clarified. [¹]

The mail to the IS was sent on Friday 14/12, at 9:39 am (Greek time) with the request it be circulated to all comrades who had received PS’s report. There was no reply whatsoever from the IS for two days (about 48 hours and not 36 as the E&W EC majority MB of 17.12.18, states) so comrade AP had no other choice than to send it out himself to IEC members for whom he had e-mail addresses.

Despite his emphatic refutation of what was attributed to him and the absolutely clear clarification of his actual position in the above mentioned letter, the E&W EC majority and the faction, continued to distort

his position! In the MB of 17 December (i.e on the fourth day after AP's refutation was received by the IS and the E&W EC) the E&W EC majority write:

*"AP has complained about the use of 'isolated phrases and quotes' from contributions he made at the IEC and says that in Philip's report the 'positions attributed to me are not my positions'. **For that reason we checked the transcript of his contribution from which we are quoting in this reply.** Of course we recognize that points made in verbal contributions can have a different intent than that understood by some of those listening and **we would welcome clarification from AP on these issues although, as we will go onto explain, we do not think the reply published in this MB constitutes such a clarification**". (Our emphasis in bold).*

If AP's reply to PS's report does not constitute a clarification, then one can only wonder what could constitute a clarification!

We quote five excerpts from AP's reply to PS.

"The above positions attributed to me are not my positions! In fact I would be entirely opposed to anybody who expressed such positions!

"I did not ask the IS to abandon its position and views! What I did was to disagree with the heavy handed way in which the IS attempted to intervene in Ireland!

"The position I essentially expressed (not necessarily in this wording as it was not a written speech) was that when the IS meets such an opposition from the NC of a section, like it did in Ireland, it must retreat, it must take a step back, without however abandoning its views and criticisms, and look for alternative ways to argue for its positions and opinion, including within other leading bodies of the international such as the IEC.

"I believe that any transcription of the IEC recordings of the above mentioned contribution will prove what I am saying.

"Finally, democratic centralism is a pillar of the CWI. The whole Greek section and all its leading bodies and individuals abide by democratic centralism and we will

not accept this commitment to be so light-mindedly questioned".

The additional point we want to stress, here, is the following: **if the E&W EC majority did indeed check the transcript of AP's speech, why didn't they reproduce it?**

Since the transcript of the recordings was never produced by the IS or the EC majority of the E&W section, comrades Danny Byrne and Cedric Gerome, undertook to transcribe the recordings.

This is what was actually said by comrade AP in the above mentioned speech (the whole speech is presented at the end as an addendum):

"When you go to a section and you send a big delegation of 4 or 5 comrades from the IS, you go to an NC and the NC votes against you with such a massive majority, you have to accept it. It cannot be allowed that the IS, in its relations with the sections, whenever they come to a minority, whenever they are defeated, then they start a procedure to overthrow the national leadership and try to find points of support for a new leadership. Because this what happened in Ireland – and everybody knows this.

"This is a wrong method and this should not be the method of the CWI! When the IS goes to a national section and loses the vote, they have to accept the vote of the NC – it doesn't mean that they will not continue to disagree with it, but it does not mean that they start a process of overthrowing the leadership, i.e. crush the majority in order to build on the basis of a certain minority, whoever they may be, even if they are very talented comrades!"

And further on:

"Once the IS lost the vote in the Irish section, instead of taking a step back, to reconsider, and retain its views, I am not saying that they should change their opinions, or not insist in relation to the political criticisms or on differences in relation to the methods in Ireland and building of the Irish section. Of course they should say those opinions and of course they should raise it in the IEC. But they chose the center of the debate to be the ...

["breach of protocol"] and the whole idea was, having lost the majority in the Irish section, we will get a majority in the IEC and use it to attack the Irish section; and we cannot accept that!"

The faction comrades "heard" only one phrase from the whole of this excerpt, i.e. that if the IS meets opposition from an NC, it has to accept it and retreat.

In addition, on the issue of democratic centralism and on the right of the IS to intervene in sections when it thinks mistakes etc, are being made, we would like to remind comrades that the proposal made by the Greek IEC members before and during the IEC meeting for the election of a *liaison committee* to handle the crisis between the IS and the Irish leadership, proves that not only did we *not* advocate for a federal international but, on the contrary, we made concrete proposals that would help the IS, and the IEC which elected the IS, to continue to intervene in the Irish section, defending its views, despite the break in relations with the leadership of the Irish section.

Finally, we would like to make a general remark on a debate that for a big part of this international is taking place in foreign language. Comrades whose native language is English, should always think and appreciate the effort of comrades for whom English is foreign language to speak and write in a foreign language.

Comrades need a lot more time to prepare a document or a speech in foreign language but most importantly native speakers should always have in mind that comrades can never express themselves in a foreign language the same way and as accurately as in their native tongue.

On the democratic procedures followed by the E&W EC

The comrades in the EC majority of E&W reject what we say concerning the democratic rights of the majority of the IEC i.e. that they were not properly respected by the minority of the IEC in the sections where the faction is in a majority.

We gave the following example from E&W:

Phillip Stott's report of the IEC, which was a factional report, was circulated on Monday December 10 [2] without the reply to this report which had already been written and presented by Danny B. and Claire L.M. Although DB and CLM asked for their reply to be circulated at the same time as Phillips Stott's report, it was not included in the #1 Members' Bulletin which went out on the same date (10/12). **This was a decision taken by a majority of 8 to 2 in the E&W EC.** The reply to PS's report was finally sent out on Friday 14/12

These are the facts. In the understanding of the Greek Section, equal, fair and democratic treatment of the views of the minority in the E&W EC and IS would require that the two documents be sent out at the same time.

The reply of the E&W EC-majority states:

"CLM attended the IEC as a visitor from the England and Wales EC. In our view it is entirely correct democratic procedure that she discusses her views with us, as part of a collective leadership, before they are circulated to the entire membership".

In our view this approach is correct under *normal* circumstances. In the exceptional conditions of a factional situation an *"entirely correct democratic procedure"* is to simply circulate opposing views at one and the same time.

This again does not mean that the majority of the E&W EC does not have the right to discuss with minority EC members about their position – but the material should be distributed without delay *once this is requested*. In this concrete situation even if the necessity of an EC discussion prior to circulation is accepted, it does not explain why the production of a one-sided members' bulletin was necessary as the initial circular to members. It would have, of course, been possible to bring forward an EC discussion, or alternatively to delay the circulation of the first bulletin for a day or so.

As regards Andros' reply to P. Stott's report, it was sent by Andros to the IS on Friday Dec 14, at 9:39 and it was sent out to IEC members by Hannah Sell on Monday 17 Dec, at 18:29, *together with many pages of faction*

material attacking it! Fair and democratic procedure in our view would be to simply have forwarded AP's letter to the IEC members on the same day.

Since this exchange, of course, there have been many protests about the lack of a really fair procedure in this debate: Brian K (US) Rob J (Russia) Danny B and GG (Int. Secretariat) have very strongly protested to the IS majority, demanding that material produced by comrades from the majority of the IEC (who are not part of the faction) should be sent to the sections on the same email lists as those used to send out factional material, without delays and without factional introductory comments(!) by the IS majority.

IS members, DB and GG, for example, have protested to the IS majority in the following words:

"In our opinion, it is simply not democratic that the faction-dominated IS unilaterally decides how and to who such material is circulated, in complete disregard to the spirit of the resolution voted at the IEC"... [3]

BK (US) emailed Tony Saunois, the following:

"Your role as Secretary of the International should not be used to skew the debate and give a factional slant to various aspects of our democratic discussion. I demand that you send this message to the comrades who received our statement accompanied by your 'initial comments'". [4]

Democracy in the Greek section

The E&W EC goes on to point out "deficiencies" in the Greek organisation on the question of democracy. Their arguments are based on the fact that at the national aggregate, which took place on December 15 and 16, we refused to change the agenda of the meeting to include the crisis in the International and the "Irish question", as demanded by the IS majority.

What did actually happen?

About one week after the IEC and one week before the aggregate cde Niall M., responsible for the Greek section in the IS, sent an email proposing to come. We replied that comrade Niall is of course welcome to come to the aggregate, as always, but also explained

that we would not be discussing the crisis in the International. As we explained we did not want to just "throw" the issue of the crisis onto the rank and file, without any preceding preparation. "Preparation" means going through the EC and the NC and sending the debate documents to the section (internal bulletins, etc). This is no different to the procedure which was followed elsewhere – as far as we are aware, no section has yet discussed this crisis at an all members aggregate meeting.

Yet there is *one important difference compared to what is taking place in E&W: the documents have to be translated*. The debate will be conducted in Greek, not in English. Translation of the material would not be possible before the New Year.

There was another reason we insisted on not changing the agenda, as was explained to the email exchanges between Niall and Andros: *this aggregate was planned weeks in advance entirely aimed to meet the needs of the whole layer of new young people (school students in their majority) entering the organisation, beginning a process of transformation of the whole organisation*. For the first time in quite a number of years, we had a net growth in the overall membership figures of about 15, compared to last year. As AP wrote to NM:

"...In the last 6 weeks we recruited 19 youth. It is a real breakthrough in our work after years' of stagnation, major difficulties and falling morale. If these youth come to their first aggregate meeting after being in the branches not more than a few times (and some of them only once or twice) only to hear about a crisis in the International, it is as if we kick them out before they have really entered".

Unfortunately, none of these arguments had any effect on NM.

The above mentioned decision of the section was taken unanimously at an EC meeting and an extraordinary NC meeting, on December 9, two days after NM's initial email (Dec 7).

On the afternoon of Friday Dec 14, *only hours (!) before the National Aggregate was due to begin* Niall sent an email letter to AP mentioning the following:

"...This is to confirm, in case there was any misunderstanding or confusion, at this late stage, that I will not be attending your national aggregate meeting...

"...the decision of the Greek leadership to not discuss, at all, the IEC meeting at the aggregate puts me in an impossible position. How could I attend the meeting and not mention such a serious dispute...

"...The reality is that the IEC meeting will, of course, feature at the national aggregate but in an unstructured and informal manner.

"...While I appreciate some of your concerns about new youth comrades being exposed to the debate, I do not think this is reason enough not to table an IEC report at what is, after all, a national aggregate meeting of all members. Moreover, I believe that we should not underestimate the capacity of the best new youth to engage in and learn from open, democratic debate...

"...Given all this, is the Greek leadership not concerned about the possibility that Greek comrades may raise concerns about democratic procedure and debate in the section?"

We appreciate the above concerns of cde Niall but we don't agree. It has taken us many years to make a breakthrough in the youth and this for us it is simply crucial! It is the only way the section can raise itself out of the general mood of depression that prevails in the Greek working class, social movements and society. It would be entirely irresponsible to sacrifice it by throwing this youth, unprepared and uninformed, into the middle of a faction fight!

The aggregate was very successful and the mood and the morale of all the comrades was great. Nobody mentioned anything about the crisis in the International.

We don't believe that the E&W section, or any section, would have ever accepted dragging, under pressure, its rank and file into a debate over a crisis in the International, without any preparation, and without any written material provided.

The crisis will be discussed in a structured way in the

section in the coming period (an NC has been set for January 19 and 20) with all views presented, with speakers from the faction being present and material from both sides translated on an equal basis.

On the liaison committee

In the "covering note" (on the document written by Bryan K, Vincent K. and Andros P.) sent out by Tony S. on December 19, he speaks in a derogatory tone of AP's "approach" concerning the issue of a *liaison committee* (compounded by IS and IEC members) that would investigate the problems in the Irish section and help heal the relationship between the majority of the IS and the majority of the Irish leadership.

TS accuses AP of distorting reality when he (AP) writes in the above mentioned document that the agreement between AP and three IS representatives to propose a "liaison committee" did not hold for 24 hours because of the disagreement of the leadership of the Spanish section.

Let us, again, look at the facts (which are *not* denied by the IS majority members) and at TS's own words.

During a very long phone call on Thursday Nov 22, between AP and three IS representatives (PT, TS and NM) an understanding was reached that the IS would move ahead on the basis of a commonly agreed proposal for the lowering of belligerent tones and for the creation of a liaison committee made up of IS and IEC comrades to visit the Irish section for an extensive period of time and come up with proposals.

However on the next day (Friday Nov. 23) a new IEC agenda was circulated according to which Ireland would *not* be discussed in a short session towards the end of the week but would be the first and main issue of the IEC discussion and for as long as needed! This showed that the agreement between the IS representatives and the Greek leadership, no longer held and that things were escalating.

The IS comrades did not contact AP to inform the Greek leadership of their change of stance. So cde Andros sent the following email to Tony and Niall (Friday Nov. 23):

"Tony, Niall,

I follow the developments and the various exchanges with extreme worry. I need a clear answer from you. Are you scaling up or are scaling down? In the discussion we had yesterday I thought that common attempts would be made to contain the situation. That is what I passed on to the comrades here [meaning the Greek EC] and there was a feeling of relief. Does what we discussed and agreed yesterday hold?"

Tony replied a few hours later. This is how he himself describes this, in his "covering letter" on the document sent out by Bryan K, Vincent K. and Andros P. of December 19:

"...it was not in the power of these IS comrades or AP to make any such agreement! We agreed it should be explored and discussed as a possibility.

Later, following discussions with the Spanish comrades and others TS wrote to AP explaining the situation:

*'Hi Andros, I have just seen your e mail. Obviously as we explained the situation is one of a crisis. **We discussed the question of a commission as a possibility. Since then we discussed it with the Spanish who are opposed to it because of their past experiences. This will clearly need to be discussed at the IEC itself'...***" (Our emphasis in bold).

What TS writes both in the "covering letter" and in the e-mail he sent to AP, actually vindicates what AP wrote in the document of AP, BK and VK. Namely, that the initial agreement reached between AP on behalf of the Greek leadership and PT, TS and NM on behalf of the IS, broke down essentially because the Spanish leadership did not agree.

Tony did not write that the IS discussed the agreement between the 4 comrades and rejected it, he wrote

"we discussed it with the Spanish who are opposed to it"!

As regard's TS's reference *"this will clearly need to be discussed at the IEC itself..."*, as matter of fact many comrades from different sections spoke in support of the idea of a liaison committee, as raised in the Greek

resolution of Saturday Nov 24! But the IS spoke against it! In the end it was devoid of meaning as the crisis reached unprecedented levels and led to the formation of the faction.

On selected quotes and the central issues of this debate

The "debate on Ireland" took the character of a generalized crisis because the IS, in discussions with a whole number of sections in the two weeks preceding the IEC but also during the IEC itself, made a conscious and determined attempt to convince section leaderships that a split with the Irish section was inevitable because the differences with them were "crucial" and "differences of principle". This is sufficiently developed in the document of BK, AP and VK ("A crisis in the international - why we disagree with the IS faction").

Having failed to convince the IEC, the IS now deny that there was ever such an intention and claim they only gave a sincere opinion/estimation about how the debate could evolve and end.

In addition, in TS's "covering letter" to BK, AP and VK's document, TS accuses Andros, Vincent and Bryan of using isolated quotes against the faction, at the same time as they (BK, AP and VC) accuse the faction of using isolated quotes against them. This is another attempt to score points and to blur the issues.

The (mis)use of "isolated quotes" means, essentially, that phrases are taken out of context to distort the central meaning! A characteristic example of this is the isolation of a sentence of AP's speech at the IEC, mentioned above, to create the exact opposite impression of what he actually said.

The defense of the idea of a split by the IS, however, was not a matter of "isolated quotes". It was the central theme in the IS's position!

The references (in the document of BK, AP and VC) to what PT and other IS and E&W EC members said on this issue are not "isolated quotes" as TS argues, they are only a few examples used to illuminate the general

theme that characterized the approach of the IS in relation to the crisis.

Other examples that clearly demonstrate the IS's approach to the crisis are comrade PT's lead off on world perspectives at the IEC and his contribution in the discussion on Ireland. Towards the end of his lead off on World Perspectives (Monday 26 Nov) PT referred emphatically, to the **split with the Mandelites in 1965**, where, as he explained, Ted Grant and himself had turned their back on the Mandelites who were abandoning the working class. This reference, made on the first day of the IEC, was directly related to what the IS sees as happening in Ireland and a number of sections that have, since the IEC, being labeled as an unprincipled "non-faction faction".

And again, in his contribution in the discussion on Ireland (Thursday Nov 29) PT referred to the split with the **Mensheviks in 1903, not once but twice** – which of course raises the (rhetorical) question: who are the Mensheviks in the CWI?

These are not "isolated phrases" selected out of context to distort the general picture, they represent the core of the arguments of the IS and, equally important, are not denied by these comrades! This picture is in complete accordance with the approach adopted by the IS in its attempt, in the week preceding the IEC, to convince the IEC members of the need to support the IS in its confrontation with the Irish NC majority.

Our experience in Greece is telling.

The Greek example

In the preceding two weeks to the IEC, the IS approached the Greek leadership not once but many times, with the above mentioned aim.

In the first discussions, the Greek leadership was positive towards the proposal of the IS to discuss the work of the Irish section and any criticisms on the work of the Irish comrades in the upcoming IEC meeting – but of course in a balanced way. This seemed entirely normal for a meeting of the International. In the initial reports of AP to the Greek EC, he explained that it

seems that the Irish comrades have made certain mistakes and there will be a session at the IEC to discuss them. At the same time, AP did remind the IS that the Irish comrades had already accepted openly certain mistakes in the past in IEC meetings (such as the mistake with the political programme in the election campaign of 2016). AP also stressed to the IS the need to avoid unnecessary polarization and have a comradely discussion.

When the IS however began to talk about a split with the Irish section, then the Greek leadership began to react. This could not be accepted. There were differences, weaknesses and mistakes, but none of these was serious enough to justify a split!

To use historical analogies, these differences were much smaller than the differences between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, to cite just one example, on a whole number of issues. They were insignificant compared to the open betrayal of Zinoviev and Kamenev prior to the revolution of 1917, yet they were not even expelled from the party.

The more comrade AP, on behalf of the Greek leadership, reacted to the idea of a split the more pressure was applied by the IS. The last two phone calls (Wednesday 21 Nov. and Thursday 22 November) were made with AP on one end of the line and Peter T, Tony S and Niall M on the other.

The IS in a minority - The declaration of a faction

The crisis is a result of the IS's mistake of escalating the attack whenever it met resistance, instead of taking a step back to reconsider its tactics and approach.

Refusing to accept the result of the vote in the Irish NC, they tried to use the international leadership against the Irish leadership. When a number of IEC members independently came to similar conclusions about the threat of a split and stood up to resist the IS, they were branded "a secret and unprincipled faction" and the attack became more generalized. When in the course of the IEC one section's leadership after another stood up in protest, the IS discovered "crucial differences of principle", on nearly every political and

organizational issue and, also, two diverging trends in the CWI...

How can such serious allegations be “thrown” at an unspecified number of sections of the CWI, in the course of a meeting, without anything being suspected or mentioned in all the past years?

Finally, in an unprecedented step, the majority of the IS declared a faction!!

The name of the faction, *“In defence of a working class and a Trotskyist CWI”* is in itself revealing: in the minds of the leaders of the faction, in the CWI there are forces (not clearly mentioned apart from the Irish section) which have abandoned the working class and Trotskyism. This, inevitably, works in the direction of a split and prepares the way for it, because, as it is obvious, non-working class and non-Trotskyist elements cannot coexist in the same revolutionary international.

The “Declaration of the faction” starts with the following:

*“Following a week of intense discussion and debate it is clear that there are now **two trends emerging within the CWI...** There are **differences on programme, tactics, united front methods, the national question, orientation to the working class, how we intervene in the women’s movement and orientate in particular to working class women and youth**”.* (Our emphasis).

And ends (last before final paragraph):

“We appeal to all IEC comrades and members of the CWI to discuss all these questions. Should comrades agree with the main issues and methods being defended by this faction, then we invite them to support and join us to defend the methods and traditions of the CWI”.

It is the first time in the history of the CWI that the IS meets the opposition of the majority of comrades in the IEC and is voted down. As a result of the opposition they met, they reacted in a panicked manner, feeling that the authority of the IS was being put into question. The authority of the IS, however, should not

be based on pretensions that the IS makes no mistakes. It is natural to make mistakes and mistakes should simply be corrected through collective efforts.

This is the real cause of the crisis and the threat to the unity of the CWI.

Part B

The Greek section has never in the past questioned the authority of the IS despite differences that we openly discussed – and even clashed on a number of occasions. We have recognized the contribution of the IS and continue to do so despite the fact that we were quite critical when we thought it was necessary, in a similar way that they have been critical of us. We know that the IS has made mistakes in the past and we believe that there are, in general, shortcomings in the overall contribution of the IS. In the same way that we too, and many sections, have made mistakes and have shortcomings – this holds for everybody in the International. But also Lenin and Trotsky, let us not forget, have made mistakes, not to mention Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, James Connolly and other revolutionaries of the previous century.

In the previous years and decades we had differences with the IS on a number of occasions. In the ‘90s, when we had been reduced to a handful after the split with Grant and Woods (ended in a downward spiral with 45 comrades left, first half of 1997) we turned to the youth as a matter of life and death to us – then we met the persistent opposition of the IS as regards the methods of our youth work. In the beginning of the 2000s we turned to the anti-war and anti-globalization movement and were able to recruit from the youth and rebuild a sizeable section, but faced the opposition of IS members (we cannot say for certain if this reflected the views of the whole of the IS) who criticized us of abandoning the working class in favor of the youth. These allegations stopped after we were able to rebuild the section and turn more emphatically to the working class and engage in successful TU work. We had sharp differences with the IS (together with the Swedish and other comrades) over the

perspectives for the Euro. We had differences over the character of the Chinese regime for quite a number of years. We had differences over tactics in relation to SYRIZA (as is well known) including the heavy handed, bureaucratic approach of IS member St. Kimmerle with whom we had a head on clash. Also, in our opinion, and this is something we noted over the past year and is part of our criticisms of the IS, the IS has been slow in recognizing the importance of issues like the environment and women, both as regards analysis and demands and as regards initiatives.

All these, however, have never been issues that we thought of using to attack or challenge the IS, we did not see the IS in any kind of an antagonistic manner, because we see the IEC and the IS as working together in a collective and equal manner to overcome weaknesses and deficiencies and provide the best possible leadership to the international.

We too, in the Greek section have made mistakes – as is inevitable. We came to the conclusion, to site just one example, that it was a mistake to have entered SYRIZA in 2008 as an official constituent part, it would have been more correct to have send limited forces into it and continue with an independent profile and a united front approach to SYRIZA. We openly recognized we were mistaken.

All, together, as members of the IEC, we have made mistakes also. For example, we had over-optimistic perspectives in relation to the political revolution in the ex-Stalinist countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We had wrong perspectives in relation to Kazakhstan, about the potential of the working class to take power there in the short term and push our weak forces to power. We had over-optimistic perspectives in relation to the development of a socialist consciousness globally after the crisis of 2007-8 globally, etc, etc.

These mistakes do not negate the tremendous contribution and historic achievements of the CWI! It is not disastrous, nor is it a problem to make mistakes of this sort, it is inevitable! The point is to be able to recognize them, collectively, correct them in time and

retain a sense of proportion.

Actually many of the differences that emerged in the previous years and decades in the CWI were of a more serious character than the ones today, but they never lead to such a crisis. *The differences over tactics in relation to SYRIZA, for example, were a serious issue.* The IS initially supported Stephan K. in arguing for the full entry of the Greek section into SYRIZA in 2012. But they never went to the extent of raising the allegation of us abandoning the mass organisations and therefore the working class masses.

The IEC can assist the IS in an essential way. There has to be a collective working relationship between the IS and the rest of the IEC. The IEC is the highest organ in the International, between the congresses. The IS has to accept the control and the check of the IEC, not in words but in deeds.

Accepting control and check does not diminish the IS's authority and does not question democratic centralism. On the contrary it increases the IS authority and strengthens democratic centralism. This is an important part of fighting for a democratic centralist, as opposed to a "federal" CWI.

The Platform

The Platform produced by the faction has not added much to what had already been known. The *"fundamental differences of principle"* between the *"two trends"* of opinion developing in the CWI did not become clearer after reading the platform.

The platform essentially repeats the criticisms towards the Irish leadership made in the previous documents and during the IEC discussions. In addition, it attacks all the comrades and sections who opposed the IS on this issue and the resolution voted for by the majority of the IEC, without however bringing any concrete examples on the differences on *"programme, tactics, united front methods, the national question, orientation to the working class...."*.

The differences that arose in this debate, which need to be discussed in the immediate period ahead, and are reflected in the Platform, are not of a crucial or

fundamental character and they should not threaten the unity of the International! A proper, collective effort by the IS and the IEC can help the International overcome political weaknesses and weaknesses in its intervention. In this way the crisis can be overcome.

Defending the mistakes made by the Irish comrades?

Before we go into the specific political differences as we see them, there is one point that needs to be answered again. The faction declaration repeats an “argument” frequently raised by its supporters: that a number of sections reacted to the IS, supposedly, in order to shield the Irish leadership from criticism.

This is not true. The Greek section, as other sections, reacted and defended not the Irish section’s mistakes, but its right to remain in the ranks of the CWI where its possible mistakes and deficiencies could be discussed and corrected!

We defended the right of the Irish section to make mistakes and try to correct them, as they clearly are. Every section makes mistakes and the issues in Ireland are similar to ones that have been made by other sections in the past, that are possibly being made by other sections at present, and which will continue to be made by sections in the future.

Mistakes by the Irish comrades

Mistakes were made by the Irish section in relation to the programme of the 2016 elections. This is clear and is accepted by the Irish comrades. They themselves explain that at that time the main parties proposed a further lowering of corporate tax, which is at the heart of the “Celtic Tiger”. The SWP and PBP were arguing to maintain it at 12.5%, while our comrades argued for 25%, i.e. a doubling of the rate. This would have brought them immediately in direct confrontation with the whole Irish establishment. The comrades should have prepared the membership, the periphery and the voters and the broader workers movement for the counter reaction such measure would provoke. They should have included in the election material warnings

of capital flight and link this demand to socialist measures, such as the non-payment of debt, except on the basis of proven needs, and the need to nationalize the finance and building sectors under workers’ control, **as they had done in their minority report for the parliamentary commission on the financial crisis only four weeks before election date under enormous press attention.**

This was a mistake but the Irish comrades have accepted that mistake, and in an open and honest way: at the Irish NC, the CWI School and again in the IEC that followed that election campaign.

There is indeed a gap between the public position of the party in Ireland and its actual membership. The party taps very well into a mood, but that mood has not yet been transformed into a permanent active participation, let alone massive recruitment to the party. Without denying the existence of subjective shortcomings, this phenomena is part of the objective complications many sections are faced with. But the party in Ireland, more than any other section, is fighting at a level well above its weight. This explains the issue with the number of comrades who work full time in political work compared to the membership of the party. There is no question about that, but the Irish comrades also see this as an issue. However the figure mentioned, gives a vastly exaggerated picture: less than half of those comrades actually work as party full timers. The question however is what does the IS actually propose concretely. If you have MP’s then it is absolutely inevitable that you will have a big number of comrades paid by the state and dedicated to MP work. Up until now we have not seen a concrete proposal by the IS on this issue.

In relation to the actions of C. there were a number of issues and certain mistakes have been accepted by the Irish comrades as is made clear in the resolution of the IEC which they assisted in drafting and voted for.

These “deficiencies” however are miles away from any idea of abandonment of the working class and a capitulation to petit bourgeois feminism and reformist pressures.

As of the criticism on the profile of the party in the election campaign, the comrades have shown that they are aware of the problem and are discussing, as they explained at the IEC, to stand in the name of the Socialist Party and not Solidarity in the next European election.

The period

Politically we live, indeed, in a complex period, in the post-Stalinist era and the post 2007-8 crisis period. The working class has not been able to face the offensive of the bourgeoisie globally and socialist consciousness has not developed on a major scale as a result of the crisis and the attacks. At the same time very important movements are developing and new layers are being radicalized, eg in the US, Ireland, Spain, in France in the past couple of months, etc. As a general rule, however, class and socialist consciousness is developing at a slower pace than desired and expected. This, inevitably, creates contradictions and problems with our work.

Also, as was expected, the new left formations have all capitulated to one degree or another to the pressures of the ruling class and the same is the case with the Trade Union leaders on a global scale. We should also remember that as a result of the lack of mass revolutionary leadership the mighty revolutions in Northern Africa and the Middle East of 2011 were completely derailed.

Partly as a result of these factors, mass radicalization takes new forms and finds expression in different ways and movements. Such movements took the form of the “occupy movement” and the “Indignados” of the previous period, of the anti-global movement before that, of important struggles against environmental disasters, of the “Umbrella movement” in Hong Kong, of youth movements of different character in different countries, of movements of the sort of the “yellow jackets” in France and, more importantly, in the recent years, of the movement in defense of women’s rights which is a global phenomenon.

The importance of new formations and new phenomena

The above mentioned movements (“occupy”, women’s, environmental or on specific issues) represent very important developments, characteristic of our epoch and in stark contradiction to previous decades when all these movements were as a general rule reflected inside and through the mass organisations of the working class (SD and Communist parties and trade unions). The turn/orientation to these movements is not only desirable but absolutely necessary for the sections of the International in order that they are able to retain their correct orientation to mass movements and have a serious impact in the working class.

The intervention in such movements can be of crucial importance for the building of our forces particularly in conditions where the working class finds itself in a lull, or is faced with a number defeats. This is particularly the case, from a subjective point of view, if we have a weak presence in the unions (because of our limited forces) and the working class and TU movement is in retreat.

Mandelism

Any parallel drawn between the turn to the women’s issues and the youth by sections of our international and the abandonment of the working class by the Mandelites in the ’50s and ’60s is unacceptable!

The Mandelites developed a “theoretical” scheme according to which the working class had been “aristocratized” or “bourgeoisified” and they turned to the students and guerilla movements as the new revolutionary subjective factors. Nothing of the sort, regarding petit bourgeois feminism or environmental movements, is taking place in any of the sections of the CWI. No evidence whatsoever was presented that anything like this is taking place in the Irish section.

Women’s movements and the working class

No evidence has been provided that the Irish section is in a process of abandoning a working class orientation,

as is claimed by the minority faction. On the contrary, the Irish section has shown a great ability to link itself to the working class and to play the role of a catalyst to mobilize big masses, create new traditions and score victories of historic dimensions, both for the working class and for the CWI. The Irish section has reestablished traditions about what it means to be a public representative of the working class, long forgotten and unknown to the new generations, like for example MPs going to jail in order to serve the class which they represent.

The attempt of the faction to counter pose the movement for Repeal in Ireland to the working class, is completely wrong. While all movements against oppression are objectively “cross-class” movements, the movement for Repeal was predominately a working class movement, as has been successfully demonstrated by the voting patterns in the working class areas and other arguments and the material that the Irish comrades presented at the IEC. The fact that the trade unions didn’t organize a campaign on this issue and didn’t want to take a stance (with the exception of some of them at a very late stage) does not take away from the main class basis and the class character of the movement and the class orientation of the Irish comrades to it. Overall there is no important movement in history which is a “clear” working class movement, much less a clear “revolutionary movement”, as Lenin himself explained. Working class and petit bourgeois elements are bound to coexist, even in cases of general strikes, the traditional powerful weapon of the working class (for example in the years of the Memoranda in Southern Europe).

The document of the IS on “Identity Politics”, which essentially is not a document on identity politics but a critique of the work of ROSA, is unconvincing. The reply of the Irish comrades actually clarifies the issues quite well. The reality is that the work of the Irish comrades around ROSA is pioneering work. ROSA’s 15 point programme is a clear class-oriented programme. The pamphlets written by the Irish comrades on socialist feminism and on Repeal give clear answers on Identity Politics and have a very skillfully developed transitional

programme that links the fight against women oppression with the struggle for a socialist society. This is also clearly manifested in the public speeches and videos of comrades like Ruth C.

Perhaps there are mistakes on individual leaflets, or elsewhere, yet mistakes are always inevitable, particularly when mass initiatives of such scale are undertaken by any section. These should be discussed concretely and corrected and they should not be used as an opportunity to describe a general “Mandelite” trend/method in the Irish section that clearly is not there.

The Trade Unions

The role of the trade unions today is quite different from the times when the system was able to show growth and concessions/reforms were possible. Also there are major differences in relation to trade union traditions, from country to country. A strategic orientation to the TUs is necessary under all conditions, but the application and character of this orientation can differ significantly from country to country, depending on the country’s historic traditions and the state in which the TU movement finds itself. There are countries, like Britain where the TUs have a very special weight in society and in mass consciousness, due to historical reasons: in Britain the Unions came into existence before anywhere else, it was the Unions that formed the Labor Party and there is only one TUC. In most other countries the SD or Communist parties (with few exceptions) formed the biggest Unions and in many countries each major political party has its own trade union Federations and Confederation (TUC).

Before we elaborate a bit on this, we want to stress that in relation to the Trade Union work of the Irish section, the minority stress the “weakness” of this work in Southern Ireland, recognizing that TU work in the North is much more developed. The Irish section, however, is one – there are no two Irish sections. The trade union work of the section must be taken as a whole.

A real and successful orientation to the working class demands a flexible approach to the way demands are raised in relation to the Unions, particularly in the sense of “appealing” to the national leaderships of trade unions. In the case of major movements of the working class which do not pass through the structures of the Unions, particular care is needed before raising criticisms of comrades for not making sufficient appeals to the Unions. Greece is one such example and it can perhaps help to illuminate the different processes taking place in different countries.

Trade Unions and the case of Greece

As is well known, in the case of Greece the “official” trade union movement not only failed to provide leadership in the years of the Memoranda but supported the “Yes” in the referendum of 2015 and, more recently, formed a “Social Pact” with “professional unions” (small entrepreneurs, lawyers, farmers, etc) which bases itself on the political programme of big Greek capital (the “Confederation of Greek Industry”). As we reported to international meetings at the time of the mass struggles against the Memoranda, the union leaders would call general strikes and rallies under the general pressure of the mass movement, but they would “plan” them in a way that they would be sure to fail. In times when not only the advanced layers of the working class but also workers on a rank and file level would speak of the need of an all-out general strike in order to overthrow the government and the austerity policies, the Union leaders would call isolated general strikes that could have no real effect. As a result of their policies, the Greek TUC leaders could not appear on the rallies they called because they would be shouted down or even physically attacked.

Especially after the defeat of the Greek working class under SYRIZA it is not possible to “put demands” on the GSEE (Greek TUC) to lead the fight against austerity! This would be incomprehensible to the mass of the working class, who will think that we live on a different planet. The words “trade unionist” and “trade unionism” have entered the daily vocabulary of the

mass of the population to mean, metaphorically, someone who cheats, who lies and who is corrupt.

What is necessary in such conditions is to strongly attack and expose the TU leadership, explain what they should have done if they really represented the working class, and also explain that what is required is the need to rebuild the trade union movement starting from rank and file level. However, *although this is necessary propaganda, its effect is minimal at the present phase of the movement in Greece!* For example, despite our attempts to establish the healthy aspects of TU work, and show that not all trade unionists are corrupt bureaucrats, we are losing ground as regards our TU positions, as we expected, essentially due to the objective situation.

In conditions like the ones in Greece our attempts should mainly be directed towards appealing or putting demands on local and rank and file unions on the level of specific workplaces. But even then things are not straight forward. When there is a major clash with the capitalists, there are quite a number of cases where local unions take the side of the bosses.

In Greece, we have the experience of the mass movements in defense of the environment, the most important of which have been that of the gold mines in Chalkidiki, Northern Greece, and the one in Volos about air pollution (produced by industry burning garbage for fuel) in the last few years. In both these cases we had unprecedented mass movements, in the case of Volos even surpassing the mass mobilizations at the time of the height of the anti-Troika movements. In both these cases the official unions, both locally and on an area basis, were on the side of the bosses (defending government policies) and against these movements.

Once again, in these cases a correct orientation to the working class cannot be pursued through an orientation to the official union structures. On the contrary the union leaders have to be severely criticized for the positions they take, anything else would sound incomprehensible to the average worker. This again does not mean that the workers and trade

unionists in particular workplaces should not be approached.

But of course it is always a matter of priorities and a sense of correct balance, given our limited resources. In the case of Volos, the attempt to approach the workers of the major factory causing pollution was consciously made, by our comrades and the local city committee, but without success.

Faced with the bureaucratisation of the trade union leaderships we should orientate to the rank and file of the unions and try to build opposition. This is what the sections of the CWI do and this is the basis of our trade union work. Yet this does not always prove possible or meaningful in the short term. What matters here is not only the number of workers who are formally members of the Unions. The question is if there are structures which allow any kind of intervention and if workers do take part in any union structures or activity.

In Greece at the moment the majority of the main unions will only call a meeting/general assembly every 2–3 (or even 4) years, and this only because it is legally required in order to hold the union elections. In the union meetings, in general, the number of workers that take part is incredibly low. As a general rule, only a few dozen will gather in workplaces of thousands of workers (eg in a big hospital, or in the new technologies) and this will usually develop into a “dog fight” between different trade union factions, controlled by different political parties. For our TU comrades of course this is by necessity a field of intervention. In such conditions correct tactics and orientation would mean to orientate to the working class outside the union structures, with different campaigns (without of course abandoning existing trade union work or any possible openings for new ones) but also turning to other layers which are in a process of radicalization (women, youth, etc) recruit, train them and then turn them to the Unions, at a later stage, under better conditions.

Dangers

We agree with the minority faction in stressing the

dangers of adaptation to reformist pressures. These pressures are always present – in the past, in the present and will be so in the future. But these dangers threaten every section. They certainly exist in relation to the Irish section which is the section with the highest degree of exposure to mass pressures – it has the biggest membership compared to the size of the population, the biggest involvement in mass working class movements and, of course, parliamentary representation. But the idea that there is an imminent danger of the abandonment of a revolutionary strategy/party taking place in the Irish section has not been backed up with real evidence.

The National Question and the United Front

Finally, differences have been mentioned in relation to the United Front and the National Question. Nothing substantial was shown to exist at the IEC discussions, where it was recognized that concerning Ireland there were differences of emphasis or some formulations in some articles which were later corrected as so often happens in all our sections. We waited for the faction’s *Platform* to clarify or substantiate the claims of fundamental differences over these issues, as was initially proclaimed by the faction *Declaration*. We saw nothing of the sort both concerning Ireland and the rest of sections who supposedly constitute the trend abandoning the working class and Marxism.

Conclusion

If there are indeed fundamental divergences from the ideas of Marxism then a split in the International is not only inevitable but necessary! But if the differences are of a secondary character, differences of emphasis or mistakes and weaknesses that can be corrected, a split is criminal

Even more so in a period where, despite important opportunities and revolutionary potential, the working class movement faces retreat in many countries, there is a lot of confusion in its ranks and the subjective factor, the revolutionary party, is weak.

Despite the difficulties of this period the CWI has

managed to emerge as the biggest revolutionary international globally. Though our forces are still small, this is a tremendous achievement of historical significance. This historic achievement should be guarded with extreme care!

The differences which have now emerged, through the “Irish crisis” are in no way more significant than differences that existed in the past in the CWI. A lively international will inevitably have differences in its ranks in all times and under all periods. Differences are always, inevitably, related to objective factors – this is not a sufficient factor to justify splits. In a lively International different sections will open new inroads and others will follow; mistakes will be made and will be corrected.

The higher leading body in the International between

congresses is the IEC. It elects the IS and has not only the right but the duty to check, control and correct the IS. The IS should look at the positive sides of this, it should not have a defensive attitude when IEC members think it is mistaken and want to correct it. Time, as a general rule, shows who is right and who is wrong. Patience in any such debate is absolutely necessary.

Impatience will lead to a new escalation and the danger of a split.

It is still possible for the CWI to come out of this situation united and strengthened, to intervene successfully in present days’ struggles and the even bigger ones that loom ahead, build the forces of the revolution and prepare humanity for the future, which is what we have dedicated our lives to.

ADDENDUM: AP’s lead off in support of the final Resolution approved by IEC

This is the lead off given by Andros P. in defence of the Resolution adopted by the majority at the end of the IEC, by 24 full members’ votes in favor and 21 against and 6 alternate members in favor and 4 against. It has been transcribed from the official recordings of the meeting by comrades Danny B. and Gedric G.

I had not sufficient time to prepare, but will manage to raise the main points.

This is an unprecedented development, could never have imagined to be in this position and nobody wanted to be in this position.

The formation of a faction by the IS, which is in charge of the whole International, is an astonishing development and I don’t know if there is a precedent! The question in the mind of every comrade here is where do we go from here? Is it possible to avoid a split as we have been talking about all week?

What we are talking about, here, is the work and building and sacrifices of numerous, innumerable comrades for 6 decades. In the recent period we were raising and speaking triumphantly, and justifiably so,

about the fact that the CWI now is the biggest international in the Trotskyist left! But once we arrive at this point we see internal processes developing which are characteristic of certain sectarian groups which lead to splits! And this is going to be an extremely damaging split if it’s allowed to develop.

Comrade Clive said in previous discussion, and another comrade (can’t remember the name) that the creation of a faction doesn’t necessarily mean a crisis or a negative development and is not necessarily a bad thing. Then I would invite the comrades to mention another example in the history of the CWI where a faction did not find itself outside the ranks of a CWI or where a faction didn’t lead to a split. Therefore the tradition we have, despite abstract/theoretical

considerations, is that when a faction develops it has devastating effects on the sections and leads to a split.

Is it possible to avoid it now at this last minute? We make an appeal to the members of the IEC who are not part of the faction to make an attempt. Although we are not at all sure that, even if everybody else tries to put a brake, we are not sure it will be put.

The issue started from an important but not fundamental issue, what is now being described as ... [“breach of protocol”] in the Irish section. When this issue was raised in all the sections that I have in mind, (all the sections!) the Greek section responded “ok there are mistakes, let’s discuss them”. But then the speed with which things developed is actually astonishing. The “breach” became the central issue of a clash with the Irish leadership and then became a central issue of a debate at the IEC and directly linked to the threat of a split and the IS put the threat of a split on the table!

I am in the CWI for quite a few decades I am a member since 1982, never, never before has any difference of opinion been accompanied by the threat of a split! And the threat was very clear, let us be in no doubt about it!

I am not only talking about the discussions with... I don’t know how many sections, at least with the Greek section, in which as I reported at the IEC huge pressure was put on us to accept that a split with the Irish is inevitable! We were not willing to accept it and that’s where our lines with the IS diverged!

We felt we had an obligation to send a very clear message to the IS that if they were determined to crush the Irish leadership –because this was the plan and I will come to it– if they are determined to crush the Irish leadership then they will have to crush the Greek leadership, then they will have to crush the Belgian and Swedish leadership and then they will have to crush the US section’s leadership. This, was a clearly defensive move and an attempt to make the IS realize that it’s not an issue to allow for the crushing the Irish majority – and the only way we could do it was to raise a wall of resistance to stop the IS in this process!

Because, you see comrades, the IS had their position and they brought it to the Irish section and they lost the majority! Whatever the circumstances and whatever everybody thinks subjectively (that they are right, because everybody can think they are right) but then you have some objective criteria! And what are the objective criteria?

When you go to a section and you send a big delegation of 4 or 5 comrades from the IS, you go to an NC and the NC votes against you with such a massive majority, you have to accept it. It cannot be allowed that the IS, in its relations with the sections, whenever they come to a minority, whenever they are defeated, then they start a procedure to overthrow the national leadership and try to find points of support for a new leadership! Because this what happened in Ireland – and everybody knows this.

This is a wrong method and this should not be the method of the CWI. When the CWI goes to a national section and loses the vote, they have to accept the vote of the NC – it doesn’t mean that they will not continue to disagree with it, but it does not mean that they start a process of overthrowing the leadership, i.e. crush the majority in order to build on the basis of a certain minority, whoever they may be, even if they are very talented comrades. This is a fundamental mistake by the IS and this is the cause of the crisis!

And many comrades can speak in this discussion and say that those who defend the Irish do not criticize them...

I think that our intervention into this discussion and other comrades’, have recognized that there are weaknesses, problems, deficiencies, mistakes (I don’t know which word to use) in the way the Irish comrades treated the issue. The Irish comrades themselves recognize that such mistakes were made in the resolution you have in your hands.

But the question is that, in this IEC, what is the dominant issue? What is the dominant issue? The “breach” or the attempt of the IS to split the Irish section?

Of course, it’s the splitting with the Irish section!

When we raised from the beginning that the aim of the IS it to crush the majority which would mean a split the section

—and in our opinion would mean destroying everything which we have built in Ireland in the last years— then many comrades thought that the Greeks are exaggerating again... But look at the result of this IEC. The IEC has come to the conclusion that we raised in the beginning that this is the way that the IS is approaching the whole issue – and we said it was going to lead to a split and this is the way it is leading now. This is why we put our emphasis on criticizing the IS because we thought that the “breach”, while it is important, was a secondary issue.

Once the IS lost the vote in the Irish section, instead of taking a step back, to reconsider – and retain its views, I am not saying that they should change their opinions, or not insist in relation to the political criticisms or on differences in relation to the methods in Ireland and building of the Irish section... Of course they should say those opinions and of course they should raise it in the IEC. But they chose the center of the debate to be the “breach” and their whole idea was, having lost the majority in the Irish section, we will get a majority in the IEC and use it to attack the Irish section! And we cannot accept that!

The comrades have drawn up a resolution and we say clearly and we say it again that there is no anti-IS faction. We disagree with the IS on a specific approach to a crisis developing in Ireland. There is no aim of overthrowing or changing the IS or getting a majority here to change the IS. We respect the work of every comrade on the IS and the work they have made to build this international until now.

But we are allowed to disagree! We are allowed to say “No” to the IS! We are the IEC, a higher body than the IS, we check the IS, that’s our role! This is the first time in the history of the international that the IEC is checking the IS. Many comrades (I cannot speak about a minority or majority yet it must be put to a vote later on) many comrades have said “we do not agree with the IS”.

The IEC should be proud of this stand – this is the first time it has happened and it has happened even from

very young comrades with little experience, members of the IS. This means that in the CWI there is a powerful cadre being developed with an independent thinking that can stand on their own in the struggle to build a revolutionary party of the working class, stand on their own because independent thinking is the A-Z, is the decisive and most important factor in the attempt to build the CWI.

The IS cannot accept this, the fact that for the first time many comrades come out and say that they are mistaken. So how do they react? The declaration of a faction is the organizational form that their reaction is taking! But what of the political form?

From the first day comrade Peter, for whom every one of us has the maximum respect, in his contribution referred to the split with the Mandelites! Who was he referring to? I’m not sure about the words, English not being my first language, but you cannot start a debate by mentioning the split with the Mandelites in 1965. You cannot start a debate with a comrade saying that there are points of disagreements, we don’t want a split but [... recording not clear for 2/3 words – DB, GG] the split is always there on the table. Comrade Hannah again, with all respect again for her contribution, she refused to remove the possibility of a split from the table!

You cannot have a discussion, comrades, on political issues when you have the threat of a split over your head!

And that is why the discussions in the last days were so polarized, because everybody was thinking in whatever they said, that the contribution I make, I may contribute or not towards the prospect of a split on the table.

Again referring to comrade Peter, in his latest contribution on Ireland (he spoke for something like 20 minutes) he mentioned twice the split of 1903, twice in one contribution – the implication is simple: in this room there are Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. This was what the split of 1903 was about! Who are the Bolsheviks and who are the Mensheviks?

How can we start a discussion by establishing we are in a 1903 situation and a split! I think Peter was preparing

the forces and comrades here to tell them to support the IS or that they need to join forces to fight against the rest of us who don't agree and in this way things will be pulled to a split.

But look also at the title of the faction of the IS resolution. Creation of a faction "In defense of a working class and Trotskyist CWI"! So the issue of the working class and orientation to the working class is on the table. Because what those of us, initially the Irish and then it became many, are accused of, is that we follow tactics and an orientation which is pushing us away from the working class and the need of a proletarian character of the CWI. On this basis the comrades of the IS and the other comrades who belong to the faction say that there are fundamental differences of principle on all these issues – perspectives, orientation etc. I'm not elaborating... what you have heard...

We are not seeing that yet. We are not blind, we know there are differences but we have not seen differences which are differences of principle and should therefore lead to a mass war inside the CWI for who will get the majority.

When I read and listened to the differences here which are real on many levels... perspectives, the national question, united front, etc I thought that our differences for example compared to the differences between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg were minor. Their differences were much more important but their unity was never put into question. The differences between Lenin and Trotsky for many years and even when they were both in the Bolshevik party and after they took power, they were more important in many ways than the differences we have today which are suspicions of the possibility of serious differences – and I say suspicions because this was the original terminology used by the cdes themselves.

For example if we look at Hannah's document it doesn't speak about decisive political differences etc. She speaks about...

(Dispute about time from PT and others...)

Let me speak... You will have time to speak later... What's your problem?

In the initial document of HS she writes about possibilities, tendencies, and implications, implying that things may be developing in a dangerous direction. This is the theme. When did these "dangers" become "differences of principle"?

Anyway, because I don't have time, we are proposing a congress in January 2020 which is also proposed by the faction, there is agreement on that. We agree with the idea of the IEC in the meantime I think the faction also proposes that, there is agreement on that. But we also propose a pre congress organizing committee.

The pre congress period is starting from tomorrow that's the reality of the situation. The IS, which is now a factional IS in the service of a faction in a revolutionary party, cannot have an objective approach to the way the pre congress discussion debate period is taking place therefore we are proposing a congress org committee and we propose parity we don't want to enter a debate about who is a majority, minority etc. We propose parity 3 from the faction and 3 from the rest of the meeting, 3 individual comrades.

If you want to discuss the numbers we can, but we propose parity, 3 members of the IS who belong to the faction and 3 from the IEC. In discussions with comrades, Danny is willing to be a part of it, comrade Tom Crean and Eric from Belgium are being proposed by the rest of us. This is a proposal in order to guarantee that there is a fair discussion in the international. The role of the committee will not be to replace the IS in its day to day work with the sections etc but it is to organize the pre congress discussion which means that they decide when documents are presented and distributed and they decide when visits to the sections to discuss this particular issue.

We urge the comrades... I am summing up... to realize that what happened in this IEC was a serious mistake of the IS, which the IS was not willing to correct and as we all know if you don't correct a mistake then you go to a 2nd and 3rd and then you go down the cliff. This is what happened with the IS: it refused to listen to our voices from the sections, when we said "stop". The refusal from the IS to put a brake on this led from one mistake to another and now to this tragic situation – because whatever the comrades say we know that the

creation of a faction, in this case by the IS, opens the way for a split.

We ask the comrades to vote for our resolution and also to vote against the IS resolution because the IS resolution apart from the title of the faction resolution which is very provocative...

(Sascha complains about distinction between faction statement and resolution)

If the comrades... Sascha, wants us to distinguish between the faction which includes the IS and the IS proposal to the IEC, on formal grounds, we can do it and make this concession. The reality of the situation is that it's proposed by the same forces... Therefore we say vote against the resolution of the IS because it's an

attempt to cover up the issues and give the arm to the faction to start its campaign inside the CWI which means starting a war in the CWI. Because what we had in this IEC was not a comradely debate but a war started by the IS – of course they will disagree...

And vote for our resolution which shows that the IEC checks the IS, which lists the issues that have to be debated in the next period starting with perspectives, the method and building the profile, and includes the political issues, whether that is the national question or ID politics or women's issues. And also vote for our resolution because we are proposing the COC which is the only way to show that in the next 12 months there will be friendly comradely debate and lower tones.

Preparation of our forces for the 2020s

A contribution to the discussion, with respect to all comrades

IEC members Shahar Benhorin and Yasha Marmer (Israel-Palestine)

January 12th, 2019

Part 1

Convulsions

1. The internal crisis which has exploded and is still rocking our international reflects a series of imbalances which have developed in the course of recent years, in the context of our collective tenacious facing up to the complex objective circumstances of the post-2008 crisis-ridden capitalism.

2. The 2008 crisis has thrown the world into a period characterized by highly increased instability in every realm and the accelerated development of trends of revolution and counter-revolution. The revolutionary wave of 2011 demonstrated forcefully how in this era, explosive and internationally-contagious mass struggles could unfold and objectively pose the very question of power in society.

3. Compared with the revolutionary events that swept Latin America around the turn of the millennium, the profound crisis in the global capitalist system has meant a sharply more generalized potential for revolutionary crises globally, including in the most developed capitalist countries.

4. Though this is, of course, not a linear process, we've seen positively in this decade how the gap between the acute objective crisis of capitalism and the lagging-behind mass consciousness among the working class generally tends to narrow. In many countries, and most importantly at the heart of the main imperialist powers, we see processes of radicalization and a shift to the left of significant working class and middle layers. This is especially sharp among the youth. Notwithstanding dominant political confusion, an important feature has been the growing mass hostility to the ruling classes, the popularization of at least the title of 'socialism', some

anti-capitalist ideas, methods of class struggle, and more significant opening to Marxist ideas.

5. A chain of explosive economic, social, political and environmental crises saw the eruption of dramatic, stormy, historic mass movements, at times bringing down governments, dictators in the Middle East and Africa, and, as in the case of Ireland, old relics of reactionary oppressive laws. The US is in historic turmoil; in France some elements of a pre-revolutionary situation developed with the Yellow Vests uprising; In China, there are signs for a more open revolt by sections of workers and youth. Processes of radicalization manifest themselves internationally in new phases of militant, radicalized and mass struggle of various liberation movements, including national, women, LGBT, anti-racism. The environmental movement has also entered a new, more radicalized phase, with unprecedented mass protests, featuring at times anti-capitalist elements.

6. At the same time, the crisis of bourgeois democracy and of liberalism is developing, at this stage, in the absence of the subjective factor of an intervening self-conscious working class, organized around a revolutionary program. The development of mass consciousness and mass political organization and leadership are of course dialectically linked. The bourgeoisification of former workers' parties in the context of decades of neo-liberal counter-revolution and particularly the disarming effects in the aftermath of the fall of Stalinism remain still indeed complicating factors for ideological and organizational re-grouping. While capitalist scare propaganda against socialism and the triumphalist mantras glorifying their decaying system are far less effective today, the drastic ideological and organizational disarmament of the working class tolls its price from the contemporary movements, clouding their objective tasks.

7. Important political developments on the left — Sanders, Corbyn, Mélenchon, Podemos — with populist and reformist features, alongside some revival of independent unionization struggles of young workers, reflect a historic leap but still a very early, vague, stage in the direction of re-grouping and re-building of a modern working-class socialist movement. This process is protracted and complicated further by the extremely weak approaches and programs of most influential forces and points of reference on the Left — or at this stage on the Left, with Syriza serving as a severe warning sign against the potential disastrous capitulations of such anti-austerity leaderships when finally faced with a historic test of power. AMLO's shift to the right in Mexico is another indication for such a danger.

8. Given growing instability and polarization, there's been an increase in authoritarian repressive measures by capitalist governments, with 'democracies' adopting more Bonapartist features. A bloody testimony to the extreme weakness of the Left internationally in this era of globalized crisis is reflected in the rise of new aggressive vicious right-wing populism — in the form of the Trump regime, the more far-right Bolsonaro, the strengthening of Le Pen, the Lega, the FPÖ, etc — and even cases of development of neo-fascist paramilitary gangs. The 'whip of counter-revolution' awakens resistance and further left radicalization, but those moods and movements develop, obviously, with their own complications.

9. The globalized capitalist crisis since 2008 led to sharpened tensions between the national ruling classes, and further added to the already growing complications of the national question, re-enforcing and re-sharpening national and ethnic schisms. Simultaneously, in some cases, working class resistance to austerity and other attacks has been channeled to and refueled national independence movements, as has been expressed in the Catalan and Scottish rebellions. There's been an element of that in the working-class Brexit vote against the capitalist EU.

10. Development to a certain extent of important manifestations of internationalist solidarity of workers and the oppressed has at times cut across bourgeois

national chauvinism and right-wing populist jingoism and xenophobia. At the height of the 'Arab Spring' revolutionary wave of 2011, workers and youth united vividly across religious sectarian lines. The lack of a working-class political alternative has tragically opened the door for bloody counter-revolutionary forces in the Middle East and elsewhere. The worst refugee crisis for decades, while first triggering waves of working-class internationalism, eventually served as a focal point for reaction. The anti-refugee policies of the European Union and national governments were not countered by a class-based and well-organized mass movement from below. Instead, aggressive right-wing populism exploited the reality of a material race to the bottom.

11. For the same central reason of a weakened working-class movement, the more radicalized phase of liberation movements of women, LGBT and people of color has seen spawning influence of a whole range of petty-bourgeois, and essentially divisive, 'Identity Politics' ideas — although these have lessened influence among the broader layers drawn into struggle.

12. The intervention of our forces in living struggles in the course of this decade acquired some impressive gains, first and foremost the unprecedented breakthrough in the US, which was achieved also through and despite of some sharp internal debates ignited by a challenging period. This should be a reminder to all that our whole international can very well and should come out of the current process of debate — **if handled constructively** — stronger and better.

13. The coming world congress will be an opportunity to produce more elaborated documents on the world perspectives, as a basis to better guide the building efforts of our Marxist international in preparation for the next decade. Nevertheless, the recent world perspectives document of the IEC, adding to a series of unanimously agreed perspectives documents in recent years, should serve as another testimony to the deep principled political agreement existing among all sides in the developing debate in the CWI — obviously, a level of agreement, tested over years of sacrifices, far greater

than with any other forces on the revolutionary left internationally.

Stage of factional rupture

14. However, we're now faced, temporarily, with a stage of a factional rupture in our ranks, which, unfortunately, has taken over the international as an earthquake, with potentially catastrophic fallout. We agree that the fundamental reason for the deterioration in relations and for the escalation of the conflict is real political differences, although those still need to be explored.

15. Debates at international level in recent years were of a more limited type — such as on the characterization of China, tactics regarding Syriza, principled approach to the PYD in Syria, etc. These contributed to political clarity.

16. It goes without saying that the IS and leading IEC comrades are not infallible, although there's no need to list a score board of who were 'correct' and who weren't in different past debates. This would not only possibly suggest a one-sided picture of more carefully phrased views and positions that were presented in the course of those debates, and not only omit many other cases when the same comrades were strongly vindicated — but would also not help to clarify the political questions in our current debate. The elected IS embodies unparalleled experience.

17. Simultaneously, we're concerned with the way that some IS comrades have been 'throwing in' to the debate every possible disagreement at hand, including raising very basic questions about the work of some sections, which could have been easily asked in the course of the recent years or even decade. How is this an attempt to constructively advance principled agreement over raised issues?

18. We're not yet sure if the current sharp nature of the factional conflict indicates, ultimately, sharpness of the actual political disagreements in themselves, apart from around more immediate questions of conduct. Allowing the international to pass such an acute stage successfully would demand coping directly with the core political and organizational questions brought into

this debate, doubly demanding the attention, diligent learning, independent thinking, responsibility and active engagement in discussion from all comrades. All points of disagreement must be resolved principally, from the standpoint of interests of the class struggle, but at the same time, generalities won't suffice. It's important all will strive **to strengthen common ground** and to carefully concretize the actual and accurate differences, with a sincere openness for corrections on all sides.

19. While this crisis currently manifests mostly its cruel negative effects — on the international's cohesion, crippling focus on the objective developments, sowing confusion and demoralization, paralyzing important aspects of work — it also contains positive potential to turn eventually into its opposite. On the condition that we strive to develop the debate cautiously, greater clarity, higher understanding and principled agreement could give way to stronger unity and more effective and successful interventions.

20. All comrades should be very concerned with the dangers inherent in the situation. Not only for the short-term activity, the organizational damage, but also the longer-term damage of political and organizational inadequacies, weaknesses and errors. Collective "*self-criticism, remorseless, cruel, and going to the core of things is the life's breath and light of the proletarian movement*", [insisted](#) Rosa Luxemburg, at the midst of the bloodshed of WW1, when faced with the historic devastating capitulation of social-democracy to the predatory interests of imperialism. Dwarfed in the shadow of such an analogy, obviously, the sort of corrections necessary in our international are, in reality, of a very limited character. A sense of proportion is imperative if we are to come out of this crisis positively strengthened.

21. Nevertheless, living problems pose certain dangers for the future, and so must be dealt with, in a process of open, collective, honest and constructive criticism and self-criticism of all parts of the international. Nobody could deny that the objective circumstances pose various types of political dangers that could undermine and eventually fail our tasks and wreck our important achievements.

22. Firstly, given the fact that many of our sections are currently struggling, sometimes bitterly, to keep what we've got, in the face of trends of reaction and low level of class struggle, obviously, there are in many cases increased dangers of demoralizing pressures horribly wearing-out comrades, undermining the dynamism of our forces. Further political clarification could help to counter this, but there is more than one way to achieve clarity, and we have to strive for the most constructive one.

23. More crucially, our debate would need to examine the danger of illusional shortcuts, of bending to yield unprincipled compromises. We would also have to consider any possible element of inflexibility and even conservatism — which are always a danger embodied in rich experience, among all sides — including in relation to methods and tactics of intervention.

24. The IS majority and the newly established faction of a minority of IEC comrades are warning against a hazardous drift in the work of the Irish section — and now apparently in the approach of a series of sections — from a clear central orientation to the working class, from healthy party building methods, from advancing of a socialist program and independent profile in mass work. These warnings against elements of 'Mandelism' and liquidationism now have to be examined seriously, even though they appear to be based on over-generalizations and don't seem to be backed up by sufficient evidence.

Part 2

Centrality of the working class

25. Comrades from the Faction claim that the fundamental perspective on the centrality of the working class in our revolutionary strategy is part of this debate. We think it's a good opportunity to explore the question further, towards our world congress.

26. The decades-old recurring debate on the revolutionary potential of the working class — engaged also by non-socialists such as Mélenchon or Paul Mason, in their attempt to rationalize their own move to the

right — remains vital. The debate's been fed by the relative decline of the workers' movement under neo-liberal capitalism, and the effects of some processes of de-industrialization or accelerated 'automatization'.

27. Metaphysic 'post-Marxists' and others have long turned to eulogize and sought to put to eternal rest the orthodox Marxist analysis underlining the historic role of the working class as the decisive revolutionary agent in capitalist society. Dogmatic 'workerist' sects may recite mantras and tend to idealize the working class, but the CWI approach, a revolutionary Marxist approach, is not a dead replica blind to the concrete and enduring changes in conditions.

28. There was never any 'classical' composition of the working class. Capital and the working class, upon which the former thrives, are living processes, in a permanent flux, changing in conditions, composition and various characteristics. As foreseen by Marx, increased productivity has been a factor in relatively reducing workforce in individual factories and workplaces. Additionally, international relocation of production lines has seen local de-industrialization processes in the developed national economies. The modern working class has been further fragmented under neo-liberal capitalism, reflected particularly with the 'precariat' layers and weakening of unionization in many countries. The prospect of accelerated processes of automatization with the onset of the 'fourth industrial revolution', in the context of a strangled capitalist economy, means a growing threat of a chronic 'technological unemployment', further weakening the working class.

29. Delusional techno-utopian reformists may believe that technological developments will lead to a peaceful transition from capitalism into a new post-capitalist society in the coming years, based on a new 'shared economy' (an idealization of the current trends of 'gig economy' and fragmentation of the labor market). Centralization of capital and the logic of the entire system leads instead to an abyss of worsened capitalist crisis. We heard in the past academic muddle-heads preaching that we already live in the 'end of history', that capitalism has overcome its internal contradictions

and will be an engine of eternal progress, or even that we already live in a post-capitalist society. Nonetheless, in the conditions of 21st century decaying capitalism, the working class remains highly central to the capital accumulation process, and thus central to the overcoming of capitalism. The fall of Stalinism as a super-power means also that the experience of the previous century's exceptional cases where capitalism was overthrown by other means, creating deformed workers' states, is highly unlikely in contemporary circumstances.

30. While there may be a lesser concentration of labor in massive factories compared to some decades ago, the broad working class — the households dependent on non-managerial wage labor — is the majority of the world population today, condensed in urban areas. Higher dependence of capital on the 'globalized' world economy, and a concentration of labor under giant multi-national firms, mean also a higher susceptibility for international workers' solidarity and a grown potential for the development of working-class internationalism. Despite a relative heterogeneity, this era of crisis mostly forces down the material conditions of different layers of working and middle class, smashing illusions in progress on the basis of capitalism.

31. The collective, systematic character of the exploitation and oppression of the working class is objectively pressurizing it to tend to develop class consciousness, to organize and to realize its own fundamental interest, necessity and capability of waging a class struggle. The highest expression of this process is a mass revolutionary socialist consciousness and organization. Concentration of massive profits by corporations, and the grotesque centralization of capital globally to the extent that the top 1% controls half of the world's wealth, are another factor in spurring the development of class consciousness.

32. Potentially, the modern working class still holds unparalleled power compared with any other strata in capitalist society, ultimately to take over production, distribution and state power, and lead a socialist re-organization of society. It may be debatable which particular layers of wage-labor should be considered as

part of the modern industrial working class, the manufacturing and transport workers. That should include electricity/energy, construction, mining and at least a layer of communication workers. Those can be considered the potential 'heavy battalions' of the working class, with their decisive capacity to paralyze the profit machines, and the essential functions of the economy in general — including in the state-owned sector.

33. Where significant local de-industrialization processes developed, and in factories where a high level of automatization has been established, it is an inevitable complicating factor, detrimental to the crystallization of the working-class movement. At the same time, it is not an overwhelming barrier. Alongside the industrial working class, with parts of it coerced and regimented in quite sizeable groups around the production chain, also other and newer sections of the working class, in services — many times packed in cubicles, tightly monitored and disciplined — are pushed to combative class battles and are on a general trajectory to develop class consciousness. Corporatizing and privatization processes in public services mean a higher degree of proletarianization among non-industrial sections of public sector workers. Moreover, the 2008 crisis unleashed new attacks on middle layers in general and deepened further proletarianization processes.

34. Obviously, particular conditions of different strata could matter for the development of the class struggle. But although different 'professional' job layers retain some petty-bourgeois characteristics to one degree or another, reflected in their outlook, this has not thwarted radicalization and resorting to proletarian methods of struggle. In many countries, teachers, social workers and health workers have at times been pushed to the forefront of the class struggle, with combative and quite bold strike actions. Also, in the retail and finance sectors, workers have been many times pushed to organize and fight.

35. We can't belittle the difficult challenges posed for class-based organization in this era by the current circumstances of grown precariousness and

fragmentation in the working class, usually low unionization rates and the hindering role of the right-wing union bureaucracies. Internet and cellular communication serve to help cutting across some of the problems, strengthening initiatives for struggle, unionization and solidarity in various forms. In the course of struggle, workers may also rebel against sell-out leadership and suffocating bureaucratism and move to split from the traditional union and/or independently set up their own democratic structures. That was the case, for example, with the Palestinian teachers strike in occupied West Bank in 2016, Israeli junior doctors in recent years, or South African miners' national strike committee after the Marikana massacre.

36. The neo-liberal counter-revolution, with its material and ideological offensive against the working class, was a decisive factor in the decline of the trade union movement internationally. But it also laid the ground for a higher impetus for unionization by new layers in this era, when the very ideas of unionization and collective agreements are re-popularized among workers.

37. The Egyptian revolution saw the massive unionization of millions of workers, forming a significant independent trade union movement, which could potentially play a critical role in future revolutionary convulsions. In some countries, new layers of workers, especially young workers, whether in fast-food or in hi-tech firms, turned to the path of unionizing. This implies a growing potential for crucially needed organization on a class basis and a revival of workers' unions. Obviously, this is not yet the mass-scale development required to overcome the crisis of working-class organization on the trade union level and in general. But it does indicate a grown potential for sharper turns and new developments in this direction — as the Egyptian example shows, those could develop quite rapidly in the context of a mass struggle.

38. Generally, the developments of this decade of crisis have underlined the potential for a re-building of a youthful and combative workers' movement, with women, LGBT, immigrants and oppressed minorities likely to play prominent roles. This is no less than the base for optimism for humanity as a whole to finally

overcome, in this century, capitalism and the most devastating catastrophes it unleashes.

39. We're, of course, open for corrections, but our assumption is that there's at least no fundamental controversy around this very general perspective. However, much more destructive than such elements who explicitly write-off the working class are the subtler and often not so pronounced tendencies among parts of the Marxist movement to derive exaggerated long-term conclusions from periodical particular weaknesses of class consciousness and organization.

40. The very name Committee for a Workers' International was originally meant to emphasize the centrality of the working class in a period of such fatal mistakes among the revolutionary left. The CWI was built from the outset not with the view of an 'external' orientation to the working class, but with the perspective of developing as an organic part of the broad working-class movement. This, of course, has never meant that our forces could not intervene effectively, from a class point of view, in many different kinds of movements and among youth and students.

41. The invoked USFI, from which our forces had split as a final resort in 1965, disastrously bended to pressures rooted in the exceptional circumstances of the post-war boom, ending up, with completely wrong perspectives about the concrete potential for working-class struggle and revolution, and about the role of students and guerrilla struggle, wrecking thousands of revolutionaries.

42. Reflective of that fundamental divergence from Marxism was their notorious reckless approach to the national question, including uncritical praising of the IRA and the PLO. While we're only beginning to carefully look into any concrete differences raised in relation to the national question in this debate, it's nonetheless obvious that we certainly don't have any elements of that aspect in our Irish section.

43. So-far, we're not convinced that what's been presented in relation to the work of the Irish section represents a clear trajectory of turning away from a general orientation to the working class. It is, of course,

necessary to take warnings seriously. We intend to pay attention to the raised concerns, also in an effort to improve and strengthen the work of the Israel-Palestine section.

Trade union work

44. Trade union work is of course only one aspect of orientation to the working-class, which must vary in different countries, but its highly important. It goes hand-in-hand with various forms of interventions in working class struggles and communities, including community struggle organizations, and with raising up working-class burning issues.

45. Working comrades, whenever possible, have a duty to patiently seek engagement or initiative of discussion, unionization and action in their own workplace. The organization as a whole has a duty to seek opportunities to intervene in workplaces, to find channels to the rank-and-file of unions. When circumstances demand and allow, we should advocate and participate in initiating new independent unions, or alternative rank-and-file democratic structures — without losing sight and giving up an orientation to workers organized in any traditional union. This is an extremely challenging task for every section, not least considering very limited forces and scarce resources.

46. In many cases, collaborationist union bureaucracies are a significant barrier to workers' struggle; internal rank-and-file union involvement and discourse is highly suffocated by bureaucratic structures, policies and conduct; and broad layers of the working class may be alienated from the main unions. Who would deny that a very flexible approach is required to trade union activity? The experience in the different sections demonstrates brilliantly successful initiatives of different types, including the rank-and-file NSSN in E&W. Of course, there are also dangers of imbalances even in cases of very impressive trade union work, as has recently been the case in our heroic South African section, where the comrades realized their efforts in this field came to some extent on the expense of party building.

47. The Irish section has an impressive record, also in recent years, of orientating to and intervening in workers' struggles, of defending working-class interests, of placing faithful working-class public representatives, and of building support among the working class. Clearly, there's a consensus that the section's trade union work in the north is quite good.

48. It's argued that in the south there may be some deficiencies in this regard, and we don't know yet what concrete proposals had been made on the issue in the course of the recent years by the IS. We have no pretension to rush to judgement about the concrete possibilities in that field in the south, and we'll wait for a clear response from the Irish comrades (majority and minority) on this issue. In any case, we're confident that the Irish section could further discuss and explore any possible trade union work in the run-up to their national congress.

49. The experience of our section in this field has been very limited, as expected from a small section. The Histadrut, the main trade union organization in Israel, has a rotten, class-collaborationist and ultra-centralistic bureaucracy (it uniquely evolved from what was first a yellow union established by Zionism to divide Jewish and Arab workers, and which was, before neo-liberalism, the largest Israeli employer, suppressing class struggle). In the previous decade, the Irish 'Social Partnership', dubbed here 'the Irish model', was praised by the Histadrut leaders, who followed suit. They managed to oversee historically low level of strikes. Given how the fossilized bureaucracy has even repealed new groups of workers who moved to unionize, a flexible perspective and strategy was required.

50. In 2007, we took part in the foundation of the independent and democratic trade union federation 'Power to the Workers', which today represents about 20,000 workers. Its activity, against the background of a significant unionization wave, challenged the Histadrut and pushed it to establish its own 'unionizing department' and move to unionize workers.

51. However, even when bumping into strong sentiments of alienation to the Histadrut among layers

of workers and youth (possibly similar to anti-union sentiments in many movements internationally), and given that hundreds of thousands of workers are organized in the Histadrut, we kept a certain orientation to it as well. In our Socialism Conferences we usually attempt to bring workers' committee members from both organizations, and that was probably the first place where such cross-union talks actually took place. In our interventions in various movements in Israeli society, including against the Israeli occupation and oppression of the Palestinians, we often attempt to point to the potential crucial power of the organized labor of the Histadrut, and explain, as part of our basic propaganda, that pressure needs to be built on its pro-capitalist leadership.

52. Despite the deformed structure of the Histadrut, for years we've advanced a fighting program and union democratic reform and came up with different initiatives, or collaborated with others, around the Histadrut elections (which aren't very democratic or representative in themselves). Our comrades have been involved in struggles in their workplaces and been elected as representatives to workers' committees and union positions. Currently, we have one comrade who's a workers' committee member in the Histadrut.

53. We recently welcomed two trade union comrades from Northern Ireland, including the president of NIPSA, to a public meeting, and we hope to learn more from the trade union work experience of the Irish, E&W, Belgian and other sections.

Danger of liquidationism

54. It seems that in Ireland there were some mistakes and inadequacies in relation to the advancing of a socialist program and emphasis on class demands to mass audiences, and those should be examined and corrected. As far as we can see, the Irish leadership recognizes this problem. Considering also the explanations of the Irish comrades themselves, it seems clear that there's no general watering down of our program, and this was evident in practice not only in public speeches (to a mass audience) in recent years,

but also in the 2016 election manifesto and in Joe H's press conference on the eve of the election.

55. In the context of Ireland's being a world-level tax haven, the Irish section's call for doubling the corporate tax in their intervention at the public debate that opened at the height of that election campaign was in itself an excellent demand to agitate around, and thus also was attacked in capitalist media. As the comrades have accepted and even raised themselves in international meetings, it was insufficient and mistaken not to include then in propaganda to a mass audience broader parts of our program, including demands for nationalizations. The Syriza experience posed a warning sign, as well as an opportunity to get more ear to the case for socialist change. Even in campaigns focused on immediate reformist demands, we should pay attention to transitionally advance our revolutionary program.

56. Assumingly, there's no disagreement on that. But there's a disagreement on the reasons for the weaknesses in that specific election propaganda. As we understand, comrade PSt somewhat argued also in real time to balance this, and that's good. To our knowledge, no political argumentation was ever presented by the Irish comrades along the lines of insisting even then on keeping away 'too radical' demands in order allegedly not to alienate voters. In itself, that's not enough, but we see no evidence to back a claim that this was necessarily the conscious or even non-conscious logic behind that particular mistake. Couldn't it also be that comrades were so pressured to give careful immediate responses that they, mistakenly, did not take enough into account other questions and had too little discussion about it? As far as we understand, there's no clear pattern in previous election campaigns to back up any speculation. Undoubtedly now, this experience will serve to strengthen future election campaigns for the section and the international, starting with the coming Irish local elections.

57. Having in Ireland at the moment the most important public positions of the CWI and the impressive work of ROSA, the imbalances in the present mass work obviously need to be carefully examined. The long-standing Irish section doesn't only have the record of

great successes in recent years, but also of extraordinary experience, committed cadre and an indisputable contribution to the CWI theoretical arsenal. All of this doesn't immune from mistakes. But having this as a starting point dictates a very careful, respectful and thorough approach to the discussion on any problems in the section.

58. The example of the Scottish majority split of 2001 is an important experience, which we gladly intend to re-visit and study further now. Those former comrades shifted willingly and democratically in a tragic left-reformist and nationalist direction, and rapidly sold-out, dissolved themselves into the SSP and crushed into oblivion. There, a minority faction was established in the section after many months of debate, which revealed more and more the existence of "fundamental political disagreements". The majority challenged the existence of differences over fundamental positions and also the very establishment of the faction, but the Scottish minority's arguments have been strongly vindicated by the events of the following years.

59. It's encouraging to see that comrade PSt from Scotland, who sided at first with the majority, and eventually turned to lead the minority faction then, states that he doesn't hold the view that the Irish section is a 'new Scotland'. Nevertheless, he warns against elements of that Scottish situation (liquidationism) in Ireland now. That would need to be further clarified, considering that the positions of the Irish majority seem to be in stark contrast to those of the liquidationist Scottish majority of that time.

60. We also note that the Irish leadership comrades have stated that they raised themselves the dangers of such a 'Scottish' degeneration for years and fought against leading ex-members who attempted to take the section in a liquidationist direction, like TD Clare D (who eventually broke with us in 2012)

Part 3

Potential for a split

61. The development of a new schism in the form of a factional struggle in our international poses the potential for a split, which on the basis of what we know for now would be unjustified and irresponsible. Such a bitter scenario cannot be removed artificially from the horizon. It could happen only based on clarification, proportion and increasing principled agreement. The goal of everyone must be to work patiently now so we could come out of the world congress with one and better united international.

62. In general, as the history of the Marxist movement had demonstrated, the greater the challenges imposed by the objective march of events, the greater the pressures may lead to fierce factional fights in the search for political clarity. Objective developments could undoubtedly pressurize and sharply accelerate processes of debates. Thus, on the eve of the historic socialist revolution in Russia, bitter factionalism raised its head at an extreme pace, with a minority even resorting to a public treacherous attack against the party in an attempt to thwart the uprising. Nonetheless, on the basis of the victorious revolution, party unity was maintained to better deal with the challenges ahead. The developing political circumstances of the coming period could decisively determine the pace and sharpness of our debate process, while possibly assisting in clarifying some of the issues.

63. However, there are currently no concrete immediate objective factors dictating an extremely pressurized and accelerated resolving of the different issues. Moreover, compared with the previous international factional battle and split of 1992, comrades must register particularly the fact that despite all the serious difficulties and entanglements, we face today an indisputably more favourable objective situation for Marxism. That's true also in comparison with the Scottish debate and split, which occurred against an exceptionally favourable conjuncture in Scotland, following the Scottish referendum of 1997, but was also fundamentally rooted in the very difficult

political circumstances globally in the aftermath of the fall of Stalinism.

64. It should also be registered that the mistakes of the international minority who split in 1992, and of the Scottish former comrades, were much more fundamental than anything currently discussed in real-terms in our international at the present time. Hence, the prospect for reaching the shore of renewed and stronger unity in our ranks is greater now, despite all subjective excesses and polarization. It is possible that only partial agreement will be reached at the time of the world congress, and even that could allow a very successful event.

65. Merely in 2017 we celebrated, in a special world congress, the quite rapid re-unification with the comrades of IR, after a quarter of a century. On the basis of experience and collective self-criticism and learning, those comrades independently moved to overcome the historical fundamental mistakes of the IMT and re-united with the CWI. It was a proud beacon of unity amid a split-ridden revolutionary left. It was the objective developments of recent years that have paved the road for this unification. We're in discussion with other forces. Further important and principled unifications could be posed on the agenda in the coming years, depending on how different revolutionary left forces respond to objective developments, and on the ability to reach thorough agreement.

66. The CWI's contempt for the sectarian swamp, for the dogmatic 'doctrinaire' preachers, for those elements who do not hold the interests of the broader movement above their cult narrow-mindedness, is ultimately rooted in the most vital necessity of unity in struggle of the working class and the oppressed. However, our forces aren't immune from making mistakes either in the direction of opportunist unprincipled compromises, or in the opposite direction of overblown rejection of needed principled collaboration of forces.

67. We all should bear in mind that any split which is not an absolute last resort, would be a crime against the entire movement. Our class enemies and sectarian

political rivals would love to see us fall into the trap of a blind sectarian clash and a disastrous split, and we all should be mindful that our debate develops in the best healthy manner.

68. We're concerned about possible unhealthy excesses among all sides at this early stage of the debate. It also alarms us that some of our comrades who support the Faction appear to have approached the question of a split in some light-mindedness, in our honest opinion. *"It is there that some have dared to say: we are not afraid of split. It is the representatives of this tendency who dig into the past, hunting there for everything that might be used to inject more rancor into the discussion, who artificially revive the memories of the former struggle and the former split in order imperceptibly to accustom the mind of the party to the possibility of so monstrous, so disastrous a crime as a new split"*. These words of Trotsky [from 1923](#) — and we absolutely don't imply any analogy to the original context of his argument against bureaucracy — are unfortunately, in our view, a relevant warning. We don't want to exaggerate this, nothing is irreversible, and we don't think that all comrades in the Faction have demonstrated such a tendency. But we ask comrades in the Faction, as we ask all comrades, to be more cautious and constructive.

69. A responsible approach will now seek to examine **over time** the different approaches and possibly difference in proposed tactics in relation to new political developments and concrete organizational initiatives and campaigns of the national sections and the international as a whole. Would there be, over a period of time, consistently very distinct approaches by different groupings in relation to program, orientation and tactics around series of different developments? This is not yet the case. So far, we haven't been convinced by the strong dichotomic view of the Faction that 'two main political trends emerged'.

For a patient democratic discussion

70. The form in which arguments are raised is ultimately secondary to the actual political content. However, the

two are dialectically inter-connected. An over-polarizing form could very well feed a tendency to exaggerate the political arguments themselves.

71. Factions, despite indisputably weakening the cohesion and unity of the organization, could potentially play a positive role in the vital clarification process. In our case, the sudden launching of a Faction, led by the IS itself, has for the time being, in our opinion, mostly made a negative contribution. The very abrupt move has in itself, unfortunately, created a distraction in the minds of many comrades, and in that sense, is clouding de-facto the political discussion process for a while. Even though that wasn't the intention of the comrades, that move has contributed to aspects of paralysis, confusion and demoralization in our ranks internationally. The comrades may claim that their route was the most effective one to develop the necessary clarification process — we're not convinced — but it doesn't hold water to claim there was 'no alternative' way to develop discussion, as the comrades do in their platform. Even in the Faction there are those who initially opposed its creation.

72. The majority of the E&W EC say that "*Given the role of a number of IEC members in trying to obstruct such a debate [on the political issues], it was necessary to form a faction in order to ensure it takes place in a democratic and thorough-going way*" (17-Dec). Do comrades actually believe that anybody at the IEC desired or was in any way capable of obstructing a democratic debate over the issues in the coming period? Comrades EB and PÅW, for example, underlined in their very limited concerned letter prior to the IEC meeting that "*The IS has every right and of course a duty to raise political concerns and criticisms of any section's work. [...] We agree on the need for full and open discussions within the IEC on our interventions and program in the new feminist movements, our election profile and programme, and also party building methods etc. These discussions are long overdue and cover not only the Irish section but all sections as well as the IS and the international as a whole. If handled correctly, all sections will gain from comradely criticism, the correction of mistakes where these have been made, questions and*

debate". This, unfortunately, received an indignant response.

73. What is a faction for, if not for attempting in an organized manner to allegedly correct the trajectory of the entire organization? But it is the IS which is leading that trajectory on the day to day basis. The IS is completely free to put forward its views to the general membership and lead a discussion process, with the aim of clarifying the issues.

74. However, we recognize the Faction's full rights to present its views and we're very open to comradely discuss with all supporters of the Faction as well. Moreover, we reckon that the group-division feature of the current phase of our International could not be resolved simply on the formal terrain — but only through the actual political discussion process and the patient resolving of the main political issues in question **over time**.

75. The Faction maintains that before it launched itself to the world, there was already an undeclared faction in operation — in their words, 'non-faction faction'. An ad-hoc opposition bloc, with very limited concrete aims, as originally developed around the IEC meeting, doesn't have to emerge as an organized political faction around broader political agreement.

76. It may very well be that from that opposition bloc, another faction, or more than one, may develop, based on continued closer discussion and understandings. But at least when the Faction was launched, it was the sole grouping to embark on organizing systematically on the basis of a long-term view, around broad political generalizations.

77. The Faction platform quotes from Lenin's [polemic in 1911](#), ending with the saying that "*shouts against factionalism are meant to distract attention from the really important question, that of the **Party or anti-Party content** of the activity of the various factions*" (Lenin's emphasis). The comrades say they "are not drawing a direct comparison", and allegedly only emphasize that the secondary discussion on the foundation of their faction is a distraction in their view. But comrades should be careful in how they approach the current

debate. Lenin distinguished in that case between "Party people and liquidators who have broken away" and criticized conciliators who "cover up the break-away". Lenin's argument was part of a developed struggle between de-facto different political parties, and not different tendencies in a tight cadre organization. Who are the comrades who should be viewed now as advancing a liquidationist 'anti-Party content' with the activity of their grouping? Where are those rivals of our international party? Who should be viewed as the conciliators who "cover up the break-away"? Is that how the Faction views the majority of the international leadership at the start of the debate?

78. We regard any possibly insinuated idea that there was any conspiracy to remove the IS as baseless, and no proposal was made even for a very partial change of the IS composition. All would probably agree that partial adjustments to the IS composition would in any case be required in the coming years and would be properly discussed in the future. But that wasn't a real factor in our current debate.

79. At the same time, we agree that there's no evidence to back a claim that the IS conspired to somehow advance an actual removal of the Irish leadership, or that the IS contemplated as a body, so-far, on practically initiating a split. However, the tendency to approach the questions in a very antagonizing manner and to escalate polarization is alarming in this regard.

80. Some IS comrades seem to have assessed in conversations with several IEC comrades that a **rapid split** in Ireland is on the agenda, as allegedly the Irish leadership are 'on their way out' — indicating that similarly to Scotland, the majority of the Irish leadership may initiate a split, and worse, that they'd try to avoid a substantial discussion. This doesn't seem to be substantiated. It contrasts the more official assessment put forward by the IS prior to the IEC meeting: "*We are not suggesting that the Irish comrades have taken this profoundly mistaken path, but we are worried that some errors could have been made in that direction which need to be corrected*" (IS document on 'Identity Politics'). In early November, the IS proposed to dedicate merely one afternoon of the IEC meeting for

the 'Irish' crisis and slightly more for a discussion on 'Identity Politics'. Surprisingly, this transformed into an emergency campaign, aiming now to combat an alleged distinct political trend, inclined in a 'Mandelite' or Menshevik direction. This still seems an unexplained logical leap.

81. The view of the IEC majority (30 to 25, including alternates) was more careful: "While **important differences of approach have surfaced**, the IEC does not believe these represent **fundamental issues of principle**, and believes such an organized discussion in the best democratic traditions of the CWI **can** result in principled agreement" (our emphasis). Who wouldn't agree that a patient democratic discussion **can** (!) result in principled agreement?

82. We agree there's no established majority in the IEC at this stage around any political question in debate apart from a very specific and necessary IEC decision. The debate needs to develop.

Part 4

Democratic Centralism

83. We'd argue against comrades who might move to depict now a de-legitimizing view of the elected day-to-day leadership of our international. We'd also reject any attempt to present it as 'foreign interference' when raising concerns and criticism in relation to any section, including our section, even when we may strongly disagree.

84. In this context, the Faction claims that some propose a de-centralized federalized international. Who would agree to such a proposal? It would help to speak more concretely about any differences regarding the role of the international central institutions in relation to the sections. The Faction's assertion seems to be based to a great deal on interpretations of a very specific criticism on how the IS responded after not convincing the Irish NC on one specific issue. We'd agree that the IS should have moved to discuss the disagreements more carefully and patiently with the

section and at the IEC, while not withholding other discussions.

85. What are the actual differences around the fundamental position on the organizational method of democratic centralism? It seems that the claims on this issue stem from over-generalizations. What are the chances to reach a consensus around a concise position document on democratic centralism to be brought for discussion and decision at the world congress? In our view, currently high.

86. Democratic centralism is, of course, not a dead set of technical formalistic rules engraved in statutes, but a method of a live process of collective discussion, adopting binding decisions and acting in a united manner to advance such decisions in the best possible way. This is expressed at times with stronger emphasis on unified action, and at times on more extensive democratic discussion, as happens to be our case now. A healthy implementation of such a method vitally includes day-to-day informal discussions, which significantly assist in advancing clarity and reducing misunderstandings and disagreements in the formal process.

87. It must be based on freedom of discussion and criticism, to allow the organization to collectively balance and correct itself. Central institutions, which concentrate collective experience, are accountable, they're elected regularly and can be recalled at any time, they meet regularly and can be convened extraordinarily, and their democratic decisions are binding upon all members, including those with a minority opinion. In this process of collective decision-making, the political and organizational initiatives and actions of individual members must be implemented in accordance with the relevant local branch or the relevant central elected institutions.

88. Contrary to Faction claims, many comrades who voted for the adopted IEC resolution expressed formally and informally a comradely critical approach to aspects of imbalances and mistakes in the Irish section, including in relation to the questioned investigation. As a result of discussions among non-faction comrades, a

consensus was reached around the 'Irish paragraph' — now agreed for circulation by the Irish leadership and the COC. It specifically criticized the lack of an oversight by the NEC or the IS. Both resolutions recognized "that the leading comrades in Ireland accept these points".

89. Apparently, the Faction never genuinely recognized that. Unfortunately, they take their logic to the absurd by stating that, basically due to the original limit of circulation, the whole adopted resolution was a 'protective shield' against the very explicit criticisms it contains. For us, the real logic behind the limit was that given the security sensitivity of the issue, any written material about it, in general, better be as limited as possible. That's reasonable. But in fact, if those in the Faction would have raised this in a more concrete manner at the IEC meeting itself, we would have supported a proposal to extend circulation. Anybody could now see that an easy solution was quickly found, by the initiative of the Irish comrades. The Faction expresses lack of satisfaction with how the Irish NC took up the IEC decision. We understand that the NC members have read the resolution, and none objected. We expect to see the NEC and NC explain explicitly their actual position on the matter.

90. Comrade HS from the Faction and the IS claimed that if the comrades of the Irish leadership would have accepted the critical points of the IEC resolution before, we wouldn't have had this whole crisis. The logic of this implies that the **concrete** differences are at least not as fundamental as portrayed at this stage, certainly not a conflict between 'party and anti-party' comrades.

91. It'll be wise of comrades to judge possible mistakes of both the Irish leadership and the international leadership in actual proportion. As advised by Trotsky, *"It is necessary, of course, to fight against every individual mistake of the leadership, every injustice, and the like. But it is necessary to assess these 'injustices' and 'mistakes' not in themselves but in connection with the general development of the party both on a national and international scale. A correct judgement and a feeling for proportion in politics is an extremely important thing"* ([1937, 'On Democratic Centralism and the Regime'](#)).

92. For most IEC members, the avalanche of criticisms raised by the IS comrades about the Irish section around a whole range of issues, were new, never seriously discussed at the IEC. Eventually, the Irish section NC was exposed to those long fermenting and overarching criticisms before the IEC was even made aware that there's any issue. Is this a fine example for healthy norms of the political discussion process at the international leadership? We appreciate that the IS Majority partially accepted our limited criticism, at least that the balance-sheet of the 2016 election campaign should have been brought for proper discussion at the IEC.

93. Still, it's relevant to ask: How many concrete proposals were made by the IS in the course of the 2016 short election campaign or the long successful Repeal campaign, striving to strengthen and improve those? The answers we got so far suggest this wasn't seriously done. Who would deny that there are some imbalances in the Irish section in aspects of party profile, and that propaganda around socialist program and class demands should be strengthened? Nobody in the Irish leadership. Who would deny that there's a need for adaptation and improvement of organizational structure in the section? Not the Irish party congress, which decided to review such changes.

94. Comrade WH claimed at the IEC meeting that the Irish successes are the result of the collective work of the CWI. So are the imbalances and weaknesses. The question now is whether we can analyse more concretely those imbalances and elaborate constructive solutions that could be discussed and agreed in Ireland, as well as help to balance and improve the work of all sections.

Towards the stormy 2020s

95. We need more international central leading of political and organizational discussion and coordination, and more investment into the international website. Unhealthily, the international center hasn't been strengthened in the recent decade, even in the aftermath of the meteoric growth in the US or the later

unification with the IR. There's an urgency to balance this. We urge again to concretely prepare, towards the world congress, a plan for taking a few more permanent fulltimers for the IB, starting by next year.

96. This is also linked to the question of the International's current financial balance and work. To guarantee the financial basis for the substantial extension of the international center apparatus, and for more internationally-led work, a special financial plan should be prepared for the world congress. It should include international targets on sections' dues and on international struggle fund. Proper harnessing of technology to allow the most efficient payments and international financial appeals must be implemented.

97. Despite organizational difficulties, the CWI indeed has a proud record of development of materials and of interventions in all developing anti-oppression movements — yes, cross-class in composition and ideas — when possible. However, politically, have there been weaknesses on the part of the IS and various sections in the attention, assessment and dealing with some of the exploding social movements? Seemingly, to a certain extent, though this needs to be examined and clarified further.

98. Several comrades of the IS and IEC, including from Ireland, have contributed in recent years to analysing and dealing with the developments of anti-oppression movements, particularly the feminist movements and contributed to consolidation of class critique of attitudes and ideas associated with 'Identity Politics'. We also had a beneficial document adopted by the world congress of 2016.

99. Comrade PSt asks: *"Does the unfounded critique from some leading comrades that the IS was underestimating the women's movement, LGBTQ work and issues around the environment not reflect the pressures from alien class forces who do not see the working class as the decisive force for change?"* (17 Dec). Surely differences on questions of emphasis and possibly approach to explosive development of various movements don't have to reflect 'pressures from alien

class forces'. The comrade hasn't substantiated the claims.

100. We accept the Irish comrades' claim that in recent years they've been proactive in trying to counter damaging petty-bourgeois ideas of 'Identity Politics' in their interventions in women's and LGBT's struggles, and in doing so, notwithstanding any mistakes along the way, they've contributed to the coping of the international as a whole.

101. Any organization which is not a 'puritan' sect, and attempts to intervene, have a real dialog and present its ideas to a broader audience in the most accessible language, would inevitably learn through trial and error. There may have been some partial, limited, influence of petty-bourgeois trends on some terminology and slogans in different interventions of sections, including at times our own, or in the successful intervention in the Irish Repeal movement, or around the impressive and successful November [school-student strike](#) in the Spanish state.

102. It's also been the case that some important mass-scale developments of the women's and LGBT's movements of recent years, just as the escalating environmental crisis, have often not got enough emphasis in international published articles and original drafts for documents of the IEC. However, in any case, the current debate will bring the benefit of more extensive analysis, synthesizing further collective experience.

103. More acute economic and environmental crises in the horizon will inject a higher dose of instability to the global system, and inevitably push for further polarization and more radical and revolutionary conclusions and actions among broader layers of working class and youth. While the CWI today is the largest and most influential Trotskyist international, it still is, of course, a mere fracture of the working class and youth in any country.

104. Most sections have developed in recent years in several aspects, but stagnated in size, mostly due to a complicated conjuncture, which evidently challenges all revolutionary left forces globally. This doesn't mean that

we fully exhaust our possibilities to grow when opportunities arise. Ireland, but also South Africa, E&W and possibly the Spanish State are cases where the weight of our outstanding influence among broader layers of the working class hasn't been translated enough into a substantial growth of our forces. We have no pretension to determine the particular reasons in each case. These could involve many aspects of the work, including interventions, profile, appeal, political tactics — and it's good that in the case of Ireland some questions are being brought up for discussion in this regard (from the majority and the minority in the leadership). In any case, this pre-congress period in our international could assist to cast more light on any weaknesses in relation to recruit strategies and work. Any section could improve work in this field, certainly in small sections like our own.

105. Despite being burdened with an intensified internal debate in the international, some sections may very well be able to make further important gains before this decade ceases. We approach the closing of this decade, in general, on a better ground objectively and subjectively. Based on hopefully improved theoretical clarity and agreement, the world congress of 2020 should serve to prepare the international politically and organizationally to be best placed for responding, orientating, successfully intervening and taking advantage of unprecedented opportunities for breakthroughs. Those are likely to be posed in the explosive and revolutionary storms of the 2020s.

106. All comrades have now the duty to fight for the most constructive, comradely and clarifying political debate. The objective difficulties and the debate shouldn't overshadow a potentially very successful world congress. If handled constructively, they could actually contribute to that end. Following a year of clarifying discussion and debate, the congress should be marked with an inspiring revolutionary vision. It should see energetic discussions around political and organizational resolutions, looking to march ahead. It should celebrate with pride our hard-won achievements and put emphasis on a growing potential. The magnificent successes of the international in Ireland,

US, Spain, as well as the very important experience embodied in dozens of sections, should be seen as a mere starting point. The exceptional leap in growth of the US section (not without internal strife) absolutely

may be repeated, and to a greater extent — on the condition that this debate process leads to the necessary clarifications and corrections on all sides.

In Defence of a Working-class Orientation for the CWI

Peter Taaffe for the IS Majority

January 14th 2019

It is necessary to call things by their right name. Barely a month has passed since the IEC and yet it is already quite clear that the CWI faces an opposition to the policies and programme of the CWI with tendencies towards petty bourgeois Mandelism. This opposition originated with the leadership of the Irish section, but it is also present in the leadership of a number of sections of the CWI who support them. This is most prominently displayed in the recent lengthy Greek Executive Committee's resolution written by Andros P, which represents an open political retreat from the policies and analysis of the CWI.

This is a complete apologia — both organisational and political — for the false methods, policies and perspectives of the Irish organisation. We have characterised this as representing substantial concessions to 'Mandelite' political positions on identity politics, the abandonment of the need for a revolutionary organisation based upon the movement of the working class and the internal regime and democracy of the revolutionary party, and the revolutionary programme and perspectives that flow from such an approach.

The Greek EC loudly denounces myself, Peter Taaffe, for drawing a clear comparison between the policies and perspectives of the present Irish leadership with those of the Mandelite USFI in the past and today. In the 1960s Ted Grant and I walked out of their world congress and subsequently broke with these opportunists. We turned our backs on them and faced

up to the task of winning the working class, above all the youth, to our banner, despite being a very small organisation at the time. All of our present 'critics' would never have been able to discover the revolutionary perspectives and programme of the CWI if we had not resorted at that time to this bold move.

What are the policies of Mandelism then and today? Abandonment of the centrality of the idea of the working class as the main force for socialist change and, in its place, the hunt for other forces to play this role: students as the 'detonator' of revolution, false illusions in the guerrilla movements and leaders like Tito, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Mao. The Mandelites did not at the outset present a clear repudiation of the working class as the main force for socialist change. They downplayed its role only gradually abandoning this working-class perspective — the process of political degeneration — that it would not move into action for years if not decades. We need to remember here the incident in 1968 when I confronted Ernest Mandel himself at a big public meeting in London where I raised the perspective of the possibility of a working class revolt in Western Europe that could take place "at any time". His riposte was to rule out such an "exaggerated" perspective, famously declaring that the working class was unlikely to move for at least 20 years! This was on the eve of the mighty French revolutionary events of 1968 resulting in the greatest general strike in history when 10 million workers went on strike and occupied the factories.

The USFI argued that the working class was dormant, that its organisations were empty, that we had to 'seek support' from other 'oppressed layers', that we should not bang our heads against 'reality' but look for more 'fruitful' areas of work amongst students, intellectuals and 'other social forces' who were coming into collision with capitalism. Does this sound familiar? Yes, unfortunately – it is echoed in the arguments of the Irish leadership and others, like the Greek leadership, and is used to justify their abandonment of systematic organised trade union work both in Ireland and in Greece. Read what the Irish leadership has argued – now reinforced by the false arguments of the Greek leadership – that the trade unions are empty, in the unchallengeable grip of right-wing leaders, etc. and therefore it is necessary to seek a point of reference and work outside of these 'moribund' organisations. Of course, there is some truth in this because of the overall corrosive effect of the trade union right wing, reinforced by the ineptitude of the 'left' during a severe capitalist economic crisis, although there have been a number of important strikes in recent years in Southern Ireland, including an impending nurses' strike. But it is not the whole truth and moreover there was an element of this in the 1960s when Militant in Britain was formed – as the pioneers of the CWI – and still in the 1970s with the formation of the CWI.

While building our influence amongst the youth we nevertheless continued to work assiduously and patiently in the unions, assembling small forces, linking together with other workers to form a left point of attraction, broad lefts, as part of the process of transforming the unions. Without this patient, long-term approach we would never have conquered some important leaderships of some trade unions, like the civil servants' union PCS where we managed to win the leadership with a left majority on its national executive after a battle that lasted for decades. The bourgeois were terrified of such a development as they were over our growing influence within the Labour Party, which was only achieved by a patient but effective approach. This is what a recently released 'secret report' about Thatcher's approach towards this development says. The Thatcher government

"was clearly most concerned with members of Militant Tendency, reporting that it was 'the largest and most threatening Trotskyist group in Britain', and that its membership had quadrupled over six years to 6,300. 'Its greatest strengths have been the dedication of its members and its strong internal discipline,' it said.

The [Inter-departmental group on Subversion in Public Life] SPL also reported in 1985 that 284 members of Militant were civil servants. Three years later, the figure had grown to around 450.

Most 'subversives' were found to be working in junior clerical positions. The SPL recommended in its initial report that they should, where possible, 'be identified and distanced from such work'.

It added that mounting a purge of suspect individuals would not be possible, but 'it might sometimes be possible covertly to move individuals to posts where they would have less potential for disruption'...

Senior civil servants were informed that they should consult MI5 [the British secret service] before moving 'subversives' to any new post. 'It would need to be a covert process, because any systematic barring of known subversives from certain work would be contentious,' they were told.

Armstrong recorded that he was most concerned about computer operators, revenue collectors and people who had contact with the public.

The need for the utmost secrecy is stressed repeatedly throughout the files that have been made available at Kew. One SPL chair, John Chilcot, [who later gained notoriety for his whitewashing inquiry into the Iraq war] wrote in June 1988: 'It is right on balance to continue with this exercise, despite its acute sensitivity and the high risk of embarrassment in the event of any leak.'

The papers also show that MI5 mounted an operation to identify 'subversives' teaching at eight schools in inner London. The Office for

Standards in Education said school inspectors had not reported directly to MI5 since it took over the work of HM Inspectors in 1992."

[Guardian, London, 24 July 2018]

AP also states in relation to the members of parliament (TDs in Ireland): "The Irish section has re-established traditions about what it means to be a public representative of the working class, long forgotten and unknown to the new generations, like for example MPs going to jail in order to serve the class which they represent." It is astonishing that he completely passes over the 1991 jailing of Terry Fields, Tommy Sheridan and 34 other comrades, for non-payment of poll tax in Britain, a mass movement with 18 million refusing to pay the tax that eclipsed the movement in Ireland in the numbers involved and its effects, especially by bringing down Thatcher. These MPs had a total of three full-time workers assisting them – not the big numbers working for the Irish TDs. These parliamentary full-timers were part of the full-time team of the organisation reported to the membership. We should also say here that Dave Nellist, who was also expelled from Labour for refusing to pay his poll tax, has donated his entire parliamentary pension to the party.

The Irish leadership is completely wrong when they compare their approach today towards the unions – in which, they have admitted, they have effectively abandoned systematic work in the trade unions for a period – to the 'open turn'. The open turn was necessitated by the emptying out of the traditional parties of the working class, particularly social democracy, and hence a period where we made a direct appeal for workers to join our organisations and parties.

But all the great leaders of the working class – Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky – emphasised the absolute necessity even in difficult periods for organised systematic work in and around the trade unions, sometimes even in 'yellow' trade union structures as seem to exist in Greece at the present time. This is as a precondition for assembling a serious working class force both on the trade union field and politically.

We fully recognise the difficulties in Ireland and in Greece of this work. We have experienced similar problems in Britain in the past; for instance in the 1950s and early 1960s when the biggest heavily bureaucratised union the Transport and General Workers Union frustrated so many militants that they resorted to what was at that time an ultra-left approach of trying to create new, 'pure' unions. We always argued against this in favour of a systematic approach in the larger, more viable union, which was borne out at a later stage when this union shifted sharply towards the left. In the form of Unite it is now the biggest left union in Britain and one of the most important props for Corbyn and the left in the current battle that has opened up between left and right both in the unions and in the Labour Party itself. Even if in practice the official structures prevent active engagement with the unions we should then seek to use any positions we build up amongst workers in the factories and workplaces to put forward a plan of action to systematically change the union structures. In addition, there have been the development of new formations amongst the overwhelmingly young 'precariat' in industries like hospitality, logistics, etc., to which we can turn.

This was not the case in Southern Ireland where there was little or no attempt by the Socialist Party to link the work amongst women to demanding action by the trade unions. In Spain the comrades did automatically take up the idea of the general strike of both students and workers against the vicious sexual violence including the rapes carried out by the infamous 'Wolfpack'. Unfortunately, no similar call was made either in the factories or to the trade unions in Ireland for concrete workers' action. And this was not at all accidental. It seems this has never even occurred to either the leadership of Rosa or the Irish party because they did not have a clear orientation towards the working class organisations and forces in the campaign in favour of abortion rights. We all agree that they carried out tremendous work in their participation in this campaign but it was not through clear working class methods and orientation.

The fundamental reason for this is that the leadership of the Irish majority did not think there was any

possibility of mobilising independent working class support and moreover did not think that the working class was the most decisive force for change. Hence, as the Irish comrades have now admitted in the light of the discussion at the IEC, the idea had grown amongst some of the comrades in Rosa and in the leadership of the Irish organisation that the new 'vanguard' for change is not the working class but the forces around the movement for women's and LGBTQ+ rights.

We have been clear on the issues of women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights: from the beginnings of our organisation in Britain – over 60 years ago – we have unflinchingly conducted a struggle against the discrimination and sexual harassment of women; not just of working class women but of all women. We also support the legitimate demands of the LGBTQ+ movement, so long as they do not conflict with the rights of others, and can be resolved by democratic discussion. We have championed the demands of all oppressed groups and strata including the LGBTQ+, for instance against the anti-Trans position of Mark Serwotka, the leader of the PCS. However, we have always sought to situate this in a class analysis linked to class demands. This is not the case even with our own organisation in Ireland. This was shown in relation to the recent magnificent strike in Glasgow of 10,000 women. Some comrades quite wrongly rushed to praise this as an example of a purely 'feminist' strike. Our Scottish comrades correctly saw it primarily as class action by women workers that appealed successfully for solidarity action from male workers. This is just one illustration of the different approach we have to those who support or are influenced by identity politics.

We have a long history of opposition to what was in effect identity politics, although not called that at the time, for instance in the 'Black Power' movement in the US and elsewhere in the 1960s. We produced thoroughgoing analyses, for instance of the Black Panthers movement, signifying what was progressive and could be supported and what was not. This movement undoubtedly represented a step forward but largely because of a lack of experience there were tendencies towards separatism that sometimes were reinforced by some alleged US 'Trotskyists', which we

opposed and sought to influence in a class direction. The success of our approach was shown in Britain by the fact that we later built the biggest black organisation of youth and workers in the form of the Panther UK. It organised the biggest indoor rally of 2,000 with Bobby Seale, one of the most prominent leaders of the Black Panthers, as a speaker. We discussed with Bobby on his visit to Britain.

Moreover, the evolution of Malcolm X was a tremendous demonstration of how under the blows of events a movement can begin with separatist tendencies, with utopian demands such as 'black power' but then can then seek to finally embrace a class analysis. All of this we explained in our material on Malcolm X, the Black Power movement, etc. The present leadership of the American organisation, particularly the editor of its paper has chosen not to reproduce this material for the new generation of US Marxists moving into struggle, even when they have published other later material on the issue.

However it was not just in terms of theory but in the practice that flows from this that we demonstrated the correctness of a clear Marxist approach. It is well-known that we had major successes in Britain in the Campaign Against Domestic Violence – which the Irish leadership effectively now dismiss as "in the past". This is not the case because it is particularly relevant in relation to the cuts in Britain that are being made against these gains that were won not least because of the work and influence of our party. Moreover it would have been impossible to achieve this if we had had some of the one-sided positions that pass for a Marxist approach and which are now advocated by some comrades who make concessions to identity politics.

'Theory is a guide to action'. When we held effective power at local level in Liverpool we put these ideas into practice – through working-class control by the council unions of hiring and firing – we made clear proposals on the issue of full-time employment of a layer of long-term unemployed, particularly black youth, in deprived areas of Liverpool.

AP spends endless pages and interminable words to try and refute what all of us clearly heard in his

contribution on the last day of the IEC when he acted as an apologist for the Irish comrades. In his usual manner, he also viciously attacked the IS. We all remember how he launched a similar, completely unprovoked verbal assault on comrade Lynn Walsh at the CWI summer school over a relatively minor issue when we were discussing the possibilities for an 'alternative currency' in Greece coming out of the crisis over the euro at the time.

This naturally caused outrage, not just amongst the British comrades but many others who noted his lack of sense of proportion in the way he attacks perceived political opponents. I intervened to try and bring comrades together – which flies in the face of the impression that is now given by him and others that we want to split or that we are organising for a split.

He did act in an intemperate fashion at this IEC when he attacked the IS for allegedly trying to 'crush' the Irish leadership and others. He characterised the IS minority comrades as "independent-minded young comrades" who had stood up to older IS members. The phrase "independent minded" is precisely that favoured by petty bourgeois academics in Britain and elsewhere to define those who are 'independent' from class pressures, who seek a middle and unprincipled political position between the pressures of the working class and the labour movement and the bourgeois.

Record of intervention – the IS and Ireland

AP attempts in an extremely tortuous manner to separate himself from what he actually said at the IEC, that the IS should effectively capitulate to the decisions of the Irish leadership. He first of all denies that he actually said what he said and then admits that "When the IS meet such an opposition from the NEC of a section, like it did in Ireland, it must retreat, it must take a step back, without however abandoning its views and criticisms, and look for alternative ways to argue for its position and opinion, including with other leading bodies of the International such as the IEC." This is exactly how we behaved on many occasions – first of all trying to persuade the Irish leadership – but on this occasion, having met a brick wall from them, only then deciding to take the issue to the IEC, particularly because the 'cover-up' had created a new

situation. To our shock and surprise AP and the Greek organisation supported the Irish on the cover-up of this shameful incident. Ultimately, the Irish leadership admitted 'mistakes' even though this was exactly the wording that we used when we originally discussed this issue in London which they rejected and continued to reject right up to the time of the IEC. If they had admitted their 'mistake' over the 'cover-up' at the beginning then this whole issue would not have taken on the sharpened form that it has.

AP, along with others, now acts as an apologist for the scandalous behaviour of the Irish leadership on this issue. We warned them at the time that this could have serious legal consequences, particularly for our public representatives. This was brushed aside and now they seek to sweep this further under the carpet. The resolution that they moved at the IEC to 'redact' any mention of the 'cover-up' was in effect an attempted gagging order, a cover-up of the unacceptable behaviour of the Irish leadership in answer to the reprehensible [*breach of protocol*] of a comrade who has been disciplined for this. The Irish leadership accepted with relief this cover-up initiated by AP, which they hoped would allow them to suppress and hide this issue from the broader membership of the sections and the CWI as a whole. We are not prepared to collaborate in such shameful practices with which now AP and the Greek EC have associated themselves. Moreover, the actions of AP then allowed them to ignore the [*breach of protocol*]. It remains a fact that the Greek leadership and particularly AP acted as a shield for the unacceptable behaviour of the Irish leadership

We tried to persuade them otherwise and then were accused of "heavy handedness" towards both the Irish leadership and the Greeks and AP in telephone calls. It is a complete fiction that four or five people at one go attempted to systematically bombard AP into supporting the position of the IS. Prior to the IEC I spoke to AP once, in a joint telephone call along with Tony S and Niall M who is responsible for Greece on the IS and also had short conversations with him at the beginning of the IEC.

After this phone call a new Greek legend took flight. AP

claims that he proposed a “liaison committee” to handle the crisis over Ireland. This is not true. What was proposed by him but not agreed to by us was a commission. We said that we will go back and discuss it with comrades, which we did, and then I explained to him at the beginning of the IEC that we had met opposition to this proposal, not just from the Spanish but from others who remembered the experience of Scotland and the ill-fated “commission” on that occasion. But this did not prevent him from declaring in another bombastic outburst that the IS had “betrayed him” by not automatically acceding to his suggestion, shouting at the IS as he walked back to his seat: “Tell the truth! Tell the truth!” The clear implication was that we lied when we disputed his version.

This says everything about the method of AP which we have noted on other occasions when we have disagreed with him on an issue. Unless you immediately jump to attention and agree with him you can expect an outburst and usually a distortion of the position which we have attempted to put forward. In particular, on this and other political issues in which there has been a conflict with him and the Greek EC in the past, it raises questions about his handling of differences within the Greek organisation. In effect his approach is that if you do not immediately agree with his proposal you are betraying him! This is no way to conduct a healthy discussion and the handling of inevitable differences, including misunderstandings, which will come up in any large organisations like the CWI. We have had many differences in the British organisation, including the formation of tendencies and factions, and intense discussions over issues of perspectives, programme and orientation. We cannot remember any such discussions and similar differences within the Greek organisation. Perhaps this says something about the internal regime in Greece under AP’s leadership.

We had many occasions when we disagreed with AP and we think we were in the right. One such difference arose not just with the Greeks, but with others such as the German comrades over their approach towards the largely petty bourgeois anti-capitalist movements in the 1990s. Of course we orientated towards this

movement as we have done and will continue to do so in movements of women, on Trans issues, the environment, etc. The evidence of our discussion and differences over the tactics for the anti-capitalist movement is dealt with in abundance in my books on the history of our party which also covers the activity of the CWI.

Our differences with the Greek comrades arose not because they were intervening in the anti-capitalist movement but how they intervened, their exaggerated expectations of the gains to be made from what was essentially a very confused student/middle-class layer with a smattering of workers. Moreover they had an incorrect definition of the social role of radicalised students at that time. After clashes with them at an IEC, I was subsequently in Greece discussing this question with AP and particularly the late Nikos Remoundos, the founder with me of the Greek organisation, and other comrades on the Greek EC. AP advanced the novel theory that so impoverished were students today, and particularly in Greece, that in effect they were “now like workers”. We begged to differ and were vocal in our opposition to this false categorisation of even the most impoverished working-class students as ‘workers’.

Students socially and in the place they occupy in society are not the same as workers who are organised by big industry with a collective consciousness that flows from this. This does not mean that we don’t try and win the best of the students to a Marxist, Trotskyist position. But we do not leave it at that; we seek to develop them as Marxist cadres who can play a role in assisting the working class and in the process can learn from them in the struggle, on condition that they approach this work not seeking to lecture workers.

Trotsky in the 1930s, in the middle of the dispute with the petty bourgeois opposition in the American SWP, made the apt comment that they had in the US “many good middle-class young men and women” but these had not immersed themselves sufficiently in the struggles of the working class, thereby learning from them and in the process hopefully taking a big step along the road to becoming effective Marxist cadres.

He advised that these student comrades should be “wet by the rain and dried by the wind”.

He was so alarmed at the social composition of the SWP – particularly the opposition of Shachtman and co. – that he proposed that unless these students linked themselves to circles of workers and recruited some of them to the revolutionary party in six months, they should be reduced to the level of sympathisers.

Of course it would be artificial to apply this in a blanket fashion today but nevertheless this general approach of Trotsky retains its full force in this complicated period facing the workers’ movement and ourselves. In recent times we have recruited comrades from a petty bourgeois milieu and background but have been forced to promote some of them prematurely to leading positions, including on leading bodies of the party, when their record and activity – particularly in the workers’ movement – did not justify such rapid promotion. We have to adopt a much more demanding approach towards these new recruits ensuring that their promotion to positions of authority only after they are tested out in actively assisting in the struggles of the working class. Above all they should be set the task of winning workers.

This does not in any way denote a ‘prejudice’ against students per se. On the contrary, some of the best comrades we have won, including at the level of the present leaderships of our sections, have come from the student field but have been first tested out in the workers’ struggles before they are promoted to positions of leadership.

AP claims, as have others in other sections, consistently throughout his document that they – the ‘non-faction faction’ – had the majority at the last IEC. That is not true and will be shown to be false as the course of this political battle unfolds. Even at the IEC the real ‘minority resolution’ – which was, as we have explained, an open cover-up by the Irish leadership of their own member – was passed by a majority of 3! This was only achieved because comrades who would have supported the IS were not present. Moreover, some comrades and sections who were not present and did not vote or abstained did so because they were not

clear on the issues but have since indicated support for the IS and many have declared support for the ‘Trotskyist’ faction. It has to be said that we have been considerably assisted in building our support by the general revulsion and opposition to AP’s document and his unprincipled support for the Irish.

At the same time, the voting rights at the IEC do not fully or accurately recognise the current weight and membership of each section. For instance England and Wales has four IEC members; Greece has four full members and Israel has two. Between 2015 and today the Greek membership has declined, which includes a period of mass upheaval in Greece. There is also the weight given to relatively small sections in terms of membership but who are nevertheless considered as important for the long-term development of the CWI.

Despite his convoluted language AP clearly blames the IS for the dispute breaking out at this time. He writes: “The crisis is a result of the IS’s mistake of escalating the attack whenever it met resistance, instead of taking a step back to reconsider its tactics and approach.” This is a travesty of the truth. I explained to AP in one of the infamous ‘phone calls’ prior to the IEC that we and others have attempted, not over months but for years to try and persuade the Irish comrades of the incorrectness of their ideas on identity politics, on the programme in elections, including the transitional programme, on the party profile, etc. And not just the IS; Bryan K in the US and Danny Byrne are on record attacking the Irish in very strong language. We met with a brick wall as we had done earlier in Scotland, Liverpool and many other examples of former comrades who were breaking from the revolutionary project and particularly the CWI.

The Irish IEC members’ refusal to criticise their own members – even in private and sensitively – over the crass comments made by some of them at the CWI School in Barcelona provoked a new discussion in the IS. AP advocates we should wear a blindfold and pass over what we considered was a breach with a Trotskyist position on these issues. “Back away” – hide the differences – is the cry; take them up on a more propitious occasion in the future. This is, in effect, the approach of AP which is an abdication of real

revolutionary leadership. Trotsky consistently advocated “say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done come what may”.

AP conveniently forgets that we were drawn into this discussion on the ‘[breach of protocol]’ months after the Irish leadership discovered this. When we did not automatically comply with their proposals they ‘escalated’ this into an attack on the IS. We acted in a responsible fashion to defend the reputation of the Irish organisation and the CWI, which provoked even more hostility from the Irish comrades and the mobilisation of their primarily full-time machine to ‘crush’ the IS delegation at the subsequent meetings that took place in Dublin following the fractious meeting in London when they remained obdurate. The counter-measures taken by a small group within the Irish NEC, without the agreement of the full Irish NEC or discussed with the IS for nearly two months, was a breach in the methods of democratic centralism and the democratic functioning of the party structures. AP does not even comment on these events. Therefore we are right to conclude that all that the Irish and, it seems, AP want is a passive International leadership that just accepts what we consider are potentially huge dangers to the reputation of the CWI and the Irish leadership, which could put in jeopardy the great achievements of the past. Belatedly, AP came to the same conclusion as us; that is why he persuaded the Irish to now accept their ‘mistakes’ – which are a lot more than this – because of the severe potential legal dangers that they faced. We stressed the potential danger of this, particularly to the elected representatives in Ireland and elsewhere.

A further travesty of the truth is also attempted by AP over the history of the Greek organisation and its relations with the IS. He effectively attempts to rewrite history on issues such as the dispute over the euro and China. It is true that one IS member, Lynn Walsh, raised questions about whether or not the euro would actually be implemented but this was connected to the economic perspectives which were widely discussed at this time by the bourgeois of a possible economic meltdown. If such a downturn had taken place this could have shipwrecked the euro before it was even launched. With the onset of the crisis of 2007-08 and

its enduring effects even during the so-called ‘boom’ the euro could yet collapse.

There is nothing surprising in this which is in line with Trotsky’s analysis of the ultimate incapacity of capitalism to overcome the limits not just of private ownership but of the nation state. AP passes over the even greater mistakes of his new friends in the Swedish leadership, some of whom argued not only that the euro could be implemented but that the nation state could be overcome and a new ‘European bourgeoisie’ could be formed! Moreover, Greece itself could have come out of the euro in 2015 if the Tsipras leadership had been pushed by mass pressure into opposing the Troika and its savage programme of austerity. Britain was stopped from joining the euro by the pressure exerted in Britain, both from sections of the bourgeois and the labour movement correctly seeing it as a vehicle for implementing savage austerity. In the new situation that we confront, the euro could yet collapse, triggered by any number of countries: in Italy, in Germany even, the countries of Eastern Europe and also the fallout from the crisis that has been generated by Brexit in Britain. The cheap attempt at point scoring made by AP on this issue – which we repeat is an attempt at rewriting history – may indicate that he and the Greek EC think that the capitalists will be able to unify the productive forces in Europe and overcome the insuperable barriers of the nation state. Such a perspective is utopian on the basis of capitalism, as we have consistently pointed out in our material particularly in opposition to the Mandelites and now, it seems, to some in our own ranks.

AP also applies the same method to the question of China – its class characteristics – and how it will evolve in the next period. It is not possible to give a full explanation here of how our position has developed. We opposed the Swedish leadership who approached the phenomena of China in a one-sided and dogmatic fashion, characterising it at one stage as already arrived as a capitalist regime – and crudely playing up the ‘Communist Party dictatorship’ – without any qualifications whatsoever. We oppose this crude oversimplification of the complex processes that have unfolded in China. We said that it was clearly moving in

a capitalist direction but when we were debating this issue it was more of a hybrid with a clear capitalist sector but the retention of a huge state sector. Therefore it was not a simple repeat of the processes that had developed in Russia and Eastern Europe following the collapse of Stalinism.

The endless debates at IEC meetings – over the precise details and therefore the character of China – led the IS on my initiative to propose a compromise which would recognise the clear process of a movement towards capitalism while at the same time not yet

description of what is a highly complex process which is still in a state of flux. Most of the bourgeois refuse to describe China as a ‘fully developed market economy’ and one of the factors explaining this is the huge retention of the state sector – including the banks and finance houses – which has allowed China, to some extent, to escape the ravages of the rest of the capitalist world following the crisis of 2007-08 through massive state-led spending which has resulted in the accumulation of huge debts.

In reality China’s class character is a continuation of the ‘hybrid’ described by us in the past. It has managed to escape serious economic crisis up to now because of the huge injection of state finance, which has in turn led to a colossal debt for China and threatens the continuation of its growth. But the artificial injection of this issue into this debate is an example of the shallow and incorrect approach of AP, the Greek EC and their allies. We look forward to further robust exchanges and discussions on this issue in the CWI and in the public domain.

clearly arriving at the completion of this process. I proposed, not AP or anybody else, that we should describe China as a “state capitalist regime with peculiar features”. This was accepted by all sides in the IEC but now AP wants to reopen this question in order for him and his allies to once again hopefully score points to the detriment of the IS and those who support us. In reality China remains as a very peculiar ‘hybrid’ regime. The most farsighted thinkers of the bourgeois internationally have come to the same conclusion as us and have used belatedly our terminology of ‘state capitalism’ to give some kind of

Let us also remind AP of the perspective of the Swedish leadership which was that capitalist globalisation was ‘irreversible’. He says absolutely nothing about this. The Swedish leadership – at least, one of them – did have the good grace subsequently to admit at the IEC that they had been wrong and the IS was correct about the inevitable interruption of this process, leading plausibly at a certain stage to ‘de-globalisation’. This prognosis of ours had been dismissed by the Swedish leadership and I do not know what the position of AP was on this and other issues.

It would take a book to completely refute all the misconceptions and falsifications of the IS’s position over Ireland and many other related questions. However, we are confident that our faction platform, ‘In defence of a working class Trotskyist CWI’, and analysis will be borne out by events and in the support that this will engender in the ranks of the CWI and beyond.