

In Defence of a Working-class Orientation for the CWI

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 hack 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 hack. 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 'hacking' 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 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 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.

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.

Peter Taaffe for the International Secretariat (Majority) 14/1/19