

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report

14th day of July 1976

SUBJECT

IMG

ICL

Reference to Papers

400/76/58

40 76/4

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:-
2. "On Friday 25 June 1976 at 7pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WGL a joint meeting of the International Marxist Group and the International Communist League was held to debate upon 'Building a Trotskyist International'.
3. The meeting, which was attended by about 60 persons, was chaired by Harry WICKS who declared himself to be a life-long Trotskyist but a member of neither organisation. Following a rambling introduction during which he recalled his presence at a communist meeting in that same chamber in 1940, which was also apparently a Trotskyist reconciliation attempt, he introduced the first speaker for the IMG, Brian GROGAN, in place of the advertised main speaker, John ROSS, who did not attend the meeting.
4. Before GROGAN was able to speak there was an interruption from the floor by a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group who was protesting at the manoeuvres of the ICL which had, apparently, after booking the venue for a debate with the RCG on the Fourth International, declined to do so and then restricted the present meeting to an IMG/ICL 'rhetorical binge' because of a joint desire to isolate the RCG.
5. WICKS firmly quieted the heckler and stated that the terms agreed for the conduct of the debate were such as to restrict it to the 5 speakers nominated by each party, who would occupy the whole of the time available. There were to be no further interruptions.
6. Brian GROGAN opened the debate with several complimentary remarks about the ICL, largely based on their joint work within the Labour Party, especially the joint running of certain Labour Party Young Socialist groups. This seemed, however, to be the only amicable point in the relationship of the parties as GROGAN followed with a criticism of the ICL's policy of Labour Party membership for all cadres and their refusal to work under IMG leadership where such joint LPYS groups existed. He said that Lenin had worked continually to unite Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the early days of the Russian Revolution in the face of common enemies and, although bitterly opposed to many factions within the Communist Party, sought, through ideological argument, to resolve the differences without splitting the party. He said that Trotsky himself had striven continually for dialectical debate within the International and had only left when the Stalinist bureaucracy had threatened the destruction of the, by then, sole Trotskyist faction.
7. GROGAN criticised the programme adopted by the ICL which he said restricted them to building a national party and prevented them from communicating with the world-wide Trotskyist movement expressed

in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. He rejected the accusations of 'Brandlerism' which ICL had levelled against IMG and said that the ICL had been inconsistent in their attitude to IMG and the Fourth International, first offering support against Healyites and others who accused IMG of betraying Trotskyism and now accusing it of treason to the programme of Trotskyism. GREGAN stated that there were factions freely operating within the IMG whose views were very close to those held by ICL, therefore, it seemed only logical for ICL to join or at least openly affiliate to the Fourth International.

8. Sean MATGAMNA, first ICL speaker, replying to GREGAN, said that papering over the cracks in the F.I. was not the correct way to fight for a clear estimation of the work for communists now and in the future. He stated that the regard of the IMG for 'The International' amounted to a fetishism and failed to respond to the ruthless political and organisational assessment, necessary to build an International. MATGAMNA said that the F.I. was an unstable centrist organisation without either ideological firmness or an accommodationalist equilibrium caused by calls for political revolution against Russian Stalinism which went hand-in-glove with accommodation to bureaucratic formations in other workers states. He said they (USFI) failed in the central communist responsibility to build proletarian parties to fight for Trotsky's programme in every way necessary.

9. MATGAMNA said that the ICL had already made contact with several F.I. groups in other countries in its own right and that the fight for a correct programme did not depend solely on passing messages through the IMG. He stated that the accusation of 'Brandlerism' was upheld by the IMG's position on Vietnam, which was also why the ICL now regarded them as betraying the programme of Trotskyism within the USFI. Their 'Brandlerism' meant the acceptance of the bureaucracy as legitimate, the absence of any analysis and critique of the social role of the bureaucracy in such deformed workers states and the failure to elaborate a programme of political revolution in these states. This failure led to accommodation of Labour and Communist Party views with the IMG's many broad front activities instead of building within these movements, as the ICL struggled to do in LPYS, a clear revolutionary leadership.

10. MATGAMNA then caused uproar within the hall by accusing the IMG of chauvinism because its accommodation to such groups led to the incorrect action of calling for a 'No' vote on the EEC referendum, instead of showing by rejection and abstention that such a vote was, either way, an accommodation to the bureaucracy. It was the acceptance by all factions within the IMG, MATGAMNA said, of such broad front principles that made it impossible for ICL to think of its revolutionary programme being presented within the confines of the USFI.

11. Harry WICKS then stated that following the main speakers each party was to present four representatives of the appropriate leaderships to expand and continue the main points of the debate so far expressed. He said that at this stage he had been asked to read a joint IMG/ICL statement calling for all members of both parties to attend the Anti-Apartheid Demonstration to be held on Sunday, June 26, at 2.30pm (reported separately). This was to be the only joint statement in agreement made by the two parties.

12. Johnathan SILBERMAN, continuing the debate for the IMG, concentrated on the destructive action that he said had been seen to be ICL's sole work within the Troops Out Movement and on Ireland generally. Dave HUGHES, replying for ICL, said that again this was a clear indication of the IMG's acceptance of broad front politics as distinct from the ICL's attitude which was to view Ireland as a whole and see that a revolutionary programme was necessary for the whole island. The ICL's actions were intended to force TOM to a clear understanding of this and not to accommodate to Leo ABSE and other reformists so beloved of the present TOM leadership.

13. Peter GOWAN then spoke for IMG. He concentrated on the problems which he said would face the ICL without an International programme as strictly organised as that of the IMG. GOWAN stated that the ICL would find itself limited to a national movement which would flounder in the bureaucracy into which all inward looking movements found themselves drifting.

14. Geoff LEE, for ICL, said that the ICL could not accept USFI discipline, that the primary task of the ICL was to relate to a correct International programme and that it was realised that the fight to build a revolutionary party in Britain was only a subordinate part of the fight to build a revolutionary-proletarian International. The primary pre-condition for such an International was a developed International programme and not just fetishism about the bare bones of the USFI.

15. Stephen POTTER, the next IMG speaker, stated that the ICL was in danger of slipping into the extreme sectarianism of the Healeyites of the WRP and the WSL. The ICL failed to see, he said, that the mainstream of Trotskyism continued through the Fourth International and that it was an elementary aspect of Trotskyism that all factions should struggle within the F.I. for a correct programme.

16. Andrew HORNUNG, replying, said that it was a pity that the IMG failed to see that it was impossible for ICL to relate to the USFI as it was a centrist obstacle to the building of a true International. He said that there was clearly a split developing within the USFI and that this was welcomed as it would increase the possibilities for healthy dialogue and regroupment on a stronger Marxist basis.

17. Tariq ALI, the last IMG speaker, attempted to change the atmosphere of recrimination which was developing by injecting some humour into the debate. His insistence, however, that the Russian and Chinese revolutions had made 'some small advances for workers' which the ICL had failed to see, was not regarded as particularly amusing by the ICL members in the hall.

18. Martin THOMAS, closing the debate for ICL, said that it was necessary to arrive at a clear view of the differences between the ICL and the IMG, the more so because there was a shared common ground on such limited questions as racialism, women's rights, etc, and that ICL did recognise the fact that historically IMG was the British section of the world tendency which was recognised as the mainstream of post-Trotsky Trotskyism. The main defect in IMG was, he said, an insistence on 'scenario politics' in which lack of assessment lead to broad-front action involving large sections of

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the social democracy and the consequent delusions of grandeur obscuring the fact that the project attempted was beyond anything that could be realistically achieved. It represented insufficient forces, in an absolute sense, specifically within the working class. Any informal organisational relationship with IMG, within the framework of USFI, was impossible. ICL, he said, must fight, itself, for the regeneration and development of the Fourth International, whilst recognising the USFI as the mainstream historically.

19. The atmosphere of the meeting had, by its close, degenerated into barely concealed mutual contempt. Future relations between IMG/ICL seem likely to be worse, as the ICL have now withdrawn even the critical support afforded to IMG/USFI in the recent past.

20. A copy of the "International Communist" Special Publication no. 1 'The ICL and the Fourth International' is attached to this report.

21. A list of persons identified at the meeting is given at Appendix 'A'.

G.T.M. Craft

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Chief Inspector

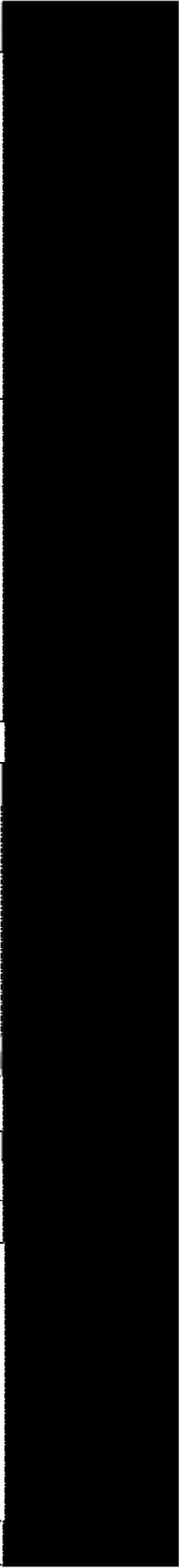
[REDACTED]

R. Wilson
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

APPENDIX A

Appendix to SB report concerning a joint ING/ICL meeting on Friday 25 June 1976

Tariq ALI	RF 402/65/h40	
Privacy		
Brian GEDGAN	RF 402	Privacy
Peter GOWAN	RF 405	
Privacy		
Andrew HOBBING	RF 405	Privacy
Dave HUGHES	No Trace	
Privacy		
Geoff LEE	Unable to identify	
Sean MATGAINA	RF 402	Privacy
Stephen POTTER	Mentions re ING	
Privacy		
Johnathan SILBERMAN	RF 402	Privacy
Privacy		
Martin THOMAS	RF 402	Privacy



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SECRET

Privacy



Harry WICKS

RF 301/MP/1683

Mentioned:

Leo ABSE MP

John ROSS

RF 402

Privacy



Faint, mostly illegible text from a document, possibly a list or report, with some words like 'Mentioned:' and names like 'Harry WICKS', 'Leo ABSE MP', and 'John ROSS' visible.

