

What is the TILC?

Notes for the information of NC members in preparation for the October 9-10 discussion.

Brief history

The old WSL from its formation sought actively to promote international discussions, initially with groupings which had been, like us expelled from the Healy International Committee, but increasingly on a wider scale. We took initiatives aimed at opening up a polemical dialogue with the USFI, and we followed up other groupings with whom we came into contact through this work and through also the contacts and international trips of cde Traven in that period.

The TILC as an organisation had its origins among such contacts. It was formed in December 1979 at a meeting in Oxford. The founding organisations were the Workers Socialist League, the Trotskyist Workers League (TAF) of Denmark, the Socialist League (Democratic Centralist) of the USA - restricted by US legislation to the status of sympathising section; the Bolshevik Leninist Group (GBL) of Italy; a group of Middle Eastern Trotskyists (later to form the Hackney Group); the Chilean Bolshevik Workers League (LOB); and a cde from France who had been working with the GBL.

Though it spanned seven countries and three continents, the total membership of the TILC sections was almost certainly not more than 200, and four "sections" had less than ten members each. It was plainly not the Fourth International reconstructed, nor did it dream of proclaiming itself as such.

Instead, the TILC set itself the task of establishing joint work on an international level, and pursuing political discussion on issues of disagreement with a view to laying the basis for the adoption of a centralist discipline for a common tendency. The objective of such a tendency was to intervene in the most effective way possible in the discussions and possibly even in some of the groupings of the crisis-ridden world Trotskyist movement, putting forward a principled programmatic basis for the reconstruction of the FI, and fighting on that basis to unite and regroup the most principled forces in a struggle against the entrenched and sectarian leaderships of the existing international tendencies.

Since that time the crisis facing the major tendencies has worsened. The USFI, which had split prior to - and remained sharply divided during - its XIth Congress in 1979 has continued to suffer the growing antagonism between the American SWP and the European leadership. And the Parity Committee/Fourth International (International Committee) which was in the process of formation when the TILC was founded, went on - to complete its merger, and then even more rapidly to split back into its previous and present day component parts - the Morenist LIT (International Workers' League), and the Lambertist FICIR (FI - International Centre of Reconstruction.)

TILC has not been exempt from the pressures generated by this crisis of the world movement. The Chilean section, the LOB (which we subsequently discovered had been in the throes of a major political crisis even at the time of its affiliation to TILC) went on to lose the large majority of its European membership-in-exile, while the Chilean "interior" leadership succumbed to a proposal of fusion by the Morenist group Izquierda Socialista and was sucked in this way into the FIIC. Having never really consolidated any relationship with the LOB cdes who declared adherence to the TILC, we suffered a setback before we even knew it.

Yet in the same period of time other TILC sections have been able to develop and take advantage of the emergence of principled forces independent of the larger tendencies looking for a way forward