

## Chapter 3

### Concocting a smear campaign: North distorts the history of the Workers League/SEP

#### The crisis of the International Committee: 1973-1982

Following his remarks about my “origins”, North takes exception to my depiction of the Workers League in the period 1973-1974. North claims that my depiction of this period “assumed an extremely subjective tone” and “betrayed [my] own serious political weakness.” Responding to my account of how Wohlforth (who was then National Secretary of the Workers League) drove me out of the movement in this period, North writes,

Wohlforth's behavior was, indeed, atrocious. But Steiner failed to examine why he succumbed politically to Wohlforth's provocations. There were others who resisted and opposed Wohlforth.

This is the first of North’s attempts to rewrite the history of the movement. North is in effect blaming the victim, me, for “succumbing”. It is not that I was hounded out of the movement by Wohlforth and Fields, but I “succumbed” to some unstated “provocation”. North deliberately minimizes the significance of Wohlforth’s actions and what they revealed of the degeneration that was taking hold of the International Committee at the time. He refers to the matter as Wohlforth’s “behavior”, as if we were dealing with the bad behavior of an individual. But this is not how North wrote about Wohlforth in the past. In his 1988 book, *The Heritage We Defend*, North said the following about Wohlforth and his impact on the Workers League:

“... Wohlforth lost whatever was left of his political equilibrium and initiated a political wrecking operation inside the Workers League which, within the space of one year, nearly destroyed the entire organization. The beginning of these violent and unstable activities coincided with the initiation, in the summer of 1973, of an intimate personal relationship with a woman by the name of Nancy Fields. This woman, who was soon exercising enormous influence over Wohlforth, was promoted into the party leadership. Ignorant of Marxism and contemptuous of the working class, Fields made use of her position, which was based entirely on her personal relationship with Wohlforth, to initiate a **pogrom** against the Workers League cadre.

Elsewhere, North sums up the damage Wohlforth and Fields inflicted on the movement:

Thus, according to Wohlforth’s own balance sheet, in the course of one year, the Workers League had lost more than 100 cadre, half the membership of the National and Political Committees, its entire original youth leadership, and virtually all of its intellectuals. On top of that its trade union work had collapsed. In other words, by the summer of 1974, Wohlforth and Fields had almost succeeded in liquidating the Workers League. This accounts for the esteem in which they are held to this day by all the enemies of the Trotskyist movement. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David North, *The Heritage We Defend*, (Labor Publications, 1988), pp. 442-443.



**Tim Wohlforth**

Whereas in 2008 North accuses me of “succumbing” to Wohlforth and claims that I “exaggerate” his political significance, in 1988 he was accusing Wohlforth and Fields of staging a “pogrom” and a “wrecking operation” that “almost succeeded in liquidating the Workers League.”<sup>2</sup> Since

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<sup>2</sup> I should add that North’s assessment of Wohlforth’s impact on the movement changes according to his polemical requirements. In a historical review of the movement published about the same time as North’s polemic, allusion is made once again to Wohlforth’s “frenzied, unprincipled and destructive character” and its catastrophic effects on the movement. The statement is not signed other than to indicate that it was adopted at the founding congress of the SEP, but there is no doubt that North was a principal author of this document. The section on Wohlforth includes the following graphic characterization of this period:

Wohlforth’s political and personal behavior exhibited disturbing signs of disorientation. Egged on by a new personal companion, Nancy Fields, Wohlforth’s interventions in the party assumed a frenzied, unprincipled and destructive character. Within the space of one year, 1973-74, the Workers League lost more than one-half of its membership. (The Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/oct2008/SEPFoundations2008.pdf> p. 45.)

While this documents is closer to the facts than those North presents in the *Odyssey* series its analysis of this period in the history of the Workers League is equally vacuous. Wohlforth is portrayed as “disoriented”, as indeed he was, but no explanation is offered as to the cause of this disorientation, other than his being “egged on” by Nancy Fields. Later the author of this document enlists the catch-all explanation that “[Wohlforth] epitomized specific traits of American petty bourgeois radicalism—in particular, its contempt for theoretical consistency and a pragmatic disdain for history.” Perhaps Wohlforth did “epitomize” the worst traits of American radicalism, but how did he get to that point after having fought for Marxism against radicalism the previous twenty years? Did Wohlforth have a character flaw that sealed his fate? What is striking in North’s depiction is his deliberate avoidance of any mention that perhaps Wohlforth’s degeneration had something to do with the growing crisis within the International Committee. North consistently depicts this period of the Workers League as if it was an entirely healthy movement, whose National Secretary suddenly went off the rails. He denies that Wohlforth’s crisis wasn’t just his personal crisis but the crisis of the Workers League and the crisis of the Workers League was in turn a harbinger of the

when does one blame a victim of a “pogrom” for “succumbing” to it? It is obvious that North will latch on to any accusation against me that serves the purpose of his smear campaign, irrespective of his own previous account of the historical record.

That we took Wohlforth’s “wrecking operation” very seriously at the time is also revealed by the fact that we produced two major statements on Wohlforth, including one which was coauthored by North and myself, *The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth*, in which we tried to trace the theoretical roots of Wohlforth’s break from the IC. What was missing in that assessment was any understanding that the degeneration of Wohlforth was connected to the increasing disorientation of the IC. Wohlforth’s “atrocious behavior”, as the North of 2008 puts it, must be seen in the context of the disorientation that was emerging in the IC as well as his own political crisis. One thing it definitely was not was the peccadilloes of an individual.

As North nowhere elaborates what this atrocious treatment consisted of, it is useful to document this aspect of the history of the movement. In his self-serving memoir, *The Prophet’s Children*, Wohlforth provides a good description of the disorientation and the sickness that had gripped the movement in this period. Writing about the period 1973-1974, Wohlforth said:

We in the Workers League were among the most disoriented of those on the left. We were deeply convinced that world capitalism was in its deepest crisis ever. This meant that “revolution” was more than an abstract notion or a moral ideal. We felt we needed to prepare in a practical way for revolutionary events that would soon take place on American soil as well as throughout the world. Our little group would then flourish and become the leadership of the American working class. This leadership would become critical to the success or failure of the revolution. The fate of humanity depended on the outcome of this battle. Therefore, quite logically, we felt that no personal sacrifice for the party was too great. These notions possessed us and shaped our very beings. We became driven by them. The more our vision clashed with reality, the more frenzied we became.

Wohlforth then goes on to describe the brutal pressure this put on comrades:

Our typical member worked a full day at his or her job and then, instead of going home, headed for the party office, bringing a slice of pizza or a hamburger for supper. Then, together with one or two others, the comrade would go to a dangerous poor neighborhood to sell papers, knock on doors for subscriptions, perhaps pick up half-a-dozen teenagers to hold a youth meeting, organize a dance or basketball game or just to talk at great length and try to convince someone to do something. Then it was back to the office to talk it all over and finally head for home. Sometimes even at home the comrade would have to try to keep awake to work up a small article for the newspaper. This wearying schedule was not kept only one night a week, either; it could be every night!

Although Wohlforth somehow manages to avoid facing up to his own responsibility for this disorientation, his description of the day to day toll this had on comrades is accurate enough. He then explains how this disorientation began to turn into a kind of witch hunt against the older

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serious crisis brewing within the International Committee which would eventually explode in 1985 with the split with the WRP. While there is some truth to the contention that the fight against Wohlforth helped prepare the movement for the much bigger fight against Healy a decade later, it is a serious distortion of this history to maintain that the crisis of the International Committee had no impact on the Workers League.

comrades who were thought to be more conservative and were therefore holding back the movement:

As time went by our views clashed increasingly with comrades' experiences in the real world. How did we explain this to the members? Since the ever-deepening crisis was taken as a given, we did not see the problem of our organization as *objectively based*. We could not simply recognize that we were having difficulties because the times were not quite as grim as we painted them; there were openings for personal advancement, and many who were once interested in leftist politics were becoming more interested in personal success. We thought our problems were *subjectively rooted*. We believed that the crisis had gotten so deep that the middle classes (or Marxists, the "petty bourgeoisie") were in retreat. Therefore our own cadres, which were of middle class origins, were resisting reaching out to the young workers, whom the ever-deepening crisis was radicalizing. Those who resisted the most left the organization. We were thus seeing a "class struggle" within the Workers League as the majority fought the middle-class element's resistance to reaching out to the ever more receptive workers.<sup>3</sup>

Again, this is a fairly accurate description of what happened, except that Wohlforth fails to mention that the great majority of those who left the organization were given a big push by Wohlforth himself and his lieutenant, Nancy Fields. And as Wohlforth elsewhere makes clear, in implementing these organizational methods and the frenzy that accompanied them he was only attempting to carry out on American soil what he had been trained to do under the guidance of Gerry Healy. Wohlforth's well-documented and systematic abuse of the members of the Workers League was one of the early symptoms of the disorientation that was beginning to grip the International Committee.<sup>4</sup>

This brings me to a crucial point: North's claim that there were "others who resisted" introduces a major falsification of the history of the Workers League. It is true that there were "others who resisted", but among those "others" you cannot find David North or any of the current leadership of the SEP. Those comrades who remained in the party in this period showed no signs of resisting Wohlforth. In other words, they also "succumbed", only in a different form

I don't doubt that some of the comrades who remained in the movement in this period chafed under Wohlforth's imperious manner of running the organization, but regardless of their private misgivings, ***not a single one of them challenged Wohlforth or fought against the direction he was taking. The opposition to Wohlforth, when it did emerge, was initiated by one of those who had been driven out of the movement, comrade Jacques Vielot, who contacted the leadership of the International Committee and asked them to intervene.*** Clearly North would prefer to bury that episode from the history of the Workers League because of the obvious

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Wohlforth, *The Prophet's Children: Travels on the American Left*, (Humanities Press, 1994), pp. 223-225.

<sup>4</sup> One example of the kind of abuse party members suffered at the hands of Wohlforth and Fields in this period was documented by North himself in his *Heritage We Defend*:

Fields employed the most vile means to force cadre out of the Workers League: in one instance, she demanded that a member, five-months pregnant, undergo an abortion!

implications it has for today – i.e. that it took the initiative of someone who was out of the movement to begin the process of reorienting the movement.

Continuing his commentary on my depiction of this period, North writes,

Nor did Steiner attempt to explain the deeper political reasons for the development of the crisis in the Workers League. Aside from a fleeting reference to the Watergate scandal, Steiner's letter hardly touched on the major changes in the political and economic changes that were taking place in the United States and internationally. His letter failed to examine the connection between shifts in the objective situation, their impact on the development of the class struggle, and their reflection, politically and theoretically, within the party.

This kind of backhanded complaint about what my letter did not do fails to explain anything. Since when was my letter supposed to be an exhaustive analysis of the economic and political foundations of the history of the Workers League? This was after all an application for membership. I wonder how many other applications for membership the SEP receives that go into even a small percentage of the issues I discussed?

North then notes that I acknowledged my own inadequacies by quoting the following statement from my letter:

Unfortunately, although I was troubled by Healy's subjective interpretation of the theory of knowledge of Marxism, I attributed whatever qualms I felt to my own inadequacies.

I did indeed acknowledge my own limitations. It's a pity that North is incapable of acknowledging his.

Next, North strongly objects to my depiction of the party in the late 1970s, the time when I left. He quotes the following statement in my letter,

...To begin with, the day to day work of the Workers League seemed to be increasingly dominated by an anti-theoretical activism. This was the direct consequence of the false perspective that had been introduced into the sections of the International Committee by the leadership of the WRP. Increasingly, we were working with the sense that a civil war was imminent. It therefore became urgent to build our ranks as rapidly as possibly [sic]. The idea of educational work and training came to be viewed as a wasteful luxury reflecting the previous propagandist stage of the movement. Comrades were being asked to do impossible chores, and this began to take its toll. Once again, as in the period of Wohlforth's wrecking operation, the personal lives of the party members were put under incredible stress. In some ways the situation we now encountered was worse than the one from the 1973-74 period. The frenetic activism launched by Wohlforth, while pushing the party to the breaking point, did result at least initially, in the recruitment of some working class youth. This was above all a product of the different conditions prevailing in the working class at that time. The period 1973-74 coincided with a period of militancy and radicalization of many layers of the working class. Three years later, the wave of strikes and youth radicalization was definitely on the wane. Despite our heroic efforts, few if any new forces were recruited in this period.



North's comment here was that I was "holding the party responsible for [my] own crisis". As far as he is concerned, this was a very healthy period in the history of the movement.

North:

...[T]he departure of Wohlforth marked the beginning of a definite break by the Workers League with the political residue of American middle-class radicalism that Wohlforth personified. In the aftermath of his resignation, the Workers League set out to place all aspects of its work in alignment with the Trotskyist heritage of the Fourth International. Steiner, obsessed with his individual pinpricks, seemed to have completely forgotten this central achievement. In this respect, it was especially noteworthy that Steiner's letter made no reference to intensive work on political perspective that characterized this period...

Here North once again rewrites the history of the Workers League and the International Committee. He fails to specifically address my characterization of the false perspective operative in those years. To reiterate, I wrote in my application for membership that "the Workers League seemed to be increasingly dominated by an anti-theoretical activism. This was the direct consequence of the false perspective that had been introduced into the sections of the International Committee by the leadership of the WRP. Increasingly, we were working with the sense that a civil war was imminent." As North has always insisted on tracing political differences back to different evaluations of the objective situation, it is curious that he neither affirms nor denies that the perspective of the Workers League was indeed dominated by the idea of an imminent civil war in this period. And if the perspective was so far off the mark, then according to North's own logic, it would not have been possible to make a fundamental theoretical breakthrough without challenging that perspective. Not only that, but North entirely leaves out of his account - in which he claims there was "a definite break by the Workers League with the political residue of American middle-class radicalism that Wohlforth personified" - the fact that it was precisely in this period that the capitulation to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism dominated the work of the International Committee.

North has constructed a pseudo-history of the Workers League in the period from 1975-1982 whereby the degeneration of the International Committee did not affect the Workers League, and that in fact the Workers League, and North specifically was battling against Healy's "practice of cognition". But that was not the case. Even by North's own admission, he did not challenge Healy's perversion of the dialectic until 1982, but it had already been well entrenched by the period 1975-1982.

Although it is a topic that ought to be by rights the subject of a separate essay, it is important to note that a new generation is being trained on the basis of this pseudo-history. North's version of this history has been enshrined into one of the major documents emanating from the SEP's founding Congress, *The Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party*.<sup>5</sup> This official chronicle of the history of the SEP and the International Committee includes gaps large enough to drive a truck through, especially concerning the period from 1975-1982. For instance there is not even a single reference to any of the World Congresses of the International Committee other than its Third Congress in 1966. (North's *Heritage We Defend*, a much more comprehensive document, and for all its shortcomings, far more honest, written more

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/oct2008/SEPFfoundations2008.pdf>

than twenty years earlier, includes one brief mention of the Sixth World Congress of the ICFI that took place in 1975 but no mention of the Seventh World Congress.) There is not one word of analysis of any of the perspectives documents produced by these Congresses. This is a curious omission coming from a movement that prides itself on its “science of perspectives”. In the section of this document dealing with the break with Wohlforth, we are told,

The growth of the League in the late 1960s and early 1970s had been based to a great extent on the radicalization of student and minority youth. But the political climate on university campuses substantially changed as the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam began and the draft was ended. The Workers League was confronted with the challenge of turning to the working class. This required not only expanded practical activities, but also a comprehensive Marxist analysis of the objective situation and the assimilation, by a relatively inexperienced party cadre, of the lessons of the ICFI’s struggle against Pabloite revisionism. Instead, the work of the party assumed, under Wohlforth’s direction, a largely activist character, without a clear political perspective.

To say that the Workers League under Wohlforth’s direction lacked a “clear perspective” is an evasion. In fact the Workers League in that period had a very clear perspective; that the Nixon Administration was at the first stage of the end of bourgeois democracy and that civil war was on the order of the day. This perspective was as it turned out completely wrong and caused havoc in the movement. There was a partial correction of this perspective after Wohlforth’s departure, but because the root causes of such a mistaken perspective were never clearly identified as emanating from the International Committee, aspects of that perspective lingered on years later though in muted form. For instance, in the perspectives document issuing from the Seventh World Congress of the International Committee in May 1977, about a year prior to my departure and three years after Wohlforth’s departure, it is stated over and over that the economic crisis of capitalism “has reached a new stage” which has revolutionary implications. In a general sense that was true, but the document took that to mean that a revolutionary situation was on the agenda in the immediate period led by the struggle of the colonial masses. The document declared that,

The International Committee, because of its intransigent record in rejecting all forms of protest and adaptation to bureaucracy represented by revisionism, is now a pole of attraction to the revolutionary forces being thrown up in the Middle East and Africa and in all the advanced capitalist countries. (p.4)

Elsewhere the document introduces some of Healy’s pseudo-dialectical verbiage to explain the enormity of the responsibility before party members,

Now, the accumulated contradictions explode to the surface of the class struggle, creating an unprecedented world situation requiring a revolutionary practice of cognition able to abstract essential objective knowledge of the new content and tempo of the revolution, a negation at a higher level of the revolutionary period of October 1917 and the first five years of the Communist International. At this level all the intervening developments of counter-revolution and the struggle against Stalinism are subsumed, cancelled and overcome at the same time. (pp. 6-7)

There are also indications in this document of the gross capitulation to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism that mark this period of the International Committee. For instance, it takes the following swipe against the Socialist Workers Party,

To this disgusting mockery of socialism and proletarian internationalism the Socialist Workers Party apologists of imperialism have added an even viler parody. They have openly sided with the malicious State Department inspired campaign against the revolutionary Cambodian regime, depicting it as a government of ‘mass murderers’... (p. 24)<sup>6</sup>

The reference was to the Khmer Rouge regime of Cambodia which was responsible for one of the worst genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century against its own people. While it might be correct to point to the attempts of the State Department to manipulate public opinion about Cambodia, to call this regime of mass murderers “revolutionary” is nothing short of nauseating.

Returning now to North’s *Odyssey* piece, he recalls my parting words when I left the movement but denies that there was any significant disorientation of the movement that could have affected me.



Bulletin issue of Nov. 16, 1979

But that disorientation was very real and very far along as witnessed by the following panegyric to the reactionary mullahs of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that one could find in the pages of the newspaper of the Workers League, *The Bulletin*. In an article titled, *Carter's Revisionist Agents: Enemies of the Iranian Revolution*, published on Nov. 16, 1979 and written by Barry Grey – then as now a leading comrade - the piece attacks the US Socialist Workers Party and other revisionist outfits from the right, accusing them of not being obsequious enough toward the leadership of the Iranian Revolution. Launching a bitter attack against the SWP – in this case for the wrong reasons - the piece states,

In the long standing tradition of imperialist agents and fifth columnists, they attempt to drive a wedge between the revolutionary masses of Iran and their acknowledged leadership.

What the author called the “acknowledged leadership” of the Revolution was the Islamic fundamentalist Ayatollah Khomeini, whose followers were at the beginning stages of their persecution of socialists, trade unionists, homosexuals, women and national minorities.

<sup>6</sup> *Manifesto of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Committee of the Fourth International: May 21-28, 1977*, Published by the International Committee and printed by Astmoor Litho Ltd, Runcorn, Cheshire, U.K., 1977.



The piece then goes on to skewer an article in the SWP's publication *The Militant*, which had the following relatively mild critique of the bourgeois leadership of the Iranian Revolution:

“These mobilizations and the breakup of the government in Iran take place in the context of the capitalist regime's inability to solve the problems in Iran, its repressive actions against oppressed nationalities and militant workers. and the rising dissatisfaction of the ‘the masses’.”

To which the *Bulletin* replied,

The rest of the article consists of a repetition of the lying charges the SWP has hurled against the Iranian revolution since its historic victory last February. These include the revolution's alleged “oppression” of national minorities and women. It is, of course, precisely on these questions that the CIA has organized its biggest provocations inside Iran, with the aid of its paid agents in the leadership of the Kurdish separatist movement and thoroughly suspect middle class operators such as Ralph Schoenman and Kate Millet.

Now it is true that the CIA infiltrated and manipulated national minority groups inside and outside Iran as well as feminist groups in order to advance the agenda of U.S. imperialism. But there was nothing “alleged” about the oppression of national minorities and women in Iran. It was very real and it still continues some 30 years later. But the most indefensible part of this article is yet to come. The author goes on to hail the imprisonment, on charges of treason, of 14 people affiliated to a sister organization of the Socialist Workers Party in Iran:

It was precisely for supporting and participating in such counterrevolutionary intrigues that 14 members of the SWP's organization in Iran, the HKS, have been imprisoned under treason charges.

The author uncritically accepts the frame-up of left wing opponents of the mullahs by the Khomeini regime and not only fails to call for their release, but enthusiastically echoes the frame up charges of “participating in counterrevolutionary intrigues”. It is hardly necessary to look much further to make the point that the period in question, 1975-1982, was one of deep political and theoretical disorientation within the International Committee and that political disorientation did not leave the Workers League unscarred.

North's contention that the degeneration of the International Committee did not affect the Workers League is, aside from being wrong factually, an example of turning internationalism on its head. It is nothing more than a resurgence of the theory of American exceptionalism – the anti-internationalist notion that there is something unique about the socialist movement in the United States for whom an international movement is largely irrelevant at best. Such arguments were in fact defended by none other than Gerry Healy who championed the uniqueness of the coming “British Revolution” led by the Workers Revolutionary Party. Healy had contempt for the International Committee which was for him little more than a post office box that he occasionally used to provide himself with “internationalist” credentials.

## **The circumstances of my departure from the Workers League**



**Gerry Healy**

Next North takes up the subject of my departure from the Workers League in 1978. First he tries to paint me as being “blind” to the developments of the post-Wohlforth period. In the only place where North even remotely acknowledges the crisis in the International Committee in that period, he greatly understates its impact on the Workers League:

The deepening crisis in the British Workers Revolutionary Party **created difficulties** [my emphasis A.S.] for the Workers League.

“Created difficulties” is a euphemism and an evasion of owning up to the real history. Is a capitulation to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism now to be considered a “difficulty”? North is simply denying the extent to which the Workers League partook of the crisis that gripped the International Committee.

North continues:

But the political and theoretical lessons drawn by the Workers League out of the struggle against Wohlforth's political betrayal, and the subsequent renewal within our party of the struggle against all forms of opportunism, prepared the party for the fight against the WRP's abandonment of Trotskyism.

Now it is true that we did some important theoretical work in the period immediately following Wohlforth's departure in 1974. But that work has to be put in perspective. The work that was done, it is clear in retrospect, acted as a double-edged sword. It did go some way to clarifying the difference between dialectics and Wohlforth's brand of pragmatically oriented politics. But

at the same time we failed to recognize the crisis that was then brewing in the IC. The fact that we had just survived the possible liquidation of the movement and had brought in a new leadership that dealt with the theoretical challenge this posed contributed to a sense of complacency about the possibility of degeneration from within. In concentrating our fire exclusively on Wohlforth, we missed the bigger picture. Furthermore, whatever theoretical work was undertaken in the immediate aftermath of Wohlforth's departure failed to sustain a continuing effort. Within a year after we wrote the polemics against Wohlforth, the theoretical output of the movement dried up considerably. A perusal of issues of the *Bulletin* from the late 1970's and early 1980's paints a very dismal picture. Aside from the political content, which was more and more openly adapting to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism, there is virtually no material of a theoretical nature and much of the news coverage and polemics from this period consisted of rewrites from the pages of *Newsline*, the daily newspaper of the Workers Revolutionary Party. North's statement therefore, that the struggle against Wohlforth "prepared the party for the fight against the WRP's abandonment of Trotskyism", is a gross exaggeration. If it really did that, then why did it take seven years, the period from 1975 to 1982, for North to launch his first challenge to Healy's perspective? I say this not to condemn North or anyone else for being slow to take up the fight. The struggle against Healy remains North's shining moment. And we must recognize that the development of a revolutionary leader cannot always happen according to a timetable that we wish to impose. But in providing an account of that history we should above all be honest about our own role. North's account simply whitewashes large sections of his own history and the history of the Workers League/SEP.

When recalling this period in my letter, I did not attempt to prettify the picture. I also explained that this period of escalating crisis within the movement coincided with a deep personal crisis. As far as North is concerned, my mention of this personal crisis meant that I remembered nothing about this period except how it affected me. (This is for North yet another proof of my excessive subjectivism.) Perhaps however the real problem is that I remembered this period all too well, and not just how it affected me! My letter was of course partly of a personal nature as I was attempting to provide an assessment of **my** political history. In that context discussing the intersection between my personal life and my political life seemed not only proper but warranted by the circumstances.

In discussing my departure from the movement in 1978, I provided neither an apology nor an excuse but tried to the best of my ability to objectively analyze it. My departure from the movement was at least partially precipitated by the crisis within the movement. In leaving I do not claim to have taken a principled stand against the degeneration that was then taking hold of the IC. A principled stand would have required the launching of an all out struggle against Healy and his capitulation to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism. I did not see clearly enough nor did I have the fortitude to undertake such a struggle at the time. But my own inadequacies should not be used to bolster North's reconstruction of the history of the movement in this period. Those who remained in the movement were just as surely experiencing the crisis of the movement as those who left, though of course they did so in different ways. If truth be told there was no one who adopted a wholly principled stand in this period as there was no one prepared to fight Healy.

North continues his review of my letter by noting that I got wrong the date of my departure from the movement. Here is another case in which North attaches great significance to my mistaken chronology, while his own far more numerous errors in this area go unmentioned. He claims that I deliberately moved the date back by a year because I tried to hide the fact that what precipitated my departure was the decision to move the party headquarters to Detroit.

North:

But there was one major factual error his account. Henehan was killed not in October 1978, but exactly one year earlier—in October 1977. The discrepancy is significant, for it resulted in an account of Steiner's departure from the Workers League in which the actual circumstances of his abandonment of revolutionary politics were misrepresented. In fact, it was not the death of Henehan that directly precipitated Steiner's desertion. Rather, it was the decision taken by the Workers League, several months after Henehan's death, to relocate the party's political center to Detroit. The purpose of this relocation, which went altogether unmentioned in Steiner's letter, was to strengthen the party's identification with and involvement in the struggles of the working class in the important industrial centers of the Midwest. The preparations for this relocation, which began in the spring of 1978, were accompanied by intensive work on the drafting of a new perspectives resolution.

It is true that my recollection of an event that took place more than twenty years prior to my letter of 1999 - the death of Tom Henehan - was faulty. But how does North conclude from this error that “the actual circumstances” of my departure from the Workers League was deliberately “misrepresented” in order to hide my “resistance” to moving to Detroit? Furthermore, I never said that my departure from the movement was precipitated by the death of Tom Henehan. In another bit of sleight of hand, North chops out of my account of my departure a very significant section. After quoting my words,

Nothing could have prepared me for such news. ...

He inserts ellipses and then quotes my account of the moment of my departure.

... For the next few weeks and months, I drifted politically. One day, I don't even remember exactly when, I left the movement.

The effect of this careful editing is what North wants the reader to infer – that I wrote that I left the movement as a result of my reaction to the death of Tom Henehan. But North's editing job has removed the real explanation for my leaving the movement - the political disorientation that was gripping the International Committee and that was affecting me along with every other comrade. Here is the entire section from my letter, including the large chunk that North left out:

Nothing could have prepared me for such news. Not only did I feel the deep tragedy of the loss of Tom, a young comrade in the prime of his life, but I also was struck with a sense that we were all under siege.

The events of the next week are still etched in my mind. There was the emotionally wrenching experience of the wake at a funeral home downtown. Arrangements were swiftly made for a memorial meeting in honor Tom. I tried to contact some of the former party members that had

recently left in an effort to bring them to the memorial meeting. The meeting itself was a cathartic experience that allowed us as a group and individually to express our appreciation for the principled life that Tom had led. Yet Mike Banda, representing the International Committee introduced a sour note into the proceedings. Banda's talk was an evocation of the WRP's new orientation. It cast Tom's death in the same terms as the martyrdom of Palestinian fighters who threw themselves in front of Israeli tanks. Banda's demagogic talk turned the memorial meeting into a celebration of individual acts of heroism. Historically, the Marxist movement has always fought against the methods of the actions of heroic individuals. Marxists work to mobilize the collective strength of the working class as part of a political struggle for socialism. It was for this struggle that Tom Henehan, as a dedicated Marxist, had given his life.

In retrospect, the collision with the history and principles of Marxism that exploded in the WRP in the mid 80's were clearly prefigured in Banda's talk. Of course I could not know this at the time. Despite everything, I still looked for leadership to the comrades from the WRP. But I did leave the memorial meeting with a profound sense of unease. Instead of energizing me to redouble my efforts the meeting left me feeling more disoriented than ever. For the next few weeks and months, I drifted politically. One day, I don't even remember exactly when, I left the movement.

After presenting a dishonest narrative of my reasons for leaving, North infers from it the conclusion that I was really dissembling – that my real reason for leaving was my “resistance” to moving to Detroit and being thrust into the struggles of the working class. As if that were not enough, North compounds his false narrative by presenting a factually inaccurate picture of the party's move to Detroit.

The move to Detroit did not take place all at once. There was a period during which one of the two printing presses owned by the party was moved to Detroit, but the party headquarters along with the remaining printing press was relocated from the West side of Manhattan to Long Island City in Queens. This period lasted for about a year. I was already out of the movement before the relocation to Long Island City. I was not even aware of an impending move to Detroit for the simple reason that no such decision had been taken at that time, at least none of which I was aware. Had such a decision been taken then, there would have been little point in moving the party headquarters to Long Island City. In any case, whatever the exact sequence of events that led up to the move to Detroit, it is clear that North concentrates on this event in order to avoid discussing the disorientation of the International Committee at that time and how it affected the Workers League.

How much responsibility North had for the decision to move to Detroit and how much Gerry Healy had I do not know, but there is little doubt that Healy's advice was a major factor in this decision. Healy had done something similar in Britain, moving the bulk of the Workers Revolutionary Party's printing operation out of London to the industrial estate of Runcorn in 1976. (Healy's motive in this move was to free the party from the restrictions and pay grades imposed by the printers union in London. When he set up operations in Runcorn, the plant was staffed by party members who volunteered their labor for little or no recompense. Healy also took advantage of government subsidies and tax incentives that were being offered to new businesses opening up in this area.) But even as he sent a team of trusted party members to run the printing operation in Runcorn, Healy still maintained the party center in London. The Workers League, being a much smaller organization than the Workers Revolutionary Party, was



not in a position to divide up its forces in that way. The party center followed the printing operation to Detroit.

North compounds his misstatements about the move to Detroit with a fictitious account of my “resistance” to it. He writes,

Steiner was unsettled by the personal implications of the relocation of the party to the Midwest and the reorganization of its work. He was attached to the radical middle-class milieu of New York City, and recognized that the establishment of a new party center in Detroit would lead to a change in the social complexion of the party and a far more intense day to day involvement in the struggles of the working class. The prospect of a change in his lifestyle was not one that he relished.

Later on North mentions my “estrangement from the party’s perspective.” As I said, nothing in North’s account of my “distress” at the prospect of moving to Detroit has any factual basis. Neither does North’s tale of my “attachment to the radical middle class milieu of New York City”. Had I been forced to choose whether to move to Detroit or remain in New York, I would undoubtedly have remained in New York due to long standing family and other ties. But the question never came up in my case as I had left the movement prior to the move to Detroit despite North’s claims to the contrary. Furthermore the ties that held me to New York had little to do with my supposed “attachment to the radical middle class milieu”. Over the course of spending 8 years in the Workers League I had become completely estranged from whatever radical milieu I may have known years earlier in my graduate student days. There is also the absurd suggestion in North’s statement that New York was devoid of workers whereas Detroit was free from a radical middle class milieu. Now it is true that New York did have – as it still does – a radical middle class milieu. But the movement never had any problem finding the working class in and around the New York area when it was actually trying to lead struggles among workers – as it did among hospital workers, transit workers, cab drivers, dock workers, civil service employees and even auto workers. (Linden and Mahwah in New Jersey, both not far from New York, had auto plants at that time as did Tarrytown, which was less than an hour from New York.)

In trying to impugn my reputation North is doing much more than merely falsifying my personal history. He is falsifying the history of the movement. Above all, North’s fictitious account of my departure from the movement has for its purpose the white-washing of the political culpability of the movement in this period. North has never been honest about the degree to which the crisis of the International Committee – about which he has written voluminously – affected the Workers League.

As I have shown, the movement was then in a period of severe disorientation. The decision to move to Detroit was partly a symptom of that disorientation. It was a pragmatic answer to a real problem – how can the movement break through its isolation from the working class? What the move to Detroit in effect said was that by locating ourselves in physical proximity to workers, we can overcome the theoretical problems. North states that,

The purpose of this relocation... was to strengthen the party's identification with and involvement in the struggles of the working class in the important industrial centers of the Midwest.

It is now some three decades after that move and this is perhaps a good time to draw up a balance sheet. Just how did the move to Detroit “strengthen the party’s identification with and involvement in the struggles of the working class in the important industrial centers of the Midwest?” Can North point to any significant section of workers in the auto industry based in Detroit who have been won over to the party and are actively engaged in the struggle against the destruction of the auto industry? To ask these questions is to answer them.

North ends his discussion of my letter by “explaining” why my application was rejected. He writes that I evaded a discussion of the struggle within the IC against Healy’s perversion of dialectics, that,

[I] made no reference whatever to the content of the theoretical disagreements—a significant omission given [my] history in the movement.

I had told North on many occasions that Healy was misusing the language of dialectics to justify the status quo within the party regime – i.e. he had transformed the revolutionary edge of dialectics into its opposite, i.e. into an apology for the practice of the WRP which increasingly was based on crude impressions combined with incredibly opportunist and pragmatic day to day political and financial arrangements and, as we were to learn in 1985, his personal corruption and abuse of comrades. If the Political Committee felt this was “a significant omission”, they could have told me as much and I would have been glad to write an appendix explaining my reaction to the IC’s critique of Healy’s butchery of the dialectic. But I never received any such request.

In the remainder of his comment on my letter of application, North takes as many pot shots as he can muster. He is particularly contemptuous of my reasons for not rejoining the party in 1985 after the split with Healy, losing no opportunity to brand me as complacent and petty bourgeois. I did write candidly, as North admits, about the social forces that made it difficult for me to reenter the ranks of the revolutionary movement. But shouldn’t the fact that after 14 years I wanted to rejoin the movement indicate something about my having overcome the conservative pull of those social forces? If my exhaustive and candid account of my political history was not sufficient for North, I cannot help but wonder what kind of application for membership North and the Political Committee would have accepted. It seems that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a former member who expressed his independence from North on theoretical issues to be admitted to membership in the SEP.

In completing his comment on my letter of application, North takes one last stab at providing a coherent account of his reasons for rejecting my application for membership. Here it is:

Steiner's letter raised many questions among members of the SEP Political Committee. There was sharp disagreement with his assessment of the history of the Workers League in the 1970s. His approach to the objective experiences of the party betrayed an extreme and disorienting subjectivism. What he seemed to remember most about the events he referred to were their impact upon ... Alex Steiner! Moreover, his appraisal of the conflict within the Workers Revolutionary Party—notwithstanding his praise for the role of the International Committee—was superficial. The Political Committee was far from convinced that Steiner had worked through carefully and systematically the political and theoretical issues that were at the heart of the differences with

Wohlforth in the 1970s and with the WRP leadership in the 1980s. While the Political Committee did not want to discourage Steiner, it was felt that it would be premature to readmit him into the SEP. Further discussion would be necessary.

North's reasoning in rejecting my application here is entirely specious. He brings up "sharp differences" over various aspects of my letter that would require "further discussion" to clarify. ***But whatever differences emerged in the discussion over my letter were never conveyed to me. And there never was any "further discussion".***

If there were "sharp differences" with my assessment of the history of the Workers League in the 1970's then there must have been as well sharp differences with the assessment made at least of the episode with Wohlforth that was conveyed in North's *Heritage We Defend*. As I have shown, my account of that episode did not differ substantially from North's account written in 1988, though it certainly differed from his rewrite of that period in 2008.

As to my approach being dominated by "an extreme and disorienting subjectivism", I was asked to provide an account of my own political evolution in the context of the history of the movement, and that is exactly what I did, no more and no less.

Furthermore, the demand that I should "work through" the theoretical issues involved with the differences over Wohlforth was nothing more than impudence on North's part. . I was, after all, one of the authors of the theoretical critique of Wohlforth in the main document penned by the International Committee on the break with Wohlforth, *The International Committee and the Renegade Wohlforth*, so I was of course very well acquainted with the theoretical issues. North should be well aware of this fact as he was the co-author of that work with me.

My letter of application did not include an extensive discussion of philosophical issues for the simple reason that my earlier letter of June 25, 1999 already included that. I had been waiting for a discussion based on that letter, as North had promised in his initial reply to me. Recall that North wrote to me in his letter of June 25,

I will reply, after I have studied your letter more carefully, to the major points you have raised.

I was therefore still expecting a reply to my original letter on philosophical issues when I submitted my application for membership. Needless to say, I never did receive the promised response to my letter. And despite North's self-serving *post festum* claim that "Further discussion would be necessary", there never were any further discussions about my application for membership.

## **One more note on my application: A case of selective memory or just plain lying?**

That North's account of my application for party membership and its subsequent rejection is based on a tissue of lies is attested to in the following exchange I had with North in February of 2000. These letters were written following an aggregate meeting in Detroit that I attended (about which I will comment presently.) Here is my letter to North:

Dear Dave,

Just a note to let you know that I was very impressed with the aggregate, both in terms of the material covered in your presentation, and the contributions of a number of the comrades. It has given me much food for thought and I would certainly like to continue our discussions the next time you come to New York.

I was however somewhat perplexed by the last thing you said to me before I left yesterday, that is that I should consider joining the party. The reason I was perplexed is that I thought I had already applied to join the party, back in the submission I made this past summer. Perhaps I was not clear enough. If so, then I wish to say once more that I do indeed wish to rejoin the party.

Comradely,  
Alex  
(A.S. to D.N. Feb. 14, 2000)

North's reply came the next day:

Dear Alex,

Thanks for your message. Re my last comment, I intended only to emphasize how important it is that our political collaboration within the movement assume a systematic character. I believe that [name left out], [name left out],[name left out] and the other comrade in New York would benefit from your regular participation in political and theoretical discussions. As for the outstanding issues arising from your letter, I do think it is important that we review them.

That we haven't so far is, I must confess, my fault. But I do hope will we (sic) be able to meet in New York in the near future.

With best regards,

David  
(D.N. to A.S. Feb. 15, 2000)

The significance of this exchange is that it shows that far from being struck by the "anti-Marxist" content of my letter of application, North apparently forgot all his objections - and apparently forgot the letter itself - at the February 2000 aggregate meeting, and suggested that I join the party! Parenthetically, my letter also shows that by February of 2000 that there was no longer anything tentative about my desire to rejoin the movement. I reminded North that I had already applied for party membership the previous summer and made a second very forthright request to join the party. North in his reply not only does not deny anything I wrote the previous day, but even owns up to the fact that it was his fault that my letter of application had not been acted

upon. He ends his letter with what was by then the usual promise of follow up discussions that never took place. <sup>7</sup>

## **The Origin of the Heidegger Project: another chronological fabrication**

Having disposed of my application, North next moves on to discuss my attendance at an aggregate meeting of the SEP in February of 2000. Here North once more creates a chronology to fit the needs of his smear campaign. He claims that I was inspired by his talk at the February aggregate meeting to write the essay on Heidegger. It is important for him to establish this fact as otherwise his account of my political degeneration makes no sense. He has already cited my letter of June 25 and my application for membership in August of that 1999 as examples of my

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<sup>7</sup> {*Note by Frank Brenner*: While North directs his smear campaign at Alex Steiner, he does include a brief footnote about me in part 3 of “The Political and Intellectual Odyssey of Alex Steiner”. That footnote deserves some comment since it contains a number of errors which should be corrected, if only to set the record straight. Here it is:

Brenner was a member of the Workers League between 1972 and 1979. After Goldstein's departure from the party in March 1977, Brenner became editor of the *Bulletin*. In January 1979, he was asked to relocate to Detroit. He spent approximately one week in the city, and then left abruptly. He offered no explanation for his abandonment of the party as he severed all relations with the Workers League. I did not see Brenner again for nearly 20 years. In 1996 we met very briefly in Toronto. That was my last and only discussion with him. He did not express any interest in applying for membership in the Socialist Equality Party. He contributed several articles to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

First, I was a party member from 1970 to 1979, a fact that can be confirmed by David Walsh, who recruited me. It was in 1972 that I first met North, which may explain this error. Second, it isn't true that I offered no explanation for leaving the party. I well remember a phone conversation with North after I left Detroit: I told him I was burnt out, a not uncommon condition given the disoriented activism that prevailed throughout the IC in this period. North told me that my action in abandoning the party would help to open the gates to the concentration camps. In fairness to North, this style of overheated rhetoric – which derived from Healy – was very much then par for the course in the movement. The only reason I raise this is to demonstrate why I still have a clear recollection of this conversation: needless to say, this would have been a painful accusation for anyone to hear, but I also happen to be the son of Holocaust survivors, and so this was not a remark I was likely ever to forget.

Next, it wasn't I who “severed all relations” with the party, but rather the party that severed all relations with me. I would have been only too happy to maintain relations with the party as a supporter; indeed, seven years later, I did renew my ties when the split with Healy brought about a new openness in the party. But we know now that some of the destructive habits of Healy's era were only temporarily set aside: soon after Alex and I began to raise our criticisms of the ICFI leadership in 2002, we were both ostracized and all contact with us was severed. Let me add that in a politically healthy movement it is at times necessary to break sharply with members and supporters who are leaving the movement and shifting to the right. But in an unhealthy movement this ostracism plays a very different role – it serves to silence dissent and shield the party leadership from criticism.

North next writes that he did not see me again “for nearly 20 years.” The reader is clearly intended to assume that I had no contact with the movement throughout this period. In fact, from the mid-1980s on I was active as a party supporter in Canada. That included attending public meetings, regular financial contributions, participating in paper sales on weekends and even doing some research for the party, specifically on Native Canadian history. The articles I eventually wrote for the WSWS did not come out of the blue, but were bound up with a long and on-going association with the movement. In these remarks, as elsewhere, North has what might be termed a ‘North-centric’ view of party history: whatever isn't directly associated with him doesn't exist, so far as he is concerned.



hostility to Marxism. Yet according to North the essay on Heidegger “represented the high tide of Steiner's collaboration with the SEP.” How it was possible for me to contribute a “high tide” in April of 2000 when I was exhibiting, according to North, a marked “hostility to Marxism” in June of 1999 is explained as being due to my temporarily having come under the sway of his benevolent influence at the aggregate meeting in February of 2000.

Arising from the philosophical issues that were raised at the SEP meeting [of February 2000], I proposed to Steiner that he write a series of articles addressing the controversy surrounding the life of Martin Heidegger, particularly the relationship between his irrationalist philosophy and his support for the Nazis after their accession to power. While Steiner/Brenner have referred several times to these articles, they have failed to mention how they came into being. I must confess that I had, in proposing this assignment to Steiner, something of an ulterior motive. I hoped that an engagement with Heidegger's subjective idealism would be of assistance in helping Steiner overcome the philosophical ambivalence toward materialism that he had expressed in his draft statement on a WSWS philosophy section and in his June 1999 letter. Steiner's articles were posted in early April 2000.

These articles, which clearly reflected the influence of the report at the national membership meeting and subsequent discussions, represented the high tide of Steiner's collaboration with the SEP.

This account of the origin of the Heidegger essay is patent nonsense. North did in fact first suggest that I do an essay on Heidegger, but that suggestion was made six months prior to the February aggregate meeting. He made the suggestion in a letter I received on Aug 23, 1999, about the same time as I composed my application for membership. Here is the letter:

Dear Alex,

Dave N. asked me to see if you could prepare a reply to this letter which we received over the weekend. Let me know.

Jim

The letter to which North was referring was the following inquiry from a reader of the WSWS:

Dear Editor

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Finally, he and I did meet in Toronto briefly, but in 1999, not 1996. I can be certain of the date because one of the things we discussed was the recent publication on the WSWS of my series, “Intrepid thought: psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union,” which came out in June of 1999. I also remember that North was quite generous in his praise of that series. He had, as yet, not discerned the insidious conspiracy that I was supposedly hatching to infiltrate alien ideas into the party about psychology and sex. That ‘discovery’ would only happen years later, when Steiner and I raised our criticisms of the party leadership.}

A couple of weeks ago there was an interesting program on BBC2 television about Martin Heidegger, the famous German existentialist philosopher. It highlighted the fact that he became a supporter of the Nazis. Heidegger managed to get away with his despicable role in the post-war period; the depth of his collaboration with the Nazis has only recently, I think, been brought out.

I felt the program didn't really explain very well how a supposedly progressive thinker could become a loyal tool of the most reactionary regime in history.

How far do you think his political trajectory grew out of his philosophical position?

DB

I agreed that it would be a good idea to explore this question and set about immediately to plan the essay on Heidegger. I drew up an outline of the essay as early as Sept 2 and then proceeded to fill in the essay based on that outline. I subsequently changed very little of my original plan for the essay. By the time I attended the aggregate in February of 2000, the Heidegger essay was pretty much completed and I was working on the last finishing touches. So it seems that I made what North himself acknowledges was a substantial contribution to the theoretical life of the movement without the benefit of having been “influenced” by North's talk at the February aggregate meeting.

Furthermore, although North did suggest the essay in the first place, I needed no prodding from him in taking on an irrationalist trend in contemporary philosophy. I had always considered - and still consider- that irrationalist trends in philosophy need to be challenged and exposed. But as I explained to North long before the Heidegger essay, exposing the irrationalist and post-modernist schools in philosophy does not exhaust the responsibility of Marxists. The other side of that responsibility lies in the critique and exposure of positivism, pragmatism and empiricism. For instance in my unpublished *Introduction to the Philosophy Section of the WSWs*, written a good year prior to the essay on Heidegger, I explicitly delineated what I considered to be the philosophical battle that Marxism needs to wage on two fronts:

Another recent philosophical challenge to Marxism stems from a group of French intellectuals, who, beginning in the late 1970s, repudiated not only the philosophical project begun in antiquity, but Marx's solution to the limitations of that project. We are speaking here of the post-modernists who challenged the notion that there is such a thing as a cognizable objective reality. There are only ideological expressions of power of one group in society against another. The late French philosopher Lyotard maintained that Marxism was merely the latest in a long list of failed “meta-narratives” that attempt to explain an essentially incomprehensible world...

Finally, it is incumbent on us to remember that alongside all the modish intellectual “nouvelle cuisine” being served up, there stands the old traditional opposition to Marxism – empiricism and its cousin skepticism...

The empiricist challenge to Marxism is in some ways more difficult to recognize because empiricist modes of thought dominate much of our society. The presuppositions of empiricism and pragmatism are ingrained in our non-reflective spontaneous consciousness. Uncovering this form of opposition to Marxism, an anti-Marxism that announces itself as Marxism and speaks the “language” of Marxism, is no simple task. Yet it can and must be undertaken. To quote Marx, “There is no royal road to science”.

North was prepared to tolerate my philosophical work as long as I focused my discussion on the irrationalist trends in philosophy. This explains why he accepted the essay on Heidegger. However, whenever I wrote anything that challenged empiricism, pragmatism or positivism, I invariably ran into resistance from North. I did not at the time realize the full implications of this attitude, nor I am convinced, did North. But in retrospect it places North’s words about my Heidegger essay being the “high tide” of my collaboration with the SEP in an ironical context. Rather than seeing the critique of Heidegger as one of the sides of a philosophical battle that Marxists are required to wage, North preferred to use it as a showpiece whereby he can demonstrate that the SEP has fulfilled its responsibilities on the philosophical front while ignoring the battle against empiricism, positivism and pragmatism. It was my refusal to go along with that agenda – and not some alleged capitulation on my part to irrationalism as North now claims – that was ultimately responsible for my philosophical break with North and my ostracism from the International Committee.

## **The Jeff Goldstein Obituary**



**Jeff Goldstein speaking at a Young Socialists meeting in the mid-1970’s.**

North ends Part II with a discussion of an obituary I wrote about Jeff Goldstein, a friend and former comrade who died prematurely as a result of complications from his treatment for lung cancer in 2000. The facts here are fairly straightforward. Jeff Goldstein, writing under the pen name of Jeff Sebastian, was a founding member of the Workers League and was single-handedly

responsible for building its West Coast branches in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jeff played a leading role in the Workers League, functioning as the editor of the newspaper of the Workers League, the *Bulletin*, for a number of years in the 1970s. Jeff was a leading theoretical spokesperson for the movement on economic issues and was heavily involved in the educational work of the movement. Jeff was also one of three delegates from the Workers League to the Sixth Congress of the International Committee held shortly after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. The other two delegates were David North and myself.

After spending about a dozen years in the movement, Jeff left it in 1977. For a number of years he drifted precariously on the edge of poverty. He eventually established himself within the gaming industry in Las Vegas where he became a racing handicapper. I remained a very close personal friend of Jeff's throughout these years and was deeply saddened by his passing. That grief was evident in the obituary I wrote for him soon afterwards, which went over the top in its praise for Jeff. That North uses this as yet another piece of evidence for my "emotional volatility" is predictable.

That being said, there are two points in North's remarks that bear comment. First he claims that his criticisms of the obituary also applied to me and that I knew this: "I am sure that he [i.e. Steiner] understood that much of what I had written about Jeff Goldstein could have served as an assessment of himself." Why should I have understood this? And why the subterfuge? This is yet another example of North covering his backside for his unprincipled decision to have never responded to my application for membership: presumably I was supposed to read North's mind and figure out that a critique of Jeff Goldstein's life was also directed at me.

More importantly, there is a significant distortion of the movement's history contained in North's critique, specifically his wholesale denial of any value in the work Jeff put into the movement when he was still active. Here is the operative sentence that caught my eye:

Jeff played a secondary role in the early history—in some respects, the pre-history—of the Workers League. The greater portion of his adult life belongs to the years after he left the party.

What could this reference to the "pre-history" of the movement mean other than that North regarded the history of the movement prior to his arrival as National Secretary to have been of little importance, that the real history only began with him?

If North considered that my obituary made more of Jeff than he was then he had every opportunity to correct that – either by asking me to rewrite my obituary or by writing his own. But in fact North did none of these things. He never even got around to writing a perfunctory piece that "noted" Jeff's passing. Whatever the problems with my obituary, I considered and still consider North's failure to even mention the name of a founding member of the Workers League upon his death to be inexcusable. And not simply from the perspective of a close friend of the deceased who was outraged by such callous treatment. More important, this episode reveals once more North's attitude of contempt toward an honest narrative of the history of the movement.

## **The World According to North: Part I – My lecture in Berlin**

I will reply in a separate section to the substantive philosophical issues contained in North's sweeping condemnation of my lecture in Berlin during the summer of 2002. Here I simply wish to set the record straight as to the circumstances behind this lecture.

North writes the following:

It was during the following year, in 2002, that it became evident that Steiner was in the midst of a decisive shift in his theoretical orientation. During a private trip to Germany, Steiner invited himself to give a lecture on philosophy to members of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) in Berlin. The German comrades, not wishing to be inhospitable, provided him with an audience.

There is not a word of truth behind this account of my trip. I did not “invite myself”, whatever that is supposed to mean. I wrote to a German comrade to let him know that I would be passing through Berlin and would be interested in meeting with him and some of the other comrades. A correspondence ensued in the course of which I mentioned that I had done a lecture recently on dialectics and science and if some of the comrades were interested I would be glad to present it to a small group. I had no expectation that this would turn into a formal lecture. I assumed this would be for an informal audience of perhaps 5 or 6 comrades in someone's living room and that is how I posed it. The comrade with whom I had been corresponding asked the leaders of the German party what they thought of this idea and they were extremely enthusiastic. They subsequently organized a lecture at a venue at a university and much to my surprise arranged for about 50 people from all parts of Germany to attend. I wound up giving two formal lectures on two separate days to a large and very enthusiastic audience.

North's subsequent concoction that I “invited myself” is a face-saving measure on his part to explain away the embarrassing fact that my talk, which he now characterizes as a “chaotic survey of the history of science” where I “seemed intent on minimizing, if not entirely dismissing, the role of empirical research in the development of scientific knowledge”, was met with lots of applause and enthusiasm. There were of course also some questions and disagreements. That is as it should be in any healthy dialogue, particularly as the subject I was discussing, the relationship between science and dialectics, had never been introduced before to most of the comrades present. I was even told by one of the leaders of the German movement that my talk was like a breath of fresh air - that there had not been that kind of discussion about dialectics within the movement for a very long time and that it was long overdue! I was in turn very moved by the positive reception I was afforded by the German comrades and looked forward to a fruitful intellectual collaboration with them in the future.

North's subsequent trashing of this lecture and his claim that the only reason the German comrades extended me an invitation was that they were concerned about “hurting my feelings” is laughable. North would have his readers believe that the leaders of the German movement, all veterans of the Trotskyist movement and the struggle against Healy, had suddenly become a bunch of shrinking violets frightened lest they should hurt my feelings!



I had a chance to discuss the lecture with North personally several months later during a party conference in the spring of 2003. North was obviously quite annoyed that I gave a lecture to the German comrades without first having “cleared it” (as he put it) with him. I have to say that I found North’s reaction a bit shocking. Why in the world did I need to have a lecture on philosophy first vetted by North? This might have made some sense if I was organizing a minority faction within the movement. But I was doing no such thing. My talk did not cover political issues at all but was strictly of a theoretical nature and I certainly did not challenge the position of the movement on any political or programmatic issue. I was not advertising the lecture as representing an official position of the International Committee – indeed my status was that of a close sympathizer and not a member and I made that clear to everyone. Of course I understood that some of my views on philosophy were controversial and I fully expected other comrades to challenge them. All I was hoping to do was to launch a discussion on some of the philosophical issues that had been neglected within the movement for many years. If North found that prospect threatening, then that says a great deal about his approach to theoretical questions.

Looking back at this episode now with the help of hindsight, it is clear to me that there was a certain consistency in my interaction with North from 1996 to the present. I was generally encouraging him to open up the movement on theoretical issues whereas he, except for a brief period when he seemed open to the idea, was consistently resisting that turn. That explains my repeated frustration in trying to get him to move forward with a theoretical journal, with educational work and finally his very negative reaction to my lecture in Berlin.

## **The World According to North: Part II - My “Return” to the Frankfurt School and the New Left**

In section IX of his diatribe, ominously titled, *Steiner's Return to the Frankfurt School and the "New Left"*, North, still in thrall to his “odyssey” metaphor, attempts to demonstrate how I have returned to my origins. He conveys this part of his tale in the following colorful effusion:

The shift that [Steiner] had made in his philosophical positions was accompanied by the development of a new political agenda—or, to be somewhat more precise, the readoption of the old one that he had rejected upon joining the Trotskyist movement in 1970. Having decisively “liberated” himself intellectually from whatever had previously remained of his commitment to the theoretical heritage of Marxism, Steiner began retracing the steps of his own intellectual biography. The logic of this movement backwards found expression in his embrace of utopianism, his rediscovery of Marcuse and other denizens of the Frankfurt school, and the beginning of his political partnership with Frank Brenner.

North has created a real “odyssey” here, complete with a symmetrical ending – a retracing of steps back to my roots - that echoes my “origin” in the Frankfurt School. The only problem is that both the origin and the ending are as fictitious as Homer’s while lacking any of its literary elegance. I have already dealt with the fiction that North has palmed off as my “origins” and my intellectual “influences”. North adds nothing new in this section where he purports to trace my “return” to my origins in the Frankfurt School that he has not already brought up in MHSC. We

answered him in great detail in MWHH and as is typical of North's modus operandi, he completely ignores our reply. There is thus no reason to reply to him again. Instead, I refer the reader to Chapters 6-10 of *Marxism Without its Head or its Heart* for a detailed examination of the issues related to the Frankfurt School and Utopia.

However before leaving this section, it is necessary to comment on North's attempt to show that I was inconsistent in criticizing the SEP position on the war in Iraq while supporting a resolution on the war at a party conference in March of 2003. He writes,

Steiner attended the national conference organized by the Socialist Equality Party on March 30, 2003 in opposition to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. At that meeting, he spoke in support of the perspective that I had presented in my opening report and gave no indication that he disagreed with the policies and activities of the SEP.

And in a footnote where he amplifies these remarks, North writes,

However, in MWHH, Steiner/Brenner denounce in the most vitriolic terms the policies and activities of the SEP and ICFI in relation to the war.

But North once more misstates the chronology of events in his attempt to brand me as less than forthright in my views. Our main criticism about the SEP line on the war in MWHH was the SEP's adaptation to bourgeois nationalism through their flirtation with the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. But that had not happened yet on March 30, 2003. Our criticism of the SEP line on Iraq is documented in Chapter 2 of MWHH. Anyone who turns to page 28 of MWHH can see that our first criticism of the WSWS coverage of Iraq was for an article from April 7, 2004.<sup>8</sup> It would have been quite a feat on my part to have anticipated in March of 2003 the SEP line of April 2004!

It is true that I presented some criticisms of the SEP's practice in the anti-war movement prior to April 2004. But these were of an entirely different character than the criticisms we launched in MWHH. The earlier criticisms, which are summarized in my polemic, *The Dialectical Path of Cognition*,<sup>9</sup> all involved the abstentionist practice that I detected early on in the anti-war movement. But at that time these were primarily sins of omission. Later on we would be dealing with much more open sins of commission. I was critical of the fact that the SEP failed to call a meeting after the invasion of Afghanistan for almost a year and that participation in anti-war marches was limited to handing out leaflets asking passersby to read the WSWS. I still supported the main political analysis and program of the SEP at the time so there was absolutely nothing hypocritical in my speaking up at the March 2003 conference in favor of North's speech. Whatever criticisms I had were within the context of support for the general line and program of the SEP in relation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, North was perfectly well aware of my criticisms about the abstentionist practice of the SEP even prior to the March 2003 conference as I had made my concerns known to several comrades. North's attempt therefore to paint me once more in the mould of Uriah Heep – depicting me as praising him while hiding my real agenda - is completely bogus.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/mwhh\\_ch02.pdf](http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/mwhh_ch02.pdf), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/dialectical\\_path.pdf](http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/dialectical_path.pdf), p. 68.

### **The World According to North Part III – My “new political relations”**

In a polemic full of smears and distortions the section North calls *Steiner’s New Political Relations*, is without a doubt the sleaziest. Here North claims that my affiliation with an alternative educational institution, the New Space, demonstrates that I have established new political relations, or rather reestablished old ones with middle class radical intellectuals who are influenced by the Frankfurt School. As what North has written in this section had a direct impact on my personal and professional life, it is the one section of North’s diatribe that I have already commented on. I can do no better than repeat my previous comment on this,:

At the end of his document, North impugns me for my supposedly “new political relations” with the New Space, which he presents as a kind of political “swamp” consisting of various radical academics who have come together to push the agenda of the Frankfurt School and destroy Marxism. He further claims that I have tried to keep this new “political affiliation” a secret from the readers of our web site and at the same time I have tried to keep my connections to Trotskyism a secret from the New Space because such ties are looked upon with disdain by the radicals who populate the New Space and whose approval I desperately seek.

There is not a word of truth in anything about this account of my association with the New Space. First of all, the New Space is not a political organization at all. It is thus not possible for me to have a “political affiliation” with it. My affiliation with the New Space is that of an instructor, not a political spokesman. The New Space is an alternative educational institution that was founded to provide a venue where left wing ideas and theories can be discussed and studied.

It is true that there are people of different political persuasions who attend the talks and classes at the New Space and it is also true that the instructors at the New Space cover a wide variety of political and philosophical tendencies. There have been instructors and lecturers who exhibit some sympathy for some members of the Frankfurt School whereas other lecturers are quite hostile to the Frankfurt School. In any case, the Frankfurt School is not a major item in the syllabus of the New Space classes.

As for my own work there, I have taught classes on Hegel, specifically his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Philosophy of History*, and *Logic*. I have never hidden my Trotskyist politics from my students but I also haven’t advertised my politics, as it has no bearing on the courses I teach. In this respect I am no different than at least one SEP member that I am aware of, who has taught for decades at a major university: I very much doubt that he advertised his Trotskyist politics in the course catalogue of his university. (I might add, however, that there is one difference between myself and this comrade: I have never earned a cent for my lectures, which I do on a voluntary basis.)<sup>10</sup>

A further item in North’s concluding section that I did not yet comment on is his rifling through some of my lectures on Hegel that are posted on the Internet. These lectures were posted on the Internet for the benefit of my students. You can find them with a search engine but they have not been publicly advertised and were never meant for the public. That being said, I stand by these

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<sup>10</sup> Alex Steiner, *The WSWS resorts to a smear campaign*, [http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/smear\\_campaign.pdf](http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/smear_campaign.pdf) p.4.

lectures and think they hold up very well. North was hoping to find some ammunition in these lectures to prove that I am teaching my students to be idealists and despise Marxism. Here is what North writes in his footnote 17 of Part III,

Steiner's analysis of Hegel and, for that matter, Marx has nothing in common with a Marxist exposition. The most striking feature of the lectures is that no one listening to them would suspect Steiner of being a materialist. He emphatically disassociates himself from the well-known Marxist critique of Hegel's idealism. In a lecture on "Reason in History," Steiner tells his students: "In order to get whatever we can get from this course, it would be beneficial to forget everything you know about Hegel, as well as what you know about Marx. The understanding of Hegel, and to a great degree Marx as well, has been mitigated through various interpretations which have little to do with what Hegel's project or Marx's project was about." The interpretation that he is criticizing is that which asserts that Marx's reworking of the Hegelian dialectic required a break from idealism. He tells his students: "I don't want to hear that Marx set Hegel on his head, or on his feet." Later, in the same lecture series, Steiner states: "I think the notions of idealism and materialism have to be rethought, after Marx." In Steiner's first lecture on Hegel's *Logic*, he presents his most explicit disavowal of the Marxist approach to the study of Hegel. He states:

Within the Marxist tradition we have an interpretation that goes something like this: "Well, Hegel was a conservative thinker, but we can save something of what he did, namely, his method, whatever that means. I am not teaching Hegel that way." By the way, I think that's a very bad interpretation. It wasn't Marx's either.

This deliberate and extreme vulgarization of the Marxist critique of Hegelianism could serve only to prejudice his students against materialism.

North's last line gives the game away. In a practice that has become tiresome through overuse, he typically equates my criticism of vulgar Marxism with a criticism of Marxism. It goes without saying that students who have never actually read Hegel but have been influenced second-hand by various interpretations they have heard but have poorly understood need a bit of a kick to encourage them to look at Hegel fresh without the prejudices they have inherited. Thus I typically tell my students, especially those who arrive with a bit of knowledge about Hegel to begin with, that I would like to see them first forget everything they have ever learned about Hegel as most of it is likely wrong. This is somewhat provocative, especially when measured against the typical graduate school seminar where regurgitation of different interpretations is prized above all and little value is attached to original thought, but I have found this method to be a very important pedagogical approach over the years.

It is obvious to me that North knows nothing about the educational process if he thinks there is something unusual in my trying to get students to come to the material fresh and with as few prejudices as possible. I brought up explicitly as an example of one of the interpretations of Hegel I would like my students – not to reject – but to set aside until they have studied Hegel closely themselves – the typical interpretation one finds in radical and Marxist circles that Marx stood Hegel on his head. I could have picked other interpretations of Hegel – such as for instance Popper's who called Hegel a totalitarian thinker – but I picked the one attributed to Marx because that is the one that most of my students have heard whereas few know of Popper's.

This is for me a teaching device. It does not mean that I reject the interpretation I ask my students to set aside or that I accept it.

## **The World According to North Part IV – My “disorientation” after 9/11**

In his parting words, North tries to explain my rapid devolution to the Frankfurt School and the New Left as a result of my being disoriented by the events of 9/11. He writes,

It is not unreasonable to suspect that the events of 9/11 and their aftermath played a major role in shattering Steiner's political equilibrium. In the maelstrom of political confusion generated by the destruction of the World Trade Center, and exploited for reactionary purposes by the government and media, Steiner's susceptibility to personal and political demoralization—which we had witnessed in the 1970s—came into play once again.

In a document full of numerous lies, this one exhibits the earmarks of a Freudian projection fantasy. It is not I, but North and the SEP who were seriously disoriented by the events of 9/11. This is a point we have previously made in MWHH and that is undoubtedly the reason why North throws this charge in at the end. He knows we are right but cannot reply to us directly so he does the next best thing and accuses us of the very sins that he committed. We summed up the prostration of the party after 9/11 in chapter 7 of MWHH as follows:

Clearly something important had changed between 2000 and 2002. And the moment one puts those two dates together, it is obvious that there was a huge change in the political atmosphere in that interval – the trauma of 9/11. This suggests a very different ‘narrative’ to North’s, but one that is a good deal more credible politically. Here we need to go back to the point originally raised by Steiner (and discussed in the first chapter of this statement) about the troubling record of the SEP on the Afghan war in this same post-9/11 period: the party held no meetings in the US to protest the war for nearly a year, it raised no programmatic demands about the war and no independent slogans or banners in anti-war demonstrations. This is the unmistakable sign of a movement (and particularly its leadership) caving in to the intense bourgeois class pressures and mass media hysteria generated in the aftermath of 9/11. The IC was already well down the road to objectivism and abstentionism prior to 9/11 (as we saw in relation to its abandonment of political work in the working class during the Clinton era), but these conservative tendencies were reinforced to a significant degree after 9/11. The more the party retreated into its journalistic shell, the less tolerant the leadership became of any creative development of Marxism, particularly any insights into mass consciousness, since that kind of theoretical work would have, if only by implication, called into question the party’s abstentionist practice. That is the real issue behind North’s repeated denunciations of ‘neoutopianism’, ‘psychology and sex’, etc.<sup>11</sup>

It was not I but David North who failed to call a single public meeting against the War in Afghanistan – which began a month after the events of 9/11 – until almost a year into that war. In the days and weeks immediately after the events of 9/11 the political posture that most clearly characterized the SEP and the WSWS was one of paralysis. I was getting phone calls and emails

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/mwhh\\_ch07.pdf](http://www.permanent-revolution.org/polemics/mwhh_ch07.pdf) p. 182-183.

from friends and acquaintances who knew that I had a background in Marxism and they were anxious to hear a Marxist interpretation of these events and a critique of the response of the Bush Administration. I tried to steer as many of these people as possible to the WSWS while trying to answer their questions. The WSWS on the other hand, while doing a good job at the time of covering the aftermath of 9/11 and the assault on democratic rights launched by the Bush Administration's War on Terror and invasion of Afghanistan, did not offer anything other than journalism. Many of the people I spoke to appreciated the WSWS's coverage, but were looking for something more. They wanted to become active in some way and organize against the Bush administration while counteracting the hysteria that gripped some of their friends and relatives. Unfortunately, the SEP was not there to provide an avenue for these and other opponents of the Bush Administration.

As we noted in MWHH, it is not completely accidental that the objectivist tendencies that had been germinating in the SEP for many years came to dominate the movement in the aftermath of 9/11. There is therefore a sick kind of irony in North's belated discovery that it was I and not he who was disoriented by the events of 9/11.

### **Abandoning Trotskyism and embracing a smear campaign**

Anyone acquainted with the history of the Trotskyist movement should above all be sensitive to the meaning of a smear campaign. For it was Trotsky himself who was the target of the biggest smear campaign in history. I refer to the infamous Moscow Trials that lasted from 1936 to 1938, during which an entire generation of revolutionary leaders were framed up, tortured, forced to make false confessions and finally executed. They were accused of being agents of Hitler and saboteurs whose hatred of the Soviet Union and Stalin personally led them to plot the overthrow of the October Revolution. Trotsky was the main defendant in absentia in all the trials.

Over the course of dozens of essays and speeches Trotsky worked tirelessly to dissect the meaning behind the biggest frame-ups since the Spanish Inquisition.

Commenting on the upcoming trial of Radek, Pyatakov and Serebriakov, Trotsky wrote,

...I haven't the slightest doubt that the primary purpose of the new trial beginning in Moscow is to discredit me before world public opinion...

I am a revolutionist and a Marxist. Next March marks the fortieth consecutive year that I have been active in the revolutionary workers movement. Conceiving me as its "enemy number one," the Soviet leadership clique wants to convince the entire world that for unknown reasons I betrayed my lifelong ideals by becoming an enemy of socialism and an advocate of capitalist restoration, and that I entered into an alliance with the German fascists and employ terrorist methods. According to the latest dispatches, my supporters in the Soviet Union have been accused of industrial sabotage, of engaging in military espionage for Germany, and even of planning to eliminate en masse workers in arms supply production centers. Reading these lines gives one the impression of being in an insane asylum. In reality, I remain, as always, a fervent supporter of all the social gains of the October Revolution, but at the same time I irreconcilably oppose the craving



of the new caste in power to exclusively control the gains of the revolution for the attainment of its own selfish ends.<sup>12</sup>

In another piece, Trotsky explained that because the Stalinist propaganda apparatus could not provide a Marxist analysis of the fantastic charges against him, they had to resort to amateur psychoanalysis and find the explanation in his supposed emotional instability, i.e. his “hatred of Stalin”,

I have still to speak about my alleged “hatred” of Stalin. Much was said in the Moscow trial about it, as one of the motives of my politics. On the lips of Vyshinsky, in the editorials of Pravda, and in the organs of the Communist International, digressions on my hatred of Stalin are appended to panegyrics to the “Chief”. Stalin is the creator of the “happy life.” His defeated opponents can only envy and “hate” him. Profound psychoanalysis from lackeys!

Toward the greedy caste of upstarts which oppresses the people “in the name of socialism” I have nothing but irreducible hostility, hatred if you like. But in this feeling there is nothing personal. I have followed too closely all the stages of the degeneration of the revolution and the almost automatic usurpation of its conquests. I have sought too stubbornly and meticulously the explanation for these phenomena in objective conditions to concentrate my thoughts and feelings on one specific person. My standpoint does not allow me to identify the real stature of the man with the giant shadow it casts on the screen of the bureaucracy. I believe I am right in saying I have never rated Stalin so highly as to be able to hate him.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years North has presented himself as a defender of the legacy of Trotsky. He has written a number of critical reviews of biographies of Trotsky, demonstrating how they are pock-marked with slanders and historical falsification in order to discredit Trotsky. While North is able to make some telling points against the authors of these biographies, Geoffrey Swain, Ian Thatcher and Robert Service, there is a huge disconnect between these academic exercises and his real politics. His actual politics is betrayed by his resort to a smear campaign against me and it shows just how far he has ventured from the heritage of Trotskyism. No one who has read Trotsky’s words above and felt moved by them would ever think of indulging in a smear campaign.

In this connection I would like to quote something from North’s most recent foray as a historian defending the legacy of Trotsky,

*Trotsky: A Biography* is a crude and offensive book, produced without respect for the most minimal standards of scholarship. Service’s “research,” if one wishes to call it that, has been conducted in bad faith. His *Trotsky* is not history, but, rather, an exercise in character assassination. Service is not content to distort and falsify Trotsky’s political deeds and ideas. Frequently descending to the level of a grocery store tabloid, Service attempts to splatter filth on Trotsky’s personal life.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “The New Trial: An Unmistakable Sign of Sharp Political Crisis in the USSR”, January 22, 1937, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-1937]*, (Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> “Hatred of Stalin”, Jan. 4, 1937, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-1937]*, (Pathfinder Press, 1978), p.67.

<sup>14</sup> David North, *In the Service of Historical Falsification: A Review of Robert Service’s ‘Trotsky’*, Nov. 11, 2009, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/nov2009/serv-n11.shtml>

North's excoriation of Service's book is well-deserved. Yet every single one of his indictments of Service can be turned around against North himself in his capacity as the author of *The Frankfurt School vs. Marxism: The Political and Intellectual Odyssey of Alex Steiner*.

It is truly a "crude and offensive" essay "produced without respect for the most minimal standards of scholarship." North's "**research**, if one wishes to call it that, has been conducted in bad faith." His *Odyssey* essay presents neither my intellectual nor political history "but, rather [is] an exercise in character assassination." North "is not content to distort and falsify" [my] "political deeds and ideas", he also impugns my character and integrity.

Of course I do not hold for a second that North's distortions of my intellectual and political history begin to approach the scale or significance of the distortions of Service's account of Trotsky. But one could say the same thing about Service's account of Trotsky when compared to the Stalinist falsifications of the Moscow Trials. There are big differences of degree here but not of kind. In all cases the methodology of the smear campaign is the same.

The publication of the *Odyssey* piece on the WSWS and the failure of a single leader of the International Committee to protest this action marks a shameful episode in the history of the International Committee. A movement that deals with criticism in this way will be incapable of building the mass revolutionary party the working class needs. Such parties require a spotless banner, not one soiled with smears.

To be continued.

[Link to Chapter 1](#)

[Link to Chapter 2](#)