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THE BOLIVIAN REVOLUTION AND
THE FIGHT AGAINST REVISIONISM

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"For Pablo the historical mission of the Fourth International has lost all meaning. The 'objective revolutionary process,' under the aegis of the Kremlin, allied with the masses, is taking its place very well indeed. That is why he is mercilessly bent upon liquidating the Trotskyist forces, under the pretext of integrating them into the 'movement of the masses as it exists.'

"The salvation of the Fourth International imperatively demands the immediate eviction of the liquidationist leadership. A democratic discussion must then be opened, within the world-wide Trotskyist movement on all problems left suspended, befogged, or falsified by the Pablist leadership during three years. Within this framework, it will be indispensable for the health of the International that the greatest self-criticism be carried through on all phases and causes of the development of the Pablist gangrene.

". . .these ideas and this liquidationist tactic were subsequently extended to the reformist parties and too all mass organizations under petty-bourgeois leadership (the Bolivian MNR, the Peronist movement in Argentina, the Ibanist in Chile, etc. . .)" (From International Committee Bulletin No. 1.)

This article is intended as a contribution to the discussion on the "development of the Pablist gangrene." At the same time it is also intended as a contribution to the struggle against Pabloism. In my opinion such a discussion, long overdue, is an indispensable part of the struggle and must not be postponed any longer; that one of the major victories of Pabloism is precisely the fact that problems of major theoretical and practical importance have been "left suspended, befogged, or falsified." The "greatest self-criticism," which is indeed necessary, will show that Pablo's greatest help in betraying Marxism came in the silence and the acquiescence of the "orthodox Trotskyists." One of the crimes of revisionism during the past two years is the betrayal of the Bolivian revolution.

That the Bolivian revolution has indeed been betrayed should be plain for all to see. Last November the Bolivian Trotskyist party, the POR, was publishing a weekly newspaper, Lucha Obrera. For a working-class party in a tiny, backward country with a high rate of illiteracy, this was a tremendous achievement, an indication of powerful mass support. In December Lucha Obrera was suppressed by the government, with hardly any resistance. There has been no struggle since then important enough to be reported in the paper here. This fact is itself a very significant piece of news.

Marxism is a science. That is to say, its generalizations are not god-given imperatives but the distillation of past events. And the distinguishing characteristic of all science is not simply that it yields true generalizations (more correctly, approximations of the truth) but that it yields generalizations which can be tested in

terms of material reality. To fail to examine any important event in its relation to Marxist theory is to turn Marxism into a dogma, with truths that are given once for all. And once Marxism is turned into a dogma, it is both useless and unnecessary for the solution of practical problems.

What events, above all others, demand investigation by Marxists? If Marxism be regarded not as a contemplative exercise but as a guide to action, the answer springs to mind immediately. Revolution is the supreme test of theory. Revolution strips away all pretense, lays bare the real class character of all parties, all programs. No brand of revisionism can pose as Marxism in time of revolution; no Marxist can ignore a revolution. It is only logical to expect that close attention should be paid to the Bolivian revolution, for more than one reason. Not only is it a test of theory and practice, especially in view of the fact that a Trotskyist party is playing an important role; it takes place under the very walls of the bastion of world reaction. But the Bolivian revolution is now more than two years old, and there has been no discussion on this important event. Only two discussion articles have appeared, both by the present writer. And, though both articles were sharply critical, they have elicited no reply. Even the news from Bolivia has been very meager. Pablo, the advocate of a centralized international, has not even conducted a decent letter-box!

What a crushing answer Pablo would have had to the charges of revisionism! "Can revisionists pursue a revolutionary policy in the very course of a revolution?" But Pablo chose not to make this reply, and this is a clear mark of his revisionism. Revisionists prefer to act rather than explain; the longer they can keep silent the longer they can mislead revolutionists. And Pablo was left in peace to do his work of betrayal.

That it is Pabloism which is the inspiration for the line of the POR is easy to prove. The POR's characterization of the MNR and of the MNR government as "petty-bourgeois," its prognosis of the possibility of the reform of the government, its stubborn refusal to make any criticism of the treacherous and anti-revolutionary line of the labor leaders, and its complete silence on Stalinism -- these come not from the arsenal of Marxism but of revisionism.

Revolution by Appointment

At its tenth national conference, held in June, 1953, the POR adopted a political resolution which, though full of admirable Trotskyist phrases, contain a few paragraphs which are sufficient to turn the whole document into an exercise in revisionism. This resolution (Etapa Actual de la Revolution Y Tareas del POR) has been published in the Mexican publication, "Que Hacer?" but has not been translated into English.

"The petty-bourgeois government," says the resolution (VII:7), ". . . acquires a transitory and bonapartist character. . . Submitting to the powerful pressure of the proletariat as well as of imperialism, it vacillates constantly between the two extremes. From this situation follows the two-fold possibility for the development of the present government. If the masses with a new impulse decide the political defeat of the right wing by the left, the possibility is

opened that the government will transform itself to a stage antecedent to the workers and peasants government (se abre la posibilidad de que el gobierno se transforme en etapa previa del gobierno obrera-campesino). This process would be accompanied by a whole series of measures of a revolutionary character, such as the spread of nationalizations, the agrarian revolution, etc. If the right wing with the aid of imperialism bars the governmental scene to its adversaries, it will have consolidated a petty-bourgeois government in the service of the 'rosca' and of finance capital. Two paragraphs further we read: "The right wing is definitely compromised with landlord and imperialist reaction and therefore we cannot simply disregard the possibility of a future split with the left wing. Complete predominance of this faction would profoundly alter the character of the MNR and permit it to move closer to the POR. Only under such conditions could we speak of a possible coalition government of the POR and the MNR which would be a form of the realization of the formula "workers and peasants government," which in turn would constitute the transitional stage toward the dictatorship of the proletariat."

A bonapartist regime can appear to be between the classes only to people who have forgotten the class nature of the state. All governments have always been, for Marxists, the instruments of the ruling class, incapable of being reformed, in their class nature, by any amount of pressure. Bonapartism is simply a form which a bourgeois or a proletarian regime assumes under certain conditions. The POR was not the first to forget that there can be neither an in-between regime nor the reform of a regime. It was the Third World Congress, with its "intermediate status" of the buffer "countries," and the IEC with its characterization of the Mao regime in China as neither a bourgeois nor a workers state, but an in-between, a "workers and peasants government."

A bonapartist regime is a dictatorial regime, rule by an arbiter. Marxists have never favored this form of rule; they always promote the intervention of the masses in politics. Thus, the Bolsheviks demanded a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage to replace the bonapartist rule of Kerensky. The demand for democratic elections is one of the foundation-stones in the Trotskyist program for the revolution in backward countries. This slogan is certainly not a "putschist" one; it can be raised by -- it is most suitable to -- a revolutionary party which is not yet in a position to take power. And raising this demand is certainly not incompatible with giving defense to the government against counter-revolutionary attempts.

Yet nowhere in the whole resolution of the POR is the demand for elections raised! And this despite the fact that the present government was elected five years ago, and a military coup and a revolution have occurred since then. There is no mention, even, of the existence of an elected legislature or of the desire to elect a new one. There is no mention of the question of popular elections. The POR is obviously satisfied with the present bonapartist government; is convinced of its capability of being transformed, step by step, into a workers government.

In the light of the refusal of the POR to demand general elections, what is the significance of the slogan it raises: "Complete control of the State by the left wing of the MNR"? How does it

expect this to come about? Naturally, through appointment by the bonaparte, Paz Estenssoro. This is not a mere deduction. This is actually what the POR proposed.

In August, 1953, a cabinet crisis erupted, a division between the right and left wings in the government on the question of division of the landed estates. In a situation like that, with the peasant movement on the upsurge, it is obvious what a Trotskyist party should propose: Resignation of the government, including the president; national elections of a president and a congress; the left wing of the MNR should run independent candidates, including a candidate for president; the POR should give critical support to the campaign of the left wing and raise the slogan: the Left Wing to Power.

The POR did not demand general elections; it did not demand that the masses be allowed to settle the dispute within the government. It proposed that the left wing be given "power" by appointment by President Paz Estenssoro.

In No. 43 (August 23rd, 1953) of Lucha Obrera, we read the following touching appeal to the Bonaparte of the bonapartist government:

"To the revolutionaries, the conduct of the President appears ambiguous and we believe that it indicates the intention to save some right-wing positions undermined by the rising pressure of the masses. Granted that a Chief of State has responsibilities, but he has these before the people. In reality it is the toilers who alone have the right to judge the acts of the government especially since it is the working class which with its sacrifices put him in Power. If these masses, who are the sole support of the President, out of their class instinct, out of distrust of the right wing, appeal and demand that men emerging from their ranks be put into the cabinet, replacing the elements linked to reaction, there exist no grounds for denying them this right. And if Paz Estenssoro respects his responsibilities before history, he is motivated primarily by a desire to respect the will of the people and carry out the aspirations of the toilers, organizing a cabinet composed exclusively of men of the left of his party."

Would such a "labor" cabinet make any difference in the character of the government? Not the slightest. It would make no more difference than the "labor" cabinets of the Spanish Loyalist government, or the "labor" cabinet of Kerensky. It would mean as little as a cabinet appointed by Eisenhower or Truman composed not of "nine millionaires and one plumber" but of "ten plumbers." A "labor cabinet" appointed by Paz Estenssoro would be responsible not to a legislative body elected by universal suffrage, as in England or France, but to a supreme ruler responsible to no one but his class. Such a cabinet would not be the result of a break of the labor leaders with the capitalist class. On the contrary, it would make them the official representatives of this class.

What is a Petty-Bourgeois Party?

It is now possible to see what the POR means by characterizing the MNR as a "petty-bourgeois" party and the MNR government as a

"petty-bourgeois" government. All the literature of the POR is very consistent in this; the MNR and its government are never called anything but petty-bourgeois. Far from being merely a terminological question (petty-bourgeois means bourgeois, I have been told by a defender of the POR line -- orally, of course), this is a formulation that conceals the rejection of Trotskyism in theory and the betrayal of the revolution in practice.

If politics is concentrated economics, then political parties are the expression of economic interests. But the dominant fact in present-day society is the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Political parties, therefore, are, and cannot help but be, expressions of and instruments in the class struggle. They serve the interests of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. This is what gives them their class character. Not their social composition, not the composition of their leadership, but which of the two major classes they serve. This is true in the backward countries as well as in the advanced.

There are parties which Marxists call petty-bourgeois -- the social-democratic and labor parties. We use this term by convention; not because these parties serve the interests of the petty bourgeoisie -- the petty bourgeoisie has no independent class interests -- but because these parties are in a certain sense between the classes. They speak for socialism and the working class but they act for capitalism and the bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeois parties are largely or predominantly proletarian in composition and bourgeois by political character. To prove this it is sufficient to ask whether the class nature of any government has ever been changed by the accession to office of a petty-bourgeois party. The victory of the British Labor Party, for example, did not change the character of the government from bourgeois to petty-bourgeois.

The MNR is not a petty-bourgeois party in this sense. It is not a labor party; it does not claim to represent the working class or advocate socialism. Its program is typical of a bourgeois nationalist party in a backward country. It claims to speak for all the people; it is for peace and prosperity. It is the conception of the POR that since native capital is very weak and very reactionary (bound up with imperialism), and since the MNR is trying to accomplish the bourgeois national revolution but is not a working-class party, therefore it represents the petty bourgeoisie and is a petty-bourgeois party.

To find the precedent for such a conception of a petty-bourgeois party -- a party which represents the petty bourgeoisie and fights against the bourgeoisie for the bourgeois revolution -- we have to go back to pre-October Bolshevik writings. This is the conception put forth by Lenin in 1903 as a prognosis for the Russian revolution. The Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry, according to Lenin, would be headed by a peasant party and supported, perhaps in the form of a coalition government, by the proletarian party. In justice to Lenin it must be said that he did not conceive of such a government as an in-between or "petty-bourgeois" government, but as one which would stay within the bounds of capitalism, removing the vestiges of feudalism, building capitalism, and thereby strengthening the capitalist class. This was to be a transitional government, not one of transition to socialism, but of transition from feudalism

to the bourgeois democratic republic. Lenin's April theses and then the October revolution mark the definitive rejection of the conception of a petty-bourgeois party, a party which is neither proletarian nor bourgeois. Thereafter all Marxists have accepted the theory of Permanent Revolution, put forth by Trotsky in 1903. According to this theory, the government which carries out the bourgeois revolution cannot stay within the bounds of capitalism; it must begin the socialist transformation. But this government cannot be a government of a peasant or a "petty-bourgeois" party; it must be a government dominated by the party of the proletariat.

Stalin betrayed the second Chinese revolution using as a pretext for his Menshevik policies a vulgarization of Lenin's conception of the Democratic Dictatorship. It is not without significance that Mike Bartell, a leading American Pabloite, defended the line of the POR (orally, of course) by maintaining that Lenin's theory of the Democratic Dictatorship has not been completely invalidated. Nor that Murry Weiss, in defending the Pabloite position on the in-between character of the Mao government (orally, of course) seized on what he asserted was Lenin's belief, in 1903, in the possibility of a petty-bourgeois, transitional government. The POR, while claiming to support the theory of Permanent Revolution, believes that a "petty-bourgeois" party can be reformed and its government become the workers and farmers government, "the transitional stage toward the dictatorship of the Proletariat."

"The zig-zag line between imperialism and the proletariat which characterizes the conduct of the government," says the POR in its resolution, "does not permit it to plan its actions and causes it to fall into a formless empiricism, suited to giving isolated and improvised answers to problems as they present themselves. Thus the observer discovers that the government policy is characterized by lack of consistency and the thought of the leaders by total absence of coherence and unified doctrine."

This is, of course, the characteristic of all petty-bourgeois and bourgeois thought. Is it, then, the chief characteristic of the activities of a "petty-bourgeois" government? No. The activities of the petty-bourgeois politicians, however inconsistent they may appear to themselves and to others, have a consistency which scientists can uncover. They are governed by law just as completely as are the actions of physical bodies or chemical elements, which have no thoughts whatever. Marxists can see the consistency in the seemingly inconsistent actions of the petty-bourgeois politicians. Marxists can see that, however they view themselves, they actually serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The Real Question of Power

The conception that the MNR and its government are petty-bourgeois is the betrayal of the Bolivian revolution. It implies that the MNR and its government are not fundamentally the enemy of the working class, that they may be reformed. Not to warn the working class that this government will smash it when it can is to leave the workers politically disarmed and helpless, a sitting duck whenever the enemy is ready to strike.

How can we know the character of the MNR? First of all, we can study its past, especially when it held state power. The MNR of Paz Estenssoro is the MNR of Villaroel. Estenssoro was Villaroel's vice-president. Villaroel suppressed the working class, executed protesting students. He was hanged from a lamp-post in an uprising led partly by the Stalinists. The MNR was so exposed as an enemy of the working class that in the 1949 elections Juan Lechin, head of the Miners' Federation, refused its nomination for Vice-President and instead made an electoral bloc with the POR. This election showed that the MNR, although it got a majority of the votes, was already discredited with the vanguard of the proletariat. The Trotskyists and the Miners' Federation each elected four deputies. Then came a three-year military dictatorship, which naturally strengthened democratic illusions among the masses. Yet during the April, 1952, revolution an incident took place which indicated that the MNR did not have the confidence of the working class. The MNR appealed to the workers for support in the uprising. The textile workers demanded as a condition of their support that two trade union leaders be accepted into the new government. The demand was granted and the workers supported the uprising. Guillermo Lora, who gave these details in an interview which was printed in the paper in May, 1952, did not say whether the POR supported this demand; but the fact that the POR has never criticized the presence of the labor leaders in the cabinet indicates that it did.

In the course of the uprising the army and police were disarmed. The workers, led by Lechin and the POR, possessed ten thousand rifles and machine-guns, all the arms in the country. What did the government do? It proceeded to reorganize the army and police force and to rearm them with new and more modern weapons. Then it began slowly and cautiously to take steps toward disarming the proletariat. And this is the measure of its bourgeois character.

The state is armed force in the service of the ruling class. To allow the government to rebuild the special bodies of armed men means to put the fate of the revolution in the hands of the bourgeoisie, its mortal enemy. Only by keeping their fate in their own hands, by preventing the rebuilding of the special bodies of armed men, by maintaining the state as the people in arms, can the working class safeguard itself and its revolution. The POR should have warned that those who rebuild the police force and army are preparing civil war against the workers and peasants. This is not the same as proposing the overthrow of the MNR government. But it is an exposure of its bourgeois character: If the MNR were truly for the workers and peasants, if it were going to carry through the revolution, it had no need of special bodies of armed men, it could base itself on the people in arms. Its "betrayal" (not really a betrayal, since it only acted in accordance with its real class character) dates from the moment it began to reestablish the army and police -- that is, from the moment it assumed power. The betrayal of Lechin and the labor leaders dates from their failure to oppose the rebuilding of the bourgeois state.

The POR did not expose the bourgeois nature of the government; it did not criticize the betrayal by the labor leaders. It completely overlooked the question of the rebuilding of the armed forces of the class enemy. In the aforementioned political resolution of the Tenth National Conference there is not one word on this question,

not one warning against the rebuilding of the counter-revolutionary army and police force; literally not one word on the military question, the real question of power. The POR obviously, believes that questions of power are decided not by armed force but by shifts and maneuvers in the top circles of the government.

The Trotskyist transitional program is totally ignored. And this program was worked out precisely for a revolutionary situation, such as exists in Bolivia. Following this program, the POR should have demanded that the defense of the country and of internal order be entrusted not to special bodies of armed men, but the workers militia, that these be armed by the government with the most modern weapons, including heavy ones, and trained under the control of the workers' and peasants' organizations; and that the officers be chosen by the workers and peasants. There is no hint of these demands in the political resolution nor in all the 1953 issues of Lucha Obrera.

Lucha Obrera cannot, however, completely ignore the military question; and what it says is a damning supplement to its refusal to recognize the transitional program. By August, 1953, the government had gone so far as to set up a military academy, to train an officer caste for its counter-revolutionary army. No. 43 of Lucha Obrera (the same issue which carried the touching appeal to the President) protested in an article headed: "Military Academy, Danger to the Revolution." "The reactionary right wing," says the article, "wishes desperately to create an armed force in which it can support itself against the advance of the unions. This is the mission assigned to the reopened military academy which will be a den of counter-revolution for the petty-bourgeois militarists. The only force which can destroy the counter-revolutionary conspiracy is constituted by the armed masses.

"Undoubtedly," continues the article, "the Revolution will achieve the building of a regular Army, but this will occur when the workers and peasants organize their own government, without any subterfuge permitting counter-revolutionary infiltration. The class feeling of the toilers should not permit the organization of any military force while the whole power is not in their hands. Only the Workers and Peasants Government can organize a true proletarian and revolutionary military force. In the meantime, it is an incapable revolutionary duty to strengthen the trade union militias in each factory, each mine, and prepare them for whatever repressions which will utilize as their instrument the military academy."

Here is the open renunciation of the transitional program, of the proletarian military policy. This is a completely unrealistic and unworkable policy, one which absolutely cannot be carried out by the Party, and is incapable of convincing anyone. We should not permit the government to organize any military force while the whole power is not in our hands? Who and what, then, will defend the country in case Yankee imperialism succeeds in provoking a military attack by one of its satellites? A standing army is absolutely necessary. The trade union militias are not sufficient. No one can be convinced, least of all the revolutionary militants, that there should be no army "in the meantime." That is why the government was able to win such an easy political victory and build up its army (a counter-revolutionary army) without any opposition. Because

the concrete alternative to a counter-revolutionary army cannot be no army, as the POR advocates, but a revolutionary army. And there is no reason in the world why this alternative has to wait "until all the power is in our hands." If enough mass pressure can be brought to force the government to build such a revolutionary army (by arming and training the workers under trade union control) then the power will be in our hands. If, as is infinitely more likely, the government resists all such pressure, its counter-revolutionary character is exposed and the necessity for its overthrow made much more clear. That is what the transitional program is for.

The POR, instead of posing the realistic alternative of the transitional program, is going to wait until "all the power is in our hands," by appointment of the very President responsible for rebuilding the counter-revolutionary army, before proposing the building of a revolutionary army. This is the policy of watching quietly while the axe is being sharpened and then waiting for it to fall.

Innocents Taken Unaware

Who, then, is responsible for the betrayal of the revolution? Who is responsible for the fact that the workers and peasants have sunk into apathy? The MNR simply carries out its appointed task -- to save capitalism in Bolivia. The labor leaders have collaborated fully in saving capitalism. They entered the government at the beginning and have remained in it ever since. They gave silent consent to the rebuilding of the counter-revolutionary armed forces and to the suppression of the POR. They allowed the workers' militias to fall into decay, as was shown in the fascist insurrection of November 9, 1953. The Falange, a comparatively small group led by officers of Paz Estenssoro's army, was able to seize Cochabamba, second city in Bolivia and center of the peasant movement, and hold it for six hours before the militias could mobilize in sufficient force to drive them out. The POR has never criticized the labor leaders for entering or remaining in the cabinet. It has never criticized them for their silence on the rebuilding of the counter-revolution. It does not even criticize them for their silence on the suppression of Lucha Obrera.

Guillermo Lora, writing in the March issue of "Que Hacer?" complains that the MNR is betraying the aspirations of the masses. The betrayal, according to Lora, consists in the fact that the government is holding back the agrarian revolution, is reversing the nationalizations, has unloaded the burden of the economic crisis on the backs of the workers and peasants, has bureaucratized the COB, the trade union center. It is noteworthy that Lora does not even mention the suppression of Lucha Obrera! This, apparently, is as unimportant to him as is the suppression of the Chinese Trotskyists to Pablo and Germain.

Lora is consistent in accusing the MNR of betrayal, since he expected better of it. But who and what made this betrayal possible? Without the support of the labor leaders, Paz Estenssoro could not have succeeded in his counter-revolutionary role. Lora does not mention that the labor leaders remain in the cabinet to this day.

Lora, of course, claims to be superior in perspicacity to the average worker. "For the bulk of the militants (of the MNR)" he

writes, "and for many other people, the year 1954 will be the year of betrayal. We speak of the betrayal by the petty-bourgeois leadership of the aspirations of the masses. For us it will be the year of the verification of our theoretical conclusions on the capability of a petty-bourgeois party to carry out revolutionary and anti-imperialist tasks." And the POR did indeed state that the petty-bourgeois party cannot carry out the revolution, that it will be overthrown by the left or by the right. But the POR also made precisely the opposite prediction, as has been shown above. This method has nothing in common with Marxist prognosis and is useful only to revisionists to bolster their claims to infallibility.

The prognosis that the MNR would suppress the working class and its party was not made by the POR, because the POR has never regarded the MNR as a class enemy. The "prediction" of the POR which has, according to Lora, been verified, was completely useless in preparing it or its followers for a struggle against the MNR. Such a struggle, in fact, was characterized by Lora in his interview as "hysteria."

"One cannot exclude the possibility," said Lora in his interview, that the right wing of the government, faced with the sharpening of the struggle against it, will ally itself with imperialism to crush the so-called 'Communist' danger."

In a letter commenting on Lora's interview (Internal Bulletin, June 1952) I wrote as follows: "One thing does appear clearly: Comrade Lora does not regard this government as an enemy of the working class and of the POR. This formulation is wrong, very wrong! This is an error which, if it actually represents the position of the POR, can have tragic consequences for the very physical existence of the cadres of the Bolivian Trotskyist party. This is the warning the leaders of the POR must give the working class and above all its own supporters: 'We must expect with absolute certainty (not merely 'not exclude the possibility') that the government (not merely its right wing) will ally itself with imperialism and try to crush the mass movement and first of all its vanguard, the POR.'"

In the same letter: "I think it is incontestable that the present Bolivian government is a bourgeois government (I didn't dream that anyone would contest it!) whose task and aim are to defend by all means available to it the interests of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism. It will, if it can, harness and disarm the working class, smash its revolutionary vanguard, and rebuild the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, which has been shaken but not destroyed by the first phase of the revolution. This government is therefore the deadly enemy of the workers and peasants and of the Marxist party."

And one more: "Lechin's is a treacherous, an undependable friendship. Lechin will capitulate again, and again. He will help disarm the workers. He will help smash the POR, no matter how it may try to placate him. And Lechin's betrayal will be facilitated if the POR continues to support him."

It does not take a genius, as can be seen, to make correct and useful predictions. Armed with the Marxist doctrine and the Marxist method, quite ordinary people can see the direction of events and prepare for them with a revolutionary policy. But without the Marxist

method, there is no possibility at all of projecting and carrying out a successful policy. Marxism is not the guarantee of victory, but revisionism is the guarantee of defeat.

Maoism Wins a Recruit

Matching the POR's capitulation to the reformist labor leaders, is its pro-Stalinist conciliationism. In this the POR outdoes Pablo. On this question I can do no better than to reproduce portions of a letter that I wrote to Murry Weiss on January 2, 1954 (unanswered, of course):

"I was pleased to see you take cognizance of the 'counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinists in Bolivia' in the paper of December 21st. However I find your passing reference entirely inadequate, since it is completely unsupported by any facts. . . Do you have such facts, Murry? I, for one, would be very interested in seeing them. . . I wonder where you got your facts about the counter-revolutionary role of the Bolivian Stalinists. Certainly not from the Bolivian Trotskyists. As you no doubt know, they never criticize the Bolivian Stalinists, not in public print.

"Look over the Political Theses adopted at the June, 1953, National Conference. In these theses, titled "Present Stage of the Revolution and Tasks of the POR," you will find not one single reference to the Stalinists. Even in the concluding section of the theses, titled "National Revolution and Permanent Revolution," there is no mention at all of the rich experience which enabled Trotsky to verify and elaborate this, his major contribution to the political life of our time; and there is no mention, naturally, of the chief opponents of Trotsky's theory, the Stalinists.

"Look over the issues of the Lucha Obrera, the paper of the POR. In all the issues of 1953 you'll find just one single reference to the Stalinists. This is an announcement of a split in the Stalinist PIR and the formation of the 'Workers and Peasants Communist Party.' Aside from that there is no other reference to the Stalinists. This fact, so incredible and so glaring, is no doubt, known to you. How do you explain it? Has anyone asked the POR for an explanation?

"Even when Lucha Obrera mentions the assassination of Trotsky, it does not say who was responsible or for what reason. (This is No. 43, the same issue I have twice quoted from. The article mentions the assassination and deals with Trotsky's contributions -- led the Russian revolution, built the Red Army, elaborated the theory of Permanent Revolution, and founded the Fourth International. But it manages to omit any mention whatever of the dominating theme of the last seventeen years of his life -- the struggle against Stalinism.)

"Lucha Obrera carried two articles on the fall of Mossadegh -- and it did not so much as whisper of the existence of a Stalinist party in Iran, much less denounce its betrayal. 'The fall of Mossadegh,' says Lucha Obrera, 'is indubitably a triumph for British imperialism, but it is at the same time a product of a vacillating policy, which attempted to limit the Iranian revolution, turning its back on the aspirations of the masses.' And Lucha Obrera means the 'vacillating policy' not of the Tudeh Party, which would be bad enough

(it does not even hint at the existence of such a party); it means the 'vacillating policy' of Mossadegh.

"The Pabloite talk about the "inadequacy" of the Stalinist policy during August, of the "failure of the Stalinists to project a revolutionary orientation" is false and misleading. It is not a question of inadequacies and failures. It is a question of calculated betrayal.' So say you in the paper. Isn't also the POR's failure to go even so far as Pablo in criticizing the Iranian and above all the Bolivian Stalinists at least 'false and misleading'?"

For the sake of accuracy, I must make a reservation to the foregoing. I find that Nos. 38 and 39 of Lucha Obrera are missing from my collection: I cannot therefore say that I have examined all the issues of 1953. Also, I have found one other reference to the Bolivian Stalinists -- a reply to their calumnies against the POR, in No. 35 (March, 1953). On international Stalinism, there is an article translated from the paper here on the case against the Jewish doctors in No. 34 (February, 1953) and a small item on the Berlin strike in No. 40 (July), which reported, oddly enough, that one of the demands of the strikers was withdrawal of the Red Army. These reservations do not change the picture of conciliationism to Stalinism.

In No. 36 (April, 1953) there is the following panegyric to Mao Tse Tung: "On the first of March the central Chinese government adopted an electoral law which is fully democratic and allows the revolutionary forces to crush reaction. Full democracy for the exploited and liquidation of all guaranties for the reactionaries, is the spirit of the law.

"The new law establishes that all Chinese (men and women) over 18 'with the exception of the counter-revolutionaries and former landed proprietors who have not been converted to productive labor,' have the right to vote. The illiterate are included and will vote by sign, raising their hands. The Chinese Communist Party and all the other 'democratic organizations' may present their lists, common or separate. The elector will retain the right to vote for candidates on no list.

"The election will be by proportional representation. One delegate for each 800,000 inhabitants of non-proletarian regions. The proletarians will elect one delegate for each 100,000. Mao Tse Tung explains that the electoral law reflects the leading role of the working class.

"As has been seen the electoral law is fully democratic for the peasants and proletarians (fundamental forces of the revolution). It concretely establishes that the right to vote can not be exercised by counter-revolutionaries and old landlords who have not been converted to production. In the China of Mao there is no democracy for the reaction."

This item appeared at about the same time that the paper here printed the appeal of the International Executive Committee against the persecutions visited on the Chinese Trotskyists. During the rest of the year, until it was suppressed, Lucha Obrera had not one word to say on this subject. It did not even report the news to its readers. And, indeed, why should it care? If the revolution is so

well-led by Mao Tse Tung, then are the Trotskyists not truly "fugitives from the revolution"? As one result of the post-war revolutionary events, Maoism has found a place in the Fourth International.

This is no academic question for the POR, for it involves the whole question of the colonial revolution. Maoism is class-collaborationism, the idea of the possibility of a "Peoples Democracy," which is neither a proletarian nor a bourgeois state, but a transitional government. The POR believes in the same possibility; it believes that the Mao government is such an in-between government. The POR has many nice things to say about the Theory of Permanent Revolution. Its actual theory, however, is a caricature of Trotskyism. The Theory of Permanent Revolution holds that the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the colonial revolution can be carried out only by a workers state; the POR holds that socialist tasks can be undertaken by a non-proletarian government.

The POR is not alone in this, of course. It finds its inspiration and support in Pabloism, which is one of the names of Maoism.

Could Maoism lead a revolution in Bolivia, as it did in China? While this is not absolutely excluded, it is extremely unlikely, much more unlikely than it was in China. "The revolution advances under the whip of the counter-revolution," said Marx of the French revolution of 1848; and this empirical observation has turned out to be a general law. Faced with a powerful class enemy, the revolution can be successful only if led by a resolute, fully conscious leadership, that is, the Marxist party; under the tempering blows of the counter-revolution, the leadership will develop, become theoretically and politically hardened, and gain the confidence of the working class. In China the native ruling class was very weak and very corrupt; deprived of the effective support of imperialism, it could be overthrown by a weak revolution, held back and sabotaged by a bureaucratic and class-collaborationist leadership. Wall Street will not dare allow such an easy victory in any part of its Latin-American empire, and it will have much more power, both political and economic, to prevent it than it had in China.

One additional condition is necessary for the success of Maoism; this is the absence of a mass revolutionary Marxist party. For Maoism is not completely revolutionary; while leading the revolution into which it has been forced by the weakness of the class enemy, it deforms the revolution, it expropriates the working class politically. The victory of Maoism results in a deformed workers state. The political expropriation of the working class can take place in no other way than by the smashing of its class-conscious vanguard and of its Marxist party. Mao left the bulk of this task to Chiang Kai Shek; that is the meaning of what the IEC delicately calls "the lack of coordination" between the workers' upsurge in 1945-47 and the peasant movement, which the Communist Party halted; that is the meaning of the persecution of the Trotskyists, who are not, as the Pabloites shamelessly and heartlessly quip, "refugees from the revolution," but rather refugees (if they are lucky) from the counter-revolution -- the Stalinist counter-revolution which Mao also represents. Between Maoism and the Marxist party there can be no peaceful coexistence.

Maoism is incompatible with Marxism. That is why Pabloism in Bolivia and every where else is the betrayal of Marxism and the liquidation of the party.

Maoism in the International

It has been objected (orally, of course) that I have criticized not Pablo but Lora and the POR, and that Lora is now "on our side." If Lora is indeed on the side of Marxism, this would not invalidate the conclusion that he and the POR were the instrument through which Pablo betrayed the Bolivian revolution. Lora can, of course, repudiate the reformist line he has been following. This would be a great help in rearming the Bolivian revolution, and could only be welcomed. But if Lora is accepted as an orthodox Trotskyist on the basis of being for revolution in the USSR while he is for reformism in Bolivia, then the orthodoxy of the "orthodox Trotskyists" is called into question, and they would share with Pablo the onus of the Bolivian betrayal.

The fight against Pabloist revisionism cannot be confined to the slogans of "No capitulation to Stalinism" and "The right of the party to exist." For the past two years the POR has been organizationally independent while capitulating politically to the bourgeois government. Why? Because the revisionism of the POR is on a more fundamental question: the class nature of the state. And Pabloite revisionism as a whole is also based fundamentally on the rejection of the Marxist position on the class nature of the state.

Before the Third World Congress Comrade Cannon recognized the danger. In 1949 he, together with the majority of the national committee, rejected the position put forth by Cochran and Hansen that the bourgeois states of Eastern Europe had transformed themselves into workers states without revolution. "If you once begin to play with the idea that the class nature of the state can be changed by manipulations in the top circles," said Comrade Cannon, "you open the door to all kinds of revision of basic theory...It can only be done by revolution which is followed by a fundamental change in property relations." This prophecy has been completed fulfilled; yet the prophet prefers to remain without honor for his prophecy. He prefers to fight some of the manifestations of the revisionism he predicted and ignore the foundation on which it rests.

When the Third World Congress adopted the very position which Comrade Cannon had attacked so sharply, he and all his supporters joined in its unanimous endorsement. They accepted the "intermediate status" of the buffer "countries" from 1945 to 1948; they accepted Pablo's and Cochran's economist criteria on the class nature of the state; they accepted the idea of a fundamental social transformation, and of a change in the class nature of the state without revolution. They weren't happy with this position; not one article has ever appeared defending or explaining it. They later also accepted Pablo's position that there was in China not a workers or a bourgeois state but a transitional, an in-between, a "workers and peasants government." They never defended this position either -- in writing -- and defended it orally only when they had to; when they were faced with the attack of the Vern tendency in Los Angeles. Murry Weiss and Myra Tanner showed then that this position could be defended only with the most blatant and open revisionism -- such

revisionism as they would not dare put on paper. They also accepted Pablo's betrayal of the Bolivian revolution, also refusing to defend it in writing and consenting to an oral debate -- in Los Angeles -- only after much hesitation and several changes of mind.

For the last four years the political line of the international movement has been in the hands of Pablo, with the "orthodox Trotskyists" following docilely behind. They were, as Murry Weiss said, "in the arms of Pablo." "The right of the party to exist" and "no conciliation with Stalinism" were nowhere to be found when Pablo and Germain presented their Maoist position on China. They voted for a resolution that declared: "By putting itself in matters of doctrine on the plane of Marxism-Leninism, by affirming that its historical aim is the creation of the classless Communist society, by educating its cadres in this spirit, as well as in the spirit of devotion to the USSR, the Chinese CP presents by and large the same characteristics as the other mass Stalinist parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries." (Is this why the POR refuses to criticize the Stalinists?)

They accepted the line of "critical support" of the Mao government, even when Germain showed that this really meant solidarity with the Mao government against the Trotskyists. With a brutality worthy of a Stalin, but unprecedented in the Trotskyist movement, Germain declared that the refusal to give critical support to Mao, put forth in the IEC by Comrade Jacque, was "counter-revolutionary." Not one leader of the International, or of any party in the movement, raised his voice against this piece of Stalinist brutality. To call Jacques' position counter-revolutionary signified that the difference over whether to give critical support to Mao was no terminological dispute; it is signified solidarity with the secret police against all independent thought, against all Trotskyists. Comrades who emitted shocked gasps at a much more insignificant defection, that of Grace Carlson, took this with equanimity. Not only were there no protests, but this Stalinist position was actually defended by Max Goldman, a leading majority supporter, in a debate. "You have no trust," said Goldman, "you are suspicious of the IEC." This was in April, 1953.

Yes, Vern and Ryan, and the comrades supporting their position, did not trust the IEC, led by Pablo and Germain; they were more than suspicious of their revisionist line. And they had much less concrete knowledge than Goldman and the rest of the National Committee were in a position to have. We didn't know what Peng knew. But Marxism is a better guide to people and events than empiricism or faith. But Marxism is a better guide to people and events than empiricism or faith. Murry Weiss had faith in Pablo. "How do you know," he asked in a debate with Dennis Vern in May, 1953, "that the Chinese Communist Party cannot become a Marxist party?"

"I am willing," replied Comrade Vern, "to stake the whole validity of my position on this: when the pressure of the Korean war lets up, the government, rather than, as you and Germain say, unfurling the proletarian power, will become even more bureaucratized; it will intensify its repressions against the Trotskyists."

Why Are They Silent

Now the comrades are indignant at the Pabloite jibe that the Chinese Trotskyists are "fugitives from a revolution." But indigna-

tion is no answer to a political position. The Pabloites are consistent; they believe that Maoism is or can become completely revolutionary. What do his opponents say? Nothing. They still formally retain the Pabloite position. All attempts to raise the question are met with stony silence. Comrade Stein made an attempt to approach the question in an internal document of the Majority caucus, but he was rebuffed and has since kept his peace. The National Committee resolution criticizing Pablo's line on Stalinism ("Against Pabloist Revisionism," FI, Sept.-Oct. 1953) retains Pablo's position on China.

Why have they remained silent? Why do they still remain silent, as the International Committee admits, on "problems left suspended, befogged or falsified by the Pablist leadership during three years?" Is it because, as we have vapidly been told, they didn't want to "dignify" the Vern tendency by replying to its criticisms? But the questions on which they hold such a stubborn silence involve the life and death of the movement! Is the tiny Vern group so powerful that it can lock the minds and typewriters of the party leadership on such vital questions?

No. The "orthodox Trotskyists" have a much more important reason for having defaulted to Pablo. While Pablo has taken up and answered important problems as they arose -- in an empirical, revisionist manner -- his opponents have been unable to give any answers to these problems. Both Pablo and his opponents find that they cannot make reality conform with their doctrine; that, in the aphorism used by both Harry Frankel and Max Geldman, "theory is gray but life is green." Pablo turns his back on doctrine and rivets his eyes in an empirical and impressionistic manner on "the new world reality." His opponents turn their back on events and maintain their doctrine as revealed dogma.

Stalinism cannot be reformed -- says Comrade Cannon in public statements. Then has the Chinese CP, which certainly was Stalinist, been reformed or not? No answer.

The Soviet bureaucracy must be overthrown by revolution. What of the Chinese bureaucracy; is a refusal to give it critical support still counter-revolutionary? No answer.

The class nature of the state, says Comrade Cannon, cannot be changed without revolution. What of the changes that took place in Eastern Europe? When and how were these states transformed from bourgeois to proletarian? On this question, once having voted for Pablo's position, they have neither defended (in writing, that is) nor attacked it.

And they have answered no questions on the Bolivian revolution.

Is it then not possible to face the post-war reality and at the same time maintain and defend the Marxist doctrine? Yes, it is. Both the empiricism of Pablo and the abstentionism of Cannon have their common foundation in the rejection of Marxism on the nature of the state; and this has its origin in the Russian Question. The belief that the Soviet bureaucracy is completely counter-revolutionary, which is the origin of the errors of both sides, signifies the rejection of Trotskyism on the nature of the Soviet state.

When a working class organization, no matter how bureaucratized, carries on a struggle against the capitalist class, no matter how inadequately, that is a class struggle. If the Soviet state is a workers state, then its struggle against Nazi Germany was a class war. A class war is class struggle on the plane of state power -- that is, revolution-war and counter-revolution-war. This thought, which has been hesitantly and equivocatingly accepted in regard to the Third World War, has been rejected in regard to the second. Yet this is the only position which can bring all the post-war events, the whole "new reality" into conformity with Marxist theory. With the victory over the Germans the Red Army was left as the only real power -- the only state power -- in Eastern Europe. That was the revolution, the transfer of power from one class to another. Without this transfer of power, the subsequent economic and social transformations would have been impossible.

This revolution is ignored by the International. The Stalinist bureaucracy was completely counter-revolutionary, it was held, and therefore could not carry out a revolution. The buffer states could not be workers states, concluded the International; they must still be bourgeois states -- degenerated bourgeois states, on the road to structural assimilation into the Soviet Union. But the Third World Congress could not ignore the fundamental economic and social transformations that had taken place; there must be workers states. How had they come into being? Bourgeois states on the Road to Structural Assimilation turned out to be states with an "intermediate status," transitional states, the betrayal of Marxism on the state. The "orthodox Trotskyists" assented to the theoretical betrayal because they had no way out. And they still hold to their original error, the cause of their abdication to Pablo.

Is the Soviet bureaucracy counter-revolutionary completely and to the core? The "old Trotskyists" can get no support from Trotsky on this point. They can find only one quotation which can in any way be made to appear to support their point of view. And this sentence is part of a passage in which Trotsky explains to Shachtman that the Soviet state is counter-revolutionary, but nevertheless still a workers state. The comrades have their own good reasons for calling the Vern tendency "talmudist" and "scholastic." Admitting that the bureaucracy does do progressive work, Comrade Weiss maintains that bourgeois politicians also do some progressive things without changing their completely reactionary character.

This shows a complete disregard of class distinctions. Building roads, scientific research, may be progressive in the general sense of the struggle to control nature; but for Marxists the terms progressive and reactionary have political meaning only in relation to the class struggle. A capitalist who gives a concession in response to a struggle is no more progressive than one who resists; the effect of capitalist resistance may even be more progressive, in that it forces the workers to organize and fight more militantly. While a capitalist who makes the most liberal concessions is not doing anything progressive, a trade union leader who organizes a picket-line is. And the activity of the Soviet bureaucracy in organizing the struggle against the Hitler counter-revolution was profoundly progressive. If the bureaucracy had deserted (and many bureaucrats did) the Soviet Union would have been conquered. It will be objected that the absence of an alternative, a Marxist leadership, was due

entirely to ferocious suppression by the bureaucracy -- and that is true. But this merely serves to point up the dual role of the bureaucracy, both progressive and reactionary.

If the Soviet state is really a workers state, then how can the administrator of this state, faced not only by a rebellious working class but also by a ferociously counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, be completely and to the core counter-revolutionary? This position cannot be held consistently; the supporters of the International Committee still cannot deny the fundamental changes in Eastern Europe. They insist that the changes were carried out by "military-bureaucratic action" and that the Chinese Stalinists are no longer Stalinists. How this proves the completely reactionary nature of the Soviet bureaucracy no one has yet shown.

The choice cannot be evaded: either give up the theory that the Soviet bureaucracy is completely counter-revolutionary, or give up more and more completely and openly Marxism on the state. The choice will have to be made. The silence will have to be broken. Until it is, the struggle against Pabloism cannot be carried to a conclusion.

Above all, and first of all, the silence on the Bolivian revolution must be broken. Pablo's betrayal must be exposed and combatted. If Pablo's silence on Bolivia is a sign of his abandonment of Marxism as a science, what shall we say of the silence of his opponents? To remain silent is to shield the betrayers and share in the betrayal.

We Need International Solidarity

Not only has there been no discussion of the Bolivian revolution, as though we have nothing to learn from it and no political aid to give; the Bolivian revolution has been almost completely absent from the propaganda activity of the Party.

When the revolution began, two years ago, the paper responded quickly and carried a goodly amount of material in the first few weeks. George Breitman wrote several good articles, which showed that he knows what a revolutionary policy should be. He even called the MNR government a bourgeois government, and wrote that "Lechin's stay in the cabinet had better be brief."

But after the first few weeks the paper carried only occasional references to the Bolivian revolution. Breitman apparently lost interest until, stung by the suppression of Lucha Obrera, he wrote a brief article in which he again called the MNR government "a capitalist government." Even when Labor Action accused the POR leaders of having accepted posts on governmental commissions, no reply was forthcoming. Even a letter written by the Secretary of the POR denying the charges was denied publication. (On this point, I admit an extenuating circumstance: The denial by the POR appeared to be a diplomatic one. The secretary of the POR denied being in the government, but said nothing about being on commissions. An open letter to Labor Action, promised by the Secretary of the POR, has never appeared).

Since the first weeks, the paper has aped the line of the POR, calling the MNR government petty-bourgeois, pointing to the presence

of labor leaders in the cabinet as proof of its progressive character, and later accusing the MNR of betraying the revolution. The last time, until this writing, that mention was made of Bolivia was on December 28. That was an editorial dealing with the suppression of Lucha Obrera. The editorial denounced the "cowardly labor leaders" for their silence on Bolivia! The paper did win one victory. After two editorials calling for recognition of the MNR government, without any mass demonstrations, public meetings, or petitions, the State Department was convinced. Two later editorials protesting the suppression of Lucha Obrera did not have the same effect.

The Party has done nothing to popularize, defend, or explain the Bolivian revolution to the public. In two years there has been just one (1) public meeting on Bolivia; not one meeting per branch, but one meeting for the whole party! This was held in New York, and Bert Cochran was the speaker. The Bolivian revolution is sometimes mentioned in holiday orations, usually not at all. There has been just one branch discussion on the Bolivian revolution in the whole party, a debate in Los Angeles; and this took place six months after it was requested. "You have a fixation on Bolivia," I was told, "we are busy with the American revolution." This from the organizer of the branch in Los Angeles, with its large Latin-American population!

This shameful neglect of the elementary duty of international solidarity is in glaring contradiction to the directives given by the Founding Congress of the Fourth International:

"Just as the Latin American sections of the Fourth International must popularize in their press and agitation the struggles of the American labor and revolutionary movements against the common enemy, so the section in the US must devote more time and energy in its agitational and propaganda work to acquaint the proletariat of the US with the position and struggles of the Latin American countries and their working class movements. Every act of American imperialism must be exposed in the press and at meetings and, on indicated occasions, the section in the US must seek to organize mass movements of protest against specific activities of Yankee imperialism. In addition, the section in the US, by utilizing the Spanish language and literature of the Fourth International, must seek to organize on however a modest scale to begin with, the militant revolutionary forces among the doubly-exploited millions of Filipinos, Mexicans, Caribbeans, Central and South American workers now resident in the US, not only for the purpose of linking them with the labor movement in the US but also for the purpose of strengthening the ties with the labor and revolutionary movements in the countries from which these workers originally came. This work shall be carried on under the direction of the American Secretariat of the Fourth International which will publish the necessary literature and organize the work accordingly."

Due to reactionary laws international affiliation is barred. But no capitalist law can prevent genuine orthodox Trotskyists from acting like internationalists. The Bolivian revolution should have the same importance for us as a strike in Minneapolis or Detroit.

The Bolivian revolution is languishing behind a thick black curtain. It is suffering from the lack of a revolutionary Marxist leadership. It is the urgent duty of genuine orthodox Trotskyists to help the POR to rearm itself with the Trotskyist program. Every day that this task is delayed adds to the danger that the POR and the revolution will be drowned in blood.

But this task can be accomplished only by a movement which is itself rearmed with the genuine Trotskyist program, beginning with the resuscitation of Leninism on the state and of the Trotskyist position on Stalinism. All taboos must be lifted. All political positions must be put to the test of free and open discussion.

June 20, 1954