

S P E C I A L I S S U E

# International VIEWPOINT

**Resolutions of the  
Twelfth World Congress of  
the Fourth International**

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# Contents

Introduction	5
The world political situation and the tasks of the Fourth International	7
The present stage of building the Fourth International	29
Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland	51
Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy	73
The Central American revolution	89

*Cover photo:*

*Solidarnosc literature being received through the fence of the occupied Gdansk shipyard, 1980*

# Introduction

THE TWELFTH World Congress of the Fourth International took place in January 1985. It brought together some 200 delegates, fraternal delegates, observers and invited guests.

Six reports were on the agenda:

- On the world political situation, taking up the development and effects of the crisis in the different sectors of the world revolution, the struggle against austerity measures and the war-drive, and the activities and central campaigns of the International and its sections.
- On the lessons and perspectives of the Central American revolution, which set out to draw out the strategic lessons of the Nicaraguan revolution and give the present framework for the campaign against imperialist intervention and in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. The discussion centred particularly on the nature of the Sandinista regime, on its economic policy, and the present situation of the Salvadorean revolution.
- On the political revolution and counter-revolution in Poland, the most important experience of a mass upsurge against the bureaucracy, taking up the gains made by Solidarnosc and the tasks of the resistance to the Jaruzelski regime.

Aside from these three discussions, concerning the principal questions in the international situation today, two others took up more general programmatic questions:

- The first, on the present relevance of the theory of permanent revolution and the notion of the workers and farmers government, reaffirmed the validity of the general programmatic framework of the Fourth International, in the light of the main events of the class struggle.
- The second, entitled "Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy", continued and closed a discussion initiated by the previous World Congress. It brought together in a systematic way the lessons of the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers states and the anti-bureaucratic struggles, the relationship between revolutionary power and democracy (relations between parties, trade unions and states after the revolution, guarantees of democratic rights, pluralism, the functional character of democracy from the point of view of economic planning, and other questions).

Finally, a written and oral report on the present stage of building the Fourth International laid out our tasks and perspectives for the years ahead, taking up in particular the relations that the International and its sections have with other revolutionary currents, the social transformation of the sections and their implantation in the key industrial sectors and popular movements, and the functioning of the leadership bodies of the International as such.

There were counter-reports on all these points either from the declared international tendencies (of which there were two), or by delegates representing the majority of their respective sections. The documents presented by the outgoing United Secretariat were all approved by a large majority, from 66 to 80 per cent of the votes, on the different points.

The Congress also received written reports from the outgoing leadership on its activity as a whole, and on its policy of cadre formation. A substantial part of the work of the Congress was devoted to meetings and reports of commissions studying the situation of certain sections. After the report of the Mandates Commission, five new sections of the International were recognised by the Congress (Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Senegal, Iceland), as well as new sympathising groups in several countries. In total, the International exists today in some fifty countries.

At the end of its work, the Congress elected the new International Executive Committee (IEC), reduced in size from previously in order to improve its functioning and regularity. The IEC itself elected the new United Secretariat. The IEC, composed of members from 27 sections, and the United Secretariat (composed of members from 12 sections at present, it is up for re-election at each IEC meeting) are charged with leading the International until the next World Congress. Opening with a tribute to comrades who have died since the last World Congress, the Twelfth Congress of the Fourth International closed with a declaration of solidarity with all militants and fighters of the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic struggles throughout the world. In addition to the general resolutions, it adopted a series of solidarity declarations with the struggle of the Kanak people of New Caledonia, the British miners' strike, the anti-war mobilisations around 20 April in the United States, the freedom struggle of the Irish people, political prisoners in Syria, and our imprisoned comrades in Japan (for these declarations see *International Viewpoint* Nos 70/71/72, 25 February, 11/25 March 1985).

We publish below the resolutions adopted by the World Congress.

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Photo: GM COOKSON

Anti-apartheid demonstration, London, 1985

# The world political situation and the tasks of the Fourth International

## I. The overall world situation

1) DURING THE last fifteen years, both the structural crisis of international capitalism and the crisis of leadership of the world working class have deepened.

The present phases of the capitalist crisis is characterised by a combination of factors, making it *the most serious crisis* of its history:

- the long period of economic depression and the long-term, far-reaching social crisis, made worse by an increasingly pronounced ecological crisis, which began towards the end of the 1960s;
- the deterioration in the international relationship of forces for capitalism, the imperialist defeat in Indochina in 1975 being the clearest expression of this;
- the accentuation of inter-capitalist contradictions and crises of bourgeois leadership, especially since the middle of the 1970s;
- the unprecedented organic strength of the working class, a product of the long period of post-war economic expansion;
- the growing force and extension of the movements for social and national liberation in the dominated countries.

2) *This crisis deepened sharply in 1979* with the overthrow of the Shah's dictatorship in Iran, the revolutionary victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador.

*The extension of the socialist revolution* in Central America is a crucial challenge to imperialism. It is taking place in what was the preserve of American capitalism. It opens up revolutionary perspectives for the mass movements which are shaking up the ruling dictatorships in the Southern Cone. All this explains the violence of American imperialism's reaction and consequently the difficulty for the revolutionary movements to win a new victory.

More generally, the depth and brutality of the economic disaster and the structural crisis and of bourgeois rule in a series of semi-colonial countries will lead inevitably to large-scale social explosions. At the same time the big battalions of the working class in the imperialist countries are resisting step for step the capitalists' austerity and militarisation offensive.

The beginning of the political revolution in Poland also had a destabilising effect on international capitalism, especially in Europe. It confirmed the revolutionary potential of the working class and its capacity to bring an overall solution to the crisis of humanity. The resistance of the Polish workers, after December 1981, remains an important element of the international political conjuncture.

3) The structural deterioration of the international relationship of forces to the detriment of imperialism does not mean it is incapable of reacting.

American imperialism's quasi-political paralysis after its Indochinese defeat or when faced with the fall of the Shah and Somoza was only temporary and conjunctural. There were political reasons for this situation, mainly related to internal US politics.

From 1979 *the imperialist counter-offensive* became clearer and was stepped up a year later with the arrival in government of the Reagan administration.

The target of the counter-offensive is above all the colonial revolution in Central America and in the Middle East. In the imperialist countries it takes the form of an anti-working class austerity and rearmament policy. It is exerting increasing military

and economic pressure on the Soviet Union without this amounting to a new period of the Cold War. For imperialism it is rather the case of constraining the bureaucracy, already in difficulty, to negotiate a new adjustment of the world relationship of forces from an unfavourable position.

4) *In the short term* the imperialist counter-offensive aims to block any new breakthrough of the revolution in the semi-colonial and semi-industrialised countries and is trying to roll back the revolution where it has marked up decisive victories, as in Nicaragua.

By reducing the masses' living standards, and through long-term unemployment which weakens the organised workers movement, it is seeking to create the conditions for large-scale attacks against the social gains and democratic rights of the working class in the imperialist countries (right to strike, trade union freedom, freedom to demonstrate etc).

This counter-offensive has already inflicted heavy defeats on the Turkish masses, with the establishment of the dictatorship in September 1980, and on the Palestinian and Lebanese masses as well as the PLO. The counter-revolutionary US intervention in Grenada is a defeat for the revolution on this island. It concretely shows US imperialism's intention to militarily attack the revolution in Central America. Certain sectors of the working class in the imperialist countries have suffered partial defeats.

But the imperialist counter-offensive has not been able to decisively defeat the working class of any of the imperialist countries, nor stabilise bourgeois rule in most of the semi-colonial and semi-industrialised countries. It has not been able to roll back the mass movement where it is on the advance, nor has it restored capitalism in any of the countries where it has been overturned.

It has therefore not succeeded in fundamentally changing the relationship of forces on a world scale.

*A long-term capitalist solution* to the crisis indeed presupposes something quite different to partial military or diplomatic successes and a gradual erosion of the forces of the workers movement. It requires *a qualitative deterioration in the organisation of the working masses* and sweeping defeats in a whole series of key countries.

The "safety-valves" which functioned in the last ten years are less and less able to absorb the shockwaves of the crisis: export of capital to semi-industrialised countries of the "third world"; expansion of the market in these countries and the OPEC ones; growth in East-West trade; relocation of production centres internationally. Limited changes in the share-out of national income in the imperialist countries are far from sufficient for ensuring an adequate rise in the rate of profit. To do that it is necessary to impose a brutal cut in wages, a far-reaching dismantling of the social security systems and massive unemployment with much lower indemnity payments.

5) The dynamic of the present world situation is above all one of the *interaction between the crisis of the international capitalist system, the crisis of the system of rule established in the bureaucratised workers states and the crisis of the organised mass movement.*

a) The Soviet bureaucracy took advantage of the victory of the Indochinese revolution and imperialism's temporary paralysis to try and modify in its favour and without great cost the regional relationships of forces (Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia).

But from the beginning of the imperialist counter-offensive the Kremlin took a line of overall negotiations with imperialism,

sacrificing if need be the mass movement of certain countries, as was confirmed at some cost in its attitude to the Palestinian movement at the time of the Zionist invasion in June 1982.

Within the framework of these overall negotiations the Soviet bureaucracy does continue to help certain national liberation movements while at the same time tries to limit the level of this aid in order to dispose of the maximum advantages in its relations with imperialism. The bureaucracy has to also take into account the existence of social and political forces partially outside its control. In a similar fashion neither does imperialism any longer control all the counter-revolutionary forces in play.

For its part the Chinese bureaucracy, through its "detente" with imperialism and the bourgeoisies of the ASEAN countries, has facilitated the bourgeois counter-offensive in South East Asia and has helped to limit the repercussions of the victory of the Indochinese revolution. In the framework of its overall "reorientation" and of "de-Maoisation" it has however in the course of the last year once again taken its distance from imperialism.

Behind both the Soviet and the Chinese bureaucracies' basic attitudes to imperialism and the world revolution is their basic counter-revolutionary conservatism.

b) From the beginning of the austerity offensive the reformist bureaucracies have politically disarmed the working class by making a series of social agreements and pacts with the bourgeoisie and gradually capitulating to the economic and social objectives of big capital. They have thus contributed to the weakening of the organised workers movement in several important countries while at the same time the emergence of organised class struggle currents and, a fortiori, the building of an alternative revolutionary leadership have not developed to the extent of at least partially neutralising the negative effects of the bureaucratic betrayals. The crisis of leadership of the proletariat therefore remains the main obstacle preventing resolving the capitalist crisis by taking a socialist road.

We are therefore seeing a crisis of the workers movement as a whole: a crisis of strategy and of leadership which tends to determine and speed up a structural crisis of the representative organisations of the working class.

c) Finally the discredit of the "socialist alternative" disfigured by the bureaucratic regimes of the USSR, Eastern Europe or China holds back the workers movement of the imperialist countries and to a lesser extent of the semi-industrialised semi-colonial countries from taking the anti-capitalist road — despite the effects of the crisis and the deadly threat of the arms race.

The Cambodian tragedy, and the Chinese-Vietnamese wars have discredited socialism. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the occupation of the country and the type of war that the USSR army is carrying out, have facilitated the international imperialist counter-offensive and the campaigns aiming to discredit socialism. The political counter-revolution unleashed by the 13th December 1981 coup d'état in Poland has further deepened this discredit.

This has less direct influence over the toiling masses of the semi-colonial countries particularly since the living and cultural standards of the USSR appear greatly superior to those of countries subject to imperialist pillage. Also the bureaucracy has given limited but real aid to certain revolutionary movements. However, new political space can be opened up between the Kremlin and various currents of these countries as a result of the experiences of the developing mass movement.

6) The process of capitalist industrialisation, with its technological choices and models of consumption, has been determined by short and medium-term profit motives calculated by each company separately on the basis of its particular interests. These choices and models have been copied by the ruling bureaucracies in the bureaucratised workers states. All these processes bring the world closer to an ecological disaster. The destruction of natural resources, along with actual catastrophes (e.g. Bhopal in India) is already at an advanced stage, especially in countries dominated by imperialism.

The cancerous effects of about 9 million synthetic chemical products are still largely unknown. Water and atmospheric pollution has already had disastrous effects on seas, rivers and forests. The "peaceful" use of atomic power as an energy source has already produced catastrophic accidents in both the imperialist

and Eastern European countries. Each year about 3 per cent of the tropical forests are disappearing because of the demand for wood pulp in the imperialist countries and due to stock rearing — which leads to desertification, floods and the destruction of land suitable for cultivation.

7) The extent of the *crisis of proletarian leadership* on a world scale has meant that up to now in the main imperialist or dominated capitalist countries the mass movement has not come to directly pose the question of the revolutionary conquest of political power — the only means of tackling the economic crisis with a solution in the interests of the exploited masses.

So in the three sectors of the world revolution there will continue to be a long period of convulsive upheavals, struggles of great importance, pre-revolutionary crises followed by phases of conjunctural downturn, even new revolutionary explosions.

It is the outcome of these struggles which will decide the future of humanity. The crisis of capitalism can result in the long-term in the victory of the world socialist revolution or in humanity falling back into barbarism. Historically the solution of the crisis is impossible without the resolution of the crisis of the subjective factor, which is more than ever the main obstacle barring the road to socialism.

## II. The crisis in the imperialist countries

8) *In the imperialist countries* the crisis is dominated by the effects of the long economic depression that began at the end of the 1960s and which has already been marked by a series of increasingly serious recessions (1970-71, 1974-75, 1980-82). Given the logic of the capitalist industrial cycle there can be short phases of recovery in production and national income like the one which began in 1983. But the tendency is still one of decline in the average long term rate of growth.

The main characteristics of the depression are the rise of long-term structural unemployment and the persistence of inflation. Taking just the imperialist countries, official unemployment has gone up from 10 million at the beginning of the 1970s to 20 million in 1975 and 30 million in 1982. It will probably reach 40 millions in the years to come without even taking into account all those — and especially women — "who voluntarily withdraw from the labour market" and are no longer registered in the unemployment figures.

While inflation has declined a little, particularly under the effects of credit restriction measures taken by nearly all the imperialist governments, it continues at levels without common measure with a "stable monetary system." Up to now inflation has prevented a fall in prices and incomes really corresponding to the decline in values expressed in stable monetary terms. Consequently the decline in production is still inferior to that of the 1929-32 period. The persistence of inflation however threatens the world system of credit and banking with collapse.

This threat presents the international bourgeoisie with a harrowing choice. If it chooses to limit inflation at all costs it will continue to accentuate credit restrictions which would threaten important sectors of world capitalist industry with collapse and cause a catastrophic reduction in world trade, and could result in a dislocation of the world market. If it lets inflation rage in order to absorb the crisis it runs the risk of a headlong lurch to a financial "crash"

This is why the safeguard measures prepared by organisations like the IMF and the International Settlements Bank tend to come up against a decisive obstacle: how to divide up the costs of the rescue operations between different central banks, i.e., between the different imperialist powers in the eventuality of a threatened collapse of a major bank.

Indeed it was above all the inflation of credit which fed the long period of post-war economic growth based on the expansion of credit to capitalist companies, to consumers and to imperialist and semicolonial governments.

To absorb the effects of the 1974-5 recession there was an explosive growth in credit to so-called "third world" countries and bureaucratised workers states. Today the total sum of public and private debts (in dollars) has reached the fantastic figure of

\$7,000 billion, including more than \$800 billion just for the "third world" countries.

Within this mass of debt there is a very big amount owed by private capitalist firms — a good number of whom are on the edge of bankruptcy (including important multi-national companies) or by imperialist governments, (France, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Denmark). These debts are often concentrated in the hands of a few banks. So, the actual resources of these banks hardly permit them to withstand their debtors defaulting. The bankruptcy of a few big debtors from the "third world" could provoke a chain reaction leading to a massive withdrawal of deposits and then to the collapse of the banks themselves. The imperialist rulers are conscious of this and seek to ward off such a situation arising (cf. the agreement reached in Mexico). However efficient the measures they take, they cannot manage to eliminate the roots of this world credit crisis. The next episode will include the multiplication of serious tensions caused by the indebtedness of a large number of countries. At the same time there will be a stronger "policing" role played by international bodies (above all the IMF). The struggle against capitalist solutions to the debt problem is therefore a vital task.

The imperialist bourgeoisie have drawn the lessons of the 1929-32 "crash" by creating national systems controlling the banks with the latter being bailed out in case of crisis by the Central Bank. But on the international level there is no such "lender of the last resort." A real "central bank of central banks" on the international scale would require the existence of an international capitalist state, that is the disappearance of inter-imperialist competition. In a period of crisis this *intensifies* rather than declines.

Whatever measures prepared and inter-imperialist compromises made (after increasingly tough bargaining and sharp conflicts), *the risk of a banking crash cannot be ruled out*. While we should be wary of believing in the inevitability of a "black Thursday" on a world scale, it is right to take into consideration what this risk implies in a permanent way for the actions of the most advanced capitalist states and for the evolution of the relationship of forces in the world.

9) As inter-imperialist competition deepens it produces strong pressure in favour of protectionism which show the limits of free-trade during periods of depression. Each imperialist power seeks salvation through exports, i.e., in plans to export unemployment since the total volume of exports is stagnant.

This aggravation of inter-imperialist competition is taking place when the supremacy of American imperialism has seriously weakened. The productivity advantages it enjoyed for several decades over its main Japanese or European competitors have been eroded (cars, steel, machine tools, electronic equipment, robots).

The American imperialists have been overtaken altogether by Japanese capital in important regions of Asia (exports, investments). Furthermore Japanese and European imperialists are trying to challenge the hegemony of American capital in certain parts of the Middle East and Latin America, and even on the American domestic market. The European imperialists have established bridgeheads on the markets of the European bureaucratised workers states which increases their economic and political contradictions with the United States. American imperialism reacts by trying to compensate for this weakening by a re-industrialisation effort particularly in high technology sectors, by monetary manipulations and by using its military superiority (which is still formidable). Compared to its European competitors it has the advantage of a unified and powerful state apparatus to help achieve these objectives. But it runs a major risk with this. If it goes too far in the abuse of its political and military superiority to weaken or put the squeeze on its European allies/competitors it can push them to develop their own arms industry, even an independent army (including nuclear weapons). The European imperialists already have the means to do that.

More generally, the accentuation of inter-imperialist competition obliges American imperialism to adopt a policy where its own interests take the priority more and more over the overall interests of the imperialist system. *The crisis of bourgeois political leadership* which is shown first in each of the main imperialist countries thus tends to be transposed onto the world level. While since the Second World War and up to the beginning of the 1970s

*American imperialist hegemony was a factor of relative stabilisation of the system, Washington's policy has become today a factor de-stabilising capitalist order on the international scale.* This de-stabilisation was produced by the crisis. It in turn deepens this crisis.

The *European Economic Community (EEC)* has undergone serious tensions seen in the failure to stabilise the European Monetary System, repeated changes in the inter-European exchange rate and the difficulty of setting up a dynamic and effective industrial policy. There are also problems with the deepening contradictions of the agricultural policy and the resistance from many quarters to the proposed membership of Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless, on the commercial level and in the domains of military and space production, EEC integration has stood up well to the shockwaves of the depression. The return in force of protectionist tendencies operates more between the EEC, Japan and the USA than on an inter-European level. The toughest protectionist measures furthermore affect the industrial exports of the dominated semi-industrialised countries.

*West German imperialism* had been one of the "motors" of post-war economic expansion and of the "moderation" of the crisis during the 1970s. It owed this privileged situation to its positions won on the world market (machinery, electronic equipment, cars) due to the progress in productivity achieved, as well as its greater internal political and social stability. The latter was notably due to the reforms carried out during the social democratic years of power — in turn made possible by the long period of economic growth.

But already towards the end of Helmut Schmidt's term of office these advantages had disappeared. The indebtedness of the East European and semi-colonial semi-industrialised countries had already put a brake on the expansion of German exports. The slowdown in growth, then the 1980-82 recession, caused a deficit in public finances and social security which led the bourgeoisie to impose an austerity policy, which has already been stepped up after the arrival in government of the CDU. The basis of social stability has thus been eroded, favouring a recovery of working class militancy and differentiations within the trade unions.

*Japanese imperialism* continued to improve its positions in inter-imperialist competition up to the end of the 1970s. Today the Japanese economic miracle is reaching its end. The worsening of the 1980-82 international recession marked the limits of Japanese commercial expansion. Certain branches of industry like steel, shipbuilding and the auto-industry are already affected by surplus capacity and lack of sales, exactly as in North America and Europe, although it occurred here some years later. The crisis of public spending looks as though it will be severe.

Among the other factors which weaken Japanese imperialism's position in inter-imperialist competition is its extreme dependence on imported raw materials and the obvious absence of the means to defend its positions by politico-military capacity comparable to that of the United States or even of the European imperialists. That is why, just like its competitors, Japan will not again have the high growth rates of previous decades.

10) The effects of the crisis on the *social and political relationship of forces inside the imperialist countries are uneven*.

The bourgeoisie must impose austerity on the workers and break the resistance of the workers movement in order to overcome the crisis in its favour. It has launched a sweeping social and political offensive to achieve these ends:

- an offensive against jobs and living standards;
- calling into question the social security and social benefits systems;
- it aims to privatise nationalised sectors;
- attacks the public sector and public education;
- develops racist propaganda and implements anti-immigrant policies;
- targets the employment of working women;
- and develops an ideological offensive replete with the most reactionary ideas.

This programme has begun to be applied in a substantial way in countries where the right-wing parties are in power (USA, Japan, Great Britain, West Germany . . .), but also, albeit more partially, in countries where the workers parties are in government (France, Spain, Greece . . .). For the bourgeoisie it is not a "maximum"

programme. It must imperatively impose its solution in order to resolve the crisis to its advantage.

This offensive has borne its first fruits: in the first place the considerable increase in the number of unemployed. It should be noted that unemployment began by affecting the most vulnerable sectors of the working class but is now hitting the industrial strongholds.

The bourgeois offensive has been greatly facilitated by the attitude of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement — complicit passivity when faced with the capitalists' plans; submission to the demands of the bourgeoisie when they are in government; divided when there are workers' mobilisations, the social democrats and the CPs have spared no efforts in holding back, diverting mobilisations and preventing an overall fightback against the bourgeoisie's attacks.

So today we see Mitterrand, Gonzalez and Papandreou align themselves with capitalist plans and prepare the way for a return of the right wing, just as Callaghan and Schmidt paved the way for Thatcher and Kohl. The social democrat Craxi is a crutch for the Christian Democrats. In Belgium political and trade union divisions made possible the blocking of the public sector workers mobilisation and gave a reprieve to the government.

This policy of the traditional leaderships has allowed the bourgeoisie to strike serious blows against the working class. The working class has suffered significant partial defeats in a series of countries. Revolutionary marxists have to take this into account when working out their tactics.

The limited and uneven character of the initial fightback of the working class is explained by the very mechanisms of the crisis. Those first hit were the more vulnerable and less organised sectors of the proletariat: immigrant workers, women, youth, older sectors — all of whom were insufficiently defended by an overall class solidarity.

Reactionary forces have taken advantage of this situation and of the effects on the working class of all the reformist policies concerning immigrant workers. They have launched xenophobic campaigns that have found a certain audience among some popular layers. The big battalions of the workers movement only began to be hit hard later on: around 1979-80 the steel industry in Walloon Belgium, France, UK and West Germany; Fiat in Italy, British Leyland, AEG in Germany etc. As the crisis deepens and the social security system is attacked by austerity measures movements of mass resistance will begin to gather strength among these key sectors of the working class.

More generally the European workers movement found itself — to varying degrees — thrown onto the defensive from 1975-76 on, not just because of the economic crisis but also as a result of political factors. The main workers parties actively contributed to the victory of the "democratic counter-revolution" in Portugal. They favoured the establishment of a parliamentary-monarchist regime in Spain and the stabilisation of bourgeois regimes rocked by the first upheavals of the crisis.

Finally the forms of fightback used by the working class vanguard in the 1960-75 period of expansion have lost their effectiveness. Social pacts and austerity policies implemented by the reformists have increased the disarray of the working class. In many countries important sectors of the trade union bureaucracy (including those considered to be left-wing) support the protectionist campaign of certain sections of the bosses. All these elements have accentuated divisions inside the working class and are a factor in the fragmented and dispersed nature of the initial large-scale working class fightbacks in most imperialist countries.

The disarray of the workers movement faced with the crisis and the partial defeats suffered on the economic and political levels (Great Britain) have led in some countries — particularly in Spain and France — to an initial weakening of the trade union movement, especially trade union membership. But:

- a) this tendency is far from universal. It practically does not affect the smaller northern European countries. It has only begun in West Germany;
- b) in most countries it is without any common measure with the extent of unemployment — i.e., qualitatively different from the weakening of the trade unions which accompanied the 1929-34 crisis;

- c) it is very contradictory since the decline in trade union membership can be accompanied by a maintenance of voting levels in elections to workplace councils/committees (Spain) and working class militancy in the workplace, industrial sectors or towns.

On the other hand, reformist election victories in France, Greece and Spain and to a lesser extent in Sweden periodically express, in a deformed way, the basic social relationship of forces and the opposition of the toiling masses to the growth of unemployment and the continued erosion of their living standards. This sentiment of opposition, in the absence of any class struggle alternative, is channelled onto the electoral terrain. But the dynamic of these "reformist" victories is very limited, even in the most favourable of cases, due to the fact that they come after a period of setbacks and divisions of the workers movement and not as the result of powerful working class mobilisations demanding immediate anti-capitalist measures. *In these conditions reformist governments are still acceptable alternatives — but not the preferred one — for the bourgeoisies.*

11) The situation in the European imperialist countries is far from being stabilised.

a) *The different types of bourgeois governments have been unable to overcome the bourgeoisies' crisis of leadership.*

- The West German reactionary government is in the process of losing its credibility and its re-election in 1987 is threatened by the decline of its Liberal partner inside the coalition. If the bourgeois parties win only a minority of votes in the 1987 general election it would seriously sharpen the period of instability opened up in the heart of imperialist Europe.
- Independently of who is in government — bourgeois parties or the social democrats — in recent years we have seen a development of working class resistance. The first signs of a revival in more extensive working class struggles have already appeared in Portugal (1982), Belgium (1982-84), in Italy with the formidable fightback of the factory councils and the working class against the decree on the sliding scale (spring 1984), in West Germany (strike for the 35-hour working week in the engineering and print industry in 1984), as well as in Spain (resistance against factory closures).
- The highpoint of this resistance to bourgeois government's austerity plans is the nearly year-long strike of the British miners, which shows the potential of the present resistance.

b) Imperialism's re-militarisation offensive has triggered off a broad mass movement which generally functions outside the control of the traditional working class organisations. Millions of people have mobilised for the first time in Western Europe against one of the pillars of this imperialist counter-offensive. A majority of the population is questioning for the first time the international strategy of the West German, British and Italian bourgeoisies — their pro-Atlanticist positions and membership of Nato. By influencing the traditional working class organisations which share this general approach, this movement is also putting into question — particularly in West Germany — the "consensus on international policy" which was one of the foundations of social stability.

c) In the past, the reformist leaderships and apparatuses, whether social-democratic, Euro-communist or Stalinist, after having built up positions in bourgeois state institutions, bowed to the logic of profit and were thus constrained to follow a bourgeois socio-economic policy for the crisis. In these conditions, differentiations inside the traditional mass organisations, developed in a rather complex way, varying according to the country.

The only "classical recomposition" inside the European working class is today unfolding in Great Britain where a left wing has emerged within the Labour Party (and to a lesser extent in the trade unions). This does not mean that there will not be similar developments in other countries in the future.

Most parties of a Stalinist origin are affected by a deep crisis of political orientation and in part by a process of disintegration (Spain, Holland, Great Britain, Belgium) or of a qualitative weakening (France), without there being the emergence of authentic left currents. In the same way, this disenchantment with the traditional leaderships is only exceptionally expressed in the emergence of structured currents in the trade unions on

specific questions (Italy, Belgium) which does not challenge the ability of the traditional parties to channel militancy onto the electoral level. In West Germany, as well as in Austria, social democracy's loss of attraction has had concrete consequences in the formation of new "alternative" or "green" parties which bite into social-democratic electoral support and to a large extent paralyses its internal differentiation.

All these developments require a specific response from the European sections of the Fourth International.

This process will follow a different course in each of the imperialist countries although it will be influenced by class struggles internationally (cf. the miners' strike in Great Britain today). Upheavals and regroupments inside the traditional workers organisations, produced by the social and political effects of the crisis cannot be ruled out. That creates a new margin of manoeuvre for revolutionaries and presents them with the task of deepening these differentiations, which also exist inside the apparatuses.

12) However neither the stagnation or temporary downturn of the strike movement, nor the apparent depoliticisation of young people, nor the ideological offensive of the right and extreme right, justify drawing impressionistic conclusions on the overall situation. What is on the agenda in capitalist Europe is *not a capitalist solution to the crisis through the accumulation of gradual defeats and without any fight from the working class, or collapse of the revolutionary alternative*. No, rather we will see mass reactions against the unbearable blows of the crisis and the beginning of a recomposition of the workers movement. At the same time we will see the negative effects of the reformist experiences on workers' morale and militancy. One of these two processes will finally win out over the other. The deepening of the capitalist crisis, the crisis of bourgeois political leadership, the maintenance of potential working class militancy, and the beginning of recomposition of the workers movement mean that sharp turns in the situation remain on the agenda in a whole series of countries.

In the United States, the repeated sell-outs of the trade union bureaucracy to imperialism and the bosses, its thoroughgoing integration in the bourgeois state apparatus and the two-party system, the progressive shift of industry to the south and west where most workers are not trade unionised, have deeply weakened the trade union movement. The capitalist counter-offensive has thus made more gains than in Europe, Japan, Australia or Canada. But working-class resistance is beginning to emerge against the intolerable concessions that the bosses and state have wrested from the bureaucrats under Reagan. The initial fightback which involves sections of the working class and Black masses will continue to develop. Such struggles could go as far as raising the question of working class political independence and a break with the two-party system, particularly among the Black masses. The struggle for the emergence of a mass labour party and a Black party independent of the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more relevant.

13) The first urgent priority is to oppose any defeatism as well as any underestimation of the seriousness of the crisis, its length and its possible results (poverty, more repressive regimes, dictatorships, imperialist counter-revolutionary wars).

*The decisive struggles are in front of us and not behind us.*

*The capacity for struggle of the workers and social movements remains immense.* This is what underlies the possibility of building our organisations: we are not in a period of growing working class passivity, whatever the temporary setbacks. But possible victories depend more than ever on building a revolutionary leadership effectively able to carry out its tasks.

This will not be done automatically. Revolutionary Marxists face a challenge. Confronted with the numerous "detours" taken by the radicalisation and recomposition in capitalist Europe, all the revolutionary Marxist arsenal of tactics and strategy is necessary according to the particular conditions of each country: working as a fraction in other parties; privileged unity of action with other revolutionary organisations including fusion proposals; entrism etc.

But whatever the adopted tactic, the workers united front must be at the heart of our political line in the different countries

of capitalist Europe. No tactic can go around the organised workers movement which is under the hold of reformism. No overall political line — addressed to the working masses — can be worked out without placing the workers united front approach at the centre of this line.

None of these tactics should be interpreted as being an alternative to a permanent effort to root our own forces in the working class in order to build class struggle currents in the trade unions or to the need for national political initiatives.

### III. The crisis in the underdeveloped countries

14) The semi-colonial and semi-industrialised countries which account for a majority of the world population, entered the crisis suddenly in 1979-80, many of them some time after the imperialist countries. Their situation became even worse in 1981, 1982 and 1983.

They have experienced a drop in production, a decline in the volume and value of their exports, and a drastic cut in employment in a situation where they were already chronically plagued by unemployment and under-employment. Their per capita income is further reduced by demographic growth. Proletarian and semi-proletarian popular layers are hit hard and directly. The income of the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie is falling rapidly. Social inequality increases relentlessly. The scanty infrastructure of public equipment and services is in process of being dismantled. The nutrition and health situation is deteriorating dramatically. Capitalist and imperialist super-exploitation have made a new leap forward.

Insofar as these countries underwent a more thoroughgoing integration into the world market over the last few decades, the first effects of the 1974-1975 recession were reflected in a growing balance of payments deficit. Their debts snowballed and reached unprecedented heights in 1982, giving imperialism the means to press for and impose extraordinarily brutal austerity policies, thereby aggravating the social and political crisis.

Moreover, the onset of the crisis further widened the spectrum of differentiation, among the countries of the so-called "Third World".

15) In the poorest countries, mainly in Africa, but also in South Asia and Latin America, the crisis has taken on the dimension of a catastrophe. The standard of living of the popular masses has fallen below the "minimum threshold" set by the thugs of the World Bank. Broader and broader layers are not getting the daily food intake specifically needed by inhabitants of these regions.

Famine has struck the bulk of the people of whole countries: the Sahel, Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad, Bangladesh, north-east Brazil, Zaire and Ghana. The scourge of famine has never struck so massively in recent decades, yet imperialist countries are implementing a policy of subsidies to reduce their grain-producing capacity and keep prices up.

Wherever market relations developed in the countryside, they have led either to the near-destruction of food production, or to considerable reduction of the share of that production consumed on the farm — the farmer must first produce for the market if he wants to be in a position to secure the goods needed to reproduce his labour power. Still smarting from the deep upheavals of their agrarian structure set in motion at least in part by agri-business, these countries have to import an ever-increasing share of their food. These imports weigh heavily on a balance of payments already skewed by the drop in the prices of some of their export goods and the increase of the prices of manufactured goods, energy and interest on their debt!

In this context, the International Monetary Fund's "stabilisation programmes" work to spread and deepen the recessionary tide. The subjection of these dependent economies to the relentless logic of the law of value pushes them backwards even further. The process of social decomposition gains momentum with a twofold result: hunger, massive unemployment, galloping under-employment and the unchecked drop of incomes on one side; unlimited corruption and "doomsday" policies of the ruling classes on the other.

These poorest countries, in addition to their most immediate particular features, display all the classical characteristics of semi-colonial countries: predominance of agriculture and agricultural production, key role of raw materials and agricultural goods in their exports, a puny industrial base almost entirely oriented to the final phase of production of consumers' goods, weak development of the industrial proletariat and decisive weight of the peasantry which is becoming increasingly socially differentiated, direct control of imperialism over the decisive sectors ...

As a result, some of these countries are faced with the perspective of acute social explosions and political convulsions that can lead to pre-revolutionary or revolutionary crises.

16) In the course of the last decade semi-industrialised countries have emerged within the group of semi-colonial countries. These semi-industrial countries, although still dominated by imperialism through the mechanisms of technology, credit, commercial (insurance, transport, distribution) and institutional links (IMF, GATT, trade agreements), no longer have all the specific characteristics of underdevelopment.

Even if dependence on imperialist loans is greater than ever there is an important difference between *imperialist property* and dependence on credit or loans.

Some have developed a permanent industrial base, even a heavy industry sector, and exports these products, with an even greater presence of imperialist companies but also of the "national" state: Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Argentina, Turkey, South Africa, Taiwan and Singapore. In a number of these countries the proletariat is already the majority of the working population and the bourgeoisie is qualitatively stronger than in the poorest countries.

Others have developed large capital reserves: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Persian Gulf emirates. Finally, some have an initial industrial base: Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Colombia, Venezuela, Iran.

In all these countries, the state plays an essential role in mobilising capital (through the banks and various financial institutions), in investments (in heavy industry, but also in other branches), and therefore, directly or indirectly, in the consolidation of a national bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie whose industrial and agricultural workforce is decisively managed by the state, is subject to the international division of labour caused by imperialist expansion but, at the same time, strives to improve its rank in this hierarchical system; hence its vacillations between subordination and attempts to loosen the grip. However, the crisis has considerably narrowed the margin of manoeuvre of these bourgeoisies.

These countries are entering the crisis from a specific situation determined by a number of factors:

- a) The end of the opportunities for sustained growth through broadening the domestic market, through a resumption and significant increase of imports, or through new autonomous industrialisation drives. This economic dead-end has considerably altered the social and political atmosphere, as compared to the previous period. As a result, these bourgeoisies are looking for closer alliances with multinational firms and banks, either to try and change the position of a given export-oriented industrial sector through technological input, or to partly substitute direct imperialist investment for the assumption of new debts that have now reached the limit of what is tolerable, or, finally, to mobilise capital.
- b) Semi-industrialisation has considerably strengthened the social weight and even the political role of the industrial proletariat. The crisis and austerity policies make the super-exploitation even more severe (with direct attacks on wages, brutal speedups, a lengthening of the workday) at the same time as they elicit resistance movements from the workers.

Accelerated capitalist penetration into the countryside has led to the proletarianisation of a new layer of the peasantry and to the subjection of a growing number of small individual landowners, farmers, and sharecroppers to the needs of capitalist agriculture. This has caused a deep mutation of work relations in the countryside and a renewed explosiveness of the agrarian question. In turn, this agrarian crisis feeds a mass exodus towards the large urban centres, especially towards the giant slums that surround

them. These peasants, impoverished or driven off, constitute a reserve pool of labour that capital can draw on, as it pleases, for the construction industry or the vast network of semi-industrial subcontracting outfits, just as the large landowners can, at harvest time. The "marginalisation" of these pauperised masses corresponds to the needs of capitalist accumulation. Super-exploitation takes the most violent forms: the growth of child labour; the maximum lengthening of the working week; the most extreme casualisation of employment; the lack of any form of contract and of the most elementary social benefits; severe accidents.

- c) The fact that, over and above the unresolved tasks of the national-democratic revolution (the land question, independence from imperialism, the elimination of dictatorships, the conquest of fundamental democratic rights, the separation of church and state, the conquest of elementary democratic rights for women ...), the social demands of the wage earning and pauperised urban masses are now posed.

In these semi-industrialised countries, the consequences of the government's capitulation to the plans of the IMF are terrifying. Wages collapse under the impact of inflation, the freezes imposed by the state and the pressure of the industrial reserve army. The employment situation is decaying rapidly. Public expenditure, especially social expenditures, are contracting. A drop in investment ensues under the double blow of reduced real demand and the restriction of expenditures for public infrastructure.

This has called into question the very model of development these bourgeoisies implemented with the blessing of imperialism. It is most unlikely, unless the international capitalist system collapsed, that a new wave of import-substitution could emerge, this time in the field of equipment goods.

Of course, we cannot totally exclude that the ruling classes might demagogically play their nationalist card, or that factions might appear in their midst and momentarily try to arouse some popular support for a nationalist campaign against the effects of imperialist aggression. But such attempts to legitimate their rule by resorting to populist nationalism cannot succeed because of the extent of the bourgeoisie's dependence and because of the exploited masses' advances in organisation and consciousness. The example of the nationalisation of the banks by the Mexican government in 1982 is an indication of this: its political impact was quite narrow and short-lived since the government immediately rushed to make concessions to international capital.

By contrast, in a number of countries where society is less differentiated, where the pauperisation of the urban and rural masses is increasing but their social weight and organisation remain limited, nationalist and populist forces can come to the fore. They will draw their strength from the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie and plebeian masses. This can be the pattern in some African and Asian countries (Iran, Ghana, Upper Volta (Burkina)).

17) In a growing number of dominated countries, increased urbanisation and the uneven strengthening of the proletariat has caused *the emergence of trade union organisations* (sometimes confined to a single sector) or the rapid "massification" of existing unions, and sometimes a more or less explicit breakaway of some trade union sectors from the control the state apparatus or its client parties exercised over them (Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia ...).

Even in the least developed countries of Africa and Asia, urbanisation has considerably modified the conditions in which the working class forms. An increasing proportion of the male and female workers, even when their job is temporary, now come from an urban milieu and have had some schooling. The expansion of the state industrial sector often provided a launching pad for the first stage of organisation of a wage-earning layer, even though the state's role as the employer enabled various state institutions to establish their grip over the trade unions.

Thus, in dominated capitalist countries as a whole, the tendency is for trade unions to be strengthened, extended or rebuilt. This is a starting point for the fight for the achievement of class independence.

In attempting to annihilate these forms of unionisation, the

employers can resort to the massive "underworld" of the proletariat, the host of workers without contracts, of casual workers (cf. the bosses' answer to the 1982-1983 Bombay textile strike), or even to the harshest repression of trade union militants through official or unofficial channels.

Coming on the heels of a period in which the real wages of large layers of the population of the dominated countries most often stagnated or regressed, the harsh austerity moves are being desperately resisted by the workers. A series of key demands were brought out by the struggles of the Indian textile workers, the Brazilian and Mexican metalworkers, and the Bolivian miners: the demand for a unified minimum wage, a wage increase to catch up with inflation, stable employment, rehiring of fired trade union activists, and even workers control over production and management in the case of the Bolivian mines. Once they pass a certain threshold, these struggles raise the problem of how they should be generalised (civic work stoppage or general strike) and what overall political perspective they should be linked to.

18) *The agrarian crisis* has generated an explosion of peasant mobilisations and struggles, often in the form of land seizures, of the defence of reclaimed lands against a threatened takeover by large landowners, of struggles over the price at which crops will be sold (to multinational firms as well as to the state) or over the requirements to obtain credit . . . Along with this, a process of unionisation of the pauperised peasant masses has emerged (in Brazil, in Mexico, in Bolivia, in Peru, in the Philippines . . .). This process puts demands on the agenda that deal with the contracts issued by agribusiness firms and large landowners who determine access to land, to natural resources (water), and the working conditions and health and food standards on plantations.

These mobilisations are one of the main sources of strength of the *armed struggle movements*, as for example in the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, on which industrial and commercial crops take 50 per cent of the land. The peasant struggles often combine with national demands (language, traditional forms of co-operation), as seen in the Philippines, Guatemala or Bolivia.

The various and many links that exist between the slum-dwelling masses, the pauperised peasants and the proletariat provide fertile ground for the convergence of their struggles. While this junction is not automatic, it is made feasible by the growing closeness of their concrete material interests, provided the combative sectors of the workers and union movement make a conscious effort to put forward overall responses to the needs of these masses that are the motor force of the socialist revolution.

19) There is a crying contradiction between the gigantic dimension of the social and economic crisis, the aggressiveness of imperialism, the extent to which the most deprived societies have decomposed, and the lack of revolutionary leadership on an international scale. Out of it flow the tragedies and convulsions of the dominated countries, such as the expulsion of millions of African workers from Nigeria, or the massacre of refugees from Bangladesh and Nepal in Assam (India).

In this epoch of the putrefaction of imperialism, partial victories won by national liberation movements (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau for example) or the advance of the mass movement (Brazil, Bolivia) can be rapidly undermined. The combined forces of imperialism and the exploiting bourgeoisies will not stop hurling new attacks against the masses, to throw them back. Their task will be so much the easier where the recognised leaderships of the workers and popular movement have helped to create the illusion that the revolution must pause at a bourgeois democratic stage, or that it should be content, when precarious democratic "openings" occur, to use the new opportunities without consciously preparing the unavoidable showdowns.

The March 1983 Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in New Delhi showed that the bourgeoisies of dominated countries have decided to concentrate their complaints around the question of their increasing debt, and consign to oblivion a series of demands that they had raised in the 1970s along with their call for a new economic order and increased participation in the sharing of surplus value. This backslide bears witness to the change in the

relationship of forces brought about by the crisis and the imperialist counter-offensive.

While social explosiveness is high, while the crisis of bourgeois rule and political instability are obvious, while mass mobilisations follow in close succession, the advance of the colonial revolution is by no means following a straight line. Its course is uneven and halting.

20) India represents a case apart. The Indian bourgeoisie, among the bourgeoisies of the dependent semi-industrialised countries, is the most independent in relation to imperialism. After independence it succeeded in imposing a marked isolation of its domestic market from the world market in order to integrate the latter more effectively later. This has made it possible in particular to maintain an annual growth rate of 4.5 per cent since 1980 while at the same time the main imperialist countries, then the dependent semi-industrialised countries, were successively hit by recession.

At the present time the role of foreign capital and exports is increasing. But the growth of Indian capitalism continues to be mainly oriented to the domestic market. It is held back by: the persistence of mass poverty and growing unemployment that economic development has not overcome; bottlenecks in the infrastructure; and the imbalance between agriculture and industry.

This relative dynamism of Indian capitalism contrasts sharply with an *endemic crisis of political instability*. The Congress party, which traditionally has had the role of the bourgeoisie's political leadership, saw its hegemony eroded from the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. There are growing tensions inside the ruling class bloc (specifically between the industrial bourgeoisie and the rich peasants) and between the industrial and rural proletariat on one side and the exploiters on the other. These tensions result in temporary compromises which give less and less satisfaction to the forces involved and are more than ever shortlived. The very big victory of the Congress party in the December 1984 elections under the new leadership of Rajiv Gandhi did not overcome this instability and endemic crisis of bourgeois political leadership. The increasing recourse to Hindu nationalism as the dominant ideology can only deepen the political crisis in a multi-national and multi-linguistic country.

In the *Indian sub-continent* the workers movement has undergone more than a decade of continuous weakening — marked in particular by: serious defeats of the Indian working class (failure of the public sector strike in Bangalore in the 1970s and the long strike of the textile workers in 1983-84); the establishment of the military dictatorship in Pakistan, and the collapse of the mass influence of the traditional parties of the working class in Sri Lanka, where the bourgeoisie has succeeded in imposing on the masses a choice between two bourgeois forms of rule. This deterioration is basically due to the constant class collaborationist policy of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement and other oppressed layers. It has facilitated ethnic/religious divisions (communalism) which is manipulated to great effect by the bourgeois state in India and Sri Lanka, which in turn accentuates the weakening of the workers movement.

But there are signs that indicate that this tendency could be reversed in a not too distant future. It is necessary to look at the sub-continent as a whole and not as a simple addition of national tendencies in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. National-communist tensions have plunged Pakistan and Sri Lanka into a sharp crisis. Fundamentally these are crises which are shaking up the whole subcontinent. It is the Indian bourgeoisie who in the last analysis must take responsibility for ensuring a relative stability of bourgeois order in the subcontinent as a whole, within the framework of a long-term plan for establishing its hegemony over the whole region.

21) In several Islamic countries, nationalist experiences, first the Nasserist, then the Ba'athist, came up against intractable problems as a result of the social consequences of their economic policies (only briefly concealed by the oil boom), of the corruption which spread like gangrene among the new ruling layers, of the increasing breadth of the process of private capital accumula-

tion (of which the Egyptian Infitah is the most advanced expression), and of their growing adaptation to the requirements of imperialism.

Repression and a lasting drop in oil revenues have exacerbated these social contradictions. The cowardice these regimes displayed in their support for the Palestinian liberation movement dealt a harsh blow to their prestige in the eyes of broad layers of the masses. This created a fertile breeding ground for the Islamic fundamentalist current. The petty and narrow-minded outlook of the organisations identified with socialism and the workers movement, their acceptance of the role of auxiliaries of the ruling regimes, along with the discredit of the ruling bureaucracies helped that current to spread.

In the name of Islam, fundamentalism opposes both imperialist oppression and its domestic representatives. This enables it to gain a hearing among the popular layers whose pressure in turn imparts a populist hue to the fundamentalist current. Nevertheless, the determining social base of Islamic fundamentalism remains located in the traditional layers of the small and medium bourgeoisie who have run into problems as a result of the development of capitalism under the aegis of nationalist regimes or of dictatorships such as that of the Shah of Iran. These are the sectors that have found a vehicle for their aspirations in fundamentalism.

Fundamentalist ideology is profoundly reactionary. It goes against the great bulk of the tasks and demands of the national democratic revolution. It violently opposes any independent organisation of the masses, especially of the working class.

22) In the *Middle East*, American imperialism and Zionism have scored some points. The Arab bourgeoisie made not a move while Lebanon was invaded and the Palestinians massacred. In fact, a convergence of interests had come about between the aims of the Zionist regime and the Arab bourgeoisies' desire to eliminate the potentially revolutionary hotbed of instability in Lebanon. This convergence arose out of the social, economic and political changes of the countries of that region. These changes are reflected in the continuation of the turn taken in Egypt after Nasser, in the Saudi monarchy's role as a pilot-fish for imperialism, and in the fierce attempts of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes to consolidate the class privileges which have come under attack from all quarters (national minorities, fundamentalist currents, popular masses).

The main purpose of the Soviet presence in Syria is to allow the Soviets to participate in the diplomatic settlement that might be applied to this key region for the international relationship of forces.

23) In *Iran*, the bourgeois nationalist leadership constituted by a sector of the Shi'ite clergy led by Khomeini, behind which are grouped important layers of the traditional Iranian bourgeoisie (Bazaar) and elements of the state bureaucracy, represent the main pillar for the maintenance of bourgeois order in the country since the fall of the Pahlavi regime.

This leadership has been an essential element for channelling, holding back, atomising and then repressing the mass movement of workers, poor peasants and oppressed nationalities.

The tragic evolution of the Iranian revolution and the course followed by the Khomeini leadership which was able to place itself at the head of the mass movement against the Shah dramatically verifies once again the fundamental tenets of the theory of permanent revolution. The Khomeini leadership was able to base itself on various objective factors to carry out its counter-revolutionary actions effectively and to stabilise the institutions of the Islamic Republic:

- a) The existence of a not inconsiderable economic margin for manoeuvre — a product of the oil revenue and the maintenance of its links with a series of imperialist powers (Japan, West Germany, Great Britain).
- b) Structural factors like the relative weakness of industrialisation under the Shah, and the significant numerical imbalance which resulted from that, between on the one hand a "young" working class without a tradition of organisation and struggle employed in assembly plants, and on the other hand the numerous plebeian masses, often unemployed and at the mercy of state and clergy-run subsidies, who are a product of the

rural exodus and who can be directly influenced by the Khomeini faction's mixture of anti-imperialist demagoguery and messianic Islamic phraseology.

- c) The material and person-power of the formidable military-police machine and of the new big state bureaucracy inherited from the Shah — where the purges were limited to a few leaders.
- d) The very structuring of the Shi'ite religious caste with its centuries-old tradition of political struggle, its organisational and financial autonomy, its relative ideological coherence anchored in a backward-looking and reactionary world-view and in its militant anti-communism; its patronage networks which have gone through a qualitative development due to its role in the leadership of the mass movement fostered by its management of state funds.

But the decisive factor permitting the stabilisation of the regime is political. It was the inability of the Iranian left organisations to present an overall revolutionary alternative to the projects of the Khomeini leadership.

This incapacity flowed on the one hand from the discredit affecting the Tudeh party and the Soviet/Chinese bureaucracies due to the latter's support for the Shah up to the eve of his overthrow by the mass insurrection. It also results from the often acritical support given by various organisations of the workers movement to a regime defined as anti-imperialist. At the same time they were sectarian in practice and refused to form independent and unitary organisations of the working class (shoras, trade unions). They refused to consistently defend all democratic rights. All this made the emergence of an overall revolutionary alternative impossible.

The various mass mobilisations which brought together the exploited and oppressed millions in the riots, the general strike, then the insurrection against the Shah's dictatorship, later during the occupation of the American embassy and even at the beginning of the Iraq-Iran war, did not therefore result, due to the absence of the subjective factor, in a qualitative deepening of the Iranian revolution, placing on the agenda the overthrow of the bourgeois state and private property. As the total control of the Khomeini faction grew over these mobilisations they were increasingly manipulated and divided — one sector of the masses being played off against another.

The Iran-Iraq war, where the Bagdad regime (backed by the region's reactionary Arab regimes) was directly responsible for the aggression, made it possible for Khomeini to reach a new stage in his institutional stabilisation and in the takeover and repression of the mass movement.

The present continuation of a war whose objective — openly stated by the Khomeini faction — is the overthrow of the Bagdad government and its replacement by an "Islamic Republic" based on the most reactionary elements of the Iraqi clergy, is not in the interests of the workers, poor peasants and oppressed nationalities of these two countries.

It objectively favours imperialist manoeuvres in the region and the Khomeini leadership's only motives are to keep any mass movement totally gagged, to justify all its bloody attacks on basic democratic rights and to block working class action, to maintain and consolidate a gigantic military police apparatus and to thereby try to put off the day when the explosive political and social problems come home to roost.

This is why revolutionary Marxists in the region are for an immediate end to the fighting. In the imperialist countries (especially in the USA and France), revolutionaries denounce the policy of their governments which are attempting to reorganise their domination in the Middle East.

In the present period Iranian revolutionaries are struggling for a revival of the Iranian revolution both against imperialist manoeuvres and against the Khomeini regime. They reject any separation between these two struggles, any subordination of the second to the first, any limits placed on defending all the interests of the exploited and oppressed masses in Iran.

Imperialist threats have not changed the laws of the class struggle in Iran. Any effective struggle against imperialism, for breaking Iran's relations of dependency, necessarily leads to exacerbating class contradictions. This struggle can only be effective if it is based on the satisfaction of the needs of workers, poor peasants, oppressed nationalities and on the extension of all their

rights.

The very course of the Iranian revolution has shown how the demands of the national democratic revolution (land reform, national independence, democratic rights, self-determination for the oppressed nationalities) cannot all be met by the Islamic Republican regime.

Only progress towards the socialist revolution, only a deepening of the process of permanent revolution can bring about the realisation and consolidation of these demands. Once that reality is grasped revolutionary Marxists can indicate the way forward for the Iranian masses to overthrow the Khomeini regime.

24) In *East Asia*, the contradictory aspects of the World International situation appear sharply. Imperialism experienced one of its worst defeats there, in 1975. The Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indochinese conflicts had their greatest impact there, notably in 1978-1979. The social and economic upheavals transforming the region are deep-going and brutal and caused the emergence of poles of industrialisation (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan) as well as the rapid expansion of agri-business, generating a new agrarian crisis (Thailand, Philippines).

The old neo-colonial order was undermined by the defeat of American imperialism in Indochina. A variety of factors — Chinese diplomacy, the tragic degeneration of the Cambodian revolution under the leadership of Pol Pot, the outbreak of the military conflict between Vietnam and China after the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia — enabled imperialism to regain the political initiative.

At the present time, the Indochinese revolutions are being subjected to very harsh external pressures. The objective conditions in which they must move towards consolidation are extremely difficult. Their leadership's orientation has proved little suited to the solution of a series of major problems and, as a result, has contributed to make the social and economic contradictions worse. The Thai revolutionary forces that experienced a genuine growth between 1973 and 1977, are now going through a period of deep crisis; the Communist Party (TCP) will not easily recover from the failure of its traditional leadership.

In South Korea the weight of the bureaucratic policies of Moscow, Peking and Pyong-Yang, and the presence of American troops bolstering the ferocious dictatorship, bear down heavily on social struggles. Nevertheless, the imperialist counter-offensive has encountered several obstacles. The uprising of the city of Kwangju in South Korea shows how severe the social and political contradictions generated by this development model can become.

In Thailand, the TCP's failure and the regime's success in fighting the communist guerrillas neither mean that the masses have been crushed nor that a historical defeat of the mass movement comparable to Indonesia in 1965-1966 has occurred.

The Thai revolutionary left is scattered and must now face a very grave situation. However, it is undergoing a slow process of recomposition that could enable it to regain the initiative in the future.

Since the second half of the 1970s social and democratic struggles have become steadily more extensive in the Philippines. The communist movement and the guerrilla forces have made highly significant advances. The Marcos regime has not been able to find a lasting solution to the national resistance of the Moro people. Since the assassination of B. Aquino, the crisis of the Marcos regime has slowly worsened. The mass struggles have taken on a new scope. The revolutionary forces (above all those of the PCP, the CNPA and the NDF) have shown themselves capable of taking new initiatives. This country, whose strategic importance is emphasized by the presence of the gigantic American military bases, is going through a deep political and social crisis. It has been the arena of high level class struggles which shows the revolution is on the agenda in the region.

25) The crisis of bourgeois rule in *Latin America* has increased rapidly in recent years under the impact of the international capitalist crisis and the generalisation of class confrontation in Central America. The triumph of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua opened up a new situation on the continent. Due to this the revolutionary process has developed onto a regional scale — both through the progress of the FMLN in El Salvador and to a lesser extent of the URNG in Guatemala and through the im-

perialist counter-offensive which has brought Central American countries into its counter-revolutionary plans.

The crisis is unfolding in the context of substantial changes in the economies and societies of the various Latin American countries. Industrialisation, the occasionally explosive urbanisation in certain capitals and the reduction in the importance of the rural economies are changes which the process of reconstruction of the world economy has strengthened.

The insertion of some of these countries, especially the most industrialised, like Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, in a new international division of labour has changed their social composition and the forms of imperialist domination. They have become more affected by, and more vulnerable to, the capitalist crisis of the metropolitan centres.

In Brazil, Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina the military dictatorships have caused real economic and social disasters which have speeded up their own political crisis. In various ways, according to their traditions and their specificities, the crisis of bourgeois domination in different countries has developed along with a prolonged economic crisis.

The recomposition of the workers movement and the mass movement is also at the heart of the crisis the bourgeois political regimes are going through in Latin America. The mass movement is confronted with austerity policies implemented by the governments and the bourgeoisies which "manage" the crisis under the auspices of the IMF. Latin American workers' movements and even significant forms of coordination and unity have been stimulated, in varying ways and degrees, by the construction and reorganisation of trade unions, socio-economic struggle and the development of mass democratic sentiment and struggles for trade union democracy. The existence of the CUT and the CONCLAT in Brazil, the PIT in Uruguay, the reunification of the CGT in Argentina, the revitalisation of the CGTP in Peru, the process of trade union reunification in Colombia, etc, expresses this tendency towards trade union unity and reorganisation.

The interaction of the economic crisis and the crisis of bourgeois rule has made possible a convergence of socio-economic demands and struggles with democratic ones which politicise and radicalise the workers movement. Workers do not just defend their living and working conditions but they must struggle for democratic rights in order to do so. The living experience of these dictatorships or authoritarian bourgeois regimes, which drastically restricted these rights for decades, leads them to reject authoritarian and bureaucratic methods inside their own organisations. This obliges them also to struggle for democracy in their trade unions and in all their social organisations.

Transformations of the Latin American economies have led to an explosive growth in certain towns which has produced significant semi-proletarian layers who organise and mobilise for their own demands. Their own radicalisation and politicisation have made them into a fundamental sector, whose struggles concretely converge with those of the working class. Significant struggles have developed in Peru, Uruguay and Mexico, in the "new towns", "misery belts" or lower class areas. Even in Managua these layers played an important role at the time of the insurrection. Their demands and these struggles are interconnected with those of the workers movement.

In the same way in a whole series of Latin American countries for some years now there has been a process of unitary reorganisation and coordination of the peasants which is linked in different ways to the workers movement. The participation of the CSUTCB inside the COB in Bolivia, the CCP-organised peasants in the Peruvian trade unions, CONTAC inside the Brazilian CUT, the MCI in the Dominican Republic, the CNOC in Ecuador, the CNPA in Mexico are important examples of the process of recomposition and reorganisation of the workers and mass movements in the various countries. It reflects to varying degrees the deepgoing character of the tendencies for unity among working people.

This process has even taken on clearly political forms. This is particularly the case with the PT in Brazil, the Izquierda Unida (United Left) in Peru, the DRU (United Revolutionary Leadership) in Bolivia. The ANOCP in Mexico embryonically combines raising economic demands with demands linked to the political struggle for democratic rights. These unitary political bodies

have been strengthened by the most advanced examples of unity shown in the course of the Central American revolution by the FSLN, FMLN and URNG.

The proletarian united front and the different forms of unity and alliance between independent class currents and revolutionaries have therefore become more than ever relevant and concrete. In Mexico the PRT envisages the possibility of building a party of revolutionaries — that is a party of the different anti-capitalist revolutionary currents.

Elections have also been a central opportunity for structuring unitary independent class fronts against bourgeois parties in crisis, on the basis of independent class policies against the projects of capitalist restabilisation of the economy and the recomposition of bourgeois domination. There have been relevant experiences rich in lessons in Peru, Brazil, Uruguay and Mexico.

In this context of long term crisis, characterised by the new rise of the workers movement and the mass movement, the bourgeois regimes are trying to restructure their class rule. We are seeing an attempt to install regimes either of "controlled" bourgeois democracy (Argentina) or of semi-constitutional regimes (Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia) where the army has kept intact its force as an "alternative bourgeois party". This policy of making "openings" or preparing the political and economic rearming of the local bourgeoisies, which, because of the intensifying class contradictions and continuing inter-bourgeois frictions has resulted in unstable political situations. In cases like Peru or Bolivia, because of the very sharp combination between the capitalist crisis, the rise of the mass movement and the existence of powerful mass organisations with anti-capitalist perspectives, revolutionary situations can arise.

The objective convergence of the oppressed with proletarian organisations of different tendencies, even if it is still in many cases limited and conjunctural, marks a substantial advance in the organisation of an independent class response to the plans of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Democracy is today a deeply held sentiment among the masses of the great majority of Latin American countries and the bourgeois regimes and its policies cannot satisfy this demand. This is why this struggle affects all working people and unites and powerfully strengthens the different demands.

All the transformations of Latin American societies in recent years have brought to the fore the central role of the proletariat, but have also stimulated the emergence of powerful allies: small and middle peasants or the semi-proletarian masses of the big towns, who potentially improve the relationship of forces against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. In the struggle for their overthrow, the force and originality of the revolution will perhaps develop through unpredictable combinations, as always in real class struggles, but it will undoubtedly reaffirm strongly the validity of permanent revolution.

26) In *Southern Africa* imperialism is striving with some success to recover its lost ground, to establish better conditions for its political and economic domination and for avoiding the danger of social explosions.

In *Zimbabwe*, the dynamic of the independence struggle was blocked by the Mugabe leadership. Neither the land question nor that of basic democratic rights were resolved. The masses' hopes were rapidly dashed by the transformation of former nationalist leaders into a privileged and repressive ruling social layer, which is establishing growing relations of subordination with imperialism. The "socialist" demagoguery used by the ruling party (ZANU) actually only serves to prepare the conditions for imposing a single party system.

In *Angola*, the 1974-1976 civil war considerably destroyed the economic capacities and social resources of the country. Imperialism was able to use this situation to put pressure on the MPLA. By using, and also directly helping, South Africa's and UNITA's military actions, imperialism sought to reduce the Angolan government's room for manoeuvre so as to speed up the return of this country into the Western camp and to reduce Angolan demands regarding Namibian independence.

But this policy was greatly facilitated by the MPLA's inability to mobilise the masses, to win the confidence of the peasantry and to commit themselves further in the anti-imperialist struggle.

The course followed by the MPLA, against the background of corruption and privileges, resulted in the agreement with Pretoria. Social and political conditions were worse just after the liberation struggle. It was possible to stand up to imperialism but not by throttling the mass movement during the civil war nor by cutting back on the neighbourhood people's committees and threatening repression against any independent political trade union activity. In practice the leadership apparatus consciously decided to seek a compromise with imperialism whose consequences could only be worsening forms of dependence.

A similar phenomenon occurred in *Mozambique*. The extent of the drought over several years now has made the economic problems inherited from colonialism even worse. The RNM guerrilla forces — who are totally supported by South Africa — have considerably disorganised economically and socially a part of the country, obliging the state to give over a larger part of its revenue to military spending.

But the FRELIMO leadership showed that it had not decided to find a revolutionary solution to the present difficulties. The attitude of the regime to the masses, the development of corruption inside the state apparatus and the party, the frenzied bureaucratisation, the distrust of and authoritarian attitude to the urban workers, has demonstrated that FRELIMO sought above all to consolidate its state power, to strengthen its control over the masses and to get a compromise — and not just a tactical one — with imperialism.

The Nkomati non-aggression treaty and good-neighbour policy with the South African regime cannot be interpreted as a tactical agreement. The FRELIMO leadership was fully aware of its actions when it hailed this event — in its own terms — as being in the continuity of the "revolution". This agreement was interpreted by the South African masses as a stab in the back, and the ANC, whose political and military operations partly depended on its positions in Mozambique, was requested to reduce its presence to a few persons and to cease guerrilla activity.

So the MPLA and FRELIMO were shown to be incapable of transforming liberation struggles into revolutions. These leaderships were neither politically or socially ready to resist imperialism's economic and political pressure. It follows that there has been an important modification in the overall relationship of forces in Southern Africa.

The racist South African regime is little by little breaking out of its regional isolation. From now on Mozambique is open to South African investments, aid and tourism. Pretoria is seeking to push home even further its advantage by increasing the dependence of other countries of the region on South Africa. The Nkomati agreement is now being used as a pretext by a whole series of countries like Mauritius, the Seychelles, Zambia, to establish more important economic relations with South Africa.

This recomposition in the relations between the states in Southern Africa does not mean at all that the racist regime is in the process of resolving its difficulties and contradictions. Quite the reverse. The agreements signed with Angola and Mozambique were reached at a time when there is a radicalisation of the mass movement in South Africa.

The development of the consciousness and organisation of the black masses in South Africa is of the utmost importance. There has been a considerable strengthening of the capacity of struggle of the oppressed population with the community associations (neighbourhood, sports ...) and especially with the trade unions. The question of the political leadership of this mass movement is now sharply posed within the perspective of future confrontations (see the resolution on South Africa).

In *Ethiopia* the revolutionary crisis resulted in the collapse of the monarchy. It combined the classical forms of an anti-feudal revolution with certain forms of a proletarian one. Due to the absence of a revolutionary leadership the urban and peasant mass movement was gradually placed under the control of the military junta, the DERG. The latter was thus able to gut the basic forms of self-organisation of their substance and divert them into supporting its political power. Not all the social forces were ready to combine in the same way the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions. National and regional questions in Ethiopia are among the most fundamental ones, and in the first place the right of the Eritrean people to independence. The social and

political interests defended by the DERG are in contradiction to a real internationalist approach to these questions. In a way it was a case of a "jacobin"-type centralist and authoritarian line of a socially petty-bourgeois military group which finally imposed itself, preventing any real solution to the ethnic and national questions and thereby blocking the general revolutionary process.

#### IV. The crisis of the bureaucratised workers states

27) Society in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the People's Republic of China has been experiencing a *crisis of bureaucratic rule* which has been reflected for over fifteen years, especially in the USSR, by a regular slowdown of the rate of economic growth. This crisis has been enhanced by the crisis of the imperialist system, but it is not a mere extension of the latter. It has its own specific causes and roots in the contradictions inherent in bureaucratic management of a planned economy.

Its main cause lies in the ever more acute contradiction between collective ownership of the fundamental means of production on the one hand, and the management of these means of production by the parasitic bureaucracy on the other. Under bureaucratic dictatorship, state ownership of the means of production does not lead to their gradual socialisation. Bureaucratic planning cannot lead to the development of productive relations based on the progressive co-operation and association of the producers. To achieve such relations, producers must determine by themselves, and democratically control, the priorities in the use of productive forces; they must have the ability to choose among a variety of economic and political solutions, in the framework of an authentic pluralistic socialist democracy, that is, to exercise power themselves.

The overthrow of capitalism had resolved the contradiction between the increasingly social character of production and the private character of appropriation. It made possible a substantial, and even, for a time, impetuous development of the productive forces. But now the increasing socialisation of production is not matched by that of appropriation: from a relative brake on the development of the forces of production, bureaucratic management is tending to be transformed into an absolute brake. The positive economic effects of the overthrow of capitalism are weakened by the bureaucratic regime. The transition to socialism is blocked.

28) On the one hand, the collective ownership of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and central economic planning, since it is not based on genuine relations between associated producers, leads to a functioning of the economy through administrative and juridical relations and through bureaucratic plans that retain full powers to set the level of prices and wages and the physical volumes of production. Since bureaucrats have no material interests for keeping the system going other than increasing and stabilising their material privileges and their status which guarantees them, this system does not result in any overall economic rationality. It gets ever deeper stuck in the dead end of bureaucratic centralisation: a great deal of wastage, breaks in the continuity of the productive process, weak labour productivity, growing imbalance between different sectors of the economy, etc.

However, on the other hand, workers gain access to the consumption fund mainly through their wages, and the relations between firms are still formally of a market-type. Even if their impact on the economy as a whole is limited these formally market-type relations are not inserted in new relations of associated producers. In the absence of the latter type of production relations the bureaucracy can also use the survival of market relations to reinforce its domination over the working class. It thus borrows from capitalism its methods of work organisation such as piece work, the production line, etc.

But in a post-capitalist society where there exists neither a genuine "labour market" nor an industrial reserve army, these practices are not sufficient to guarantee a continuous and regular process of production in the nationalised firms. This is why the

bureaucracy is obliged to limit the use of these market mechanisms. Consequently the system neither has the "rationality" of generalised market production nor the rationality of socialist planning.

*Bureaucratic management of the economy is an obstacle to the reconversion of industry, and even more of agriculture, from an extensive-type development pattern to an intensive-type development pattern.* To achieve such a reconversion, a new, rational and conscious organisation of work, calculations of the real compared productivity, as well as the actual completion of development projects on time, are indispensable.

Now, *this reconversion is becoming ever more necessary and urgent*, on the one hand because the natural reserves which had been lavishly expended are getting closer to exhaustion, and on the other because of the growing contradiction between the overall shortage of labour (in the USSR, in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia) and the substantial "surplus" of labour in individual firms. It is also imperative because of the demands of the consumers (not just the labouring masses, but also broad layers of the bureaucracy) and the pressure which technological and labour productivity advances in the most developed capitalist countries bring to bear on the economy of the bureaucratised workers states.

The transition to an intensive-type development of the economy is incompatible with bureaucratic rule and can only come about in one of two ways:

- *Either by the extension of market relations* that would free the bureaucrats at firm-level from the constraints imposed by bureaucratic planning and re-establish a labour market, a market of the means of production, and a capital market.

The Yugoslav experience, which went furthest along this path, showed that this alternative generates strong contradictions and runs up against the survival of collective ownership and the resistance of the workers to the deterioration of their social conditions which inevitably arises in this kind of dynamic.

The solution of these contradictions would then require *a genuine social counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism*, which would merely substitute the economic and social crisis of international capitalism for the specific crisis of the bureaucratised workers states, and in addition subject these societies to a semi-colonial-type super-exploitation by large imperialist finance capital.

- Or by establishing democratic planning based on a coordinated system of self-management and the subordination of market relations which inevitably survive in the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, to such a system. To achieve this the workers must, themselves, really and democratically exercise power in the state and economic management. Socialist democracy is not some abstract or moral norm. It is necessary for a planned economy to run smoothly, because the mass of the workers constitutes the only social force with a real material interest in a generally rational and conscious reorganisation and management of the economy. Only the workers are interested both in an overall increase in the quantity and quality of the consumers goods produced, and in reducing the effort needed to produce them. These two aspirations imply the transparency of the economy, of costs, and of productivity gains.

By contrast, for the bureaucracy, its efforts to defend and consolidate its material privileges overrides the overall rationality of production and the improvement of the masses' consumption, even when its "material interests" are expressed by attempts to fulfill the plan. Furthermore its material interests are fragmented between different layers and cliques and are not unified at the level of the caste as a whole.

There is a tendency for opposition to develop between the heavy central apparatus, which is afraid of losing its influence and privileges once the bureaucracy of groups of firms gain the upper hand, and pressure groups from different sectors and the regions, which hope to increase and consolidate their privileges at the expense of the central apparatus thanks to decentralisation. Such tensions can exist and even shake up the political apparatus of the state/party. But the fundamental attachment of the bureaucracy to the monopoly of power — the only solid base

of its material privileges — means it has to react to these contradictions and to its fears of working class revolts by half-reforms and vacillations. Nevertheless it is not possible for the bureaucracy to rationalise the overall functioning of the system.

29) Participating in the arms race relaunched by imperialism makes the crisis of the bureaucratically planned economy in the USSR worse. In China, the burden of military expenditure corresponds to the twofold pressure of imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The bureaucratised workers states' dependence on the advanced technology of the imperialist countries continues, with all its consequences on the commercial and financial levels.

In the 1960s and especially the 1970s, the bureaucracy tried to overcome the obstacles to a transition to intensive-type development, through an increase in the division of labour inside the COMECON and an expansion of trade with the imperialist countries. Expanded trade rapidly got the upper hand. The bureaucracy hoped that the production increase that these imports would generate, would divert the people away from massive revolt by providing greater satisfaction to their need for quality consumer goods. It met with temporary success in Hungary, especially because of the modernisation and specialisation of agriculture that eliminated supply problems for a whole period.

But the contradictions of these projects burst out into the open in 1980 with the aggravation of the capitalist economic crisis. Its magnitude and length surprised and threw off the bureaucracy in the USSR and the Eastern European countries just as it had surprised the workers bureaucracies in the capitalist countries.

Outlets in the West for the goods produced in the bureaucratised workers states shrank. This led to a balance of payments deficit with the West and difficulties in the repayment of the debts imprudently accumulated in many of these countries during the 1970s. So they had to reduce both the imports of quality consumer goods and of production goods. The intrinsic slowdown of growth was thereby made worse.

The specific interests and chauvinism of each of the COMECON member country bureaucracies further contributed to the partial failure of the economic reorientation of the 1970s. Faced with the consequences of the capitalist economic crisis, the Soviet bureaucracy at first tried to increase the satellite countries' integration in COMECON, hoping that the lessons of Eastern Europe's grave debt situation and financial crisis would make the satellite bureaucracies more amenable. It will meet with some success although this will not prevent renewed resistance by these bureaucracies when they see the Kremlin will not keep to its promises.

30) Mass discontent is on the rise in the bureaucratised workers states, albeit unevenly, for a number of reasons: as a result of problems in the supply of quality consumer goods, sometimes (as in Poland and Rumania) aggravated by generalised scarcity phenomena; as a result of the growing expectations of the masses that were generated by the real economic, social and cultural advances of the previous decades and by the promises of the bureaucracy; as a result of the attraction of the capitalist model of consumerism which is better known today thanks to improved communications; as a result of social, or even moral, demands for greater equality, freedom and truth that are the product of the very nature of the post-capitalist societies smothered by cynicism, careerism and corruption; and as a result of the deep ideological crisis racking these societies, aggravated by the lack of upward social mobility which finds its most concentrated expression at the top of society in the ruling gerontocracy (USSR, China). It is also on the rise as a result of brutal instances of national oppression, especially in the USSR (Ukraine, Georgia, Baltic countries, nationalities of Soviet Asia, Jewish population) and in China (Tibet, Inner Mongolia) where many nationalities live under the yoke of Great Russian and Great Han chauvinism. The same observation applies, although to a different degree, to the oppression of the Hungarian minority in Bulgaria, and of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Stalinism shares with imperialism the historical responsibility of the division of the German nation into different states and of the counter-revolutionary division of the potentially most powerful pro-

letariat of Europe.

However, the obstacles before a spontaneous revolutionary outburst of the masses are enormous. They derive, first of all, from the fact that the bureaucratic regime keeps the working class and all of society in a state of forced atomisation, and prevents independent organisation and the free circulation and centralisation of information. Under these circumstances the working class can only accumulate experience and develop class solidarity very painfully and slowly.

Moreover, the weight of the repressive apparatus in the system of bureaucratic rule is increasing, even though, contrary to the Stalinist era, it now operates more through selective repression of the first opposition nuclei and of any form of workers' rebellion, than through massive terror. The case of Poland, however, demonstrates that the bureaucracy is capable of conjuncturally resolving its crises of regime by resorting to open military intervention, including, for a time, by the temporary institutionalisation of a military form of its dictatorship. But the latter does not rule out the distribution of social and cultural advantages to divide the working class — this has always been used by the bureaucracies in the workers states.

But the obstacles to the emergence of mass movements leading to the beginning of political revolution, can break down. The bureaucracy's inability to control effectively the working class in the process of production is reflected by the workers' capacity to resist passively in the workplaces. In this context, active resistance can be sparked off in a number of ways. The absence of unemployment and the fact that the state is the single employer enhances the rapid development of class solidarity and unity in the struggle. This is why a significant social explosion, even though it be local, can lead to a vast social movement.

31) In Poland, it was a series of overwhelmingly spontaneous explosions and the assimilation of these experiences that led to the formation of activist nuclei (mainly the KOR) and a broader workers vanguard which in turn helped to overcome the obstacles described above, beginning with the strikes of the summer 1980. This explains how the explosion of mass self-organisation could come about between July 1980 and December 1981. This is why ten million workers could assemble in Solidarity and wrest a series of democratic freedoms. A situation of dual power began to appear.

*It is the most profound experience of the beginning of a political revolution that Eastern Europe has experienced to this day.* Poland's acute national feelings and the historical role of the church as the embodiment of these feelings contributed to the process by maintaining an opposition centre that was partially tolerated thanks to the concessions of the bureaucracy to the Catholic hierarchy; the bureaucracy preferred concessions to the church to allowing the slightest legal or semi-legal activity of socialist, communist or workers' opposition centres.

Subsequent events confirmed the lessons drawn from the explosive struggles in East Germany in 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the beginning of the Polish revolution in 1956, the Chinese cultural revolution and the "Prague Spring" in 1968. There is no substitute for a real anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states. Any hope of a gradual and peaceful democratisation of these states through reforms, whether they be initiated at the top or come about as a result of a split in the bureaucracy and mass pressure, is illusory. The bureaucracy may concede on secondary questions; it will never bend on the key issue, namely its monopoly over the exercise of political power from which flow its material and social privileges. The political revolution is a genuine mass revolution that implies the destruction of a series of specific state apparatuses, including especially the repressive apparatus.

The feudal nobility and bourgeoisie had succeeded in safeguarding their rule while making real political concessions to their class enemies (e.g. communal autonomy under feudalism, universal suffrage in the bourgeois state). The bureaucracy's — apparently irrational — rigidity is an illustration of the fact that it is not a class, that its rule is infinitely more precarious and unstable than that of a ruling class, that it corresponds to no necessary economic function, that it is in permanent conflict with the efficiency and logic of the plan.

The Polish experience confirmed that the bureaucracy only makes concessions on the field of democratic freedoms on a temporary basis, when pressured and coerced, and without giving these concessions the slightest final juridical or constitutional formalisation. It retreats only to advance later and take back what it gave. The counter-revolutionary move of General Jaruzelski was inevitable to the very extent that the rise of political revolution had not come to fruition in the seizure of political power by the workers.

Likewise, the rise of political revolution and then of bureaucratic counter-revolution in Poland have confirmed that even the mobilisation, at first spontaneous, and then increasingly well organised, of millions of workers cannot on its own succeed in overthrowing the dictatorship if there is no conscious and determined revolutionary leadership. More generally, they have confirmed the immediate relevance of the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states, the hegemonic role of the proletariat in that revolution, and the workers spontaneous tendency to self-organisation and the institutionalisation of socialist democracy.

Proletarian hegemony in the revolutionary process, the workers' drive towards taking over the firms and running the economy themselves, constitute real guarantees against the danger that capitalist restorationist tendencies might gain the upper hand. However, in the longer term, there is no automatic guarantee that these tendencies will be defeated since they arise for both social reasons (the survival of market mechanisms, the pressure of the capitalist economy, the spontaneous tendencies of petty commodity production) and political reasons (the disastrous political and ideological consequences of decades of bureaucratic dictatorship). Only the emergence of a consistent revolutionary leadership sinking deep roots in the working class, the rebirth of the proletariat's class consciousness, and the international extension of the revolution can finally neutralise these tendencies.

The Polish proletariat suffered a real defeat on 13th December 1981. The bureaucracy was able to score some tactical victories but is far from having restabilised its dictatorship. The workers have kept some forms of organisation, albeit more limited and less effective than the legal ones they had between August 1980 and December 1981. They have preserved a substantial capacity to resist and fightback, especially where Solidarnosc was rebuilt in the workplaces and where inter-factory co-ordinations have emerged.

32) Without any doubt Yugoslavia is one of the bureaucratised workers states where the contradictions and centrifugal forces are the most explosive: the rise of the different nationalisms, the recent riots in Kosovo and the extreme disarticulation of an economy where neither the plan, nor the market, nor self-management, nor the League of Yugoslav Communists manage to impose a coherent regulation, are all elements of the most serious crisis of the system since the end of the war. New loans and rescheduling of a foreign debt of some \$20 billion have just been obtained in the context of these deficiencies. The Western bankers and the IMF prefer to deal with a single, "responsible" partner rather than a multitude of Yugoslav firms that have all separately got into debt, so paradoxically they have encouraged a strengthening of state control over foreign trade and foreign exchange.

Thus a halt is going to be made to the increasingly confederal evolution of Yugoslavia. But this comes up against powerful resistance from the richer republics such as Slovenia and Croatia. At the same time the Yugoslav authorities are counting on the accentuation of market competition to restore a greater unity to the economy. This new "liberal" turn will doubtlessly go hand in hand with purges and will meet bitter working class resistance. Up to now workers have used their self-management rights to stop redundancies (which is not to say they have used such rights to hire the hundreds of thousands of youth, peasants and women who are looking for jobs). This turn will also come into contradiction with the oft-repeated objective to reduce regional inequalities for the development of the private sector — aimed at resolving the problems of unemployment and of the non-repatriation of some \$12 billion placed in the Western banks by emigrant workers — will come into conflict with financial

measures limiting private enrichment.

Intense public debate is presently taking place in Yugoslavia on the balance-sheet of its system, centred on the question of political pluralism. Revolutionary Marxists have a responsibility to participate in such debates but also to make them as known about as possible in the other bureaucratised workers states, since the present problems of the Yugoslav system are at the same time the richest in experiences permitting us to come to terms with the conditions of a democratically centralised system of socialist self-management.

33) *Soviet society's* failure to move forward had already appeared in many fields during the last years of the Brezhnev era. In addition to the decline of the growth rates of industrial production, there was: an increasing technological lag; the failure of the economy; the sclerosis of the apparatuses; the more and more acute ideological and moral crisis in the bureaucracy itself, and especially the worsening crisis of agriculture and consequent greater difficulty in supplying the population in products derived from livestock. At a time when a public polemic with imperialism is raging as a result of the war-drive launched by Carter and Reagan, Soviet society's dependence on massive imports of American grain is not merely a source of economic weakness but also of ideological and political disarray.

While avoiding any kind of understanding of the economic might of the USSR (which remains the second industrial power in the world today) and the real advances of the standard of living of the masses over the last thirty years, and while denying the slightest credence to the fantasies about an impending "collapse" of the Soviet economy, revolutionary Marxists must emphasise *the tendency of a slowing down of development* in all realms of society in the USSR. The beginning of Andropov's era is characterised rather by a desire for reform than by the actual ability to impose it against the stubborn resistance of given factions of the apparatus. This means that, under Andropov, the bureaucracy will have far less leeway in which to play the card of a "consumers' society" (consumerism) to cushion at least some of the elements of the social crisis ripening in the country, than it did under Khrushchev or Brezhnev. This spells a worsening crisis.

34) After beating around the bush for a long time to avoid new explosive crises in its own ranks, the *Chinese bureaucracy* finally openly decided on a course of de-Maoisation which included the de facto dissolution of the rural "People's Communes", a stronger use of market mechanisms, a broader opening to the world market, and emphasis on modernisation, the abandonment of some theoretical precepts of Maoism, a break with the conception of two "superpowers" of which the USSR was the most aggressive, a return to the definition of the Eastern European bureaucratised workers states as "socialist countries", and the attempt to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the Kremlin at the level of state-to-state relations.

When the Deng Hsiao-Ping faction came to power it was confronted with the following contradictions and crises:

- A slowdown in economic development caused by bureaucratic management and a succession of errors in economic policy. The masses' living standards were low, discontent rising and passive resistance becoming generalised.
  - Frequent and violent factional struggles inside the bureaucracy caused partially by real differences over policy and leadership methods and partially by power struggles.
  - Growing scepticism at the base of the party and among the masses towards the leadership of the party and its leadership.
- This was the context in which the young generation in China became politically reactivated and, linking up with the traditions of the anti-bureaucratic struggle of the first phase of the "cultural revolution", raised the banner of the struggle "against hunger, repression, for human rights and democracy". The "dazibao" (wall posters) movement of the "Peking Spring" spread: non-official publications appeared; organisations developed across the whole country. A new stage had opened for the "Democracy movement" in China. The main current of this movement declared itself as socialist, opposed to the restoration of capitalism, demanded the implementation of socialist democracy, proposed a multi-party system and opposed the system of the single-party dictatorship.

Furthermore, after having defeated the other factions of the party, the Deng faction was obliged to recognise some of the errors committed by the Mao-led CCP under pressure from the masses' opposition to the Maoist faction.

All this, in the course of recent years, has led to accelerated economic growth and a partial raising of the masses' living standards. But at the same time the Deng faction has begun to repress the "Democracy movement". Consequently certain components of this movement shed their illusions in the Deng faction. The Deng faction feared the *Solidarnosc* example would spark off similar actions by the Chinese working class. For this reason it abolished the right to strike that is in the Constitution so as to stop strikes breaking out and any dynamic towards the formation of independent trade unions.

At the same time the "new course" of the Chinese bureaucracy has been accompanied by significant concessions to small commodity producers and the primitive accumulation of capital, which has widened social inequality. The CCP is encouraging the establishment of "special economic zones" where foreign capital can operate. It is enlarging the space for private enterprise in commerce and small industry where there is greater use of wage labour. It is favouring the strong rise in the number of rich peasants and urban private capitalists (recently the communist press celebrated the first millionaire CCP member). At the same time a growing number of poor peasants are obliged to sell their labour power to capitalist entrepreneurs to escape their miserable living conditions. The entire course inevitably produces new tensions and new conflicts, including inside the bureaucracy.

In the field of foreign policy the CCP maintains its hostility to Vietnam and continues to support the "tripartite alliance" (Pol Pot, Sihanouk, right-wing capitalist forces) in Kampuchea. Although Peking is no longer proposing an anti-USSR united front with imperialism and has abandoned the definition of the bureaucratised workers states of the USSR and Eastern Europe as having restored capitalism, that does not mark the end of the vacillations of the bureaucracy between a Peking/Washington axis and a Peking/Moscow axis, despite an improvement in relations with the USSR and the East European CPs.

## V. The imperialist war drive and the anti-war movement

35) The crisis of capitalism is accelerating capitalism's *tendency to rearm and increasing the danger of war* in the world. The new round of the arms race imperialism set in motion at the end of the 1970s corresponds to several immediate objectives:

- To set up a *mobile and effective strike force against developing national liberation struggles* and revolutions in the semi-colonial and dominated countries.
- To provide a *greater "replacement market"* that will allow for profit rates to increase (in the context of the crisis) without increasing the standard of living of the masses.
- To weigh down the Soviet economy with the particularly heavy burden of the arms race and sharpen its social contradictions so as to force the Kremlin bureaucracy to enter an overall negotiation in a more unfavourable relationship of forces and reduce its possibilities of answering requests for help from governments brought to power by national liberation struggles.
- To *re-establish American hegemony* inside the imperialist camp and block the centrifugal tendencies enhanced by the "détente" policy, by bringing its military supremacy into full play.

In the longer term, the arms race aims to prepare the reconquest of several workers states by imperialism, an objective realisable only through war. But the *immediate threat* is localised counter-revolutionary wars against liberation struggles or advances of the revolution in Central America and the Caribbean, in the Middle East and in Southern Africa where Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are in the firing line of the South African army supported by imperialism.

But the arms race is not confined to the escalation of nuclear weapons, far from it. It should be noted in particular that 10 per

cent of the US military budget are allocated to these weapons, while 25 per cent go towards interventions in so-called third world countries, and the remainder to conventional weapons, chemical weapons and research. Nevertheless, the spectre of the nuclear holocaust is not the product of some great irrational fear. It corresponds to the qualitative transformation of the means of destruction since World War II. Their murderous potential has advanced more in the last thirty years than in the period stretching from the age of the sling to World War I.

The nuclear destruction capacity which already exists at the threshold of the 1980s represents more than one million Hiroshimas and the possibility of annihilating the entire population of the planet twenty times over. The French nuclear arsenal alone — although it may appear dwarfish — represents 4,000 potential Hiroshimas. A nuclear world war would signal humanity's collapse into barbarism and perhaps the destruction of all human life on the face of the earth.

As it is, the risks of accidents and the outbreak of localised nuclear conflicts are increasing for political as well as military reasons as a result of the development of a whole gamut of sophisticated weaponry, including chemical weapons, which is beginning to bridge the gap which had existed between conventional and nuclear weapons; as a result also of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their possession by reactionary regimes like those of Israel or South Africa; and as a result of the continuing capitalist crisis and bourgeois leadership crisis in some of the main imperialist countries. This is the context in which some of the Pentagon strategists have come to seriously consider the possibility of a "limited nuclear war", at the peril of triggering the mechanisms of a generalised nuclear conflict.

Such a war would be qualitatively different from World War I and World War II. It would no longer pit armies against one another but aim to annihilate populations as shown in a sinister way by the neutron bomb and the chemical and biological weapons. Today, the very nature of the means of destruction makes the dilemma socialism or barbarism more urgent than ever.

Neither the world proletariat nor the workers states can "win" a nuclear world war. The latter would make the building of a socialist society, indeed the survival of humanity, impossible. Our opposition to such a war is therefore not all "moral" but materialist and in no way breaks with class criteria — to preserve life and the possibility of emancipating the workers of the world. So preventing nuclear world war is a central strategic objective of the proletariat.

36) The American bourgeoisie has already used the nuclear weapon twice against another imperialist power (Japan). It has threatened to use it against the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions. At least one of the reasons it has not carried through this threat is the dissuasive impact of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. This arsenal will remain necessary as long as imperialism continues to maintain, increase and perfect atomic weapons. The fear of extremely serious political consequences or of protest demonstrations would not on their own prevent imperialism from repeating Hiroshima/Nagasaki-type operations against determined centres of revolution in the "third world". But neither can the Soviet nuclear deterrent prevent the outbreak of nuclear war in the long term. The survival of humanity cannot indefinitely depend on the unstable balance of nuclear terror.

The imperialist strategists are looking for their own way out in the direction of "limited nuclear war". All forces identified with the workers movement must take a clear stand in favour of the other way out: *a total ban on nuclear weapons and the controlled destruction of all stocks of such weapons.*

This is why the workers states should take *spectacular initiatives to partially reduce their own nuclear, biological and chemical arsenals* — this would constitute a *political blow* to imperialist plans and the most vigorous encouragement for mass mobilisations against the war drive.

This would be the best means of strengthening workers in the conviction that only the socialist revolution will be able to definitively end threats of humanity's annihilation.

However the bureaucracy is unable to adopt such a policy. It locks itself into a militarist logic. In this way the struggle against

the militarism of the bureaucracy is an integral part of the programme of the political revolution.

Humanity will only be definitively freed from the threats of war by the combined overthrow of imperialism in its main citadels and the bureaucracy in the USSR.

37) While all consistent and resolute opponents of atomic weapons can and must come together in the broadest united action, the question then becomes: by what means can this disarmament be imposed?

We reject the demobilising and defeatist notion that the outbreak of nuclear war is already a fatality. We also reject the idea that world war can be prevented by permanent negotiations and a series of agreements between the "two big powers". Finally, we also reject the illusion that nuclear war can be avoided in the long run through a gradual weakening of imperialism as a result of its being defeated in a growing number of dominated countries, of the strengthening of the economic and military potential of the bureaucratised workers states, of the internal divisions of the imperialist camp and of the advances of the anti-war movement.

The war drive and the bomb are not some wart on an otherwise healthy face, nor are they the toy of delirious rulers who need only to be reasoned with. The arms race is rooted in class society. It is part and parcel of the needs of the imperialist system in crisis. Armed conflicts change their form but they do not escape the logic of the class struggle. This is why there can be no subordination of the struggle for socialism to some sacred union among the various social classes against the mysterious demon of the nuclear threat.

Only the extension and victory of the socialist revolution in the very strongholds of imperialism can disarm the warmongers and save humanity from the nuclear holocaust.

38) The imperialist states, with US imperialism coming first among them, are the principal warmongers and the main threat to peace. The new drive towards worldwide slaughter they have initiated is the third one of our century — the first unfolded during the first years of the century, the second in the 1930s. In the first two cases, the pretext of a "Soviet arms build-up" could not be used. It has been made up out of whole cloth to get the population of the imperialist centres to accept an astronomical increase of military expenditures.

In fact, the Trident, MX and Cruise programmes were conceived at the end of the sixties, long before there was any talk of the SS20s. The deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles was prepared ever since the Vietnam war ended. The strategic modernisations put into effect by Reagan were already initiated in 1972. Military expenditures had already begun to skyrocket in 1977, under Carter's administration. The refusal to ratify the SALT II agreements and Nato's two-track decision in 1979 on the deployment of the Pershings came before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, not to mention the Polish events.

The pretexts used to justify the imperialist escalation are not only given the lie by the chronology of the arms race, but also by the facts of the matter. US imperialism and its allies still retain a quantitative, qualitative and strategic superiority in both the fields of nuclear and conventional weapons. Their expenditures on armaments are far above those of the USSR and Warsaw Pact both per-capita and in absolute value. The land divisions alone of those European armies which are allied to the United States number 2,176,000 soldiers, as opposed to 2,617,000 in the land divisions of the Warsaw Pact including those of the USSR which has its other frontiers in Asia to cover. The deployed missiles are not the only installations in Europe targeting the USSR; such installations also include American bases and the system of Poseidon nuclear submarines soon to be replaced by the Tridents.

The deployment of the Pershing missiles in Europe under a direct American command introduces a new imbalance not from the point of view of their technical features, but from the point of view of their strategic function: it places the vital centres of the Soviet territory within a few minutes of the range of American weaponry.

This colossal arms build-up implies the stepped-up plunder of semi-colonial countries, harsher austerity drives against the workers of the capitalist countries themselves, attacks against

democratic rights in the imperialist countries and the denial of the sovereignty of nations.

39) Workers states, even bureaucratically degenerated or deformed ones, must be defended against any attempt to restore capitalism. We recognise the right of these states to equip themselves with the necessary armament, including nuclear weapons, to deter imperialism. But nuclear weapons are only that — arms that deter, not arms that can be used to victoriously defend the USSR in a war.

The best defence of the USSR and the other workers states against the threat of a capitalist comeback lies in the mobilisation of the proletariat and the extension of the revolution. But the fact that a parasitical bureaucratic minority has usurped power in these countries transforms the state, including the military apparatus, into an instrument of rule against the working class. The repression of any autonomous activity of the masses and the irrational management of the economy undermine the workers states' ability to defend themselves.

The victory of the anti-bureaucratic revolution would make it possible to defend and develop the remains of the conquests of October and to launch a massive mobilisation of the international proletariat against the imperialist war drive. This is why the defence of the workers states cannot be separated from the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

Therefore, stating that the bureaucratised workers states have the right to equip themselves with a deterrent nuclear armament should in no way imply support for the military choices of the Soviet bureaucracy or for placing those countries where its missiles are deployed under receivership. These choices are part of a defence policy which, like the bureaucracy itself, fulfills a dual role. On the one hand, it contributes to the defence of the workers state (as with Stalingrad, or with its military aid to North Vietnam during the war). On the other, it defends the bureaucracy's own interests either against the workers of the workers states (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland) or against the self-determination of peoples (Afghanistan). Thus, the needs of defence are inseparable from the means of coercion, from the costs of the armaments policy in terms of social welfare and democratic rights, and from the diplomatic and political utilisation of the nuclear weapon.

The fact is that this armament is in the hands of a bureaucratic caste which is totally uncontrolled, a factor which increases the chances of its being used. It serves at once as a means to intimidate the mass movement of the countries under the rule of the bureaucracy, as an instrument for negotiation and compromise with imperialism, and as a means of pressure on allied semi-colonial countries or in inter-bureaucratic conflicts (as between the USSR and China).

The ceaselessly growing burden of military expenditures in the bureaucratised workers states cannot be explained only by the pressure of imperialism; one must also take into account the reactionary nature of the bureaucracy's military policy and the irrationality of its economic management. The refusal to base the defence of the workers states on the self-defence of the masses and the general arming of the workers leads to relying on technical means rather than the mobilisation of the masses and unavoidably ends up developing an ever-larger and more advanced military power. At the same time, bureaucratic rule is inherently wasteful; the military domain, being no exception, contributes to maintaining a low standard of living for the masses.

While imperialism must bear the overwhelming responsibility of having renewed the arms race, the bureaucracy makes its task easier, by moving from a dissuasive policy to a military policy whose form parallels that of imperialism every more closely, by sending its troops into Afghanistan, and by its repression of the Polish workers. Thus, Andropov's threat to answer the deployment of the Pershings with the deployment of new missiles in Czechoslovakia and the GDR dealt a blow to the unilateral disarmament movements in Western Europe. This is why the struggle for the unilateral disarmament of imperialism is inseparable from the struggle for control by the masses in the workers states over the production and utilisation of these countries' military might, for the arming of the workers in the framework of a regime of socialist democracy, and for their sovereign right to

define a foreign policy based on the world wide interests of the proletariat.

Imperialist propaganda justifies its own over-arming by the so-called threat that the Soviet nuclear arsenal is supposed to represent. That is how it seeks to undermine the masses' resistance to imperialist rearmament. The bureaucracy's political approach — its involvement in the arms race in the wake of imperialism — facilitates this operation.

On the other hand, we have never considered the conditional and parsimonious Soviet military aid to the Vietnamese or Cuban revolutions as dangerous "Soviet expansionism", rather we have often denounced the inadequacy of this aid and the conditions sometimes attached to it.

40) In the imperialist countries the peace movement expresses the broad masses' reaction against the imperialist rearmament offensive. It struggles by its *actions*, independently of the ideology of its leaders or a part of them, for the unilateral disarmament of imperialism, and consequently is one of the main obstacles to imperialist war preparations. The existence of this movement demonstrates the historic inability of the reformist organisations to take in hand the anti-war struggle. At the same time it expresses an extreme mass distrust of bourgeois government, of the warmongers. The logic of mass mobilisations leads it to bring in to question the imperialist military alliance (Nato), European post-war "order", and the right of bourgeois state institutions to decide on questions of war and peace over and above the heads of the masses.

Insofar as these mobilisations oppose the build-up of imperialist arsenals, without posing any preconditions or demands for reciprocity, by actions that are independent of the diplomatic policy of any state, they play a highly progressive role. Mass pacifism, which should not be confused with pacifist ideologies, plays a positive role in capitalist Europe, in the United States and Japan insofar as it signals practical opposition to imperialism's policy, even without the understanding that the threat of war is inherent in the capitalist system itself.

We are fully committed to participate in these mobilisations, to organise and broaden them on the basis of the greatest possible unity around such slogans as *No Pershing! No Cruise! Nato bases out! Out of Nato! No neutron bomb! No to French and British nuclear weapons, integral parts of the imperialist war machine! Imperialist troops out of Central America, the Middle East, Grenada, Chad ... ! For a nuclear-free Europe from Poland to Portugal!*

By contrast, the slogan *No Pershing, No SS20*, under the guise of simplicity, actually introduces confusion if it aims to tie the rejection of the Pershing missiles to a withdrawal of the SS20s. For such a bias tends to transform the anti-war movement into a means of pressure on the negotiations. If it really wished to express a radical refusal of all nuclear weapons, it should encompass not only the Pershing and SS20s but also the American MX and the French and British warheads. Although we do not endorse this slogan, we do not make abandoning it a condition for united action by the anti-war movement.

On the other hand, the reformist leaderships seek to compensate for their "involuntary" involvement in the movement by trying to subordinate the disarmament of imperialism to that of the Soviet bureaucracy, by using bilateralist slogans, in the perspective of transforming the anti-war movement into a means of pressure on diplomatic negotiations between the two "big powers".

The mass anti-war mobilisations are rooted in a desire for survival by broad sectors of the population. They have nothing to do with any sort of "European nationalism".

Such a nationalism would be concretised in the acceptance of a defence of capitalist Europe with or without the help of nuclear weapons by bourgeois armies, integrated or otherwise, and would be profoundly reactionary. But such a political line — developed by certain reformist currents — remains very much a minority inside the mass peace movement in capitalist Europe.

Within this context, the question of the division of Germany is posed again and the theses of the last World Congress on this subject are more relevant than ever:

The division of Germany is a major factor in maintaining the

status quo. It is a brake on the most powerful proletariat in Europe. But, on the other hand, any upsurge in mass mobilisations in one part of Germany will have an impact on the other, and more generally on Europe as a whole.

We link ending the division of the German nation with the socialist unification of Germany, based on the political revolution in the German Democratic Republic and on the social revolution in the German Federal Republic. We oppose any unification that involves dismantling the economic foundations of the workers state in the German Democratic Republic.

We support the demand for withdrawal of occupation troops from the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, respectively allied troops — first of all the American forces — and those of the USSR. In fact, this double military occupation is designed to assure stabilisation of the political and social situation on both sides of the line in this key area of confrontation between the imperialist camp and the bureaucratised workers states. In the long term, it is also aimed at blocking both the socialist revolution in the German Federal Republic and the political revolution in the German Democratic Republic.

The stationing of powerful armies equipped with gigantic nuclear arsenals in both parts of Germany poses a danger of nuclear war, with the catastrophic consequences that would flow from this for the future of humanity as a whole.

By linking the struggle against imperialist militarism as closely as possible to the struggles against military aggression against dominated countries and against capitalist austerity, we give the anti-war mobilisations a class content that is not only anti-imperialist but also anti-capitalist.

We seek to give the anti-war movement its full anti-imperialist dimension by showing how the dangers inherent in imperialist militarism are already concretised at this very moment in warring expeditions against the colonial revolution. The people's liberation struggles are no more the result of some plot or "Soviet expansionism", than the Polish workers upsurge is the product of some CIA or Vatican plot. Both are expressions of social contradictions that no state apparatus can even aspire to control.

Likewise we link the struggle against militarisation to the struggle against austerity and military budgets around demands such as the rejection of military budgets, "Money for social services, not for war, down with the bomb!", for the planned reconversion of the arms industry, for the defence of soldiers' material demands and democratic rights. Thereby, we work to broaden the participation of the organised workers movement, of its parties and trade unions, in the anti-war movement.

In Europe, the strength of the movement against nuclear weapons and war is fostered by the experience of two world wars and the feeling that a new world conflagration would once again make Europe its theatre. Various ideologues and leaders can try to orient this sentiment towards some form of nationalism or alleged "armed neutrality" or "non-alignment" on behalf of a still capitalist Europe. But at the level of the mass movement, the rejection of nuclear armament and American and Soviet decisions taken behind the back of the peoples can be transformed into a new internationalist spirit that is both anti-imperialist and anti-bureaucratic and into the perspective of the *Socialist United States of Europe*.

41) We support the peace movements that are independent of the states or governments and have emerged in the GDR, Hungary or the USSR for example. We support their right to organise independently to struggle against war, as well as their resistance to the nuclear and military policy of the bureaucracy which has an objectively anti-bureaucratic dynamic.

The demand for the abolition of secret diplomacy and military secrecy about the use of resources, for making information widely available to the workers and for the right of the people to decide their own fate, represent a first step in a growing awareness of the danger of militarism.

We support the struggle against the militarisation of society, against militarist and chauvinist education, against the repression of the mass movements, against the deployment of Soviet nuclear arms in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. We have never considered the Warsaw Pact to be a self-defence between freely associated workers states. As opposed to the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of "limited sovereignty" we also stand for the *right of*

East European countries to leave the Pact while at the same time we think the appropriateness of such a separation or of a renegotiation of the Pact's condition of membership is a tactical question that the working masses of each of the countries concerned must resolve in each concrete situation.

Decades of bureaucratic dictatorship and denial of the most elementary democratic rights could foster tendencies among the East European peace movements that believe bureaucratic rule represents the main threat to world peace. In some extreme cases this position can lead them to support imperialist rearmament in the name of defending "democracy" against "totalitarianism". We make no concessions in fighting such positions, and support the demand for a radical disarmament of imperialism and the bureaucracy put forward by the most conscious sections of the independent peace movement.

42) We unconditionally support the peoples of colonial and semi-colonial countries against any imperialist aggression. When an armed conflict breaks out, we unambiguously take sides for the military victory of the dominated country and for the defeat of the imperialist power (Malvinas). This unconditional support in a confrontation does not imply in any way support for a truce or some kind of national union between the exploited masses and the ruling bourgeoisie. Only the recognition of democratic and trade union rights, the strengthening of the independent organisation of the toilers, the extension of such social measures as the agrarian reform and the confiscation of imperialist holdings, permit a full mobilisation of the masses and a strong and effective defence against imperialism.

During the British aggression against the Malvinas, revolutionary Marxists in the imperialist countries — and above all in Great Britain — correctly struggled against their imperialism's military expedition, for the unconditional withdrawal of these forces, for the recognition of Argentinian sovereignty over the Malvinas. They particularly opposed those who de facto supported the aggression by claiming it was a conflict between a "democracy" and a dictatorship.

In Argentina, while supporting the country's defence against imperialism, revolutionary Marxists had to continue to fight, shoulder to shoulder with the toiling masses, for the defence of workers' political and economic interests, for the conquest of democratic rights and for the fall of the military junta. They had to denounce the inability of the junta to carry out any sort of resolute fight against imperialism either on a military or economic level (refusal to nationalise British property), the adventurous and criminally irresponsible character of its operations and had to show how the junta's survival was a major obstacle to winning the just demands of the Argentinian nation.

The crisis racking the dominated capitalist countries is also reflected in an increase of military conflicts, among them in Africa, the Middle East (Iran-Iraq), Latin America (Peru-Ecuador). To a large extent, these conflicts are the direct product of the "Balkanisation" imposed by imperialism on entire regions of the world. They reflect imperialism's determination to maintain its yoke over the exploited and oppressed peoples.

They are a means whereby imperialism can exercise a variety of pressures that can lead to armed conflicts which it hopes to use to weaken the political forces that have escaped its control, to counter the Soviet bureaucracy's influence in a given region or, more openly, to attack an ongoing revolution. In the civil wars that arise in a particular country, such as Angola, imperialism supports the reactionary forces.

Therefore, in order to determine the tasks of revolutionaries in a military conflict, whether international in scope or localised inside one country, and in order to know how to combine the anti-imperialist tasks with the tasks of defence of the workers' class independence against their own bourgeoisie, it is necessary in every concrete case to define the reality and dynamic of the class struggle and imperialist policy.

Imperialism systematically tries to use the military conflicts between dominated countries to its advantage. It is no accident that many of the "hot spots" are located in regions that it considers economically or strategically important. But the fact remains that a series of these clashes are the product of policies decided by the bourgeoisies of these dependent capitalist coun-

tries on the basis of their own specific interests. These bourgeoisies have developed a relatively large military machine to counter the rising social explosiveness and consolidate their rule through repression, most often with the backing of imperialism. These ruling classes can be led to revive ancient territorial claims or launch nationalist campaigns in order to sidetrack the social and democratic aspirations of the masses.

In conflicts of this type, our *basic guiding principle is the struggle for the political independence of the exploited classes* and the principles of proletarian internationalism. We point to the road of a struggle of the popular masses both against imperialism and their oppressors. We can even advocate the need for a political settlement of the disputes left behind by imperialist rule.

## VI. Our tasks

43) In the long term *only the world revolution can prevent a nuclear world war*. This implies the overthrow of the imperialist bourgeoisies by the proletariat of these countries. It rules out the subordination of socialist objectives to the anti-war movement and any subordination of the socialist revolution in the capitalist countries or the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states to the anti-imperialist struggle. Seeing such a hierarchy of tasks for the world revolution would also mean an under-estimation both of the objectively revolutionary movements that will continue to emerge in the imperialist countries and the bureaucratised workers states and the threats of the outbreak of a nuclear war as long as imperialism survives in its main strongholds.

The victory of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist centres, the victory of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the USSR or in China and the progress of the permanent revolution in the main dominated countries, *today becomes a question of survival for humanity*. Only the socialisation of the means of production under workers management and widescale public control and the withering away of sovereign national states in a world socialist federation will permit the elimination once and for all of any danger of war through the simultaneous destruction of nuclear arms stocks and the definitive banning of their production, under the control of all potential producers.

Establishing a hierarchy between the three sectors of the world revolution flows from a strategy which gives priority to the confrontation between "camps" — i.e. between the imperialist states and the bureaucratised workers states (beginning with the USSR) and not to the class struggle on a world scale.

True the very existence of the USSR, independently of the policies of the bureaucracy, or even in spite of that, facilitated the consolidation of the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions against imperialism. But at each decisive stage of the rise of the world revolution (in 1935-37 in Europe, in 1943-47 and the 1960s in Latin America, the Arab countries and South Asia for example), imperialism was supported not only by the dependent bourgeoisies but also by the ruling bureaucracies and the bureaucratic apparatuses of the workers movement. The inevitable conflicts and contradictions should not lead us to minimise the importance, for the world revolution as a whole, of the rise of the political revolution in Poland and the counter-revolutionary intervention of the Soviet bureaucracy against it.

The deepening of class conflicts on an international scale highlights the dialectical unity of the three sectors of the world revolution. This unity reflects the actuality of the class struggle worldwide and cannot in any way be reduced to a confrontation between "blocs" of states, with imperialism on one side and the "socialist camp" along with progressive bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces on the other. Recent developments in Central America, Latin America, the Middle East and in Iran prove this point. The passivity of the Soviet bureaucracy, bogged down with its own economic difficulties and the policy of the Arab regimes at the time of the Zionist aggression in Lebanon illustrate this too.

In a strategic sense the emancipation of the workers means the overthrow of imperialist and capitalist forces and the ruling bureaucracies. Political and social crises are inevitable in the bureaucratised workers states. Any attempt to ignore or relativise these conflicts between the bureaucracy and the work-

ing masses of these countries will necessarily result in practice to making concessions or capitulating to the bureaucracy.

44) At the present stage, the tasks of revolutionary Marxists flow from the immediate problems facing the masses in the three sectors of the world revolution, from the masses' relations with the traditional organisations and from the emergence of new organisations with which the masses are beginning to identify.

Among the immediate tasks, *the solidarity campaigns* with revolutionary movements targeted by repression or counter-revolutionary attacks, are a priority on an international level: solidarity with the independent Polish workers' movement, solidarity with the Palestinian resistance, with the Southern African masses and with the revolutionary struggles in the Philippines.

These campaigns correspond to an urgent need. They are developing on the initiative of a variety of currents of the workers' and popular movements. It is important that they set themselves concrete and precise objectives which can impart a genuinely unitary dynamic to mobilisations.

Moreover, revolutionary Marxists must stand in the front ranks of the many initiatives on behalf of working class organisations and activists targeted for repression by reactionary regimes, as in Turkey, Argentina, Chile, and Iran. Such efforts correspond to the struggles waged inside these countries against 'disappearances', tortures, assassinations, and are a key factor in rekindling the fight against these dictatorships.

45) *In the imperialist countries*, the priority tasks revolve around the struggle against the austerity offensive and military build-up of capital. Sections of the Fourth International will seek to stimulate and unify the workers' fightback against attacks on employment, wages and social security. They will carry out mass campaigns on issues that can generate united mobilisations of wage earners and broaden their struggle against austerity. *Rejection of austerity policies in all forms* is the core of their propaganda and agitation.

It is a question of starting from the real demands of working people and of formulating slogans expression the collective needs of the broad masses:

- For the defence of living standards, for the indexing of wages on prices, for the sliding scale of wages. It is necessary to fight to the end without giving an inch and by all means of proletarian struggle to defend workers purchasing power — in opposition to the reformist leaders, who are always ready to concede on this question.
- For the defence of jobs against all redundancies and for the 35 hour working week without reduction in wages.
- For democratic rights: at a time when the reactionary "neoliberals" argue in favour of the elite, for selection, competition and profit against the "welfare state", we must commit all our forces to the battle for democratic rights.
- For the defence of immigrants: their right of residence, their right to work, their civic rights (right to vote).
- For the defence of youth rights: their right to free, public and secular education, cultural and democratic rights, their rejection of militarism and war.
- For the defence of women's rights: civic rights, equal pay, equal job opportunity, for abortion and contraception rights.
- For the defence of secular schooling and the right to free education.
- And, above all, for the defence of the right to strike and trade union freedoms without any restrictions.

The big workers' struggles of recent years in Europe have shown that trade unions are still the priority framework for the organisation of the working class. Everywhere where there has been broad mobilisations workers have tried to really use their trade union organisations. We have seen this especially in Great Britain, Italy, West Germany, Belgium and Denmark. While it is correct to note an increase in the distrust of working class leaderships expressed in a tendency for trade union membership to decline mainly in countries where workers' parties are in power and the trade union leaderships clearly appear as complicit or even the direct agents of austerity policies, at the same time it needs to be emphasised that trade unions remain the main instru-

ment of workers mobilisations, even when there is a development of self-organisation, for this does not go around the trade unions.

When such struggles do take place we see the beginning of the emergence of trade union oppositions which tend to contend with the traditional leaderships for the control of the trade unions in order to restore their real function — the intransigent defence of workers' demands.

The dividing line between the old leaderships and class struggle trade unionists is between those who are ready to fight for workers' demands and those who do not want to.

This is why intervening in the trade unions is a priority for sections of the International.

Moreover, the sections will strive to put forward an overall anti-capitalist alternative to bourgeois and reformist policies. This can be expressed in an action programme. Such a programme must help to bring together the various currents opposing the collaborationist policy of the bureaucracies and to convince ever broader layers of the need to break with the bourgeoisie, its logic of profit, its state, and its international system, and to orient towards the conquest of power by the workers. In periods of acute political crisis, it is imperative to combine such an action programme with agitation for a precise government formula which concretises in the eyes of the masses the necessary break with the bourgeoisie.

Sections will work to promote the broadest unity in action of all forces willing in practice to open breaches in the austerity policy. While such initiatives should not be subordinated to the policy of the bureaucracy, they must be part of a united front policy towards all the workers' organisations.

The defence of the most vulnerable layers of the proletariat of imperialist countries (immigrant workers, women, youth, recipients of social benefits) is part of this approach.

To defend women's rights we must initiate or support independent women's mobilisations against unemployment, for the right to abortion and against reactionary policies "in defence of the family". At the same time we fight for the workers' movement as a whole to take up the struggle for these demands. Particular attention must be paid to the triple exploitation of immigrant women.

The workers' movement must organise a response to the rise of racism and xenophobia on which the far-right and fascist forces feed. Assaults and repression against the immigrant workers lay the ground for assaults that will be extended next to revolutionary organisations, trade union activists, and the whole of the workers' movement.

In addition to the struggle against nuclear weapons and the imperialist military pacts, the campaign against the military build-up requires a sustained struggle against the bourgeois army, for democratic rights for soldiers, including the right to form trade unions. The combined struggle against austerity and the military build-up revolves around such slogans as: "Social expenditures, not military expenditures", "Schools, hospitals, not missiles", "Jobs not bombs".

46) In all capitalist countries many ecological movements or parties have been formed. Usually they have been led to distance themselves from the workers' movement due to the fact that the traditional parties have not given a valid response to the environmental question. In the dependent countries the relations between a catastrophic ecological situation, economic dependence on imperialism and the oppression of indigenous peoples appear increasingly clear. In the bureaucratised workers states opposition movements discuss the ecological dangers implicit in bureaucratic models of growth.

In fact, the ecological question implies a dynamic going beyond the system in all three sectors of the world revolution. In the imperialist countries it leads to posing the question of control over the means of production. In the dependent countries it cannot be taken up outside of a consistent struggle against the hold of imperialism and for a radical transformation of socio-economic structures. In the bureaucratised workers states it leads to challenging the bureaucracy's power.

Given the extent of the ecological crisis — as well as the depth of the economic crisis on a world scale — this fundamental tenet needs to be reasserted: workers' power is the necessary pre-

condition for guaranteeing for future generations the conservation of these natural resources without which the prosperity of human civilisation and its very survival are mortally threatened.

Consequently the Fourth International and its sections must take up the environmental question more and more systematically in their propaganda and general activity. They will strive to develop common actions with ecologist movements.

47) *In the semi-colonial and semi-industrialised countries, the combined struggle for democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-dictatorial goals plays a central role.*

The mobilisation of broad popular layers for their most elementary rights, in a context of rising poverty and crisis, profoundly undermines military dictatorships, and more generally, all ruling regimes. The link between democratic rights and the anti-imperialist struggle strengthens because of the still more blatant and aggressive intervention of imperialism in periods of crisis, through the IMF, the World Bank, the resort to the food weapon, and direct military interventions. Independently of the uncertainty of any actual repayment of the loans — it is improbable — the demand for the real annulment/repudiation of the foreign debt retains all its validity.

The anti-imperialist struggle also includes the denunciation of regional military pacts, particularly in South East Asia, the Pacific Ocean (ANZUS) and the Middle East, and of the supplementary role played by certain local armies in the framework of imperialist projects (Caribbean bourgeois armies in Grenada, Chad army etc.).

We also support the masses' struggle for a nuclear-free zone in the Indian sub-continent and ocean and in the Pacific Ocean.

The struggle for democratic and anti-imperialist demands includes the struggle for *land reform*. Wherever possible, sections will strive to draw up a concrete programme of land reform, that will take into account the great diversity of regional situations, put the emphasis on helping to mobilise and organise poor peasants and the agricultural semi-proletariat and proletariat, and seek to answer their aspirations in matters of land ownership, access to water, to fertilizers, to tools and agricultural machinery, to credit, to commercialisation networks, to social infrastructures and to jobs.

Wherever possible, we must promote the formation or help to enlarge mass *peasants unions or peasant leagues*, and encourage them to carry out effective land seizure actions. More generally, we must promote the constitution of *mass fronts* among the peasants, slum-dwellers, the women, the youth, the unemployed, when possible on a united front basis with other revolutionary or combative socialist tendencies, in order to enhance the self-activity and self-organisation of the most deprived layers, and encourage them to enter into united actions with the working class. The initiatives and leading role that revolutionary Marxists can play in these mass fronts will also represent important tools for party-building.

The particularly dramatic situation of the semi-proletarian, marginal population of the towns means the demand for *urban reform* has great importance. Such a reform should include the immediate satisfaction of the needs of the shantytown population in terms of services (running water, sewers, electricity), housing, public transport, education, health, decent commercial supply of basic necessities, etc.

As a result of the industrialisation and urbanisation of a certain number of semi-industrialised countries the specific demands of the working class become more and more intertwined with the democratic and anti-imperialist demands from the very beginning of the mass movement. This interconnection is further strengthened by the consequences of the crisis and the effects of austerity policies on living and working conditions. All this leads to the emergence of a series of demands against austerity policies and anti-working class legislation, but also to the appearance of transitional and anti-capitalist demands as is the case in Bolivia today. These demands mainly deal with the massive urban unemployment, famine and undernourishment, inflation and super-exploitation.

This overall orientation, rooted in the programme of permanent revolution, entails a systematic effort to *mobilise and independently organise the proletariat and poor peasants, to struggle for the class independence of the proletariat*, and to build the

workers and peasants alliance in which the outcasts of the cities, the popular youth, and the labouring urban petty-bourgeoisie will take their place. The struggle for class political independence can be based on all or part of the existing trade union structures. It can also emerge out of a political radicalisation of militant trade unionists and workers, as was the case when the Workers Party of Brazil was formed. It can also come about through a broad united front of organisations of the workers' movement with substantial trade union influence, as could have been the case in Peru on the basis of ARI.

Clearly then, it can arise through a variety of paths, depending on the country. Revolutionary Marxists fight for class political independence must include initiatives towards populist or nationalist currents moving in an anti-capitalist direction who can be won over to the project of building a workers' party independent of the bosses and the state. Insofar as the anti-imperialists task intermingle with the battle for class political independence, revolutionary Marxists do not exclude the possibility of agreements with sectors of the bourgeoisie who *are acting in practice*, albeit only temporarily and around a limited range of issues, against the dictatorships and imperialism. These agreements or tactical alliances must be established on the basis of precise goals and accompanied by the systematic education of the masses to the fact that these bourgeois sectors will inevitably go over, sooner or later, to the camp of the counter-revolution.

Strict maintenance of the class, political and organisational independence of the proletariat and poor peasants; unrestricted freedom of the masses to mobilise and organise to promote their own class demands; march separately, strike together: these are the rules that must guide revolutionaries in such conjunctural agreements with fractions of the bourgeoisie. They must especially promote a mass self-defence policy based on the balance sheet of past experiences, of the recurrence of waves of repression, coups and counter-revolutionary foreign interventions. The workers and peasants must be prepared to fight back, using as a point of departure their military preparation inside their own mass organisations. Revolutionary Marxists emphasise the combination of the insurrectional tasks on the agenda during a revolutionary crisis, and the general political-military tasks.

When confronted with fascist or military dictatorships which violently and systematically repress the workers' and anti-imperialist movement, specific initiatives by revolutionary organisations can be justified, within the framework of a general approach of self-defence of the toiling masses and their organisations. A precondition for this is that this organisation has the forces and implantation permitting it to avoid any adventurism or putschism.

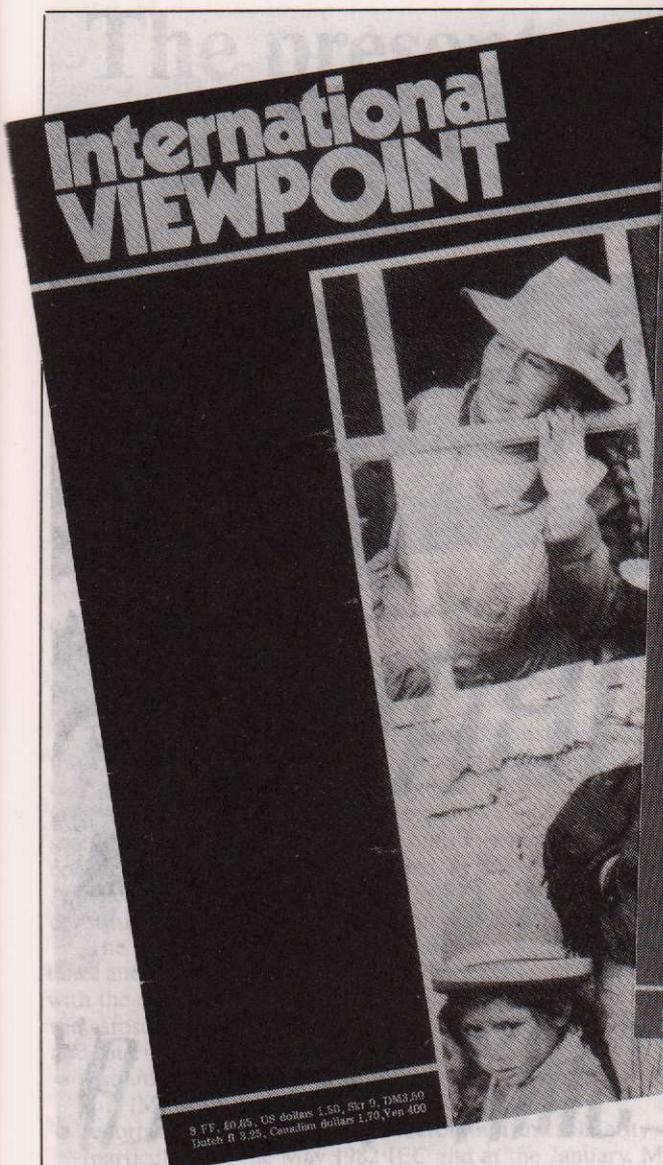
48) *In the bureaucratised workers states the revolutionary tasks revolve around the preparation of the political revolution, i.e., the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy.* This is now the best way to defend the revolutionary gains that remain in these countries and to eliminate the obstacles which prevent new advances towards socialism. These tasks can be concretised in the light of the Polish experience. They range from the struggle for the basic interests and democratic rights of the workers, in order to begin to overcome their atomisation, to the struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment (or restoration) of socialist democracy.

The anti-bureaucratic political revolution requires a revolutionary party of the vanguard capable of concentrating the energy of the mass movement on the urgent tasks, of proposing tactics that can help achieve the strategic goals, of giving impetus to the self-organisation and centralisation of the mass movement. The nucleus of such a party could only play that kind of role if it intervened in close connection with the most advanced currents of the movement, and if it respected its rhythms of maturation and real dynamic.

Revolutionary Marxists undertake the building of such a nucleus as an urgent task of the day.

This approach implies a rejection of the positions propagated by some sectors of "the dissidents" who claim the passivity of Soviet workers reflects their acceptance of the bureaucratic regime, or even a preference for the faults of bureaucratic management because this state of affairs allows them to combine





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PRT Presidential election campaign, Mexico, 1982

# The present stage of building the Fourth International

## I

SINCE THE Eleventh World Congress, the programmatic foundations and role of the Fourth International have been subjected to more and more systematic challenges in the course of internal discussions.

The stakes in this debate are high. In the first place, whereas most previous polemics and differences appeared as differences over the interpretation or implementation of a common programme, the present disagreements explicitly concern the very programmatic questions around which our movement originated. Second, this revision has been initiated by the leadership of the American Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), an organisation that constitutes one of the pillars of the International's continuity.

The majority of the United Secretariat, aware of the importance and far-reaching implications of the issues raised, proceeded with the utmost caution. The major questions were dealt with as they arose in a series of meetings of the United Secretariat (USec) and International Executive Committee (IEC):

- resolution on the Cuban revolution and the Castroist leadership (May 1981 IEC);
- reports on the Central American revolution and solidarity work (particularly at the May 1982 IEC and at the January, March and October 1983 USec meetings);
- resolutions on Poland at the January 1981 USec and May 1981 and May 1982 IECs;
- resolutions and reports on the Iranian revolution (August 1980 and January 1983 USecs);
- resolutions on the imperialist wardrive and the anti-war movement (October 1981 USec and May 1982 IEC);
- reports on the turn to industry (May 1981 and May 1982 IECs);
- finally, a discussion on the permanent revolution was initiated orally, on the basis of the articles of comrades Doug Jenness and Ernest Mandel (October 1982 USec).

Section leaderships were kept abreast and alerted of new developments in these debates. Section members were informed through the International Internal Discussion Bulletin and, in some cases, through publication of debating articles in our press.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we tried not to let the necessary discussion interfere with the life and activity of the International. We coordinated solidarity work with the Central American revolution and the Polish workers and our intervention in anti-war mobilisations in line with the means at our disposal. In addition to French *Inprecor*, we began the regular publication of a Polish *Inprecor*, of a Portuguese-language review entitled *Perspectiva Internacional* (in collaboration with the Brazilian comrades), and of *International Viewpoint* in English. We resumed publication of the review *Quatrième Internationale*. We re-established yearly European-wide educational meetings, and later workshops of the European and Latin American section leaderships (in 1983). We began to coordinate the relaunching of youth organisation building in Europe. Finally, and most importantly, we launched a permanent international school whose fourth session is due to begin in a few weeks.

While avoiding precipitating a crystallisation of the accumulating differences, we presented a first report synthesising the

programmatic and organisational issues involved in building the International at the May 1982 IEC.<sup>2</sup> But on none of these questions, which had sometimes been placed on the agenda at the request of the SWP leadership comrades (as was the case with Cuba, the anti-war movement, and the building of the International), did we receive written counter-resolutions or counter-reports which would have made it possible to clarify the substance of the debate. The only exception was the counter-report on Poland presented by comrade John Steele of the Canadian section.<sup>3</sup>

Comrades of the SWP leadership have reduced their participation in the life of the International to a minimum. As early as late 1980, they withdrew from the day-to-day functioning of the USec Bureau; since then, their attendance at USecs and IECs has become irregular. At the same time, they presented the International with more and more accomplished facts and resorted to strongarm tactics. Although they failed to introduce any alternative document into the discussion on the 1981 IEC resolution on Cuba, they began changing their position to such an extent that they said they could no longer vote for the resolution adopted by the 1979 SWP convention. They did not even try to initiate a discussion on permanent revolution in the regular bodies of the International to check the positions of different comrades and attempt to influence them, but directly took the initiative of opening a public debate by publishing the articles of comrade Doug Jenness.

Instead of using all the necessary means to carry through the internal discussion on this question which they themselves considered decisive (up to and including a world congress discussion and vote), the comrades of the SWP leadership unilaterally took the responsibility of publicly announcing their decision to revise the founding programme of the Fourth International on this point in comrade Jack Barnes's December 1982 Chicago speech and in his article in the August 1983 issue of *New Internationalist* (Vol. 1, No. 1, p.13):

Permanent revolution does not contribute today to arming either ourselves or other revolutionists to lead the working class and its allies to take power and use that power to advance the world socialist revolution. As a special or unique frame of reference it is an obstacle to reknitting our political continuity with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the first four congresses of the Communist International. It has been obstacle in our movement to an objective reading of the masters of Marxism, in particular the writings of Lenin.

We will return to the political content of this statement later. For the time being, we merely wish to point out that for a number of months the comrades had been presenting their position as simply an interpretation or updating of our founding programme.

This text was adopted in two parts:

- I. The first on the present relevance of the theory of permanent revolution and the notion of the workers and farmers government.
- II. The second on the present stage of building the Fourth International, setting out tasks and perspectives for the years to come.

1. See the review *Quatrième Internationale* No 10, *Inprecor*, 120; IIDB Vol. XVIII, No.3; *International Viewpoint* Special Supplement No. 32 1983

2. IIDB, Vol. XVIII, No. 6

3. IIDB, Vol. XX, No. 2

They waxed indignant at us for supposing this was a revision. Today, comrade Barnes writes straightforwardly:

In some ways, the shift I am proposing is one of the biggest changes in our movement since we first emerged, more than half a century ago, as a distinct political current in world politics. Since that time, permanent revolution in all its meanings has been a guiding concept of our entire world movement, including the SWP. (*NI*, Vol. 1, No.1, p.81).

Now here is a revision that at least has the merit of being up front.

Nothing could be more legitimate than the desire to confront the theory of permanent revolution to the concrete revolutionary experience of colonial and semicolonial countries over the last 40 years; nothing could be more legitimate than the desire to make it more complete, more subtle, or to correct it if necessary. Comrades have an undeniable right to question this programmatic gain if they now think it is erroneous or has been invalidated by history. But before arriving at such a far-reaching conclusion, they should have arranged to conduct the discussion with the utmost seriousness, both in the SWP and in the International, in an organised fashion, through their established leading bodies. This is not a formal objection: on a question of this importance, the experience of the sections and sympathising organisations active on all continents can shed more light than the "innovations" drawn by the SWP leadership from its own limited and partial experience. In fact, this is precisely one of the International's functions and reasons to exist.

We might have decided to make this debate public through the channels and at a pace defined by the leading bodies of the International. Instead, the publication of Jack Barnes's article in August 1983 and at the very moment when the SWP's own regularly scheduled convention was postponed for a year, constituted a sort of coup d'état inside the SWP and the International.

This method of approaching the decisive issues at stake is the root cause of the many organisational conflicts which have developed both with respect to the administrative handling of the SWP minorities opposed to the revision, and with respect to the increasing number of attacks the comrades have launched since 1981 against sections with neither prior consultation nor the acceptance of a written discussion of the issues raised: against the anti-military work of the French section, against the Mexican PRT and its solidarity work with the Salvadorean revolution, against the Australian SWP and its leadership.<sup>4</sup>

The situation has now come to the point where the debate must be settled by the world congress. Its very nature threatens to lock us into a quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, the dogmatists and the realists, the orthodox and the innovators. If we confined ourselves to defending the programmatic gains and banner of the Fourth International instead of coming to grips with the real party-building problems faced by the sections, we would confirm our adversaries' depiction of us as a fossilised sect. We would be regressing in relation to the efforts we have already undertaken with the establishment of the international school and the working meetings of the European Political Bureaus. This is why the preparation of the world congress must not be allowed to detract from this work. For the building of the International is first and foremost the building and development of its sections.

But it is equally indispensable to begin with a clarification of the programmatic discussion, a delineation of its terms and stakes, in order to define the solid ground on which we intend to move forward. Whatever the ways in which this discussion has cropped up in our ranks, it does not correspond to some oddity or diversion, but to concerns that are widely shared, although sometimes in different forms, within the workers and revolutionary movement across the world.

Before defining the stage of building of the Fourth International that we have reached, and how this stage fits in with the rebuilding of a mass revolutionary International, we must answer the vital and elementary questions that have been raised:

- 1) Should key aspects of the programme of the Fourth International be revised in light of the new events of the class struggle?
- 2) Can the turn to the Castroist current and the turn to industry constitute a line for building the International and its sec-

tions, as the US comrades have argued?

- 3) What type of International is necessary and possible to build today? How centralised should it be? What type of leadership system and functioning should it have?

## I. Should our programme be revised?

### 1) *What is at stake?*

The SWP leadership comrades claim that their revision was motivated by a desire to be open to reality, which led them to abandon the sections of our programme that have proved to be "an obstacle" to revolutionary practice.

Questioning the validity of one or another point of our programme in the light of new events is a perfectly acceptable practice. But in this precise case, the SWP comrades have directly linked their proposed revision to an organisational challenge, thereby setting a relentless logic in motion. They no longer explain the isolation of the International and its sections — which they call its "semi-sectarian existence" — mainly on the basis of objective conditions, but on the basis of a programmatic malformation acquired at birth. They allege that by introducing his own pre-1917 conception of the permanent revolution into the International's programmatic foundations, Trotsky introduced the worm of sectarianism into the apple. This fact would help to explain both the lasting isolation of the International and the mistaken course of certain sections when faced with decisive tests such as the Chinese revolution and the Nicaraguan revolution. But if this were the case, one would have to probe still further and query the very nature and reason for existence of an international organisation built from the outset on a sectarian and false line for the entire colonial revolution.

Moreover, *the revisions seldom come singly*. If at the time of the founding of the Fourth International Trotsky was ultraleft and sectarian on the question of the permanent revolution in the dominated countries, why would he not have been on other key questions too, such as that of the political revolution in the Soviet Union?

The fact is that in proposing to junk the theory of permanent revolution, the comrades are not only proposing to get rid of an artificial "trademark" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.11) or an ultimatic conception of the growing over of the democratic tasks into the socialist tasks in the course of the colonial revolution. As early as 1929, Trotsky considered that the theory of permanent revolution had *three* aspects. It had not only "established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat" (*Permanent Revolution*, p.132, Pathfinder Press). Its "second aspect" posited "the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such", which by the mid-1930s was concretised in the necessity for a political revolution to overthrow the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy in the USSR. The "third aspect" emphasised the international character of the revolution and counterposed the extension of the socialist revolution to the Stalinist theses on building socialist in one country. From the 1930s on, this international extension of the socialist revolution *includes the indissociable tasks of defending the gains of the October revolution and struggling for the overthrow of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy*.

By curtailing their heritage to the Trotsky of the first con-

4. These criticisms of the anti-militarist policy of the LCR were made by Cindy Jaquith in her greetings for the SWP at the December 1981 LCR congress. She did not discuss them previously with the leadership of the French section. The French section proposed a written discussion on this point and sent a dossier to the SWP comrades. (See IIDB Vol. XVIII, No 1) There has been no answer to that proposal. The January 1982 USec dealt with the public attacks of the SWP (US) leadership against the Mexican PRT. Finally, the October 1983 USec heard a report from cde Dunder that a report given by Larry Seigle to the August SWP plenum about the Australian SWP was a full-scale attack on the work of the Australian section. Once again there had been no previous contact or discussion with the leadership of the section.

gresses of the Communist International and renouncing his systematisation of the theory of permanent revolution, the comrades are at one and the same time sliding towards a line of "reform" of the bureaucratically deformed and degenerated workers states, a line of peaceful and gradual democratisation which would empty the necessity of political revolution of any real content.

We had already noted this point in comrade Barnes's written report on the workers and farmers government circulated at the May 1982 IEC: "This is what we think the permanent revolution is," wrote Barnes. "It is the strategic vision of the world socialist revolution that integrates the proletarian revolution in the developed capitalist countries, the anti-imperialist democratic and socialist revolution in the colonial and semicolonial countries, and the fight to defend, extend, and democratise the workers states."<sup>5</sup> In this quote, the political revolution has disappeared and been replaced by the defence and democratisation of the workers states, indistinctively. The phrase was removed from the final version of the document on the workers and farmers government published in the internal bulletin. Probably not to correct this quote on the workers states, but rather because comrade Barnes seems in the meantime to have radically moved away from the understanding of the permanent revolution which he still supported at the time.

However comrade Steele's report on Poland is a broad confirmation of the beginning of a revision on the political revolution.<sup>6</sup>

The comrades of the SWP majority, then, believe that the Fourth International suffered from excessive programmatic definition. By adopting as part of its heritage false or superfluous tenets, it fostered the chronic sectarianism of some of the organisations identified with Trotskyism. The tendency platform submitted by comrades Hoffman and Heredia takes the opposite tack.<sup>7</sup> They believe the International's problems arise mainly from a lack of definition and programmatic timidity in dealing with the characterisation of the bureaucratized workers states.

These challenges to key tenets of the programme cannot be simply the result of an accidental combination of circumstances. They reflect doubts about the perspective of building the International in the present situation. The doubts spring from questions about the revolutionary potential of the proletariat of the industrialised capitalist countries. This gives birth to a two-fold temptation.

The first is to replace the international class struggle with a struggle between camps: this approach, in the name of some pseudo-realism, reduces revolutionary strategy to support of revolutions in the colonial countries, defence of the workers states against imperialism and workerist propagandism in the imperialist countries themselves. Thus we witnessed the SWP comrades tone down their solidarity work with *Solidarnosc* in the name of the priority of the anti-imperialist struggle. We saw them adopt tail-endist positions towards the bourgeois leaderships involved in the Iranian revolution and the Malvinas war. And we heard them go over to the thesis that the entire skilled proletariat of the imperialist metropolises allegedly constitutes a labour aristocracy and is responsible for the reformist policy of its leaderships (with the exception of the less skilled and more exploited sectors, particularly the immigrant workers).

Conversely, the idea is beginning to arise in a confused way that the Fourth International cannot hope to play a significant role in countries where the industrial proletariat is not sufficiently developed. In this view, the International's role should be to concentrate more and more on defending political revolution and socialist democracy which, allegedly, can only be generated by the large proletarian armies of the imperialist countries and the most industrialised workers states. This alternate version of propagandism is sometimes rounded out in Europe with the perspective of a long march through the majority organisations of the working class which, in the last analysis, reflect the low level of consciousness of the working class itself.

Both these temptations derive in part from differences in the appreciation of the international situation which is dealt with in the draft resolution adopted by the October 1983 U.Sec.<sup>8</sup>

Under normal conditions, the world congress preparations would not require a reaffirmation of programmatic points that are part of the very foundations of the International. A discus-

sion on party-building should confine itself to defining the concrete tasks posed by events, and drawing from that analysis of the situation political and organisational guidelines for the main countries.

However, in a situation where the programmatic and historical foundations of the International have been explicitly challenged, it would be irresponsible to pretend not to notice, and continue a routine discussion that would avoid a reappraisal of the major questions at issue.

## 2) *The revolutionary heritage and historic role of the Fourth International*

The Fourth International places itself in the continuity of the Communist International and carries on the revolutionary heritage of its first congresses. From its inception, it has added the programmatic lessons of the major experiences of the class struggle, ranging from the Russian revolution to the defeat of the Spanish revolution, and including the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution, the victory of Nazism in Germany and the Moscow trials. These are the lessons that are brought out in the definitional documents of the Fourth International which are the *Eleven Points of the Left Opposition* of 1933 and the *Transitional Programme* of 1938:

- intransigent defence of class independence against all forms of class collaboration;
- recognition of the international, "and therefore permanent" character of the proletarian revolution, against the theory of the building of socialism in one country;
- characterisation of the USSR as a workers state, despite its bureaucratic degeneration, and of the need to defend it against imperialism;
- the necessity of a political revolution to overthrow the dictatorial rule of the bureaucracy;
- "rejection of the formula of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants as a regime separate from the dictatorship of the proletariat winning over the support of the peasant masses and of the oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of a peaceful growing over of the democratic dictatorship into a socialist dictatorship";<sup>9</sup>
- the importance of transitional slogans for the mobilisation of the masses towards the conquest of power, and the particular role of democratic slogans against national oppression and various sorts of dictatorships;
- the necessity for a united front policy counterposed not only to class collaboration in all its forms but also to divisive policies such as that followed by the Communist International during the "third period";
- the necessity for a democratically centralised revolutionary vanguard party and a genuine mass revolutionary International;
- respect for internal party democracy.

Nothing in these fundamental points of the Fourth International's programme can be described as superfluous or as an artificially-nurtured idiosyncrasy that doomed the FI to the fate of a sect. They include only the *major programmatic delineations* that come out of the experience of the workers movement and are *indispensable from the standpoint of the world revolution, that is from the standpoint of the defence of the historic and international interests of the proletariat.*

In his article, Jack Barnes points out that when Trotsky became convinced that a new International was necessary in 1933, he insisted that "there was no parallel necessity to lay a new theoretical foundation, to develop a new programme and strategy" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.55). This is partially true insofar as the Communist International and its first congresses laid the irreplaceable foundations for all revolutionary strategy. But it is false insofar as the Fourth International could not be content to defend the CI's programme against Stalinist

5. Quoted in the Segur report, IIDB Vol XVIII No. 6

6. IIDB, Vol. XX, No. 2

7. Tendency platform of Hoffman and others, IIDB Vol. XIX, No. 1

8. IIDB, Vol. XIX, No. 4

9. Cf. *Eleven Points of the Left Opposition*, Trotsky

reaction. It had to face a *new historical phenomenon of major significance for our epoch: the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state* and its catastrophic consequences for the entire communist movement.

From this standpoint, the incorporation of the analysis of bureaucratic degeneration and of the struggle for political revolution and socialist democracy into the revolutionary programme did not constitute a mere "enrichment". It laid the foundation for a *new current* of the international workers movement intent on remaining true to the interests of the workers of the whole world, including those living under the boot of the bureaucracy.

From the standpoint of the world proletariat, there is no possible minimum revolutionary programme. Returning to the first four congresses of the Communist International represents an important step forward for organisations and currents that are breaking with the Stalinist tradition or coming over to communism in the present context of the crisis of Stalinism. In some countries, it can open the road to a sincere revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the abolition of capitalism. But, in and of itself, it is not sufficient to lay the necessary programmatic foundations for rebuilding a genuine Communist International and beginning to resolve *the crisis of revolutionary leadership on a world scale*.

Such an International must take into account the needs and demands of the millions of proletarians in Poland, the Soviet Union and China. It must respond to the arms race and war-drive from an internationalist point of view. These are major questions that concern the proletarians of imperialist and dominated countries as well as of the bureaucratised workers states.

This is why we maintain that many intermediate positions and subtle shades of opinion can arise between the Social Democratic, Stalinist, and revolutionary Marxist currents within the international workers movement, but no new fundamental historic current from the programmatic point of view. In practice such intermediate currents are decisive for building a mass revolutionary party in this or that country, and eventually for the building of a mass International — we will return to this point; but establishing a dialogue and ultimately converging with them does not imply that we should indulge in programmatic self-mutilation.

Our attractiveness for these groups lies precisely in the fact that we are the continuators of a historical tradition that goes back to the big tests and lessons of the Russian revolution, that we really exist on an international scale and that consequently we can help orient them with respect to the various currents of the workers movement. On the other hand if we are talking about immediate strategy for the conquest of power, we have much to learn from them and find ourselves in the position of pupils. We wholeheartedly and modestly accept this role without however throwing overboard the lessons history has taught us.

Just as we cannot afford to slice any fundamental point off the programme that defines us historically, we cannot either add any superfluous particularism to it. History did not stop in 1933 or 1938. We have to learn from all the great experiences of the workers since then, from the victory of the Chinese, Yugoslav, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Central American revolutions as well as from the defeats and setbacks in Indonesia, Chile, Iran, Portugal, Czechoslovakia ... Each new major event requires that we subject our gains to the test of practice and tasks.

All these lessons have made possible a considerable enrichment of the strategic and tactical experience of the workers movement in its struggle for the conquest of political power. But to this day, no event of the magnitude of the Russian revolution or of the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state has yet to cause a general realignment of forces inside the international workers movement.

### 3) *The permanent revolution: "an obstacle"?*

One of the reasons some time went by before the current discussion became clear was that the SWP majority comrades hesitated before choosing the best approach to present and argue for their revision. They began by correcting the theory of the permanent revolution by generalising the need for an intermediate workers and farmers government stage. Eventually they decided on a frontal revision. This has enhanced the clarity of the discussion.

According to J. Barnes, Trotsky allegedly began after 1927 to

say that he had been right on some important strategic questions before 1917, "in particular on those associated with his theory of the permanent revolution." This is how he allegedly "began a process of blurring the line of revolutionary continuity growing out of the Comintern programme and strategy" (*New International, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.50*).

But this approach to the question is precisely the best way to blur what is at stake in the discussion. First of all, Trotsky did not begin to claim his pre-1917 positions were correct in 1927: he already defended the continuity of his own position in *New Course and Lessons of October*. But something new did happen in the 1920s, not in Trotsky's head, but in reality: the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution and the systematisation throughout the Communist International of a stagist line that led to a disastrous subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie in the course of the democratic revolution. Contrary to Stalinist myths, there is no doubt that Lenin and Trotsky would have stood on the same side of the barricade against such a line.

The clarifications Trotsky made in *The Permanent Revolution* in 1928 are therefore not a return to the old ultraleft demons of his youth, as suggested by Barnes, but indispensable clarifications that correspond to new practical (*the Second Chinese revolution*) and theoretical developments (*the theory of revolution by stages*) that arose after the first four congresses of the Communist International.

In this crucial debate between permanent revolution and revolution by stages, there is no reason why we should sound a retreat or look for some conciliation through an impossible third solution at the very moment when growing sectors of the revolutionary movement, especially in Central America, are more or less explicitly repudiating the Stalinist theory and its Maoist variants in the light of their own experiences.

Already on the basis of the experience of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara categorically condemned the Stalinist policy in Latin America: "Either socialist revolution or caricature of a revolution!" Comrades Barnes himself quotes the Cuban Communist Party programme in his article:

"This situation, in which the objectives of national liberation and of a democratic nature had to be implemented by the working class at the head of the State power, conditioned the *close interrelationship between the measures and tasks of the first and the second stages of our Revolution and the uninterrupted character of the transformations leading to the transition from one stage to the other in the context of a single revolutionary process.*"

He also quotes the intervention made by Jesus Montané in the name of the Cuban delegation at the 1983 International Conference on the Revolutionary Process in Latin America:

"On this continent, we are witnessing an *inseparable merger of the class and national struggles, a unique combination of the fight for democracy and for socialism, the fight for anti-imperialist liberation together with urban and rural workers' actions against capitalist exploitation.*"

These conclusions flow from a half-century of experiences on the continent and were foreshadowed by Mella, Mariategui, Farabundo Martí and confirmed by the Cuban revolution, the Chilean defeat, the imperialist intervention in the Dominican Republic, the series of coups in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, the revolutionary victory in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador. The Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties have drawn similar conclusions from their own experiences on this question.

Today even the general secretary of the Salvadoran Communist Party is forced to take these lessons into account. Indeed, Shafik Handal, who is a major source of quotes in comrade Barnes's article, wrote:

"One can't go to socialism except by the democratic anti-imperialist path, but neither can the democratic anti-imperialist revolution be consummated without going on to socialism.

"To the extent that between these two there is an essential and indissoluble connection," Handal explains, "*they are facets of one revolution and not two revolutions* ... The democratic anti-imperialist revolution will not appear to us as a separate revolution but rather as the realisation of the tasks of *the first phase of the socialist revolution.*"

We are not discussing at this time either Handal's practice or the totality of his ideas. But while he claims not to know where these

ideas came from he does admit that the Latin American Communist Parties worked for years "with the idea of two revolutions," and looked upon the Cuban experiences as a "particular exception." This allegedly is what led them to subordinate themselves to the national, or allegedly national, bourgeoisie, and renounce taking the leadership of the struggle for power.

The fact is, this was one of the key issues at stake in the fight inside the Communist International during the 1920s. The entire history of revolutions since that time, and unfortunately that of the defeats too, confirmed its conclusions. To decide now to transform the Trotsky-Stalin clash of 1927 into a controversy between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917, that is *before* the practical tests of the Russian revolution and Second Chinese revolution, amounts to nothing less than the creation of a diversion and the "blurring" of those conclusions.

This is why, contrary to comrade Barnes's assertions, there is nothing in the sixth of the Eleven Points of the Left Opposition that can be dispensed with: "Rejection of the formula of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants as a separate regime, distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat with the support of the peasant masses and oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of the peaceful growing over of the democratic dictatorship into a socialist dictatorship." What is at issue here is the irreconcilable and practical opposition between the theory of the permanent revolution and the Stalinist version of the "democratic dictatorship" as a regime separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Revolutionaries who are breaking in practice with Stalinist stagist conceptions do not spontaneously think this through in the framework of the ideas of the Permanent Revolution. More often than not they conceive it as a return to Lenin's formulation of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Workers and Peasants. Many reasons explain why the rupture with Stalinism takes this form. It helps to open up debate among revolutionaries. In fact Lenin's position was ambiguous on the transformation of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, and could lead either to a stagist dynamic or to a dynamic of permanent revolution. The differences that emerged in the Bolshevik party in 1917 illustrate these two possibilities. Our job today is not to set ourselves up as judges of the debate between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917 but rather to clarify it historically in the light of the later lessons of the Russian, Chinese, Cuban and other revolutions.

The difference between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917 can be discussed as much as one wants. This is a historical and theoretical question about which many viewpoints have already been expressed inside the Fourth International. However, the thesis of the sixth point of the Left Opposition is a dividing line between revolutionaries and reformists in the colonial revolution. It is consistent from its first to its last word since there cannot be "a peaceful growing over" of the Stalinist-style democratic dictatorship (as a regime separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat) into a socialist dictatorship; nor can the building of socialism be undertaken without a revolutionary conquest of power. On the other hand, there can and must be a growing over of the democratic and national tasks of the revolution into socialist tasks, *in the framework of a dictatorship of the proletariat.*

On this essential point the Cuban, Vietnamese and Nicaraguan revolutions, and negatively the Indonesian disaster and the bourgeois normalisation currently underway in Iran, confirm the immediate relevance of the theses of the permanent revolution: "For countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially for the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution means that the genuine and complete solution of the democratic and national liberation tasks can only be *the dictatorship of the proletariat standing at the head of the oppressed nation, above all the peasant masses.*" The truth is that just as those who stop making revolutions halfway are digging their own grave, those who in the epoch of the putrefaction of imperialism stop the revolution at its bourgeois democratic "stage" are handing the revolution over to its gravediggers. And now the course of the Nicaraguan revolution since Somoza's overthrow is also verifying this law of the growing over of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, a process which is necessary if the democratic conquests themselves are to be

consolidated.

At first, fractions of the bourgeoisie may participate in the struggle against a foreign occupation or a military dictatorship. But as soon as the struggle sinks roots through social measures that harm the interests of landowners and more generally of private property, they abandon the fight and turn against the workers and poor peasants. Sandino correctly predicted that only the workers and peasants would carry the struggle against imperialism through to the end. All the victorious revolutions of dominated countries have confirmed that the land question is at the heart of the alliance between the proletariat and peasantry.

"Not only the land question, but also the national question, assign the peasantry which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries, a primary role in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance between the proletariat and peasantry, the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved; they cannot even be posed seriously. But the alliance of these two classes will only be achieved by a relentless struggle against the influence of the liberal national bourgeoisie." This thesis of the "permanent revolution" puts the alliance of the proletariat and peasantry at the very centre of the revolutionary strategy in the dominated countries and categorically gives the lie to the Stalinist slanders concerning an alleged Trotskyist "under-estimation" of the peasantry.

Likewise it is also false that the theory of the permanent revolution advocates in ultraleft fashion the immediate socialisation of all the means of production or that it predetermines the pace for passing from the democratic tasks to the socialist tasks.

What it emphasizes is the necessity for the conquest of political power and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat which can then serve as the instrument for these later transformations, and make it possible to manoeuvre, to gain time if necessary, and even to organise temporary retreats, as was the case with the New Economic Policy in the USSR.

By contrast, any attempt to manage the bourgeois state apparatus and progressively transform it from within, will lead to a counter-revolutionary bloodbath. This is the heart of the difference between the victorious Cuban revolution and the crushing of the Chilean revolution. "Whatever the initial episodic stages of the revolution in different countries, the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and peasantry is only conceivable under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard organised as a Communist Party. This in turn means that the democratic revolution is conceivable only by means of a dictatorship of the proletariat basing itself on an alliance with the peasantry and starting by solving the tasks of the democratic revolution."

On the basis of experience, then, the theory of the permanent revolution establishes the line of march of the revolution, the necessary continuity linking the democratic revolution and socialist revolution, the leading role of the proletariat and the proletarian character of the future revolutionary regime. Contrary to the Stalinists' often repeated accusations, it does not confuse the starting point with the point of arrival. It does not exclude the existence of phases or stages in the framework of an uninterrupted process. Nor does it exclude the possibility of temporary alliances with anti-imperialist or anti-dictatorial factions of the bourgeoisie.

It is true that some groups identified with Trotskyism have often given the theory of the permanent revolution a caricatural, sectarian and ultimatic interpretation. These "pure socialists" who were mainly preoccupied with not getting their hands dirty and keeping immaculate theory at a safe distance from practice, waited for a chemically pure proletarian revolution and sometimes were not able to recognise the revolution as it was when it really appeared before them. This was what happened to the Chinese Trotskyists, or at least to one of their factions, in 1949.<sup>10</sup> This was also what happened to the Lambertist current when the Nicaraguan revolution happened in 1979. And it also happened to minority currents within our own organisation when the Vietnamese revolution happened.

Fortunately, the International as a whole has been able to avoid such a sectarian degeneration. It is a process that must be

10. See Wang's document, IIDB, Vol. XIX, No. 3

fiercely fought. It is the product of isolation, of a distorted relation between theory and practice, and of an interpretation of the colonial revolution that reduces it to the schemas of the class struggle in developed capitalist countries. Today, given the magnitude of the social and economic crisis convulsing the dominated countries, any dogmatic failure to understand the importance of national and democratic demands, of the role of the peasantry, of potential tactical alliances against the dictatorship or imperialism, would doom our sections to political impotence in the face of the real course of the class struggle.

The theory of Permanent Revolution provides us with the necessary historical framework. It does not mean we can dispense with a concrete, case by case analysis of social formations and class relations. Neither does it automatically define a correct strategy and an effective political line towards the conquest of power. Confining ourselves to the reaffirmation of sweeping historical tendencies would lock us into a vicious circle of objectivism (seeing the process of permanent revolution as a sort of natural and inevitable march of history) and sectarianism (towards organisations which have led victorious revolutions in their countries without, for all that, being revolutionary Marxists). If instead of being interested mainly in general characterisations of parties like Chinese, Vietnamese or Yugoslav CPs, we had studied more attentively their concrete politics we would have been in a better position to perceive their contradictions and assimilate those aspects of their experience that were more generally applicable. If the theory of Permanent Revolution becomes nothing more than reminders of great principles and warnings from the sidelines, then concrete politics, revolutionary strategy and their agent (the revolutionary party) tend to be dissolved in a vast objective movement of history. Neither is it sufficient to respond in a liberal and tolerant way to the political and strategic dimension of these problems, for example, with respect to alliances — without saying positively what we would have done in Nicaragua or El Salvador and what we have to do in Peru or Uruguay. Thus the debates between the three FSLN components *before* the seizure of power, or those which divide the Salvadoran revolutionary organisations today, cannot be resolved by simply referring to the theory of permanent revolution. In each case this theory must be expressed in concrete policies, and this process of concretisation involves a great deal of interpretation — including among revolutionaries.

But blaming the theses of the permanent revolution themselves and Trotsky for the sectarianism of some of his disciples would amount to doing Stalinism a belated and unexpected favour. In his struggle against Stalinist policy, Trotsky traced a general orientation and posted some warning signs. In this framework we have a lot to learn in terms of strategy in the struggle for power (how to combine mass struggles, guerrilla warfare and insurrection), in terms of peasant struggles and tactical alliances with sectors of the bourgeoisie, in terms of economic and institutional transitional measures after the conquest of political power, in terms of forming new revolutionary parties.

But to assimilate these lessons we need not “blur” and soften the main frontal line. What Lenin and Trotsky both shared before 1917 in opposition to the Mensheviks was the conviction that the liberal bourgeoisie was incapable of waging a sustained struggle against the autocracy. Trotsky never thought this forever after forbade alliances with this or that faction of the bourgeoisie on the terrain of action, and on condition that the banners not be confused, that the political and organisational independence of the proletariat be scrupulously defended (contrary to what happened in China at the time of the alliance with the Kuomintang in 1925-1926) and that the mobilisation of the masses not be subordinated to these agreements.

In Nicaragua, with every advance of the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of Somoza, we saw the opposition bourgeoisie, which had initially joined the Broad Opposition Front, seek to conciliate the dictatorship and imperialism. At that point the initiative and the centre of gravity of the struggle definitely passed to the side of the workers and peasants. The United People's Movement and the Sandinista Front asserted their hegemony within the National Patriotic Front (FPN) set up in early 1979, and the Chamorros and Robelos found themselves in a subordinate position as was subsequently verified by history. As soon as Somoza was overthrown, the Sandinista leadership

asserted both its willingness to make compromises in the economic field and its determination to keep the instruments of political and military power in its own hands (formation of the Sandinista people's army and militia, conflicts with the bourgeoisie over the composition of the Council of State and the scheduling of elections).

The overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat does not automatically imply the immediate socialisation of the means of production and the beginning of a planned economy. In dominated countries, the dictatorship of the proletariat begins on the political terrain with the tasks of the “national democratic revolution.” The masses involved in this revolution are not always immediately ready for a conscious struggle for socialism. Seizing imperialist properties beginning the land reform and a literacy campaign are often the first tasks on the agenda. However, as soon as the revolution resolutely advances on that path, social differentiations among the peasantry begin to deepen and new showdowns with the bourgeoisie loom in the near future.

There is no general formula that dictates in advance the pace and forms of the growing over of democratic tasks into socialist tasks. As long as revolutionary leadership exists, there is no Chinese wall between the democratic beginning of the revolution and its socialist completion.

Trotsky was quite conscious of the difference between the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat at the political level and its consolidation by means of transformations that bring the economy from continuing production for the market to planned production, and he therefore established a distinction between dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist dictatorship: “A government based directly on the proletariat and through its intermediary on the revolutionary peasantry, does not yet signify a socialist dictatorship; ...

... the *true* democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, that is, the one which actually destroyed the regime of autocracy and serfdom and snatched the land from the feudalists, was accomplished not *before* October but only *after* October; it was accomplished, to use Marx's words, in the form of the *dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasant war* — and then, a few months later, began growing into a socialist dictatorship. (P. 230-1, *Permanent Revolution*, Pathfinder)

When Trotsky refers here to “socialist dictatorship,” his intention is not to suggest some alleged socialist relations of production or some alleged socialist mode of production. He is merely establishing a terminological distinction between the conquest of political power (dictatorship of the proletariat) and its *consolidation* by the institution of the first radical measures expropriating both the urban and rural bourgeoisie. This distinction corresponds to the very nature of proletarian revolution. Unlike the bourgeois revolution, it begins with the conquest of political power which then becomes the instrument for transforming social relations and the material and cultural situation of the proletariat itself. There is therefore no simultaneity between the conquest of power and the social transformations. Quite the contrary, in most cases, there is a time gap between the political establishment of proletarian rule and the social consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is the objective root of the difficulties we have often had in producing an immediate characterisation of revolutionary proletarian power at the moment of its birth. In the case of the October revolution mentioned by Trotsky, the insurrection settled the dual power situation at the political level, under the leadership of an internationalist revolutionary party, and established a dictatorship of the proletariat based on a soviet system but without having yet swept away all elements of dual power in society.

In the later cases of the Chinese, Cuban, and Nicaraguan revolutions, such a soviet system did not exist. And while the parties that led the seizure of power acted as revolutionary parties, they were nevertheless qualitatively different from the Bolshevik leadership of 1917.

But it is precisely because the establishment of workers power begins with the conquest of political power, that subjective factors such as the forms of organisation of the mass movement and the nature of its leadership are initially decisive. This was the source of the many hesitations that occurred in recognising the

proletarian character of the Chinese revolution as of 1949, and that of the Vietnamese revolution as of 1975.

The very nature of proletarian revolution and the specificity of each revolution make it impossible to construct a general concept or formula of the transition that would be more precise than the distinction indicated by Trotsky.

There have been two symmetrical attempts to discover a universal concept of the transition from the bourgeois state to the workers state that would encompass all the revolutions that have been victorious to this day; both have run into insurmountable theoretical contradictions. Thus, at the time of their honeymoon, Moreno and Lambert came up with the idea that all the revolutions that had led to the establishment of workers states, except the Russian revolution itself, had been merely "February revolutions" because they had not experienced soviet forms of organisation of power. This attempt leads purely and simply to mixing under a single label workers states (even though bureaucratised) and the bourgeois state which the Russian state still was, army and institutions included, after the February 1917 revolution and before the October insurrection!

On the other hand, the comrades of the SWP majority were tempted to generalise the application of the Workers and Farmers Government concept so that it no longer was a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat but an *intermediate historic stage between the bourgeois state and the workers state*, necessary in all revolutions including in the imperialist countries and the United States, and retroactively in the Russian revolution.

The result according to them is that the dictatorship of the proletariat allegedly only emerged in the USSR in June 1918, and not when power was conquered in October 1917.

On this question of the workers and farmers government, comrade Barnes' article signals a cautious retreat. The notion of workers and farmers government is no longer central to it. When it does appear, it does so clearly with the meaning of *first step of the dictatorship of the proletariat*:

Such a government, emanating from a victorious popular revolution, opens the road to the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat ...

Workers and farmers governments are characterised by a stage in the class struggle where capitalist property relations have not yet been abolished, but where the workers and farmers have conquered political power through a genuine revolution. The main task of proletarian revolutionists in such a government is to organise, mobilise, and raise the class consciousness of the working class and its allies, to lead them through the class struggle to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the consolidation of a workers base. (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.35)

Here, the workers and farmers government is clearly defined as the product of a victorious revolution, opening the way to the consolidation of the workers state or dictatorship of the proletariat, that is as the beginning of this very dictatorship of the proletariat. Comrade Barnes himself confirms this a few lines later: "We see the workers and farmers government as the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.75).

It is true that the transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the socialist dictatorship (to use Trotsky's very formulas) or from the conquest of political power to the transformation of property relations can proceed relatively more slowly in a scarcely industrialised country and in certain international circumstances. Conversely, in industrialised dependent countries, and all the more so in imperialist countries, the democratic and socialist tasks are intimately interconnected and follow each other in close succession.

It is now clear that the nub of the issue is the question of permanent revolution and not that of the workers and farmers government which is merely a partial aspect of the former. But on this question, the dividing line between our revolutionary heritage and the pall of Stalinist reaction is not being "blurred" by Trotsky but by comrade Barnes himself.

#### 4) *Upward or downward revision of the political revolution?*

We have already pointed out that the theory of permanent revolution also concerns the strategic perspective of extending the revolution in counterposition to the Stalinist thesis of building socialism in one country. On an international scale, this extension

of the revolution also signifies the overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy in China and the USSR, and several other states.

The apparatus of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states has become an instrument of bureaucratic violence against the working class which remains an exploited class deprived of its political power.

The bureaucratic management of the planned economy inexorably leads to wastefulness and the smothering of productive forces.

These states remain workers states insofar as production is organised on the basis of collective ownership of the means of production, labour power is not a commodity in the full sense of the term, and a monopoly of foreign trade enables the state to control the influence of the world market on the economy. The bourgeoisie has been expropriated, capitalism abolished, and the essential elements of a planned economy exist.

In this sense and this sense only do we uphold the need to defend the gains of the workers states, even though bureaucratised, against any attempt at capitalist restoration. But the defence of the workers states and the extension of the revolution imply a ruthless struggle against the bureaucracy which is the chief saboteur of the foundations of the workers state.

The anti-bureaucratic political revolution is not a mere reform or democratisation of the bureaucratic apparatuses, a sort of revolution without a revolution. It is a genuine revolution whose goal is to overthrow the bureaucracy without restoring capitalism. It implies an uprising of the oppressed masses against the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

The entire experience of mass movements in the bureaucratised workers states, from the East Berlin uprising of 1953, to the workers struggles in Poland, and including the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the "Prague spring", confirms this line of march.

The Polish experience which has unfolded over the last three years constitutes both a resounding confirmation of the general programme of political revolution and an enrichment of its strategy and tactics.

Right from the 1980 negotiations in Gdansk, the workers disproved the bureaucracy's claim to be the representative and embodiment of the working class. By setting the elected representatives of the strikers against those of the bureaucratic state apparatus, they tore the mask off the usurpers. The most elementary economic demands very rapidly become charged with a directly political content and pass from challenges to bureaucratic privileges to a questioning of the choices of bureaucratic management and to the conclusion that socialism is not only the statification of the means of production but also their socialisation through a system of workers self-management and democratic planning of society's development.

Democratic demands such as freedom of information, of organisation, or trade union independence from the state, likewise become charged with a concrete class content and lead to a challenge to the bureaucracy's monopoly on political power. Free elections, the right for several parties to exist are not just political freedoms but the necessary conditions for actual democratic planning and a real mobilisation of the masses.

Finally, the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship implies the destruction of the coercive apparatus of the state which the bureaucracy has shaped over the years to suit its own needs.

Just as the bureaucracy cannot be identified with the working class, so the bureaucratised workers state cannot be identified with socialism. We categorically reject the sort of blackmail which asserts that opposition to the bureaucracy's arbitrary rule would endanger the building of socialism itself.

And the fact is, in his very long article on Trotsky's contribution to "our revolutionary heritage," comrade Barnes exclusively emphasises the defence of the USSR while keeping quiet about the anti-bureaucratic struggle and its programme: "As we learned from Trotsky, the unconditional defence of the conquests of the Russian revolution and of every subsequent workers state has been shown to be vital to the extension of the world socialist revolution and to the regeneration of communism" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.86)

When he does quote *In Defense of Marxism*, he is guilty of a flagrant misinterpretation. In the passage referred to, Trotsky writes: "We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us

subordinate to the question of the preservation of state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is for us subordinate to the question of the world proletarian revolution" (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 21, Pathfinder, 1973).

This sentence has all the appearance of a vicious circle: the overthrow of the bureaucracy is subordinated to the preservation of state ownership which is itself subordinated to the world proletarian revolution which requires the overthrow of the bureaucracy that is undermining the foundations of the workers state ... Yet, in the last analysis, the prime mover is the interests of the world proletariat as a whole. And the bureaucracy opposes them on two counts: because it opposes the extension of the revolution and because it smothers the revolutionary energy of decisive contingents of the proletariat in countries where it rules.

The pages of *In Defense of Marxism* that precede the quote selected by comrade Barnes leave no room for doubt on this topic:

What do we defend in the USSR? Not that in which it resembles the capitalist countries but precisely that in which it differs from them ... *In the USSR the overthrow of the bureaucracy is indispensable for the preservation of state property.* Only in this sense do we stand for the defence of the USSR ...

... Defence of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle ...

As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan centres ...

The defence of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter. (*In Defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 15-18)

Such a counterposition would unavoidably tend to subordinate the interests of the world revolution to those of the bureaucratic dictatorships.

The existence of workers states, even bureaucratized ones, can work to the advantage of ongoing revolutions and the bureaucracy can sometimes be a conjunctural ally for them. But the sort of "realism" that would sacrifice the rights and interests of the workers living in bureaucratized states would be short-sighted and illusory. The bureaucracy always drives a hard bargain and asks for a political price before extending conditional support to this or that struggle. This was verified in the course of the Soviet-Yugoslav crisis, of the Sino-Soviet crisis, of the Cuban missiles crisis, of the Vietnam war and more recently of the war in the Middle East.

Such support, subordinated to the bureaucracy's own diplomatic interests, can never be a substitute for the internationalist solidarity and independent mobilisation of the masses

In contradistinction to the American comrades, comrade Hoffman and his tendency find our characterisation of the bureaucratized workers states inadequate.<sup>11</sup> Hoffman rejects both the "state capitalist" thesis and the thesis that portrays the bureaucracy as a new class destined to universal expansion; he asserts that the bureaucracy is not merely a caste but an actual new class, although a "non-fundamental" and parasitic class.

If that is all there is to it, comrade Hoffman's announcements of a theoretical revolution have given birth to a mere conceptual reform and one that hardly clarifies the problem. A parasitic class, but "parasitic" on whom? On the proletariat? In that case, this "new class" is as like the caste Hoffman just dismissed as two peas in a pod. Moreover, in what way would this change represent an advance for our characterisation of the bureaucratized workers states as such? What is their class nature? Hoffman now baptizes them "bureaucratic collectivist states." All right. One could likewise define the Communist Party as a bureaucratic collectivist party but this still would not tell us anything about their class nature.

If power in these "bureaucratic collectivist states" is still exclusively in the hands of the bureaucracy, henceforward defined as a "non-fundamental class" parasitic on the proletariat, then,

however paradoxical this may sound, the proletariat although politically expropriated and oppressed, nevertheless, remains the socially dominant class. This takes us back to our starting point: bureaucratically degenerated workers states.

However, Hoffman contends that his theoretical innovation is necessary for a more precise redefinition of the tasks involved in the defence of the USSR and the new problem posed by the conflicts, including the armed conflicts, between bureaucratized workers states.

But his conclusions on the first point are rather close to the classics: "Does the term bureaucratic counter-revolution mean that we place an equal sign between the bureaucratic collectivist states and the imperialist states? No! ... We are therefore *not neutral in conflicts between imperialist states and bureaucratic collectivist states.*" The problem then becomes that which we have already raised of the relation between the defence of the bureaucratized workers states and the struggle for the anti-bureaucratic revolution.

Hoffman argues that his approach enables him to understand the possibility of a form of Soviet political expansionism which, unlike imperialist expansionism, is not fundamentally motivated by economic plunder. This bureaucratic expansionism derives from the very fragility of the "non-fundamental class" and its rule. It allegedly compensates this fragility caused by the lack of any autonomous popular mobilisation, by a forward flight into bureaucratic militarism and the establishment of a diplomatic alliance system.

Yet Trotsky had no need of the concept of a "non-fundamental class" to explain that the bureaucracy was capable of launching reactionary military adventures: "The Kremlin participates in a new division of Poland; the Kremlin lays hands upon the Baltic states; the Kremlin orients towards the Balkans, Persia, and Afghanistan. In other words, the Kremlin continues the policy of Czarist imperialism" (*In Defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder, 1973, page 26). But this does not mean that we should "identify the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy with the policy of monopoly capitalism on the basis that both the one and the other use military force to achieve expansionist ends." The bureaucracy's policy can have reactionary and disastrous consequences for the workers movement but it corresponds to other mechanisms and other driving forces than those of imperialist expansion.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Hoffman claims that his thesis of the "new non-fundamental class" can provide a firm anchorage for attempts to deal with the new question of conflicts between workers states (Yugoslavia-USSR in 1948, USSR-China beginning in 1960, and leading up to the Vietnam-Cambodia and China-Vietnam military confrontations). It allegedly makes it possible to locate the qualitative leap from the bureaucratic caste to the new non-fundamental class, and in parallel fashion, from the "bureaucratized proletarian state" to the "bureaucratic collectivist state."

So far, this is nothing very new. Trotsky always analysed bureaucratization as a process that encompassed gradations and qualitative transformations. The degree of bureaucratic crystallisation and of the bureaucracy's autonomy from the proletariat on which it is a parasite was not the same in 1924, when Thermidor began, as in 1938, after the purges, the trials and the victory of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. From the stand-

11. Quotations from the contribution submitted for publication in the IIDB in the name of this international tendency

12. Cannon incidentally certainly understood the different significance of border conflicts and large-scale wars: "... in our opinion Stalin could take the path of Napoleonic conquest, not merely against small border states, but against the greatest imperialist powers, on one condition: that the Soviet bureaucracy in reality represents a new triumphant class which is in harmony with its economic system and secure in its position at home, etc. That if such is really the case, we certainly must revise everything said on the subject of the bureaucracy up to now, and admit at the same time that the regenerating revolution in the Soviet Union, along with the proletarian revolution in the West, must be crossed off for a long time to come." *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, Pathfinder, p. 104

point of tasks, this difference is substantial enough to warrant moving from a line of reform and democratisation of the workers state to a line of political revolution.

Likewise, the Yugoslav leadership and the Chinese leadership in the period that immediately followed their seizure of power, were not exact replicas of the consolidated Stalinist bureaucracy, in spite of their bureaucratic deformations. Their link with the masses was not broken off instantaneously. This is one of the reasons we gave critical support to China and Yugoslavia in their conflicts with the USSR, and later to Vietnam in its conflict with the normalised China of Hua Kuo Feng and Teng Hsiao Ping.

Comrade Hoffman's and his tendency's proposed innovations are therefore of no aid in advancing our theoretical clarity and our clarity on tasks. On the other hand, they concede ground to those who, faced with the anti-Marxist offensive unleashed in the capitalist countries, would like to tone down our defence of the workers states.

So the answer is no, our analysis of the bureaucracy and of the tasks of the political revolution needs no revision, either upwards or downwards.

### 5) Immediate relevance and unity of our fundamental programme

None of the major points in our programme is superfluous or outdated. The programme needs revision neither on the permanent revolution nor on political revolution.

The campist course progressively endorsed by the SWP majority comrades reflects both a lack of confidence in the role of the working class of the imperialist metropolises and a defensive reflex to the indications of a new Cold War. Their loss of confidence is also reflected in the attempt to extend the concept of workers and farmers government and make it into a necessary transitional stage, even in the United States, in the downgrading of the fight for soviet democracy even though it had been central in the first four congresses of the Communist International, and by the attempt to turn the relation between the party and the masses in a revolution upside down so that the party becomes responsible for making the revolution and only later for mobilising and "educating" the masses.

This course has been confirmed in the evolution of the debate on socialist democracy at the January 1984 USec meeting. The SWP comrades now seem to want to limit the recognition of the right to party pluralism to the bureaucratically degenerated workers states where the political revolution is on the agenda, rather than accepting it as a basic right in any socialist democracy. This logic can lead even to a practical and political questioning of the rights of tendency and faction in revolutionary organisations, for these rights would have no sense if they did not extend to the right to split, in other words to the possibility of founding a new party.

Yet the course of the world class struggle has emphasized the dialectical unity of the three sectors of the world revolution. This unity is the result of the major trends of our epoch, whether economic (growing internationalisation of production and capital), social (internationalisation of the division of labour), military (pact and alliance systems bolstered by the weight of nuclear weaponry), political (internationalisation of local conflicts: Malvinas, Central America, Middle-East, Grenada) or linked to "global responsibilities" claimed by the United States and the Soviet Union in world affairs.

Long before these trends had worked themselves out and as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the workers movement had laid the foundations of a first international organisation of its own. However, it is entering the present situation in a state of extreme dispersion while the bourgeoisie, despite its contradictions, is striving to build the political, financial, diplomatic, and military instruments of an international policy.

Not only does the dynamic of the world revolution emphasize the need, and more tragic than ever, lack of a mass revolutionary International. It also emphasizes the living and immediate relevance of the revolutionary Marxist programme, which links together the socialist dynamic of the revolution in dominated countries, the socialist tasks of the proletariat in the imperialist countries, and the tasks of the political revolution against the bureaucracy ruling in the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe. It is the only programme that can help to break the ossifying logic of

the division of the world into camps and avert the dangers of nuclear world war.

Of course, not all elements of this programme have the same practical bearing, at the same time, in the different sectors of the world revolution. Nevertheless, it cannot be dismembered or confined to the tasks of the permanent revolution in the dominated countries or those of the political revolution in the bureaucratised states. The growing interdependence of the three sectors and the international impact of local conflicts mean that the fate of the revolution in Central America is not unrelated to that of the Polish workers, and that any revolution attempting to consolidate will be faced with the necessity of diplomatic alliances with their inevitable price and constraints.

Anyone who seriously sets out now to build the Fourth International in the perspective of rebuilding a mass revolutionary International cannot do so with any solidity on the basis of a truncated or discounted programmatic platform, but only by standing on a programme that corresponds in its main lines to the objective needs of the proletariat in all three sectors of the world revolution.

## II. Turning towards the Castroist leadership or positioning ourselves in the overall recomposition process of the international workers' movement and vanguard?

Since the Eleventh World Congress, but without ever submitting a clear resolution on this topic to the vote, the comrades of the United States SWP leadership have asserted in many articles and documents that their perspective for building the international boiled down to two key ideas: the turn to industry and the turn to the Castroist leadership.

### 1) "Turning towards the Castroist current"?

The different conceptions of the turn to industry can be discussed. At least it is a concrete problem; we know what we are talking about.

On the other hand we were driven to ask several times, but all in vain, what the "turn" toward the Castroist current or leadership means concretely. Does it mean intensifying our solidarity activities with the Central American and Cuban revolutions and establishing a dialogue with their leaderships as far as possible? Does it mean "turning" programmatically towards these currents and then, what are the implications? Or does it mean "turning" organisationally towards these currents and then, what concrete perspectives and practical initiatives should be adopted to reach out to them?

Since the American comrades will not provide us with any precise answers, we have to base ourselves on their approach. In the successive texts they have written, they characterised the Cuban leadership as revolutionary, then as revolutionary Marxist and ended up comparing it to the Bolshevik leadership under Lenin and Trotsky.

The 1981 IEC resolution considered the Cuban leadership to be revolutionary insofar as it had thrown imperialism out of its country and overthrown capitalism. And that it remained revolutionary since that time insofar as it never stopped helping to extend the revolution in some countries. This is a capital fact.

We have found little problem in grasping it, especially because the emergence of this leadership was part of the broader historical process of crisis of Stalinism. Unlike the hopeless sectarians, we do not believe that there is nothing in the international workers movement between the reformists and Stalinists, and us. When Yugoslav, Chinese, and Vietnamese CP leaderships led the seizure of power in their respective countries, they were acting as revolutionary leaderships, despite the bureaucratic deformations of their theory and practice — "revolutionary centrist" if you will, but revolutionary.

At this very moment, the international development of the class struggle, the advances of the revolution, the establishment of new workers states, are fostering a general trend towards a recomposition of the workers movement and its vanguard. In this context, currents can emerge that no longer vacillate between reformism and revolution, but between revolutionary internationalism and the Soviet bureaucracy; or in yet more complex fashion, between revolution, reformism, the Soviet bureaucracy and the Chinese bureaucracy.

These vacillations have powerful material roots linked to the weight of the bureaucratised workers states. But this does not mean that, outside of the Fourth International, no organisations exist that are struggling resolutely and honestly for the victory of the proletarian revolution in their country. The Sandinistas did not suddenly become revolutionary the day after their victory. They already were before then, and there certainly exist future Sandinistas in several countries today, whether we know of them or not.

Compared to other leaderships that have overthrown capitalism in their country, or to revolutionary organisations that are struggling for power, the Cuban leadership displays several highly significant particularities. It has taken power. It has kept it for 25 years. Moreover, unlike the Chinese and Vietnamese leaderships, it was not of Stalinist origin. This is one of the reasons this leadership, on the basis of an original experience of mass mobilisation, went further in explicitly challenging the Stalinist strategic framework and putting the permanent revolution on the agenda in Latin America. Not only did it never adopt the theory of building socialism in one country but it explicitly opposed the stagist strategies officially advocated by Moscow and it sought in practice to extend the revolution.

But does that warrant calling it a revolutionary Marxist leadership and comparing it to the leadership of the Bolshevik party? The point is not to devise some moral or psychological standards of good will and good intentions. Nor is it to downgrade the role of this leadership and its merits. Rather the point is to define the scope and limits of this role on the basis of political criteria.

As soon as Lenin had taken note of the failure of the Second International, he put the creation of a Third International on the agenda and began to lay the groundwork for it. This was not the course followed by the Cuban leadership. It can be argued that the obstacles in the path of a new mass revolutionary international are far greater now than in 1914. If the Cuban leadership were to pose this problem, it would immediately face a conflict with the Soviet bureaucracy at a time when it needs its economic and military support. So the motivations of the Cuban leadership are understandable, but the fact that the problem has not been posed corresponds to an actual political decision that goes beyond a mere tactical concession on an organisational question.

The Cuban leadership combines internationalist positions like helping the extension of the revolution in the Caribbean and Central America, with a type of anti-imperialism that reduces the international class struggle to a struggle between camps or blocs, to the point of supporting the bureaucracy against the Czechoslovak and Polish workers all in the name of not "weakening the socialist camp." Similarly this leadership is ready to support revolutionaries in countries where it can perceive success in the short- or medium-term, but in countries where it does not expect rapid advances the needs of state diplomacy tend to override internationalist solidarity.

This policy cannot be reduced to tactical errors. It directly affects an entire and decisive sector of the world revolution. Nor can it be reduced to tactical manoeuvres or to the mere juxtaposition of a revolutionary line for dominated countries, a reactionary line for the bureaucratised workers states and a sceptical line on the potential of the proletariat of the imperialist countries. Quite the opposite, it is a global line, with its own consistency, that inserts a regional revolutionary commitment into an alliance system dominated by the weight of the Soviet bureaucracy.

For all these reasons, a fusion with the Castroist current is not on the agenda on the international level if it is meant as a concrete perspective and not as a metaphor designed to cover unconditional adaptation to its position.

Nor is fusion with the Castroist current a concrete perspective for the building of sections, country by country, in Latin America. Cuba constitutes a central political factor in the continent and the Cuban leadership plays an active role there. The organisations under its influence share a common respect for its history and the will to be inspired by its experience. They have learned a lot from the Cuban revolution but they have also had to overcome the initial weaknesses of focoism and resolve new problems on their own. Each one of them is shaped by its own ex-

perience. This is true of the Sandinista Front and of the Salvadoran revolutionaries.

Beyond their common definition in relation to the example of the Cuban revolution, these organisations often develop differences, sometimes unfortunately even leading to violence, on the response to new tactical or strategic questions. This was shown by the FSLN split before 1978, by the crisis in the FPL leadership in El Salvador, and the split in the NJM in Grenada. Conversely, the unfolding revolutionary experience in Central America, the political contributions and identity of the different political organisations operating in its framework can provide the Cuban leadership with new material for reflection and face it with new political questions.

Finally, this leadership has derived strength from its rich experience in dealing with its own revolution and collaborating with other revolutionary organisations. But its experience in mobilising and organising the workers movement in highly industrialised dominated countries where the conquest of class political independence is the central task, such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, remains limited. When confronted with tasks of this sort, the Castroist leadership intervenes as a significant, but not central, political factor; this is demonstrated by the formation and trajectory of the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil.<sup>13</sup>

This is why we cannot say that a homogeneous "Castroist current" exists. We can develop a practical convergence with revolutionary organisations influenced by the Cuban leadership, look for ways to collaborate with them in action, and establish relations and discussions based on different programmes and positions which should not be hidden. Starting with these differences we can learn from each other and enrich each other, but this will certainly not happen if we keep quiet about the problems which these organisations themselves are raising.

## 2) *An overall recomposition process of the workers' movement*

The emergence and future evolution of the Castroist current are in fact part and parcel of a broader process of reorganisation of the workers movement and its vanguard on an international scale.

Since the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, what had been the international communist movement has been experiencing a steadily worsening crisis of dislocation. Beginning in 1969, the Soviet bureaucracy had to give up holding world conferences that only revealed the increasing contradictions and tensions dividing its fraternal parties. Since the 1976 East Berlin conference, it has even avoided calling new conferences limited to European parties. The tendency towards dispersal is winning out, even though the evolution is neither homogeneous nor linear.

A broad spectrum of positions exists, ranging from traditionally pro-Soviet parties like the Argentine CP or the Portuguese CP, to parties like the Mexican, Italian, or Spanish CP. At the same time as some communist parties are emphasizing the gap between them and Moscow, currents that are reasserting their identification with the Kremlin are appearing in their midst; this is the case with the CP of Gallego in the Spanish state for instance. Moreover, various revolutionary nationalist or revolutionary organisations have lined up with the international policy of the USSR, through the medium of Cuban or Vietnamese influence. This was the case with the Chilean MIR beginning in 1978.

In countries where they have managed to retain significant forces, the parties of Maoist origin have often withdrawn into a purely national existence and adopted policies ranging from rightist neo-Stalinist (often underlain by an identification with Albania) to a quest for revolutionary paths that would imply a radical critical re-examination of the stagist schemas, alliance policy and history of the international workers movement. More generally, in Asia, the trauma of the conflicts between Vietnam and Cambodia, and then between China and Vietnam, has forced communist parties, whether of pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese origin, to rethink their historical and strategic references.

A new debate on the terrible 1965 defeat and Sino-Soviet policy has broken out among the Indonesian exile community

13. See Appendix on Latin America IIDB Vol XX No 8.

linked to the Indonesian Communist party. In Thailand the failure of the line defended by the Thai Communist Party explains to a large extent the downturn in the mass movement, the disorientation of different generations of militants and the deepgoing crisis of the communist movement. But it has also stimulated an unprecedented amount of political and theoretical rethinking among militants who have lived through the 1973-1980 experiences. In the Philippines on the other hand there is a combined rise of socio-economic and democratic struggles and a dynamic communist movement. Also in that country the evaluation of the regional context and the experience of the ongoing struggles is causing a positive re-orientation and is encouraging fundamental strategic discussions.

In South Africa the growth of the industrial working class has given birth to independent non-racial mass trade unions. Some of the leaderships of these unions have begun a strategic rethinking about a class-based alternative to the apartheid regime that runs counter, for the moment, to the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party line.

In Western Europe, the decline of the mass communist parties is general. "Eurocommunism" was a belated attempt to manage this insoluble contradiction: either the communist parties tighten their priority links with the USSR and therefore have to pay a share of the cost of each major crisis of the bureaucracy, the price of Prague and the price of Gdansk; or they widen their distance from Moscow to burrow deeper into their own national state apparatus and their living space is consequently reduced because there really is no room for a second social democracy. They know they will lose in either case and therefore try to hedge their bets and avoid a final decision, while striving to keep control of the key sectors of the workers and trade union movement because this is what makes them a worthwhile partner for both their own bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy. The massive losses and splits of the Spanish Communist Party, along with the erosion of the French Communist Party, are the symptoms of the historical changes at work in the European workers movement.

Neo-Stalinist currents that identify fidelity to the USSR with a more militant past and with a firmer line against austerity policies and the imperialist war drive, can re-emerge out of this crisis.

Until now, social democracy has been the beneficiary of the decline of the West European communist parties. It experienced particularly spectacular electoral successes in France in 1981, in Greece and Spain in 1982, in Portugal in 1983. It won the post of head of government in Italy. It came back to power in Sweden. By contrast, in the northern European countries where social democracy directly managed the first consequences of the crisis, it is showing some signs of erosion: this is especially true in Great Britain, but also in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. Its electoral success in southern Europe is the expression of a first political protest of the working class and popular layers against the social effects of the economic crisis, as well as of their attachment to parliamentary institutions, particularly in the three countries that lived under dictatorships until the mid-1970s.

Even in those countries where it has emerged as a hegemonic force on the electoral level, this has been reflected neither in an organic and activist strengthening of the social democratic parties nor in an increase of their organised influence in the trade union movement. The French and Spanish Socialist Parties in power remain giants with feet of clay: there is an enormous gap between the millions of Socialist voters and the ridiculous number of members (100,000 to 200,000).

Their fragility has deep causes. In several countries, having for a long time participated in the government and managed the bourgeois state, social democracy no longer appears as an instrument for struggle and mobilisation to the masses of workers. In opposition, it can channel the protests against the effects of the economic crisis as well as the rejection of militarisation and American hegemony and the reputation of the Eastern bureaucratic dictatorships. But as soon as it comes to power, social democracy resumes its role as the loyal manager of capital, and the faithful ally of European imperialism, as illustrated by the interventions of Schmidt, Gonzales, Mitterrand, and Soares. They have followed a bourgeois policy of avowed austerity.

Underlying the electoral recovery of certain socialist parties and the maintained influence of certain communist parties (par-

ticularly the Italian Communist Party but also the Greek and Portuguese Communist Parties), a general trend towards the weakening of the reformist apparatuses' control over the bulk of the working class can be detected. The majority reformist parties are experiencing a shrinking of their activist base and trade union roots. In countries like France and Spain, the de-unionisation trend has reached considerable proportions. These phenomena can reflect the demoralisation of certain sectors of workers but there is no mechanical connection between the evolution of trade union membership and the state of workers' militancy. Important layers of the working class often remain outside, or on the sidelines of trade-union organisations (women, youth, immigrants). These are the contradictory forms the process of recomposition of the workers movement is taking before the decisive tests and the emergence of a credible revolutionary pole of attraction.

In Latin America, the Socialist International is actively defending the interests of the European imperialisms by trying to play the role of a mediator between American imperialism and the popular forces. These efforts will not easily lead to the implantation of genuine social democratic parties on the continent. For a local social democratic bureaucracy to emerge and consolidate, it would have to enjoy a long period of the parliamentary and trade union freedoms that have nurtured its growth. Moreover, the distinctive anti-imperialist image which social democracy is trying to acquire is constantly undermined by its practical activity, whether it be its lukewarm solidarity with Nicaragua or even, in the case of Mario Soares, its open support of the American invasion of Grenada in spite of the fact that the NJM was an official member of the Socialist International. This is why the Socialist International's policy in Latin America has more often taken the form of alliances with liberal (Colombia) or populist (Brazil, Mexico) factions of the local bourgeoisies.

Populist nationalism too, after a period of expansion begun in the late 1930s in several Latin American countries, and in the 1950s in the Arab countries affected by the impact of Nasserism and the Algerian revolution, has now entered a period of decay. The dominated bourgeoisies were confronted with a new challenge when the economic crisis began to worsen. Nothing leads one to believe that they might be capable of a new anti-imperialist renaissance in either the economic or the political arena. The first results of the crisis in Latin America have been a dizzying increase of their external debt and a growing dependence on imperialism while poverty, economic crisis, and urban crisis are shaking up the traditional populist formations like the APRA in Peru, the Argentine Peronist movement, the MNR in Bolivia, labourism in Brazil, and to a lesser extent the PRI in Mexico.

This decline of the large populist organisations is still slowed down by the absence of clear class struggle and revolutionary alternatives, but they have, nevertheless, lost their initial impetus long ago and undergone deep transformations. Thus, in Argentina, the failure of the armed organisations in the early 1970s and the role of the Communist Party under the dictatorship made it possible for Peronism to survive even though its advanced state of decomposition and discredit initially benefited bourgeois radicalism on the electoral plane.

Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that the intensification and severity of the economic crisis along with the outrageous social cost of the imperialist dictates, will provoke populist revivals, even with the participation of limited sectors of the bourgeoisie.

In the Arab countries, the populist hopes born of Nasserism have been disappointed both by the social achievements of the nationalist regimes and their powerlessness in the face of Zionism and imperialism, and their attitude towards the Palestinian national movement. Their military defeats in the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel led them to pursue a new course characterised by the "infitah" and the return of Egypt into the imperialist orbit under Sadat, and the attempts of the Chadli regime to follow the same path in Algeria even though this is more difficult there because of the weakness of the national bourgeoisie.

Due to the lack of a credible revolutionary alternative on the international level, and given the role of the USSR and China in the region, this decline of Arab populism has so far not been

reflected in the emergence of strong class struggle currents. Rather, it has aided the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in some countries; this current can be the initial vessel for national and popular aspirations and at the same time be used by the reactionary interests of the most traditional sectors of society.

Failing world-shaking events powerful enough to upset the relationship of forces between the classes and cause a general realignment of political forces, the recomposition of the international workers movement will therefore remain slow, uneven and extremely differentiated.

### 3) *Building the Fourth International, preparing the conditions for a mass revolutionary International*

The present stage of building the Fourth International should therefore be situated within this overall process characterised by the emergence of a broad spectrum of forces breaking to varying degrees with reformism, Stalinism, and nationalist populism. These currents are capable of rediscovering a revolutionary practice on the basis of their own experience, but they do not immediately pose the question of the programme of world revolution and the rebuilding of a revolutionary International.

On the other hand, the Fourth International has been marked by the particular conditions in which it was formed, following accumulated defeats of the workers movement, and of its many-years existence as a minority. It will not be transformed on its own into a mass International, unless major events bring about a qualitative change of the relationship of forces established after World War Two.

The time now is neither to abstractly proclaim a mass International nor to search out shortcuts towards that end. We stand now merely at the beginning of profound and lasting transformations in the workers movement. We should approach them by a combination of building the Fourth International as it is and collaborating with the vanguard forces evolving in the different countries and continents. This is the best way to prepare the formation of a genuine mass revolutionary International.

The fact is, it is possible under the present conditions to win new activist forces over to revolutionary Marxism, to enrich our own experience, and to transform the practice of our own sections. At the same time, possible areas of convergence with other revolutionary organisations of diverse origins are beginning to emerge. They signify that common work and even fusions on the national level are possible and should be put on the agenda even though these regroupments do not yet have any international equivalent.

At the national level, a rapprochement with other forces can take various forms, ranging from systematic united action to the establishment of stable liaison committees and unifications. In cases of fusions with revolutionary organisations or mass leftward-moving centrist currents, the united organisation's affiliation to the Fourth International should not constitute a principled precondition. On the other hand, it is indispensable that the united organisations be governed by a democratic centralism that allows the discussion on the political issues not resolved at the time of fusion to continue in the light of subsequent common practice.

At the regional level, we seek to collaborate with other revolutionary currents in the framework of solidarity campaigns, mass initiatives and election campaigns where relevant. On the basis of a relationship of trust verified in practice, we can consider holding regional conferences open to these currents around precisely defined agendas and clearly determined goals.

One of the key conditions making such collaboration possible both at the national and international level is that it provide a better instrument to turn the broad unorganised masses and the masses influenced by the reformist majority organisations, and not become an additional obstacle to this work.

Our policy towards organisations identified with Trotskyism is part of the same overall approach. In a certain number of countries, these organisations represent activist forces that cannot be underestimated. They too are profiting from the radicalisation of the vanguard and channeling new generations of militants turning towards revolutionary Marxism. They argue for programmatic positions that lead them to converge with our positions on some key problems for the world revolution, especially the

defence of the workers states, support for the political revolution and the need for an International.

In countries where such organisations exist, we must follow the possibilities for rapprochement through the practical tests of the class struggle, on the basis of a common understanding of the events and tasks, and keep up a sustained public exchange with these organisations.

The Eleventh World Congress went further in this direction and outlined the perspective of "unification of the Trotskyist movement." At the same time the factions led by N. Moreno and P. Lambert jointly took the initiative of a splitting operation against the Fourth International on the basis of a position of hostility to the Nicaraguan revolution. In December 1980, they jointly constituted the International Committee, which flew apart no later than October 1981, thereby ridiculing the pretensions of its promoters who had claimed the foundation of the I.C. was nothing less than the most important event since the foundation of the Third International!

The lessons of this experience are clear. The existence of common historical and programmatic references, however important, cannot be the main criterion for a unification process. On the national level, such a process can take as its starting point a practical convergence in day to day action that is then deepened and consolidated by a serious programmatic discussion. It can also take as its starting point a key programmatic convergence and use it as an instrument to bring closer together the current activity of the two organisations. In all cases, programmatic and practical convergences are both necessary to verify whether "a common understanding of events and tasks" exists, and serve as the foundation for a viable united organisation.

The differences that emerged as the Nicaraguan revolution developed have demonstrated that the disagreements between organisations identified as Trotskyists that arose at the time of the Cuban revolution had not been overcome. Moreover in none of the countries where the organisations affiliated to the International Committee, the International Trotskyist League, *The Militant*, or any other regroupment, as well as the sections of the Fourth International have substantial forces, have real convergences developed in practice: neither in France nor Peru, nor Brazil, nor Britain.

A tendency has surfaced inside the French section whose platform consists mainly of "asking the Twelfth World Congress to resume the battle for the unification of the Trotskyist movement adopted at the previous congress". But since then, four years have gone by, full of events that cannot be overlooked.<sup>14</sup>

The Eleventh World Congress's statement on the split characterised the split orchestrated by Moreno and Lambert as an unprincipled split. The reason was that a difference can be corrected in a few months, in the light of experience and with the help of a discussion, even if it is as severe as the one which erupted over the Nicaraguan revolution. An organisation can make a mistake without thereby ceasing to be revolutionary. This is even truer for small organisations whose limited size and connections only make possible incomplete and belated information. Only the major tests of the class struggle can reveal or verify qualitative transformations. This was Lenin's method in dealing with the degeneration of the Second International, and Trotsky's with that of the Third. We should take great care to stick to such a method given that the implantation of our sections is too limited for us to have rapid and reliable information and an extensive verification of our judgements.

But the 1979 split confirmed something even more serious, more deeply ingrained and more lasting than the differences over Nicaragua, namely Moreno's and Lambert's very conception of an International in which every political, local or circumstantial difference can become a new programmatic frontier between revisionism and orthodoxy, a new pretext for splits and excommunications. The only possible product of such a conception is a monolithic and sectarian international faction, incapable of maintaining any real democracy on either the international or the national planes. It systematically destroys all previous gains and turns the building of the International into the ceaseless labours

14. See Matti et al. tendency platform (not published yet in English), in BIDI 7

of Sisyphus. It fosters organisational methods that often have nothing to envy in those of the Stalinists.

The conditions for the unification of the forces identified with Trotskyism are still far from being met on the international level. They could only be on the basis of a common approach to party building in the difference key countries and a common project of building a mass revolutionary International.

## II

### III. What sort of International?

At the present time the Fourth International is the only organically organised international regroupment of revolutionary organisations. Its battle is part and parcel of the struggle for the rebuilding of a mass revolutionary International which cannot be reduced to the simple extension of its own forces. This objective can only be achieved after deepgoing transformations inside the international workers movement under the impact of major events.

To prepare for these changes we try to build right now an international organisation united by the same programme and with a political line based on the interests and needs of the world proletariat as a whole and not the particular or conjunctural interests of one or another of its components.

As opposed to the first three internationals, the Fourth was founded in a context of reaction, when the workers movement was on the retreat after defeats at the hands of Nazism and the bureaucratic counter-revolution. The Fourth International's struggle in defense of the internationalist heritage of the Third International was for a long time isolated and always that of a minority. This struggle was prolonged a lot longer than its founders had envisaged.

This existence as a minority current is due, first of all, to objective factors. These objective reasons are the consequences of the world war, of the temporary consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR and of the low level of activity of the proletariat in the two decisive countries, the United States and the Soviet Union.

#### 1) What overall perspectives?

Such a long existence as a minority international revolutionary organisation in the workers movement is unprecedented. The consequence has been a big distortion between theory and practice, between analytical activity and effective intervention and between discussion and party building. It has favoured political and organisational deformations both in the International and in its sections. This type of existence has produced vacillations between, on the one hand, dogmatic and sectarian crystallisation, the reproduction of artificial particularities, a monolithic internal regime and, on the other hand, the search for political and organisational shortcuts, political impressionism and liberal organisational practices.

While the objective situation sets limits to the possible development of the International, these deformations have caused us to miss a number of opportunities on a national level, in the various continents, to the extent that the present strength of the International and its sections is far from having reached what it could and should have been.

The shortfall is not, strictly speaking, just numerical. Often winning a few hundred new members allows us to cross the threshold beyond which a revolutionary organisation begins to be able to act politically, take initiatives, bring about political agreements that modify, even slightly, the political situation. In turn, this advance can improve the type of organisation we are building, its functioning, its concerns, its style of work and reflexes, the quality of its leadership.

The International accumulated forces and extended itself geographically at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. But the effects of the crisis on the European workers movement, the stagnation and regression of certain important sections

and the absence of the International in the development of the revolution in Central America and the negative role other forces claiming to be Trotskyists played there — all this contributed to the perspectives of building the International being frankly questioned.

Each major period in the life of the International has been dominated by a perspective of an overall breakthrough in the short or medium term.

At the time of its foundation this project was built around the idea that the Second World War would result in the rise of the European revolution and in particular of the German revolution and in the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy by the masses led by a powerful section in the Soviet Union. The war was expected to shake up the international workers movement in a comparable way to what happened at the end of the First World War. The end of the Second World War was indeed followed by major events such as the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, and the formation of bureaucratically deformed workers states in Eastern Europe, but without the hoped-for effects on the workers movement.

At the end of the 1940s a change of perspective was therefore necessary. The majority of the International tried to come to terms with the situation by conceiving the period as an intermediary one prior to the break up of reformism and Stalinism (at first through the march towards a third world war) with the emergence of mass centrist currents inside the traditional workers organisations.

Finally, under the effects of the open crisis of Stalinism and of the Cuban revolution, the 1963 reunification congress drew up again a party building model based on the dialectic of the world revolution and the balanced interaction of its three sectors. In 1968 with the combination of the French general strike, the Prague spring and the Tet offensive in Vietnam, this model led to hopes for rapid success and imminent changes of the relationship of forces inside the workers movement in our favour as well as for the perspective of winning new developing vanguards escaping from the control of the reformist and Stalinist apparatuses.

Between the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses (1969-1974), the International certainly went through a period of growth. But while it was true that May 1968 opened up a rise in struggles in the European capitalist countries, these struggles converted a social relationship of forces into new rights and gains rather than taking the form of a showdown for the conquest of power. The subjective conditions which were lacking for a crisis like that of 1968 to place the question of power concretely on the agenda cannot be limited to the absence of a revolutionary party. More generally, there was the absence of a working class vanguard organised in the trade union movement, the loss of certain traditions of struggle and organisation during the previous period. While 1968 revealed the force and objectively revolutionary potential of the proletariat accumulated during the long post-war economic boom, the mid-1970s were marked by a profound change in the situation.

Attempts to deny this change in the name of simple "continuity" of the period opened in 1968 would be puerile or blind. But to better measure its real significance and limits, it is necessary to have a better appreciation of the 1968 to 1975 situation. Overestimating those years and what was then on the agenda fosters a tendency to define, in contrast, the turn of 1974-76 as a sweeping generalised downturn, whereas it is something quite different.

It is not very useful to seek out what different people said after 1968. It is sufficient to recognise that many documents of the International and sections' leaderships saw 1968 as evidence of an immediately revolutionary situation and envisaged the possibility of synchronised revolutionary crises ending up in the short term in dual power situations in several European countries. True, the 1968 general strike temporarily took the initiative away from the bourgeoisie (who only re-established its authority with the open collaboration of the reformist bureaucracies) and raised the question of power in conditions where the means to resolve such a key question did not yet exist.

From the point of view of building the party the oft-repeated statement that "the question of power is posed" involved a gaping contradiction in relation to the state of development and organisation of the working class vanguard. Left-wing splits in

the traditional parties are still a marginal phenomenon in the working class and opposition currents in the trade union are only embryonic at best. Consequently there are two possible temptations for resolving the contradiction. Either bring the subjective factor in line with the objective tasks of the hour with a voluntarist and ultra-leftist mad dash forward. Or bank on the spontaneous development of the situation to resolve the crisis of the subjective factor.

The situation opened by 1968 expressed a longlasting change in the social relationship of forces between the classes, as well as in the relations between the masses and the apparatuses. It inaugurated a new wave of workers struggles favouring an initial accumulation of forces and experiences for the revolutionary nucleus. This initial implantation and assimilation of the key lessons of revolutionary Marxism helped us face up to, and come to grips with, the 1974-76 change in the situation. But the illusions inherited from previous years, the already visible gap between hopes and reality, meant that most European sections suffered a crisis of adaptation and reorientation and needed to programmatically re-arm themselves.

The tide of the Portuguese revolution had turned at the end of 1975 due to the responsibility of the reformist and Stalinist leaderships. The transition from Francoism in Spain, despite a wave of struggles in Spring 1974, did not produce a revolutionary crisis. The effects of the recession began to weigh on the working class, structural unemployment developed and social-economic struggles were increasingly linked to an overall political perspective. This meant that minority revolutionary organisations found themselves marginalised and unbalanced, especially when they did not have a clear united front approach. This step is indispensable, whatever the specific party-building policy adopted, because it starts from the fact that one cannot go round the organised workers movement in the imperialist countries. A series of centrist organisations formed during the 1960s did not survive this turn of events. Finally, the impact of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution was quickly counterbalanced by the crimes of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and the effects of the conflict between Cambodia, Vietnam and China.

Consequently, the model of a simultaneous convergence of the three sectors of the world revolution, which had served since 1963 as the perspective for building the International, has been subjected to questioning. Revolutionary processes in the three sectors of the world revolution have turned out to be more uneven and their convergence more difficult than had been envisaged at the end of the 1960s. Quite recent events confirm this point:

★ The anti-bureaucratic revolution in Poland is the most advanced process of political revolution we have seen up to now. It generally confirms the programme of the political revolution but at the same time it raises new problems. It proves that, given the existence of state ownership of the means of production, proletarian mobilisation can very rapidly take on a mass character and acquire a political significance in the confrontation with the bureaucracy. But the rise of the political revolution does not in itself resolve the problem of the formation of a vanguard, the only thing permitting the Polish movement to go beyond the results obtained. The limits of the Polish revolution and the fact that the question of power has not been resolved has had specific consequences on the workers movement of the imperialist countries. It has led many advanced workers to lose sight of the extremely positive effects of the Polish mass movement. While being repelled by the unmasked face of 'really existing socialism' they have taken from this experience only those elements of ideological confusion.

★ Up to now the colonial revolution has not developed in the most industrialised dominated countries. It may take off in the coming years due to the depth of the crisis, but the revolutionary processes in Indochina, Central America, or Grenada will not be able to exert a direct influence or attraction over the proletariat of the more industrialised countries, whatever the sympathy they might evoke.

★ Finally, exposed to the consequences of the economic crisis and disoriented by the class collaborationist policies of its traditional organisations, the working class in the imperialist countries is looking for new directions and for new forms of struggle. These will be found and forged only through large-scale ex-

periences and struggles, and a serious reorganisation of the forces of the workers movement will take time. *This intermediary situation*, where the working class is struggling in most cases on the defensive for the safeguard of its gains, feeds doubts about its revolutionary capabilities, particularly among the vanguard militants of the dominated countries that are affected much more severely by the crisis, and facilitates an acceptance of the bureaucracy as an inevitable and permanent phenomenon in the workers movement.

While there are explosive situation in the three sectors of the world revolution particularly in the dominated countries (and there will be in coming years), the dialectic between them, *their combination is not automatic*. That is why it is important to define as lucidly as possible where we are and to critically appropriate our heritage. It is the condition for working out our real possibilities and defining accessible objectives for the future.

The social force accumulated by the proletariat throughout the long period of the postwar boom has not been fundamentally affected. The world relationship of forces established by the victories of the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions has not been reversed by the beginning of the imperialist counteroffensive. The economic crisis and political events since the middle of the 1970s however, opens up a new situation for the reorganisation of the social and political forces in the three sectors of the world revolution.

The crisis of the political leadership of imperialism and the bureaucracy is shown up more starkly and broadly. But the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat internationally also makes itself felt just as sharply.

Even if it continues to have decisive weight compared to the other imperialist countries (particularly politically and militarily), American imperialism, after its defeat in Vietnam, has lost the capacity to impose overall political solutions for the big world problems. This is shown in the crisis of the international monetary system as well as in the accentuation of inter-imperialist competition and contradictions. This crisis also highlights the weakness of the bourgeois political leadership on a national level: collapse of the majority bourgeois coalitions in Spain and Portugal (going as far as the dissolution of the UCD in the first case), responsible for administering the crisis, and shake up or fall of military dictatorships in Latin America or the Philippines.

At the same time, unlike in the 1930s, the contradiction and limits of bureaucratic management of the planned economies are stripped bare by the crisis of underproduction in the Eastern European countries.

None of the attempts to define a new international share out of zones of interest (between three to five powers) have got anywhere. Both in the imperialist centres and the bureaucratized workers states centrifugal tendencies have the upper hand.

The function and future of the Fourth International does not lie in any short-term miracle solution, nor in the fusion with the Castroist current, nor the unification of the Trotskyist movement nor in a return to generalised entrism. It does not depend on staking everything on a general breakthrough around one country nor the fusion with whole sections of the reformist parties nor on the sudden emergence of a new vanguard directly created in a dual power situation. The real perspective is a much longer and more complex process of reconstitution of a vanguard on an international level. Nothing in the situation today leads us to predict a sudden, great leap forward between the Fourth International as it is and a mass international. It is rather more probable that we have a prolonged battle ahead of us, with a multitude of particular national and regional cases which will tend to put into question the united framework of an international. This is the battle we have to prepare for.

Once we do not bank on a brusque and imminent metamorphosis, the intermediary forms and mediations along the road to a mass International will be decisive. For example, the experience of the Central American revolution and to an even greater extent the future experiences of the revolutionary crises in other Latin American countries, disparages the theory of the single party. Pluralism, including among revolutionary forces will become increasingly accepted. It stimulates currents and organisations which agree with such pluralism to look for new forms of coor-

dination and collaboration which can take the form of conferences or fronts without necessarily tending to come to a common organisational framework. We must be ready, not only to take our place in such initiatives but to launch them ourselves. If such approaches prove to be possible or necessary in different countries there is all the more reason for a similar approach to be developed for building the International.

Trotsky took this approach as early as 1933 with the initiative of a Bloc of Four. At that time he did not envisage an International limited to revolutionary Marxists but a broader international of which they would be a decisive component. In reasserting such an approach today we come up against: a dispersal of the vanguard that cannot be compared to the earlier period; references to the heritage of the Third International are very much more diffuse; the very necessity of an International is no longer a widely supported theoretical/political gain; and finally the broad outline of the program condensed in the "Eleven Points of the Left Opposition," relates in an uneven and fragmented way, to present reality because of the specific experience in each sector of the world revolution. Thus, currents in the dominated countries which assimilate through their own history a perspective of permanent revolution do not at the same time automatically adopt a position in support of the political revolution in the bureaucratised states.

Less than ever can we see the passage from today's Fourth International to the mass revolutionary International as a nice straight road, as the linear growth of an International that already exists in miniaturised version. Movement in that direction will mean all sorts of intermediary initiatives and stages. In order to intervene in this recomposition and to orientate it we have to be able to count on our own forces — which are modest but real enough. Whatever the tactical mediations we envisage — fusions and regroupments, entrust operations or interventions in trade union opposition currents — their effectiveness will be determined by the political and organisational solidity of our sections. Accumulating members, forming teams and networks of cadres, implanting ourselves in the key sectors of the working class and modifying our social composition, are in all circumstances the conditions for the success of bold organisational initiatives.

The Fourth International certainly has a lot to do with a programme but just as much as this programme it has to do with the reality, activity and social implantation of its sections.

Today it is grappling with a new stage and new possibilities of building itself with resources, experience, cadres and an implantation which is substantially greater than at the end of the 1960s. This political and human capital can produce good results provided we can lead and come to grips with a real process of change in the International, particularly by the transformation of the social composition of the sections and by a re-definition of its mechanisms of functioning and centralisation.

The sections of the Fourth International have to be re-armed on the Leninist conception of party building. This political weakness is at the root of the "organisational errors" made by many sections in building leaderships, forming cadres, in the internal life of the party, the need for a solid backbone of workers, whatever the tactic of party building adopted. The party will not be spontaneous fruit of radicalisation. Building the party must be considered as a political question in its own right.

A whole series of problems that have come up concerning the building of sections in the present period — including in the form of self-critical balance sheets — will continue to be discussed after the world congress in the national and international leadership structures, particularly in the PB's meetings which have proved to be very useful over the last years. The appendices to this report gives an overview of the problems that have been discussed in these meetings — the August PB's meeting in Europe and the September one in Latin America.

## 2) The turn to industry and proletarianisation

The general resolution of the Eleventh World Congress made the implantation of the sections in the industrial working class an organisational priority for the sections:

"The immediate objective of the Fourth International is therefore to recruit and form proletarian cadres through a deeper and deeper involvement in the class struggle. That must be

focused on the need to carry out a decisive turn to industry, to follow a proletarian orientation."

This turn to industry, as a decisive link in an overall proletarianisation policy, is not itself and on its own a line for building the sections but an organisational measure necessary for correcting deformations linked to the specific conditions of development of the sections, particularly in the imperialist countries, since the end of the 1960s. In this sense it is a bridge to the next stage of party building.

The necessity for this turn flows from the acknowledged social composition of the big majority of sections and on the possibilities opened up by the process of reorganisation of the workers movement, whatever might be the tactical choices of party building, (fusions, entrust operations, fraction intervention in the traditional parties).

Although the social composition of the sections has shifted in the course of the last 10 years from youth to wage earners (factory and office workers) the proportion of industrial workers in the key sectors of public and private industry, transport and telecommunications remains low. In general there are few stable numerically concentrated groups of militants in the same production unit. The spontaneous development of the class composition of the sections tends to reproduce the initial disequilibria — indeed to accentuate the imbalance between the white-collar and industrial workers. Finally, the weight of women in the sections is too weak, both from the point of view of their proportion as well as in terms of the presence of working women, capable of playing a role in the development of a women's movement linked to the working class.

Over and beyond the unevenness in development between the sections, these facts are the sign of an abnormal situation. The emphasis placed on the need for a turn towards implantation in the industrial proletariat therefore is a response to several problems. It aims to correct this imbalance in our implantation which tends to reproduce itself or even to get worse with the spontaneous growth of the sections.

It aims to bring more adequately into alignment the proletarian programmatic definition of the section and their real social base. In particular conditions a minority organisation can remain proletarian essentially from the point of view of its programmatic references. But in the long term the weakness of social roots in the key sectors of the proletariat would certainly produce both political and organisational deformations.

Finally, an implantation in the main sectors of industrial production improves the possibilities of party building whatever the tactical conjunctural choices that may be made. There would be nothing more incorrect than to counterpose an entrust tactic to the proletarianisation efforts and vice versa or again to counterpose the turn to the building of trade union oppositions. In all cases the ability to influence the trajectory of radicalising currents in the workers movement and to recruit the best militants out of them will depend on the presence, activity, and authority in action of revolutionary Marxist militants.

Within the framework of an overall effort at proletarianising our sections we emphasise the turn to the industrial proletariat and particularly getting comrades hired in the big factories, in order to correct a flagrant weakness. That does not in any way imply a theoretical revision — in a restrictive sense — of the definition of the proletariat. Most office workers in commerce, the services, the health sector, banks and administration in the developed capitalist countries are part of the proletariat. But the industrial proletariat concentrated in the main production centres play a decisive strategic role inside the ranks of the proletariat which like all classes is itself differentiated.

Certain leaderships of the sections, after an initial effort, are tempted to relax their efforts or even to abandon the turn. We must on the contrary reaffirm the proletarianisation drive. In a number of sections it is still insufficient in relation to the needs and possibilities, despite the effects of the economic crisis. To make further progress it is useful to distinguish the objective difficulties from the mistaken conception we have had since the Eleventh World Congress decision. This is what the report by USec Bureau to the May 1982 IEC began to do:

Looking back with hindsight we can say that the majority defending the industrial turn at the World Congress presented a series of fundamental arguments for the turn and formed an enthusiastic united front for this decision. But at the same time we have to admit that it didn't succeed in raising the profound discussion of how to carry it through under different circumstances and with the given tradition and characteristics in different parts of our movement. The discussion and argumentation stayed on a quite general level. It succeeded in giving a real impulse to our movement, but had a lack of precision in itself rather understandable at that early stage. This helped to give the decisions taken and the perspectives outlined a voluntarist twist when later translated into national plans in some of the sections underestimating the amount of education and preparation necessary and overestimating the speed with which the industrial turn could be carried through, thus giving unrealistic goals for some sections that had to be corrected over time.<sup>15</sup>

In light of the experiences we have already had it is possible to place the turn to industry in an overall, clearer perspective. It is a *long term party building axis requiring prolonged effort* and is consistent with a strategic perspective in which the industrial proletariat plays a central role and not a short-term gamble about the conjuncture.

It is a *political/organisational project* and not a moral imperative. Rooting ourselves in industry is not an objective in itself but *the means to strengthen an intervention in the struggles and organisations of the working class*. We want to accumulate forces making our sections active, working class political vanguard organisations, distinct from both propagandist groups which say what should be done without having the means themselves to act and from simply militant trade union fractions. Collective implantation inside the workplaces breaks with a de facto conception of party building limited to a spontaneous growth and good propaganda for the united front.

The role of political leadership at all levels is decisive for the proletarianisation and the turn — to politically lead these moves, to situate them within a political line which militants can use to intervene effectively and also to transform the leadership teams themselves. The leading nuclei of the sections, given their origins and experience, often must go through a process of social transformation, parallel to the whole of the sections. Mastering their involvement in the turn should mean we can ensure both a transition and a continuity, the integration of leaders in the turn and the integration into the leaderships of comrades who have made the turn or have been recruited as a result of the turn.

This process is very important for helping us to improve our leadership methods, the follow through of a particular orientation, and the necessary permanent interaction between the definition of the line, its practical results and the necessary corrections to it. Building up a solid network of intermediary leaderships town and sector leaderships is a fundamental condition for this control and correction of central orientations being carried out systematically.

Progress in the proletarianisation project must be shown with concrete facts and figures. But the quantitative criteria adopted in the report given to the Eleventh World Congress (that is, the absolute majority of membership in industry) does not best express the solidity of new implantation or the quality of the intervention. Such a quantitative objective can be attained by a determined effort at getting comrades hired but also by an absolute loss of membership in the non-industrial sectors. It is applied in a blanket way to sections which are at different stages of party building and tends to cover over the specific problems they are facing. It can in certain cases introduce an endless race for the percentage, if the initial results of the turn are not sufficient for producing a higher regular rate of recruitment in industry than in other layers. Consequently it can encourage workerist criteria tending to reduce party building just to its industrial component. The other social sectors then become simple reservoirs for the turn and not fully-fledged areas of work for building a revolution party.

To measure the progress of the turn it would thus be better to combine statistical data with other criteria more significant from the point of view of the quality and stability of the implantation such as, for example, *the creation and consolidation of active*

*cells in the big industrial centres, the development of trade union fractions for each branch of industry, the development of the party in the key industrial regions*. The aim continues to be that the industrial implantation becomes the centre of gravity of the sections. The weight that the implantation in industry will have in the orientation and initiatives of the party, in its internal political life and the concerns of its leadership is not independent from the relative weight of workers in the membership as a whole. Thus the social centre of gravity of our sections has to shift qualitatively and quantitatively. While we reject any short cuts in building our organisations, the effort to proletarianise the sections constitutes the axis for building — if not we run the risk of getting bogged down and allowing the present social composition to reproduce itself.

Just continually reaffirming the need for the turn can become an abstract and routinist moralist battle. It can even become transformed into a theme of activity as such, making the organisation seen weird in the eyes of the workers we want to recruit. Within the framework of an ongoing effort of the proletarianisation project, the turn as such must be paced out in waves, the relaunching of new waves being based on political success in campaigns and struggles, permitting new layers of the membership to be convinced of the effectiveness of the turn.

More generally, while the turn to industry represents the corner stone of the proletarianisation efforts for the sections, the latter cannot be limited to getting comrades hired in industry. It involves a coherent series of measures: recruitment policies, a system of education, a redefinition of internal functioning, the conscious development of a long-term network of leaderships, adapting the system of press and the structures of intervention, a particular attention given to the immigrant workers in the countries where they represent a significant part of the working class.

Initially envisaged for the imperialist countries, the turn to industry was progressively generalised onto a world scale without enough attention being paid to the specific problems that can be posed in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

In these countries social differences between the proletarian or semiproletarian masses and the petty bourgeois layers or between skilled industrial proletariat and the exploited plebian masses of the big towns, are more striking than in the imperialist countries. Situations can vary a great deal from country to country.

But for organisations that originally came out of the student movement or the intelligentsia, the first problem they face is that of a 'turn to the people' — within which the turn to industry is only one element.

In fact the changes in the international division of labour over the last 25 years and the effects of uneven and combined development have in some cases thoroughly shaken up the societies of these countries. For example in the semi-industrialised countries the growth and concentration of a new working class has been accompanied by a rapid growth of both "unregistered" sectors — peripheral to industry and services — employing millions of temporary workers without legal status or trade union membership and plebian layers subject to permanent unemployment or underemployment. These sectors of the masses can be decisive for building a revolutionary party whose role is to be the "caudillo of the nation" (Trotsky), in other words, the force which leads and brings together all the oppressed and exploited of the country.

These economic and social transformations have other consequences. There is thus a structural, not just conjunctural, relationship between, on the one hand recent industrial development, the urban explosion and on the other, the agrarian crisis and the ruin of the peasant's world. So that in many cases the potential for mass struggles in the cities is closely connected to whether there is mobilisation and resistance in the countryside. Thus the Mexican PRT comrades directly link demands for radical urban reform to proposals for a radical land reform.

That is why building a revolutionary party with real implantation in these countries implies not only rooting ourselves in the industrial proletariat but also intervening and building up ex-

15. See Frej's report to the 1982 IEC in IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 7

perience in the poor neighbourhoods and the shantytowns as well as in the countryside.

While the industrial working class is itself very heterogeneous and does not form a social pole of attraction as powerful as the working class in the imperialist countries, nevertheless it constitutes the indispensable backbone for the building of an independent workers movement able to attract and organise other oppressed layers. The relative weakness of the traditional reformist or populist apparatuses means it is possible to directly win workers to a vanguard organisation. The obstacle to such recruitment is often more sociological (ability of the organisation to integrate and aid these militants) than political.

But it is still true that, even for small-sized groups in the process of formation, selected projects of getting concentrated groups of comrades hired can be an indispensable lever for speeding up the transformation of the sections, their recruitment and the concerns of the leaderships.

Finally, we also have had cases in these countries of organisations having an initial proletarian and trade union implantation but whose problem was to extend their intervention, particularly among the peasantry, in order to acquire the status of genuine revolutionary political parties. No simple recipe can resolve in advance the tactical choices to be made case by case in function of the strength and solidity of the sections.

However, it is important that they are attentive to these problems and are ready to set up specific organisational forms or political movements having a mass character: for unemployed, peasants, shantytown dwellers, etc., which the trade union movement occasionally has neither the possibility nor the will to organize.

At the Eleventh World Congress we adopted a resolution that outlined our basic programmatic positions and strategic line of march for the struggle for women's liberation. It also explained the particular difficulties faced by women comrades in our own organisations, and the steps necessary to begin to overcome them.

This text was prepared on the basis of a number of years' experience by the sections, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, or work and recruitment in the women's liberation movement.

The women's movement as it was then constituted — primarily women-only groups based mainly among white collar women workers and students — has declined and fragmented in most of the advanced capitalist countries. At the same time there has been an increased ideological offensive by the bourgeoisie aimed at reasserting in the context of the crisis, that women's place is in the home and not of right to be in the work force.

Our lack of implantation in those sectors hardest hit by this offensive — working class women, immigrant women — made it more difficult for us to participate in the initial struggles women have led against these attacks.

This situation makes it more vital than ever that the fight against women's oppression is integrated into all aspects of our work, and particularly into our intervention in workers struggles and the consistent work of building trade union oppositions. The weakness of our implantation in these sectors of women is part and parcel of our overall weakness of implantation. Thus the measures we take to overcome the general problem must be accompanied by a particular effort to implant ourselves among these sectors of women.

At the same time as the objective situation changed the insufficiency of the internal measures outlined in the resolution at the Eleventh World Congress was put to the test. The inadequate attention given to political education and the integration of women comrades in the leaderships, although obviously not inseparable from the decline of the women's liberation movement, does have a certain autonomy from it.

The basic analyses of the 11th World Congress still hold good, even if the women's movement has changed a lot since then. During the 1970s the women's movement was mainly composed of intellectuals and women workers in the better-paid layers of the white-collar proletariat. The central concern of the movement, which was at the forefront in the advanced capitalist countries, was the right to choose for their own bodies. In some countries it was possible to win a liberalisation of the abortion laws. But the

women's movement of this period found it very difficult to reach out to women workers. In general, the movement did not succeed in linking up in an ongoing way with the struggles that emerged on the questions of equal pay, women's role in trade unions, etc.

Towards the mid-1970s, after the first big upsurge, the women's movement went into crisis because, among other reasons, *it could not provide a perspective for the mass of women in this new situation*. The weakness of the Marxist-feminist current is a partial explanation for this.

Since then, although it has still not achieved a real effectiveness either on the question of demands or in organisation, the women's movement has entered a new phase. Using the crisis as an excuse, the bourgeoisie has launched a new offensive aimed at re-establishing the traditional role of women in the home and refusing women the right to (waged . . .) work. In this context the bourgeoisie emphasises a reactionary family policy, promotes child-bearing and attacks on abortion rights. In the name of encouraging compatibility between family and work, women become the first victims of flexible and precarious work. This pressure is strongest for young and immigrant women.

The women's movement of the 1970s succeeded through its activity and the growth of a feminist culture (press, theory, art, etc) in encouraging the development of a feminist consciousness in the workers movement and among women workers. Without exception, women play a big role in all social, wage and mass struggles. Whether within the organisations of the workers movement or in the German ecology movement of the "Greens", women are coming forward in the leadership and demanding their rights. In this they are fighting for the specific demands of women, but at the same time are at the forefront of the struggle in all progressive struggles. New layers are joining the fight, for example housewives, most often in liaison with workers' struggle for jobs, the struggle of the British miners' wives being a good example, as well as the immigrant women's movement.

Women, and women's self-organisation, thus constitute an important factor in the recomposition going on in the workforce and its vanguard. This is true in all three sectors of the world revolution, even if the starting point and the form of the radicalisation is different each time.

For these reasons, it is more important than ever to integrate the struggle against women's oppression into all aspects of our work, particularly our intervention into labour disputes and building trade union opposition tendencies. The weakness of our implantation in the sectors most affected by the bourgeoisie's new offensive, such as women workers or immigrants has proved a handicap to this up to this point. The measures that we will take to root our organisation more deeply in the proletariat must include efforts to link us to these sectors. *However, the struggle against women's oppression is not reducible to an aspect of the turn to industry*. Our participation in and initiatives leading to mass autonomous action by women and a thoroughgoing feminisation of all our campaigns and our internal life are equally a part of this.

Finally, we are also called upon in the terrain of theoretical analysis. Against the old and new reformism of the women's movement, we must take the offensive in putting forward our feminist, revolutionary Marxist responses.

The insufficient attention paid to the education of women comrades and their integration into the leadership has internal roots, even if it can be linked to the decline of the women's liberation movement. The sections and their leadership must today take the measures outlined in the last World Congress resolution, to ensure that the potential and capacity of women comrades are used to the full in leading the organisations and areas of work, and in making special efforts to recruit women.

### 3) The youth organisations

The turn to industry requires complementary and increased attention being paid to intervention among youth and in building youth organisations. The resolution adopted by the May 1982 IEC<sup>16</sup> emphasized the specific role of the youth radicalisation and the vital necessity for the future of the sections *to win new*

16. Published in *International Viewpoint* No. 10, May 7, 1982

generations of revolutionaries bringing their own experience to the building of the party. The resolution consequently insists on the perspective of building real youth organisations, organisationally independent of the sections once the sections themselves are stabilised and have established their centre of gravity in the working class.

In the present period these organisations are inevitably vanguard organisations and not mass organisations. Their political basis is not a complete political programme or a summary of the Fourth International's programme. It consists rather in a platform for action responding to the burning problems facing youth today: the struggle against racism and the effects of austerity policy, the struggle against imperialism and militarism, campaigns against repression and in solidarity with the liberation struggles of oppressed peoples, solidarity with the antibureaucratic struggles in Eastern Europe, the struggle for women's liberation, etc.

These youth organisations should be really organisationally independent from the sections, turned to militant action and education and not small youth parties, a miniaturised version of the section. It is traditional to say in the workers movement that youth organisations allow new generations, who do not have the weight of past defeats around their necks, to go through their own experiences, to commit and correct their errors. But we should add that this also means that they are sometimes right when the "adult" sections are wrong and can shake the latter out of their routines.

We need to build organisations that are above all geared to action and function around central campaigns. But they should not just be campaign fractions. Stabilising membership and recruitment implies diversifying beyond campaigns and having real areas of work and a sustained educational effort.

The line of proletarianisation adopted by the sections must be expressed in a specific way in the youth organisations. It is not a question of mechanically copying the measures taken in the sections. Getting jobs in industry presupposes a level of consciousness and long term commitment to building the party which is not automatically the case for young people freshly recruited out of campaigns. To turn towards working class youth the youth organisations must first of all define their priorities of intervention among working class youth at work or in technical training and make a methodical effort to orient the professional careers of their own militants, bringing about a movement to making the turn especially among youth who are already members of the party.

Forming youth organisations is a choice which implies heavy responsibilities for the sections. It does not just mean relieving the party of its youth sector or formally granting autonomy to a youth sector which remains under the more or less attentive tutelage of the section. The aim is to create real youth organisations which have close relations of dialogue and cooperation with the section on an organisation-to-organisation basis. This obliges the youth organisation to deal itself with the fundamental problems of youth and to work out its political line.

Fraternal links between the youth organisations and the Fourth International and its sections only have any practical (and not administrative) sense if they correspond to a real experience of trust and collaboration. Without that, such a definition would at best correspond to a formal programmatic agreement unrelated to the consciousness and real activity of the youth organisation and at worst a pure and simple manipulation.

There is a specific problem regarding the explosive situation for young people who are particularly affected by the consequences of the crisis in the dominated countries. Up to now none of the sections in these countries have yet responded by forming a youth organisation. But initial experiences of intervention in the youth movements have been made. These should be the subject of a specific discussion in order to draw the preliminary lessons and work out perspectives for future work.

#### 4) *What sort of centralisation and functioning for the International?*

The necessity for a democratic centralist-based International flows from the internationalisation of the productive forces and of the class struggle. This internationalisation is qualitatively

superior in the imperialist epoch, the epoch of wars and revolutions, to a century ago.

However, workers' economic and political struggles basically still develop within the framework of national states. There is no automatic or spontaneous convergence of struggles to common positions on an international scale. In these conditions, the absence of a conscious internationalist preparation, education and orientation will inevitably lead to deep divisions between the workers of different countries when faced with the actions of a class enemy who is more and more centralised.

Building the Fourth International at the present stage fulfills the irreplaceable function of preparing and educating militants and sectors of the vanguard whom we influence in the priority of international solidarity and unity of action over any "national" considerations once the interests of the proletariat of several countries are concretely at stake. Any lack of such internationalist principles opens the way to "national communist" deformations and to possible conflicts between the workers of different countries.

The forms of functioning and centralisation of the International are not, however, based on timeless principles. They must be defined in terms of the present stage of party building and the tasks which flow from them. This International is not a miniature version of a future mass International equipped with all its structures and functions but an instrument necessary for its construction.

Undertaking to build the Fourth International as it is, without waiting, means categorically rejecting the idea according to which an International will be the natural product of developments in the class struggle and of the spontaneous convergence of revolutionary forces on a national or regional level. The latter approach would in practice result in abandoning an international point of view for diplomatic relations between national organisations. This has been generally verified in the collapse of the best intentioned centrist organisations, both in the 1930s with the London Bureau and at the beginning of the 1970s in Europe. But already today building an International and not a simple coordination of national groups does not mechanically imply adopting illusory and formal forms of centralisation which in practice mitigate against the indispensable dialectic between strategic elaboration and practical experience in each country.

Democratic centralisation of the International above all consists in working out a *common general line on the big questions and the main events of the international class struggle through world congresses and normally elected bodies*. The mechanism of internal discussion should aim at an *effective synthesis of the experience of the International through the mediation of its sections*. Consequently it decides its political positions through congresses and does not merely organise conferences in which the sections exchange pre-established positions on the big international questions. This is also why there can be no imperative mandating of delegates by sections for the world congress or for members elected to the leading bodies of the International.

Our own experience and the history of the Third International has taught us that the centralism which regulates an International — particularly a small one like ours — cannot be mechanical reproduction of the democratic centralism of a national section involved in a struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois state in its country. Democratic centralism on an international level includes respect for *the sovereignty of the sections over the definition of their national political line, over tactics, over the choice of their leaderships and over the organisation of their internal debates* — all this within the framework of the statutes which regulate the life of the International as a whole.

In this sense the International is not an organisation of directly affiliated *individual members*. It is based on the *political and organisational reality of its sections* "which constitute the basic organisational units of the International".

Once these broad points are outlined there remains an area of practical difficulties and of interpretation. Thus, the SWP leadership comrades are now pulling explicitly in a direction which would gut the very notion of an International of any meaning. Inversely, comrade Hoffman and his tendency denounce the laxism and polycentrism of the International without bringing any concrete answers regarding its forms of functioning.

Indeed in his report to the February 1982 SWP Plenum comrade Barnes gives a very particular interpretation of the resolution at the last world congress:

Our view of international democratic centralism is summed up in two paragraphs in the resolution adopted at the 1979 World Congress. These are important paragraphs. Without them, we would not have been able to agree to the political resolution for the last World Congress that dissolved the old factional lines. These two paragraphs meant that we *had* agreed on the dissolution of factions in the International.

Here's what they say:

"To advance party building, the *Fourth International* abides by the norms of democratic centralism both nationally and internationally, with the right to form tendencies or factions guaranteed as was the tradition in the Bolshevik Party in Lenin's time.

"On this point the statutes of the Fourth International include two general provisions on the mode of operation of democratic centralism.

"(1) Decisions taken by a majority of delegates at a democratically organised world congress, the highest body of the Fourth International, are binding on all sections. Decisions taken by the International Executive Committee, which is elected by the delegates to serve as the highest body until the next congress, can be appealed but remain in effect until the appeal is heard and decided on;

"(2) The members of national sections have the right to elect their own leaderships. Democratically organised congresses and plenary meetings of elected national committees constitute the highest bodies of national sections. They have the right to determine political line on all questions nationally, and to interpret and determine for all members of the section the national application of decisions made by the Fourth International."

Notice the word "nationally" in the last sentence. It's an adverb, not an adjective. It doesn't say that the sections have the right to determine political line on all national questions. It says they have the right to determine political line on all questions nationally.<sup>17</sup> (our emphasis)

Comrade Barnes' interpretation is to say the least unilateral and mistaken. It is a radical contradiction of point 1) of the resolution he refers to. Even if his grammatical interpretation of the difference between an adverb and an adjective is correct the last sentence nevertheless is still contradictory since it affirms at one and the same time the sovereignty of the sections over all questions (including international ones) and the duty of sections to interpret for their countries the decisions taken by the leading bodies of the International. Now the word "interpret" does not mean "contradict" and no grammatical sophistication can change that. The contradiction is even more blatant since the statutes of the International — unanimously adopted — explicitly state that Congress decisions must be carried out by all sections. Up to now, cde Barnes has not asked for the statutes to be revised. In fact, behind this quarrel is a deeper, more substantial contradiction which is not evident in the documents but exists in reality.

The International exists as a world organisation with its congresses, its statutes, its elected leaderships. If comrade Barnes were consistent, all that would be in his eyes no more than a useless ceremony. What is the good of elected congresses and leaderships if the sections determine their line in any case on all questions independently of the positions adopted by the International?

At the same time, the International endeavours to respect the sovereignty of the sections in the working out of their intervention in their countries and in the organisation of their internal life. As the sections develop and become more active, so too there are more and more ways in which national and international questions combine in their intervention. Just to take one example, at the last world congress the line of unifying the Trotskyist movement was an international position, but in France or Brazil it became a tactical question of national party building (which in the case of France was opposed by the majority of the section).

This type of contradiction, linked to our present stage of party building cannot be resolved by an formal device. On the contrary we have to look for the framework and norms of functioning allowing us to overcome it through common agreement. Once they have accepted the statutes, participate in world congresses and elect the leadership bodies the *International's legitimacy and authority, which cannot be limited to the sum of its sections* and a

confrontation between positions pre-established at a national level, must be recognised by the sections and leaderships. The latter can make their positions public when they are not in agreement with the International when it is a case of international events directly involving the working people of several countries.

The limits we have in political centralisation come up even more strongly in our organisational centralisation. It would be absurd to think the International can be more centralised and "directive" on organisational matters than on its general political line. For example, that it could tolerate on the one hand a great diversity of positions in its ranks on questions as important as Cuba, Poland, and Indochina, and then define on the other hand universally obligatory party building tactics like the turn to industry or the unification of the Trotskyist movement.

Recognising the sovereignty of sections in the election of their own leaderships and in the organisation of their internal life implies the corollary that sections refrain from public attacks against the line and activity of other sections.

Finally, the international application of tendency and faction rights, recognised by the statutes raises a particular problem, to the extent where it tends to come into contradiction with the principle of sovereignty of sections in the organisation of their internal debates. This contradiction, which increasingly sharpens in proportion to the growth and proletarianisation of the sections, can be partially resolved by a rigorous definition of the international discussion periods and of their form (access to internal bulletins, distribution of documents, trips for representatives of tendencies). On the other hand the contradiction would be worsened by a form of debate that is the heritage (which has not been overcome) of another period of party building when the International was essentially limited to a network of propaganda groups.

The growth and transformation of the International should logically lead to more frequent, regular World Congresses with more limited agendas (focused on the big questions of the day and not a periodic debate of general programmatic refoundation every five years.) Thus a dialectic of effective centralisation — in line with our present resources — could be set up based on the activity and experiences of the sections.

An adjustment of the International's functioning along these lines would impose other corrections, particularly concerning the criteria for recognising new sections. Up to now programmatic agreement in practice was the exclusive criterion, independent of any political and organisational criteria.

This overestimation of general ideological and programmatic criteria has occasionally led to the recognition of groups without the minimum guarantees of stability and activity. Such procedure can in certain cases discredit the project of the International by identifying it with purely propagandistic circles. In the worst of cases it can even lead to creating supplementary obstacles for the building of sections rooted in the masses by conferring on groups, which have not proved themselves, a power of veto over the International's relations with other revolutionary organisations of the country concerned.

This conclusion does not imply any contempt of underestimation of small organisations. Furthermore the problem is not principally a numerical one. In certain difficult circumstances (i.e., illegality) small organisations have shown greater proof of their solidity, the stability of their leaderships and the effectiveness of their intervention than numerically bigger organisations in easier conditions.

But it is an illusion to think that recognition as a section is the first of best aid the International can give to a group in formation. Within the limits of our present resources, political and material aid can be more concrete and effective, without automatically implying or presupposing granting the status of a section. Recognition of new sections by the World Congress should take into account a whole series of political and organisational considerations, such as the real activity, the existence of a regular press, criteria of functioning and minimal implantation.

17. Report adopted by the SWP (US) National Committee March 1982 published in Internal Information Bulletin (SWP) No. 1 in 1982: "Defending the Organisational Principles of a Proletarian Party."

A common acceptance of such criteria would be a proof of maturity on the part of the International as well as the organisations turning towards it. This is more important than the geographical multiplication of groups, which, in some limited cases, have in part a formal existence.

This particular question, tied up with the *progressive uneven and combined transformation of the International and its sections*, was masked by the factional situation of the early seventies. Then it was confused with the circumstantial problems raised by the division of certain sections, obscuring in this way the political significance a real transitional status of sympathising group could have.

5) *What system of leaderships in the International?*

The credibility of the International is based on its capacity to come to grips with its own growth and to invest its general programmatic references into the concrete experience of building its own sections. If its leading bodies restrict themselves to a role of defence and illustration of the programmatic heritage without being capable of intervening in the problems the sections come up against in their development, the centrifugal tensions inherent in the uneven development of the sections will accentuate. Intervening does not mean laying down a line or giving recipes, but *first of all dialogue and collaboration*. Indeed the International and its leaders are above all the product of its sections and of their experience. They also reflect the limits of this experience.

Consequently we have to conceive of the *International leadership as a genuine network of structures and cadres, based on the reality of the sections* and not as a central repository of the programmatic identity of the International. Forming cadres of the International is a conscious, long term task. There is no model of identikit picture of the "political cadre". Cadres are the product of specific stages of party building. Building up a network of leadership teams must aim at integrating the most advanced experiences of the sections, which are themselves in constant evolution, and the experiences and respective qualities of different generations of militants.

With this objective in mind we must set up a *leadership system which internationalises the practice the sections' leaderships*, by associating them closely in the responsibilities of the whole of the International and by ensuring a controlled rotation of certain central tasks.

As concerns the organisation of the leading bodies the system of leadership should be based on the existence of an *International Executive Committee*, both representative of the reality and the diversity of the International and *sufficiently small* to be able to really meet once or twice a year to discuss the key events of the world situation. *The Secretariat must be a real political executive body* made up of comrades directly involved, to varying degrees, full or part-time, in the work of building the International. For the latter to be able to meet frequently and rapidly if necessary, its size should be around 20 members.

We also need a *Bureau* formed by the USec to ensure a full time presence of the executive and to *direct the production of our press, prepare IEC and USec meetings*, coordinate the tasks of members of these bodies, *maintain correspondence with the sections and centralise education*.

Since the last world congress the International's press has been consolidated and extended. Its great weakness remains the irregularity and distribution of *Spanish Inprecor*.

Regarding education, setting up an *international cadre school* has been the most important initiative. This school must be a pivot of a system of formation for section leaderships which in the long term aims at the education and homogenisation of an international nucleus of cadres and the creation of a collective memory of our experience. It should also produce education and research material which must result in a publishing project linked to the school. Such an overall project can only be brought to fruition if it is relayed in the sections by a planned policy of using this school for the formation of their own leadership nuclei.

Once the regular leading bodies of the International are consolidated it is possible and necessary to steadily create a tradition of educational and working meetings, leadership meetings on a regional or continental basis (or meetings dealing with a particular theme). This has got under way on a European and Latin American scale and we can begin this with the Arab countries. In addition a limited effort has to be made on another level to coordinate the work of the youth organisations and, as far as possible, the campaigns.

Experience shows that it is possible to make progress in the centralisation of coordination of central political campaigns (Central America, Poland, antiwar) and to strengthen our still insufficient traditions of defence campaigns against repression. These campaigns can draw in either the whole of the International or more limited geographical regions. On the other hand our implantation is still quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient for an ongoing centralisation of our intervention by sector or industrial branch (this does not rule out conjunctural meetings.)

Fixing the priorities for the coming years in these terms means deliberately deciding to change a whole way of working — where the big questions discussed in the leading bodies of the International and the problems of political line and party building faced by the sections remain on different levels and hardly ever come together. This situation perpetuates and increases the juxtaposition between the International's disproportionate analytical function (as "deposit-holder" of the principles) and the often empirical practice of the sections. The lessons of this practice are often not drawn nor used.

It is not just a case of homogenising the experience of the leaderships of the sections but also of collectivising it, so that it can be assimilated by the International itself. In this way the International can become useful not only as the guardian of the tradition but also increasingly as a relevant political instrument capable of effectively helping the sections.





Photo: Associated Press

Solidarnosc leader Anna Walentynowicz, Gdansk, 1980

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# Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland

## I. The rise of political revolution

1) OF ALL THE political revolutions in which workers have risen up against the totalitarian power of the bureaucracy in the bureaucratised workers states, the Polish revolution of August 1980-December 1981 is incontestably the most advanced. While we should not expect each new revolutionary rise in the workers states to represent a further step in a linear progression, it is nevertheless a fact that the latest one in Poland shows that they are following an ascending course and tend to pose in practice the question of a revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic regime.

In none of the previous cases, except perhaps that of Hungary in 1956, have the workers set themselves the task of assuming direct economic and political power. Never have the workers discussed the tactics so broadly or so extensively worked out the means for achieving this goal as consciously as they have this time. It is true they only have reached this stage of maturity in the most recent months, in the last weeks. Even in the last hours before the proclamation of a state of war, the national leadership of Solidarnosc did not reach the point of adopting the strategy for the seizure of power by the workers. Nevertheless, the workers and the leadership of the mass movement did openly recognize that the question of power was posed and opened a discussion aimed at finding the means to resolve it. This is an original feature of the Polish revolution which constitutes an event of historical importance and reflects a qualitative leap forward in the development of political revolutions as a whole. Thus, the Polish mass movement and its main organisation — the independent self-managed Solidarnosc union — went far beyond the most advanced gains of the mass movements led by strike committees in East Germany in 1953, by workers' councils in Hungary and Poland in 1956, or of Czechoslovakia in 1968-69.

The Polish anti-bureaucratic revolution of 1980-81 unfolded in a country characterised by a whole number of features some of which are specific and whose influence on the course of the revolution is undeniable:

a) The high level of industrial development and a correspondingly educated working class with a leading role and social weight based on the existence of several highly concentrated industrial zones (some firms employing several tens of thousands of workers). The massive movement of agricultural workers into industry has not, however, left the working class in a state of perpetual political "adolescence", contrary to the bureaucracy's intention, since they promoted this process in the hope that that would make it possible to neutralise the social power of the workers. On the contrary, the working class has not become diluted in an alien social milieu. Instead, society has assumed an ever more proletarian character, thereby digging the grave of the bureaucratic regime.

b) The traditions and experiences of the Polish working class in its uprisings against the bureaucratic regime. The explosions of workers' protests in June 1956 (Poznan), December 1970 (Gdansk and Szczecin), and June 1976 (Radom and Ursus factory in Warsaw), made it possible for the Polish workers:

- to lose any confidence they might have had in the ability of the bureaucratic regime, or any fraction of the bureaucracy, to achieve the aspirations of the working class. The myth of the "providential man", embodied first by Gomulka and then by Gierek, no longer had any hold.

- to become convinced, on the basis of their own experience, of the limitations of spontaneous movements and of the necessity of self-organisation.

- to move on to a new form of struggle: the mass strike with occupations. The experience of the workers' self-management mobilisations of 1944-45 and 1956-57 had created a tradition of struggle for workers' control over production and for workers' management of factories; this legacy made it easier for the political revolution of 1981 to find the road to workers' power in the factories as well as in the state.

c) The relative weakness of the power of the bureaucracy that had to confront not only a powerful and experienced working class, but that also had not been able to impose its total hegemony over society as a whole.

In Poland, forced collectivisation did not succeed in cowering the peasantry into accepting the yoke of the bureaucracy. The main sector of agriculture remains in the hands of peasant family units, which give independent working farmers a considerable margin of manoeuvre and facilitate resistance to the state. Moreover, the strength and influence of the Catholic church have buttressed a constant resistance with which the bureaucracy has found itself obliged to seek a compromise, in the framework of an unstable but persistent equilibrium. Between 1971-80, especially after the workers' revolt in 1976, the Catholic hierarchy sought to develop its base in the working class and thus prevent the decline of this influence in society. Its traditional base — the peasantry — experienced a relative weakening in a society which became rapidly urbanised and industrialised. The episcopate thus came to the defence of oppressed workers on a number of occasions, and put forward democratic demands and ones concerning labour legislation (in particular the right to rest breaks, right of independent unions ...). These stances helped reinforce Catholicism by making the church look like an ally and supporter of the oppressed. The existence and force of the Catholic church, appearing to be a political and ideological counter-weight to the bureaucracy, also furthered the development of a plurality of conceptions of the world, and thus the development of more or less critical and independent thought in society. Yet, if this breach in the monolithic control of society favoured the rebirth of an autonomous mass movement, the fundamental conservative role of the Catholic hierarchy worked to hold back the revolutionary process.

d) The closer and closer association of the bureaucracy with certain capitalist forces. During the 1970s, the Polish economy became much more dependent on the imperialist countries, both on the financial and technological levels, which led sectors of the bureaucracy to establish links with foreign monopoly capital and to let itself be corrupted by it. Also sections of the bureaucracy forged links in Poland with certain sectors of a middle bourgeoisie that had accumulated substantial commercial capital speculation.

The bureaucracy also encouraged the development of a capitalist sector in agriculture and built up close ties with it. It gained the right legally to pass on some of its privileges (in 1972, guaranteed resources and pension rights, transmittable to the third generation, were instituted for "people performing leadership tasks in the party and state"). It became more and more under the spell of the values of bourgeois society and developed propaganda favouring a model of a consumer society. It proved unable to make this model a lasting reality, and thus increased the feeling of frustration in society.

e) An economic crisis of unprecedented gravity in the history of the bureaucratised workers states, most glaringly illustrated by a 25 per cent drop in GNP in 1979-81. The foundations of this crisis are social and political. The technical errors of the Gierek team played only a secondary role. This represented a crisis of system of bureaucratic management of the economy. On the one hand, the social character of production has been increasing uninterruptedly, and huge means of production are the property of the state. But on the other hand, a privileged minority enjoys a monopoly of power over the use of the means of production and the social surplus, and disposes of it in the interests of individuals, groups and castes. Bureaucratic privileges come with the post, and every member of the apparatus is conscious that he or she can lose these privileges by losing that post. Only the establishment of a favourable relationship of forces — an alliance with other members of the apparatus — can assure the stability of the post. This leads to competing cliques in the bureaucracy.

In order to preserve privileges for their members, these cliques must constantly reinforce themselves to the detriment of their competitors. These cliques try for maximum investment in the spheres they control in order to expand the number of posts they control. This social phenomenon undermines and distorts planning, as the plan becomes a stake in the bureaucratic lobbies. This phenomenon, which tends to be present in all bureaucratically dominated societies, was of a particular scope in Poland. This was first of all because of the weakness of the Gierek leadership which, straight away in 1971, had to face the working class and yield to its pressure (cancellation of the price rises and a price-freeze after the Lodz strike in February 1971). It was also due to the first version of the 1971-75 plan because it was not definitively adopted until 1973. This greatly weakened the bureaucratic centre's control of the economy. Diverse bureaucratic cliques could thus force through their investment plans, profiting from the godsend of the western credits, securing their positions and preventing any return to the former status quo. Thus planning became more and more formal and the illicit deals between branches, enterprises and industrial associations sealed (up as well as can be expected) the gaps which appeared in the regulatory role of the plan. The exacerbation of shortages due to enormous wastage in the system and to increasing difficulty in getting new western credits encouraged the development of pressure groups. It became more and more difficult, if not impossible, for an enterprise to count on the plan for its supplies. The frenzy of investment that seized Poland under these pressure groups led to an ever-increasing reduction in consumption in the share of the national income, to the benefit of accumulation. Given the price freeze imposed by the working class, this led to a growing shortage in consumer goods, leading to a fall in productivity and to a growing discontentment in the working class. The settling of the repayment of credits (mainly contracted in 1972-74) and, at least partially linked to the economic crisis in the west, the impossibility of finding new loans, imposed a cutting down of imports, increasing the shortage of primary materials, goods and spare parts, which led to a reduction in industrial production. Thus the recessive spiral began. The Gierek regime tried to get out of it by attacking the standard of living of the workers — he did not have the strength.

f) The existence of opposition groups, whose activity within the working class the bureaucracy had been forced to at least partially tolerate since the 1976 revolts, played an important role in the preparation of August 1980.

The creation of the Workers Defence Committee (KOR) in solidarity with the 1976 strikers, victims of bureaucratic repression, made it possible to have an ongoing activity in defence of democratic rights, in particular the rights to strike and to organise. From 1976 to 1980 the activity of the KOR was a symbol of the possibility of united and independent action against the repressive abuses of the regime. The KOR had nourished wide-ranging political reflection, developing the idea of the need for autonomous mobilisation of the "society" and particularly its most oppressed and active component: the workers. Insisting on the role of self-management and on the necessity to create social self-defence organisations and free trades unions, the KOR, although small in numbers, won a broad response in the

working class. Aiding in the development of underground unions and workers' journals it contributed:

- to transforming the multiplicity of workers' struggles of the 1976-1980 period into a common experience of the new vanguard;
- to feeding an open discussion on tactics and strategy in the struggle against the bureaucracy, broadening the struggle from immediate demands to perspectives for the organisation, autonomy and democracy of the social movement.

Other than the KOR, which was the best-known grouping, the role of clandestine workers journals such as *Robotnik* (The Worker), *Robotnik Wybrzeza* (The Shore Worker) etc should be mentioned. The opposition groups played a fundamental role leading up to August 1980. They broke the isolation of the combative workers, encouraged the exchange of experiences, helped the development of a platform of demands and popularised the demand for free trade unions. They constantly organised the defence of victimised workers — often successfully! — which greatly facilitated the rebirth of a workers movement in Poland. Finally the elaboration by *Robotnik* and the *Charter of Workers Rights* of a first workers' programme of action, however limited, played a very big role in the politicisation and unification of the broad workers vanguard.

Nevertheless the victory of the workers in August 1980 — which went beyond the strategic framework elaborated by the opposition — found it disarmed and lagging behind the mass movement. After August 1980, the groups subsequently coming out of the KOR as well as other structures of the opposition no longer played the vanguard role that *Robotnik* and the KOR did during the previous years. On the contrary, the "strategy of self-limitation of the revolution", advocated by militants coming out of KOR and *Robotnik*, among the experts as well as the leadership of Solidarnosc, constantly acted as a brake on the movement and is heavily responsible for its failure.

2) The Polish revolution is characterised and qualitatively distinguished from the beginnings of previous political revolutions in Eastern Europe by the following features:

- This was a mass movement of colossal dimension. Nearly 2 million workers directly participated in the strike wave of July-August 1980. Over 10 million workers — that is, over one-third of the entire Polish population — participated actively in the preparations for the general strike which was cancelled at the last minute in March 1981. Moreover, in the fall 1981, the campus strike movement encompassed the overwhelming majority of student youth. Although less sizeable and more dispersed over time and space, significant mass mobilisations also developed among the peasantry.
- Despite unavoidable fluctuations, the revolutionary wave lasted a long time. The bureaucratic regime only decided to resort to force and stage its counter-revolutionary military crackdown in the eighteenth month of the revolution. On 13th December 1981 the revolution was not defeated and was not in a phase of retreat. On the contrary, the mass movement had entered a new phase of quickening radicalisation several weeks before, and the entire country was in the throes of a directly revolutionary political crisis. What happened in the days following the crackdown showed that the revolutionary potential of the mass movement was far from being exhausted. Workers' resistance to the military dictatorship took on the dimensions of a near-general strike, despite the dismantling of the Solidarnosc organisation and leadership structures in the wake of a powerful repressive operation. In many factories, and especially in the mines, the police and army had to resort to violence in order to break the strike.
- The social composition of the mass movement was predominantly working class. The working class was not only the main driving force of the Polish revolution; it was its directing force. This is an undeniable fact recognised by all the other sectors who participated in the revolution: the students in revolt, the democratic intellectuals, the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the active sectors of the peasantry. The highly concentrated industrial zones were the centres of the mass movement and the large factories were the fortresses of the revolution. They set the tone insofar as forms of struggle,

demands, forms of organisation, and pace of mobilisation of the workers were concerned, and thereby put an unquestionably working-class stamp on the unfolding revolution. All the nonworking-class sectors of the movement were aware that their own chances of gaining success in the struggle depended entirely on the support of the large factories.

- The mass movement was distinctly organised even though it drew great strength from its spontaneous tendencies. The wage workers achieved the highest level of organisation: 9.4 million out of 13 million members of the Solidarnosc union. The best organised were the productive workers in heavy industry. In the other social layers, the level of organisation was distinctly less. Only a minority of the peasantry and student youth were unionised, even though the students showed their organisational capacities on certain occasions, such as during strikes involving occupation of the universities.
- The mass movement was independent of the bureaucracy, whether state or party apparatus, and it uncompromisingly defended its independence. Evidence of this is the determination with which Solidarnosc opposed the attempt of the bureaucracy to intervene in the debate over its statutes by means of the courts. The high level of working-class independence was already obvious in the August 1980 strike. Instead of massively leaving their factories and rallying in front of PUWP provincial committee headquarters, as they had done previously, the workers entrenched themselves in the factories they occupied, thereby forcing the representatives of the bureaucratic regime to come negotiate with them on their own grounds. This independence was subsequently confirmed at the time of the move to organise independent unions — the first and most important demand of the workers. It is true that for several months there were still illusions in the mass movement about the possibility of negotiating with the bureaucracy, of achieving a more or less lasting compromise based on the recognition of a series of democratic gains of the working class and society as a whole. It is obvious that there were still illusions about the good will of certain figures and factions in the bureaucracy. But the workers rejected any subordination to this or that sector of the bureaucratic apparatus, and likewise refused to grant it any kind of legitimacy.

3) In the course of the revolutionary rise, various forms of struggle and organisation emerged that brought the workers closer to the conquest of power. The first was the movement of workers' self-management that was concretised in the formation of workers' councils in the factories; these tended to become centralised, first on a regional level, and then on a national level. Solidarnosc's experiment with supervising distribution and the system of rationing of essential products significantly contributed to developing workers' control over the economy, even though it was limited to only one region. The challenge to bureaucratic power was sharpened by the emerging forms of citizens' self-management on a territorial basis which corresponded to the mass movement's demands for free elections to the Diet, as well as the provincial and municipal councils. In the last few days before 13th December all these movements were becoming intertwined with the preparations for the active strike. This was the angle from which the workers intended to challenge the bureaucracy's power, beginning with its economic power.

The qualitatively new degree of the Polish experience, in comparison with the previous experiences in the Eastern European countries, whether in the scope, duration or depth of class independence, was finally summed up at programmatic level by the putting forward of self-management as both dual power and embryo of the future socialist society.

In the past, the bureaucracy first disarmed and then dismantled the workers' factory councils that had been the main gains of the Polish political revolution in 1956. For this they used the "law on workers' self-management" imposed in 1958, which substituted the control over production exercised by the workers' councils for that of fictional "co-management" bodies called the "Workers Self-management Conference" (KSR). But despite all this, the Polish working class did not allow its aspirations towards self-management to be taken away.

As soon as Solidarnosc was formed, it took the name of the "independent self-managed trade union", testifying to the masses' desire for independence from the state, and the workers' desire to organise themselves on the basis of the principles of self-management. As soon as the first stage of the struggle was reached, that is the creation of the independent union, the dynamic of the mass movement led it to confront the two main daily aspects of the bureaucratic dictatorship: the anarchy of production and distribution on the one hand; and the all-powerfulness of the factory directors designated by the state on the other. One of the first measures adopted spontaneously by Solidarnosc on this was to deny any legitimacy to the KSR and to boycott it, and then to demand real workers' self-management, and begin to create workers' councils similar to the 1956 ones.

From January 1981, one can note the appearance of the first workers' councils in the workplace, which began to exercise workers' control over production and to fight for workers' self-management. The first slogan raised in this fight was for all power to go to the workers in the factories. One can also note growing disputes in an increasing number of enterprises over the nomination of directors. Solidarnosc demanded that their nomination should cease to be an affair of the state, on the basis of the party *nomenklatura*, and that the directors should be nominated solely and independently by the workers' councils, on the basis of a public examination. In a number of enterprises the directors were forcibly expelled or obliged to resign, and the workers' councils organised examinations for the post of director.

The workers' councils, or the temporary commissions set up by Solidarnosc, took on the job of controlling the factory management, pay and work conditions, and even worked out new plans for organising the work. They also worked out plans for organising the enterprises and for co-operation between them, as well as alternative investment and production plans, in keeping with the criteria of satisfying social need.

The bureaucracy tried to recuperate the self-management movement by imposing a reductionist orientation. For one section of the bureaucracy, its technocratic-reformist wing, self-management was destined to remain a system of co-management allegedly allowing the participation of the workers in the production and thus guaranteeing an economic reform project and the marginalisation of Solidarnosc. Utopian during the period of the legal existence of the independent union, this project was not totally abandoned after 13th December. Another narrow conception of self-management existed within the union itself.

The constitution of a network of the major enterprises in spring 1981 testifies to the spread of the demand and practice of self-management, to its first steps towards inter-regional co-ordination, and pointed to a dynamic of extension of dual power.

The Network of the big enterprises, a pressure group within Solidarnosc, brought the necessity of developing self-management bodies to the forefront of the strategic debate within Solidarnosc. But its project, formulated around the elaboration of a reform project constituting the basis for a new compromise between Solidarnosc and the regime, did not allow it to respond to the questions raised by the extension of self-management bodies.

The economic advisers linked to the Network, interested by a reform corresponding to the theory of "market socialism", only supported the self-management movement insofar as it seemed to them to be a way of pressurising the central bureaucracy and wringing some concessions out of it in the direction of such a reform.

At the same time, they were opposed to the movement towards centralisation of the workers' councils, which was in contradiction with their project of "market socialism", as well as to the radicalisation of the self-management movement, because this went against their desire for a compromise with the bureaucracy. The intervention of these economists, and the pressure that they exerted in the corridors on the leadership of Solidarnosc and the Network, contributed to the slow progress of centralisation and radicalisation in the struggle for self-management, and of the mass movement in its position on the question of power.

It was to respond to these difficulties that the "Lublin Group" was formed in July, insisting on the regional coordination of the workers' councils through permanent bodies, on the necessity of preparing the conditions for the first national congress of delegates from the workers' councils, and to establish an integrated system of workers' self-management throughout the nationalised sector of the economy. The group thought it necessary to "formulate and present a steering plan to the workers' self-management bodies for activities in the short term", and to proceed to its further elaboration.

Finally, in the culminating stage of autumn 1981, the programme of Solidarnosc referred to the perspective of a "self-managed republic" as the overall project for the Polish workers' struggle. At the same time there was a growing need for real experiences of self-management. Given the poverty of the society, the idea of taking responsibility for food supplies through the "winter commandos" organised by Solidarnosc took shape. Moreover, the idea of the active strike as a means of extending and imposing self-management of the enterprises became a real perspective for Solidarnosc and the workers' councils in Lodz and certain other regions. This was energetically supported by the Lublin Group. There was also progress in the co-ordination and democratic centralisation of the movement for workers' self-management with the creation of the Constituting Committee of the National Self-Management Federation (KZ-KFS), based on the regional co-ordinating commissions of the workers' councils, which existed in more than twenty regions.

Thus, at every stage of the crisis, workers' self-management, as a means of action as well as a general aim, showed its transitional and unifying character for the whole class, even if some sectors lagged behind in comparison to the most advanced fringes.

## II. Why was the counter-revolution victorious?

4) The bureaucracy's response to the rise of the mass movement and the political radicalisation of the workers was the 13th December crackdown. The political counter-revolution launched on that day was intended to shore up the crumbling power of the bureaucracy and preserve its privileges as a parasitic caste. The fact that it had to resort to the army and establish a military junta — an unprecedented move in the so-called "socialist countries" — reflected both the extent of the paralysis of the central administrative apparatus and the depth of the PUWP's crisis. The party had been shaken by violent internal struggles between rival factions, drained by the departure of 2 million members, especially workers, and become clearly incapable of exercising its "leading role". Only the repressive apparatuses — the police and the army — were still in a position to re-establish bureaucratic order. This is the reason for the resort to tanks and guns. Arrests and internments by the thousands, the ban on travel inside the country, the disconnection of the communications network, the curfew, the massive firings, and the various other measures of intimidation, all were essential to decapitate the union and impose silence on a social movement embracing ten million people. The scale of the Polish proletariat's defeat was indicated by the loss of democratic and trade-union rights which the working class had wrested from the bureaucracy in the course of its fierce eighteen-month struggle. Overnight, the proletariat was deprived of the right to strike. The brutal lengthening of the working week as well as the militarisation of the key productive enterprises, the suspension of the Solidarnosc union — followed by that of the students' and peasants' organisations — and the abolition of all freedom of expression, clearly showed the ruling clique's determination to press its assault on the mass movement to the bitter end.

The abolition of the workers' right to organise freely in the union of their own choosing — undoubtedly the most significant political advance over previous revolutionary rises in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland itself — interrupted the development of a situation of dual power. Thus, it abruptly halted the revolutionary process in which the working class was demonstrating its capacity to run its own affairs.

In this regard, the seriousness of the blow dealt to the Polish working class on 13th December, at a time when the revolu-

tionary nature of the situation that emerged in the last few months had become clear, should not be under-estimated. This was indeed the beginning of a political counter-revolution — a counter-revolution designed to crush the movement while there was still time.

5) The 31st August 1980 Gdansk Agreements that recognised the workers' right to build their own mass independent organisations represented a magnificent victory of the Polish workers. But they also represented a compromise, because while the power of the bureaucracy was weakened, it was not overthrown. The bureaucrats were able to force a formal recognition of their monopoly of power in a clause of the Agreements that stated that the union to be set up would recognise "the leading role of the party in the state".

Nevertheless, this type of formal recognition could not guarantee the bureaucracy's continued grip on power at a time when it was proving incapable of meeting the social needs of the working class and could not even keep production going at its previous level. The workers very rapidly moved to demand the removal of incompetent bureaucrats which raised the spectre that more of these officials become "unemployed", that is might lose their status and privileges. Moreover, the fact that the protest movements spread to all layers of society while conflicts in the factories, both on economic and social issues, were increasing and workers' councils were spreading throughout the country and beginning to unite in co-ordinating bodies, first on the regional, and then on the national levels, tended to bring the scattered struggles together and turn them into a central confrontation with the state. A struggle to the death had begun between the tottering regime of the bureaucracy and the emerging power of the workers. A confrontation was inevitable.

6) Far from ushering in a period of stability and peaceful co-existence, the Gdansk Agreements led to an increase in partial and local conflicts. The moderate wing of the trade union, backed up by the majority of the experts and strongly supported by the Catholic hierarchy, sought to direct the movement into safe channels and prevent a confrontation. In the first few months, this sector had clearly had a strong influence on Solidarnosc. But in a society based on the nationalisation of the means of production, all economic issues immediately take on a political dimension. All immediate demands raise problems involving the reorganisation of production, revising the plan, economic reform, etc... The question posed was: Who runs the economy and in whose interests? Who rules? The working class or the bureaucracy?

Faced with its obvious inability to confine the union to the field of material demands, the moderate currents put forward the strategy of "self-limitation" of the revolution. According to this strategy's supporters, it was possible to wrest a series of concessions from the Polish bureaucracy by adopting a step-by-step approach that would never exceed certain boundaries and especially not challenge the "geo-political context" in which the country found itself, so as to prevent a military intervention by the USSR. According to them, the main danger of a confrontation came from the Soviet bureaucracy and not from the Polish bureaucracy, which was split and weakened. A guarantee of Soviet interests, tolerating the appearance of bureaucratic power emptied of all meaningful content in Poland, would allow the country to avoid the confrontation. This assessment underestimated the Polish bureaucracy as an opponent and underestimated its fierce determination to defend its own interests. This was most obvious during the negotiations for a "National Accord" that the supporters of "self-limitation" presented as desirable for its own sake. Since the bureaucracy no longer had anything to concede in exchange for a compromise, it demanded nothing less than the total subordination of Solidarnosc within a body that it would completely control. Its determination to safeguard its privileges by any means necessary was also obvious in the 13th December crackdown, which produced surprise and disarray among those who expected the military intervention to come from the Soviets.

Along with the hope of escaping a confrontation, another illusion prevailed in Solidarnosc. It was rooted in the very history of the eighteen-month struggle in which the union had always

found a way, despite hesitation, to wrest new concessions from the bureaucracy. Many activists also believed the movement could continue indefinitely feeding on its own victories, that the support it enjoyed from the overwhelming majority of the population and its strength — ten million workers poised for a general strike to defend their union — would be sufficient to force the government to retreat.

7) These illusions kept the movement from preparing for the confrontation. It is true that the revolutionary currents that favoured the development of control over production and distribution, initiated the idea of the active strike and understood the importance of co-ordinating the activity of the workers' councils, clearly perceived the need to create a more favourable relationship of forces that would allow for new advances. But they did not have time to set up a national structure and had few spokespeople in the Solidarnosc national leadership chosen by the first congress of delegates. Solidarnosc's first conference gave the movement its goal of a self-managed republic — a concept formulated as is inevitable in the mass movement, with various weaknesses and imperfections — that is, a democratic workers state, based on the socialisation of the means of production, a planned economy and political pluralism.

But because there was no significant presence or coherent intervention by revolutionary militants, the conference could not clearly spell out how such a republic could have been established. Neither the question of power, nor *a fortiori* the strategic and tactical road to its seizure, were posed or discussed from at this congress. The national leadership elected from the conference was therefore very heterogeneous on these questions, and for good reasons only imperfectly represented the advances on this question which appeared in the base a month later.

This is a reason why, in the decisive weeks of autumn 1981, Solidarnosc lacked a coherent approach on the goal to be pursued and the means to achieve it. For lack of a correct evaluation of the enemy it confronted, the union leadership could not in time formulate an alternative to that of "self-limitation". The decisions voted at the National Commission were often contradictory and could not be implemented. Faced with the question of power and an increasingly radical rank and file, the leadership hesitated and beat about the bush. The last meeting of the National Commission on the eve of the putsch gave a good picture of the contradictions that beset the organisation. Alongside the programmatic advances that reflected a revolutionary viewpoint and were formulated by the Lodz, Cracow, and Warsaw leaders, came the hesitations of Lech Walesa and the Jan Rulewski proposal to hold free elections, which did not take into account the need to take the initiative in the confrontation with the bureaucracy. This is why the government was able to paralyze the mass movement without itself suffering paralysis from a general strike. In revolution as well as in counter-revolution, whichever side takes the initiative gains a considerable advantage because it can use its own centralisation against the scattered resistance of its opponent.

8) The 13th December setback was not a foregone conclusion. On the one hand, the bureaucracy had only unreliable troops at its disposal. The broad mass of the soldiers were not ready, of themselves, to let themselves be used in a civil war, while they were not ready either to go over to the side of the workers just like that. Fraternisation between the troops and the workers must be prepared a long time in advance by activities of the workers' movement on behalf of the soldiers, their right to organise independently of the military hierarchy, the defense of victims of repression inside the military institutions, and the development of links between union structures and the barracks. These are all tasks that, aside for a few rare exceptions, were not assumed by the leadership of Solidarnosc because of its illusions in the Polish army, which it saw as a natural ally against the Soviet enemy. Moreover, we should stress that before they will go over to the side of the workers, soldiers must be convinced that the struggle at hand is not a mere skirmish, that the workers are determined to go all the way and replace the power of the bureaucracy with their own. A national strike in which production was resumed under workers' control could have created such conditions.

While some regional leaderships of Solidarnosc and the self-management movement had begun to undertake the elaboration of emergency plans in the last period, they were unable to complete their work before 13th December 1981.

Obviously, their work was obstructed by the reticence, and sometimes the fierce opposition, of the moderate currents in the leadership of Solidarnosc who correctly thought that the tactic of the active strike posed the question of power. Solidarnosc was the only structure on a national — and often the only one on a regional — level that could have initiated and led an active strike in the fall of 1981. Workers' councils did not yet exist in all factories, or were only being set up at the time. Regional co-ordination of the councils did not exist in the whole country and was only beginning to get organised. The National Federation of Self-Management had not yet acquired full legitimacy in the eyes of the masses.

When it became clear that the initiative in this field would not come from the national leadership, some regions decided to begin preparations for the active strike without further delay (Lodz, Silesia, Warsaw, Stalowa, Wola), but they were unable to carry them through to completion for lack of time. The debate only surfaced on a national scale and with force within the leadership of Solidarnosc a few hours before the crackdown.

Because they did not understand what was brewing, in particular when the School of Fireman Cadets in Warsaw was forcibly evacuated ten days before 13th December the leadership of Solidarnosc did not call for the general strike that the workers were ready for — in several regions at least — and that would have allowed the union to regain the initiative.

In the autumn of 1981, there was therefore a race against time between the bureaucracy and the social movement which, in important sectors, was just beginning to pose the question of power through its preparation of active strikes. However, although the bureaucracy knew what it was doing, the national leadership of Solidarnosc, even on the eve of the coup, did not. From this fact, the social movement did not have the political and military means which it needed to confront the bureaucracy. The lack of a revolutionary organisation, capable not just of propaganda on the question of power, but also of preparing such a confrontation, was responsible for such a situation. Moreover, the lack of an organised revolutionary socialist current, able to speak for the idea of an active strike which was surfacing in the mass movement together with the proposal for workers' militias, prevented such currents by and large from gaining a hearing on Solidarnosc's national leadership.

If a revolutionary organisation had existed in Poland at that time, it would have had to:

- support and propagate the preparation of an active strike, proposed in several areas, so that such a strike could rapidly have taken on a national character;
- develop and inject into the social movement agitation in favour of trade unions for soldiers (conscripts as well as professionals) and the police. The soldiery and the police would have been able to count on absolutely massive support for trade union rights and the right to strike — a battle which also had to be supported in the soldiery. Soldiers and police had to win workers' support for demands such as the right to elect their superiors, the right to belong to the workers' trade unions, and the right to refuse orders which attacked their dignity or threatened the democratic gains of the masses. Finally, the revolutionary organisation would have fought for the dissolution of the special repressive bodies of the state (ZOMO — Motorised police units, SWS, the military police) and the military tribunals;
- fight for the centralisation and development of workers' committees and their national representation in a second chamber of producers — first step on the road to a national conference of workers' and peasants' councils. Such a second chamber need not have been counterposed to the demand for free elections to the Diet, a natural and spontaneous demand in a country which for decades had suffered a bureaucratic dictatorship, though it is the second chamber which should have been granted sovereign economic powers so that it would substitute itself for the bureaucratic planning mechanisms

whose inefficiency and incompetence needed no further demonstration;

- put forward, in the heart of the mass movement, and in particular within the factory workers' councils, the idea of a nationally and regionally centralised workers' defence guard. Such a defence guard, apart from the self-defence of the trade unions, could have guaranteed the functioning and security of the principal means of communication and telecommunication at the service of the whole society, and stop any attempt by the bureaucracy to put them out of service or reserve them for its exclusive use;
- develop a major propaganda campaign in order to make workers aware of the necessarily international nature of their struggle and hence of the international character of the relation of forces to be established against the bureaucratic power; with the establishment of links between Solidarnosc and many Western workers' organisations, and with the appeal launched by Solidarnosc aimed at the workers of the East, the movement took its first step in this direction, but it was far from enough. Solidarnosc could and should have set up a foreign language information service concerning its goals and its struggles, and addressed itself to everyone willing to support it, asking them to circulate its information in their own countries, taking initiatives with a view to circulating, at least in the surrounding countries (GDR, Czechoslovakia, USSR), information on its struggles. Solidarnosc would equally have been able to propagate, at home and abroad, information on its fight against repression in these countries, supporting their struggles (particularly those of the oppressed nationalities in the USSR). A revolutionary organisation would have spared no effort to bring about international objective convergences between its struggles and the peace movement in the first instance — so that this objective convergence could translate itself into a subjective community. It would have constituted an important element in the political relationship of forces which the Polish revolution had to impose on the bureaucracy. Also, such a revolutionary organisation would have deployed all necessary resources to ensure that Solidarnosc supported anti-imperialist and anti-dictatorial struggles by oppressed peoples — in the first instance in Nicaragua, Salvador, Chile and South Africa — understanding that such a position would also have constituted a precious element for improving the relationship of forces between Solidarnosc and the bureaucracy;
- propose that Solidarnosc, together with the regional structures of the workers' councils and the National Self-Management Federation (KFS) should help elaborate an urgent plan for economic reconstruction and to get production going again. The elaboration of such a plan at national level would have constituted precious support for the workers' councils efforts to get control over production. Applying it — with the support of the active strike — would have contributed to reinforcing the emergent power of the workers and to creating the subjective conditions for the overthrow of bureaucratic power.

In the autumn of 1981, conditions were ripe for such steps. Moreover, the masses were ready to take this road. What was missing was the knowledge of how to take such steps on the part of a recognised mass leadership. What was missing was the experience of the revolutionary workers' movement which only a revolutionary organisation could have brought to the masses. Such an organisation cannot be constituted spontaneously, above all in a situation where the workers' movement has for the first time in decades succeeded in constructing an independent movement — the revolutionary upsurge in Poland, of an exceptionally long duration, shows once more how necessary it is. The Fourth International, in spite of its efforts since 1956, also bears responsibility for the absence of such a revolutionary organisations, even embryonic, from the outset of the revolutionary upsurge in Poland. An organisation of this character must be built if the next revolutionary upsurge in Poland is to be victorious.

### III. The general political lessons about the political revolution that emerge from the Polish experience

9) The rise of the political revolution in Poland after the summer of 1980, and the 13th December 1981 counter-revolutionary crackdown, have shed new light on the post-capitalist nature of the society dominated by bureaucratic dictatorship that exists today in the USSR and other bureaucratized workers states. The entire revolutionary dynamic, the nature of the political, economic, social and ideological conflicts that shook Polish society, were qualitatively different from those that distinguish the revolutionary rise of workers in a capitalist country. The focus of the struggle was not the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. Rather it was the question of the abolition of the monopoly over the management of nationalised property and the state appropriated by a privileged bureaucracy under the ideological cover of the "leading role of the party". The central question posed by social and political struggles in Poland 1980-81 was not "capitalism or socialism", but "bureaucratic power or workers power".

Neither the nature of the economic crisis nor the nature of the solutions proposed in various quarters had anything to do with any sort of capitalism, even be it some hypothetical "state capitalism". There was no crisis of overproduction of commodities. There was a crisis of under-production of use-values. There were no massive layoffs caused by the profitability or bankruptcy of firms. There was a shortage of raw materials, spare parts, and consumer goods accompanied by a relative surplus of means of payment.

The under-production of use-value, the lack of raw materials, of spare parts, the authoritarian and anti-egalitarian planning, carried out to the sole benefit of the bureaucracy — all that was rejected as a whole by the Polish revolution.

The fundamental question posed by the revolution was "who rules?", posing the problem of what is the content of real socialism. Thus, for the majority of Polish workers, the rejection of economic constraints (price rises, poverty . . . ) was never a simple rejection of unequal division according to the "bourgeois" norms of social wealth. This rejection was one of the consequences of a way of decision-making, of a power-structure where the workers had to submit without ever deciding, accept sacrifices and put up with inequality without ever controlling the use of the social wealth.

The problems of distribution and share-out are only the tip of the iceberg: the central question is that of economic decision-making power, bureaucratic monopoly of the organisation, orientation and control of production.

All this is the result of an economic policy designed to satisfy the interests of a deeply divided parasitic caste whose internecine struggles for control of the social wealth were reflected in its anarchic decisions, catastrophic lack of foresight, leading to such a thorough breakdown of the plan that only a caricature of centralised planning was left standing. The workers tended more and more not only to demand the elimination of social injustices arising from the bourgeois norms of distribution, but also to impose social controls in order to prevent the bureaucracy from utilising these norms to strengthen its privileges and divide the working class. They had understood, most of them instinctively but many also consciously, that the problems of distribution were directly connected with the problems of power and particularly with problems of organising, orienting and controlling production.

This fundamental conflict between the bureaucratic management apparatuses and the workers in the enterprises explains the polarisation of the workers' movement and Solidarnosc around the self-management slogan, through the creation of self-management councils, bodies of workers' control and power. What was at stake was the aspiration towards direct management of the productive apparatus in the enterprises and the country as a whole. On the basis of this, the Polish workers adopted an overall response to the problem of transition, while starting to put it into practice.

This rise in consciousness did not proceed in a linear fashion, and we cannot claim that the movement responded in the same

way everywhere and at every time during the revolutionary process. The project of the active strike particularly shows this but the growing process of maturation went continuously in the direction of the workers taking charge of the means of production and co-ordination.

While the Polish workers clearly demanded direct power within the socialised enterprises ("nobody is putting forward the re-privatisation of the means of production" declared the economist Edward Lipinski at the Solidarnosc congress), a certain number of experiences and writings affirm the necessity of a partial and controlled return to market laws for certain branches of the economy or certain enterprises.

This type of concern, reinforced by the omnipotence of the bureaucratic regime over the economy and its negative consequences, will undoubtedly come up again in the future revolutionary developments in the East.

Despite all pressures, whether they emanated from the regime or from the technocratic wing of the movement for self-management, the workers counterposed elementary class behaviour to the siren songs offering competition between firms and between individuals as the means of resolving the crisis. To the exaltation of so-called market economy values, they counterposed the co-operation of producers. To the project of competition between individual enterprises, they began to counterpose the co-operation of enterprise workers councils through a democratically elaborated and adopted plan.

They looked for salvation in solidarity, in the takeover by the workers themselves of the management and co-ordination of the enterprises, in the collective deciding of priorities concerning the use of resources, in challenges to excessive economic investments which often meant duplication of efforts, in the upgrading of social investments in the struggle against inequality and injustice in the field of distribution.

All these key values of a radical reorganisation of planning, including its aims, methods, and organisational framework, are clearly proletarian and socialist in nature. They confirm the fact that, had the anti-bureaucratic political revolution triumphed, the social and economic foundations of the workers state would have been consolidated, not weakened, let alone destroyed.

10) Similarly, the rise of the political revolution in Poland, as well as the beginning of the counter-revolution of 13th December 1981 have confirmed that the bureaucracy is not a class like the bourgeoisie, the feudal nobility, or the slave-owners. The bureaucracy is not the agent of a specific mode of production. It does not have distinctive roots of its own in the process of production. Today like yesterday, its rule does not contribute to a further development of productive forces. It does not exercise any economically necessary function, not even in the process of accumulation. For all these reasons, it is led to deny its own existence and to hide its functions behind those of the proletariat and its vanguard, to continue to lay claim to Marxism, perverting it and using this deformed version for its own ends.

But when the bureaucracy finds itself in a permanent situation of open conflict with 10 million workers, the absurdity of its claims becomes glaring. It becomes clear that the management functions that the bureaucracy have usurped could be fulfilled instead by the working class; that far from ensuring the reproduction of the existing social and economic system, even with its own contradictions, it acts to undermine the foundations of the system and to prevent the full potential of the system from being realised on accordance with the system's own internal logic. In none of the previous anti-bureaucratic revolutions had the essentially parasitic nature of the bureaucracy become so evident to the masses as during the rise of the political revolution in Poland.

This is reflected not only in the fierce disputes over the management of enterprises counterposing the bureaucracy and the workers who aspired to workers' self-management. It was reflected even more clearly in the workers' participation in the preparations for the active strike. "The enterprises will go on running during the strike. Production and exchanges will continue; only the government will have nothing to say", warned Stefan Bratowski in a letter to the Central Committee of the PUWP in October 1981. He was voicing the more and more

widespread attitude of the workers. The understanding of the superfluous nature of the bureaucracy as a ruling layer, and the workers' ability to do without it in the management of the economy and the state, were its main features.

However, the fact that the bureaucracy is not a class does not imply that it has no resources of its own or that it automatically becomes powerless whenever the proletariat begins to turn against it. The power of the bureaucracy lies in its control over the use of both the means of production and the social surplus through its exclusive monopoly of power within the state apparatus.

Moreover, the bureaucracy is conscious of its collective material interests. It obstinately hangs on to power, displaying even desperate courage in the face of the worst temporary setbacks. It is capable of promoting diversions, of backing off temporarily, of making significant concessions, of giving in, even formally, on principles, as long as it continues to control the centres of power and remains in a position to prepare a repressive counter-attack.

This is why the idea that the bureaucracy can reform itself in the direction of democracy is an illusion. Equally deceptive are the proposals that the bureaucratic power be subjected to social control or be forced to accept the participation of democratically elected workers' representatives in the fundamental decision-making of the regime. These ideas — which the Solidarnosc mass movement gradually moved away from as a result of its own experiences in successive confrontations with the bureaucracy — underlay the strategies of self-limitations and national agreement, seen as a historic compromise, that were advocated by many experts of the leadership of Solidarnosc, and even, almost until the very end, by the majority of tendencies in the leadership of the union. However, such ideas were alien to the bureaucracy, not for ideological reasons, but because it could only preserve its power and privileges if the proletariat remained atomised and passive. And, of course, such a situation ceases to exist as soon as the slightest genuine workers' democracy is instituted.

11) In a transitional society, where totalitarian power is exercised by the bureaucracy, the repressive machinery of the state and its different apparatuses are parasites on the body of society. The essential political task of the working class in an anti-bureaucratic political revolution consists of destroying these apparatuses of domination. The interests of the working class, the poor peasantry, and of all the other layers of society oppressed by the bureaucracy coincide with this task. In a transitional society under bureaucratic dictatorship, all these layers are united by the fact that the bureaucratic machine oppresses them, crushes them, exploits them. To *smash* this machine, *demolish* it, is inevitably in the interest of the majority of the "people".

The bureaucracy, unlike the bourgeoisie, does not have deep roots in the socio-economic system. But this is precisely why it clings to the apparatuses that provide it both with its livelihood and monopoly over the exercise of power. During a political revolution, the bureaucracy is forced to resort to even more brutal than usual repression against the workers, and this leads it to reinforce the state machine.

What Trotsky defined as the tasks of the political revolution — "the violent overthrow of the political rule of a degenerated bureaucracy" — follows from the fact that: "There is no peaceful outcome for this crisis. No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off its own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight. The development obviously leads to the road of revolution.

"With energetic pressure from the popular mass, and the disintegration inevitable in such circumstances of the government apparatus, the resistance of those in power may be much weaker than now appears. But as to this, only hypotheses are possible. In any case, the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force. And, as always, there will be fewer victims the more bold and decisive is the attack." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder Press, p. 287.)

On the other hand, the political revolution by itself by no means puts an end to all the problems which arise in the transition from capitalism to socialism and the need for a workers state that derives from them. It must reconstruct the apparatus of a

new type of state, much more integrated into the proletariat and under its control, notably in the military, juridical, administrative, economic, etc., fields. The Polish revolution has given useful information in both these regards.

For one, the first victory of the Polish workers over the bureaucracy was reflected in the destruction of one of the apparatuses of bureaucratic power. The strike committees' winning of the workers' right to organise independent unions in August 1980, later, after the emergence of Solidarnosc, turned into a fight in which the state trade-union apparatus was largely dismantled and demolished (not completely though, since the bureaucracy remained in power). Even though the power of the bureaucracy was not challenged as such, the self-organisation of the workers involved the destruction of one of the apparatuses that under bureaucratic rule make up the state machine.

As the movement for economic reform based on workers' self-management developed, other state apparatuses — those that give the bureaucracy its economic power — were subjected to pressures tending to destroy them. An often fierce struggle broke out to prevent the nomination of enterprise directors on the basis of the PUPW *nomenklatura*, and to get the compulsory enterprise associations and industrial ministries disbanded. The workers proposed various solutions to replace the bureaucratic apparatuses that they sought to destroy, including public competitions to be organised by the workers' councils of the enterprises for the post of factory manager, restricting the role of enterprise management to carrying out decisions subordinate to organs of workers' self-management, and the formulation of voluntary enterprise associations based on the workers' councils.

On the other hand, the fundamental weakness of the Polish revolution was that it did not concentrate all its forces on destroying the repressive apparatus of bureaucratic rule. It is true that Solidarnosc did demand that a part of the police apparatus — especially its buildings — be returned to society and used to meet the needs of the majority. It supported the formation of the independent union of members of the civil police force. And in the last days before 13th December, its revolutionary sectors called for the formation of workers' guards. But no struggle was organised, inside or outside the army, to eliminate the bureaucratic apparatus in the armed forces. This was precisely the bureaucracy's last resource and the one it relied on to carry through its political counter-revolution.

12) The Polish revolution is the first anti-bureaucratic revolution in which the mass movement was able to find a solution to the problem of self-organisation of the workers. In all previous political revolutions, like that in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the working class created organs of power and dual power — workers' councils, or strike committees tending to convert themselves into workers' councils — but not permanent forms of self-organisation. This is where the superiority of the Polish experience lies.

The inter-enterprise strike committees of August 1980 did not turn into workers' councils but into organising committees of the union. The overwhelming majority of wage earners, organised at the grass roots in workplace union sections, joined this union. Solidarnosc did not organise on the lines of occupations or industries, but on a territorial basis (the regions). The horizontal structures completely outweighed the vertical structures — although they did exist, the sections based on industrial lines had a very small role. This method of organisation ensures the unity of all workers, regardless of their trades or the industry in which they are employed. The specificity of Solidarnosc as a trade union organisation lay in the fact that it was not based on trades or industries. All the enterprise sections were united in a regional organisation, and the regional organisations in a national organisation.

Another particularity of Solidarnosc is the fact that its union democracy had many features of the democracy of workers' councils.

Because of this, Solidarnosc was an organisation representing the majority of workers whose leading organs also tended to assume the role of organs of a counter-power.

It is not by chance that the Polish workers are organised in the framework of a trade union that ensures the protection of their rights, their dignity, and their interests — material as much as

spiritual — against the state; that they, moreover, call the state "boss". This reflects the situation of workers in a transitional society during the whole historic period in which the state and the bureaucracy, and the dangers bureaucratic deformation engender, continue to exist. In the USSR and the Eastern European countries, the bureaucracy manages almost all the surplus product, thereby feeding its own privileges. It is naturally against this form of parasitic exploitation that the workers revolt, and organise themselves. Their work is reduced to being only the source of a wage necessary to procure the means of subsistence, often a poor one. From this point of view, trade unions have tasks similar to those that they have to assume when labour power is a commodity hired by capitalists — to struggle against the state-boss in an attempt to improve the conditions of work and the remuneration of labour power.

"The transfer of the factories to the state changed the situation of the workers only juridically. In reality, he is compelled to live in want and work a definite number of hours for a definite wage." (*Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder Press, p. 241). From this fact, "Wage-labour does not lose its degrading character of slavery under the Soviet regime," said Trotsky. In a general manner, although there is no longer in these countries exploitation in the sense of class exploitation, there is still:

- a) use of "forms of exploitation" (Trotsky) for the extortion of surplus product and to determine its extent and use without workers having the right to control or of veto. "The differences in income," said Trotsky about the transitional society under bureaucratic dictatorship, "are determined, in other words, not only by differences of individual productivity, but also by a masked appropriation of the products of the labour of others." (*Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder Press, p. 240.) These forms of exploitation will only disappear with a generalised system of self-management which allows the working class to decide itself the extent and the destination of its sacrifices.
- b) parasitic exploitation in the sense in which Marx used the term, that is to say appropriation by the parasitic bureaucracy of part of the social product as the foundation of their privileges.

In addition, it is the bureaucracy which decides on the standard of living of the workers in the light of its specific caste interests, and it often brutally denies the material conditions needed to assure reproduction of the labour force.

This is the reason, along with the fact that labour power partially retains a commodity character, that the workers need a trade union.

At the same time, labour power no longer has strictly the status of a commodity. This essential difference is expressed notably in slower rate of work, and in setting wage rates in accordance with different criteria than those imposed by a labour market.

The defence of workers in the framework of new relations of production should preserve and reinforce the fact that they have the right to demand to be no longer mere wage earners. This logic should be reflected at the trade union level:

- by struggles against all attempts to reintroduce the right of factory managers to lay off workers for economic reasons: closure of an enterprise must not be because of the automatic function of the market, but the relevant decision of a competent territorial unit (district, regional, national) and its organs of self-management. This closure implies the simultaneous re-employment of all workers in another job at least at the same level of qualification;
- by demands tied up with the workers right to decide on the use of the total social surplus product. A variety of options could obviously develop with respect to this. Thus, the "wage" demands should not be separated from the others. This precisely reflects the fact that the functions taken over by the bureaucracy could be assumed by the workers. The workers must have the right to make the decisions after a debate on the following:
  - the part of the surplus product allocated to productive and unproductive investment funds and the sectors to get priority;
  - the share allocated for the collective consumption and extending free goods and services;

- the part distributable in the form of wages in accordance with criteria established nationally.

Here again, a public debate must make it possible to produce consistent criteria (adjusting them in accordance with experience and degree of development reached). At the same time, such public debate must serve as a means of combating the following:

- effects of the market on the incomes that aggravate inequalities with little regard to the effective work put in;
- income differentials based on the so-called "quality" of work, which are a hidden form of appropriating part of the surplus product to feed social privileges.

Beyond that, the essential effect of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution does not bear on the sphere of distribution, but on that of production. To break up the power monopoly of the bureaucracy in the economy does not mean only denying it the right to decide on the use of the social surplus product, but also the right to determine the scope and limits of the social surplus product. This is why the need for combative and self-managing trade unions throughout this historic period involves the need for such trade unions to have the right to share in determining the organisation of work (tempos, ways of measuring work, etc.).

This does not mean that the trade union should be responsible for the management of the economy, which is a task that belongs to the organs of workers' self-management.

13) One of the essential lessons of the Polish revolution was the questioning by the working class of the concept of social property as it has been presented by the bureaucracy in power. The Polish workers rejected the identification of state property. The slogan "Give us back our factories!" which was raised during the first meeting of delegates of the self-management movement on 8th July in Gdansk, expresses this reaction very concretely, just as did the emergence of the concept of "social property" counterposed to the concept of state enterprise, or the distinction that came to be made between legal ownership and *social* control of the means of production.

From this standpoint, revolutionary Marxists fully support the aspirations of the Polish workers expressed in their struggle for self-management, and agree with all those who say, "We demand a real socialisation of the means of production; that is socialism".

The transformation into state property of the means of production expropriated from the bourgeoisie is evidently a formal juridical act that has major importance for the socialisation of the means of production. But in the same way that in the workers state power can be exercised either by the workers or the bureaucracy, the power to control the means of production may be in the hands of the working class or in those of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. That is what decides the real socio-economic content of the property forms.

The bureaucratic caste profits from the state-owned means of production as if it actually owns them, but it does not take on any responsibilities of ownership. This double nature is the basis for the very widespread feeling in the transitional societies under bureaucratic domination that state property does not in fact belong to anyone.

Revolutionary Marxists defend state property in the workers states against internal tendencies and external threats that seek to restore the system of private ownership of the major means of production. But, at the same time, they advocate the transformation of state property into social property. Undoubtedly, the *complete* socialisation of the means of production will only be possible when social classes, commodity production, and the state have completely disappeared. But the experience of the Polish revolution, especially that of the self-management movement which developed under the leadership of Solidarnosc, helps to clarify the point at which the socialisation of the *major* means of production *begins*. In his criticisms of the totalitarian regime of the bureaucracy, Trotsky clearly indicates that the socialisation of the means of production can begin and advances only as the state begins to wither away, that is, begins to be absorbed by a self-managed society. He states that social property begins not at the point where private property stops, but where state property stops. This is precisely the view which gained currency in the Solidarnosc mass movement.

Certainly, the diversity of projects defended in Poland under the single name of self-management, as in the Yugoslav experience, indicates the danger of a reductionist orientation of self-management where each workers' collective would manage, through the intermediary of a self-management council, their own means of production, leaving the co-ordination of economic activity to result from the free action of market mechanisms. In order for the process of socialisation of the means of production to progress, a fight has to be waged from the start to keep it from being diverted by the state or by the market. We should not think that such an understanding is obvious.

- In fact, the historic experience of Stalinism leads to rejecting all centralisation and all mandatory planning. But practice proves that indicative plans, or social funds designed to reinforce great principles of solidarity are by no means sufficient to counter the growth of social and regional inequalities when it is the logic of decentralisation and the market that essentially determine incomes and, above all, investments.
- The market seems to offer a guarantee both for a certain economic rationality and for liberties that are trampled underfoot in the framework of hyper-centralised bureaucratic planning. These ideas represent not only illusions but projects to which we counterpose the possibility of another kind of rationality: that of workers' democracy based on the power of workers' councils. So long as this alternative has not been put into practice somewhere, pro-market conceptions will retain considerable force.
- The resistance by the workers to the working of the market laws has been and will remain very great. But the idea that they can better control what they know (their factory, their workplace) conflicts to a certain extent with integrated and co-ordinated self-management, and leads some to fall back on reliance on the market, experts and other "competent" managers. Then, when there is real decentralisation, not even thousands of strikes can rebuild the unity of the working class.

This does not mean that revolutionary Marxists regard the adoption of market mechanisms as something to be opposed on principle: for us the question of principle is only opposition to the introduction to the *capitalist* market. In certain fields, non-capitalist market relations are inevitable in the transition to socialism. What, however, we do insist upon is the fact that there will always be tensions between market relations and the egalitarian social values of the working class, and the political vanguard of the working class must always ensure that in handling these tensions, the will of the majority of the working people must be respected. Thus in August 1980, the 21 demands of Gdansk very emphatically supported the principle of rationing — against the principle of free prices.

However, the close connection between the process of socialisation of the means of production and the process of the withering away of the state unveiled by revolutionary Marxism, began to be perceived by wide sections of the Polish workers who struggled at the same time to socialise the state sector of the economy and to socialise the state itself. The struggle for workers' self-management of the enterprises rapidly took on a broader dimension. The mass movement wanted to replace the bureaucratic state institutions with different institutions that would ensure the existence and the expansion of a genuine democracy of workers and citizens. The construction of a "self-managed republic", as advocated in Solidarnosc's programme, would have tended to set up apparatuses suitable for a state in the process of socialisation, that is to say that would be withering away as they merged with the masses, submitted to their direct control, and associated them to the direct exercise of power. The bureaucratic caricature of planning would have been replaced by a democratic elaboration of the plan through the broad participation of the organs representing the workers and the citizens and the possibility of submitting and discussing alternative proposals.

14) The Polish revolution once again confirms that in all workers' revolutions, whether anti-capitalist social revolutions or anti-bureaucratic political revolutions, the working class seeks to concretise its power in its own institutions of council

democracy that combine the advantages of mass direct democracy with the advantages of representative democracy. The organs of struggle for power (or dual power organs) thrown up by the mass movements when they are led by the working class naturally tend to adopt the form of workers' councils in the enterprises and the form of councils of workers' delegates on the territorial level — two institutions whose historical precedents are the 1917 Russian revolution's factory committees and the soviets.

As previously stated, the leading organs of Solidarnosc in the enterprises, at the regional level, and at the national level, were in fact nascent organs of a democratic counter-power of the workers. The union democracy whose norms governed the functioning of these organs had the features of a council-type democracy. The workers' councils, organs of workers' control over production and of struggle for workers' self-management of the enterprises, based on general assemblies of the workers (or of the delegates in the larger enterprises), corresponded exactly to this new type of institution. The regional co-ordinating bodies of workers' councils pointed the way to workers' power on a territorial basis, and the emergence of the organising committee of the National Federation of Self-Management (which was preparing to hold the first congress of delegates of councils) demonstrated the tendency toward centralisation on a national scale. The independent peasant movement organised in the Solidarnosc private farmers' union also called for the setting up of new forms of power in the rural zones, based on township general assemblies. The new organs of democratic management that appeared in the universities struggling for their autonomy also were close to the form of councils.

It is the working class that is the historic bearer of the tendency toward council democracy. The Polish revolution demonstrated that when the working class exercises its hegemony in the mass movement, the model of democracy and democratic institutions that it puts forward is also followed very closely — with some unavoidable variations — by the other oppressed social sectors involved in the revolution. This was the case in many other revolutions — think of the poor-peasant councils in the Russian revolution, of soldiers in the Russian, German, and Spanish revolutions.

This does not mean that the advance or even the triumph of the anti-bureaucratic revolution leads to the immediate disappearance of the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the complete rule of council democracy.

The traumatising experiences of Stalinism and the bureaucratic dictatorships have unquestionably refurbished the image of parliaments in Eastern Europe, as tarnished as it had become. The idea of electing a parliament by universal suffrage, with several slates, the citizens having a genuine right to present candidates and choose among them, was very popular during the revolutionary rise in Poland. It is improper for revolutionary Marxists to oppose what emerges as a legitimate democratic demand of the broad masses. But they cannot therefore abandon their criticisms of parliamentary democracy; they must clearly indicate its limitations. The essential thing is to define the competence of parliamentary-type institutions in a workers state so that they do not undermine the power of the workers' councils, whose democratic legitimacy is based on one decisive point — *those who produce the material wealth must have the primary right to decide how it will be used*. This idea is a basic one in the history of the international working-class movement and was already put forward in Poland in 1956 by Oskar Lange, and later picked up by Solidarnosc as a means of resolving the problem at hand. It was the origin of the idea of a second chamber of the Diet, the Social and Economic or Self-Management Chamber which, according to the most advanced projects of Solidarnosc, was to be elected exclusively by the direct producers and to concentrate in its hands all the economic power of the state. Such an institution could be considered as a transitional form towards council democracy in a situation where the institutions of parliamentary democracy continued to exist. At the same time, it is no substitute for — and is not in contradiction to — a national congress of delegates of workers' councils, or a permanent body originating in such a congress.

The project of a "self-managed republic" combined the direct democracy of self-management councils with forms of delegation of economic and political powers. There was thus an effort to establish a dialectical link between direct and representative democracy, and to break with institutionalised compartmentalisation such as the autonomy of the economic apparatus.

Moreover, the proposal to create a second chamber in the Diet, a self-management chamber, was going in the direction of a national expression of the development of dual power and the co-ordination of the self-management councils. The second chamber would thus have been a sort of permanent counterweight to the bureaucratic Diet, in the perspective of a self-managed republic. Elected by the workers, it would not have replaced the powers of elaboration and decision of the self-management councils. It would have been, through its controlling role, a guarantor of the political and economic coherence of the councils. It would also have ensured a democratic expression for small owners of the means of production, an expression which only the organised proletariat can guarantee. However, the precise sphere of competence of these chambers and their relation to the self-management councils were not clearly defined.

It is certainly necessary to delimit the sphere of competence of parliamentary-type institutions in a transitional state, in such a way as not to undermine the direct power of the workers. But on the other hand, it is probable that forms combining chambers elected by universal suffrage and self-management councils will appear during the revolutionary process, and continue during the period of transition.

The relationship between these two demands depends in fact on the level of development of the organs of direct democracy and their level of co-ordination. The existence of an assembly elected by secret and direct universal suffrage can appear as a counterweight to the bureaucratisation that is always possible in co-ordinating bodies of self-management councils.

Its existence in a period of transition will reflect the proletariat's difficulty in straightaway establishing a complete system of council democracy, because of the weight of its division of labour and its diversity.

It is from this point of view that one should consider that, inversely, the proletariat could, through the growth and co-ordination of self-management councils, increase its power and limit the dangers of the re-establishment of traditional parliamentarism that the existence of the first chamber alone could imply.

It is thus in the relationship between these two types of institutions that the dialectic of transition could be expressed because, as Leon Trotsky explained in *Revolution Betrayed*, "The final physiognomy of the workers state ought to be determined by the changing relations between its bourgeois and socialist tendencies".

In a transitional society in which various forms of ownership of the means of production survive, the system of workers' self-management represents the power not of all the different producers, but only the producers in the nationalised sector of the economy. The working class, even though hegemonic, must guarantee the democratic expression in the organs of economic power of all the direct producers, including the peasants and the other layers of small owners of the means of production.

In both capitalist society and the transitional society between capitalism and socialism, the working class is the most consistent bearer of the tendency toward political democracy. This is so because it is the representative of a new mode of production that, in its highest phase, will institute unrestricted democracy, that is, a democratic workers state in the process of withering away.

In attacking bureaucratic power, the working class does not aspire to replace the existing bureaucratic dictatorship by workers' democracy, but to assure also democracy for all citizens. Workers' democracy rests on the co-operation of producers and is founded essentially on the workers' councils formed in the factories. The experience of the Polish revolution confirms that citizens' democracy, as it emerges in the framework of a revolution led by the working class, is profoundly different from the distinctive forms of bourgeois democracy. Although it is not completely synonymous with workers' democracy, it borrows the latter's features. This was obvious in the embryos of ter-

ritorial self-management that appeared in Poland in the last phase of the revolutionary rise under the impetus of workers' self-management. The newly emerging territorial self-management was a citizens' democracy based not on the market but on co-operation and on mutual help of consumers, neighbours, or the solidarity of families.

15) Even during a revolution, the subjective maturing of workers is the outcome of a complex process, indeed a contradictory one in which the stages can be relatively prolonged. In the Polish political revolution, the workers had to go through almost a year and a half of sharp struggles in which they lost their illusions before they decided to take their destiny into their own hands. But this moment was preceded by an objective maturation which was reflected in their activity, and particularly in the forms of struggle. This is one of the great lessons of the Polish revolution.

Since August 1980, that is, since the very beginning of the revolutionary rise, the main form of struggle of the Polish workers, adopted as such by Solidarnosc in its subsequent struggles, was the mass (passive) strike combined with factory occupations. The significance of this form of struggle when it is generalised and becomes the main form of struggle, is much more important than appears at first sight. Here is what Trotsky says about it:

Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary occupation of the factories deals a blow to the idol of capitalist property. All strikes with occupation raise in practice the question of who rules in the factory: the capitalist or the workers? While the strike with occupation raises this question episodically, the factory committee gives it an organised expression.

Something very similar takes place under the rule of the bureaucracy. A strike involving occupations poses in practice the question of who should control the factories and their product — the working class or the bureaucracy? The form of the strike movements in Poland demonstrated that the workers were capable of putting the factories they occupied, as well as the means of production concentrated in them, to work for society as a whole and in the interest of all. Trotsky also noted that the emergence of factory committees as a result of strikes involving occupation created a situation of dual power in the factory. The enterprise committees, the regional leaderships, and the national leadership of Solidarnosc de facto have created dual power at all these levels, not only because they developed out of this type of strike, but because they also have taken the lead in carrying out new occupation strikes.

The transition from objective maturity to subjective maturity for the seizure of power is marked by an even broader involvement of the working class in the preparation of a higher form of occupation strikes. We are referring to the active strike that was called for by the most revolutionary currents in Solidarnosc. According to the conception that evolved inside Solidarnosc, the active strike does not confine itself to raising the question of economic power in practice, but it must also move to resolve it through revolutionary mass action. Moving beyond the proclamation of occupation strikes, the workers were to resume production under the leadership of the strike committees, according to alternative plans drawn up by these committees. Such plans were to reflect the genuine social needs and priorities. The strike committees had to extend workers' control to encompass distribution.

At the same time, they had to form workers' self-defence guards. Through active strikes of regional scope, and then of national scope, co-ordinated and centralised by the leading organs of Solidarnosc, economic power was to be wrested from the bureaucracy. Once firmly in the hands of the workers, it would be turned over by the strike committees of Solidarnosc to the organs of workers' self-management consolidated during the active strike and centralised on a national scale. The victory of the active strike would mean that the workers had succeeded in accumulating sufficient forces to wrest from the bureaucracy the remainder of its political power. Rooted in the natural tendencies of the workers' movement and its own forms of struggle, the tactic of the active strike constitutes one of the most important contributions of Solidarnosc to the general strategy of the political revolution.

16) The subsequent development of the revolution, and especially its culmination in the seizure of power by the proletariat as a whole, inevitably would have sharpened differentiations based on social interests and conflicting political orientations that were already latent in the months before the 13th December 1981 crackdown. The material interests of the majority of the proletariat and those of the independent peasantry, the urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the materially privileged *intelligentsia* (especially its technocratic wing), are not identical, either in the immediate sense or in a historical sense. The debate on economic reform by itself was enough to bring out differences clearly rooted in different social interests. But all these layers had an interest in freeing themselves from the unbearable tutelage of the bureaucracy.

The working class cannot dilute its own historic interests nor the power that it conquers for the sake of some illusory general interest of a society in which the division into classes and the division between manual and intellectual labor survives. Being the builder of socialism, it must ensure its supremacy through the democratic exercise of power. But at the same time, it must win over to this revolutionary undertaking the broadest possible layers, beginning with the peasantry and other groups of independent producers, and maintain an alliance with them; this is the only way to advance toward socialism. The very broad social alliance forged around the working class in the heat of the common struggle against bureaucratic power in the course of the political revolution, is a solid starting point to move in this direction.

The hegemony of the working class within self-managed post-capitalist society will remain assured so long as, beyond these basic institutions of state power, the following factors exist:

- the overall predominance of collective ownership of the means of production, which does not exclude the existence, or even the prevalence, of private property in agriculture and petty trade, but which obviously excludes any dynamic of progressive expansion of private property to other economic sectors;
- the progressive limitation, on a strictly voluntary basis, of what remains of private property and of commodity production;
- the shielding — fundamentally by state monopoly of foreign trade — of the national economy from the pressures of the world capitalist market and growing co-ordination with other workers states free of bureaucratic oppression;
- the existence of other political and economic mechanisms that can keep a symbiosis from developing between the private commodity sector and international capital leading to a subordination of planning to market laws;
- the systematic limitation and reversal of all phenomena of social inequality;
- the predominance of the principle of solidarity over that of material interest in social investments, the functioning of the state, official education, and — progressively — in everyday economic life;
- the teaching and practice of genuine international workers' solidarity without subordination of any nation or nationality to another, and with a systematic struggle against all xenophobic and racist prejudices to overcome the exaltation of an unhealthy nationalism.

For the anti-bureaucratic political revolution to be victorious in an Eastern Europe country that is a satellite of the Soviet bureaucracy, the following are required:

- self-defence against pressures and threats of military intervention, or against aggression, whether it emanates from the ruling bureaucracies of other workers states or from imperialist powers;
- the protection of the national economy from the world capitalist market and increasing co-ordination with the economy of other workers states freed from bureaucratic oppression;
- international aid to all the sectors of the world revolution, and in the first place to the most immediate ally of such a political revolution — the workers' movement in workers states where the bureaucratic dictatorship still rules.

#### IV. The masses enduring resistance and its main lessons

17) When the bureaucratic dictatorship turned to open political counter-revolution and instituted a state of war on 13th December 1981 it dealt a severe blow to the political revolution in Poland, but was not able to follow up on this advantage and totally crush and disperse the mass movement everywhere. Solidarnosc went underground and initiated a mass resistance that still goes on today and constitutes a political phenomenon without precedent in the history of the workers' movement.

The length, tenacity and breadth of this resistance have already earned it a place among history's most glorious working class struggles. They confirm our earlier feeling that the 1980-81 Polish revolution was one of the deepest and most dynamic proletarian revolutions of this century and that the period of revolutionary rise was extremely prolonged: on 13th December, far from having exhausted its dynamic and entering a downward trend, the revolution was still gaining momentum. This emerges clearly from the 1982 May Day demonstrations, 13th May, fifteen minute strike, and 31st August, celebration of the Gdansk Accords anniversary, when, answering the call of Solidarnosc's underground leadership, the masses took to the streets in over 80 cities and turned the country's main industrial and urban centres into the scene of fierce confrontations with the forces of repression.

18) The fact that the mass struggles continued after 13th December and gave birth to a broad resistance movement calls for an explanation. Simply recognising that the Polish revolution was in full swing at the time of the counter-revolutionary coup is not enough. The qualitative aspects of this revolution must also be taken into account. There were of course serious shortcomings on the programmatic and political level since neither a revolutionary workers' party nor even an organised revolutionary socialist nucleus existed, and since the political differentiation process was still embryonic. Nevertheless if one examines the level of class consciousness of the proletarian forces involved in the revolution, one notices that it was on the average very high. The explanation can be found in the distinctive features of working-class struggles in the workers states subject to the bureaucracy's totalitarian rule.

On the one hand, in "normal" times, independent working class activity and self-organisation are impossible; atomisation is carried to extremes; the repressive apparatus can intervene quicker than is customary under capitalism; and partial gains are difficult to secure. All this prevents, or at least greatly hinders, the centralisation of experiences gained in advancing immediate demands and in various working class actions. As a result, a generalised and prolonged struggle can only occur if broad sectors of the working class have somehow previously gone through the experience of struggles, assimilated their lessons, and attained both a relatively high and homogeneous average level of consciousness and an ability to give a concrete expression to the immediate aspirations of the masses.

This is precisely what had occurred in Poland by August 1980. The nationwide strike broke out at a time when the Polish working class, at least every major section, had learned to put forward demands that everybody could identify with and to struggle as a homogenous bloc.

On the other hand, the bureaucracy's structural weakness becomes fully visible as soon as its rule is challenged by a struggling working class and goes into crisis. The experience of the Polish revolution has shown that it can sometimes be quite difficult for the bureaucracy to overcome such a crisis by "normalisation" of its rule. In this respect, the Polish events have provided an excellent empirical verification of our traditional theory on the class nature of the state in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Not only is there no reason to reconsider this theory; on the contrary it should be well defended as the only valid theory.

The level of consciousness the masses had reached in August 1980 was greatly enriched by eighteen months of bitter struggle, confrontations with the bureaucratic rulers and the search for the means to resist the regime's attacks and run the country themselves. While the level of maturity — and corresponding

organisational forms — they attained could not prevent the defeat of 13th December, it did nevertheless lay a solid foundation for resistance to the bureaucratic counter-revolution.

It is undeniable that the experience of participating in a self-managed trade union rapidly gave birth to the desire to generalise this experience and to the idea of a self-managed republic. Then, as now, the aspiration for a self-managed republic is not confined to those who fully understand the question of power and the need to settle it by revolutionary means. The feeling that no political decision, no measure taken by the state is legitimate unless it has been discussed and negotiated with Solidarnosc is extremely widespread and strong among Polish workers and has acquired its own dynamic. They consider their union not only as the sole repository of working class legitimacy but also as the sole source of legitimacy of the state itself. This conviction alone cannot carry the Polish revolution to victory, but it is capable of generating a broad and prolonged resistance. It was the key subjective factor of the resistance and was reflected in the Solidarnosc activists' favourite saying "We are subjects, not objects".

19) The tactic used by the mass movement during the general strike called by Solidarnosc, in the first hours and days after the state of war was established, was a tactic of passive resistance and progressive retreat. This tactic contributed decisively to the subsequent ability to continue the struggle. Even in those workplaces where the workers had initially decided to actively defend themselves and were prepared, if necessary, to blow up the major factories and industrial facilities, a big majority was rapidly won over to a more realistic assessment of the relationship of forces and adopted a more correct tactic that made it possible to safeguard a substantial part of the mass movement's forces by avoiding unnecessary exposure to the blows of the repressive apparatus.

Solidarnosc was not prepared to effectively resist, let alone defeat, a general counter-revolutionary coup. The 13th December was a moment of truth which revealed a relationship of forces unfavourable for the mass movement. Wherever the union leaders escaped the dragnet of the first few hours, led strikes inside the workplaces and kept losses to a minimum by organising the retreat, the resistance subsequently developed fastest, most organically and most coherently. This was particularly the case in Lower Silesia. By contrast, in Upper Silesia, the old Solidarnosc miners spontaneously organised resistance on the basis of active defence methods or of occupying the pits until the very limit of their physical endurance. But there came a time when thirst, hunger and general exhaustion compelled them to surrender. In those pits where they had been able to manufacture some rudimentary weapons, they waged often heroic battles against the ZOMO — thus, the "Wujek" miners gave the Polish working class new martyrs. Nevertheless, these forms of resistance contributed to worsen Solidarnosc's defeat and considerably weakened the subsequent resistance in that region. The "Wujek" miners' exemplary action demonstrated once again that arming the workers and mass violence are effective tactics in clashes with the repressive apparatus. But given the existing circumstances, their struggle was doomed to failure. The outcome convinced many Polish workers that mass violence was useless and should be rejected. But the main Lower Silesian leaders correctly drew the opposite conclusion: they insisted that their own tactic of passive resistance had been the only possible one, but also recognised that if workers across the entire country had been as ready for active resistance as the "Wujek" miners, not only would this method of struggle have been justified, but it could have routed the counter-revolutionary coup. The fact was, only a few vanguard elements had come to that conclusion, not the broad masses.

20) The fact that the 13th December defeat was not decisive, that Solidarnosc's most active forces were able to go underground and that a mass resistance against the bureaucratic counter-revolution developed, has given rise to the idea of a "clandestine society" (sometimes also called "independent society"). This can be an ambiguous concept if it implies that an alternative society can develop spontaneously and if it encourages the illu-

sion that the problem of a confrontation with bureaucratic rule can be avoided. The political value of the idea lies in its correct understanding that the resistance must rely on the activity of broad social layers to preserve and sustain an activist force within the masses.

Experience has demonstrated that the existence of an underground Solidarnosc union in the workplaces was not merely possible but could become the backbone of the "clandestine society". In fact, everything depends on rebuilding such organisations: the effectiveness of day-to-day resistance, the "front of refusal", the development of an independent social consciousness, the outcome of partial economic and political struggles and the preparation and success of a future general strike or other major battles. The dues collected by Solidarnosc in the workplaces where it was able to continue existing underground represent an extremely important material base for the resistance. They made material assistance to their members, set up loan funds, dispensed aid to the families of jailed or fired unionists and organised vacations for the workers' children and families. Solidarnosc's strength in the workplaces guaranteed the effectiveness of the boycott of the state's "new unions", made it possible to pressure the labour inspectors and forced the factory managers to take the workers' interests into account. In some cases, these activities could be carried on in the open, either formally through the workers' councils, or informally through the workers' representatives in the workshops.

Solidarnosc's implantation as a union is noticeably stronger in workplaces of industrial centres where the regional leaderships best understood the potential for workplace organising and the central role the union should play in the structures and activities of the "clandestine society". The existence of a conscious leadership proved to be crucial in this respect. The union's implantation was also closely connected to the ability of the rank-and-file bodies led by workplace committees to establish a co-ordination among themselves: first on a regional basis with delegates from all the major workplaces; then on a local basis, between neighbouring workplaces. Wherever the regional Solidarnosc leaderships came out for extremely decentralised organisation and activity and neglected the work of co-ordinating workplace union bodies, the results were very damaging for both Solidarnosc and the "clandestine society" as a whole.

"Clandestine society" refers to a variety of autonomous activities, initiatives and forms of organisation that are carried on in a secret manner in the most diverse walks of life. It aims to prevent the bureaucratic rulers and their repressive, political and ideological apparatuses from dispersing the social vanguard by atomising, dividing and eroding the social consciousness of the working class and other oppressed layers. "Clandestine society" makes it possible to preserve the most active forces of the social movement and win new forces.

The underground press that has grown up in Poland represents an unprecedented phenomenon by its magnitude (number of titles and copies printed); it is supplemented by book publishing and regular underground radio broadcasts in some regions. All these activities have created a new independent network and a vital forum for discussion and exchange of experiences. The flying universities and self-education clubs represent another aspect of the "clandestine society". They are far more limited than the news-circulation activities but nevertheless make it possible to create a space where independent learning, education and culture can continue. They promote freedom of thought and dispense culture to sections of youth and many worker cadres. They make it possible to keep the alliance of the working class and the most active and devoted sectors of the democratic intelligentsia alive.

Wherever the policy was to focus the building of "clandestine society" mainly on rebuilding and activating the workplace bodies, it was possible to publish a large part of the underground press directly in the workplaces and to orient the self-education initiatives towards setting up workers' universities and workers' discussion clubs. But this was not the case everywhere; in general the "clandestine society" had a stronger base where it was solidly connected to the underground union, and weaker, especially in terms of its structures and roots in the working class, where the Solidarnosc leaderships had neglected directly trade union ac-

tivities and where the learning, publishing and other independent activities were focused on the intelligentsia.

The very idea of building a "clandestine society" — insofar as it is focused on the working class — was one of Solidarnosc's main contributions to the general strategy of mass resistance in a counter-revolutionary situation.

21) The emergence of a nationwide Solidarnosc Provisional Co-ordinating Committee (TKK) in April 1982 created the conditions for the formation of a central leadership of the resistance movement. The need for such a leadership has been keenly felt by trade union militants. In fact, Solidarnosc had been embroiled in an almost permanent crisis of leadership since 13th December, with negative effects on the entire mass movement. There are objective factors which make it difficult for a central leadership even to exist. Even after the TKK was formed, subjective problems erupted in its midst and prevented it from firmly taking over responsibility for leading Solidarnosc. In practice, it seemed more of a moral authority than a genuine leadership or co-ordinating body; but this, in turn, began to undermine that moral authority. In autumn 1982 political vacillations, inconsistencies, mistakes and sometimes extreme empiricism gave the leadership crisis a dangerous acuteness. The fact was, the TKK had failed to tap the enormous potential for militancy and radicalisation that the tremendous 31st August mass actions had revealed. This naturally led to a demobilisation, and to the fact that Solidarnosc was caught by surprise when the Diet outlawed it on 8th October.

The leadership crisis was reflected in the inability to put forward an adequate fighting strategy and programme for Solidarnosc. The old strategy of "self-limiting revolution" which had led Solidarnosc to the 13th December defeat, remained the prevalent political outlook in the TKK during the entire first year of the resistance. "Geo-political fatalism" — the belief that any serious threat to bureaucratic rule would bring on an immediate response of the Soviet Union Warsaw Pact allies who would crush the movement militarily — had a paralysing effect. It continued to foster the illusion that a compromise had to be struck with the Polish bureaucracy which would allow for the co-existence of the independent mass movement and bureaucratic rule, and force the latter to liberalise. This fatalistic attitude led to the adoption of an extremely inconsistent line on the general strike strategy.

Under the pressure of the more radical currents more directly linked to the workers of large-scale industry — mainly represented in the TKK by the Lower Silesian leadership — a fragile compromise and unstable equilibrium was arrived at inside the TKK, and made possible the adoption of the January 1983 programmatic statement. The statement represents a real step forward in overcoming the crisis of strategy: in addition to systematising some of the gains embodied in the "clandestine society", it was the first open renunciation of the quest for a "national reconciliation", recognised the need to overthrow the bureaucratic regime in its post-13th December form, and indicated that preparing the general strike was one of the central axes of Solidarnosc's work and aimed not merely to resist but to "smash the dictatorship".

But the TKK's programmatic statement did not lead to a real political turn. The inability to concretise these advances in both an action and a transitional programme, combined with the resistance of some TKK members to the new perspectives, restricted the potential political impact of the document; it found little support among the masses. Given that it had no concrete tasks to propose and did not lay out the organisational forms and actions that corresponded to the goals it advocated, it was likely to remain a piece of paper.

In considering all these political weaknesses of the leadership, it is important to emphasise a very important fact: the overwhelming majority of the tens of thousands of activists who emerged as Solidarnosc's cadres during the period of legality were completely new to political and trade union activity. As a result, the underground movement had to draw mainly on the gains made during the eighteen-month period: this goes a long way in explaining the difficulties they had in grappling with these obstacles.

22) Nevertheless, there already existed inside Solidarnosc, particularly among the most politically advanced sectors, a series of gains that could point the way out of this strategic orientation crisis. Some of these advanced elements for instance had mainly focused their efforts to create the "clandestine society" on rebuilding workplace union structures and succeeded in setting up genuine regional leaderships closely connected to the industrial strongholds through co-ordinating committees; these co-ordinations brought together representatives of strongholds and inter-enterprise committees and were in a position to make their main decisions on the basis of opinion polls taken in the workplaces. They had also clearly defined their strategic objective — the general strike — in the belief that, in the long run, the key question would be the relationship of forces between bureaucratic rulers unable to impose "normalisation" and a social movement that would have accumulated an enormous potential. They foresaw that this uneasy balance could break down at any time, more or less suddenly, and generate a general strike dynamic if the break occurred in a way favourable to the mass movement.

Experience confirmed the validity of this analysis. After the mass demonstrations of 31st August 1982 80 per cent of the workers of the large plants of Lower Silesia were ready to launch the general strike. The regional leadership also agreed on going ahead but was forced to back off when it realised how unevenly prepared the action was around the country, and how dangerous it could become. Barely a month later, on 12th October, the Gdansk shipyard workers, responded to the outlawing of Solidarnosc by taking the initiative of calling a renewable strike which they conceived as the possible prelude to a national strike with occupation of worksites. Their initiative got a favourable response in many of the country's large factories where the workers appeared determined to follow the example of Gdansk. They only gave up the plan in the end when they found out the TKK had called a national day of protest at a later date — a decision that was to lead to the fiasco of the 11th November 1982 strike. In a situation of exacerbated social tensions, any similar initiative could trigger a general strike.

In this respect, the Lower Silesian Solidarnosc leaders have put forward several very important points on the subject of the general strike strategy:

First, they have pointed out the need for the workplace union organisations to wage partial struggles for immediate demands that can raise the workers' level of organisation, social consciousness and preparedness to fight. The TKK's January 1983, programmatic statement had recognised that economic struggles and partial struggles in general constituted an essential axis for Solidarnosc's activity. Such struggles — most often brief strikes or warning strikes — had occurred in many workplaces to protest the awful, and sometimes inhuman, working conditions, the low wages imposed by the bureaucracy, to defend workers fired for their illegal union activities, etc. But their lack of co-ordination had made them weak. The "week of protest" organised by the main Wroclaw factories under the leadership of the regional strike committee showed such a co-ordination was possible and would elevate these partial struggles onto a qualitatively higher plane.

Second, they emphasised the importance of defending factories against the attacks of the repressive forces during a general strike. Over the summer 1982, some more advanced sectors had drawn the lessons of the 13th December defeat and discussed the concept of a "general strike with active defence of the factories". As for the lower Silesian Solidarnosc leadership, it had already begun to concretise that idea by proposing that workers' guards be set up in the main factories and centralised under the direct responsibility of the regional leaderships.

Third, for the first time in Solidarnosc's history, they correctly posed the question of Soviet military intervention by demonstrating that it was linked to the current relationship of forces; the weaker the level of organisation, mobilisation and determination of the mass movement, the greater the risk of such an intervention.

Fourth, they tried to define the necessary conditions for a victory of the general strike. They believed that it should not confine itself to reconquering trade union freedoms but rather lead

to the workers taking over their plants and to workers' control over production, or even to more advanced forms of control over the economy.

The weak point of the most advanced thinking on the strategy the Polish working class should adopt to promote a new rise of the political revolution concerns the question of the repressive apparatus — army and militia. It has no perspective for resolving this problem. Up to now, despite the glaring lessons of the 13th December counter-revolutionary coup, even the Solidarnosc sectors who have thought things out the furthest have not understood the crucial need to carry on propaganda and agitational work among the rank and file of the repressive apparatus and lay the groundwork for paralysing and dividing it, in order to win the workers in uniform to the cause of the working class at the time of the showdown with the bureaucratic rulers.

Even the most lucid leaders still harbour illusions that the repressive apparatus can spontaneously disintegrate and become paralysed without a prior political intervention in its midst of the most active and conscious forces of the social movement. It should also be emphasised that those who support the general strike strategy inside Solidarnosc are still a minority and are not without their own vacillations.

23) The 13th December defeat forced the mass movement into a partial retreat towards the church. As the bureaucratic dictatorship repressed all independent social activities, the church became the only institution retaining at least some autonomy from the power of the state. It was only natural that the masses who were looking for free spaces and meeting places would turn towards it. The retreat had some ideological implications such as the increased religious fervour of the masses which, in turn, bolstered the "spiritual power" of the church. John Paul II's pilgrimage merely confirmed the existing situation.

But this does not automatically imply that the masses politically support the church as an institution. Solidarnosc has demonstrated the working class' real ability to preserve its political independence from the church — even in very difficult circumstances and despite its attachment to Christianity. The Catholic hierarchy's conciliatory policy mouthed by Cardinal Glemp was not followed by the masses. On the contrary, it drew often very harsh criticism from the underground press and more generally from broad sectors of the mass movement.

Compared to the previous period, the critical attitude towards the church has considerably increased. At the same time, the masses, in retreating towards the church, introduced into it deep contradictions which the hierarchy is having problems overcoming. Many parish priests have begun to collaborate with the mass movement and underground Solidarnosc and express the aspirations of the masses in their Sunday sermons. Rather violent political controversies have erupted between a section of the lower clergy and the hierarchy. Some bishops, especially those closer to the peasantry, have adopted an attitude of severe condemnation of the bureaucratic dictatorship and proposed concrete initiatives towards a worker-peasant alliance.

In its haste to fully re-establish discipline inside the church, the Catholic hierarchy gave in to the bureaucracy's pressures and demands that the lower clergy cease and desist from its "subversive activities". It has more and more insistently urged parishes and individual priests to abandon all contact with the underground and all statements of support for the mass movement. This seems to be the cause of the reaction of increasing disaffection towards the church institutions seen among the masses and in Solidarnosc.

24) Both the development of the underground mass movement and the overall crisis of the bureaucracy have caused the failure of the "normalisation" policy so vaunted by Jaruzelski and his clique at the time of the coup d'etat in December 1981. They have failed on the economic, social and political levels.

The "economic reform" which was broadly defined in Autumn 1981 involved above all giving greater autonomy to the workplaces and extending market mechanisms. It was gutted of its content even before it began to be applied.

A whole series of measures had to be taken which directly contradicted the declared intentions of the bureaucracy to decen-

tralise economic management and planning:

- By the end of February 1982 the prices of most goods and services were set by the central authorities of the regime.
- Nearly 50 per cent industrial production came under the "operational programmes" — i.e., decrees laying down priorities of production in certain sectors and for certain products.
- The militarisation of the main factories meant turning all decision-making powers over to the central authorities of the bureaucracy and caused unprecedented disorder and wastage due to the incompetence of the military teams to whom the factory managers were supposed to be subordinated.
- A decision was taken to sharply cut back on imports in the two categories weighing most heavily in the foreign debt with the West (cereals, technology) and resulted in bottlenecks both in agriculture and industry.

The crisis in agriculture is continuing and the bureaucracy has not managed to improve the situation for the peasantry due to the continuing lack of machinery and infrastructure material, which was already in extremely short supply in the previous period. Imports of grain and feedstuffs — cutback drastically — are practically all distributed to state farms and collectives, excluding in this way the immense majority of agricultural producers. Peasants do not have the necessary machinery. The project of replacing imports by the development of maize cultivation has proved to be a fiasco. No efforts are being made to improve the transport of agricultural products, the storehouse facilities and other services needed by peasants, although all are in a deplorable state.

In July 1983 the bureaucracy decided to try and neutralise the peasantry — certain sectors had organised strikes in deliveries of farm produce — by granting one of its key demands (which had been supported by Solidarnosc) — the establishment of constitutional guarantees on the perenity of private property.

One of the major failures of the bureaucratic dictatorship has been its inability for both subjective and objective reasons to re-establish work discipline in the productive process. The ever greater discontinuity of the productive process due to the difficulty factories have in getting raw materials and spare parts is increasingly pushing factory managers to carry out a labour intensive policy. That is, they minimise financial losses resulting from this situation by increasing production costs through increasing wage costs. This is just another way of ensuring the maintenance of subsidies and privileges which are indexed on a certain level of production costs.

Workers are taking advantage of the enormous demand for labour thus created with — conscious or unconscious — forms of resistance to the bureaucracy's policy. There is a clear increase in labour mobility, workers do not hesitate to leave jobs they consider too hard or badly paid for other lighter and better paid ones. The government's attempts to institutionalise certain limited forms of "forced labour" (through limitations on the workers' rights to change jobs — a sort of partial assignment of a single workplace) has proved to have at least partially failed to the extent that workers refuse to take jobs in workplaces where this type of regulation is in force. More generally, the bureaucracy's efforts to divide workers by using the weapon of widening differentials and distributing privileges, particularly with respect to wages, has had only quite limited success given the economic crisis and the resistance the working class has shown against this policy.

It is not at all surprising then, that two years after the beginning of the so-called "normalisation process" and even according to the official press, the Polish economy is mainly characterised by anarchy, incoherence and instability. Even all the authorities' specialists conclude that "the reforms have not had any effects".

The setting up of "new trade unions", which the bureaucracy wanted to use as a transmission belt permitting it to re-establish direct control over working people, has been a particularly striking fiasco. The call for a boycott made by the underground Solidarnosc leadership has been generally followed — particularly in the big factories, the Solidarnosc strongholds. In factories with several thousand workers — or even tens of thousands of workers — these official "trade unions" have not been able to bring together more than a few hundred members. Furthermore official figures are artificially exaggerated.

The relative success of the regime in imposing the establishment of official "trade unions" in traditionally less organised sectors, in smaller workplaces and the administration, cannot cover up the fact that in 1983 only 45 per cent of PUPP members had joined these trade unions — the fear of reprisals from militants of the underground movement being a significant dissuasive factor that is rather effective in the big workplaces.

Just as with the new trade unions the formation of the PRON (Patriotic Movement of National Rebirth) with an objective of rallying the "broad masses" was not able to create any illusions for very long. The inability of its official representatives to give precise membership figures and a breakdown of activity rapidly led the bureaucracy to put a damper on its declarations about this "new step forward along the road of unity and socialism".

The main instrument permitting the government to make some gains is the use of direct and brutal repression. Secret police are out to track down militants of underground movement. Many Solidarnosc leaders are arrested, imprisoned and sentenced. But the factional struggles between the representatives of various apparatuses — army, militia, secret police, administration, party apparatus — and between various cliques inside the bureaucracy as well as the very different positions expressed by the "hawks" and the so-called "liberals" over the use of repression — is evidence of the instability of the situation and of the fragility of the relationship of forces.

## V. The international impact of the Polish events

25) The proclamation of the state of war dealt a severe blow not only to the Polish proletariat but also the international proletariat as a whole. The fight of the millions of workers of Solidarnosc had been one of the most advanced points of the struggle of the proletariat on a world scale, representing an experience without precedent in the history of the struggle against bureaucratic dictatorship and of the workers' aspirations for the real socialisation of the means of production and social wealth.

In this fight between a bureaucratic government and the masses, revolutionary Marxists were one hundred per cent on the side of the masses. The workers state was not the target of any imperialist assault designed to restore capitalism. No coherent social force in Poland itself wished to, or could, reintroduce private appropriation of the means of production. What was under attack was the bureaucracy and its dictatorship, which had usurped power within the workers state. The proletariat tended to radically question the power of the privileged minority backed up by an entire repressive apparatus. The elimination of the bureaucratic caste could only strengthen the working class on the international level, not weaken it.

The liquidation of bureaucratic power would have demonstrated, in practice, in the eyes of the masses of the whole world, that the economy and society can be led by the workers as a whole. A giant step toward socialism would have been accomplished. It would have deeply influenced the behaviour of workers both in the USSR and Eastern Europe and in the imperialist countries, and given a huge boost to both the anti-bureaucratic political revolution and the proletarian revolution. This is what explains the emergence of the Holy Alliance against the Polish revolution, from Wall Street to the Kremlin.

The Kremlin could rejoice that its "advice" was diligently applied without it being forced to participate directly and massively in the repression. The price of such involvement would have been very costly, both in political and material terms. General Jaruzelski and his group, when they tried to break the back of Solidarnosc, were not only defending their interests as a Polish bureaucracy; they were also defending those of all the bureaucratic regimes. The bureaucracy's self-defence reflex worked with a vengeance. Caste solidarity was complete: This is what they call "proletarian internationalism".

Those who, for whatever reason, aligned themselves with the position of Jaruzelski, were in fact defending the interests of these bureaucracies against those of the proletariat. On this score, the motives of the Cuban and Nicaraguan leaders were obviously quite different from those of the PCP leaders, not to

mention the leaders of the DKP or the American CP. But the objective significance of the position they adopted was the same.

True proletarian internationalism called for active support and active solidarity with the Polish workers against the Polish and Soviet bureaucracies.

26) The fundamental interest of the international bourgeoisie was a halt to the alarming rise of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution in Poland. This interest was all the stronger since the problem was not only the threat that the experiences of workers' self-management might spread toward capitalist countries, but involved the settlement of the \$27 billion debt, and the ongoing servicing of this debt. This is why the most representative spokesperson of imperialism had taken a stand, before General Jaruzelski's crackdown, in favour of "restoring order" and "the workers returning to work" in Poland, as a condition for rescheduling the debt. On the day after the crackdown, newspapers that speak for big business such as *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *Le Figaro*, as well as the official spokespeople from the West German and British governments, again adopted similar stances: "Most bankers believe an authoritarian government is a good thing because it will impose discipline".

The cynicism of the imperialist bourgeoisie shows up glaringly in the way that it decided to link this basic orientation — which is in keeping with the anti-union and anti-working class stance of the imperialist bourgeoisie all over the world — to a demagogic propaganda campaign that pretends to condemn the crackdown and defend Solidarnosc. It is in fact a completely crooked operation undertaken to try to cash in on the natural revulsion aroused by the repression of trade unionists in Poland among broad layers of the international working class and to try to channel it in a pro-capitalist and anti-communist direction. This confusionist operation is designed to achieve specific ideological and political goals:

- On the pretext that it is necessary to resist "Soviet intervention" and "totalitarianism" Washington took advantage of this international situation to step up its aid to the bloody dictatorships in Central America, and to call for an end to all restrictions on its military aid to the Turkish dictatorship, a bastion of Nato.
- A campaign was launched by various imperialist governments to justify their remilitarisation effort and the cutbacks of social expenditures this implies. The Polish generals, the PUWP, and the Kremlin have given reaction the ideal opportunity to try to beat back the anti-military mobilisations.
- Finally, trying to turn everything to its advantage, with the priceless help of the union bureaucracies and reformist and Stalinist forces, the imperialist bourgeoisie tried to lock the workers of capitalist countries into the dilemma: either austerity under "democracy", or the risk of a "totalitarian society" that would also impose austerity. The bourgeoisie used this latter argument to step up its general anti-socialist and anti-communist propaganda.

Imperialist forces harmonised their voices in an anti-working class concert. But in a context characterised by economic crisis and new advances of the colonial revolution, the Polish crisis brought on a new worsening of inter-imperialist contradictions. The West German bourgeoisie took the lead of the European imperialist powers, resisting any escalation of retaliatory measures that would have imperilled its outlets in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. American imperialism, being less involved in East-West trade (except for agribusiness), could afford the luxury of brandishing the threat of an economic embargo. Each partner of the imperialist alliance thereby combined its general defence of the system with the pursuit of its own particular interests.

27) The reactions of the social democratic and communist parties to the defeat suffered by the Polish proletariat can only be understood in the context of the combined crisis of imperialism and Stalinism. Over and above the very different positions they took towards the imposition of the state of war, the reformist apparatuses always displayed either extreme reserve or more or less open hostility toward the fight of the workers. What type of

ideological camouflage they used to disguise their opposition, primitive anti-clericalism for some, simplistic "campism" for others, was not very important. The fact is the *material*, social basis of their position lay in the threat that the dynamic of the struggle and self-organisation of the Polish workers would, at least eventually, have an impact on and weaken the bureaucratic control that all these apparatuses exercise over their own organisations, especially at a time when they are involved in a policy of compromise and even systematic capitulation with respect to the austerity demands of the bourgeoisie. What has frightened these bureaucratic apparatuses in the rise of the Polish proletariat was first of all its fight for a *self-managed union movement, that is for trade union democracy*. In fact, their reserve and hostility toward Solidarnosc reflected an international solidarity of bureaucrats. Moreover, the reformist apparatuses used the Polish workers' defeat to warn against any central confrontation with the class enemy which, according to them, could only lead to a crackdown of the Jaruzelski type in the West too, that is to the establishment of a "strong state". They therefore took advantage of it to justify a collaborationist and capitulationist policy toward the bourgeoisie.

The social democratic parties of the German Federal Republic, Great Britain, and Austria fundamentally lined up behind the interests of their own imperialist bourgeoisies. While they rejected any cold war-type policy, they also rejected any mobilisation of the workers on a class basis to defend the rights and liberties of the Polish workers that were trampled on by Jaruzelski. Their motives were the same as those of their bourgeoisies — holding onto the profits of the East-West trade. Even the official social-democratic left (like the Benn tendency in Great Britain and the left of the German SPD) was most often silent and accepted the political framework imposed by the leading apparatuses.

In France, the pressure of the workers, the far left's capacity for initiative, the rivalry between the SP and the CP, and the impetus given by the leaderships of the SP and CFDT who had their own specific goals in mind, led the protest movement to assume more massively the character of a class mobilisation in support of the Polish working people.

The rise of the political revolution in Poland, as well as the launching of the bureaucratic counter-revolution, have led to a new stage in the crisis of the communist parties, a crisis already fueled by internal developments of the class struggle in most countries. The centrifugal tendencies at work in all the CPs of capitalist countries redoubled. The contradiction between the identifications of these parties with the USSR and their insertion in the reality of their own country was exacerbated. The interplay of these various factors — in particular circumstances of each country, of each CP's historical trajectory, and each CP's relation to its respective social democratic party — was reflected in the adoption of a whole gamut of different positions by the various CPs.

At one end of the spectrum stood the positions of the French CP, the Portuguese CP, the CP of the German Federal Republic (DKP), and that of Denmark. Fundamentally, these parties supported the institution of the state of war which allegedly "made it possible for socialist Poland to escape the mortal danger of counter-revolution". Paradoxically, but in fact as a result of the convergence of their own interests with those of the Kremlin, some of these CPs presented the crackdown as a lesser evil compared to ... a Soviet intervention. According to them, any mobilisation in favour of the Solidarnosc could only "add salt to the wound" and prevent the Military Council of National Salvation from keeping its promises to proceed toward a "liberalisation" ... by stages.

At the other end of the gamut were the positions of the Italian CP and the Spanish CP who condemned Jaruzelski's crackdown and demanded the release of the prisoners and the re-establishment of trade union freedoms. They went very far in their conflict with Moscow; the PCI even went so far as to state that "the phase of development of socialism that was inaugurated by the October revolution has exhausted its potential". But the position on Poland advocated by the PCI implied a call for closer collaboration with the Church and petty-bourgeois forces, and not an orientation toward the democratic power of

the workers. It was therefore a reflection of the class-collaborationist strategy pursued by this party in Italy itself. This position led to a quest for a more systematic rapprochement with French, German, and Scandinavian social democracy. This is the reason why a significant section of combative worker militants did not approve of the orientation of their leadership on Poland. It was not a question of militants nostalgic for Stalinism, but an instinctive reaction against what appeared as a new concession to the class enemy.

The positions of the British, Belgian, Dutch, and Swedish CPs fell in between these two poles, although they did include an explicit condemnation, at least on paper, of the 13th December crackdown.

The form and character of the rise of the masses in Poland, as well as the contradictions between the CPs and within the CPs, impelled similar differentiations within the trade union movements of several European countries.

Contrary to what occurred during the crushing of the East German workers' revolt in 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, and the "Prague spring" of 1968-69, opposition to bureaucratic repression within the international workers' movement was not confined, this time, to the imperialist countries alone. For the first time, in a series of semi-colonial countries, especially in Latin America (Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, etc.), not unimportant sectors of the workers' movement demonstrated their solidarity with the victims of this repression and sometimes even called street demonstrations. The attempt by the lawyers of the bureaucracy to label all those who oppose the bureaucratic dictatorship, even when they are the majority of the working class of a country, as "objectively pro-imperialist" forces, is beginning to lose ground within the anti-imperialist movement. Each new rise of the world revolution can only deepen this profound resurgence of true proletarian internationalism.

To the militants of the CPs and national revolutionary movements critical of support for Solidarnosc, the Fourth International should explain that a strengthening of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces in the West demands the application of a united front policy, including Catholic and socialist workers and their mass organisations. The realisation of such a united front is gravely handicapped by the rejection of a campaign of solidarity with Solidarnosc for reasons of purely ideological opposition to the anti-communism of the reformists. Evidently, the systematic campaign for the united front in solidarity with Solidarnosc, as in solidarity with the Central American revolution, etc., is always combined with defence of the revolutionary Marxist programme, including the struggle against false and counter-revolutionary socialist ideas.

28) The repercussions of the Polish events on the rest of the bureaucratised workers states are still difficult to assess. Clearly, the rise of the Polish proletariat found no immediate mass response in any of these countries. This is not surprising in view of the uneven development of the economic and social crisis in the different countries and in view of the fact that vanguard sectors of the working class lagged behind the Poles in renewing their experience of waging a sustained struggle of their own, and the strict censorship of information of the Polish workers' struggle imposed by the various bureaucracies.

Nevertheless, in countries where the workers were informed of the Polish events, the vanguards demonstrated an enthusiastic response. In the People's Republic of China, the party organ *People's Daily* gave a detailed coverage of the Polish workers' struggle up till the end of August 1980, in the belief that the Soviet Union might intervene and a "national liberation struggle" against this "superpower" would ensue. When the official press changed its attitude after the formation of Solidarnosc, the samizdat press continued to respond to the developments of the Polish events.

The Polish workers' struggle had a special impact on China because the Peking Spring democracy movement was unfolding in the same period, and the activists, predominantly educated young workers, were stimulated by the gains of the Polish workers. The 21 demands and the Charter of Workers' Rights were reprinted in the samizdat press, and over 10 samizdat

publications from different regions in China discussed the Polish events and drew important conclusions: "The emergence of the multi-party system in all communist countries is now on the agenda"; "strikes are one way to raise the status of the working class and overcome bureaucratic rule in the existing socialist system"; "the death knell for the rule of the privileged bureaucracy is tolling"; "the rule of the bureaucracy must not be replaced by the rule of the bourgeoisie; the only correct way out is to build a system of proletarian democracy for this particular transitional period in history".

The impact was not limited to theoretical enlightenment. Both the official and the samizdat press reported a series of attempts to organise independent trade unions in different parts of China. The fact that a national wave of arrests of the majority of editors and organisers of the samizdat publications was launched in April 1981, and that the article guaranteeing workers' right to strike was deleted from China's Constitution in April 1982, show how panic-stricken the Chinese bureaucracy was of the "Polish example" in China. It is no accident that the bureaucracy changed its attitude and extended support to Jaurzelski's military dictatorship by sending material aid. This demonstrates that the various bureaucracies, despite their differences and contradictions, have the same interests in repressing the working class.

Moreover, in several of the Eastern countries like Rumania and the USSR, a crisis in the supply of basic goods is ripening and causing broad discontent among the masses, not unlike what happened in Poland during the 1976-80 period. In other countries, such as Hungary and the GDR, political opposition tendencies are emerging among the youth and intellectuals and will gradually search out a way to link up with the workers. The bureaucrats are perfectly aware of these facts and are frightened by them. In all these countries, they are panic-stricken by the thought that the "Polish example", that is an explosion of anger by the workers leading to mass strikes and workers' self-organisation, could be repeated in their own country.

The bureaucracy's reaction to this threat displays its lack of a clear orientation, a reflection of its disarray and crisis. While it very naturally leans toward harsher repression of "political dissidents", it hesitates to launch an all-out attack against workers' actions, stating, not without good cause, that the blood spilled in the ports of the Baltic in 1970 was the origin of all that followed in Poland. Selective repression on the one hand, and an attempt to give the trade union organisation new weight by granting it some elbow room in pursuing economic demands on the other — these seem to be the tactical lessons drawn from the Polish events by the bureaucracy of several bureaucratised workers states.

As for the better informed and more experienced section of the working class in these states, it followed the actions of its brothers and sisters in Poland with sympathy, even though it most often has not yet found a way to translate that sympathy into action. But the "Polish model" will undoubtedly have a profound influence on the development of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution in many bureaucratised workers states.

## VI. The tasks of revolutionary Marxists

29) While the rise of the Polish revolution demonstrated once again the proletariat's capacity for initiative, action, and self-organisation on a colossal scale once it moves in a collective and united mobilisation, it also confirmed this other lesson of the history of the workers' movement: the unsurmountable limitations of the spontaneous activity of the masses. Neither when what was needed was to define exactly the goals to be achieved by Solidarnosc — the economic reform project: that is, reorganisation of the economy on a different basis than that proposed by the various factions of the bureaucracy and petty bourgeoisie — nor especially when the need was to elaborate a strategy and a precise tactic for defending Solidarnosc against the stalling manoeuvres of the bureaucratic dictatorship which finally led to the 13th December 1981 crackdown (that is, a strategy for the seizure of power), did the spontaneous reactions of the rank and file, more or less expressed in the local and regional structures, suffice to bring out a clear, let alone a correct line. Thus, grave

errors were committed that seem decisive after the fact, like the lack of an orientation toward the soldiers based on calling for democratic rights and the right to self-organisation in the army.

More generally, in every revolution, the ability to seize the initiative in a centralised fashion is an essential advantage, an advantage which precisely can only be secured by a leadership acting as a vanguard. The lack of such an organised vanguard was cruelly felt in Poland.

Of course, the official bureaucratic propaganda's use ad nauseum of a vocabulary drawn from the revolutionary traditions of the workers — and the reinforcement of this identification of the bureaucratic rulers with Marxism and Leninism by Western bourgeois propaganda — led to a visceral rejection of concepts such as "revolutionary vanguard party" by a very large number of Polish union activists. This called, and still calls, for a great deal of careful educational work by revolutionary Marxists to convince these activists of the need to build such a party. But this need can be demonstrated very concretely and very clearly by an analysis of the very events that shook Poland since the summer of 1980, or even since the workers' revolt of 1976.

We are speaking of course of a party which clearly formulates its own role and its own goals in relation to those of the mass organisation of the workers. The revolutionary vanguard party which revolutionary Marxists seek to build in Poland is not a substitute for the institutions created by the workers at the state level after the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship: workers' councils democratically elected and federated on the local, regional, and national level.

Within these councils as well as within the organs of self-organisation of the masses such as Solidarnosc, party militants will defend their political positions by political and not administrative means. They will try to win and hold their confidence of the workers solely on the basis of the dedication to the class and its movement, and of their spirit of class solidarity and sacrifice for the common cause, as well as the correctness of their programme and political line. They will reject all material benefits, all economic privileges of any kind. But they will be a vanguard force insofar as they embody the collective memory of the Polish and international working class, all the lessons that emerged from the 150-years experience of struggle of the Polish and international proletariat. The existence of such a party corresponds also to the interests of the whole of the working class. Before 13th December 1981, it would have facilitated the accomplishment of many concrete tasks facing the mass movement.

30) To the fear expressed by some that a relatively small initial nucleus of revolutionary Marxist activists could do less effective work than the activists not set apart organisationally in any way whatsoever from the structures of Solidarnosc, we must answer that Polish history has already demonstrated the efficacy of small nuclei acting in a favourable context. The intervention of a few hundred activists, mainly from the KOR, beginning in 1976, played a decisive role in forging the links that connected activists of the various factories, links that greatly contributed to the success of the summer 1980 strikes, and to the emergence of Solidarnosc as a mass organisation.

Moreover, by no means is the point to counterpose in mechanical fashion the formation of a revolutionary Marxist vanguard party to the emergence of a natural leadership of the class within the enterprises and organs of self-organisation. The activists who first come together on a mainly programmatic and political basis are merely the initial nucleus of a party. They do not proclaim themselves the "leadership of the working class" by a voluntarist exercise lacking in any practical meaning. They attempt to win the confidence of the working class by their intervention, and in so doing, attract the best workers emerging from the very process of self-organisation. They become the *actual* leadership (that is they earn this distinction in the eyes of the masses) only insofar as they succeed in fusing with the natural leaders of the class in the workplaces.

To the fear, likewise formulated by some, that the emergence of a party would divide the working class and deepen political cleavages within the organs of self-organisation, we answer that such cleavages are inevitable among ten million workers, given

the tremendous economic, social, political, cultural, and ideological problems which they must face, and the difficulty of finding correct answers.

In fact, such a differentiation did arise within Solidarnosc in the 17 months of its open existence. Moreover, it continues today in the resistance. The appearance of a vanguard party — one respecting the norms of workers' democracy within the mass movement — would only mean that the fight would be waged more effectively to assure the adoption of positions best suited to the class as whole from among a welter of contending positions. Building the revolutionary vanguard party does not conflict with the struggle for unity in action and the broadest and most democratic united organisation of workers. To the contrary: This is one of the central goals the party fights for under all circumstances, as dictated by its programme.

To the fear, likewise formulated by some, that the building of a revolutionary vanguard party would allow a minority to manipulate the masses, we answer that the absence of such a party allows for far worse manipulations. Insofar as differentiations are inevitable within the bodies of self-rule over the answers that have to be provided at every stage of the struggle, the choice is not between an impossible unanimity and majorities "manipulated" by "active minorities". The choice is between, on the one hand, majorities manipulated by minorities which do not come out in the open — act behind closed doors, in the form of cliques without clear platforms or under the pressure of charismatic leaders or experts offering "scientific" credentials or simple demagogues — and on the other hand, majorities which are constituted on the basis of clear votes for coherent platforms, representing different orientations among which the mass of delegates *can choose* with a clear understanding of what is involved, on the basis of honest information circulated widely and democratically.

This is why the second solution is by far the more democratic and the less manipulative, the one which best keeps actual decision-making power in the hands of the working masses as a whole. This holds true on condition that the position of a revolutionary vanguard party not involve any privileges, and that the *right* to constitute parties, associations, currents, and tendencies of all kinds, be guaranteed to *all* workers within the institutions and bodies of self-organisation. This is why revolutionary Marxists resolutely fight for the multi-party principle in the construction of socialism and have written this principle into their programme.

31) a) Revolutionary Marxists consider that rebuilding and expanding Solidarnosc's underground workplace union organisations (especially in the large factories) is the key task of the mass movement and the central axis for the development of a "clandestine society". On the basis of their analysis of the situation, they are convinced that objective conditions are favourable for building these organisations and turning them into centres for resistance to the bureaucratic dictatorship's attempts at normalisation and for the mass struggle of workers. Underground workplace union organisation is decisive for initiating defensive and offensive partial struggles and preparing the struggles of more strategic import.

b) Revolutionary Marxists propagandise for launching struggles around partial or transitional demands — and intervene in them wherever they can:

- against inhuman working conditions, for better wage rates, for a sliding scale of wages; against the introduction of forced labour practices in work relations; against factory despotism, for the democratic election of labour inspectors and workers victimised by repression because of their political activity;
- for the general and unconditional amnesty of all unionists who have been prosecuted and of all political prisoners of conscience, for the right to independent trade union activity and trade union pluralism;
- for the restoration of Solidarnosc's legal activity, etc.

Partial struggles, both economic and political, constitute a decisive factor in the development of the workers' self-organisation, political awareness and fighting capacity.

c) Within the mass movement, and in particular within Solidarnosc's underground union organisations, revolutionary

Marxists defend the strategic perspective of the revolutionary general strike with occupation and active defence of worksites. The political, organisational and technical preparations for such a strike must be carried out in all workplaces and regions where the level of activity of the masses or social and political vanguards permit, independently of the general level of mass resistance to the dictatorship. They put forward an action programme for the general strike whose central components are:

- the reconquest of trade union freedom with a dynamic pointing in the direction of a struggle for political democracy;
- social control over the economy, beginning with workers' control over production, with a dynamic that tends to transform this struggle into a struggle for workers' self-management.

Revolutionary Marxists believe that an unlimited national general strike will inevitably pose the question of power, but that it cannot resolve it on its own. Only the destruction of the repressive and other apparatuses serving the bureaucratic dictatorship will make it possible to resolve the question of power in favour of the working class. The general strike can be victorious only if it leads to the emergence of a dual power situation based on more or less developed forms of social control over the economy. Only dual power can put the mass movement in a position to preserve the gains already won in a victorious general strike and at the same time accumulate the forces necessary for the overthrow of bureaucratic rule.

d) Revolutionary Marxists deem that one of the key tasks that will determine the outcome of a general strike or any direct confrontation with bureaucratic rule, is a direct and conscious intervention by Solidarnosc into the repressive apparatus with the aim of promoting — particularly among the soldiers — a collective awareness of the need to oppose any involvement of the troops in repressive actions against the workers, and of putting forward the elementary democratic demands related to the formation of independent trade unions or democratic committees of militia members and soldiers, allied to Solidarnosc. The destruction of the repressive apparatus serving the bureaucratic dictatorship must be prepared now and integrated into the strategy of the political revolution through immediate, partial and transitional tasks.

e) Revolutionary Marxists resolutely oppose "geo-political fatalism" on the basis of their belief that the unbreakable unity and a high degree of both social and political organisation of the masses, combined with the fierce determination to defend the gains of the revolution are, the best means to neutralise the danger of an intervention by the USSR and Warsaw Pact, as well as the best means to prepare to resist it. The eventual formation of a revolutionary workers' government and a general arming of the masses would considerably increase the price the Soviet bureaucracy would have to pay for a direct military intervention and could even prevent such an intervention.

32) A victorious struggle against the bureaucracy calls — at least as much as the anti-capitalist revolution — for a clear understanding of who are your enemies and your allies, both on the national and international fields. The Polish bureaucracy did demonstrate a clear sightedness about this. Despite its contradictions and the mediocrity of its functionaries, it always placed any compromises it was forced to accept in a clear strategic perspective. The accumulated experience of the international workers' movement is an essential part of developing this sort of understanding. In order to be useful, this experience must be all inclusive: that is, it must reflect at once the struggles for the overthrow of capitalism and for the overthrow of bureaucratic dictatorships. The Fourth International is the only organisation that embodies this dual struggle. With respect to Poland, in accordance with its resources, the Fourth International carried out the following work:

- a) in the bureaucratised workers states, attempts to get out the truth about Poland; and to promote debate on experiences of political revolutions;
- b) in the advanced capitalist countries, giving impetus to the solidarity of the working class;
- c) in the underdeveloped countries, while remaining at its post in the front ranks of the defence of the Cuban and Central

American revolutions against US imperialism, it did not hesitate to take a stand in favour of solidarity with the Polish workers against the leaders of these same revolutions.

In Poland itself, the circulation of the Polish *Inprecor* showed the great potential for the development of revolutionary Marxism as the revolution advanced.

We are aware that compared to what is needed to ensure a victory, what the Fourth International did was small. But all those who agree that the tasks that we undertook are essential ones should join us.

Our international organisation had something to contribute to the Polish revolution, but it also had a lot to learn. Its role is also to make sure that in future eruptions of the political revolution, the lessons of the extraordinary struggle of the Polish workers will in turn become a source of education. In this respect, the organisation of Polish revolutionary Marxists has an importance far beyond Poland itself. The struggle for the overthrow of the bureaucracy will be a long one. For these comrades to succeed in maintaining ongoing activity regardless of the ups and downs of the mass mobilisations, would be a giant step forward for the next phase.

For revolutionary Marxists, the revolution and counter-revolution in Poland, besides reconfirming the validity of the programme of the Fourth International on the nature of the bureaucratised workers states and the inevitability of an anti-bureaucratic political revolution, demonstrate the following:

- the growing centrality of the working class in the three sectors of the world revolution, and the increasing prevalence of the classical proletarian forms of struggle and organisation within it;
- the unity of the world revolution and the importance of the political revolution within it;
- the need, for historic as well as strategic and immediate reasons, to promote a turn of the organised workers' movement and the daily practice of the class struggle back to the road of true proletarian internationalism, which defends unconditionally the rights and liberties of the working class everywhere in the world against whatever social force is attacking or suppressing them, and without subordinating the interests of the proletariat anywhere to the alleged "higher" or "priority" interests of any "bastion" or "camp" wherever it may be. Only on the basis of practicing such international class solidarity can the international proletariat succeed in accomplishing its historic tasks, including, in the case of an imperialist aggression, that of defending the USSR and all workers states;
- the need to build a revolutionary International and revolutionary Marxist parties, which are indispensable not only to give impetus to such international solidarity campaigns and such a return to true proletarian internationalism, but also and especially to ensure the victory of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution itself.

The Fourth International will strive to intervene in the international debate around the Polish events by propagating all these key ideas that provide a political and organisational way forward to activists of the CPs, SPs, revolutionary nationalist organisations, trade unions, and centrist organisations who are worried, shaken, or disorientated by the Polish revolution and counter-revolution. But it holds that such a propaganda intervention can only be carried out in close connection with an action orientation aimed at organising a broad class solidarity campaign with the Polish workers and unionists who are the victims of bureaucratic repression. In fact, revolutionary Marxist propaganda can be fully effective only if it is carried on in this framework.

33) Active solidarity by the workers of other countries with Solidarnosc will be decisive in convincing the Polish proletariat that it does not stand alone in its struggle.

The Fourth International will put all its strength into pushing the solidarity campaign with the Polish proletarian masses inside the international workers' movement. All those inside the workers' movement who today refuse to advance this mobilisation are dividing the working masses — in their own country and internationally.

To mobilise against the outlawing of Solidarnosc means to simultaneously support the Polish workers and to defend the political and trade-union rights of all workers of Turkey, Brazil, El Salvador, the Spanish state, or Rumania. To call for the abrogation of repressive laws, a general and unconditional amnesty for all the prisoners, the restoration of all democratic rights, for the right to meet and organise is to defend these liberties against the attacks of imperialism and the totalitarian bureaucrats. To organise active solidarity with the Polish workers today is to facilitate and prepare the same active support of the international workers' movement with the mighty struggle being fought by the Salvadoran people against the bourgeois dictatorship and US imperialism! These are the most elementary lessons of proletarian internationalism!

All the links that have been forged over the past years between the independent and self-managed trade union of the Polish workers and the workers' movement of the capitalist countries must be used to break the isolation in which General Jaruzelski wants to confine the Polish masses. To send material food and medical aid remains an immediate task. That should make it possible to renew links, to pass on information, and to let the Polish workers know that their class brothers and sisters are their best supporters and not the imperialist bankers who welcomed the military crackdown with such relief.

This aid can facilitate the rebuilding of links between Solidarity militants and sectors of the population. By doing everything possible to send trade union commissions of inquiry to find out about the repression meted out to Solidarnosc militants, the workers' movement can unmask the hypocrisy of both the bureaucrats who speak of "respect for liberty" and the spokespersons of imperialism who shut their eyes to the fate of trade union militants in Poland ... just as they do for Turkey.

Within the workers' movement itself, revolutionary Marxists must systematically explain the aims and actions of Solidarnosc. The democratic way in which the trade union functioned, the broad and public way in which its main political positions were discussed, its debates on self-management, and the experiences

of workers' and social control must become the property of the international workers' movement. This is the most effective way to undermine the sort of "bureaucratic solidarity" that we have seen operate so often since 1980, either in the form of calculated indifference from the trade union leaderships, of open hostility, or in a way that deforms the workers' objectives. The latter are presented as fitting into the framework of the class-collaborationist projects defended by these reformist apparatuses (co-management, "historic compromise").

By doing everything to build this working-class solidarity on the basis of class unity and independence, it will be possible to partly defeat the attempts of imperialism to use Polish events to reinforce its ideological and political positions.

The Fourth International closely links its solidarity campaign with Solidarnosc, with its efforts to stimulate mobilisations against the remilitarisation drive, against Nato's policy of aggression, and against the criminal initiatives of US imperialism, the real warmonger, in Central America and the Caribbean.

Within this perspective, the unity of the working class on a world scale is crystal clear. Any reticence in giving support to the Polish workers can only hold back and divide the mobilisation against nuclear rearmament in Europe and against imperialist aggression in Central America. In the same way, any abstention or opposition — as we see among the social democratic parties — with regard to the mobilisation against Nato or in support of the revolutionary struggle of the people of Nicaragua, Guatemala, or El Salvador can only weaken the unity and breadth of support for the resistance of the Polish masses.

- ★ *Solidarity with Solidarnosc!*
- ★ *Down with the bureaucracy's military dictatorship!*
- ★ *Freedom for all political prisoners, release all trade unionists, intellectuals, and students!*
- ★ *Re-establish all political, trade-union, and civil rights!*
- ★ *Long live the international solidarity of the workers of all countries with all liberation struggles, in defence of all the exploited and oppressed, which form a single, united struggle for the socialist world of tomorrow!*

# Dictatorship of the proletariat and the democracy

[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a long, multi-paragraph piece of text, possibly a book chapter or a long article, discussing the relationship between the dictatorship of the proletariat and democracy. The text is centered on the page and occupies most of the space below the title.]



Photo: DAVID KING Collection

# Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy

THE CURRENT debate in the international labour movement over differing conceptions of socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat is the most deepgoing since the years following the Russian revolution of October 1917. It is a product of the growth of workers' struggles in the capitalist countries since 1968 and of the anti-imperialist struggles, of the parallel crisis of capitalism and the rule of the bureaucratic castes over the bureaucratised workers states. It is likewise a product of the awareness, inside the international working class, of Stalinism and of bureaucracy in general. All these factors take the debate out of the realm of more or less academic polemics into the field of practical politics. A clear position on this question is required to advance the socialist revolution in the capitalist countries and the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states. It is therefore necessary for the Fourth International to state its programmatic positions on this subject.

## I. What is the dictatorship of the proletariat?

The fundamental difference between reformists and centrists of all varieties on the one hand and revolutionary Marxists, i.e., Bolshevik-Leninists on the other hand, regarding the conquest of state power, the need for a socialist revolution, the nature of the proletarian state, and the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat consists of:

- a) The recognition by revolutionary Marxists of the *class* nature of all states and of the state apparatus as an instrument of maintaining class rule. In that sense, all states are dictatorships. Bourgeois democracy is also the dictatorship of a class.
- b) The illusion propagated by the reformists and many centrists that "democracy" or "democratic state institutions" stand above classes and the class struggle, and the rejection of that illusion by revolutionary Marxists.
- c) The recognition by revolutionary Marxists that the state institutions of even the most democratic bourgeois states serve to uphold the power and the rule of the capitalist class (and, in addition, in the imperialist countries, the exploitation of the people of the semi-colonial countries), and therefore cannot be instruments with which to overthrow that rule and transfer power from the capitalist class to the working class.
- d) The recognition by revolutionary Marxists that the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, in the first place destruction of its military/police repressive apparatus, is a necessary prerequisite for the conquest of political power by the working class.
- e) The recognition by revolutionary Marxists of the necessity for the development of the consciousness and mass organisation of the workers in order to carry through the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- f) The necessary conclusion drawn by revolutionary Marxists as a consequence: that the working class by itself can exercise state power directly only within the framework of state institutions of a type different from those of the bourgeois state, state institutions arising out of sovereign and democratically elected and centralised workers councils (soviets), with the fundamental characteristics outlined by Lenin in *State and Revolution* — the election of all functionaries, judges, commanders of the workers or workers and

peasants militias, and all delegates representing the toilers in state institutions; rotation of elected officials; restriction of their income to that of skilled workers; the right to recall them at all times; simultaneous exercise of legislative and executive power by soviet-type institutions; drastic reduction of the number of permanent functionaries and greater and greater transfer of administrative functions to bodies run by the mass of the concerned toilers themselves. In other words, a soviet-type representative democracy, as opposed to the parliamentary type, with increasingly wide-ranging forms of direct democracy.

As Lenin stated, the workers state is the first state in human history that upholds the rule of the majority of the population against exploitative and oppressive minorities. "Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfill all these functions, and the more the functions of a state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power." (*State and Revolution, Collected Works, Vol. 25, pp. 419-420.*) Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat in the programmatic sense of the word is by no means contradictory with workers democracy: "By its very essence, the dictatorship of the proletariat can and must be the utmost flowering of proletarian democracy" (L. Trotsky, *Oeuvres, Vol. V, pp. 206-7.*)

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which summarises all these points, is a basic part of the Marxist theory of the state, of the proletarian revolution, and of the process toward building a classless society. The word "dictatorship" has a concrete meaning in that context: it is a mechanism for the disarmament and expropriation of the bourgeois class and the exercise of state power by the working class, a mechanism to prevent any re-establishment of bourgeois state power or of private property in the means of production, and thus any re-introduction of the exploitation of wage-earners by capitalists.

But it in no way means dictatorial rule over the vast majority of people. The founding congress of the Communist International states explicitly that "proletarian dictatorship is the forcible oppression of the resistance of the exploiters, i.e., an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and capitalists. It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism — the toiling classes ... all this implies and presents to the toiling classes, i.e., the vast majority of the population, greater practical opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than ever existed before, even approximately, in the best and the most democratic bourgeois republics." ("Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", Lenin, *Collected Works, Vol. 28, pp. 464-5.*)

Such a state is only a state, in the traditional sense of the word, during the period when it is necessary to "violently repress the resistance of the class that has lost political power." That is the period in which Marxist tradition has called the state dictatorship of the proletariat. "From its inception, the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat ceases therefore to be that of a state in the old meaning of the word, that is a machine made to keep the majority of the people subservient. Along with

weapons, material force passes directly, immediately, into the hands of workers organisations such as the soviets." And this state, "a bureaucratic apparatus, begins to wither away from the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus speaks the programme, unchanged to this day" Trotsky wrote in *Revolution Betrayed*.

It is clear that if this sort of evolution towards the withering away of the state does not take place, when the resistance of the bourgeois class has been broken within the new workers state, and if, instead, a process of bureaucratisation develops, then we are not dealing with a "strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat" but with its degeneration towards bureaucratic state forms.

It follows that we reject the allegation by the reformists and many centrists — influenced on this point by bourgeois ideology, or apologists of the Stalinist dictatorship — that the basic difference between proponents and adversaries of the dictatorship of the proletariat lies either in the defence of a one-party system by the former and its rejection by the latter, or in defending the need to severely restrict or even suppress democratic freedoms on the part of the former and the staunch defence of those freedoms by the latter. The argument is all the more hypocritical in the light of historical evidence which shows the willingness of reformists to severely restrict the democratic freedom of the masses when they threaten to overthrow the bourgeois order, even using police and military repression to that end (Noske!), and their inability and unwillingness to effectively defend democratic freedom even within bourgeois society against ultra-right threats, inasmuch as such a defence involves mass mobilisation on the broadest scale, including arming of the masses.

Against the open programmatic revisionism of many communist parties and centrist formations, the Fourth International defends these classical concepts of Marx and Lenin. A socialist society is not possible without the collective ownership of the means of production and the social surplus product, economic planning and administration by the working class as a whole through democratically centralised workers councils, i.e., planned management by the toilers. No such socialisation is possible unless the capitalists are economically and politically expropriated and state power is wielded by the working class. No fully developed socialist society can emerge within the narrow boundaries of the nation state.

Especially after the tragic Chilean experience, which confirmed so many previous lessons of history, the reformist concept now shared by the communist parties of capitalist Europe, the Japanese CP, and several other CPs as well as centrist formations and the social democrats, according to which the labour movement can fully attain its goals within the framework of bourgeois parliamentary institutions, through reliance on parliamentary elections and gradual conquest of "positions of state power" within these institutions, must be energetically opposed and denounced for what it is: it is a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the conquest of state power by the proletariat; a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, for abandonment of a policy of consistent defence of the class interests of working class; a substitution of ever-more systematic class collaboration with the bourgeoisie for the policy of consistent class struggle; a disarming of the proletariat in the face of violence unleashed by the capitalist class; and, consequently, a growing tendency to capitulate to the class interests of the bourgeoisie at moments of decisive economic, political and social crisis. Far from reducing the "costs of social transformation" or from ensuring a peaceful, albeit slower, transition to socialism, this policy, if it should decisively determine the political attitude of the toilers in a period of unavoidable overall class confrontation, can only lead to bloody defeats and mass slaughters of the German, Spanish, Indonesian, and Chilean type (in the German case, additionally caused by the criminal ultra-left "social-fascism" theory and practice of the Comintern).

## II. Workers-council power and the extension of democratic rights for the toiling masses

The dictatorship of the proletariat in its complete form, workers'

democracy, means the exercise of state-power by democratically elected soviets, workers' councils. Marx's and Lenin's whole critique of the limitations of bourgeois democracy is based on the fact that private property and capitalist exploitation (i.e., social and economic inequality), coupled with the specific class structure of bourgeois society (atomisation and alienation of the working class, legislation defending private property, function of the repressive apparatus, etc.) result in the violent restriction of the practical application of democratic rights and the practical enjoyment of democratic freedoms by the big majority of the toiling masses, even in the most democratic bourgeois regimes.

The logical conclusion flowing from this critique is that workers' democracy must be superior to bourgeois democracy — not only in the economic and social sphere — such as the right to work, a secure existence, free education, leisure time, etc. — but also because it increases the democratic rights enjoyed by the workers and all layers of toilers in the political and social sphere. To grant a single party or so-called "mass organisations" or "professional associations" (like writers' associations) controlled by that single party, a monopoly of access to the printing presses, radio, television, and other mass media, to assembly halls, etc., would, in fact, *restrict and not extend* the democratic rights of the proletariat compared to those enjoyed under contemporary bourgeois democracy. The right of toilers, including those with dissenting views, to have access to the material means of exercising democratic freedoms (freedom of the press, of assembly, of demonstration, the right to strike, etc.) is essential, as is the independence of the trade unions from the state and from control by the ruling party or parties.

Therefore, an extension of democratic rights for the toilers beyond those already enjoyed under conditions of advanced bourgeois democracy is incompatible with the restriction of the right to form political groupings, tendencies, or parties on programmatic or ideological grounds.

Moreover, self-activity and self administration by the toiling masses under the dictatorship of the proletariat will take on many new facets and extend the concepts of "political activity", "political parties", "political programmes", and "democratic rights" far beyond anything characteristic of political life under bourgeois democracy. This applies not only to the combined flowering of more advanced forms of council democracy (congress of councils, with growing manifestations of direct democracy, with political instruments like referendums on specific questions being used to enable the mass of the toilers to decide directly on a whole number of key questions of policy. It applies also and especially to the very content of "politics".

Under capitalism and even beyond it, under pre-capitalist forms of commodity production, it is the law of value, i.e., objective economic laws operating independently of the will of men and women, which basically regulates economic life. The socialist revolution implies the possibility of a giant leap forward towards a conscious regulation of humanity's economic and social destiny instead of a blind anarchic one. While this process can only come to full and harmonious completion in a worldwide socialist society, it starts with conscious planning of the socialised economy during the transition period between capitalism and socialism, in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat. While the influence of the law of value cannot be completely eliminated during that period, its domination must be overcome or the economy cannot be planned.

But planning means allocation of economic resources according to socially established priorities instead of according to blind market forces and the rule of profit. *Who will establish these priorities*, which involve the well-being of tens and hundreds of millions of human beings and whose implications, consequences, and results in turn influence the behaviour of the mass of the producers and the toilers?

Basically, there are only two mechanisms which can be substituted for the rule of the law of value: either bureaucratic choices *imposed* upon the mass of the producers/consumers from the top (whatever their origin and character may be, from benign technocratic paternalism to extreme arbitrary despotism of Stalin's type), or choices *made by the mass of the producers themselves*, through the mechanism of democratically centralised workers' power, i.e., through the mechanism of socialist

democracy. *This will be the main content of political debate and struggle, of socialist democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat.*

Experience has shown that the first mechanism is extremely wasteful and inefficient. This is true not only because of direct waste of material resources and productive capacities and great dislocations in the plan, but also and especially because of the systematic stifling of the creative and productive potential of the working class. Theoretical and empirical analysis concurs in the conclusion that the second mechanism can and will greatly reduce these shortcomings. In any case, it is the only one permitting a gradual transition to that which is the goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat: a classless socialist community of self-administering producers and consumers.

Experience has, however, also shown that this mechanism of democratically centralised workers' power through a system of workers' councils cannot master all the social and economic contradictions of the building of socialism without the existence of instruments independent of the soviet state apparatus which act as a counterweight. Independent trade unions and a labour law guaranteeing the right to strike are essential in this sense to guarantee a defence of the needs of the workers and their standard of living against any decision taken by workers' councils, particularly against any arbitrary and bureaucratic move of the management bodies. The Hungarian experience of 1956, the Czechoslovak experience of 1968 and the Polish experience since 1980 also confirm that this is a fundamental concern of the proletariat that has gone through the experience of bureaucratic dictatorship. Although in principle revolutionary Marxists recommend the organisation of the working class in a single democratic trade union, the right to trade union pluralism must not be challenged. Not simultaneously holding central leadership responsibilities in a trade union and a party is an element of trade union independence.

Building a classless socialist society also involves a gigantic process of remoulding all aspects of social life. It involves constant change in the relations of production, in the mode of distribution, in the labour process, in the forms of administration of the economy and society, and in the customs, habits, and ways of thinking of the great majority of people. It involves the fundamental reconstruction of all living conditions: reconstruction of cities, complete revolution in the education system, restoration and protection of the ecological equilibrium, technological innovations to conserve scarce natural resources, etc.

Previously the highest acquisitions of culture have been the property of the ruling class, with special prerogatives and privileges accruing to the intelligentsia. Members of this special grouping function as transmitters and developers of science, art, and the professions for the ruling class.

That intelligentsia will gradually disappear as the masses progressive appropriate for themselves the full cultural heritage of the past and begin to create the culture of the classless society. In this way the distinction between "manual" and "intellectual" labour will disappear, each individual being able to develop their own capacities and talents.

All these endeavours, for which humanity possesses no blueprints, will give rise to momentous ideological and political debates and struggles. Different platforms on these issues will play a very important role. Any restriction of these debates and movements, under the pretext that this or that platform "objectively" reflects bourgeois or petty-bourgeois pressure and interests and "if logically carried out to the end", could "lead to the restoration of capitalism", can only hinder the emergence of a consensus around the most effective solutions *from the point of view of building socialism*, i.e. from the point of view of the overall class interests of the proletariat, as opposed to sectoral interest.

It should be pointed out that important struggles will continue throughout the process of building a classless society, struggles that concern social evils that are rooted in class society but will not disappear immediately with the elimination of capitalist exploitation or wage labour. The oppression of

women, the oppression of national and racial minorities, the oppression and alienation of youth, and discrimination against homosexuals are archetypes of such problems that are not reducible to "the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie" unless one challenges their Marxist and materialist definition, as various Maoist and ultra-left currents do.

Political freedom under socialist democracy therefore also implies freedom of organisation and action for independent women's liberation, national liberation, and youth movements, i.e. movements broader than the working class in the scientific sense of the word.

The revolutionary party will be able to win political leadership in these movements and to ideologically defeat various reactionary ideological currents not through administrative or repressive measures but, on the contrary, only by promoting the broadest possible mass democracy and by uncompromisingly upholding the right of all tendencies to defend their opinions and platforms before society as a whole.

Furthermore it should be recognised that the specific *form* of the workers state implies a unique dialectical combination of centralisation and decentralisation. The withering away of the state, to be initiated from the inception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, expresses itself through a process of gradual devolution of the right of administration in broad sectors of social activity (health system, educational system, postal-railway-telecommunications systems, etc.) internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally (communes) to organs of self-management. The central congress of workers' councils, i.e. *the proletariat as a class*, will only decide, by majority vote, what share of society's overall material and human resources should be allocated to each of these sectors. This implies forms of debate and political struggle that cannot be reduced to simplistic and mechanical "class struggle criteria".

Finally, in the building of a classless society, the participation of millions of people not only in a more or less passive way through their votes, but also in the actual administration of various levels, cannot be reduced to a workerist concept of considering only workers "at the point of production" or in the factories as such. Lenin said that in a workers state, the vast majority of the population would participate directly in the exercise of "state functions." This means that the soviets on which the dictatorship of the proletariat will be based are not only factory councils, but bodies of self-organisation of the masses in many spheres of social life, including factories, commercial units, hospitals, schools, transport and telecommunication centres, and neighbourhoods (territorial units). This is indispensable in order to integrate into the conscious and active proletariat its most dispersed and often poorest and most oppressed layers, such as women, oppressed nationalities, youth, workers in small shops, old-age pensioners, etc. It is also indispensable to cementing the alliance between the working-class and the toiling petty-bourgeoisie. This alliance is decisive in winning and holding state power and in reducing the social costs both of a victorious revolution and of the building of socialism.

One of the institutional guarantees of the development of socialist democracy is the establishment of correct relations between the organs of this democracy and the apparatuses of the state administration, at all levels and in all fields: political, cultural, educational, military, etc. Socialist democracy is impossible if the purview of these apparatuses is not strictly delineated, if their powers are not reduced to a strict and indispensable minimum and if they are not thoroughly subordinated to the organs of socialist democracy (the councils). The councils should have full sovereignty over the strategic and tactical decisions in their purview. The administrative apparatuses should be responsible for the implementation of these decisions and nothing more.

Administrative officers should be selected on the basis of technical competence and professional experience criteria. They should not be appointed by the higher echelons of the administration, but by the corresponding councils, and should remain subject to recall by these councils.

### III. Class struggle under capitalism, the struggle for democratic rights, and the emergence of the dictatorship of the proletariat

The ruling class utilises all the ideological means at its disposal to identify bourgeois parliamentary institutions with the consolidation of democratic rights of the toilers. In Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia, for instance, the capitalist rulers seek to appear as champions of "democracy" in the eyes of the workers and plebeian masses, an outlook which has been strengthened by the negative experiences of fascism and Stalinism.

One of the key components of the struggle for winning the masses to socialist revolution, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, consists of responding to their democratic aspirations, of expressing them adequately, and thus counteracting the strenuous efforts of the reformists to co-opt the struggle for democratic demands and divert it into the blind alley of bourgeois parliamentary institutions.

Whatever democratic rights the masses enjoy under capitalism — from the right to free speech, to the right to organise labour unions and workers' parties, to the right to universal franchise and free abortion — have been won by them through struggle. Revolutionary Marxists fight for the broadest possible democratic rights under capitalism. The greater the degree of democratic rights, the greater the possibilities for the workers and their allies to struggle for their interests and to improve the relationship of class forces for the proletariat, in preparation for the showdown struggles with the capitalists for power.

It is in the class interests of the workers to fight to defend every conquest of the masses, including democratic rights, against capitalist reaction. History has shown that the working class is the only class that can consistently do so, and that the workers united front is the best instrument for successfully organising such a fight against the threat of fascist or military dictatorships. Likewise, in the fight against capitalist reaction, we place no confidence in the capitalist state or any of its institutions. Every restriction by the capitalist state on democratic rights will inevitably be used tenfold against the working class and especially its revolutionary wing. Fascism, like any other attempt to impose an authoritarian regime, can only be stopped by independent mass mobilisations by a united working class and its allies, in consciously-led united front mass struggles.

Capitalism in its decay breeds reaction. The extent of democratic rights and freedoms enjoyed by the masses at any particular time in a given country are determined by the relationship of class forces.

In the imperialist epoch, given the increased polarisation between the classes, the long-term tendency for capitalism in the imperialist epoch is to restrict democratic rights.

This is especially true the more a given capitalist class finds itself in economic and social crisis, and the smaller are its material bases and reserves. Today this can be seen most clearly in the many brutal dictatorships in semi-colonial countries.

The task of wresting leadership from the reformists as "representatives" of the democratic aspirations of the masses is thus crucial for revolutionary Marxists. Obviously, programmatic clarification and propaganda, especially the struggle against reformist and parliamentary illusions, important as they are, are insufficient to achieve this objective. The masses learn through their practical daily experience; hence the importance of going through this daily experience with them and drawing the correct lessons from it.

As the class struggle sharpens, the workers will increasingly challenge the authority and prerogatives of the ruling class on all levels. The workers themselves, through their own organisations — from union and factory committees and organs for workers' control, to workers' councils (soviets) — will begin to assert more and more economic and political decision-making authority, and thereby they will gain confidence in their power to overthrow the bourgeois state. In this same process, in order to carry out their struggles more effectively, with the broadest mass involvement,

the workers will see the need for the most democratic forms of organisation. Through this experience of struggle and participation in their own democratically run organisations, the masses will experience more freedom of action and more liberty in the broadest sense of the word than they ever exercised in the institutional framework of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. This is an indispensable link in the chain of events leading from capitalist rule to the conquest of power by the proletariat. It will also be a vital experience to draw upon in establishing the democratic norms of the workers state. Self-organisation of the proletariat in the course of the class struggle — from democratic strikers' assemblies and democratically elected strike committees to a generalised system of dual power — therefore is the best school of proletarian democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

### IV. One-party and multi-party systems

Without full freedom to organise political groups, tendencies, and parties, no full flowering of democratic rights and freedoms for the toiling masses is possible under the dictatorship of the proletariat. By their free vote, the workers and poor peasants indicate themselves what parties they want to be part of the soviet system. In that sense, the freedom of organisation of different groups, tendencies, and parties is a precondition for the exercise of political power by the working class. "The democratisation of the soviets is impossible without legalisation of soviet parties." (*Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International.) Without such freedom, unrestrained by *ideological* restrictions, there can be no genuine, democratically elected workers' councils, nor the exercise of real power by such workers' councils.

Restrictions of that freedom would not be restrictions of the political rights of the class enemy but restrictions of the political rights of the proletariat. That freedom is likewise a precondition for the working class *collectively as a class* arriving at a common or at least a majority viewpoint on the innumerable problems of tactics, strategy, and even theory (programme) that are involved in the titanic task of building a classless society under the leadership of the traditionally oppressed, exploited, and downtrodden masses. Unless there is freedom to organise political groups, tendencies, and parties, there can be no real socialist democracy.

Revolutionary Marxists reject the substitutionist, paternalistic, elitist, and bureaucratic deviation from Marxism that sees the socialist revolution, the conquest of state power, and the wielding of state power under the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a task of the revolutionary party acting "in the name" of the class or, in the best of cases, "with the support of" the class.

If the dictatorship of the proletariat is to mean what the very words say, and what the theoretical tradition of both Marx and Lenin explicitly contain, i.e., *the rule of the working class as a class* (of the "associated producers"); if the emancipation of the proletariat can be achieved only through the activity of the proletariat itself and not through a passive proletariat being "educated" for emancipation by benevolent and enlightened revolutionary administrators, then it is obvious that the leading role of the revolutionary party both in the conquest of power and in the building of a classless society can only consist of leading the mass activity of the class politically, of winning political hegemony in a class that is increasingly engaged in independent activity, of struggling within the class for majority support for its proposals, through political and not administrative or repressive means.

*Under the dictatorship of the proletariat in its complete form*, state power is exercised by democratically elected *workers' councils*. The revolutionary party fights for a correct political line and for political leadership within these workers' councils, not to substitute itself to them. Party and state remain entirely separate and distinct entities.

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ditions of civil war, or to conditions of the revolutionary crisis and armed insurrection itself, to which this resolution refers in a later point). Likewise, workers' councils can function democratically only if all the elected delegates enjoy the right to form groups, tendencies, and parties, to have access to the mass media, to present their different platforms before the masses, and to have them debated and tested by experience. Any restriction of party affiliation restricts the freedom of the proletariat to exercise political power, i.e., restricts workers' democracy, which would be contrary to the historical interests of the working class, to the need to consolidate workers' power, to the interests of world revolution and of building socialism.

Obviously such rights will not be recognised for parties, groups or individuals involved in a civil war or armed actions against the workers state. Neither do such freedoms include the right to organise actions or demonstrations of a racist character or in favour of national or ethnic oppression.

In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers' power, a workers state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In no theoretical document of Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky, and in no programmatic document of the Third International under Lenin, did such a proposal of a one-party system ever appear. The theories developed later on, such as the crude Stalinist theory that throughout history social classes have always been represented by a single party, are historically wrong and serve only as apologies for the monopoly of political power usurped by the Soviet bureaucracy and its ideological heirs in other bureaucratised workers states, a monopoly based upon the political expropriation of the working class.

History — including the convulsions in the People's Republic of China, in Poland, Yugoslavia, Grenada and Nicaragua — has on the contrary confirmed the correctness of Trotsky's position that "classes are heterogeneous; they are torn by inner antagonisms, and arrive at the solution of common problems no otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties ... An example of only one party corresponding to one class is not to be found in the whole course of political history — provided, of course, you do not take the police appearance for the reality." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 267.) This was true for the bourgeoisie under feudalism. It is true for the working class under capitalism. It will remain true for the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat and in the process of building socialism.

If one says that only parties and organisations that have no bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois?) programme or ideology, or are not "engaged in anti-socialist or anti-soviet propaganda and/or agitation" are to be legalised, how is one to determine the dividing line? Will parties with a majority of working-class members but with a bourgeois ideology be forbidden? How can such a position be reconciled with free elections for workers' councils? What is the dividing line between "bourgeois programme" and "reformist ideology"? Must reformist parties then be forbidden as well? Will social democracy be suppressed?

It is unavoidable that on the basis of historical traditions, reformist influence will continue to survive in the working class of many countries for a long period. That survival will not be shortened by administrative repression; on the contrary, such repression will tend to strengthen it. The best way to fight against reformist illusions and ideas is through the combination of ideological struggle and the creation of the material conditions for the disappearance of these illusions. Such a struggle would lose much of its efficacy under conditions of administrative repression and lack of free debate and exchange of ideas.

If the revolutionary party agitates for the suppression of social democratic or other reformist formations, it will be a thousand times more difficult to maintain freedom of tendencies and toleration of factions within its own ranks. The political heterogeneity of the working class would then inevitably tend to reflect itself within the single party.

Thus, the real alternative is not either freedom for those with a genuine socialist programme (who ideologically and programmatically support the soviet system) or freedom for all political parties. The real choice is: either genuine workers' democracy with the right of the toiling masses to elect whoever they want to

the soviets and freedom of political organisation of all those who abide by the soviet constitution in practice (including those who do not ideologically support the soviet system), or a decisive restriction of the political rights of the working class itself, with all the consequences flowing therefrom. Systematic restriction of political parties leads to systematic restriction of freedom within the revolutionary vanguard party itself.

When we say that we are in favour of a legalisation of all soviet parties, i.e. of those that abide by the soviet constitution in practice, this does not imply that we in any case underestimate the political confusion, errors, and even partial defeats which the propagation of wrong programmes and alien class influences upon the toiling masses by such parties could and will provoke under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even more obviously do we not *call* upon the workers to build parties upon the basis of what we consider wrong programmes, platforms, or policies, nor do we advocate the creation of such parties. We only state that the artificial administrative suppression of such parties — artificial inasmuch as they continue to reflect currents among the masses even if they are legally suppressed — far from reducing these dangers, increases them. The political, ideological, and cultural homogenisation of the working class, bringing the great majority of its members up to the point where they are capable of substituting a free community of self-administered citizens to the survival of a state machine (i.e., able to achieve the building of socialism and the withering away of the state) is a gigantic historical task. It is not only linked to obvious material preconditions. It involves also a specific political training: "The existence of critically-minded people, opponents, dissidents, discontented and reactionary elements, gives the revolution life and strength. The confrontation of differences and polemics develop 'the ideological and political muscles' of the people. It is a permanent form of exercising, an antidote to paralysis and to passivity." (Tomas Borge Speaks, *Granma*, weekly French edition, October 7, 1984)

Likewise, Fidel Castro had polemicised against Escalante, saying: *the revolution must be a school of unfettered thought*. Even if practice does not always match these statements, they represent the programmatic continuity of Marxism on the subject and must be defended tooth and nail against all who would deny them.

Historical experience confirms that outside of conditions of genuine workers' democracy, this process of training the masses for self-administration, can only be retarded or even reversed, as it obviously has been in the USSR. Historical experience has also confirmed that no genuine workers' democracy is possible without political pluralism.

## V. What do political parties represent?

Revolutionary Marxists reject all spontaneist illusions according to which the proletariat is capable of solving the tactical and strategic problems posed by the need to overthrow capitalism and the bourgeois state and to conquer state power and build socialism by spontaneous mass actions without a conscious vanguard and an organised revolutionary vanguard workers' party, based upon a revolutionary programme confirmed by history, with cadres educated on the basis of that programme and tested through long experience in the living class struggle.

The argument of anarchist origin, also taken up by ultra-left "councilist" currents, according to which political parties by their very nature are "liberal-bourgeois" formations alien to the proletariat and have no place in workers' councils because they tend to usurp political power from the working class, is theoretically incorrect and politically harmful and dangerous. It is not true that political groupings, tendencies, and parties come into existence only with the rise of the modern bourgeoisie. In the fundamental (not the formal) sense of the word, they are much older. They came into being with the emergence of forms of government in which relatively large numbers of people (as opposed to small village community or tribal assemblies) participated in the exercise of political power to some extent, while social and especially (but not only) class antagonisms had already arisen (e.g., under the urban democracies of antiquity and of the

ditions of civil war, or to conditions of the revolutionary crisis and armed insurrection itself, to which this resolution refers in a later point). Likewise, workers' councils can function democratically only if all the elected delegates enjoy the right to form groups, tendencies, and parties, to have access to the mass media, to present their different platforms before the masses, and to have them debated and tested by experience. Any restriction of party affiliation restricts the freedom of the proletariat to exercise political power, i.e., restricts workers' democracy, which would be contrary to the historical interests of the working class, to the need to consolidate workers' power, to the interests of world revolution and of building socialism.

Obviously such rights will not be recognised for parties, groups or individuals involved in a civil war or armed actions against the workers state. Neither do such freedoms include the right to organise actions or demonstrations of a racist character or in favour of national or ethnic oppression.

In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers' power, a workers state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In no theoretical document of Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky, and in no programmatic document of the Third International under Lenin, did such a proposal of a one-party system ever appear. The theories developed later on, such as the crude Stalinist theory that throughout history social classes have always been represented by a single party, are historically wrong and serve only as apologies for the monopoly of political power usurped by the Soviet bureaucracy and its ideological heirs in other bureaucratised workers states, a monopoly based upon the political expropriation of the working class.

History — including the convulsions in the People's Republic of China, in Poland, Yugoslavia, Grenada and Nicaragua — has on the contrary confirmed the correctness of Trotsky's position that "classes are heterogeneous; they are torn by inner antagonisms, and arrive at the solution of common problems no otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties ... An example of only one party corresponding to one class is not to be found in the whole course of political history — provided, of course, you do not take the police appearance for the reality." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 267.) This was true for the bourgeoisie under feudalism. It is true for the working class under capitalism. It will remain true for the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat and in the process of building socialism.

If one says that only parties and organisations that have no bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois?) programme or ideology, or are not "engaged in anti-socialist or anti-soviet propaganda and/or agitation" are to be legalised, how is one to determine the dividing line? Will parties with a majority of working-class members but with a bourgeois ideology be forbidden? How can such a position be reconciled with free elections for workers' councils? What is the dividing line between "bourgeois programme" and "reformist ideology"? Must reformist parties then be forbidden as well? Will social democracy be suppressed?

It is unavoidable that on the basis of historical traditions, reformist influence will continue to survive in the working class of many countries for a long period. That survival will not be shortened by administrative repression; on the contrary, such repression will tend to strengthen it. The best way to fight against reformist illusions and ideas is through the combination of ideological struggle and the creation of the material conditions for the disappearance of these illusions. Such a struggle would lose much of its efficacy under conditions of administrative repression and lack of free debate and exchange of ideas.

If the revolutionary party agitates for the suppression of social democratic or other reformist formations, it will be a thousand times more difficult to maintain freedom of tendencies and toleration of factions within its own ranks. The political heterogeneity of the working class would then inevitably tend to reflect itself within the single party.

Thus, the real alternative is not either freedom for those with a genuine socialist programme (who ideologically and programmatically support the soviet system) or freedom for all political parties. The real choice is: either genuine workers' democracy with the right of the toiling masses to elect whoever they want to

the soviets and freedom of political organisation of all those who abide by the soviet constitution in practice (including those who do not ideologically support the soviet system), or a decisive restriction of the political rights of the working class itself, with all the consequences flowing therefrom. Systematic restriction of political parties leads to systematic restriction of freedom within the revolutionary vanguard party itself.

When we say that we are in favour of a legalisation of all soviet parties, i.e. of those that abide by the soviet constitution in practice, this does not imply that we in any case underestimate the political confusion, errors, and even partial defeats which the propagation of wrong programmes and alien class influences upon the toiling masses by such parties could and will provoke under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even more obviously do we not call upon the workers to build parties upon the basis of what we consider wrong programmes, platforms, or policies, nor do we advocate the creation of such parties. We only state that the artificial administrative suppression of such parties — artificial inasmuch as they continue to reflect currents among the masses even if they are legally suppressed — far from reducing these dangers, increases them. The political, ideological, and cultural homogenisation of the working class, bringing the great majority of its members up to the point where they are capable of substituting a free community of self-administered citizens to the survival of a state machine (i.e., able to achieve the building of socialism and the withering away of the state) is a gigantic historical task. It is not only linked to obvious material preconditions. It involves also a specific political training: "The existence of critically-minded people, opponents, dissidents, discontented and reactionary elements, gives the revolution life and strength. The confrontation of differences and polemics develop 'the ideological and political muscles' of the people. It is a permanent form of exercising, an antidote to paralysis and to passivity." (Tomas Borge Speaks, *Granma*, weekly French edition, October 7, 1984)

Likewise, Fidel Castro had polemicised against Escalante, saying: *the revolution must be a school of unfettered thought*. Even if practice does not always match these statements, they represent the programmatic continuity of Marxism on the subject and must be defended tooth and nail against all who would deny them.

Historical experience confirms that outside of conditions of genuine workers' democracy, this process of training the masses for self-administration, can only be retarded or even reversed, as it obviously has been in the USSR. Historical experience has also confirmed that no genuine workers' democracy is possible without political pluralism.

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Middle Ages), i.e., they coincide with the existence of social conflicts based upon conflicting material interests. These are not necessarily limited to conflicting interests *between* antagonistic social classes. They can also express conflicting material interests *within* a given social class.

Political parties in *that* real (and not formal) sense of the word are a historical phenomenon the contents of which have obviously changed in different epochs, as occurred in the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the past (especially, but not only, in the great French revolution). The proletarian revolution will have a similar effect. They will survive as long as conflicts based on material interests or social orientation survive, i.e. until the final building of a fully developed classless socialist society. It can be predicted confidently that under genuine workers' democracy parties will receive a much richer and much broader content and will conduct mass political struggles of a much broader scope and with much greater mass participation than anything that has occurred up to now under the most advanced forms of bourgeois democracy. Many of these parties will be new, i.e., not simple continuations or remnants of parties existing under bourgeois democracy.

In fact, as soon as political decisions go beyond a small number of routine questions that can be taken up and solved by a restricted number of people, any form of democracy implies the need for *structured and coherent options of a great number of related questions*, in other words a choice between alternative political lines, platforms, and programmes expressing in the last analysis conflicting interests of different social classes and layers. That is what parties represent.

The absence of such overall orientations, far from giving large numbers of people greater freedom of expression and choice, makes government by assemblies and workers' councils practically impossible. Ten thousand people cannot vote on 500 alternatives. If power is not to be transferred to demagogues or secret pressure groups and cliques, there is need for free confrontation among a limited number of structured and coherent options, i.e., political programmes and parties, without monopolies or prohibitions. This is what will make workers' democracy meaningful and operative.

Furthermore, the anarchist and "councilist" opposition to the formation of political parties under the dictatorship of the proletariat in the process of building socialism either: (a) represents wishful thinking (i.e., the hope that the mass of the toilers will abstain from the formation or support of groups, tendencies, and parties with different political lines and programmes), in which case it is simply utopian, for that will not happen; or (b) it represents an attempt to prevent and suppress the attempts by all those toilers who wish to engage in political action on a pluralistic basis to do so. In that case it can objectively favour only a process of bureaucratic monopolisation of power, i.e., the very opposite of what the libertarians want.

In many centrist and ultra-left groupings a similar argument is advanced, according to which the dispossession of the Soviet proletariat from the direct exercise of political power was rooted in the Leninist conception of a democratic centralist organisation itself. They hold that the Bolsheviks' efforts to build a workers' party to lead the working class in a revolution inevitably led to a paternalistic, manipulative, bureaucratic relationship between the party and the toiling masses, which in turn led to a one-party monopoly of the exercise of power after the victorious socialist revolution.

This argument is unhistoric and based on an idealist concept of history. It is also factually wrong. From a Marxist, i.e., historical-materialist point of view, the basic causes of the political expropriation of the Soviet proletariat were material and socio-economic, not ideological or programmatic. The general poverty and backwardness of Russia and the relative numerical and cultural weakness of the proletariat made the long-term exercise of power by the proletariat impossible if the Russian revolution remained isolated. That was the consensus not only among the Bolsheviks in 1917-18 but among all tendencies claiming to be Marxist. The catastrophic decline of the productive forces in Russia as a result of the civil war, foreign imperialist military intervention, sabotage by the general pro-bourgeois technicians, etc., led to conditions of extreme scarcity

that fostered a growth of special privileges. The same factors led to a qualitative weakening of the already small proletariat. In addition, large portions of the political vanguard of the class, those best qualified to fight the capitalist class and the bureaucracy, died in the civil war or left the factories to be incorporated massively into the Red Army and the state apparatus.

After the beginning of the New Economic Policy an economic upturn began, but massive unemployment and continuous disappointment caused by the retreats and defeats of the world revolution nurtured political passivity and a general decline of mass political activity of the toilers, extending to the soviets. The working class was thus unable to stem the growth of a materially privileged layer, which, in order to maintain its rule, increasingly restricted democratic rights and destroyed the soviets and the Bolshevik Party itself (while using its name for its own purposes). These are the main causes of the usurpation by a bureaucracy of the exercise of direct power and of the gradual merger of the state apparatus, and the apparatus of economic managers into a privileged bureaucratic caste.

Lenin, Trotsky, other Bolsheviks, and later the Left Opposition, far from favouring it, tried to fight the rise of the bureaucracy. The weakening of the proletarian vanguard and not the "Leninist theory of the party" made that fight unsuccessful. One can argue that some measures taken by the Bolsheviks before Lenin's death — like the temporary banning of factions at the Tenth Party Congress — might have contributed to that weakening.

"Banning opposition parties leads to banning factions; banning factions leads to a ban on thinking otherwise than the infallible leader. The police-like monolithism of the party was followed by bureaucratic impunity which in turn became the source of all kinds of demoralisation and corruption." (Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*.) But we are dealing here with secondary causes.

The causes of the bureaucratisation process were objective, material, economic and social. They must be sought in the infrastructure of Soviet society at the time, not in its political superstructure and certainly not in a particular concept of the party. Far from being a product of Bolshevism, the Stalinist bureaucracy had to physically destroy the Bolshevik Party in order to establish its totalitarian rule. The Bolshevik Party was an instrument of the working class and an enemy of the bureaucracy. The political strangling of the party preceded the total expropriation of the working class.

On the other hand, historical experience has confirmed that where a leading or even highly influential revolutionary party is absent, workers' councils last shorter and not longer than they did in Russia: Germany in 1918-19 and Spain in 1936-37 are the most conspicuous examples not to mention Hungary in 1956 or Chile in 1973.

## VI. The need for a revolutionary vanguard party

The lack of homogeneity of the working class, the unevenness of consciousness of its different layers, the discontinuous character of political and social activity of many of its components, make the separate organisation of the most conscious and permanently active elements of the working class in a revolutionary vanguard party indispensable. This applies to the needs of the class struggle under capitalism as well as after the seizure of power by the working class. The irreplaceable role of such a revolutionary vanguard party increases in those conditions.

A strengthened mass Leninist party must lead the workers in running a state and building a new society, until capitalism has been uprooted on a world scale and a classless society has been fully achieved. The problems of options between various rhythms of economic growth, various allocations of scarce economic resources, various priorities to more rapid or slower increases of different forms of individual and social consumption; the problems of rhythms of reduction of social inequality; the problems of reduction of defence of the workers state against bourgeois powers; of building a mass revolutionary international to extend the socialist world revolution; the problems of combating prejudices, reactionary ideas and inequalities between sex-

es, age groups, nationalities, and races, etc., inherited from the past — all these problems essential to the transition period between capitalism and socialism cannot be solved spontaneously. They require the intervention of a party armed with the revolutionary Marxist programme.

The role of the revolutionary vanguard party during the dictatorship of the proletariat will be essential, moreover, in the struggle against the rise of material privileges and of bureaucratic layers inside the dictatorship of the proletariat. To implement a radical and revolutionary programme of socialist workers' democracy such as the present one — a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class is especially indispensable. It must exercise its authority by free vote and political confidence gained among the masses and not by administrative means.

The dialectical combination of the free and democratic self-organisation of the toiling masses and of the political and programmatic clarification and leadership by a revolutionary vanguard party creates more favourable conditions for the conquest and the continuous exercise of power by the working class itself.

In order to prevent any abuse of power by a vanguard party leading the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the following principles are adhered to by the Fourth International:

- a) Fullest internal democracy of the party itself, with full rights or organising tendencies and a refusal to ban factions and possibilities of public debates between them before party congresses.
- b) Broadest possible links and interpenetration between the party and the working class itself. A revolutionary workers' vanguard party can only efficiently lead the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat if it simultaneously enjoys the political confidence of the majority of the workers and organises in its ranks the great majority of the vanguard workers.
- c) Strict suppression of any material privileges for party cadres or leaders. No party leader, full-timer or member elected in any leading position of the workers state, its economy or its other social institutions, should receive a higher wage than the average wage of a skilled worker.
- d) No political or ideological monopoly of the vanguard party in or control over political or cultural activities. Adherence to the multi-party principle.
- e) Strict separation of the party apparatus from the state apparatus.
- f) Real integration of the party in a revolutionary international and acceptance of international comradely criticism by revolutionary organisations of other countries. No control of the international by any party or parties in power in given workers state(s).

## VII. A clear stand on socialist democracy is necessary to win the proletariat for the socialist revolution

The defence of a clear and unequivocal programme of workers' democracy is today an indispensable part of the struggle against the reformist leaderships that seek to inculcate bourgeois-democratic myths and illusions in the working class in the imperialist countries. It is likewise indispensable in the struggle against pro-capitalist illusions and anti-soviet prejudices among various layers of rebels and oppositionists in the bureaucratised workers states in the unfolding process of the struggle for political revolution in these countries.

The disastrous historical experiences of both fascism and other types of reactionary bourgeois dictatorships in the capitalist countries on the one hand, and the experience of the bureaucratic regimes in the USSR, China, Eastern Europe or elsewhere on the other, have aroused in the proletariat of both the capitalist countries and the bureaucratised workers states a deep distrust of any form of one-party system and of any restricting of democratic rights after the overthrow of capitalism.

If the revolutionary Marxists leave the slightest impression that under the dictatorship of the proletariat the political

freedoms of the workers will be narrower than under bourgeois democracy — including the freedom to criticise the government, to have opposition parties and an opposition press — then the struggle to overcome the propagators of parliamentary illusions will be incommensurably more difficult, if not condemned to defeat. Any hesitation or equivocation in this field by the revolutionary vanguard will only help the reformist lackeys of the liberal bourgeoisie to divide the proletariat and divert an important sector of the class into the defence of bourgeois parliamentary state institutions, under the guise of assuring democratic rights.

It has been argued that all the above arguments apply only to those countries in which the wage-earning class already represents a clear majority of the active population. It is true that where a big majority of independent petty producers exists, the social relationship of forces creates objective obstacles on the road of a full flowering of socialist democracy and has objectively contributed to the phenomenon of bureaucratisation of the workers states. But it is necessary first to underline the exceptional character of these experiences, which will not be repeated even in most semi-colonial countries.

It is necessary, secondly, to stress that these extreme forms of bureaucratisation of workers states, even in backward countries, were not simply results of unfavourable objective circumstances, but also products of specific ideological and political deformations of the CPs which had led the process of building these states.

Inasmuch as a growing number of semi-colonial countries are at present undergoing processes of partial industrialisation, their proletariat today is often already of much greater weight relative to the active population than was the Russian proletariat in 1917 or the Chinese proletariat in 1949. This proletariat, through its own experience of struggle, will speedily rise toward levels of consciousness and self-organisation that will place the organisation of soviet-type organs on the agenda from the beginning of a revolutionary crisis (Chile was an illustration of this). In that sense, and inasmuch as it is particularly applicable to the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states, the Fourth International's programme of workers-council democracy as a basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat, in its basic features, is a *universal programme for world revolution*, which corresponds fundamentally to the social nature, historical needs, and way of thinking and mass activity of the working class itself. It is in no way a "luxury" reserved for the workers of the "richest countries," while its concrete application might suffer certain limitations because of the excessively reduced weight of the working class in some countries.

In the same way it is necessary to make a clear conceptual and theoretical distinction between institutions of bourgeois democracy — which flourish essentially in imperialist countries, as a result of the imperialist super-exploitation of hundreds of millions of peasants and workers in colonial and semi-colonial countries and dependent countries and the vicious repression of their most elementary democratic rights — and institutions of proletarian democracy, including their nuclei within bourgeois society, which are the results of centuries-old struggles, sacrifices and successes in self-organisation and the conquest of various levels of class consciousness by the working class itself. The former are condemned by history and will disappear. The latter will grow and develop as never before during and after the struggle for socialist world revolution, and during the whole historical period of the building of world socialism.

It is obvious that the healthy functioning of workers' democracy presupposes the generalisation of a minimum level of culture and industrialisation in society. When social conditions are such that a major part of the toiling population is illiterate, the bureaucratic degeneration of the forms of rule is made easier. This explains Lenin's insistence, in his last writings, on the need to raise the cultural level of the masses. The literacy campaigns conducted in Cuba and Nicaragua are models that should be followed.

Moreover, in backward countries, during an initial phase, the dictatorship of the proletariat may not follow proportional representation of the different segments of the population. It may openly choose to give added weight to the representation of

the working class, particularly in relation to the peasants, as the Soviet Constitution of 1918 did.

### VIII. Why has this programme of socialist democracy not been widely realised up till now?

The definition of our ideas about the dictatorship of the proletariat is not "normative". It is fundamentally programmatic. In that sense, as with all programmatic positions of Marxism, they are but the conscious expression of an objective historical tendency, of an instinctive thrust of the working class under conditions of revolutionary crisis. History strikingly confirms that from the Paris Commune to the revolutionary explosions of the recent years, through the experiences of the Russian and Finnish revolution of 1905, of the Russian revolution of 1917, of the German revolution of 1918-19, of the Austrian revolution of 1918-19, of the Hungarian revolution of 1919, of the Italian revolutionary upheaval of 1919-20, of the Spanish revolution of 1936, of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, of numerous general strikes in innumerable countries of practically all continents including many colonial and semi-colonial countries, the working class *did* manifest its tendency to generalised self-organisation, to the setting up of workers' councils or similar bodies. We are firmly convinced that this historical tendency — clearly understood and programmatically expressed by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg — will unfold itself in revolutions of today and tomorrow even more than it did in revolutions of yesterday.

Critics counterpose to this general observation the fact that all victorious social revolutions up to now have led to political systems where power is exercised by minorities, by a single party, even by the leadership apparatus of this party and not by the toiling masses as a whole.

We do not accept the argument that the delay in firmly and durably establishing workers-council power — which *did* exist in Soviet Russia for several years, latter-day historical falsifications by both the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy notwithstanding — would be due in any way to a congenital incapacity of the proletariat to exercise political or (and) economic power as a class, to its inherent weakness or fatal trend to delegate the exercise of power to a privileged minority. The least one can say is that such a conclusion is historically premature at this stage — as it would have been premature to conclude, after the first experiences of bourgeois revolutions, that bourgeois rule was incompatible with universal franchise.

On the contrary, the basic reason why workers-council power has been up to now the exception and not the rule in the existing workers states is closely linked *with the very limited weight which the proletariat has had in the establishment of these states* — and the weakness and even more extreme successive weakening of the proletariat in Soviet Russia between 1917 and 1923.

The interaction of a whole series of historical factors — the backwardness of Russia, the isolation of the Russian revolution, the rise to absolute power of the Soviet bureaucracy, the victory of the Stalinist faction inside the Communist International, the cumulative effects of defeats to a great extent due to this "victory", the absence of an alternative revolutionary leadership of the international proletariat, the possibility of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses to keep control over the working class at the end of World War II, the fact that the rise of the revolution essentially took the form of prolonged rural guerrilla warfare, under leaderships influenced by Stalinist ideology — led to a period in which new workers states arose with a very reduced weight of the proletariat at their birth, without proletarian forms of struggle and organisation.

In addition, the low specific weight of the working class in countries like China and Vietnam, and the special nature of the problems with which the dictatorship of the proletariat was confronted in these countries — problems of *initial* industrialisation and *initial* increase of the agricultural productivity of labour, of even greater scarcity and backwardness than in Russia — created additional objective obstacles on the road to socialist democracy.

As a result of the interaction of all these factors, the dictatorship of the proletariat was bureaucratic in these countries from its inception. At no time did the working class directly exercise political power there.

But in the present period, after the qualitative strengthening of the proletariat in a series of workers states and semi-industrialised dependent capitalist countries, the new rise of revolutionary struggles symbolised by May 1968 in France and by the Portuguese revolution from 1974-1976, the rise of the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers state (Czechoslovakia, Poland), the weight of the proletariat in the real process of world revolution is much larger today than it was in the period 1945-1968. And this is strikingly confirmed by the re-emergence of general strikes, urban mass insurrections, and soviet-type organs of self-organisation, in the main revolutionary upheavals of the recent years, not only in Chile and Portugal but also in Iran and Nicaragua. Simultaneously, after the inevitable delay of mass consciousness upon reality, sectors of the world proletariat have now assimilated the real nature of Stalinism (which they didn't either in 1936 or 1945), and firmly reject "patterns" of "dictatorship of the proletariat" similar to those of the USSR. They do this not only in certain imperialist countries but also in countries like Eastern Europe, China, Brazil etc.

Again, what our programme of dictatorship of the proletariat based upon workers-council democracy expresses is neither "abstract norms" nor utopian wishful thinking but a real basic historical trend, which, having been held down by the objective and subjective results of two decades of defeats of world revolution, now reasserts itself more and more powerfully.

We reject likewise any concept that the workers-council power would be in any way "impractical" as long as imperialism survives, i.e., as long as the problems of self-defence of the victorious proletarian revolution and of its international extension remain central under the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, we believe that workers-council democracy strengthens the capacity of self-defence of the workers state, and strengthens its power of attraction to the workers of the capitalist countries, i.e., favours the struggle against imperialism and for an international extension of the revolution.

### IX. In response to dogmas of Stalinist origin

The ideology of the ruling bureaucracy has been and remains essentially pragmatic. But a certain number of theories and dogmas underpin this ideology and they have an internal coherence which is contradictory with revolutionary Marxist theory. This ideology of the bureaucracy — of which the key idea is the rule of the single party acting in the name of the working class — although not always explicitly formulated can be synthesised as follows:

- That the "leading party" or even its "leading nucleus" (the "Leninist Central Committee") has a monopoly of political consciousness at the highest level, if not a monopoly of knowledge at least at the level of the social sciences, and is therefore guaranteed political infallibility ("the party is always right").
- That the working class, and even more the toiling masses in general, are too backward politically, too much under the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology and "imperialist propaganda," too much inclined to prefer immediate material advantages as against long-term historical interests, for any direct exercise of state power by democratically elected workers' councils to be tolerable from the point of view of "the interests of socialism." Genuine workers' democracy would entail the risk of an increasing series of harmful, "objectively counter-revolutionary" decisions, which would open the road to the restoration of capitalism or at the very least gravely damage and retard the process of building socialism.
- That therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat can be exercised only by the "leading party of the proletariat," i.e., that the dictatorship of the proletariat *is* the dictatorship of the party, either representing an essentially passive working class, or actively basing itself on the "class struggle of the masses,"

who are nevertheless considered unworthy, unwilling, or incapable of directly exercising state power through institutionalised organs of power.

- d) That since the party, and that party alone, represents the interests of the working class, which are considered homogeneous in all situations and on all issues, the "leading party" itself must be essentially monolithic. Any opposition tendency necessarily reflects alien class pressures and alien class interests in one form or another (the struggle between "two lines" is always a "struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie inside the party," the Maoists conclude). Monolithic control of all spheres of social life by the single party is the logical outcome of these concepts. Direct party control must be established over all sectors of "civil society."
- e) A further underlying assumption is that of an intensification of the class struggle in the period of building socialism (although this assumption alone does not necessarily lead to the same conclusion, if it is not combined with the previous ones). From that assumption is deduced the increasing danger of restoration of bourgeois power even long after private property in the means of production has been abolished, and irrespective of the level of development of the productive forces. The threat of bourgeois restoration is often portrayed as a mechanical outcome of the victory of bourgeois ideology in this or that social, political, cultural, or even scientific field. In view of the extreme power thereby attributed to bourgeois ideas, the use of repression against those who are said to objectively represent these ideas becomes a corollary of the argument.

All these assumptions and dogmas are unscientific from a general Marxist point of view and are untenable in the light of real historical experience of the class struggle during and after the overthrow of capitalist rule in the USSR and other countries. Again and again, they have shown themselves to be harmful to the defence of the proletariat's class interests and an obstacle to a successful struggle against the remnants of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois ideology.

But inasmuch as they had become nearly universally accepted dogmas by the CPs in Stalin's time and undoubtedly have an inner consistency — reflecting the material interests of the bureaucracy as a social layer and an apology for its dictatorial rule — they have never been explicitly and thoroughly criticised and rejected by a CP since then. These concepts continue to linger on, at least partially, in the ideology of many leaders and cadres of the CPs and SPs, i.e., of the bureaucracies of the labour movement. They continue to constitute a conceptual source for justification of various forms of curtailment of democratic rights of the toiling masses.

It should be noted that organisations other than those inspired by Stalinism put forward similar conceptions in this regard, justifying at least partially similar practices in their own ranks. This makes it all the more necessary to stress that all this is absolutely contrary to the teaching of Lenin and Trotsky, not to mention Marx and Engels, and of our historical movement. A clear and coherent refutation of these conceptions and of the practices which they motivate, is therefore indispensable to the defence of our programme of socialist democracy.

First: the idea of a homogenous working class exclusively represented by a single party is contradicted by all historical experience and by any Marxist analysis of the concrete growth and development of the contemporary proletariat, both under capitalism and after the overthrow of capitalism. At most, one could defend the thesis that the revolutionary vanguard party alone *programmatically* defends the *long-term historical interests* of the proletariat, and its immediate *overall class* interests as opposed to sectoral interests of national, regional, local, special sectors or skill, over-privileged, etc., interests. But even in that case, a dialectical-materialist approach, as opposed to a mechanical-idealist one, would immediately add that only insofar as the party actually conquers political leadership over the majority of the workers can one speak of a *real*, as opposed to a simply *ideal* (literary) integration of immediate and long-term, of sectoral and class interests having been achieved in practice, with the possibilities for errors much reduced. Furthermore, this in no way excludes that on particular questions this party can be

wrong.

In fact, there is a definite, objectively determined *stratification* of the working class and of the development of working class consciousness. There is likewise at the very least a tension between the struggle for immediate interests and the historical goals of the labour movement (for example the contradiction between immediate consumption and long-term investment in a workers state). Precisely these contradictions, rooted in the legacy of uneven development of bourgeois society, are among the main theoretical justifications for the need of a revolutionary vanguard workers' party, as opposed to a simple "all-inclusive" union of all wage-earners in a single organisation. But this again implies that one cannot deny that different parties, with different orientations and different ways of approaching the class struggle between capital and labour and the relations between capital and labour and the relations between immediate demands and historical goals, can arise and have arisen *within* the working class and do genuinely represent sectors of the working class (be it purely sectoral interests, privileged sectors, results of ideological pressures of alien class forces, etc.).

Nor can it be excluded that several revolutionary parties might arise in a single country, whose differences might not be settled by a fusion before the revolution, a situation which would lead to the need to seek to form a more or less tightly knit front of these parties that would try to determine their political action in common.

Second: a revolutionary party with a democratic internal life does have a tremendous advantage in the field of correct analysis of socio-economic and political developments and of correct elaboration of tactical and strategic answers to such developments, for it can base itself on the body of scientific socialism, Marxism, which synthesises and generalises all past experiences of the class struggle as a whole. This programmatic framework for its current political elaboration makes it much less likely than any other tendency of the labour movement, or any unorganised sector of the working class, to reach wrong conclusions, premature generalisations, and one-sided and impressionistic reactions to unforeseen developments, to make concessions to ideological and political pressures of alien class forces, to engage in unprincipled political compromises, etc.

However there are no infallible parties. There are no infallible party leaderships, or individual party leaders, party majorities, "Leninist central committees," etc. The Marxist programme is never a definitely achieved one. No new situation can be comprehensively analysed in reference to historical precedents. Social reality is constantly undergoing changes. New and unforeseen developments regularly occur at historical turning points. The phenomenon of imperialism after Engels's death was not analysed by Marx and Engels. The delay of the proletarian revolution in the advanced imperialist countries was not foreseen by the Bolsheviks. The bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state was not incorporated in Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The emergence after World War II of many workers states (albeit with bureaucratic deformations from the start) following revolutionary mass struggles not led by revolutionary Marxist leaderships (Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam) was not foreseen by Trotsky, etc. No complete, ready-made answer for new phenomena can be found in the works of the classics or in the existing programme.

Furthermore, new problems will arise in the course of the building of socialism, problems for which the revolutionary Marxist programme provides only a general framework of reference but no automatic source of correct answers. The struggle for correct answers to such new problems implies a constant interaction between theoretical-political analysis and discussions and revolutionary *class practice*, the final word being spoken by practical experience. Under such circumstances, any restriction of free political and theoretical debate spilling over to a restriction of free political mass activity of the proletariat, i.e., any restriction of socialist democracy, will constitute an obstacle to the revolutionary party itself arriving at correct policies. It is therefore not only theoretically wrong but practically ineffective and harmful from the point of view of successfully advancing on the road of building socialism.

One of the gravest consequences of a monolithic one-party

system, of the absence of a plurality of political groups, tendencies, and parties, and of administrative restrictions being imposed on free political and ideological debate, is the impediments such a system erects on the road to rapidly correcting mistakes which can be committed by the government of a workers state. Mistakes committed by such a government, like mistakes committed by the majority of the working class, its various layers, and different political groupings, are by and large unavoidable in the process of building a classless, socialist society. A rapid correction of these mistakes, however, is possible in a climate of free political debate, free access of opposition groupings to mass media, large-scale political awareness and involvement in political life by the masses, and control by the masses over government and state activity at all levels.

The absence of all these correctives under a system of monolithic one-party government makes the rectification of grave mistakes all the more difficult. The very dogma of party infallibility on which the Stalinist system rests puts a heavy premium both on the denial of mistakes in party policies (search for self-justification and for scapegoats) and on the attempt to postpone even implicit corrections as long as possible. The objective costs of such a system in terms of economic losses, of unnecessary, i.e., objectively avoidable sacrifices imposed upon the toiling masses, of political defeats in relation to class enemies, and of political disorientation and demoralisation of the proletariat, are indeed staggering, as is shown by the history of the Soviet Union since 1928. To give just one example: the obstinate clinging to erroneous agricultural policies even on detailed questions such as purchasing prices for certain agricultural products by Stalin and his henchmen after the catastrophe caused by the forced collectivisation of agriculture — which can of course be explained in terms of the specific social interests of the Soviet bureaucracy at that time — has wreaked havoc with the food supply of the Soviet people for more than a generation. Its negative consequences have not been eliminated to this day, nearly fifty years later. Such a catastrophe would have been impossible had there been free political debate over alternative economic and agricultural policies in the USSR.

Third: the idea that *restricting* the democratic rights of the proletariat is in any way conducive to a gradual “education” of an allegedly “backward” mass of toilers is blatantly absurd. One cannot learn to swim except by going into the water. There is no way masses can learn to raise the level of their political awareness other than by engaging in political activity and learning from the experience of such activity. There is no way they can learn from mistakes other than by having the right to commit them. Paternalistic prejudices about the alleged “backwardness” of the masses generally hide a conservative petty-bourgeois fear of mass activity, which has nothing in common with revolutionary Marxism. The bureaucracy is in deadly fear of socialist democracy, not for “programmatically” reasons, but because that form of government is incompatible with its material privileges, not to say its power. Marxists favour the fullest possible flowering of socialist democracy because they are convinced that any restriction of political mass activity, on the pretext that the masses would make too many mistakes, can only lead to increasing political apathy among the workers, i.e., to paradoxically reinforcing the very situation which is said to be the problem.

Fourth: under conditions of full-scale socialisation of the means of production and the social surplus product, any long-term monopoly of the exercise of political power in the hands of a minority — even if it is a revolutionary party beginning with the purest of revolutionary motivations — runs a strong risk of stimulating objective tendencies toward bureaucratisation. Under such socio-economic conditions whoever controls the state administration thereby controls the social surplus product and its distribution. Given the fact that economic inequalities will still exist at the outset, particularly but not only in the economically backward workers states, this can become a source of corruption and of the growth of material privileges and social differentiation. “The conquest of power changes not only the relations of the proletariat to other classes, but also its own inner structure. The wielding of power becomes the speciality of a definite social group, which is the more impatient to solve its own ‘social problem’ the higher its opinion of its own mission.”

(Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 102.)

Thus, there is an objective need for real control over decision-making to rest in the hands of the proletariat as a class, with unlimited possibilities to denounce pilferage, waste, and illegal appropriation and misuse of resources at all levels, including the highest ones. No such democratic mass control is possible without opposition tendencies, groups, and parties having full freedom of action, propaganda, and agitation, as well as full access to the mass media, as long as they are not engaged in armed struggle to overthrow workers’ power.

Likewise, during the transition period between capitalism and socialism, and even in the first phase of communism, it is unavoidable that forms of social division of labour will survive, as well as forms of labour organisation and labour processes totally or partially inherited from capitalism, that do not enable a full development of all the creative talents of the producers. These handicaps cannot be neutralised by indoctrination, moral exhortation, or periodic “mass criticism campaigns” as the Maoists contend, and still less by mystifying expedients like having cadres or leaders work a few days a month or a week as manual labourers. These objective obstacles on the road to *the gradual emergence of truly socialist relations of production* can be prevented from becoming powerful sources of material privileges only if *the mass of the producers* (in the first place those likely to be the most exploited, the manual workers) *are placed in conditions such that they can exercise real political and social power* over any “functionally” privileged layer. The radical reduction of the work day, the fullest soviet democracy, and full educational opportunities for rapidly raising the cultural level of *all workers* are the key conditions for attaining this goal.

To protect itself against the professional risks of power, the revolutionary party will have to reject its members accumulating positions in the state apparatus and positions in the leadership of the party.

The present conditions in the bureaucratised workers states, which make the problem of advancing proletarian democracy difficult, would of course be altered qualitatively if (or when) either of the two following developments occur, or even more if they occur together: (1) A socialist revolution in one or more industrially advanced capitalist countries. Such a revolution would itself give enormous impulsion to the struggle for democratic rights throughout the world and would immediately open the possibility of increasing productivity on an immense scale, eliminating the scarcities that are the root cause of the entrenchment of a parasitic bureaucracy, as explained above. (2) A political revolution in the bureaucratically deformed or degenerated workers states, particularly in the Soviet Union or the People’s Republic of China. This would likewise signify an upsurge of proletarian democracy with colossal repercussions internationally, besides putting an end to the bureaucratic caste and its concept of building “socialism in one country”.

Following a political revolution, common economic planning among all the workers states would become realisable, thus assuring a leap forward in productivity that would help remove the economic basis of parasitic bureaucratism.

Finally, it is true that there is no automatic correlation or simultaneity between the abolition of capitalist state power and private property in the means of production and the disappearance of privileges in the field of personal wealth, cultural heritage, and ideological influence, not to speak of the disappearance of all elements of commodity production. Long after bourgeois state power has been overthrown and capitalist property abolished, remnants of petty commodity production and the survival of elements of a money economy will continue to create a framework in which primitive accumulation of capital can still reappear, especially if the level of development of the productive forces is still insufficient to guarantee the automatic appearance and consolidation of genuine socialist relations of production. Likewise, elements of social and economic inequality survive under such circumstances long after the bourgeoisie has lost its positions as a ruling class politically and economically; the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies, customs, habits, cultural values, etc., will linger on in relatively large spheres of social life and broad layers of society.

But it is completely wrong to draw from this undeniable fact

(which is, incidentally, one of the main reasons why *state power* of the working class is indispensable in order to prevent these "islands of bourgeois influence" from becoming bases for the restoration of capitalism) the conclusion that administrative repression of bourgeois ideology is a necessary condition for the building of a socialist society. On the contrary, historical experience confirms the total ineffectiveness of administrative struggles against reactionary and petty-bourgeois ideologies. In fact, in the long run, such methods even strengthen the hold of these ideologies and place the great mass of the proletariat in the position of being ideologically disarmed before them, because of lack of experience with genuine political struggles and ideological debates and the lack of credibility of official "state doctrines".

The only effective way to eliminate the influence of these ideologies upon the mass of the toilers lies in:

- a) The expropriation, along with all major means of production, of printing shops, radios, television channels, that is, the liberation of the media that is capable of massively spreading ideas from the material grip of big business;
- b) The creation of objective conditions under which these ideologies lose the material roots of their reproduction.
- c) The waging of a relentless struggle against these ideologies *in the field of ideology and politics itself*, which can however attain its full success only under conditions of open debate and open confrontation, i.e. freedom for the defenders of reactionary ideologies to defend their ideas, freedom of ideological and cultural pluralism, as long as they do not go over to acts of violence against workers' power.

Only those who have neither confidence in the superiority of Marxist and materialist ideas nor confidence in the proletariat and the toiling masses, can shrink from open ideological confrontation with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Once the capitalist class is disarmed and expropriated, once their members have access to the mass media only in relation to their numbers, there is no reason to fear a constant, free and frank exchange of ideas. This confrontation is the only means through which the working class can educate itself ideologically and successfully free itself from the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas. The validity of Marxism will fully assert itself.

Any monopoly position accorded to Marxism (not to speak of a particular interpretation of Marxism) in the ideological-cultural field through administrative and repressive measures by the state can lead only to debasing Marxism itself from a critical and revolutionary science, as a weapon for the emancipation of the proletariat and the building of a classless society, into a sterile and repulsive state doctrine or state religion, with a constantly declining attractive power among the toiling masses and especially the youth. This is apparent today in the USSR, where the monopoly position accorded to "official Marxism" masks a real poverty of creative Marxist thought in all areas. Marxism, which is critical thought *par excellence*, can flourish only in an atmosphere of full freedom of discussion and constant confrontation with other currents of thought, i.e. in an atmosphere of full ideological and cultural pluralism.

## X. The self-defence of the workers state

Obviously, any workers state must defend itself against attempts at being overthrown and open violation of its basic laws. *In a workers' democracy of a stable workers state, emerging after the disarming of the bourgeoisie and the end of civil war*, the constitution and the penal code will forbid private appropriation of the means of production or private hiring of labour, just as constitutions and penal codes under bourgeois rule forbid individual infringements on the rights of private property. Likewise, as long as we are not yet in a classless society, as long as the proletarian class rule survives and the restoration of capitalism remains possible, the constitution and the penal code of the dictatorship of the proletariat will forbid and punish acts of armed insurrection, attempts at overthrowing working-class power through violence, terrorist attacks on individual representatives of workers' power, sabotage, espionage in the service of foreign capitalist states, etc. But only proven acts of that kind or *active*

preparation of them should be punishable, not general propaganda explicitly or implicitly favourable to a restoration of capitalism. *This means that freedom of political organisation should be granted to all those, including pro-bourgeois elements, who in actual practice respect the constitution of the workers state and operate within the legal framework of its institutions, the soviets*, i.e. are not engaged in direct action to overthrow workers' power and collective property.

The workers have no need to fear as a mortal danger propaganda that "incites" them to give the factories and banks back to private owners. There is little chance that a majority of them will be "persuaded" by propaganda of that type. The working class in the imperialist countries, the bureaucratized workers states, and an increasing number of semi-colonial countries, are strong enough not to have to introduce the concept of "crimes of opinion" or "anti-soviet agitation" either in their penal codes or in the daily practice of the workers state.

What is important is to strictly distinguish between activities instigating violence against workers' power and political activities, ideologies, positions, or programmatic statements that can be interpreted as favouring a restoration of capitalism. Against terror, the workers state defends itself by repression. Against reactionary policies and ideas, it defends itself by political and ideological struggles. This is not a question of "morality" or "softness". It is essentially a question of *practical long-term efficiency*.

The disastrous experience of Stalinism, which has systematically misused slanderous accusations of "collusion with imperialism", "espionage for foreign powers", "objectively acting in favour of imperialism", "anti-soviet" or "anti-socialist agitation", "sabotage and diversionist activities", to condemn and suppress any form of political criticism, opposition or non-conformism in the countries under the rule of parasitic bureaucratic castes, and which has organised barbaric repression on a mass scale under these pretexts, has created a profound (and essentially healthy) distrust of the abuse of penal, juridical, police or psychiatric institutions for purposes of political repression. It is therefore necessary to stress that the use of repressive self-defence by the proletariat and its state against attempts to overthrow workers' power by violence should be circumscribed to *proven acts and crimes*, strictly separated from the realm of ideological, political, and cultural activities.

The Fourth International stands for the defence and extension of the most progressive conquests of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the field of penal codes and justice and fights for their incorporation into the socialist constitutions and penal codes. These include such rights as:

- a) The necessity of written law and the avoidance of retroactive delinquency. The burden of proof to be on the accuser, the assumption of innocence until proof of guilt.
- b) The full right of all individuals to freely determine the nature of their defence; full immunity for legal defenders from prosecution for any statements or lines of defence used in such trials.
- c) Rejection of any concept of collective responsibility of social groups, families, etc., for individual crimes.
- d) Strict prohibition of any form of torture or forceful extortion of confessions.
- e) Suppression of the death penalty outside of civil war and war situations.
- f) Extension and generalisation of public trial by juries of peers.
- g) Democratic election of all judges, and the right for the mass of the toilers to recall elected judges.

The workers state can gradually eliminate a professional judiciary by drawing the masses more and more into the judicial functions beginning at the local level and for less serious crimes.

Obviously, the last word in all these matters, as well as regarding the final draft of the penal code and functioning of the penal system of the proletarian dictatorship after armed resistance by the bourgeoisie has ceased, will rest with the workers' councils themselves, to which we submit our programmatic proposals and in which framework we fight for them by political means. The fundamental guarantee against all abuses of state repression lies in the fullest participation in political activity of the toiling masses, the broadest possible socialist democracy, and the aboli-

tion of any monopoly of access to weapons for privileged minorities, i.e. the general arming of the proletariat.

However, as Lenin pointed out, "the fact that the proletariat has accomplished the social revolution will not be sufficient to turn it into a saint and will not shelter it from errors and weaknesses". This is why the vigilance of revolutionary communists should not let up during the period of transition towards communist society. It will be necessary for the communist vanguard to smoke out the slightest evidence of "bureaucratism", to denounce and fight all misuses of power in the proletarian state, to make sure egalitarian and democratic principles are respected, to defend the rights of women and racial, national or ethnic minorities; in a word, to play its role of communist vanguard also in relation to the proletarian state.

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This is our programmatic and principled position: unfettered political freedom for all those who in practice respect collective property and the workers state's constitution. This does not mean that these norms can be fully implemented irrespective of concrete circumstances. In the process of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, a revolutionary crisis culminating in an insurrection is unavoidable. During the period leading to that insurrection and the insurrection itself, when power passes from one social class to another, violent convulsions and the absence of the rule of law which accompany them occur. They will bring victory to the proletariat only if insurrection enjoys the support of the majority of the population — the large majority of wage-earners — at least in all those countries where the wage-earners are already the largest social class. The broader the mass mobilisation of millions accompanying this insurrection, the lesser will be the unavoidable violence and arbitrariness accompanying that giant social transformation.

Likewise, the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be preceded by civil war or foreign military intervention, i.e. attempts by the former ruling classes and their international allies to overthrow workers' power by force. Under such conditions, the rules of war apply. Restrictions on the political activities of the bourgeoisie may well be called for. No social class, no state, has ever granted full rights to those actively engaged in violence to overthrow them. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot act otherwise in that respect.

More concretely, all individuals, organisations, and parties that participate in, or can be proven to *actively* support or prepare counter-revolutionary violence, will be repressed and submitted to conditions in which they cannot pursue these activities. The extent and concrete forms of that repression will depend upon the circumstances and relationship of forces existing at the moment in a given country or group of countries.

During the first phase of establishing a victorious workers state against armed resistance of the bourgeoisie or attempts by that bourgeoisie to overthrow it, the existence of written penal law — socialist legality — can lag in comparison with the need for the revolution to solve crisis situations, which cannot wait until that legality is finally established. Historical experience has confirmed again and again that the more swiftly and more radically the armed resistance of the bourgeoisie is broken, the shorter will be the period of actual civil war, the lesser will be the costs in human life of the social transformation.

The criteria which determine the general framework of *revolutionary long-term efficiency* are those which relate measures of immediate expediency with the question of social consolidation of the new socialist order on the basis of the largest possible mass adhesion and mass participation. Only those measures of expediency against the class enemy are really efficient, even under conditions of civil war, which raise and do not lower the class consciousness and self-confidence of the working class, its faith in its capacity to build a workers state and a classless society, its active support of and participation in the administration of its own state, its capacity for mobilisation and self-organisation. Even under conditions of civil war, that basic criterion should never be forgotten, particularly since future revolutions will develop within a relationship of forces a lot more favourable than they were in Russia in 1919 or 1920-21.

In that respect, Trotsky expressed himself most clearly in

1940. What he said then applied even more to present conditions:

By anticipation it is possible to establish the following law: The more countries in which the capitalist system is broken, the weaker will be the resistance offered by the ruling classes in other countries, the less sharp a character the socialist revolution will assume, the less violent forms the proletarian dictatorship will have, the shorter it will be, the sooner the society will be reborn on the basis of a new, more full, more perfect and humane democracy... Socialism would have no value if it should not bring with it, not only the juridical inviolability but also the full safeguarding of all the interests of the human personality. (Leon Trotsky, "The World Situation and Perspectives," February 14, 1940, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40*, pp. 155-156.)

It is likewise necessary to stress the direct political and material responsibility of bourgeois counter-revolution and international imperialism for any restriction of socialist democracy under civil war or war conditions. This means to indicate clearly to society in its totality, and to the remnants of the former ruling classes themselves, that they way they will be dealt with depends in the last analysis on themselves, i.e. on their practical behaviour.

## XI. International revolution and international counter-revolution

As long as imperialism survives at least in major countries — and certainly in the United States of America — it will never give up its attempts to stop any further extension of the socialist revolution by economic pressure and military force. Nor will it give up its attempts to reconquer, first part and then all, of the territories lost for direct exploitation by capital. Such a restoration is not possible in a gradual and peaceful way, any more than the overthrow of capitalism can occur in a peaceful and gradual way.

Hence the conclusion that any workers state arising out of a victorious socialist revolution, and any group of workers states, whatever the degree of bureaucratisation or socialist democracy which characterises it, will find itself in conditions of armed truce with international capital, which could, under certain circumstances, lead to open war. Therefore, one of the central responsibilities of the dictatorship of the proletariat is to maintain and advance permanent military preparedness (from a material as well as from a human point of view) to meet such a challenge when it arises.

While we reject the idea that nuclear war is inevitable, we likewise reject the idea that propaganda, agitation, and class organisation of the toilers in the capitalist countries alone is sufficient to prevent wars of aggression by imperialism against new and old revolutions. As long as the working class of the main capitalist countries has not actually overthrown bourgeois class rule at home, the danger of counter-revolutionary wars remains. The proletariat in power must prepare against that danger, as it has to be ready to help the insurgent masses of other countries facing armed intervention of national and international counter-revolution.

To maintain military preparedness against wars of aggression by imperialism means to deviate resources toward arms production which otherwise would speed up the evolution towards socialism. It is a reason the more to reject the reactionary utopia of finally achieving the building of socialism in one or in a few countries.

The workers' and people's militias constitute the basis of the armed self-defence of the workers state. But the latter also requires the maintenance of an army specialised in the use of sophisticated weaponry, etc. The workers' army will be an army of a new type, reflecting its new class basis. Just as the Red Army created by the Soviet Republic initially did, it will abolish the officer caste and replace it with councils of soldiers and democratically elected commanders. In general "the correlation between regular troops and militia can serve as a fair indication of the actual movement toward socialism." (Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 218.)

But it by no means implies the inevitability of bureaucratic degeneration, or of serious restrictions of socialist democracy because of the outside pressure of imperialism upon the workers states.

In the first place, the rise and victory of the Stalinist bureaucracy was not a direct and automatic result of the capitalist encirclement of the USSR. It came about as the result of a unique *combination* of factors: relative backwardness of Russia; relative weakness of the Russian proletariat; first defeats of world revolution, capitalist encirclement; political unpreparedness by the proletarian vanguard towards the problem of bureaucracy; repercussions of the gradual rise of bureaucratic power upon the outcome of successive waves of revolutionary struggles throughout the world; the absence of an alternative revolutionary leadership of the proletariat outside the Moscow-controlled CPs; factors which were all exacerbated by the cumulative failure of the revolution to extend internationally. It is extremely unlikely that that combination will ever repeat itself again, especially in the case of new victorious socialist revolutions in countries industrially much more advanced than were Russia in 1917 or China in 1949.

Even today, the degree of backwardness of Russia compared to international capitalism is much more limited and the objective strength of the Russian proletariat incommensurably bigger than they were in 1923 or 1927. If to the relative power of the present workers states would be added that of victorious socialist revolutions in Western Europe, in Japan, or in the biggest Latin American countries — not to speak of the USA — the relationship of forces with international capital would witness a new dramatic deterioration for capitalism of such a depth that the pressure of the capitalist environment and the necessity to keep up military preparedness would not be an objective source for serious restrictions of socialist democracy.

Furthermore, if the survival for the time being of powerful imperialist states and rich bourgeois classes in the world imposes a situation of more or less permanent *potential* armed confrontation and *potential* international war upon existing workers states for a whole period, the obvious need for the workers states to protect themselves against the *threat* of foreign imperialist intervention does not at all imply the identification of conditions of *potential* war with those of *actual* war, an argument that Stalinists and pro-bureaucratic elements of all shades have continually used to justify the strangling of workers' democracy in the countries under the rule of parasitic bureaucracies.

Moreover, the main problem today in the Soviet Union, the Eastern European workers states, and China is not the danger of immediate capitalist restoration under conditions of war or civil war. The main problem facing the working class in these countries is the dictatorial control over the economic, political, and social life by a privileged bureaucratic caste. The tremendous abuses that control has led to have deeply undermined the identification of the masses of these countries with the existing states — thereby, in the long run, weakening their capacity to victoriously withstand a possible future onslaught by imperialist armies.

The defence of democratic rights of all against the restrictions imposed by the bureaucracy, and the struggle for the political revolution is even more necessary. These processes will strengthen and not weaken the workers states' capacity to withstand any imperialist aggression, including their capacity to actively assist the process of world revolution.

Finally, the whole argument should be turned the other way around. We deny that restrictions of socialist democracy — not to speak about a bureaucratic dictatorship — are a necessary price to be paid in order to successfully defend victorious revolutions and extend them internationally against the military power of imperialism. On the contrary, we contend that such restrictions *weaken* the dictatorship of the proletariat politically and militarily against imperialism.

A high level of political consciousness and socialist conviction on the part of the toiling masses; a high level of political activity, mobilisation and alertness; an internationalist education and activity of the proletariat, all help to strengthen the capacity of self-defence and the armed strength of a workers state in general.

History has proven that in the last analysis the superior capacity of self-defence of any state depends upon two key factors: a higher degree of social cohesion and political identification of the mass of the people with the given state; and a higher

level of average productivity of labour and of productive capacity. The broader and less restricted socialist democracy is, the higher the identification of the overwhelming majority of the people with the workers state and the quicker will be the growth of productivity of labour, including the greater the chance of achieving decisive technological advances compared with imperialism. From that point of view, far from being a "luxury" in a world situation characterised by potential wars of aggression of imperialism against the workers states or against ongoing socialist revolutions, socialist democracy is a major weapon in the hands of the workers state even in the purely military field.

This is true from a defensive point of view, as already indicated. It is also true from an offensive point of view. Inasmuch as imperialism cannot embark upon military adventures against past and current revolutions without provoking massive opposition at home and inasmuch as it would have to try to weaken such opposition by increasingly having recourse to repression and restrictions of democratic freedoms of the masses, a high level of socialist democracy existing in the workers states would at the same time exercise an increasing power of attraction upon the restive and oppressed masses of the capitalist countries, thereby undermining the military strength of imperialism and favouring international expansion of the revolution.

Military preparedness of the workers states against threats of imperialist aggression must include special measures against espionage, saboteurs sent in from abroad, and other forms of anti-working class military action that could persist for years if not decades. But special technical measures for self-defence by the workers state should in no way restrict workers' democracy, by calling citizens who are exerting their right of criticism and opposition "spies" or "saboteurs". In fact the higher the political activity, awareness, and social cohesion of the broad masses — which can be realised only through a full flowering of socialist democracy — the more difficult does it become for real spies and saboteurs to operate in a resolutely hostile milieu and the stronger becomes the capacity of self-defence of the workers state.

## XII. The bureaucratized workers states, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the rise of political anti-bureaucratic revolution

From a theoretical point of view, the USSR and the other bureaucratized workers states are extremely distorted and degenerated forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, inasmuch as the economic foundations created by the socialist October revolution have not been destroyed by the bureaucracy. In that sense, the necessity of the defence of the Soviet Union and the workers states against any attempt to restore capitalism — which would represent a giant historical step backward — flows from the fact that these are still degenerated or deformed workers states, i.e. degenerated forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But it does not flow from this that there are various historical forms of dictatorship of the proletariat which we consider all more or less equivalent, socialist workers' democracy as described by our programme being only the "ideal norm", from which reality has deviated and will still strongly deviate in the future.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a goal in and of itself. It is only a means to realise the goal, which is the emancipation of labour, of all exploited and oppressed, by the creation of a worldwide classless society, the only way to solve all burning problems facing humanity, the only way to avoid its relapse into barbarism. But under its extremely degenerated form of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, the "bureaucratic" dictatorship of the proletariat not only does not allow workers to advance towards that goal, it holds back the transition between capitalism and socialism. It becomes a major obstacle on the road toward socialism, an obstacle which has to be removed by the proletariat through a political revolution. So it follows that far from being only one among different variants of the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialist democracy, the rule by the toiling masses through democratically elected workers' and people's councils, is

the *only* form of the dictatorship of the proletariat compatible with our socialist goal, the only form which will make it an efficient weapon for advancing toward world revolution and world socialism. *We fight for that form of the dictatorship of the proletariat and for that form alone*, not for reasons of morality, humanitarianism, or historical idealism (the attempt to "impose" certain "ideal" patterns upon the historical process), but for reasons of political efficiency and realism, for reasons of programmatic principles, for reasons of immediate and historical necessity from the point of view of the interests of the world proletariat and of world socialism.

Furthermore, the "bureaucratic" dictatorship of the proletariat can only arise — as it did in the Soviet Union — as the result of a disastrous and lasting *political defeat* of the working class at the hands of the bureaucracy. It is not accidental that Trotsky uses in that context the formula "political expropriation of the proletariat by the bureaucracy". As proletarian revolutionists we are not neutral or indifferent in front of the question of political victory or defeat of *our* class. We try to assure its victory. We try to avoid its defeat by all means possible. Again it follows that we can only fight for that form of the dictatorship of the proletariat which enables such a victory and avoids such a defeat. Only the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised through political power in the hands of democratically elected workers' councils assures that.

Politically, the question is by no means purely academic. It is a burning issue in all those countries — not only the imperialist ones — where the working class has by and large assimilated the crimes and the real nature of Stalinism and of labour bureaucracies in general. Any identification of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" with nationalised property only, irrespective of concrete conditions of exercise of power by the working class in the state and the economy, becomes in all these countries a formidable obstacle on the road toward a victorious socialist revolution and the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It objectively helps the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, the social democrats, and the CPs to maintain the working class in the straitjacket of the bourgeois-democratic state.

It is an even more burning question in all the bureaucratized workers states themselves, where the political revolution is on the agenda. In these countries, any attempt to present variants other than workers' democracy as goals for that revolution, would condemn those who make such attempts to extreme isolation from the rising masses. Indeed it would risk involving them in the same hatred with which the proletariat views the bureaucracy, "the new masters".

The concrete experiences of the Hungarian revolution of October-November 1956 and of the Polish revolution of August 1980-December 1981, which went furthest on the road to a full-blown anti-bureaucratic political revolution, as well as of the "Prague Spring" of 1968-69 has already permitted the drawing of highly significant lessons on the dynamic of the political revolution. The "Prague Spring" and the political revolution in Poland also benefitted from taking place in the social, economic and political conditions of countries where the working class represented the vast majority of the active population and could base itself on an old tradition of socialist, communist and trade union mass organisations, as well as in Poland, on a rich experience of anti-bureaucratic workers' revolts and struggles for workers' self-management.

These three experiences of the beginning of political revolutions confirm that the contents of socialist democracy as set forth in our programme and further explained in these theses are but the conscious expression of what millions of workers and toilers fight for when they rise against the totalitarian rule of the bureaucracy.

The struggle against its secret police, for the liberation of political prisoners, against repression of political and trade union activities which undermines the power monopoly of the ruling bureaucracy, against press censorship, against juridical arbitrariness (i.e. for written law and the right of defendants to be judged and defended in line with the law), against the one-party system, against the bureaucracy's control over the economic system, against the exorbitant material privileges of the bureaucracy and in favour of substantial progress in socio-

economic equality — all these planks were the key motives which brought the Hungarian and the Czechoslovak masses onto the streets against the bureaucracy. It will be the same tomorrow in the USSR and the People's Republic of China too.

They have nothing to do with the restoration of private property, or the restoration of capitalism, as the Stalinist slanders falsely alleged in order to justify the counter-revolutionary suppression of these anti-bureaucratic mass uprisings with the use of the Soviet army in Hungary or Czechoslovakia or the imposition of martial law in Poland. In that sense, they have nothing to do with the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat either.

In Hungary in 1965, the workers' councils and the Central Workers Council of Budapest, after long debates, declared themselves in favour of a defence of nationalised property and of the freedom for all political parties except the fascists. In Czechoslovakia, during the Prague Spring, the demands for unrestricted freedom of political organisation, of political clubs, tendencies, and parties, first defended by the most radical protagonists of the movement, was taken up by large tendencies inside the Communist Party itself and supported by the great majority of the trade unions and workers' councils that sprang up in the final part of our movement. The working class was energetically in favour of a free press — while, significantly, the Stalinist spokesmen of the bureaucracy, those who prepared, facilitated and collaborated with the Soviet bureaucracy's counter-revolutionary military intervention, concentrated their fire on the so-called "irresponsible" "pro-bourgeois" writers whose freedom to express themselves they wanted to crush at all costs — with the working class, in its overwhelming majority, supporting the freedom of the writers.

In Poland in 1980-81, the working class drove forward the broadest experience of struggle for political democracy in a workers state, for sixteen months. The internal democracy which the ten million organised Polish workers adopted within the Solidarnosc union demonstrated the attachment of the working class to the principles of proletarian democracy. The slogans of "socialisation of the means of production and of planning", and of "construction of a self-managed republic", put forward by the mass movement, clearly expressed its aspiration to wrest the control of the economy as well as of the state from the bureaucracy, and to subject them to the collective democratic management of the workers, an aspiration which materialised in the struggle for workers' self-management and in the building of workers' councils and their co-ordination. The programme adopted by the national congress of Solidarnosc, stating that "ideological, social, political and cultural pluralism must constitute the basis of democracy in the self-managed republic", also added that:

Public life in Poland requires a deep reform that should lead to the final institution of self-management, democracy and pluralism. That is why we struggle both for a change in the structures of the state and for the creation and development of independent self-managed institutions in all walks of social life.

In defence of the "the citizens' total freedom of association", the programme said:

We believe that the principles of pluralism must apply to political life. Our union will aid and protect initiatives that aim to propose different social-political and economic programmes to society.

It is most likely that similar confrontations will occur during every future political revolution, especially in the USSR and the People's Republic of China. Revolutionary Marxists cannot hesitate or sit on the fence. Neither can they present them as purely tactical choices. They must align with the overwhelming majority of the toiling masses in defence of unrestricted democratic freedoms, against the censorship and repression of the bureaucracy.

In the beginning of the actual political revolution, the toiling masses make the distinction between those sectors of the bureaucracy which strenuously, including by the use of violence, try to oppose mass mobilisations and organisation, and those sectors which, for whatever motivation, yield to and seem to go along with the mass movement. The former they will pitilessly exclude from all nascent genuine organs of workers' and popular power. The latter they will tolerate and even conclude tactical

alliances with, especially when they are under attack by the most hated representatives of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

In the final institutionalisation of workers-council power, the toiling masses will most probably, however, take all appropriate measures to ensure their numerical, social, and political preponderance inside the reborn soviets, in order to prevent them from falling under the sway of technocrats and "liberal" bureaucrats.

This is also possible by specific electoral rules, and does not require any banning of specific parties or ideological tendencies considered representative of sectors of the bureaucracy having temporarily allied themselves with the revolutionary masses.

Throughout the rise and the struggle for victory of the political anti-bureaucratic revolution, a tremendous handicap which revolutionary Marxists and proletarian revolutionists will have to overcome is the discredit which Stalin, Stalinism and its heirs have thrown upon Marxism, socialism, communism and Leninism, by identifying their hated oppressive rule with these great emancipatory ideas. The Fourth International can successfully overcome this handicap by basing itself on the record of the relentless and uncompromising struggle by its founders and militants against that oppressive rule for more than half a century. But to this record must be added an audacious programme of concrete demands which embody, in the eyes of the masses, the overthrow of the rule of the bureaucracy, its replacement by the rule of the workers themselves, and the necessary guarantees requested, and the necessary guarantees requested by them that we shall never see workers' political and economic power expropriated again by a privileged layer of society. Our programme of socialist democracy synthesizes all these demands which expresses the socialist goal as a worthy one in the eyes of hundreds of millions of proletarians in the bureaucratized workers states.

### XIII. The programme of socialist democracy — an integral part of the programme of world revolution

The balance sheet of sixty years of bureaucratic power, since the rise of the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union and of 30 years of crisis of world Stalinism can be summarised as follows:

a) In spite of all differences between the various European and Asian workers states and in spite of all the changes that have occurred there, *all* remain characterised by *the absence of institutionalised and constitutionally guaranteed direct workers' power* (i.e., democratically elected workers' councils, or councils of workers and toiling peasants exercising direct state power). Everywhere de facto one-party systems exist as expressions of the complete monopoly of real power in all spheres of social life by the privileged bureaucracies. The absence of tendency rights within the single party, the negation of real democratic centralism in the Leninist sense of the word, reinforce that monopoly in the exercise of state power. The parasitic nature of the materially privileged bureaucracies furthermore implies that to various degrees momentous obstacles are placed on the road to advancing the world socialist revolution and building a socialist society; the transition from capitalism to socialism becomes bogged down, creativity is stifled, and tremendous amounts of social wealth are misused and wasted.

b) In spite of many partial criticisms of the existing political and economic system in the USSR by various ideological currents that have developed since the crisis of Stalinism (Titoism, Maoism, "Eurocommunism", and left centrism of the Italian, Spanish and West German types, etc.) none of these currents has put forward a fundamental alternative to the Stalinist model in the USSR. Against that bureaucratic power structure none propose *directly democratic working class power*. No real understanding of the problem of Stalinism is possible without a Marxist analysis of the bureaucracy as a specific social phenomenon. No real alternative to rule by the bureaucracy (or in relation to the restoration of capitalism) is possible without institutionalising direct workers' power through democratically elected workers' councils (workers' and toiling peasants' councils) with a multi-party system and full democratic rights for all toilers, within a system of planned and democratically centralised self-management of the economy by the associated producers.

Most West European CPs, while accentuating their criticism of the dogmas and practices of the Soviet and East European bureaucracies, and while broadening polemics with the Kremlin, propose at the most a reform of the worst excesses of Stalinist rule rather than a revolutionary change. These parties have not cut their umbilical cords which link them to the Kremlin, and continue to provide justifications and make an "objectivist" apology for the past crimes of the bureaucracy and many aspects of the present forms of bureaucratic rule. Furthermore, in the imperialist countries, their general policy of class collaboration and upholding bourgeois order even during big explosions of mass struggle, of necessity limits their credibility regarding their respect for democracy inside the labour movement, particularly within the mass organisations that they control and within their own parties. In their critiques they have systematically obscured the differences between bourgeois and workers' democracy and, under the guise of combatting the one-party system in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China. In reality, they defend the concept that the only alternative to the bureaucracy's rule through a single-party system is to accept bourgeois parliamentary institutions. In this way they reintroduce in the labour movement today the general theses of classical social democracy with regard to the "peaceful" and "gradual" transition to socialism.

In the light of all these failures, the programme of the Fourth International is in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat, direct working class rule through democratically elected councils, and recognises the plurality of soviet parties as the only coherent and serious alternative to the twin revisions of Marxism advanced by social-democratic reformism and Stalinist codification of rule by a usurping bureaucratic caste.

This programme, which represents in its main lines the continuity of the writings of Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune, of Lenin's *State and Revolution*, of the documents of the first congresses of the Communist International on the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been further enriched in the light of the successive analyses of proletarian revolutions and bureaucratic degeneration or deformation of workers states, first by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* and in the founding programmatic documents of the Fourth International, and later by documents of the Fourth International after World War II. This document summarizes the present thinking of the revolutionary Marxists on this key aspect of the programme for socialist revolution.



Women militia members in Nicaragua

# The Central American revolution

## I. The context and the imperialist escalation

1) A QUARTER of a century ago, the victory of the socialist revolution in **Cuba** heralded a new stage of the world revolution. A first breach was opened in the American empire. The seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement and the establishment of a revolutionary government (March 1979) in **Grenada** opened up a new breach. Grenada forms a revolutionary link between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean basin region.<sup>1</sup> The revolutionary seizure of power in July 1979 by the FSLN in **Nicaragua** inaugurated a further stage of the prolonged revolutionary process developing in this strategically decisive region for the United States. The overthrow of Somoza represented a defeat for the American presence that had hidden behind the National Guard and Somoza dictatorship for so long. Today the revolution in **El Salvador** is the sharpest expression of the class confrontations in the region. The other revolutionary and mass struggles underway in Central America (mainly in Guatemala) and the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica) are also unfolding within this dynamic of radical challenge to the US system of rule and of *extension of the socialist revolution*.

The geo-political framework profoundly influences all aspects of the Central American revolution. The revolution developed in countries strictly subordinated to imperialism where the political regimes were "created" by the United States. The states that have emerged from victorious socialist revolutions — like Cuba and Nicaragua — are the first authentically national and independent states crystallising the historical aspirations for self-determination of these oppressed nations and the demands of the exploited masses. These revolutions come up against the imperialist counter-revolution in this United States security zone. This explains the present central role of the Central American revolution in the class struggles on an international scale.

2) There are few regions which have been so much the *object* of the foreign policy of an imperialist power as Central America and the Caribbean. It has been the theatre for permanent United States intervention for 85 years. The United States has always claimed the *right* to dictate its law there. It considers this whole region to be an integral part of its "defence system", and has 40 to 50 *military* bases there. It is building new ones — among others in the Honduran part of the Gulf of Fonseca between Nicaragua and El Salvador. In 1982-83 20 per cent of the entire US military budget was earmarked for this region.

This zone is a major communications and trade route, as well as a transshipment and refining site for oil shipped from Alaska and the Middle East to the United States. It is a very important trading lane for both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts (Panama Canal). It bristles with top-ranked, off-shore financial havens (Panama, Cayman Islands, Bahamas).

It contains oil, gas, and other raw material reserves.

The Reagan plan for the "Caribbean Basin" — in which the United States is included! — aims to use it as a location for implanting industries avid for cheap labour. Washington and Wall Street would like to impose on an even greater scale a Puerto Rico-style model of development! A hundred important firms are co-ordinated in the "Caribbean Central American Action" — a body led by D. Rockefeller which gives total support to Reagan's policy. However *direct* imperialist economic interests

(investment) are relatively limited compared to its *military-strategic* interests.

American imperialism demands "absolute hegemony" in this part of the world with the accord of the imperialist bourgeoisies. Keeping this intact and allowing no sharing of its supremacy is a test of its *international credibility*. The present revolutionary upsurge threatens the American empire in its "own" backyard. Also, the problems of the "backyard" are in the process of becoming domestic problems — if only because 10 per cent of the region's population live in the United States.

The *power of attraction* of the Nicaraguan revolution, coming after the Cuban, is based among other factors on the fact that it shows it is possible to defeat American supremacy head-on in one of the regions closest to the imperial metropolis. Better still, despite all the difficulties caused by the Pentagon, these revolutions, sustained by popular mobilisation, have been able to rapidly begin to respond to the basic needs of the majority of the people. An economic disaster is hitting the *Southern Cone* countries hard — the impoverishment of very broad layers of the population is accelerating. All this contributes to closer links between the class struggles in South America and the Central American revolution, which increases the stakes involved in the ongoing confrontations.

3) The new rise of the revolution in the Caribbean Basin is taking place — as opposed to the period of the Cuban revolution — when American imperialism is undergoing a prolonged economic crisis and its hegemony is in decline. A decline sharply revealed by the defeat suffered in Vietnam and the overthrow of one of its strategic allies, the Shah of Iran. So the Central American revolution became the target of a large-scale imperialist *counter-offensive*. The counter attack underway since the July 1979 victory of the FSLN is one facet of a *global policy*: brutal attacks on workers' living standards in the United States; breath-taking remilitarisation and stepped-up pressure against the Soviet Union; strengthening of military intervention capacity aimed at hitting back hard against attempted revolutionary breakthroughs in the dominated countries; and finally the economies of the latter are placed under tight IMF surveillance.

In fact Carter had begun this policy of *crisis* and *war*. The Democratic Party administration had a series of failures when it attempted to set up a regime without Somoza but based on his National Guard. It attempted to get the Organisation of American States (OAS) to back a direct counter-revolutionary intervention, in order to get broader support in the United States and internationally. The OAS refused this, for the first time.

Imperialism quickly drew the lessons of this experience. It gave increased importance to *regional military sub-alliances*.

As early as autumn 1979, Carter orchestrated Romero's coup d'état in El Salvador, stepped up military aid to Honduras and El Salvador and prepared the conditions which were to turn Honduras and Costa Rica into future bases of intervention against the Nicaraguan revolution, ensured the survival and training of Somoza's National Guard, reinforced the presence of marines in the area and directed the overthrow of Manley in Jamaica although masking the operation through the elections. Threats against Cuba increased.

Since 1980-81 the Pentagon's war drive has been continually stepped up. It has the following features:

a) A reorganisation of the Salvadoran police and army (the latter being placed under the tutelage of the American military high command). The involvement of US "advisors" is getting

greater and greater — in terms of information gathering, air-surveillance, maintenance of sophisticated military equipment and also in commanding military operations in the field. Without the aid, training and structuring provided by the United States, the Salvadoran army would have certainly suffered a collapse under the effects of the FMLN military offensives.

b) The increase in the number of joint military exercises between the United States, Honduras and El Salvador. These manoeuvres are organised in the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras (on the Nicaraguan-El Salvador frontier) and also some certainly take place in Salvadoran territory. These military exercises serve to force *regional military alliances* — a necessary condition for the direct use of American forces in greater number. Their importance is due to the failure of the imperialist plan to “Latin Americanise” the war in Central America. This project was to be based on armies like that of Argentina. But it broke up due to two factors — the Malvinas war and the crisis of the Southern Cone dictatorships. During the counter-revolutionary intervention in **Grenada** the United States inaugurated the use of these regional military sub-alliances. As it happened this also made it impossible for a new “watchdog” force to be established in the region.

c) **Honduras** has been transformed into a real American “aircraft carrier”. More than 2,000 soldiers are permanently stationed there excluding the CIA personnel who organise the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary forces. The *Palmerola* base — equipped for all types of military aircraft, is the strategic centre of the United States war operation. Ten military airports complete Honduras’ “defence system”. A training centre for Salvadoran and Honduran troops, with a capacity for 1,500 soldiers has been functioning since 1983. Finally a system of radar surveillance, necessary for carrying out both aerial offensives against Nicaragua and permanent air reconnaissance has been set up.

The heavy American influence is provoking a process of decomposition and corruption within the power structures. The combined effect of this heavy influence, the danger of a war that is rejected by the masses and the economic crisis, are provoking reactions among the population. But it is difficult for these to find an independent political expression, given the weakness of the revolutionary political forces. Conflicts are emerging between sections of the regime and the military hierarchy, which itself is not free from internal conflicts. The presence of several armies (from the *contras* to American troops, not forgetting the Salvadoran troops trained in Honduras), is another destabilising factor. The leading circles in the army are totally dependent on the United States, but are keen on negotiating aid in their own interests. They are also concerned to maintain a position of strength vis-a-vis the other armies in the region, such as that of Salvador.

In the next period the American imperialists will try to strengthen their military position in **Costa Rica**.

d) A *fully-fledged counter-revolutionary army* based in Costa Rica and Honduras is financed, trained and staffed by the CIA. It is 15,000 strong with a solid component of ex-Somozista National Guards. These mercenaries have launched an *all-out war against Nicaragua* causing them great human and financial costs.

e) In the Caribbean sea the American fleet is on constant patrol and organises bigger military exercises (Ocean Venture). A reorganisation of the police and military in the Caribbean states is underway. A multinational military force has been established (Dominica, Antigua, St. Lucia, and Barbados) to prevent any “new Grenadas”.

f) Washington relies on *Israel* to expand its war effort in the region. The Zionist state plays a frontline role in the arming and training of repressive forces in Guatemala. It is a prime supplier of modern arms to the dictators of the region. Its advisors operate in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and among the *contras*. Taiwan also participates in these counter-revolutionary operations by financing the anti-Sandinistas and by arming and training the armed forces in Guatemala.

g) The occupation of Grenada by American troops was to show the revolutionary movements of the region — as well as US allies — what Washington’s real objectives are. It also demonstrated that, faced with a deployment of US air/naval

forces, revolutionary fighters should not expect aid of an equivalent kind. Fidel Castro correctly stressed that to deter such aggression and — if need be — to resist it, unfolding revolutions have to draw strength from the level of mobilisation, the preparation of the masses and the revolutionary forces, and the quality of their leadership. This can raise to the maximum the price imperialism would have to pay for such action and could facilitate a certain aid from the revolutionary forces of the region. The course of the Grenadian revolution made that impossible.

h) Since 1981, the Reagan administration has worked out a doctrine based on hackneyed formulas designed to legitimise direct large-scale intervention domestically and internationally. It alleges in the first place that the United States must stand up to the USSR in Central America; next, that the FMLN only exists because it is propped up by the Cuban-Soviet alliance via Nicaragua, thereby casting El Salvador as the victim of a foreign aggression; and finally, that the fall of El Salvador would pave the way for “Russian penetration” in Guatemala and then Mexico. Faced with this danger, the United States has a duty to fight “Russian expansionism”. It portrays American policy in this part of the world as just one element of the “East-West” conflict.

Reagan’s and the Pentagon’s diplomatic manoeuvres fit in with this schema. Their objectives are domestic and international, as well as having a direct effect on ongoing battles in Central America. As is the tradition, American imperialism *puts together elections* and tries to brush up democratic appearances in El Salvador and Guatemala, for instance. Such moves are designed to legitimise stepped up military aid or direct intervention for the “safeguarding of democracy”. They also represent a last-gasp attempt to hold off the crises of bourgeois leadership. Finally, they are also used to introduce breaches in an anti-imperialist and anti-dictatorial front and to cause a certain disorientation among layers of the population.

4) But we should not lose sight of the essential thing. For American imperialism, as the bipartisan Kissinger report bluntly put it, the Cuban workers state and Nicaragua are *anomalies* in this “internal periphery”. They must in the short term be contained and if possible eliminated. This basic objective is accepted by all the bourgeois forces in the United States. They can have differences, based on their specific judgement on the internal situation in the United States, over the balance to be struck between the means to be employed: between all sorts of pressure and direct aggression. But they are united about the necessity of preventing at all costs the victory of the Salvadoran revolution, the consolidation of the revolution and state in Nicaragua and of inflicting a major defeat on the Guatemalan guerrillas.

*A full-scale escalation is planned.* At different levels it aims to put an ever-tightening noose around Nicaragua, to politically and militarily consolidate the present regime in El Salvador and to use this tremendous pressure to try and militarily and politically weaken the revolutionary forces. European countries (the EEC) and Latin American countries (like Venezuela and even Mexico) and now using economic weapons to try and force Nicaragua into line. Their support to the Duarte regime in El Salvador goes along the same lines. Furthermore the involvement of sectors of the European bourgeoisies, of social democracy and, in a certain respect, of the Latin American bourgeoisies in these diplomatic and political manoeuvres has a dual aim: to diversify the very strong pressure on the revolutionary forces (and those willing to aid them to one extent or another) and to lessen the political cost for Washington of a qualitative escalation with the direct presence of imperialist troops.

*The first phase of a counter-revolutionary war* in Central America has already begun. The Pentagon’s whole strategy is to recuperate complete hegemony over the Caribbean basin, as an integral part of *American imperialism’s overall counter-offensive*. This explains the specificity of the struggle led by the FMLN compared with both the July 26 Movement in Cuba or the FSLN in Nicaragua, which had to confront imperialist aggression *after* the seizure of power. Thus, what is at stake in Nicaragua and El Salvador is of exceptional importance. Consequently for workers and revolutionaries throughout the world, for those who are fighting against imperialist re-militarisation, it is of primordial importance to aid the victory of the revolu-

tionary movements in Central America and the Caribbean and to ensure the unconditional defence of Cuba and Nicaragua.

## II. Characteristics and nature of the revolution

1) In the Central American isthmus those who have always suffered oppression and exploitation no longer accept being kept down. One of the roots of their revolt — from the beginning of the 1970s, lies in the *considerable deterioration of their living standards*. That became linked up with continually frustrated political aspirations, permanently violated democratic rights and with unresolved social problems built up over a long period.

Over some 30 years the Central American population has more than tripled. More than 45 per cent of the population are less than 14 years old. The majority of these *young people* are considered a danger in themselves by the ruling classes. Somoza and the Guatemalan military have made the most open demonstration of this.

*Under-employment and unemployment* are growing. Unemployment levels have exploded since the end of the 1970s. Economic development in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s further accentuated the extreme *differentiation* in income distribution. Nearly 65 per cent of the population lives in a "state of poverty" and 40 per cent in "extreme poverty" (57 per cent in El Salvador). Malnutrition, undernutrition, very high infant mortality rates, illiteracy, generalised lack of access to basic services (water, electricity, etc.), and endemic illness is the daily reality for the great majority of the people, who are today fighting against imperialism, its regimes and more or less openly client dictatorships.

Under the effects of the agrarian crisis and the industrialisation the *urban population* has rapidly increased, with proletarian and semi-proletarian agglomerations in the lower-class neighbourhoods of the main towns, especially the capital cities. Over the last fifteen years the number of students has skyrocketed. They constitute a social and political force which will play an important role in political struggles and in the growth of revolutionary organisations. However the *rural population* is still big, is still the majority: more than 55 per cent on average (El Salvador, Honduras with particular weight in Guatemala). The rural labour force continues to grow with a consequent increase in under-employment. Under the impact of agricultural transformations regional geographical centres have grown up. All this urban and rural "massification" underlies popular struggles.

The consequences of the international crisis of capitalism on these fragile, deformed and dependent economies resulted in their going into the *most serious economic slump in their history*. So the effects of "capitalist modernisation" are combined with the economic crisis in countries with an ample agricultural base, but with a newly-urbanised but severely under-employed population. The urban masses' living standards have worsened, impoverishment of small peasants, the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat has accelerated and the petty and medium bourgeoisie have not been spared. The whole social structure has been shaken up.

2) *The disruption of the oligarchical system of rule* turned out to be an element favouring the revolutionary process. The ruling oligarchies — fully party to the economic "modernisation" — are being partially transformed and thus undergoing a process of differentiation that is sometimes a sign of internal tensions. This process is also taking place in the army, which was however a factor in these modifications. These oligarchies are incapable of responding to the social and political effects produced by economic growth (extension of capitalist relations of production, destruction of pre-capitalist social structures, increase in size of the urban middle-class, implantation of the multinationals, etc.). The Central American Common Market (CACM) gives an impetus to these changes and — despite the crisis that appeared at the end of the 1960s — it accelerates economic and a relative growth. The socio-political effects of this growth/modernisation go beyond its strictly economic importance. On this level economic growth is partial, superficial and distorted. To take agriculture for example, only the export sector is involved in this process which goes hand in hand with a concentration of land

ownership. The situation for agriculture linked to the domestic market (basic subsistence foodstuffs) is getting worse. Industrialisation is taking off — its weight in GDP has doubled in 15 years. However, it is still very fragile and does not modify the predominant importance of the agro-export sector.

The oligarchies cannot simply perpetuate the old system of rule (Costa Rica is an exception to this general framework). *Inter-bourgeois infighting* is more and more frequent and is expressed *even inside the bourgeois state* (putsches in Guatemala; conflicts in El Salvador over the agrarian reform of General Molina; the clashes in Nicaragua which were stronger and more continuous after 1975). But these oligarchies, who tend to monopolise power inside the bourgeoisie, are incapable of establishing a new system of alliances and an institutional reorganisation able to consolidate their hegemony.

In turn all *reformist projects* based often on sectors of the "middle classes" and liberal professions are short-lived, either destroyed by military coups or because the situation is autocratically taken in hand (in Guatemala in 1963 with Jose Arevalo; in 1972 in El Salvador when the Christian Democrats and Duarte were "deprived" of their election victory, and again in 1977; in 1967 then in 1972-73 with the liberal/conservative pact in Nicaragua). The "forces for renewal" fear the masses like the plague and usually put an end to their protest in exchange for transactions with the oligarchy, the army and imperialism. The latter always maintains the oligarchic sectors as *allies*.

The present regimes are structurally unable to control the rise of movements of popular protest. They cannot set up channels that can at least partially hold back such movements. Thus political-social instability intensifies. These oligarchical regimes completely devalue all components of bourgeois democracy (parliament, elections/fraud, independent legal system, freedom of the press . . .).

It is typical for these oligarchies and their allies to have a recourse — to defend their interests — more to bosses/professional organisations than to political parties whose usefulness is temporary since their role is limited to electoral farces. Their ideology, of "sacrifice progress in favour of order" is cemented uniquely around anti-communism which reveals their historical weakness and vacuity — though they are extremely well armed.

The recourse to *state terrorism* and *military dictatorship* — which receive the blessing of the top Catholic hierarchy up to the time when the regimes go into their deepest crisis — appears as the favoured response of the ruling circles to the difficulties of reorganising class domination and to the emergence of popular struggles. This does not exclude more combined (political and repressive) operations, such as have been seen in Honduras or, in the present situation, in Guatemala or El Salvador. However, these are in the framework of the "counter-insurgency" policy that the Guatemalan military have particularly developed.

The above-mentioned elements make it possible to understand the *differences* between the conditions for revolutionary struggle in Central America (once again with the exception of Costa Rica) and those in many and important countries of Latin America, where the ruling classes have other resources at their disposal and can play the card of a "controlled, albeit shaky, democratic opening".

3) The permanent intervention of American imperialism into this region has been an obstacle to the formation of national bourgeoisies with a solid base. Of course, in the framework of the "Alliance for Progress" among others, and a relative economic growth, these bourgeoisies have consolidated a little. But they remain social forces whose own national and historic project is extremely weak. This has been sharply demonstrated by the crisis as well as by the revolutionary upsurge since 1979. The consolidation of their armies and the military policy that gives them a certain possibility of negotiating with the United States (Guatemala) does not substantially change these fundamental elements. Their "monopolistic" character (control of most of the country's wealth, particularly the land, by a few families and freshly-promoted military leaders) and their subordinate association to American imperialism means that systematic repression remains a key element in their form of rule. Their economic policy, over and above *super-exploitation* and links with imperialist capital is often reducible to a flight of capital. The present situation shows

this clearly. The present situation shows this clearly. They "sacrifice" their future class interests to the pressing demands of the moment, which show up their parasitic nature. They are ready to sell their country down the river while pretending to embody the nation's future.

Consequently it is up to the people, the oppressed masses, to *bring about the formation of the nation and a really independent national state*. Furthermore, it is within this broad social/national dynamic that the popular majority necessary for a victorious outcome for the revolution can be built and will be further broadened afterwards as a result of the victory itself. This is one of the major lessons of the Sandinistas' struggle against Somozaism.

4) The popular forces in Central America drew their strength from a history of struggles that in the 1930s forged the great figures of the struggle against imperialism and for national and social liberation: Sandino and Farabundo Martí. The experience of the Cardenas period and its reforms in Mexico has also left its mark. Finally, the period of the Arbenz government (1950-54) in Guatemala forms part of their heritage, revealing the limits of a bourgeois agrarian reform and a moment of intense mass mobilisation.

Since the beginning of the 1970s the mass struggles went through a series of stages leading to open military confrontation — with differences according to the countries.

From 1972-73 on inflation began to cut into incomes. Sectors like the teachers, university teachers, bank employees, social security and health workers became radicalised. Trade unions extended their influence and workers' strike grew in number. The urban shantytown dwellers and "pobladores" started to mobilise and organise. Peasants, demanding land, organised occupations which is an act of civil disobedience par excellence and broke with submissive, fatalist ideology. The peasants' entry onto the political scene produced a fracture which would no longer be repaired. Revolutionary organisations accumulated their forces. Protest and socio-economic movements organised openly and occasionally still legally, up to 1977-78.

*New actors* have joined the march of popular revolt. Christians, lay people and priests opposed to the hierarchy (base communities); Indians in Guatemala where they are the majority of the poor peasantry; women's organisations and associations of families of political prisoners and the "disappeared".

During this time, the miserable failure of bourgeois reformism undermined the credibility of possible struggles within a legal framework.

Since 1978, open and underground struggle, legal and illegal activity now became more combined (factory and land occupations, urban squats with self-defence and armed actions). Repression increased greatly, thousands of militants, trade union leaders, students, peasants, and workers were kidnapped and assassinated. Terror is so omnipresent that a new social category has been created: internal and external *political refugees*. They show the terribly precarious conditions of the underprivileged population of the whole region.

On the basis of their experience the toiling masses increasingly understood the most down-to-earth struggles for their democratic, social and economic rights *were turned into political confrontations with the regimes in power*. The *overthrow of the dictatorship* appears to be the condition for introducing any sort of substantial reform. The struggles of various social sectors *converged* and the political-military organisations, establishing themselves as the leading forces of the struggle of the exploited and oppressed masses, came closer together. *Mass insurrections, armed peoples' movements and peoples' wars — which took on the significance of a class war — necessarily became the expression of social confrontations*. The popular insurrections in Nicaragua leading to the destruction of the Somozista state apparatus (1979) and the vast mass mobilisations in El Salvador (1980) marked a turn.

A new framework for revolutionary developments in the region was now defined by the *consolidation of: the Sandinista revolution*, of its state, its army, the beginning of a *civil war* in El Salvador and the *direct military and political intervention of the United States*.

5) The dynamic of this revolution is not the product of sociological determinism, even if in a country like El Salvador the class structure sharpens the anti-capitalist significance of popular struggle. It cannot be understood without recognising the existence of *political-military revolutionary organisations* — which built themselves during the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s — with the *explicit objective of the seizure of power*.

These organisations took up the best of the *Marxist and communist heritage* in Central America and the tradition of the *national, anti-imperialist liberation struggle*. They are the product of a long history. They showed they were able to root themselves deeply in a national reality. This, plus the unbreakable links with the Cuban revolution is enough to show their *qualitative difference* with the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships.

Over and above these organisations political and organisational differences — which are still significant — we can define some major common features:

a) These organisations have assimilated the *experience of the Cuban revolution*. They above all drew a strategic lesson which has become the guiding line of all their thinking and practice for 20 years now: revolution is possible in the United States' backyard. A revolution starting with anti-dictatorial, democratic, and anti-imperialist objectives can be transformed into a socialist revolution through vetoing any imperialist mediation, by seizing power and clearly refusing any share of military power with any bourgeois sectors — that is, the refusal to reconstruct a bourgeois state after the fall of the dictatorship — and by the organisation and mobilisation of the masses to ensure their definitive hegemony.

b) The Cuban revolution and OLAS placed the *armed struggle on the agenda*, the necessity of armed struggle for overthrowing the dictatorships in power and, therefore, there was a break with the idea of the "peaceful road to socialism". This constituted another break with the policy of the communist parties. The communist parties either assigned a leading role to the bourgeoisie in the national-democratic revolutions and tailed it, or envisaged the constitution of a political bloc with the bourgeoisie that would not even be directly led by the latter but which would imply the maintenance of the bourgeois state apparatus. The CP also confined themselves to legalist, syndicalist and workerist activity and were incapable of bringing the impoverished urban and rural masses into the struggle.

The adoption of the "armed struggle strategy" did not exclude a series of deformations synthesised in the "focoist" theory which was to lead to impasse and resounding failures. In particular political action, properly speaking, was neglected, and often assimilated to reformism. This left an open terrain that the CPs and other reformist or nationalist forces were to occupy.

One of the big merits of the Central American revolutionary organisations, including in El Salvador, where this type of guerrilla experience did not develop at all, was to carry out a systematic rethink on the basis of the defeats of "focoism". But this rethinking took place within a *continuity* of experience — in terms of cadres or organisations (FSLN) having gained moral and political authority — which is a key element in the maturing of these organisations. The very existence of Cuba as a "rearguard" is a component of this political-organisational continuity, despite momentary differences between these organisations and the Castroist leadership.

c) The Vietnamese revolution had in the same way encouraged the reflection of many of these revolutionary cadres. It has favoured a reassertion of *political work*, of the *role of the party* and of the idea of *incorporating the masses into the armed struggle*. The military question is consequently seen first of all as a political question. The Vietnamese experience will be a very important element — in addition to the critical balance sheet drawn of the urban guerrillas organised by the Uruguayan Tupamaros and the Argentinian PRT — which stimulated an advance of these organisations on the terrain of forming armies and mass fronts. In El Salvador a real *revolutionary army* was created after 1981.

This reference to Vietnam is occasionally directly linked to a judgement about the inevitability of American intervention — *before the seizure of power* — which would give the class struggle the character of a war of liberation.

Therefore the Indochinese revolution occasionally prompted some schematic and dangerous generalisations. The fact that it had the character of a war of national liberation against an *occupying army* brought with it by analogy the development of a strategy (for example in the case of the GPP tendency of the FSLN in Nicaragua) which very much subordinated immediate political and military action to the preparation of a war against the coming imperialist intervention. Consequently this approach marginalises political and military initiatives aiming to attack the dictatorship and seize power, before any imperialist intervention. In this sense it tends to prepare the struggle against tomorrow's enemy more than today's. It neglects political demands and the work of organising the masses. The "mountain" becomes the privileged place for action which is likely to be isolated nationally and one just organises the popular sectors of a "liberated zone".

d) So in the mid-1970s organisations were formed which in concrete activity were able to combine — each time in an original way — political, economic and military struggle. To this end they established an *organic liaison* between the work involved in leading the trade unions, the mass rural organisations and urban shanty-town dwellers and the armed struggle. They rejected spontaneous insurrectionalism, seen as an automatic product of self-defence. The perspective of an insurrection was re-integrated with the armed struggle, and mass action at its highest level (mass general strike, insurrectional general strike). All organisations were concerned at all times to organise the mass movement and to accumulate forces. Experience of struggle, self-defence initiatives and armed detachments were combined in this process. Armed struggle was conceived as having to develop, at a certain stage, both in the towns, the mountains and the countryside.

They put forward a national political project and became the direct protagonists of political conflicts. They took away control of the mass movement from reformist forces — including by forming mass organisations.

e) These organisations have rejected the alliances' policy as recommended by the CPs which was part and parcel of their idea of "two revolutions". The CPs, while being utterly sectarian against the revolutionary forces, tailended the bourgeois formations — at most trying to improve the relationship of forces through paper organisations included in electoral fronts.

The revolutionary organisations opposed this political line and right away were seen as the number one enemy of the dictatorships and the champions of self-determination. They contended with opposition sectors of the bourgeoisie over who the best were standard-bearers of national and anti-imperialist interests. Within this framework they were clear about who were the *motorforces* of these revolutions: the alliance of the workers, semi-proletariat and peasant masses. All the specific elements were built (class organisations, military forces, etc.) to ensure their independence and hegemony *within the framework of these alliances*. For, in these revolutions which begin around national democratic tasks, they grasped the importance of the *utility* of alliances in anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist struggle. But the substance of this alliance policy was summed up very well by FSLN leader, J. Wheelock: "The axis of our alliances policy was not the bourgeoisie, but the people. That isn't a demagogic declaration. It is the basic truth. Our programme and our schema of the forces (involved) were based on a concrete reality. We had the *arms and the people with us*. It was an *anti-dictatorial, popular and revolutionary alliance*." (*El Gran Desafío*, p.26)

Armed with this approach the revolutionary organisations were able to bring together different forms and levels of radical consciousness into the melting pot of the anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist struggle: from the Marxist and communist current, the "liberation theology" supporters, the radical democratic forces to the revolt of the Indian masses determined to conquer their dignity.

f) Finally they developed an internationalist policy. They demonstrated a good understanding of the revolutionary process on the regional and continental scale. They have built up an *authentically revolutionary international diplomacy*, which functions not only in the battle against imperialist intervention but in extending mass solidarity worldwide. Their solidarity with the struggles of their brothers and sisters in Central America and the Caribbean has been consistently demonstrated.

These revolutionary organisations — like the FSLN or the FMLN — are in the front line of a far-reaching process of recomposition of the workers' movement and its vanguard internationally.<sup>2</sup> The development of such currents helps to increase the impact of our programme and perspectives internationally. To this effect the Fourth International and its sections must strive, in addition to solidarity work, to learn from the experiences of these comrades' struggle, to get into a dialogue with them and to let our positions be known on the various questions that are the subject of their discussions. The organised members of the Fourth International in these countries will be able to fully participate in the struggle led by these organisations and to explain the overall positions of our movement.

6) The Central American revolution therefore draws on and deepens the lessons of the Cuban revolution. There is an uninterrupted, permanent revolution, that advances from democratic and anti-imperialist tasks towards socialist ones. The destruction of the state apparatus and its repressive backbone (army, police, special units) and the establishment of a *revolutionary regime independent of the bourgeoisie* and imperialism appears as an obligatory condition for ensuring the implementation of democratic and anti-imperialist measures and to transform the national democratic revolution onto the path of the socialist revolution. The reactions of imperialism, its links with a bourgeoisie carrying out an increasing amount of economic sabotage and military and political attacks mean that the workers' and peasants' power, the dictatorship of the proletariat — based on the army, the militia, and the mass organisations — has to make more and more frequent inroads into capitalist property. The transition to socialist measures is the guarantee of a consolidation and extension of social gains and national independence.

### III. The Nicaraguan revolution<sup>3</sup>

1) The dual power situation opened up in April/May 1979 was qualitatively changed on 19th July. After the revolutionary overthrow of Somoza and the destruction of the National Guard (which overlapped practically completely with the Somozista state) the *effective centre of decision-making and the centralisation of popular power was in the hands of the FSLN*.

The essential part of the bourgeois state apparatus — its repressive forces — was destroyed, and a *revolutionary army* was formed whose origin, composition, leadership structure and training was a direct result of the revolutionary war waged by the FSLN. In Nicaragua, as in all revolutions, the state apparatus was not totally liquidated in one blow (administration, Central Bank, parts of the legal system). However its principal prop had been broken and another of a *different class character* took its place. The Sandinista army expressing the aspirations of the toiling masses held *the real power* in the country.

The bourgeoisie held — and continues to hold — substantial economic strongholds. Nevertheless, its traditional political weakness; its inability in the final period to get hold of, however small, a part of the leadership of the anti-Somoza struggle; the fact that it was obliged to exist in the shadow of Sandinism during the crucial phase of the revolution, all made it even less able to transpose the weight of its economic pressure onto the political level. It has organisations — above all the COSEP, some channels of expression (*La Prensa*, private radios), influential allies in the Catholic hierarchy and fragile political parties. It has support in a part of the state apparatus (administration, banks, justice), but this personnel is deprived of *strategic decision-making power*.

This intermixing of elements not only reproduces aspects already seen in other revolutionary processes (Cuba) but also is related to the relative brevity of the dual power situation properly speaking and to the political line followed by the FSLN (creation of the Government Junta of National Reconstruction — JGRN — in June 1979. Thus after 19th July there were still *some elements* of this situation of dual power. But such elements existed in the framework of a centralised power *in the hands of the FSLN representing the interests of the workers and peasants*. *There isn't any sort of more or less equal-handed share-out of the*

*antagonistic elements of power.* The beam of the balance was decisively tipped. Power passed into the hands of the workers.

The conquest of political power and control over the essential mechanisms of state power is the *beginning* of any proletarian revolution and gave the FSLN the *instruments* to defend the revolution, to deepen it, to broaden and consolidate its social base, to launch inroads into bourgeois property and to transform the direction of the economy in the interests of the class which had made the revolution. The pace of these transformations — particularly in a country where the productive forces are very weakly developed, which is in extreme dependence and also facing tremendous imperialist pressure — depends on a whole series of *national and international* political, social and economic factors.

The 19th July 1979 marked the *first steps of the dictatorship of the proletariat* based on an *alliance with the peasantry, of the construction of a workers state*, which has to be consolidated like any emerging workers state. In this sense there is a *transition* in the consolidation/building of a workers state. There is a contradiction — but it is compressed within the straightjacket of the new regime — between the socio-economic class content (weight of the private sector) of property relations and the class content of this emerging dictatorship of the proletariat. This contradiction expresses the difference that exists between the *the appropriation* of political power by the FSLN — ie the establishment of the dictatorship — and the *consolidation* of this dictatorship through the expropriation of bourgeois and imperialist property and the introduction of collectivised property relations. The dictatorship of the proletariat — where the proletariat disposes of an instrument, the state — opens up a transitional period in which there can be an opposition between the class character of political power and the class character of economic relations. Certainly in the *last instance* the economic foundations will be decisive in the consolidation of the workers state. In such a crossroads situation which constitutes a necessary moment in any revolution it is the orientation of all the measures taken which brings into harmony the *class* which made the revolution with its *social content*.

An examination of the measures and gains of the revolution over the five last years only confirms the strengthening of the new workers state, the “second free territory of the Americas.”<sup>4</sup>

2) After 19th July three problems have to be taken into account to evaluate the major choices made by the Sandinista leadership. In the first place the radical challenge to the status quo in Central America was bound to trigger off — in a more or less short lapse of time — imperialist aggression. To gain time, to look for (even fragile) support from various countries and to make use of inter-imperialist contradictions served to politically consolidate the revolution and to strengthen its military defence. Then under the impact of the Sandinista revolution the revolutionary upsurge in the Central American isthmus speeded up. The course of the Nicaraguan revolution was from that time linked to the advance of these revolutions and in turn to the counter-revolutionary actions of imperialism and its allies. Finally the FSLN has to deal with a large-scale economic disaster.

In this context it rapidly consolidated the main instruments of its power, the power of the hegemonic bloc of workers and peasants, of semi- and sub-proletarian layers.

a) The cornerstone of the new state is the *revolutionary army*. To build and professionalise the EPS (the Sandinista People's Army — the name speaks for itself) was logically a priority task. Its hard nucleus is formed of some 5,000 fighters, ex-members of the FSLN “regular forces”. A literacy and politicalisation campaign among the ranks was then organised. The entire command structure is in the hands of the Front. The Sandinista police was set up at the same time. A great part of its membership is made up of anti-Somoza working class fighters, thrown into unemployment because of war damage.

While the priority at the very beginning was given to the EPS, the FSLN leadership prepared for the creation of the militia. The Sandinista People's Militia (MPS) were formed in February 1980. Organised on a volunteer basis, dozens of thousands of workers and young people quickly enrolled.

Decisions concerning the Interior and Defence ministries were made within the combined national leadership of the FSLN made up of the “9 commandantes of the revolution”.

b) Political conflict arising in the first phase of the revolution showed where real *decision-making power* lay. Already in *December 1979*, the FSLN decided to reorganise the government — assigning itself the three decisive ministries: Defence (H. Ortega), Agriculture and Land Reform (J. Wheelock) and the plan (H. Ruiz).

From this time the COSEP (High Council of Private Enterprise) publicly concentrated its fire on one target “The FSLN must reduce its hold over the army, police and CDS (Sandinista Defence Committees)”.

In *March/April 1980* the JGRN (Government Junta of National Reconstruction) broke up on the question of the composition of the Council of State. A solid *majority* of seats were assigned to the mass organisations and parties thus expressing the majority opinion of the population. The departure of the two bourgeois representatives from the JGRN (V. Chamorro-Barrios and A. Robelo) was revealing in several respects. The Council of State was established without encountering opposition on 4th May — marking the anniversary of the pursuit of Sandino's anti-imperialist struggle despite the bourgeois betrayal (1927). Those who resigned were not immediately replaced. The bourgeois opposition dealt directly with the nine “commandantes”, as they knew who decided in the last analysis. And it was the latter who named the new junta — without concern for excessive formality. Two new bourgeois personalities (A. Cruz and R. Cordoba Rivas) were included in the Junta. The COSEP was disarmed and publicly ratified the presence of the new Junta members. Then the COSEP demanded a constituent assembly, the separation of the FSLN from the state, Junta members with a right to veto, control of the legal system and finances and formal guarantees concerning the maintenance of private property.

Conflicts around the formation of the Council of State, a consultative body, confirmed in two ways who was master of the situation. On the one hand the FSLN leadership showed it held the tiller of the state and was not making any, even slightly substantial, concessions to the bourgeoisie. On the other hand the replacement of two bourgeois representatives by two others demonstrated — in a way — that nothing had changed. Bourgeois representation was completely subordinated and did not have any more commanding levers in the centre of the new state apparatus with Cruz than it had with Robelo.

In *July 1980*, H. Ortega, answering COSEPs demand for elections announced that they would be held in 1985. Once again who decided? Better still, the Ministry of Defence declared that genuine democracy meant the reduction of social inequality and not just elections which “would be organised to bring peoples' power to perfection”.

*At the end of 1980* the bourgeoisie launched a new offensive on the now familiar theme: the FSLN has a monopoly of power. But this time it was combined with the first *armed attacks* on the revolution. The bourgeois opposition momentarily withdrew a part of its members from the Council of State, which was to be restructured a few months later by a JGRN now reduced to three members with Daniel Ortega as the co-ordinator!

The bourgeoisie and imperialism increasingly centred their opposition both on the economic terrain which obliged the JGRN to proclaim a *state of economic and social emergency* (September 1981) and on the military terrain which obliged the JGRN to impose a *state of emergency* (March 1982). The bourgeoisie's political manoeuvres were not dropped but these became simple complements to economic sabotage and to more or less open support for counter-revolutionary military actions organised from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica.

c) The basis of the new regime, in addition to the EPS and the militias, is founded on the development of mass organisations. Certain of these were a direct product of the revolutionary struggle (ATC, CDS).

They are represented by:

- The Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS) which are very important for the effort to unify *differentiated* layers of the population.
- The Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST) which for the

first time organised a majority of the workers on a national scale and set off (after a few disappointments) a prolonged effort of unifying the independent working class trade union movement (formation in February 1980 of the national inter-trade union commission).

- The Association of Rural Workers (ATC), catalyst of the land reform, of the defence of the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat and of keeping the *latifundistas* (landowners) under surveillance: an organic link exists between the CST and the ATC, materialising the workers' and peasants' alliance.
- The Nation Union of Farmers and Ranchers/Stockrearsers (UNAG) which aimed to organise this fraction of the small and middle peasantry, decisive for food production, for the development of the co-operatives and whose support is key to defeat the counter-revolution.
- The Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMLAE) which set a task of winning many rights that women had always been denied. Women played a considerable role in the revolution.
- The 19th July Sandinista Youth (JS 19), as a result of the impulse given by the *literacy campaign* and the formation of student production brigades (BEP) now organises a sector of the youth. The literacy campaign was a vast effort of political consciousness raising of the urban and especially rural masses.

Organisations with a trade union character are independent of the FSLN. Even though it exerts preponderant political influence, the Front does not impose its monopoly. They are open to anybody and everybody. Their growth is a feature of these years. These organisations have initiated a deepgoing transformation of mass consciousness and the organisation of power in society.

Their functions and objectives, which are not always achieved, can be summarised as follows:

- Encourage the people's active participation in all aspects of social life.
- To facilitate various sectors of the population coming together to defend their interests, to express their needs, raise their class consciousness and get involved in a dialogue (occasionally conflictual) with the FSLN or the ministries.
- To participate in the institutions of political power — shown by the weight of their representation in the Council of State, or their role in the formation of the municipal Juntas.
- To support economic reconstruction, co-operate in or take charge of educational campaigns, of public health, of the maintenance of local facilities and in this way to help to increase the living standards of the most impoverished layers of the population; they also educate people in management and administration through the planning and organisation of their activities and tasks and train their leaderships at all levels.
- To defend the revolution against misinformation campaigns and sabotage.
- To struggle against the "abuses of authority", arrogance, bureaucratisation — an inherent danger in such an underdeveloped situation — and for moral, civic attitudes in a society so deeply marked in the past by corruption of all sorts.
- They combine changing the social and economic situation by revolutionary practice with the "self-transformation of man" (Marx).

From the first months the FSLN used political power to *organise and broaden* the popular majority carrying forward the revolution and to initiate the transition to socialism.

d) The FSLN is the centre of gravity of real power, it has consolidated its hegemony and legitimacy by refusing to *a priori* introduce ruptures with bourgeois sectors included in the June 1979 coalition. It has brought about these breaks in connection with concrete tasks and choices flowing from the necessary advance of the revolution and favouring the advance of mass consciousness. Each time the bourgeoisie is caught off balance it is exposed as having broken with the "Sandinista project", and it appears in the eyes of the people as opposed to "anti-imperialist" national unity and to "national reconstruction".

The FSLN approach reveals an aptitude to grasp the articulation between the maturing of national anti-imperialist and

socialist consciousness. A process of clarification operated (and is operating) in which the FSLN imposed itself with increasing force, no longer just as the current which had overthrown the dictatorship but as the force which was leading the people to a "new society". The *concessions* made on one or another point to the bourgeoisie — which still has resources, especially due to the links with imperialism — must be resituated in this overall dynamic and in the framework of strengthening the position of working people — in order to be correctly evaluated.

The political *hegemony* of the FSLN rests on the authority it won during the struggle against imperialism and against the dictatorship, and its ability to include the main forces active in the country in the project of building the "new Nicaragua"; a project that demonstrates in practice its superiority over the ideas of other political and social forces.

The continuous conquest and reconquest of this hegemony presupposes *pluralism* particularly as the ideological bedrock of the Nicaraguan revolution rests in the political and cultural alliance between nationalism, the heritage of the socialist revolutions (particularly Cuba) and, also, a Christian current that was ready to take part in the most determined struggles for national and social independence.

3) The "mixed economy", the way the FSLN characterise the *economic structure* in Nicaragua cannot be considered without taking into account the challenging of imperialist domination and the nature of the present regime. The evolution of such a situation must be looked at.

The fact is, the control of the state that was built after July 1979 has imparted its own imprint on the "mixed character" of the economy as a result of its having the means and the social base needed to increase its inroads into private property and to expand the areas already under its control (foreign exchange, distribution, credit, etc.). It acts as a lever for economic change, as a permanent instrument of coercion. Obviously, this has not eliminated the *sharp contradictions* between the various sectors of the economy, between the social and economic goals of the revolution and the pressure of the world market as well as the reproduction mechanisms of a private sector that is still prevalent in the strategic agro-export sector. But the present regime can resolve these contradictions on the basis of the priorities dictated by the defence of the revolution. The "extra-economic" character of the state becomes an economic force.

a) During all this phase the economic policy choices made by the FSLN cannot be isolated either from the state of the economy in 1979, or from international factors, or from the critical balance sheet it had drawn from the first steps of the transition made by the Castroist leadership in Cuba.

Some of the measures of the economic situation should be recalled:

- The heritage left by the Somozista regime and the civil war: 50,000 dead and about 100,000 wounded, considerable destruction of industry and disorganisation of two agricultural cycles with repercussions on foods supplies and exports; GDP per capita had declined to levels of 17 years before; a massive foreign debt, a near-total lack of foreign currencies and a high inflation; a total budget imbalance accompanied with a massive "social deficit" (illiteracy, health and housing).
- A poorly developed capitalist economy (much less developed than Cuba in 1959), therefore with a small, recently formed, urban and rural proletariat, a very thin layer of technical cadres (400 all told for agriculture!).
- Dependence on agro-exports for earning foreign income, while the latter is extremely sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations and demand on a crisis-ridden world market; development of the agro-export sector distorts the "balance" of imports (fertilizer, chemical products, machinery and spare parts) in addition to the traditional foodstuff deficit.
- There was the ever-present threat of economic sanctions and even of a blockade.

b) The new regime, confronted with such a difficult situation, swiftly moved to take control of four important sectors of the economy: the property of Somoza and his allies — which provided the backbone of the Public Property Sector (APP); the finan-

cial system and insurance; foreign trade (gradually nationalised up to 70 per cent of exports); all natural resources.

The FSLN say there are a series of considerations that argue in favour of not immediately taking over the agro-export sector:

- The fragility, the lack of cohesion of the bourgeoisie allowed a certain margin of manoeuvre and facilitated a "productive alliance" — in exchange for which there is nothing other than the implicit hope — and possibility — for bourgeois sectors to profit from their economic strongholds in the new "trench warfare".
- The subsidiary benefits this alliance aimed for was the immediate granting of vital credits and a postponement of the imperialist economic stranglehold. About 1.5 billion dollars were rapidly allocated under favourable conditions. For three years there was no evident enthusiasm from the "socialist camp" — with the decisive exception of Cuba — to provide massive aid. Besides, this aid only relatively corresponds with immediate needs and diversifying aid and trade is a positive political element in the battle against Washington's warmongering.
- The APP requires a lot of complicated organisation both nationally and locally to avoid an explosion of extra costs that are inevitable in such a transition. There is an extreme tension between this priority and all the other priorities flowing more strictly from the reconstruction process. For the APP to generate a significant surplus a relatively efficient administrative ability must develop and facilitate the later take-over of new agricultural or manufacturing companies. But the FSLN has only won a small number of cadres to its perspectives and the level of preparation of the workers in this field is very low.
- Weak socialisation of the productive forces (weight of small commodity production, of artisan production, of small and middle peasantry) makes central planning a problem; its field of application is due to extend rapidly. Also there is a limited correspondence between the structure of demand resulting from the change in the distribution of income and what the APP can offer. Planning also requires its transition.

The FSLN therefore opted for a combination between direct control over a minority APP and indirect control (foreign trade, credit, production contracts, fixing prices and wages, etc.) over the private sector (AP), with all the *limits* inherent in the use of these types of mechanisms in a context of class confrontation. *Planning* the APP with regionalisation in a second phase was introduced with great difficulties. Annual plans concerning major objectives and tasks were decided on.

The FSLN has clearly emphasised its medium-term objective is to have the state and co-operative-owned sectors become the majority and preponderant sector of the economy.

4) In response to the demands of the masses and the bourgeoisie's sabotage the Sandinistas were to modify the rules of the game to the disadvantage of the former ruling classes.

a) In the second quarter of 1980 the legislation against decapitalisation (capital flight, destruction of the means of production and raw materials, hoarding) made it possible to sanction these *illegal acts* by the total or partial confiscation of land or plants. The ATC and the CST played a significant role in the implementation of this division between those "who respond to the needs of reconstruction" and "those who sabotage" — without a political bonus being given to the former. The control of currency exchange steadily increased and the overall system was established in May 1983.

b) The *Land Reform*, a key element in the economic upheavals, after its anti-Somozista stage, was extended first of all by expropriating the land occupied by poor peasants during the first months of the revolution and by lowering the rent for land. A new stage began with the transfer of land left fallow, or badly cultivated by the big landowners, to the landless peasants, the small poor peasantry and occasionally to the state farms. It was a direct attack on *latifundist* property.

At this stage, the emphasis was placed on the *voluntary formation of production and services* (CSS and CAS) co-operatives. They are more apt to respond to the burning problem of unemployment than the APP in the short and medium term.

They made it possible to associate with the revolution this high proportion of small and semi-proletarian peasants who are of strategic importance for the production of foodstuffs.

A third stage of the agrarian reform opened at the start of 1984. This consisted of massive granting of property rights to small peasants who worked the land without having ownership titles, particularly in the "agricultural frontier" zone. There was an answer in this to the efforts of the armed bands of counter-revolutionaries to try and find a base of support among the peasants.

Each stage of the agrarian reform is closely linked to a systematic effort to organise the peasant movement.

For its part, the state guarantees with difficulty the provision of a certain number of consumer goods and services. It buys a part of their production at fixed guaranteed prices. In this way it has control of about 40 per cent of the distribution of basic foodstuffs (by volume), (ENABAS). A series of important agricultural and agro-industrial projects have got underway.

Agriculture has undergone both a real economic reactivation and a partial transformation of social relations, the difficult two-fold challenge every radical land reform must face.

The weight of the big landowner compared to the state and co-operative sector has *diminished*. In July 1979 the big landowners (more than 500 manzanas) controlled 36.1 per cent of cultivable land; in July 1984 they controlled 11 per cent. In the private sector (AP) the increase in associative forms of production (co-operatives) has led to a deepgoing *differentiation*, undermining the base of the reactionary UPANIC (Professional Union of Nicaraguan Farmers). In 1984, 44,000 families benefited from the Land Reform, 25,000 of whom now produce in co-operatives. The CAS control 8.2 per cent of cultivable land; the CSS 10.7 per cent and the APP 18.3 per cent.

The Land Reform is an instrument in the hands of the motor forces of the revolution. Brutal super-exploitation has been ended not only in the state sector but also in the private sector where the ATC can make its force felt. A real cataclysm is sweeping the Nicaraguan countryside — apart from anything else with the progress of the co-operatives — an intensive transformation of the political and cultural level of the peasant masses is taking place.

c) Alongside all these gains are the large steps forward made in the fields of education, health, housing, social services which are all solid bases for future development.

5) A series of difficulties and tensions, produced by a great number of external constraints, by the structure of a dependent agro-exporting economy and specific to the transition, were to forcefully emerge.

The slow pace of industrial recovery — in the nationalised and private sector — was worse than government forecasts (lack of spare parts, pernicious effects of long term decapitalisation, management difficulties, restriction of outlets on the Central American market, a more or less open blockade by imperialism).

The inflationist pressure was initially held back by the means of a certain adjustment between a very limited supply and increased demand (the reduction in unemployment increases the volume of salaries even when wages are frozen). It is impossible to carry out a policy of increasing wages in Nicaraguan economic conditions. But the social and political need to increase the living standards ("social wage") of the underprivileged layers weighs on the budget and is another expense on top of the costs of recapitalisation and reconstruction.

Banking on the agro-export private sector to earn *net* export revenue brings in itself contradictions in relation to the social objectives of the transition. Restructuring production — both agro-export and basic foodstuffs — and responding to the most urgent needs of the masses led to the necessity of external finances. It was therefore indispensable to control export income and especially its allocation between the agricultural export and non-export sector otherwise the effort of accumulation would be placed on the backs of the small peasantry or paid for by further debt, which has greatly increased, particularly when compared with the income of foreign currency produced by exports. But the state only owns a limited part of this sector.

The most precarious equilibrium was aimed at so that the incentives offered to the agro-export sector did not come into too

open conflict with a social redistribution of income.

A growing number of capitalists, among others those of average importance, invested little. There is a diversion of capital to the commercial sector where investment is easily recuperated. The flight of capital continues and the over-valuation of the cordoba in relation to the dollar requires excessive coverage of current change operations.

The bulk of state funds (approximately 40 per cent) allocated to agriculture goes to the big private sector producers. Most come under the heading "short term loans" which reflects a limited capitalist effort of modernisation. The accumulation effort rests on the shoulders of the state with a big proportion connected with construction (development projects and defence). Taking this into account along with the other points (including subsidies for a number of consumer goods) opens wide the trap of the foreign debt and of financing the budget deficit (8 per cent of GDP in 1980, 23.3 per cent in 1983) by printing money with the consequent inflationist pressure.

Eliminating the rule of the old ruling class caused a decline in agricultural productivity. The land redistribution, the lowering of rents and defence needs considerably reduced the supply of labour for seasonal crops. Volunteer work partially remedied this but with negative effects on productivity. Migration to the towns continues and increases the contradiction between urban under-employment (non-registered/undeclared sector in Managua) and the lack of agricultural labour and the difficulty of channelling this work force into the productive sectors.

Direct access to the market by a large number of foodstuff producers opens up a wide field for market forces both in production and distribution (reduction of area seeded, sales on the black market) and work organisation.

The credit policy for small and medium-sized peasants is not a solution for those who are too poor to get into debt or who do not have land, which explained the *speeding up of land distribution from 1982/3*. There was then the risk that the debt would become a barrier between the state and a sector of the peasantry — which explains why the peasant debt was restructured in 1983. Production co-operatives receive priority aid. The service co-operatives — more widespread — cannot avoid a certain social differentiation but this cannot result in acquisition of land.

The growth of the APP and the co-operative sector is stronger than that of the AP. But the co-ordination between the APP and the co-operative sector is still just a question of projects for the moment while effective planning of the APP is difficult to achieve. There is a very loose articulation between the annual plan, external resources and the budget. The private sector takes advantage of the breach left open in the control over foreign trade to carry out speculative operations. The shrinking of private investment has effects on employment which is partly counter-balanced by the land distribution and defence mobilisation. The tension between accumulation and consumption is worsening. Spending power has declined even for popular layers of the population. Nevertheless there has been an improvement in living standards of the most underprivileged sectors and a general improvement in social services.

Since the beginning of 1983 the economy has been put on a *state of war basis*. The counter-revolution drains an important part of resources to defence needs (25 per cent of the budget in 1984). In 1983 material damage was equal to 20 per cent of overall investment. Whole agricultural zones are threatened and the co-operatives are the prime targets of the counter-revolution.

The *financial boycott* has been tightened up although in 1983 loans were still steadily flowing in. The contribution of the "socialist countries" or countries like Algeria, Libya, or Iran has increased. However, that has not compensated for the drying up of multilateral and bilateral loans, and aid is far from meeting Nicaragua's needs. Development projects have been disrupted. The *value* of export revenue has stagnated, the trade balance is very negative and interest payments on the debts are a heavy burden.

The food deficit, despite massive efforts, grew. Shortage of certain basic products appeared. That is explained by the lack of foreign exchange (imports), the increase in popular consumption of basic products and the difficulties the state has to control a greater part of food production and distribution.

FSLN economic policy hangs on a knife edge. The heritage of the past, imperialist aggression and social polarization totally disrupted the accumulation process. The state has become the only *dynamic* centre for distribution. This explains, along with the active participation of the people and despite all the obstacles, the 1983 economic results. But this investment effort was accomplished at the cost of a considerable budget deficit and was supported by foreign aid which is now declining. The law of value and the market, given the minority role of the state and co-operative sector comes into even sharper contradiction with the first attempts at planning.

The limitations of this initial economic strategy became greater and greater. *A war economy was installed*. Defence and self-sufficiency in food were prioritised. Rationing was introduced for various products. Subsidies for basic goods — except for milk and sugar — were cut by half. The state took over *distribution* for six essential products (June 1984). Measures were adopted *confiscating* the speculators' property and goods. A strict law in defence of consumers was adopted at the same time to back up the central fixing of the prices of basic goods and to "share out shortages on an equal basis".

In such a situation the main strength of the FSLN resides in its capacity to mobilise the masses, to consolidate their organisations and their collaboration in managing the APP; their anticipation in extending the co-operative sector; their control over distribution; their trade union presence in the private sector (control/management).

The *war* situation places strict limits on the extent to which economic policy can move. The reorganisation of the economy has to be carried out in accordance with the exigencies of defence of the revolution — military, social and political — against not only the war waged by the counter-revolutionaries but also the threat of a massive imperialist intervention. This military pressure comes on top of the structural weaknesses inherited from the past. There is a narrow path between, on the one hand, measures that would require increased control over the share-out of the surplus (planning) such as a central allocation of a portion of the agro-export income (with the difficulties that exist in carrying through such a project) and the exigencies of defence needs (with the austerity measures that flow from that). It is in this context of hard confrontations between the revolution and counter-revolution — in one of the most difficult geo-strategic positions — that the toiling masses and the FSLN face the historic challenge of *consolidating the workers state*.

6) The goal of imperialism is still the overthrow of the Sandinista regime. At the moment its attacks aim to precipitate Nicaragua into a crisis which would be without solution and turn a vacillating sector of the population against the revolutionary government.

a) The *contras* infiltrate in small groups in many regions of the country. However, they have been unable to take over any town even of minor importance and install permanent control over an area paving the way for the declaration of a provisional government which would then call for the aid of the US army and its regional allies. The revolutionary forces have hit them extremely hard. The attempt to use the frictions between the FSLN and the Miskito population in a strategic region (the Atlantic coast, Zelaya) had not brought imperialism the expected results. However, the price paid by the FSLN has been high. Time was needed to lessen the effects of errors in dealing with ethnic, cultural and historical problems of this type. The FSLN is evolving towards a position that includes the right of *autonomy* for the Atlantic Coast communities.

Imperialist and reactionary efforts to unleash a *civil war* in Nicaragua as a pretext for intervention have floundered up to now.

b) The *bourgeois opposition* has presented itself as the champion of pluralism and elections — in fact it was banking on them being annulled. The announcement of the elections for the 4th November 1984 caught it unprepared. The opposition vacillated continuously between a boycott (advocated by COSEP from the outset) and participation. It then developed a tactic of conditional participation. The demands of the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordination (CDN) — bringing together the Social

Christian Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Constitutional Liberal Party — were revealing insofar as they pointed to a desire to eradicate the memory of July 1979 (*de facto* suppression of the EPS; elimination of the obligatory military service; reorganisation of relations between the FSLN and the state; annulment of the law on capitalisation; supervision of the elections by the Organisations of American States, as a recourse to imperialist mediation).

The CDN candidate, Arturo Cruz, blatantly supported by Washington, tried to force a “national dialogue with the armed opposition”. This “dialogue” was presented as the precondition for holding “really free elections”. The whole of bourgeois and imperialist strategy was to *make the elections illegitimate — nationally and internationally — and to give recognition to the contras*.

The FSLN defeated this policy through a firm rejection of any “national dialogue” with the *contras* and a number of overtures towards the opposition, wherein existed several contradictions. The massive registration on the voters’ list strengthened the position of the Sandinistas and indicated their capacity to bring out an “anti-imperialist consensus” among broad sectors of the population, beyond their direct social base.

The whole policy of the bourgeoisie betrayed their social weakness after five years of the revolution. The former ruling classes could no longer combat the revolution without *directly* joining the camp of the imperialists and their mercenaries.

The *official church* is the most organised opposition force. It has a presence among the people and has a strong national and international propaganda apparatus. It seeks confrontation with the Sandinistas. It was the Bishops’ Conference, which, in April 1984, proposed “a dialogue with all sectors, including Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the government”. But this church is *divided on class lines*. The FSLN recognises Christianity as a constituent element of the revolution and was able to link up with the “Christian communities at the base” rooted among the most underprivileged. “God’s ministers are ministers of the Revolution.” The FSLN takes on the reactionary hierarchy on its own terrain.

7) The November 1984 elections were the first free elections in Nicaraguan history where politics previously amounted to a regulated and limited struggle between two bourgeois factions.

a) *The law on the political parties* adopted in August 1983 in the framework of a thoroughgoing reworking of the legal system, allows the existence of all political parties, both bourgeois and working class, “constituted to contend for political power with the aim of carrying out a political programme responding to the needs of the country’s national and social development”. The very democratic March 1984 electoral law lays down that the exercise of universal suffrage, for all persons over 16, is an “inalienable right (of all people) to build a new society and its own future without external interference of any kind”. It provides for the election of an executive with a six year term of office (president and vice-president elected by relative majority) and a parliament (an assembly elected by proportional representation) having in an initial period the function of a constituent assembly. This law correctly decrees the removal of the right to vote and to stand for election for ex-National Guard officers and from all those involved in military and sabotage actions against the revolution.

The November 1984 elections clearly indicate that the FSLN is far from reducing “mass democracy” to the question of elections. But they do not exclude them from their conception of democracy. The FSLN gave priority to the social aspects of democracy and the role of the mass organisations. In fact, these elections were organised *after* a certain consolidation of the new regime that issued from the July 1979 victory and after a first massive effort in the realm of education, health, etc.

The bourgeoisie — in the tradition of elections under Somoza where terror, poverty, illiteracy and clientelism emptied the formal right to vote of all content — demanded elections rapidly after July 1979. It was more hesitant in 1984!

But, by assuring democratic elections, the FSLN showed that it was also ready to put the *majority support* for the revolution to the test on the terrain that is not necessarily the most favourable

for it: that of universal, secret suffrage. It passed the test in a decisive fashion. Not only was there 85 per cent participation in the elections — despite the war situation in many regions — but the political hegemony of the FSLN was confirmed, including on this level.

By introducing elections into the mechanisms institutionalising the new regime, by making official an opposition with some 30 per cent of the votes, the FSLN has chosen to face up to a series of problems that are relatively new in the history of the transition to socialism. This is more than a challenge to imperialism. The FSLN is not only keeping open a broad space for political debate but it is ensuring a legal existence to the opposition parties and trade unions, while taking strict measures of self-defence against those who are in practice sabotaging the revolution.

The FSLN used these elections as a second political literacy campaign, taking into account what would be the meaning of these elections — the first free elections in the country. This was an opportunity for *political pedagogy* for the mass organisations, for the thousands of members and sympathisers of the FSLN. As Article 1 of the electoral law states: “The Sandinista people’s revolution insitutionalises the Nicaraguan people’s right to elect its supreme authorities”. In this way the FSLN demonstrated the irreversible character of the gains of July 1979. But, at the same time, by linking elections to the functioning of the institutions, it has introduced a sort of permanent constraint, through the possible of vote of sanctions, against bureaucratic deformation, the loss of relations with the masses, etc.

During the elections, the FSLN was also to publicly draw out the lessons of the internal tragedy of the revolution in *Grenada*. On this occasion it emphasised three aspects: the necessity to maintain a democratic debate in front of the masses; the need to ensure their direct participation in the process; the imperative need to arm them.

The orientation of the FSLN and the place of the mass organisations in the former Council of State, leaves open the possibility that, in the framework of the constitutional norms that will be established by the new assembly, a new element will be added to the institutionalisation of the revolutionary process: the *direct representation* of these organisations, their real participation, at the local, regional and national level, in the working out of and the application of the major social economic decisions. The question of the *respective competences* of such a body of direct representation and of the legislature is therefore likely to be posed in the future.

In these conditions the question of building the *Sandinista revolutionary party* is posed. Rather broad political education has been carried out. Cadres develop through the activities of the JS 19, the ATC, the CST, etc. But building the party as such still has to be done. The leadership of the revolutionary process rests a lot on the authority of the collective leadership of the FSLN. The 9 “commandantes”. The delay in building the party is certainly explained by the lack of cadres, their being absorbed in the defence and reconstruction effort and by the lack of functioning as a party. But this delay does involve some risks: in terms of ensuring internal democracy of the FSLN (beyond the Sandinista Assembly — a consultative body of 72 members), of counter-balancing the deformations arising from a superimposition of the state apparatus and the FSLN or finally of leading mass political struggle in the framework of party pluralism.

b) The major advantage of the FSLN, in this period of extreme tension, remains the maximum political popular participation in the revolutionary process. The strengthening of the mass organisations has been a feature of the last five years.

The FSLN has had important subjective and objective difficulties at the level of the organisation and participation of workers in management — both in industry and in agriculture. In the agrarian sector the “reactivation assemblies” rather rapidly resulted in a dead end. Since 1981 they have been replaced, in the land reform farms, by “consultative councils”. The latter have only partially met the need for an increased integration of producers in management. In the industrial public sector, after an experience of “reactivation assemblies”, various structures have been set up (production committees etc) to try and more precisely

define the forms of participation of producers in the leadership of workplaces and economic sectors. In the AP the CST has given an impetus to actions of control against economic sabotage and in favour of more effective management. The ban on the right to strike was lifted in 1984.

Shortages and speculation also reveal the limits and at the same time the potential of the CDS. Two crucial questions come out of the balance sheets drawn of the CDS: the first, the need to ensure a more effective and democratic functioning of the CDS (elections and right of recall) so as to fight head on the inertia and bureaucratic tendencies inherent in such a situation of crisis and shortages; the second, to use the social economic problems in order to stimulate a "control from below" of the functioning of the state apparatus. The most immediate needs of defence could reinforce rigid administrative tendencies and restrict the autonomy of certain mass organisations. The FSLN shows it is really conscious of these problems.

*Defence is the priority.* The mass organisations directly participate in the defence effort. In the war zones, *intensive political work* is directed towards the peasantry so as to avoid reducing the battle against the mercenary forces to just a military one.

Initially the patriotic military service brought out into the open those upholders of "national independence" who refused to serve the cause of anti-imperialist combat. It gives military training to broad layers of young people. Thanks to the MPS and military service the EPS is not obliged to disperse itself which would facilitate a brutal offensive from imperialism in a strategic zone. The FSLN made great efforts to attenuate the consequences of this defence effort (pensions to the families of the victims, guaranteeing the maintenance of a person's job after service, compensation to peasants whose crops or land are damaged...)

c) The FSLN is vigorously stepping up its *diplomatic* initiatives. The axis of all the FSLN's diplomacy is based on the right to self determination of the peoples of the region and the refusal of all interferences in the internal affairs of Central America and on the liquidation of the foreign military bases. This can profit only the revolutionary forces and is fundamental against the plans of Washington.

The JGRN has proposed bilateral treaties with the United States, Honduras, and El Salvador. Such proposals aim to unmask imperialist plots and the subordination of the present regimes to the United States' objectives. The JGRN's diplomatic initiatives are a response to the manoeuvres of Washington which occasionally plays the negotiations card for domestic consumption in the United States, to shore up the counter-revolutionaries' political operations and to avoid over-centrifugal tendencies inside the Latin American states since their seal of approval is useful for its policy of aggression.

In 1982-83, the FSLN correctly gave its support to Contadora initiatives and to its declared aim of finding a "peaceful solution for the region". Nevertheless, it has not failed to express its disagreement with a series of points proposed by the Contadora and its frontal opposition to all proposals implying any type of infringement of Nicaraguan sovereignty or weakening of the revolution (military defence).

It has always expressed doubts on the effectiveness of Contadora given imperialist pressure on client-states deep in financial debt — not to speak of the specific interests of the Latin American bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, an equals sign should not be placed between the projects of American imperialism and the aims of certain Latin American bourgeoisies. Open conflicts of interests exist and explain the different pressures put on members of the Contadora by the United States, with the aim of modifying or defeating certain of their proposals. When the Nicaraguans signed the proposed agreement in September 1984 — which reaffirmed the right to self-determination, a ban on economic embargos, opposition to all foreign intervention — the United States stepped up its efforts to bring the project to naught. Imperialism's efforts were directed towards a surrender by the FSLN — under cover of the "national dialogue" — through cancellation of the November 1984 elections, new elections under "surveillance", and a legitimisation of the *contras*. All that would have opened the way for an im-

perialist intervention in the guise of "defending democracy". During this period the technical preparations for a massive intervention were advancing.

Present developments reveal the open crisis of the initial Contadora project, the incapacity of most of its members to really develop a position independent of imperialism and even, with only Mexico showing some opposition, their gradual falling into line with the US.

The FSLN has striven to maintain links with social democracy and take advantage of all the contradictions in the imperialist camp. Its relations with an important sector of social democracy are getting more tense to the extent that the latter is adapting more openly to imperialist policy.

In the context of the worsening confrontation in the region Nicaragua maintains privileged links with Cuba, which has given decisive aid to the Nicaragua people. Nicaragua is developing the option of strategic relations with the Soviet Union — which is presently supplying relatively large material aid — in the framework of a declared policy of "non-alignment". At the same time, in order to fulfil its needs and loosen the noose tightened by the United States, Nicaragua is also trying for an increased diversification of its economic changes and making the "overtures" necessary towards European and Latin American countries.

#### IV. The Salvadorean revolution

1) In El Salvador a revolutionary upsurge has developed since 1979 which has involved workers, peasants, popular and student struggles, general strikes, semi-insurrections, local insurrections, a guerrilla war, and a civil war. This uprising has been on a scale unprecedented in the history of the region, despite the growing intervention of the United States.

The brutal extension of capitalist relations of production, the extreme concentration of landed property, combined with a high demographic intensity gave birth to a significant rural semi-proletariat and proletariat in El Salvador. Alongside a still very small working class and impoverished artisans it was the motor force of the *1932 proletarian insurrection*, which was drowned in blood. The struggles that have developed from the end of the 1970s have inherited this mass hatred of the oligarchy's brutality.

Industry developed especially from the 1960s under the impact of the Central American Common Market. Fertile land became more and more concentrated in the hands of a few families. Then the oligarchy began to differentiate its investments on the basis of money earned from its land. It went into agro-industry, import-export trade, finance, and even industry. Imperialist capital was part of this development which thus gave birth to a few new bourgeois sectors.

The working class emerged strengthened from these transformations. In 1967, a broad general strike marked a first turn in struggles around immediate economic demands.

The rural semi-proletariat and proletariat underwent a terrible *process of impoverishment*. More and more peasants had *no land and no work* (in 1975, 41 per cent of peasant families had no land) or became peddlers, sub-proletarians in the towns.

In 1969 the "Football War" between El Salvador and Honduras — which aimed to protect its domestic market — stimulated the crisis of the MCCA (the Central American Common Market). It had repercussions for the Salvadorean oligarchical system. Tens of thousands of Salvadorean peasant emigrants were brutally evicted from Honduras. The Salvadorean ruling class was consequently not just denied an outlet onto a bigger market but also had this "demographic safety valve" blocked.

These new refugees, who occasionally had gone through an experience of trade union struggles in Honduras plantations, organised demonstrations in support of their demands. This was the first time, since 1932, that peasants had *invaded* the towns.

The "Football War" also provoked a political crisis in the ranks of the left, particularly in the Salvadorean Communist Party (PCS) which had politically supported the government in the military conflict. A *turn in the situation* began to emerge at the very beginning of the 1970s.

2) From 1970 to 1979 a series of ruptures took place which shaped political parameters for the whole decade: the formation of the politico-military organisations, the creation of the mass peoples organisations, a radicalisation in the Christian community, and the dead end of the electoral "road" was confirmed.

a) In April 1970, a sector of the PCS leadership, linked to the trade union movement, broke with the party to set up a politico-military organisation: the *Farabundo Martí People's Liberation Forces* (FPL). Coming out of the radicalised Christian layers, the *Revolutionary Army of the People* (ERP) was also formed in 1970. The first armed actions of these two organisations were carried out in 1972.

So, compared to Nicaragua or Guatemala, the organisations involved in the armed struggle were formed rather late. Certainly they had to respond to the very particular conditions of the country's social structure and geography (small size, population density, the great number of roads and communications, non-existence of "protective mountains") and the 1932 "trauma". In this period the political military thinking of the FPL was the most significant. Its leadership came out of a rich trade union tradition. It understood the need to equip the violence of the fiercely repressed masses with new instruments of struggle. One formulation summed up its ideas: "our mountain is the people." The urban guerrilla experience also stimulated its reflection. Its conception of the armed struggle in the strict sense of the term was the culmination of this whole development of its thinking. It was to link together: the *militia* (mass instruments of self-defence in the neighbourhoods, workplaces and in preparation for insurrection), the *guerrilla forces* (a limited force fighting in a fixed zone) and on a higher level, the *revolutionary army*.

In its early years the ERP was strongly marked by militarist and adventurist positions based on a characterisation of the situation as being revolutionary since 1972. This line cut it off from sectors of the masses and was to be an important element of the 1974 split which resulted in the formation of the *Armed Forces of National Resistance* (FARN-RN). From 1975-6 on the ERP began to adjust its line.

In 1979, despite a series of differences which were left in the background or covered over by ambiguous formulations, a convergence began to develop between the revolutionary organisations around such questions as: self-defence, the guerrilla struggle, the army and the need to link together people's revolutionary war and perspectives of a mass insurrection with the aim of smashing the army and the repressive apparatus. All the organisations emphasised the necessity of having a perspective of taking political power.

b) *The mass revolutionary people's organisations* appeared in the middle of the 1970s. This showed the need for the masses, affected by a brutal fall in living standards, to find new instruments, new means to stand up to the repression, to overcome a whole battery of legal constraints on the right to strike. Finally these people's organisations sanctioned the failure of the PCS methods in relation to the militancy of the proletariat in the recently formed industries.

*The People's United Action Front* (FAPU) was formed in 1974; the *Revolutionary People's Bloc* in 1975 as a result of a split in FAPU and the *February 28th People's League* (LP 28) in 1977. These organisations were composed of social sectoral groupings, (workers, peasants, shantytown dwellers, teachers, students and school students, peddlers) that existed prior to their formation or which were later built through the revolutionary mass organisation. Each revolutionary people's organisation was linked to a politico-military organization: the BPR to the FPL, the FAPU to the FARN and the LP 28 to the ERP.

Women play an historically unprecedented role in the politico-military organisations and in the mass organisations, including at a leadership level. This reflects the big changes that took place in the university and teaching sectors but also the role of women in the organisation of the struggle against repression in the countryside and the neighbourhoods.

From 1977 to 1979 workers' and peasants' struggles grew in number. The form these mobilisations took was a break with the past: strikes with occupation and self-defence, occupations of the big farms, solidarity strikes, demonstrations in support of struggles, occupations of churches and embassies, mass demonstra-

tions with self-defence and armed actions. These struggles won a certain number of their demands despite the attempts to stifle them and the legalisation of brutal repression.

The revolutionary people's organisations took away the control of the trade union movement from the PCS — except in the building trade union — and brought about a radical reorientation, above all in the United Confederation of Salvadorean Workers (CUTS). State-tied trade unionism declined dramatically and there was impressive progress of the people's organisations in the peasant movement where the PCS was practically absent. By 1978 the politico-military organisations and the mass people's organisations had won hegemony over most of the mass movement. A revolutionary situation was maturing.

C) A "conversion" had taken place in the church which had repercussions particularly in the university and in the countryside. The Christian "base communities" raised the consciousness of a terribly oppressed and exploited peasantry, facilitated the work of revolutionary militants, often from a Christian background, and legitimised their actions in the eyes of the masses.

d) The 1972 elections (presidential), the 1974 elections (local and legislative) and the 1977 elections (presidential) degenerated into open farce. Politics was seen to equal repression.

Reformist political projects, based on the electoral road and concretised in the *National Opposition Union* (UNO) composed of the Christian Democrats, the *Revolutionary National Movement* (MNR) claiming Social Democratic affiliations and the *National Democratic Union* (UDN) linked to the PCS, were seriously floundering. The oligarchy and the key sectors of the army were not ready to make the least concessions to demands for political reform and even less for land reform. This was the sort of explosive situation in which the Nicaraguan revolution erupted in 1979.

3) There was a *rapid speeding up* of the revolutionary upsurge from October 1979 to the middle of 1980.

a) On 15th October 1979, encouraged by imperialism, a sector of the army made a preventative coup d'état. It wanted to hold off the rise of the mass movement and cut the ground from under the feet of the revolutionary organisations. While *real power* remained in the hands of the military, the Junta doled out an apparent power to "honest technicians" or to the PDC or MNR. The PCS-UDN joined this government. The Junta made efforts to open a dialogue with the *Foro Popular* (people's forum — made up of the PDC, the MNR, the UDN and trade unions) in order to try and occupy the political terrain and to marginalise the popular and revolutionary organisations. A reform programme, rather sweeping on paper, was announced.

October 1979 was a test for the revolutionary organisations. By upsetting this reformist political trap they kept alive revolutionary perspectives. The FPL denounced the coup d'état as "aiming to divert the masses into an electoral process". The LP 28 immediately left the *Foro Popular* and the ERP characterised the coup as a "new manoeuvre from imperialism and the oligarchy". The FARN-FAPU hesitated a little and emphasised the internal contradictions of the Junta. Then it attacked the reformist patching up operation. If the revolutionary organisations had supported or participated in the Junta they would have disoriented the masses and facilitated things for imperialist policy. Revolutionaries in El Salvador, not only denounced the reformist dead end, but launched semi-insurrectional military actions and *organised demonstrations in support of the masses' demands*. The real substance of the Junta's programme was exposed by the combination of these initiatives and the social-economic struggle — instead of the promised reforms the masses were given massacres.

The first Junta from October 1979, which was supported by the Socialist International and the Christian Democratic World Union, and then the second junta from January to March 1980, rapidly came apart at the seams. The independent "technocrats", the MNR, the PCS and then DC representatives left the ship. From March 1980 Duarte's PDC was left alone in the junta with the armed forces but there was no doubt who took the decisions in this junta.

b) *A revolutionary crisis* was opened in the *first quarter of 1980* and the constituent elements for a situation of dual power began to come together. *On one side* the crisis of bourgeois leadership deepened. The radical opposition of oligarchic corporatist organisations to the reform policy of the junta and against the Christian Democrats' role, eroded the government's power. Conflicts in the army, relaying the oligarchy's manoeuvres, led to aborted coup d'états. The PDC fractured. The decreed reforms did not progress at all and resulted in sharpening the intra-bourgeois conflicts. The Junta's action was not much more than generalised repression: state of emergency (March), military occupation of the university and militarisation of the public services (August), state intervention in the trade unions and massacres. The paramilitary organisations carried out daily terrorist actions against even Christian Democrats. All this contributed to the international political isolation of the Junta.

*On the other side*, the revolutionary organisations knew how to exploit even the limited space opened up immediately after October 1979. They asserted their political presence. The people's organisations recruited and built up their implantation. They held the centre of the political scene, relegating the democratic, reformist opposition forces to a secondary role. Mass struggles, despite the massacres, became extremely powerful and reached a high point during the second quarter of 1980. On 17th March a general strike called by the revolutionary people's organisations paralysed 70 per cent of the country's economic activity. After the assassination of Archbishop of San Salvador, Mgr. Romero (on 24 March), an eight-day strike was called. On 24 June a *political general strike* paralysed nearly the whole country. It posed *de facto* the question of power. The 13-14th August general strike was seen as a *turning point*. It combined aspects of a general strike with military actions and an insurrectional dynamic in the outer neighbourhoods of the capital. However, participation in the strike was more limited than in June. Mass terrorism, militarisation of society, and the counter-offensive of the army, where the most extreme right wing was cracking the whip, did have an influence on the population. In *November 1980*, the assassination of the official representatives of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) by the paramilitary forces symbolised the end of this phase of the revolution.

c) from February 1980, the revolutionary camp began to organise united political structures, which increased its authority and influenced the mass upsurge.

The BPR, FAPU, LP 28, and UDN set up the Mass Revolutionary Coordination (CRM) in February. Its programme set down that the struggle for power was on the agenda. There was no doubt about its objectives.

The decisive tasks of the revolution, on which achieving all its tasks and aims depends, is the conquest of power and the establishment of a revolutionary government which will begin leading the people to build a new society. The democratic revolutionary government will include representatives of the revolutionary and people's movement and democratic parties, organisations, sectors and personalities willing to participate in the realisation of this programme.

This government will base itself on a broad social and political basis formed in the first place by the working class, peasants and progressive middle layers; closely linked to the latter there are all the social layers open to the application of this programme: small and medium-sized industrial entrepreneurs, shop-keepers, artisans, and agricultural producers (small and medium...)

In addition to social, economic and democratic tasks (nationalisation of monopolistic sectors, radical land reform), it emphasises immediate political tasks, the creation of a

'popular army built up in the course of the revolutionary process, ... in which can be incorporated elements of the soldiers, under-officers, officers and chiefs of the present army who correctly conduct themselves and reject foreign intervention against the revolutionary process and support the liberation struggle of our people.

*In April 1980 the FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front) was set up* — made up of the MNR, the Social Christian People's Movement (MPSC), a split from the PDC and the previously regrouped forces — on the basis of the CRM programme, expressing the *political hegemony* won by the revolutionary

organisations. These structures were completed at the *end of May* by the formation of the Unified Revolutionary Leadership (DRU), which represented the *first step* in the difficult unification of the command structures of the politico-military organisations.

d) The present leadership of the FMLN considers it missed a "favorable opportunity" to struggle for power throughout these months of 1980. The following weaknesses characterised the way the revolutionary forces carried out this struggle. Examining this period makes it possible to draw out some of the key aspects of this lost opportunity.

A lack of synchronisation existed between the powerful upsurge and demands of the popular struggles and the construction of the united front of the revolutionary organisations.

This united front was only achieved with some *delay* and with a limited political content in *terms of strategy and tactics*. This belated unity nevertheless had to be achieved in a short period of time, with all the consequent complications in terms of responding to crucial questions in such a conjuncture: leading general strikes, working to divide the army, tactical alliances, the planned co-ordination and concentration of still relatively limited military resources, a common revolutionary diplomacy to aid the struggle, etc.

An instrument that had been essential for the revolutionaries in their winning the hegemony over the toiling masses, the mass fronts, became transformed into an obstacle for the building up of *united front bodies at the base*. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand the sectarianism which still reigned between the organisations; on the other hand the conception they had of their relations with the mass movement which neglected struggle for unity at the base in favour of the tight control of each of their organisations over sectors of the mass movement. The top-level unity as well as the strength of the organisations had been sufficient for calling and organising extraordinarily widescale general strikes. But differences of tactical and strategic orientation and the non-existence of united bodies at the base undermined the preparation of the insurrection. Furthermore, the absence of united front committees meant the differences between the organisations was felt more strongly among the masses and there was no pressure for unity from the base to the leadership.

In this framework the case of the PCS is interesting. True it has carried out a drastic turn — it had to survive — by joining the CRM and by beginning to carry out the armed struggle and in giving up a strategy that assigned a leading role to the bourgeoisie in a "first phase of the revolution". It declared the necessity of "taking the power away from the bourgeoisie by destroying its bureaucratic-military apparatus" and the present-day relevance of the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, it still justifies its 1979 government participation, saying that it was necessary "to go along with the democratic forces up to the moment when the project failed so as to avoid dispersal after the rout." It also continues to give an important place in its strategy to "democratic sectors of the army" and did not rule out a strategic agreement with them.

4) *The last months of 1980* were characterised by an *increased militarisation* and the FMLN's preparation for the *January 1981 offensive*.

After September 1980, the traditional reactionary sectors had regained complete control of the army. Military collaboration with the Guatemalan and Honduran armies was resumed under the aegis of the United States. The latter prevented the economic collapse of El Salvador and put Duarte in the presidency of the Republic (December 1980) — the first civilian president for 49 years — in order to make the regime more presentable diplomatically.

On their side the revolutionary forces consolidated their military potential. They moved out many cadres from mass work (increasingly difficult given the repression) to military activity, in the perspective of a direct assault. They carried out military occupations of towns to prepare the incorporation of the population in a future insurrection. The DRU forces had drawn the lessons of the past and wanted to profit from the political situation in the United States (1980 elections). They made progress on unity, encouraged on this path by the Castroist leadership, and in

October 1980 they set up the *Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN)*. It replaced the DRU and broadened to include the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC). A general high command was set up with a representative from each of the five organisations. A consensus emerged on the preparation of a general military offensive, initially defined as the "final" offensive.

The offensive was launched on 10th January 1981. The most violent battles lasted eight days. However, as early as 14th January the FMLN organised the retreat. The "final" offensive had failed but the FMLN did not come out of it defeated or militarily crushed. Two factors explain the significance and results of this offensive:

- It was late in relation to the highest point reached by the mass movement in the middle of 1980. From that moment on the military's hold over the capital and the main towns was considerably strengthened. Terror and the displacement of revolutionary cadres had weakened mass work.
- The insurrectional pushes in the *barríos* of the capital were not backed up and relayed by a large-scale general strike. It was more difficult for the mass movement to display its militancy since revolutionary military protection was insufficient. A chain reaction of partial local insurrections did not take place.

Furthermore, concentrating military attacks on the barracks, in order to strike very hard blows against the enemy, took up big forces and left a greater freedom of movement to the counter-revolutionary army. Finally, the FMLN military forces were little co-ordinated and the hoped-for uprisings and mutinies in the barracks did not happen. After January 1981 a *real civil war* began.

5) During the phase from *January 1981 to March-June 1982* both the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary forces reorganised their structures and plans of action.

a) *Militarily speaking* the scope of the January 1981 offensive made possible an advance in the accumulation of the military forces and experience. Up to the middle of 1981 the FMLN nevertheless was constrained to *defend its positions*. It neutralised the "sweep" operations of an army seeking a quick knockout. Through this battle, the different forces of the FMLN were able to conquer *zones of control* — not liberated zones — allowing them to improve the training of their troops, to deal with supply problems, to set up bases to plan future offensives, transmit radio broadcasts (Radio Venceremos) and to begin to build a real *people's army*. The peasant masses of these "controlled zones" were gradually organised, both to defend themselves and to orient their economic activity to war needs. This is what the FPL called *local people's power* (PPL).

From the end of the second quarter of 1981, the FMLN was able to go back onto the offensive. It attacked garrisons, took over certain towns (Perquin), damaged strategic infrastructure (el Puento de Oro) and attacked the Ilopango airbase (January 1982). The military pressure on the towns was stepped up at the beginning of 1982 and paved the way for the March 1982 military campaign, the FMLN response to the elections.

b) These *March 1982 legislative elections*, made in the USA, did not represent a victory of the latter. The USA had banked on the PDC/armed forces pact. However the PDC was relegated to a secondary role through an alliance inside parliament between the Party of National Conciliation (PCN), historic party of the oligarchy and the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). The oligarchy and its allies had backed this latter political formation (recently formed and fascist) in order to oppose any reforms and to react against the Junta's inability to smash the FMLN. Indeed the ARENA organises a "popular base" and has an armed wing (the death squads). The crisis of bourgeois leadership therefore got sharper.

Massive, open fraud, the electoral advance of the ARENA and the military capacity of the FMLN to a large extent neutralised the usefulness of these elections for the United States. Nevertheless they were held. A part of the population had voted (about 50 per cent) even if many people were intimidated. The elections brought out into the open and convulsions at work in the bourgeois camp and the malaise of certain sectors of the

population. Outside of its military offensive the FMLN offered a rather lame response.

On the one hand the thinking behind this new offensive continued in many respects the conception of the January 1981 offensive. The idea of a more or less short-term victory, in an insurrectional perspective, combined with decisive military actions hastening the decomposition of the army was still the strategic tradition of the main FMLN forces — outside of the differences they had on the combination of these various elements and on the more precise pace of their practical realisation. The Nicaraguan revolution had very much influenced the "strategic schema" of the FMLN. The inadequacies of this hypothetical schema for El Salvador were increasingly apparent.

On the other hand the FMLN as a whole judged correctly that the 1982 elections did not provide imperialism with a solution. But its various components were not agreed on the *tactical action proposals* to be adopted (military boycott or political denunciation). The result of this was clear: the FMLN *did not have a political position as the FMLN on the question of the elections*.

Three themes came out strongly from the discussion inside the FMLN following the March 1982 experience:

- How to aid sectors of the people condemned to silence by "state terrorism" to express, in one form or another, their support for the FMLN? The weakness of the FMLN in this conjuncture did not lie only in military inadequacies.

- How introduce splits and divisions among political forces permitting the broadening of the camp of opposition to the regime/imperialism coalition, given the increased intervention of the United States, the role of ARENA, the economic crisis and bourgeois leadership crisis? This meant raising the problem of alliances, of an opening of the FDR towards forces like those grouped in the *Democratic People's Union* (UPD), formed in 1980. The UPD is made up of the Salvadorean Communal Union (UCS), the building trade union (Fesincontrans), associations of small industrialists and shopkeepers etc. It supports the PDC but also expresses the support of these sectors for reforms, their opposition to blind oppression and an openness to "dialogue".

- Agreement was reached inside the FMLN on the need to *consolidate its military force* in order to give new confidence to the masses who were *disconcerted* in some cases by the results of the two previous offensives (January 1981 and March 1982) and to strike new blows against the army. Indeed the United States had opted to *rebuild the Salvadorean army*: special battalions trained in the United States, reorganisation of the command structures and involvement of American officers in the direct conduct of the war.

c) On the *diplomatic level* the Reagan administration tried, on the one hand, to revive regional agreements between the bourgeoisies (Democratic Central American Community) and, on the other hand, to justify its intervention by presenting the Salvadorean revolution as the fruit of "Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan interference".

This project was conjuncturally counterbalanced by the Franco-Mexican declaration (August 1981) and Lopez Portillo's (Mexican president) peace proposals. The FMLN thus won diplomatic status internationally, even if the Franco-Mexican declaration was to be vigorously attacked by the Southern Cone dictatorships and Venezuela and Colombia — under pressure from the United States (Caracas Manifesto, September 1981).

From the end of 1981 the FMLN turned *negotiations into a weapon of struggle*. It showed that war and negotiations are not antagonistic, but can be complementary. Internationally they hammered away correctly at one idea: there is "no solution to the conflict without the FMLN-FDR." In October 1981, Nicaragua offered it a platform at the UN to present its "peace proposal" demanding the opening of negotiations without conditions between the FMLN-FDR and the Junta in the presence of governments as witnesses.

6) From the *end of the first quarter of 1982* to just before the March 1984 presidential elections, the course of the Salvadorean revolution was characterised by: a growing FMLN offensive military capacity; continually stepped up American imperialist

aid to shore up the regime and its army; a serious crisis in the FPL; a redefinition of the FMLN-FDR political platform and finally, by the recovery of still modest movements around socio-economic demands in the towns.

a) Since June 1982 the FMLN increasingly determines the reactions of the counter-revolution army by *surprise offensives* concentrated on specific objectives. Thus it can: inflict defeats on whole companies of soldiers; increase its recuperation of arms; make the movements of the army more difficult; develop a policy towards government soldiers who have been captured or have surrendered; temporarily occupy relatively important towns; better co-ordinate operations on the various fronts each of which remains linked to one of the FMLN organisations.

From the middle of 1983, imperialism got its "military/civilian operations" underway (the CONARA plan — National Commission for the restoration of the zones). They aimed to eliminate the social base of support for the revolutionary forces (bombings, moving the population, civilian patrols and small, mobile military units).

Nevertheless, in September 1983, the FMLN succeeded in upsetting imperialist plans once again. It took over the third biggest town (San Miguel) of the country, an important barracks (El Paraiso) and three departments were now almost completely under its control.

These military actions are no longer placed in a short term insurrectional perspective, a "final battle". Their function is to keep the initiative in the revolutionaries' hands. They prove to the population that the dictatorship is losing control over an increased part of its territory. They also: weaken the army and counter-balance the effects of US aid given to recompose it, boost recruitment to the FMLN and aim to modify the relationship of forces and make a shift in the situation. It was on the basis of the *priority* given to these military efforts that the FMLN general command placed its political and diplomatic initiatives in January 1984.

Two key questions are posed by the very logic of the way this war is unfolding:

- The increased intervention of the United States, which corresponds to the inability of the Salvadorean army to fulfil its counter-revolutionary function without being taken in hand by imperialism, means that the *civil war increasingly takes on a dimension of a war of national liberation*.
- How to establish a relationship between the progress made on a military level, the action of the masses outside the FMLN zones of control and a response on the political level.

The discussion opened up in the FMLN after March 1982 was bound to spring to life again.

b) The *government of "national unity"* set up by Alvaro Magana after the March 1982 elections went through crisis after crisis. The presidential elections planned for 1983 by the United States had to be postponed to 1984. The second phase of the so-called land reforms was put in the bottom drawer.

In this context, the UPD contained the socio-economic protests of the small- and medium-sized peasants (September 1983). It also filled a vacuum left by the diminishing presence of the FMLN in the towns. The fall of purchasing power of wage earners and the fierce super-exploitation meant that strikes broke out in the public administration and the workplaces. A limited trade union reorganisation took place with the birth of the unitary trade union and the Profession Movement of El Salvador (MUSYGES) in May 1983.

The FMLN forces were far from being able to broadly influence this protest movement. In the towns the loss of cadres from the mass movement and the effects of the civil war has modified the relationship of forces. The channels of expression the workers were forced to use were often linked to bourgeois parties or petty-bourgeois organisations. Wage demands, democratic demands and the "desire for peace" now have an important role to play. This is not incidentally in contradiction with having sympathy for the FMLN activity in the civil war.

c) The FMLN kept up its *politico-diplomatic pressure*. It unmasked the US and government manoeuvre of the *Peace Commission* set up by the Junta to get a "dialogue without direct negotiations" going and to put out a line to try and get one sector of the FMLN-FDR to participate in future elections. The FMLN

raised three questions with this commission: the withdrawal of the United States from El Salvador, the opening of a dialogue on Salvadorean territory, the conditions for a ceasefire and participation in elections. The Peace Commission was mandated only to discuss participation in elections. But, for the FMLN, any such participation is only to be envisaged *after* the setting up of a "government of broad participation" (September 1983 Declaration in Colombia).

This government proposal became an important element of the political and diplomatic response of the FMLN-FDR. At the end of January 1984, with the elections of March 1984 coming up, it presented the proposal of forming a "*Provisional Government of broad participation*" (GAP) and a platform of tasks. The most "immediate tasks of this provisional government are:

- destroy the repressive apparatus;
- dissolve the security police, the death squads and their political organisation, the ARENA party;
- send home the North American advisors, stop the military intervention and aid as well as all arms supplies in the country;
- after a full inquiry bring the civilians and military personnel responsible for genocide, political crimes, torture, kidnappings, violations of individual rights, to justice;
- restore all democratic rights;
- (a series) of fundamental social and economic reforms in order to transform existing structures.

As an end result of this process conditions will be created for "preparing and organising general elections".

Agreement on the tasks of this government which is "*not due to last long*" and on the time scale and means for their implementation will determine the creation of government structures.

This process must end up in the organisation of a single national army, formed by the FMLN forces and the armed forces of the present government after they have been purged. The FMLN and government forces will keep their arms until the end of negotiations ...

Representatives of the workers' movement, of the peasants, teachers, professional associations, white-collar workers, university organisations, political parties, private property owners, the FMLN and the reconstructed armed forces must be in this government.

The oligarchy, sectors and personalities and sectors opposed to the objectives of this government or proposing the maintenance of the dictatorship will be excluded from this government.

No single force will dominate this government, all the social and political forces in favour of the overthrow of the oligarchy's regime, of the reestablishment of national sovereignty and independence and of private property and foreign investment not contradicting society's interests, will be represented in it.

The FMLN-FDR's offer of negotiations is not a substitute for military action, it *goes hand in hand* with it. It specifically precludes the FMLN laying down its arms before "*successful negotiations*" which must be held in two phases: "*a direct and unconditional dialogue must precede the negotiations*". This initiative is part of an anti-imperialist framework of "*defence of independence, national sovereignty and right to self-determination*". This is based on a judgement concerning the nature of the political offensive being jointly carried out by the US, the army and Duarte, the dynamic of the ever-broader intervention of the US and the possible regionalisation of the conflict and the transformation of El Salvador into a sort of American protectorate. This platform marks a change — which has been seen to be coming for some time — compared to the 1980 programme for the seizure of power in the short term, a change that has to be integrated into the national and international framework.

d) In April 1983, a dramatic crisis broke out inside the FPL leadership with the assassination of Ana Maria and the suicide of Marcial.

Thus once again methods were used to sort out internal differences which have already caused great harm to the Salvadorean revolution. The extreme difficulties of the military struggle, the militarisation of the organisations and the manoeuvres of the enemy forces provide the framework for these tragic events. But no objective condition or "necessity of the struggle against the class enemy", can justify the use of such methods in the ranks of the workers' movement. The various

FPL and FMLN communiqués “explaining” the events not only changed several times their version of what happened but brought in serious accusations without providing proof nor (above all) political explanations worthy of the stakes involved in this revolution. In this sense they are unacceptable.

Since 1982, the debate in the FPL has been focused on the following questions:

- The articulation between the workers’ and peasants alliance and alliances with other social sectors and the problem of proletarian hegemony in these alliances.
- The composition of the government that has been proposed for a political solution and the inter-relation between the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle.
- The development and forms of mass urban work; the conception of work aimed at weakening the enemy army and how to take advantage of internal contradictions which could emerge in it; the role of diplomatic struggle in the revolution and its relations with the armed struggle and political struggle.

In fact all these differences took on a particular sharpness once they became immediately related to the problems of building a unified organisation and consequently with the place each of the present FMLN currents, among others, the PCS forces, would have in it.

In September 1983, the plenary council of the FPL announced the election of a new leadership. It pointed out the two key tasks it had set: “intensifying the revolutionary peoples struggles in all its political, military, and diplomatic aspects in the perspective of establishing a government of broad popular participation” and “to dedicate all efforts to the struggle against intervention, for the legitimate defence of national sovereignty and the peoples’ right to self-determination faced with the growing interventionist policy of the Reagan administration”.

The debate inside the FPL resulted in a significant division giving birth to two groupings, the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MOR) and the Clara Elizabeth Front, which are outside of the FPL. The MOR and the Frente make a connection between the turn made by the FPL, “the excessive verticalist functioning of the Political Commission”, and various international organisational pressures which, according to them, are being put on the FPL and FMLN. The MOR, like the Clara Elizabeth Front, identify with what they consider the original orientation of the FPL — the “prolonged peoples’ war” line. They also claim continuity with the initial project of making the FPL the only revolutionary proletarian party of the FMLN and consequently these two groupings carry out a series of sectarian and maximalist criticisms that avoid giving a response in terms of a concrete political orientation to the present problems of the Salvadorean revolution.

7) For American imperialism, the *Salvadorean Presidential elections of March/May 1984* had three functions:

- Provide a legal and democratic cover behind which to organise a new military escalation against the revolutionary forces;
- End the relative isolation of the Salvadorean government internationally and combine more closely the war and diplomatic pressure;
- Try to modify the relationship of forces between ARENA and the PDC, and thus to increase the effectiveness of Duarte’s counter-revolutionary policy and a remodelled army, in the framework of a more effective “reformist counter-insurgency” project.

The FMLN-FDR denounced this electoral farce, but it did not turn the election into a target for military actions — apart from the ERP which took some initiatives of this sort. But the FMLN refused to declare a military truce during this period. The growth of the territory under its control in comparison with March 1982 is shown by the fact that the government found it impossible to organise the ballot in 89 municipal areas (34 per cent) of all municipal areas).

a) Throughout the first three months of 1984 the Pentagon and the Salvadorean military command tried to bring together electoral victories and military ones. They concentrated on “air surveillance” in order to prevent the concentration of FMLN troops and to facilitate the pursuit of its units. *Bombing the*

*civilian population in the FMLN zones of control* was sharply stepped up.

Despite the lack of technical resources, the revolutionary forces were able to defend themselves and even to fight back. Economic sabotage (energy, transport, agro-exports) held an important place in their activity. They even took over the heavily-defended Cerro Grande dam (June 1984) and developed actions in new regions.

One conclusion emerges clearly: the Salvadorean army, which has doubled in size since 1981, *cannot defeat the peoples’ army*. On the one side, the counter-revolutionary army faces serious difficulties in dealing with the incompetence of more than one command structure; corruption; the permanent turnover of its troops; desertions and a low fighting spirit. On the other side the logistical support and the structured US aid at all levels does make it possible for it to carry out a counterinsurgency war, with a very high cost for the rural population, and to maintain a more consistent military pressure aiming to take away the tactical initiative from the FMLN by trying to dislodge it from the “controlled zones” and particularly by making it very difficult to concentrate troops. The nature of the American intervention narrows the margin for imperialism between the option of inflicting a qualitative weakening on the FMLN by basing itself on a Pentagon-led Salvadorean army *and* that of a direct, massive intervention.

b) American imperialism is mounting an intensive campaign to get international diplomatic support for the new Duarte government. The World Christian Democratic Union ensures it the support of many European bourgeoisies. International Social Democracy has looked on benevolently and has legitimised its election, just as Mexico has. These operations are supposed to facilitate its task of taking the banner of the “peaceful solution” out of the FMLN-FDR’s hands.

But a series of contradictions are undermining Duarte’s regime:

- It is difficult for it to satisfy the demands of both the national association of private entrepreneurs (ANEP) and the social economic movements of protest which are becoming more extensive (strikes in the public sector, the post office, teachers, water workers, etc.) The same potential conflict exists on the land reform question. All this will have repercussions inside the UPD and make relations with the PDC more tense.
- The institutional and political crisis will continue and there will be more and more conflicts between the Duarte government and the ultra right-wing bloc (Arena).
- The democratic facade that Duarte wants to put on the army won’t deceive people for very long.
- The ruin of the economy, combined with structural obstacles, removes any credibility from the reformist populist measures and an economic recovery.

For the United States, the Duarte government appears as the last card to play before having to opt for invasion. To consolidate a bloc of Duarte and the army command, based on control of as many as possible of the national and local institutions, represents the most worthwhile option for imperialism.

Tactically, Duarte and his American advisors are seeking to divide the ranks of the FMLN-FDR by putting in the window a possible participation of the “political wing” in some vague elections. The Socialist International and the Latin American bourgeoisies are relaying this manoeuvre with the following argument: a truce, understood as a stage towards laying down arms would create the ideal conditions for dialogue. In fact, for American imperialism, only the *qualitative weakening of the FMLN-FDR, its total defeat is what counts*; that is the precondition for effective negotiations.

The FMLN-FDR firmly rejects Duarte’s proposals and declares the need “to go forward with the war” and the “*economic and social and political struggles*” as long as imperialism and the government maintain their present positions. The five FMLN commanders have publicly insisted on the minimum conditions which would create “*the favourable and necessary climate for dialogue*”: the end of direct North American participation in the war, an immediate halt to bombings of the civilian population, the freeing of political prisoners

and the elimination of torture, assassinations and "disappearances".

8) Discussion since 1982 inside the FMLN and more particularly in the FPL relate on the one hand to changes in the development of the revolution since January 1981 and on the other hand to the transitional situation between a civil war and a war of national liberation given the decisive intervention of imperialism in El Salvador and the Central American isthmus.

a) The FMLN is confronted with a series of important problems for the future of the revolution:

- The social and human costs of the war, the inevitable wearing down of layers of the population and their desire for a "just peace".
  - The direct political and diplomatic efforts of imperialism, which, as opposed to the Nicaraguan situation of 1978-9 is in the front line in the management of the conflict.
  - The possible emergence of contradictions between a social sector linked, among others, to the UPD, but outside of it too, and the present government; the recovery of the urban mass movement which is a long way from having the dynamism or the means of expression that existed in 1980.
- In this context, for the FMLN to lead forward the revolutionary war, it has to offer a political solution and to take the initiative in the field of negotiations. A series of urgent tasks flow from this:
- Ensure the intervention of the FMLN-FDR on the political terrain so as to put into question the result imperialism has been looking for with the elections and the establishment of the Duarte government.
  - To broaden the front struggling against the policy of the US, the armed forces and the oligarchy, by gathering social sectors coming into opposition to the Duarte government's policy around the FDR. To gain political space in order to get back more solidly into the urban mass movement.
  - Keep the task of dividing the counter-revolutionary army.
  - Develop diplomatic activity in order to increase the *political difficulties* for American imperialism's regional escalation.

The January 1984 programme cannot thus be looked at apart from the questions facing the FMLN and the masses in a framework different from that of 1980. It aims to respond to these problems. Any judgement we make on the real dynamic of an orientation of negotiations for the formation of the GAP must take into account the obstinate refusal of the United States of a dialogue — which would put the question US presence — with the FMLN-FDR as belligerent party, the similar attitude taken by all the dominant forces of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie, the social, political and moral polarisation and the existence of a people's army and controlled zones. Any judgement on the function of such a programme must be linked to the *present practice of the FMLN*. Obviously the evolution of the relationship of forces inside the FMLN-FDR itself — a relationship which is not independent of the state of the class struggle and the military situation and the enormous international pressure focused on EL Salvador — is an element of the way in which the line developed since 1983 has been concretised.

b) The FMLN has made negotiation proposals while *maintaining a sustained military effort*.

It seeks to unify in the eyes of the masses, on the one hand a political proposal for "*overturning the old oligarchical society and its client state*" and on the other hand, given imperialist and Duarte's policy to continue the people's war. It is calling all those who "*voted for peace in voting for Duarte*" and whose anti-imperialist reflexes can sharpen under the effects of a war which seems to have no solution due to the blockage of the United States and their man Duarte.

The importance given to democratic and anti-imperialist demands — compared to the 1980 programme — corresponds to a requirement of the revolutionary struggle in the present phase. The whole pyramid of the power of the bourgeois forces rests on the keystone of imperialist aid. "Send back the North American advisors, stop the intervention and the military aid" is just as decisive as the battle against any imperialist interference in the Cuban or Nicaraguan revolutionary process.

"Dissolving the repressive bodies" and "ARENA", the political stronghold of the oligarchy, amounts to breaking up of

one of its vital bases of support. This is laid down as an initial point for any real process of negotiation. It is a case of responding to a deep-held sentiment among broad popular layers who look around for a safe corner both in the oligarchical system and in the political plan outline by Duarte.

Consolidating popular action cannot be done just through immediate demands. The objective is to give this movement, starting from its reality, a *dynamic* of political confrontation with the practical policies of the present government. To do this it has to be offered an overall perspective which links democratic, anti-imperialist and immediate economic demands. That is the way to throw off balance the leaderships of the popular organisations who want to subordinate the activity of the masses to the needs of the regime. The GAP platform can have this sort of effect, although it gives no response at all — but this is not its function — to the thorny problem of mass work in the towns.

The nationalisation of the "monopolistic" enterprises has disappeared from the 1984 platform. But on this terrain the real question is whether there is a commitment to satisfying the needs of the enormous mass of landless and impoverished peasants who are the fundamental basis of support for the revolutionary process. The GAP programme calls for the establishment of a complete land reform "guaranteeing the free participation of the rural workers in its implementation". It is the real substance of this land reform which is important.

Reducing the scope of the expropriation demands in the GAP platform corresponds to an attempt to broaden the alliance(s). Two questions are superimposed here and must not be confused.

The *first* is that of the very *conception of alliances*. The reality of the class struggle reduces to the extreme any substantial sectors of the bourgeoisie willing to play the same game as a Robelo. *In practice*, the alliance policy is oriented more towards the layers of the petty and medium bourgeoisie, or very small layers of the bourgeoisie opposed to the oligarchy, towards sectors like the UPD. The formulation concerning the composition of the GAP, at the level of the social forces, further responds to this reality. The policy of alliances cannot be conditioned, as the MOR appears to say, by a priori conquest of a new hegemony over the popular movement. On the contrary, it is a lever to broaden once again the FMLN-FDR influence among these layers and to combine it with their own politico-military forces. In the same way it cannot be separated from an overall political proposal.

The *second* is that of the essential problem of the army. The GAP formulations on this point are very ambiguous and mark the most substantial change from the 1980 platform. Such formulations might just be a question of tactics — in this sense entirely similar formulations were used in October 1981 in the negotiations proposals made at the UN.

But these formulations can also find an echo in the more consistent line of some sectors of the FMLN on the alliance with the "healthy sectors of the army" not in the sense of speeding up its decomposition but to try and get an institutional agreement with these sectors. Such a position could fit into an actual project of a transitional stage at the level of power — as opposed to what concretely took place in Nicaragua — before the establishment of the power of the workers, peasants and their allies.

In the concrete world of the civil war in El Salvador, this proposal is a matter, at the best, of tactics in relation to possible conflicts in the army, at the worst, it can produce confusion. The *practical rejection* of a real prolonged truce and of dumping arms — that is, the refusal to subordinate the struggle to negotiations and to conceive them as an auxiliary instruments for the struggle — the emphasis put on the dissolution of the repressive bodies, the unconditional rejection of the American presence, the very forms proposed by the negotiation process, all that relativises the significances of this proposal of integrating a "purged army" and the FMLN troops.

The danger of such a proposal would make itself felt if it were the case that it began to alter the practice of the FMLN and led to significant splits in the present FMLN leadership.

The Soviet bureaucracy deals with the Salvadoran revolution in the framework of its own interests in relation to imperialism. It seeks to increase its control over the Central American revolution by placing its aid where it can draw the best advantage. In function of international developments — the combination of grow-

ing military pressure in the region, the difficulties faced by the revolution in Central America, the evolution of discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union — it could try to use a relay like the PCS leadership to exert pressure, in a direction convenient to its interests.

c) The two meetings in autumn 1984 (La Palma and Ayagualo) between representatives of the Duarte government and the FMLN-FDR confirm the orientation of the revolutionary forces. Duarte was not able to take them offguard with his proposal of negotiations. This was made, in part, under the pressure of international factors, but also in taking account of the movement around wage demands, by the UDP base and middle layers, who saw no possibility of a stabilisation, or any sort of economic upturn without the participation of the FMLN-FDR. It thus also had an electoral objective (legislative elections in 1985).

Nevertheless, Duarte and his advisors are banking on a military weakening of the FMLN. This would make it possible for them to engage in negotiations with the revolutionary forces, no longer having effective control over entire regions of the country (a dual power situation). This project rapidly appeared without foundation, whatever the military difficulties of the FMLN-FDR, which must rejig its military strategy in order to deal with the joint operations by the Salvadoran army and its American advisers (aerial bombardment and surveillance, helicopter-lifted troops, telecommunications, etc).

During the two meetings, the FMLN-FDR emphasised the *social* significance of peace, the need for national sovereignty (departure of American advisers), respect for democratic rights, dismantling the special units of repression. The Front continues its military actions, without mechanically subordinating them to the negotiations. Its revolutionary capacities are demonstrated once more at the politico-military plane, despite the extreme difficulties in which it is immersed.

The military relationship of forces that are still in force, the political difficulties of the Duarte government, the military policy of the central command and the Americans, the FMLN-FDR's capacity to politically use the opening of negotiations, indicate that Duarte could only give up on this manoeuvre for the time being.

d) *The question of unity* has been — and still is — at the centre of the discussion inside the FMLN. The traditions of sectarianism have had devastating effects in the revolutionary camp in El Salvador. Division has had negative repercussions on the mass movement, on the process of self-organisation and the carrying out of military operations. Sectarian methods of discussion — as the confrontation between the FPL and the MOR/Frente Clara Elizabeth continues to show us — are a factor weakening the revolutionary movement.

Revolutionary war requires a *united military command*. At the same time the needs of the mass movement makes urgent a centralised effort for setting up unified rank and file structures, able to draw on and lead the potential for militancy that exists.

Developing a united process at the level of the mass movement and at the level of military command and operations is an indispensable means for achieving the objective of creating a *unified revolutionary party*. The simple existence of a front has been shown to be inadequate to the present needs of the revolution.

The historical trajectory of the organisations and the "compartmentalising" of their politico-military influence makes a unification which respects the contribution of each organisation and makes it possible to go beyond that is a difficult and delicate question. Unification cannot be imposed. Even less can it be a monolithic party — except at the cost of splits and elimination of democratic internal functioning (within the limits imposed by war conditions). Rejection of such a monolithic party is a necessary factor for a real fusion and for defeating divisive manoeuvres. Today the FMLN declares it is advancing in a "long process of synthesis" which should lead to a higher level of unity.

## V. The revolution in Guatemala

1) Guatemala, because of its geographic position, the size of its population (about 8 million), its economic weight, its resources

(oil, nickel), the strength of its counter-revolutionary army, and the history and gains of the revolutionary forces, is a decisive link in the confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution in Central America.

Imperialist efforts to "put out the fire in the United States' backyard" (Reagan) include a stepping up of the counter-revolutionary effort in Guatemala, in concert with the Guatemalan military. The coup (8th August 1983) which sent General Ríos Montt back to his Bible studies — after he had taken power in March 1982 — and replaced him by General Mejía Victores, was part of the imperialist plans which combine political and military aspects in an overall "counter-insurgency" plan.

Towards the end of the Second World War (the 1944 "revolution"), Guatemala experienced a broad surge of the mass movement and an exceptional period of democratic openings (the government of Juan José Arévalo 1945-1950, and of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz 1950-54), in comparison with most Central American countries.

It was in this context, where the government forces were trying to slacken the imperialist hold a little, that the mass movement carried out some significant struggles, organised and won some rights (the 1947 Labour Code for example). While the increase in the rate of workers' organisation (industrial and agricultural workers, service- and public-sector employees) was significant, the objective limits in the development of the proletariat at this period should be taken into account.

The *agrarian reform* promulgated in 1952 paved the way for large-scale expropriation of land either with compensation equivalent to the declared fiscal value (obviously under-estimated by the proprietors) or by the confiscation of land lying fallow. The agro-business giant, United Fruit, was hit by these measures. Whatever the limits of this land reform, it indicated that the *political and social* process underway represented a threat to American imperialism and the Guatemalan oligarchy. A coup d'état was organised to overthrow the Arbenz government in June 1954.

A long period of *systematic repression* of the toiling masses and their organisations then commenced. *The army* was in the front line of this. It took matters more and more in hand, particularly with the advent of the government of Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio (1970). Significant sections of the military hierarchy used their position in the state apparatus and the direct running of the government to accumulate capital (goods and real estate) and change their social position. They thus entered the leading economic circles of the country.

What arose from this situation was not only the particular role of the state sector in the economy and a partial recomposition of the ruling class, but also potentially increasing internal tensions within the army and within the ruling circles.

2) One of the striking features of the structure of the Guatemalan economy was the co-existence (and partial complementarity) of a capitalist export agriculture based on the *latifundia*, an extraction industry (mines, oil), and small-scale agriculture — particularly in the mountain region — which occupied the bulk of the *Indian masses*. They lived almost completely isolated from the capitalist market.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, following the example of other Central American countries, a change has occurred. This has happened under the impact of lively economic growth, stimulated by the MCCA among other factors. The spread of capitalist relations of production speeded up, with its concomitant: the *slow* disintegration of pre-capitalist social relations, and introduction of the use of money among increasing layers of the population (decline in self-sufficiency). From this point, the mass of peasants were to be increasingly subject to the fluctuations of the economic cycle, the hazards of the conjuncture.

Even though it was distorted and increased social inequality, the economic growth of Guatemala was the steepest in Central America. It reached its culminating point in 1980. At this point an economic downturn set in.

The social consequences of this so-called modernisation of Guatemalan society were considerable. The bourgeoisie was socially strengthened, and the relationship of forces between its

different components (agrarian, industrial, even financial, the section from the army ... ) modified. This change did not take place without internal tensions, nor without a need to reshape the forms of rule — above and beyond the recognised priority of crushing the mass movement and liquidating the military forces of the revolution.

At the same time, the *proletariat* grew in size in the industrial sector (food, chemicals, light manufacturing industry, extraction industry), the agricultural exports sector (sugar, cotton, bananas) and subordinate sectors. The urban semi-proletarianised layers grew rapidly. This proletariat was socially consolidating without having any elementary economic rights. It was constantly faced with a murderously determined machine of repression.

3) The *economic crisis* hit Guatemala at full blast. There was a drastic fall in production in 1982-83 and 1984. Production suddenly found itself once again at 1972-74 levels. All the structural weaknesses of a dominated, dependent capitalist economy, closely linked to the price fluctuations of exported goods with only a limited domestic market, were thrown into relief.

The flight of capital that began before the 1980 downturn, for social-political reasons, increased. At the same time, the economy suffered the effects of unbounded corruption and state investment that had more to do with the short-term interests of the bloodsuckers in power than with any coherent projects for growth and development. The external public debt grew, accompanied by an extreme fiscal crisis "cured" by printing banknotes — with the inevitable inflationary consequences. The Central American market, thrown into disorder by the revolutionary upturn beginning in 1978-79 and the international capitalist economic crisis, went into depression. Foreign currency reserves fell, affecting imports and thus the production process. The national currency (*quetzal*) was *de facto* devalued in relation to the dollar, stimulating the currency black market and thus inflation, which could only rise. IMF pressure demolished the "model" economy that had relied on heavy state participation in investments (reduction in public spending from 1983).

For the masses, this crisis was expressed by increasing *pauperisation*. For the bulk of the population daily survival became the number one problem.

4) From the mid-1970s, there was a *reactivation of mass struggles*. This had a certain autonomy from the economic crisis, and was in fact an expression of economic growth.

As a sort of signal of this upturn, teachers went on strike in 1973. This spread to the national level. A broad solidarity movement emerged with an impressive support demonstration — given the vicious repression — in the capital. Despite the actions of the Arana government, the rail, electricity and tobacco workers also went into struggle. There was a radicalisation in trade-union circles jeopardising the plans to create trade unions controlled by the state.

In 1976 a strike broke out — that of the Coca-Cola (Embotelladora Guatemalaca) workers — which represents a turning point in workers' struggles. It put into question the employers' right to sack workers (after the 1976 earthquake there were a plethora of savage sackings) and posed the question of elementary trade-union rights.

This struggle acted as the catalyst for a process of trade union unification. It led to the creation of the *Comité nacional de Unidad Sindical* (CNUS), which brought together more than 65 unions, including the National Workers' Confederation (CNT). This latter thus broke its links with its origins in Christian democracy.

In November 1977, the miners (Indians) organised a protest march on the capital. In September 1978, a bus drivers' strike led to a riot in Ciudad de Guatemala against the rise in fares decided by the government (Lucas Garcia).

From 1st May 1978, the *peasant movement* appeared at the front of the social and political stage. After a long period of clandestine organising work the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (Peasant Unity Committee, CUC) appeared publicly. It was the expression of a threefold effort on the part of the revolutionary forces: broad organisation of the peasants; consolidation of an alliance between the *ladinos* and *indios* sectors; a struggle against

the fragmentation of different *indios* communities.

The peasants were hit by the most brutal repression. Symbolically, the regime decided to burn alive dozens of peasants from El Quiché who had peacefully occupied the embassy of the Spanish state to protest against military repression in January 1980. In February-March 1980, a national sugar workers' strike was organised by the CUC. In August of the same year, the banana plantation workers from the Atlantic Coast went into struggle.

At the same time, other sectors of society began to show their preparedness to fight. The students and the shantytown dwellers created an organisation: the *Movimiento Nacional de Pobladores* (MONAP). The Christian base committees began, from 1978, to work in different social layers. Differences appeared in the church apparatus.

During a brief period, the mass movement found restricted openings. From 1978, the most brutal repression tried to disrupt this. An entire leading group of the CNUS was assassinated in June 1980.

In fact, the question of *clandestinity for the mass movement* was already on the agenda and openly discussed. It was here that the difficulty of combining the greatest possible use of the smallest openings, in order to give life to the mass movement, with effective protection of the structures and cadres of these movements was demonstrated. A certain "optimism" can perhaps be explained by the fact that since 1978 the rise in popular struggles had been stimulated by the *positive developments of the Nicaraguan revolution* and the promise of the Salvadoran revolution.

5) The growth of the mass movement during the 1970s and the beginning of 1980 is incomprehensible unless an understanding of the *politico-military revolutionary organisations' activity* is integrated.

These organisations, after the terrible blows suffered at the end of the 1960s, slowly got back on their feet in Guatemala. From 1972 to 1978-79, most of them were engaged in slow, clandestine painstaking work to rebuild their forces, their apparatus, and their social base.

A process of assimilating and reflecting on their own history led them, to different degrees, to go beyond "focoist" conceptions.

Four politico-military organisations are dominant: the *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (EGP, Guerrilla Army of the Poor); the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (FAR, Rebel Armed Forces); the *Organisation Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas* (ORPA, Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms), the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo-Nucleo de Direccion Nacional* (PGT-NDN, Guatemalan Workers Party-National Leadership Nucleus). This latter was formed from a split in the Communist Party (PGT-Central Committee) in 1978, a split on the question of armed struggle.

These organisations have developed work in regions and social sectors that, often, do not collide. The EGP, for instance, emphasised developing an implantation in the Indian regions of El Quiché, Alta and Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango and Chimaltenango. In addition it asserted its presence in the capital and the coastal region. It played a key role in the development of the CUC. The FAR, originating from the FAR of the 1960s, have a significant activity in urban sectors, in the trade-union movement and the coastal (plantation) region, among others. After 1978, they solidified their guerrilla fronts in El Péten and Chimaltenango. The ORPA only appeared publicly in 1979, although it originates from a 1971 split in the FAR-PGT alliance. It has worked on integrating the Indian masses and is active — not having developed an effective conception of work in the mass organisations — in the San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Solo, Totonicopan, and Huehuetenango regions. The PGT has an urban activity, in the workers' movement among others.

They have in common a general conception of *revolutionary people's war*, which implies an integration of the social motor forces of the revolution into military confrontation. This general agreement obviously leaves room for many divergences in theory and practice. Nevertheless, a process of joint discussion started

up in 1979 between the EGP, the FAR and the PGT (the "tripartite"). In 1980, the ORPA joined this forum.

In January 1982 a unity agreement was signed and gave birth to the Union revolucionara Guatemalteca (URNG, Guatemalan Revolutionary Union). This unity rested more on a statement of intention and a general objective than on a programme. The organisations had to confront a vigorous counter-insurgency offensive on every front in this period. This required a higher level of elaboration and strategic (military and political) homogeneity than they had at this stage.

At the same time, this unity, which should be put in its regional context, expressed the considerable progress made by the military/political organisations since 1978. Between 1979-80, they showed that they were able to construct military fronts in three-quarters of the country.

In fact, from 1981, the *military question* became the key element of the politico-social situation in Guatemala. The organisations carried out their work of social implantation, generalisation of the armed struggle and stimulating mass actions quite well. In fact, they began to challenge the class enemy, and its army, for territory.

Nevertheless, the ability to effectively lead the mass movement — that is, in tandem with the demands of an unremitting military confrontation — in the urban and coastal regions remained limited.

The strength of the apparatuses of the military organisations could not compensate for this weakness. In the worst of cases, it created a tendency of substitutionism in regard to the mass movement. In addition, the organisations came up against a political obstacle: how to occupy the political arena? How to create a political front that would challenge the regime among the intermediate layers of the population? How to combine a policy of alliances with the perspective of a politico-military outcome? The creation of the *Frente Democrático Contra la Represión* (FDCR, Democratic Front Against Repression), in 1979, represented a step forward in this domain. But it remained more a defensive response to the repressive policy of the government than a political front based on the progress of the revolutionary people's war. Its deficiencies were quite quickly revealed.

6) Imperialism, the ruling classes, and the army quickly understood the dangers of an irreversible revolutionary process. From 1980, the class struggle was concentrated, in essence, in the *clash between the "contrainsurgencia" and the revolutionary people's war*.

The counter-insurgency policy was primarily aimed at the mass movement of the urban areas and the coast. Its purpose was to socially isolate the revolutionary forces. It tried to strip the revolutionary forces of their material base in the towns and prevent them from carrying out sabotage actions directed at the agro-export sector. The counter-insurgency project then concentrated on the key regions of the altiplano, to deprive the guerrilla forces of the military initiative.

Counter-intelligence was particularly developed to attain these objectives. The main aspects of the army's activity were to prevent the concentration of the revolutionary forces, to prevent co-ordination of their movements and to destroy their supply and communications lines.

This attempt to impede the functioning of the revolutionary fronts — particularly those of the EGP — included plans to *exterminate* the population, to disperse and concentrate it in special zones (strategic hamlets), a "scorched earth" policy (deforestation, liquidation of indigenous crops). In order to separate the guerrilla forces from their popular base, the counter-revolutionary army — with the aid of imperialism, Israel and Taiwan — sought to *break up* the indigenous communities. This "defence of the West" involved: 35,000 assassinations; mass rapes of indigenous women; more than one million persons displaced inside the country; tens of thousands of peasants forced to seek refuge at the Mexican border (where the Mexican army kept them under close control); 900,000 people enrolled in the "civil patrols", with aim of involving them in the counter-insurgency and thus breaking them.

From 1983, the army concentrated its offensive on the revolutionary units, with the aim of liquidating them. *This objective was not reached*, which proves not only their military solidity but

also their socio-political gains, and the depth of the historic crisis affecting the country and reflected in the bourgeoisie's forms of rule.

7) While not able to eliminate the revolutionary forces, the ruling classes and imperialism began a new phase of their counter-revolutionary, anti-people plan in 1984.

The counter-insurgency project was not limited to the military plane, even if that constituted its backbone. War and repression remained a decisive element. All the reorganisation of the military forces was aimed at continuing this war against the people and to leave the reins of power with the army at this level... but, it was combined with social "reform" measures (infrastructure, agrarian projects under the control of the army in the combat zones) and political "reforms" (elections).

This political counter-offensive was supposed to make it possible to deprive the weakened revolutionary forces of a political base and to reorganise the ruling bloc by trying to broaden its political base and reduce the internal contradictions in an army that was too exposed on the political level. But this political reform was also intended to play a role in the diplomatic operation of the Guatemalan bourgeoisie and imperialism. Even though tensions can exist between the imperialists and local regimes the "stability" of their relations rests in the last instance on the advances of counter-insurgency plans at the regional and national level. This is illustrated by the reorganisation of relations between Guatemala and the United States following 1983.

However, the designs of the counter-revolution came up against several obstacles. The economic crisis undermines the "social reform" projects, limited though they are. The crisis makes it inevitable that austerity policies will be continued bringing insupportable pressure on the popular masses and the middle layers that are becoming steadily impoverished.

Since 1982, some hard blows have been struck at the revolutionary forces. Nevertheless, URNG's *capacity for action* still remains an essential factor in the socio-political developments in the country.

The forces comprising the URNG are engaged in a process of reflection at a higher level, the product of the very high level of the class struggle. The economic crisis as well as the social effects of the counter-insurgency plans decisively demonstrate the historic bankruptcy of the ruling classes. It is obvious that it is for the popular forces and their allies to offer a real programme of *national salvation that would appear as an alternative* to the operations of the ruling classes, which lack any real future.

It is in drawing out the elements of such a programme, achieving a new convergence between the URNG's ability to act militarily and the mass movement, linking the construction of various mass fronts (in the urban milieu, on the coast and in the strongholds of the counter-insurgency) that the Guatemalan revolutionaries will demolish the counter-revolutionary plans, among the most barbaric developed by a ruling class, imperialism and its allies. Political dialogue and unity in action will make it possible to take a step forward in the process of political unification and to elaborate a response to the tactical challenge of the elections as well as to the strategic problems of mass work and the revolutionary people's war.

The future of the revolution in Guatemala cannot be separated from that of the Central American revolution. Over and above the conjunctural ups and downs, the process started on Nicaragua in 1979 will indubitably find its expression in Guatemala, through a people and revolutionaries who demonstrate at the highest level that the desire to fight for self-determination, dignity, social liberation is much stronger than all the plans of imperialists, if this is expressed in revolutionary organisations that know how to keep their continuity and keep up a continuous process of strategic thinking, in the light of their experience.

## VI. Building a solidarity movement

The escalation of imperialist intervention in Central America has already taken on the dimension of an out and out war of agres-

sion against Nicaragua. More than ever solidarity with the Central American revolution is a central task for the whole of the Fourth International. This means:

- giving political and material aid to the liberation struggles in the region;
- developing a systematic information campaign about the reality of the imperialist intervention and against the media-orchestrated "misinformation";
- to try and bring about a situation where the imperialist intervention is confronted outside of the Central American theatre itself with a powerful network of solidarity, the living expression of the significance of the test of strength taking place in the region.

There already exists, even before any direct mass intervention of American imperialism, an active solidarity movement internationally. Furthermore, in addition to the united front committees which make up the motorforce of the solidarity movement there is a powerful anti-war movement in many countries which opens up the possibility of qualitatively broadening this solidarity, faced with new stages in the escalation. Finally, the challenge made to imperialism in its direct zone of influence and the very character of the Sandinista revolution has sparked off an internationalist remobilisation among significant layers of young people and has produced, for the first time since the Vietnamese revolution, a profound identification with an unfolding revolution.

These conditions mean that it is both possible and necessary to bring the solidarity work onto a superior level in the next period.

Already, with the intensification of the counter-revolutionary operations and thanks to the efforts of the FSLN in favour of united non-exclusive solidarity, there has been a new boost in the defence of the Nicaraguan revolution — even if criminal operations like the mining of the ports did not receive the adequate solidarity response.

On the other hand solidarity with the Salvadoran people's struggle — which had more attention up to the middle of 1982, has run a little out of steam and experiences difficulties. First of all because this work was initiated with the perspective of a short term victory and had to redefine its tasks in the framework of a war of resistance in which imperialism was now a full participant. It also suffered the effects of the FPL crisis inside the solidarity movement.

Today it is indispensable to *broaden solidarity*, to closely link the defence of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions in a united campaign against imperialist intervention and for the right of the peoples of Central America to freely determine their own future.

Popularising the proposals and positions of the FMLN and the FSLN is a full part of such a campaign, while maintaining the political autonomy of the movement of solidarity with their liberation struggle until final victory.

From the point of view of the International as a whole it is a question of a prolonged campaign, regularly punctuated by initiatives to be worked out concretely with the appropriate means in all sectors of intervention of the sections.

The united committees and collectives, which have maintained for several years regular solidarity activity, are the motor and the most consistent pole of the bigger movement. To bring this campaign into line with the stakes involved, it is necessary on the basis of the gains represented by the committees to broaden the front of those forces committed to work against imperialist intervention. Broadening the front can be done in several ways:

- firstly and above all towards the workers' movement, through "twinning" workplaces, tours of information related to specific sectors (health for example), and initiatives to raise funds involving trade unions at a local or workplace level. Initiatives like the trade union meeting for peace, held in Managua in April 1984, should, if concrete proposals come out of them, help work in this direction;
- then towards the anti-war movement, to the extent that one can raise opposition to the war of aggression already going on in Central America more and more in the mobilisations against the missiles;
- finally with religious and humanitarian bodies, through

financial campaigns and international information conferences.

The main activities around which the solidarity campaigns are organised are:

- the ongoing campaign of information on the reality of American aggression in Nicaragua, on the crimes of the counter-revolution and the bombing of civilians in El Salvador, on the positions of the FSLN and the FMLN in relation to the big national and international problems linked to their struggle;
- organising tours of information, meetings, conferences and demonstrations, strengthening international co-ordination at the level of the committees thereby contributing to a greater effectiveness of their initiatives;
- continuing and extending material and financial solidarity, more than ever indispensable given the economic situation created by the war; twinning cities, directly linking workplaces or organisations can provide the framework for this;
- continuing and building up the work brigades for Nicaragua, which fulfill the function of both material solidarity and information. Their existence is a precious gain: it is the first time that so many militants with such varied political, trade union or ideological affiliations have had the opportunity of forging direct links with the experience of an unfolding revolution and to get from it a conviction and a force which keeps the solidarity movement so alive.

For the International itself, stepping up the campaign means:

- strengthening the responsibility of the leaderships of the sections for this campaign, to actively follow this work;
- giving particular importance to the youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International taking up this work and getting involved in the campaign;
- improving information and analysis about the Central American situation and the solidarity movement in our press;
- strengthening links with the Central American revolutionary organisations.

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1. On the trajectory of the revolution in Grenada and the imperialist intervention, see the resolution adopted by the United Secretariat (13th May 1984) published in *International Viewpoint* No. 54, 4th June 1984, and *Intercontinental Press* 9th July 1984.

2. See: *The present stage of building the International*, Chap. 2, points 1 and 2 this volume.

3. For an analysis of the general political and socio-economic conditions of the revolution one can consult the resolution adopted by the 11th World Congress in November 1979. (See special *Intercontinental Press*, Feb 1980).

4. A critical balance sheet has to be drawn of the positions adopted by the Fourth International at its 11th World Congress (November 1979). The criticism bears on *three inter-related*

aspects. The first is the delay in the understanding of the character and trajectory of the FSLN (June 1979 USEC resolution). We can certainly invoke the fact that this current had declined numerically and was heterogenous during the 1970s.

Secondly the FSLN alliance policy; its actions were incorrectly grasped (problem of hegemony) and were not situated in the context of a battle for "national unity against Somoza" in the sense understood by the FSLN. Thirdly, characterising the state as capitalist after July 1979, with a situation of *sui-generis* dual power, was an attempt to grasp the specificity of the situation, but was wrong. Consequently the judgement made concerning the installation of a workers' and peasants' government following a series of changes that took place between March and September 1980 (USEC resolution, September 1980) confused the process of consolidation of the workers state with the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government. The largest minority at the 11th World Congress stated that: "The

workers' and peasants' government in Nicaragua... is similar to the regimes described by the Fourth International which emerged and exercised power in Cuba and in Algeria from the end of 1963 to the middle of 1965". And further on: "Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois personalities hold government posts. Capitalist property and control of the main sectors of industry and agriculture has not been destroyed. This signifies that the *class character of the state remains bourgeois*". The minority announced: "the approaching test of strength (in the sense of expropriation of the capitalists) in the months to come". A mere examination of the different tasks confronting revolutionaries (in particular concerning the army) in Algeria from 1963 to 1965 and Nicaragua since 1979 indicates the lack of validity of this characterisation which combines workers' and peasants' government and capitalist state.

These errors have not however led to our current going wrong on general political tasks, on the attitude to take to the FSLN, recognised as a revolutionary leadership, or on solidarity work.

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# THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED

WHAT IS THE SOVIET UNION  
AND WHERE IS IT GOING?



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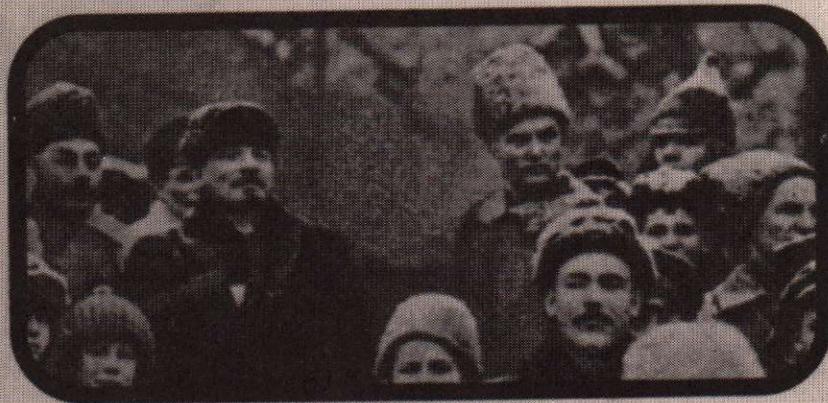
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# The Stalin School of Falsification



## Leon Trotsky



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Typesetting by Lithoprint Ltd (TU), 26-28  
Shacklewell Lane, London, E8. Published by  
Presse-Edition-Communications (PEC).  
Administration: 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108  
Montreuil, France. Directeur de publication:  
Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire  
64324. Imprime par Rotographie.