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WHERE ARE WE GOING?

by

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## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

By Michel Pablo

The Ninth Plenum of the IEC has opened the preparatory discussion for the Third World Congress of our International and has set its date for the year 1951.

Two documents presented by the International Secretariat and approved by the Ninth Plenum will serve as basis for opening this discussion: the "THESES ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE ORIENTATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT" and "THE YUGOSLAV REVOLUTION AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL."

The first document has a general character and does not obviate the need to present a "Political Resolution" before the World Congress which will concern itself more particularly with the concrete analysis of the international situation and with our specific political tasks in the immediate future.

But it has appeared necessary to open discussion in the International primarily on the basis of a document which would trace the main lines in our outlook on the evolution of the international situation in the years ahead, and which would reaffirm and more sharply define a series of fundamental ideas determining the thought and activity of our movement.

For we have recognized, with far greater clarity than ever, since the Second World Congress and particularly in the most recent period, two factors to which we attribute a fundamental importance:

1. Since the end of the last war we have entered a period essentially different from everything we have known in the past, with the tempo of this period speeding up.

2. In the face of this new period of rapid and abrupt change, it is vital, it is imperative for a real Marxist-revolutionary movement such as ours, to overcome the unavoidable discrepancy between its way of thinking, between its theory and the new developments in objective reality. This must be done by a constant effort at dialectically passing beyond every limited notion and discarding all schematism, all doctrinairism and every kind of thinking which is unable to encompass, analyze and comprehend the infinitely rich content of a new reality in full bloom.

Some comrades have written that, on the eve of the last war, our theory, that is to say, the way in which our collective thinking (the thinking of our movement) grasped the reality of that time, appeared solid, without cracks and fissures. Now, say these comrades, everything seems out of joint.

The truth naturally is far from what these comrades, shedding bitter tears (and we want to believe that the tears are genuine), imagine about the alleged broken harmony in our theory.

So far as we are concerned, we have never conceded primacy to theory (no matter what the theory) over life since such an affirmation

would be fundamentally contrary to the genuine, non-mystical, non-schematic, undogmatic outlook which is Marxism. We find an entirely different explanation for this phenomenon.

It is true that on the eve of the last war our theory appeared more global, more uniform, more harmonious, for it reflected a far less complicated and less dynamic content than is the case today. On the eve of the last war the world seemed to be in relative equilibrium and repose, so far as either the capitalist regime or Stalinism were concerned. Can we, even remotely, say the same for the present period?

For the genuine Marxist revolutionary movement the problem is not to desire to force the new reality at any cost into yesterday's norms of thinking, but to so widen and modify the latter as to bring these norms into accord with new objective developments. Naturally these must be well understood and grounded theoretically in the light of a principled line, not one which is empirical or opportunist.

That is what we have in part accomplished (within the measure of our collective capacities) mainly since the Second World Congress.

For it is in fact mainly since then that the line of the International became more defined and developed on a series of fundamental questions pertaining to a better understanding of the nature of the period in which we are living and of its perspectives.

The transformations undergone by the capitalist regime during and after the last war, its perspectives, as well as the changes undergone by Stalinism, its role, its perspectives, have been better understood by our movement. This came about not all at once but step by step, aided by events, and with unavoidable gaps and delays.

In the document "Theses on International Perspectives. . ." etc., we have endeavored to reaffirm this acquisition of our movement and to render more precise the points which appeared to us essential for our orientation in the years ahead. The ideas formulated in this document are presented in a condensed and rather summary form and naturally call for further exposition. That is what we shall try to do in the present article.

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For our movement objective social reality consists essentially of the capitalist regime and the Stalinist world. Furthermore, whether we like it or not, these two elements by and large constitute objective social reality, for the overwhelming majority of the forces opposing capitalism are right now to be found under the leadership or influence of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Therefore, to understand objective social reality and to be able to act effectively upon it we have to know both the present condition of the capitalist regime (in its static and dynamic state), and the way in which Stalinism is developing.

### The Condition of Capitalism

What is the fundamental difference between the present and the prewar condition of capitalism?

This difference manifests itself mainly in the many-sided breakdown of the equilibrium of the capitalist regime and in the fact that this breakdown tends to get worse.

Capitalism as a regime is characterized, as Trotsky has said, by an equilibrium which is simultaneously "dynamic" and "complex" (economic, social, international). That is to say, this equilibrium constantly tends towards breakdowns followed by a reestablishment of equilibrium. Capitalist equilibrium resulted from a certain inter-relationship of its economic functioning, the class relations within each country, and its international relations. Since none of these main factors remains static but each is constantly evolving, a corresponding movement takes place from equilibrium towards breakdown -- under the influence of an economic crisis, for example, a revolution, or a war -- to be followed later by a new reestablishment of equilibrium.

Up to the eve of the last war, capitalism evolved according to this general outline, the objective foundations for a new equilibrium still proving to be fairly weighty.

But this is not true now. The disequilibrium of the capitalist system which was engendered during and following the last war is proving to be basic, chronic and tending to grow worse. This results from the following basic causes which we can now grasp with increasing clarity and in all their tremendous importance:

The breakup of the colonial sector of imperialism as a result of the colonial revolutions in Asia, especially of the Chinese revolution; the breakdown of the economic unity of capitalist Europe arising from the formation of the Soviet buffer zone; the apoplectic expansion of American capitalism in the midst of a narrowing and impoverished capitalist market, and the disruptive economic and political role which American imperialism is compelled to play in this capitalist world; and finally the political and economic power which the USSR itself represents.

All these new factors act together in the direction of maintaining and aggravating the breakdown of capitalist equilibrium on all levels: those of economic relations, of class relations, of international relations.

I do not believe it essential for this article (and do not have the necessary statistical data) to develop in detail exactly what is represented for certain capitalist countries, and for the regime in its entirety, by the economic loss (outlets for capital and goods, sources of raw material, balances of trade) of territories such as China, Indo-China, Korea, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma. Some of these territories are not yet actually lost to imperialism but they are in process of becoming so, and this is already determining certain reactions and preparations by imperialism.

The loss of Malaya, for example, would throw British imperialism into a grave financial crisis by depriving it of important resources it now obtains from exploiting this country.

It is necessary on the other hand to consider not only what these losses mean in terms of the past condition of capitalism but also how they relate to its future possibilities, to its perspectives. From this point of view, for instance, the loss of the Chinese market is a historic defeat for Yankee imperialism so far as its possibilities for expansion are concerned. The same considerations in their economic significance apply to capitalist Europe, particularly through the loss of those countries which now constitute the Soviet buffer zone.

All these structural modifications (to which must be added the new relationships between capitalist powers resulting from the crushing preponderance of Yankee imperialism over all the other capitalist countries), add up to this: that the capitalist regime, having lost its equilibrium, now has no possibility of recovering it without restoring a world market embracing the lost territories, and without a more equalized redistribution of forces within the imperialist camp.

Such a perspective is not theoretically excluded in the event of a victorious war waged by imperialism which would also bring with it a marked weakening of American imperialism while in an equal measure not draining the other powers such as England, France, Germany, Japan.

Actually, however, we are very far today from such a perspective.

Given the fact that all its attempts to restore a certain measure of equilibrium have failed, and that on the contrary it is constantly losing ground, nothing else is now left for capitalism except to take the road toward ever greater military, economic and political preparations for a new war.

This is the initial important point of departure and the initial fundamental perspective in the evolution of the international situation.

To understand that capitalism is now rapidly heading toward war, for it has no other short or long-term way out, and that this process cannot be stopped short of the unavoidable destruction of the regime, is equivalent to defining a fundamental line in the evolution of the international situation.

Neither the defeatist or "neutralist" tendencies which are prevailing among certain circles of the European bourgeoisie, nor the "isolationist" tendencies of certain sections of the American bourgeoisie, will be able in the long run to determine the fundamental line of the central core of the international monopolist bourgeoisie and of the American monopolists in particular. Even by itself, the latter, if it succeeds in maintaining its control over the American masses, would rather risk war than surrender without a fight to the revolution.

Consequently, discussion among revolutionary Marxists cannot take place over the question of whether war is inevitable or not, so long as the capitalist regime remains standing, but is limited to questions of how soon, the conditions for the outbreak of war, as well as over the nature and consequences of such a war.

On all these questions the documents of the International have contributed very important clarifications.

Against those who have already for a number of years put forward the positions of the "immediacy" of the Third World War, the leadership of the International has presented its argument, by and large confirmed by the events, demonstrating the unpreparedness of imperialism for all-out war, and the fear, on the other hand, of the Soviet bureaucracy to engage in an all-out war which would place its own equilibrium in peril.

It is nevertheless true that, within this correct general perspective of the international leadership, as it was more concretely set down at the time of the Eighth Plenum of the IEC, there were two weak points which have been clearly revealed in the light of the Korean war and its international consequences. The first point, which was implicit in this perspective, was the overestimation of the effective forces of imperialism and the corresponding underestimation of the opposing forces.

It is with the Korean war that our movement for the first time realized the important factor that the relationship of forces on the international chess-board is now evolving to the disadvantage of imperialism; that the internal dislocation and disequilibrium of the capitalist regime are greater than either we had thought or than the Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist leaderships themselves had supposed; that the weight of the colonial revolution in Asia presses more heavily than we had realized on the destinies of capitalism; that the true relationship of forces between imperialism and the forces opposed to it are to be measured not simply on the level of reciprocal material and technical resources, but also on the level of social relations and class relations and that these relations are developing internationally to the disadvantage of imperialism; that the revolutionary spirit of the masses directed against imperialism acts as an additional force, supplementing the material and technical forces raised against imperialism.

The second weak point in our perspective (which moreover flowed from this erroneous estimate of the actual trend of development in the international relationship of forces) was to have allowed imperialism the possibility to unleash a general war only after "many years." (Political Report of the Eighth Plenum of the IEC). This postponement flowed from the estimate that a "reciprocal neutralization" prevailed between the imperialist bloc and the bloc led by the USSR, and that this neutralization would last "many years," rendering war "impossible" in the meantime.

Actually the Korean war has demonstrated that the international relationship of forces (encompassed in this general formulation is the relationship of forces between the two blocs) was not tending toward a prolonged equilibrium but was developing to the increasing disadvantage of imperialism.

On the other hand, in accord with this rectification, it would be wrong to set down as a necessary condition for imperialism to unleash a major war that its preparation should be completed so that it may also conduct and win (read: have good chances of winning) the unleashed war.

It may happen that imperialism, unsuccessful in stabilizing its present positions and finding itself compelled to retreat from certain positions which it considers fundamental, will plunge into war, despite all the risks and in spite of its diminishing rather than growing chances of success.

Such an attitude is above all applicable to American imperialism which constitutes the hard core of capitalist forces today.

It is possible that American capitalism, if it maintains its control over the American masses and feels relatively strong by virtue of the progress of its intensive rearmament, may in two or three years, for example, prefer war with all its risks to a new retreat on the Korean model.

This possibility, which flows precisely from the dimensions of the setback to imperialism now taking place in the world, and consequently of its crisis (even though that does not manifest itself immediately in all its acuteness), is no longer excluded, particularly for American imperialism.

It is the advance of forces opposing imperialism which brings nearer the possibility of a final and desperate resort to war by imperialism -- unless we can expect the disappearance without a struggle of the capitalist regime as a whole, including the still extremely powerful fortress which Yankee imperialism constitutes.

For this reason, in the "Theses on the International Perspectives and the Orientation of the Fourth International Movement," while we emphasize the reasons which cause imperialism to hesitate in unleashing war and to continue to temporize, we do not exclude the possibility of a general war, even during the period in which the relationship of forces remains, as at present, fundamentally unfavorable to imperialism.

The next question which poses itself is: What can be the nature of a war launched under such conditions?

Such a war would take on, from the very beginning, the character of an international civil war, especially in Europe and in Asia. These continents would rapidly pass over under the control of the Soviet bureaucracy, of the Communist Parties, or of the revolutionary masses.

War under these conditions, with the existing relationship of forces on the international arena, would essentially be Revolution. Thus the advance of anti-capitalist revolution in the world at one and the same time postpones and brings nearer the danger of general war.

Conversely, war this time means the Revolution.

These two conceptions of Revolution and of War, far from being in opposition or being differentiated as two significantly different stages of development, are approaching each other more closely and becoming so interlinked as to be almost indistinguishable under certain circumstances and at certain times. In their stead, it is the conception of Revolution-War, of War-Revolution which is emerging and upon which the perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest.

Such language will perhaps shock the lovers of "pacifist" dreams and declamation, or those who already bemoan the apocalyptic end of the world which they foresee following upon an atomic war or a world-wide expansion of Stalinism. But these sensitive souls can find no place among the militants and least of all the revolutionary Marxist cadres of this most terrible epoch where the sharpness of the class struggle is carried to the extreme. It is objective reality which thrusts this dialectic of Revolution-War to the forefront, which implacably destroys "pacifist" dreams, and which permits no respite in the gigantic simultaneous deployment of the forces of Revolution and of War and in their struggle to the death.

The task of revolutionists fully cognizant of this period and of its possibilities consists above all in solidly basing themselves on the growing objective chances in favor of the Revolution, fructifying these (by the most appropriate means of propaganda) for all the laboring masses drawn toward the Revolution.

But let us more closely examine the character of this latter process.

### The Evolution of Stalinism

Up to now the crisis of the capitalist regime appears to have directly benefited Stalinism. This constitutes the principal reason for the prevalent lack of understanding, even in our own ranks, of the profoundly revolutionary character of the overturns we are witnessing.

For revolutionary Marxists who do not want to fall prey to confusion or to petty-bourgeois reactions (resulting in part from this confusion), it is absolutely necessary to return to fundamental criteria, to the fundamental bases of our theory, in order to be able to grasp the direction of the evolution which we are witnessing, and to set their course on the basis of excluding all empiricism, all impressionism, all narrow-mindedness, every conjunctural, transitory, secondary aspect of the situation.

The deepest, most revolutionary, most decisive overturns of capitalism and of its imperialist stage, Marxist-Leninist theory teaches us, are engendered despite and against all subjective obstacles, despite and against the treacherous line of the traditional Social-Democratic and Stalinist leaderships, by the contradictions inherent in the present social regime, by the inevitable sharpening of these contradictions in direct proportion with capitalist development.

Such is the case today.

The capitalist regime, having attained its highest stage, is breaking up, decaying, and thus allowing a series of phenomena to



appear which fall into the general framework of an epoch of transition between capitalism and socialism, an epoch which has already begun and is quite advanced.

This epoch of transition is disorienting the scholasticists of Marxism, the partisans of "pure" forms, of norms, because it follows a far more complicated, more tortuous, and longer course than that which the classics of Marxism had sketched out before the experience of the Russian Revolution.

But in further grasping reality as well as the spirit of our theory (as against what is essentially the letter of certain writings) we see that this epoch of transition exists for profound reasons for its own.

Even discounting the role played in the present historical process by the profound bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and the Stalinist leaderships, it is necessary to single out an objective cause which is exercising its influence upon the epoch of transition: the gradual, partial development of the revolution, isolating it for a certain period and localizing it in countries which, moreover, are not among the most developed economically and culturally.

This pattern of development of the Revolution, which is the real pattern and has its reasons for existence, implies a more complicated, more tortuous, longer passage from capitalism to socialism, lending transitional forms to society and to proletarian power.\*

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\*The writings and policy of Lenin after the Revolution and especially between 1921 and 1923 are significant of the flexibility of his thinking when confronted with reality and its concrete problems. We are already far from the schema of Revolution as conceived prior to its victory and its concrete experience.

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To this fundamental objective cause is added the influence which has been exercised up to now on the course of history by the Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist leaderships.

Our fundamental difference with certain neo-apologists for Stalinism, of the Gilles Martinet stripe in France, does not involve the fact that there are objective causes at work imposing transitional forms of the society and of the power succeeding capitalism, which are quite far from the "norms" outlined by the classics of Marxism prior to the Russian Revolution. Our difference is over the fact that these neo-Stalinists present Stalinist policy as the expression of a consistent, realistic Marxism which, consciously and in full awareness of the goal, is marching toward socialism while taking realistically into account the requirements of the situation. And the only reproach they have to make against Stalinism is that Stalinism conceals these realities from the masses and strives, for example, to embellish the situation in the USSR by declaring that it has already succeeded in passing from "socialism to communism." \*

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\*See among others the writings of G. Martinet "On the Socialist State" in the Revue Internationale, October-December 1950.

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These people who pose as sincere pretend to forget that, if things are this way, it is because Stalinism is not the expression of the policy of a "realistic" proletarian leadership but that of the Soviet bureaucracy, that is to say, of a vast privileged social layer in the USSR which has usurped political power from the proletariat and has theoretically formulated its position of exorbitant privileges, fiercely guarded from the Soviet masses by a monstrous oppressive apparatus, into "socialism on the eve of passing over to communism."

This layer can have neither a "socialist" consciousness or policy but on the contrary sees its mortal enemy in world Revolution and genuine proletarian power.

By virtue of the role of the Soviet bureaucracy in the present historical process and in the international working class movement in particular, the liquidation of the capitalist system in almost half of Europe, and of imperialism in Asia (a liquidation which has been facilitated and made possible primarily because of the internal dislocation of the regime, and of the revolutionary upsurge of the masses, owing to a favorable situation: the recent war), has taken on transitional forms which are even more deformed than objective necessity dictated. On the other hand, the role played by the Stalinist leadership, impedes, just as in the USSR, the free socialist development of these forms and places all the realized conquests in constant danger.

It is nevertheless necessary, for a correct orientation of revolutionary Marxists, not only to bear in mind that the objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining factor, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order, but also that Stalinism itself is on the one side a phenomenon of contradictions, and on the other a self-contradictory phenomenon.

Only Trotskyist analysis, as it was fundamentally laid down by Leon Trotsky himself, enables us to understand the specific dialectic of Stalinism, its contradictory character and the contradictions inherent in its nature.

At issue here is not an abuse of the term dialectic in order to impress others or to further obscure an inadequate outlook nor for that matter in order to contrive a false way out of a difficult situation.

To understand Stalinism is impossible for vulgar, mechanical or merely formalistic thinking. We constantly see the bankruptcy of this kind of thinking in the analyses, conclusions, perspectives of all those in the capitalist camp or in the working class movement who strive to explain Stalinism and to define it in this way.

The repercussions of such superficial thinking have made themselves felt in our own ranks. Before such phenomena as the formation and evolution of the Soviet buffer zone in Europe, the Yugoslav experience, the present colonial revolutions, the regime of Mao Tse-tung, confusion and perplexity have made their way right inside of our own movement.

Are we witnessing an expansion and a worldwide domination by Stalinism? Can the latter really overthrow the capitalist regime in

some places? Can the Communist Parties lead a revolution and bring it to victory? Comrades pose these questions and speculate on the validity and future of our analysis of Stalinism with a certain anxiety.

But these comrades would be far less troubled and perplexed if they had genuinely and not mechanically assimilated the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism, and if, in order to understand present phenomena, they started out from the following principle and the following consideration: in order, as Marxists, to give correct answers to all these questions, it is necessary here, as in all other important social and political phenomena, to grasp the world dialectical process, to grasp its contradictions as they inexorably develop under the new objective conditions.

The bogie of the "worldwide domination of Stalinism" is proper to people who are incapable of perceiving, for lack of a correct theoretical understanding of Stalinism, that the contradictions inherent in its nature, far from being ameliorated or eliminated in direct proportion to its expansion, are in reality being reproduced on an ever greater scale and will provoke its destruction. This will take place in two ways: by the counterblows of the anti-capitalist victories in the world and even in the USSR stimulating resistance of the masses to the bureaucracy; by elimination in the long run of the objective causes for the bureaucracy, for all bureaucracy, in direct proportion as the capitalist regime suffers setbacks and an ever increasing and economically more important sector escapes from capitalism and organizes itself on the basis of a state-ized and planned economy, thereby stimulating the growth of the productive forces.

In the prodigious rise of American imperialism which followed the First World War, most people have seen only one aspect of the process: the expansion and trend towards world domination by Wall Street. The other aspect, which we are witnessing precisely at present, which consists in this: that this expansion simultaneously includes within the foundations of American imperialism's structure "the powder magazines of the whole world" provoking the "greatest military, economic and revolutionary convulsions, beside which all those of the past fade into the background." This was clearly grasped at the time by Leon Trotsky.\*

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\*The Third International After Lenin, by L. Trotsky. Chapter on "The United States of America and Europe."

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This is an example of dialectical analysis of a phenomenon which, despite its outward appearance of power, its fleeting historical successes, rests fundamentally on irreconcilable contradictions.

Stalinism is such a phenomenon.

Since the Second World Congress, our movement has succeeded in better seeing, better grasping and better understanding the contradictory process of Stalinist expansion in a definite sphere: that of the relationship between the Communist Parties where they have attained

power and the Soviet bureaucracy. Fundamental ideas (several of which moreover are to be found at least implicit in our prewar theoretical arsenal) have been reaffirmed, clarified, developed in the documents of the International and the writings of leading comrades on the Soviet buffer zone, the Yugoslav affair, the Chinese revolution, the crisis of Stalinism. We have insisted, and rightly so, on the specific dialectic of the relations existing between the Soviet bureaucracy, the Communist Parties and the mass movements, emphasizing the following principal ideas: The Yugoslav affair as well as the march and the victory of the Chinese revolution, also the other unfolding colonial revolutions (Korea, Vietnam, Burma, Malaya, the Philippines) have demonstrated that the Communist Parties retain the possibility, in certain circumstances, of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation, that is to say, of finding themselves compelled to engage in a struggle for power. These circumstances have revealed themselves during and following the Second World War to be the extreme dislocation of the regime of the possessing classes and of imperialism, and of the revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

Under these exceptional conditions, the mass movement, which found only the Communist Parties available as a channel, compelled these parties to go further than their leaderships and above all the Kremlin would have wished, and literally pushed them into power.\*

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\*Our Transitional Program foresees this possibility. It states: "One cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty-bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie."

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By virtue of the weak resistance and at times the virtual non-existence of the class enemy (internally demoralized and displaced), the Communist Parties have been able to win despite their opportunism (Yugoslavia, China). In other cases, power was turned over to them by entry of the Red Army (European buffer zone), but it was not monopolized and consolidated until after the break between the Soviet bureaucracy and imperialism, and the beginning of the "cold war."

Thus the rise of Communist Parties to power is not the consequence of a capacity of Stalinism to struggle for the Revolution, does not alter the internationally counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, but it is the product of an exceptional combination of circumstances which has imposed the seizure of power either upon the Soviet bureaucracy (in the case of the European buffer zone), or upon certain Communist Parties (Yugoslavia, China).

In the case of the Soviet European buffer zone, the overthrow of the economic and political power of capitalism and the installation of the Communist Parties in the government was above all the outcome of the military-bureaucratic activity of the Soviet bureaucracy, the mass movement having played a secondary role (Czechoslovakia) or practically none. In the case of Yugoslavia and of China, the assumption of power was occasioned principally by the internal displacement of

the class enemy and of the exceptional upsurge of the revolutionary movement of the masses.

I have already dealt to a certain extent with the problems regarding the significance, the causes and the trend of the transformations which have taken place in the Soviet buffer zone in my two articles contributed to the discussion held in the International on the Yugoslav affair. ("On the Class Nature of Yugoslavia," Oct., 1949; "Yugoslavia and the Rest of the Buffer Zone," Feb. 1950). I will return to these same questions soon in another article.

We have already discussed the problems regarding the significance, the causes and the consequences of the taking of power in Yugoslavia and in China, in a series of documents by the International and in articles by comrades in the International leadership and in our sections. These have thrown light on certain important aspects: the influence of the mass movement upon the Communist parties at its head (in the absence of any other organization), which tends to tear them away from strict discipline at the hands of the Soviet bureaucracy; the possibility, and even in the long run the inevitability, of an opposition arising to the Soviet bureaucracy to the degree that these Communist parties have a mass base of their own which has enabled them to conquer power by and large through their own means.

The most important lesson we have drawn from the Yugoslav affair, from the new China of Mao Tse-tung, and other Asian revolutions in progress is this: not to confuse every victory over capitalism and imperialism achieved by the revolutionary movement of the masses, although it may be led by Communist parties, with a pure and simple victory of the Soviet bureaucracy.

To take the case of China alone, we are now forced to admit, after the Korean experience, what I had partly put forward in my articles on the crisis of Stalinism (Quatrieme Internationale, March-April, 1950) and on the Korean war (Quatrieme Internationale, August-October, 1950) that China could not play the role of a mere satellite of the Kremlin but rather of a partner which henceforth imposes upon the Soviet bureaucracy a certain co-leadership of the international Stalinist movement. This co-leadership is, however, a disruptive element within Stalinism which is based on the rigid application of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy corresponding to its interests. The role of China in the unleashing of the Korean war and its conduct that many attribute exclusively to the Kremlin have shown itself to be much more important and decisive than had been thought. China has become an international power of the first order, with far more possibilities than Yugoslavia, for example, of playing an independent role between Moscow and Washington. Consequently, the evolution of China can prove different from that of the Soviet bureaucracy and introduce powerful elements of differentiation within the Stalinist camp.

It is in the light of all this experience and all these considerations that we must place the possible perspective of a war which may break out before imperialism can radically change the existing relationship of forces which is unfavorable to it. Such a war, launched under such conditions, will quickly acquire, as we have already pointed out, the character of an international civil war, at least in Europe and in Asia.

To the attempts of the bourgeoisie and of the imperialists to mobilize the masses for their war against the USSR, the "People's Democracies," China and other Asian revolutions in progress, and to crush the Communist parties and the revolutionary movements in their respective countries, large sections will react by revolt, open struggle, armed struggle, a new Resistance, but which would this time take on a far clearer class character. It is possible that, thanks to these reactions of the masses, and to the convulsions and the exasperation which such a war would quickly create, different Communist parties would find themselves obliged to undertake a struggle, under pressure from the masses and their own rank and file, which would go beyond the objectives fixed by the Soviet bureaucracy.

Such a war, far from curbing the struggle which would actually unfold to the detriment of imperialism, would intensify it and bring imperialism to its death throes. Such a war would upset all the equilibriums, drawing all forces into the struggle, speeding up the process already initiated of the convulsive transformation of our society which would be abated only with the triumph of socialism internationally. The fate of Stalinism would be settled precisely within this period of gigantic overturns.

People who despair of the fate of humanity because Stalinism still endures and even achieves victories, tailor History to their own personal measure. They really desire that the entire process of the transformation of capitalist society into socialism would be accomplished within the span of their brief lives so that they can be rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the Revolution. As for us, we reaffirm what we wrote in the first article devoted to the Yugoslav affair: this transformation will probably take an entire historical period of several centuries and will in the meantime be filled with forms and regimes transitional between capitalism and socialism and necessarily deviating from "pure" forms and norms.

We are aware that this statement has shocked certain comrades and served others as a springboard to attack our "revisionism."

But we do not disarm. A century has already elapsed since the Communist Manifesto and more than half a century since imperialism, "the highest stage of capitalism." The course of history has shown itself to be more complicated, more tortuous and drawn-out than the predictions of men who had the legitimate aim of shortening the intervals separating them from their ideals. The best Marxists have not avoided being mistaken, not to be sure on the general line of development, but on its time-spans and concrete forms. What is today, in all countries, the possible strategic aim, is the Revolution, the taking of power, the abolition of capitalism. But the taking of power in one country does not settle the entire question. The conditions for a free development toward socialism are still more complicated and more difficult. The example of the Soviet Union, the "People's Democracies," Yugoslavia and China prove that.

However, it would be no less false to minimize the historical importance of the progress accomplished along the road of overturning capitalism and the victory of the Revolution in the world.

Those who wish to reply to the anxiety and perplexity of certain people in the face of what is called the victories of Stalinism by

minimizing the objectively revolutionary significance of these facts are compelled to sink into an anti-Stalinist sectarianism at all costs which scarcely conceals, under its aggressive appearance, its lack of confidence in the basic revolutionary process of our epoch, which is the most positive pledge of the ultimate destruction of Stalinism and which will be realized all the more rapidly as the overturn of capitalism and of imperialism progresses and wins an ever more important section of the world.

### The Orientation and the Future of our Movement

Our basic orientation today flows essentially from the analysis of the period in which we struggle, from the basic revolutionary character of this period.

We do not attach ourselves exclusively to any episode within this period, however important it may be. We do not say, it is now or never; we do not consider any defeat as a defeat which shuts off revolutionary perspectives. A revolutionary movement leaves lamentations to spectators of the struggle and not to those participating in this struggle. It solidly supports itself on revolutionary perspectives which are objective and real and attempts to reinforce them to the best of its ability by its own subjective weight.

To be sure, the objective revolutionary process is not automatic and we cannot, even at the present time, when the relationship of forces is evolving to the disadvantage of imperialism, categorically affirm that victory is definitely at hand. To be sure, the danger exists that a general war may engender extensive destructions which will render still more difficult, more complicated and more protracted the socialist reconstruction of humanity. Under certain conditions, the theoretical possibility of a descent into barbarism is not excluded.

To be sure, the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy constantly places in peril all the conquests up to now and can facilitate a new shift in the relationship of forces to the advantage of capitalism.

But what distinguishes a genuine revolutionary movement from a tendency which is at bottom petty bourgeois is that the revolutionists base their fundamental orientation on the perspective of the Revolution and Socialism. As against the counter-revolutionary alternative of the period they base themselves on the revolutionary possibilities which are practical, actual and not theoretical; they appraise these possibilities at their full value; they survey the revolutionary process in its ascending objective totality and do not get lost in this or that secondary episode of this process.

Certain people have been astonished, and even indignant, at our abrupt change when the course of the foreign policy of Yugoslavia began to slip into the orbit of the "democratic forces" of imperialism. In reality, our turn developed with a certain delay following the sharp turn in Yugoslav policy itself under the international pressure unleashed by the Korean war.

The change was primarily objective, in the situation outside of us. It signified a defeat, let us hope a transitory one, for the



Yugoslav revolution. From this moment, with this fact as the starting point, for us it was not an occasion to weep or to hesitate or to remain indecisive. In the revolutionary period in which we struggle, there will be many ups and downs, victories and defeats, and we base our fundamental orientation only on the essential line of this period, characterized by the growing objective perspectives of the revolution which is unfolding on the ruins and the crisis of capitalism and imperialism.

The policy of the Yugoslav leaders has isolated, as it still does, the Yugoslav revolution from the support of the proletarian and colonial masses for the sake of entrusting its defense to the "democratic" imperialism that has now with such hastiness been discovered by Milovan Djilas.

Between this policy and unconditional support of the struggles of the proletarian and colonial masses, we have very naturally chosen the second pole of the alternative which corresponds with the general struggle for the world Revolution of which the Yugoslav revolution forms only a subordinated part. This conception of our orientation, of our conduct, acquires exceptional importance precisely at the present stage which is characterized by the greatest tension ever known in the international class struggle and the greatest pressure ever exerted upon movements and individuals. This pressure is incontrovertably far greater now than on the eve or during the Second World War and it will go on being reinforced.

Without a clear and principled line, without a firm and revolutionary orientation, we run the risk of falling into confusion and petty-bourgeois deviations of all kinds, which have likewise marked our movement in the past.

The leading elements of our movement ought to be aware of this danger, I would say of its manifestation which is to a certain degree unavoidable.

That is why we place such emphasis, in the "Theses on the International Perspectives and the Orientation of the Fourth International Movement," on the need to reaffirm and to define more precisely our programmatic position toward the USSR, the Soviet bureaucracy, the Communist Parties and the colonial revolutions in progress. The experience of what has happened around us with the different anti-Stalinist tendencies in the workers' movement, as well as the still more important experience which the Yugoslav CP is now passing through, clearly demonstrates that without a Marxist orientation on these questions, one can imperceptibly glide over objectively into the enemy camp in the present period of the extreme polarization of class forces.

Our movement is naturally not "neutral" between the so-called two blocs, that of imperialism and that led by the USSR. First of all because neutralism always works objectively in favor of one of the antagonistic forces. There is no such thing as pure "neutralism." Next because, in the relations and above all the conflicts of the bloc led by the USSR with imperialism, we give critical support to the first while we unreservedly contend against the second. Our support to the colonial revolutions now going on, despite their Stalinist or



Stalinized leadership, in their struggle against imperialism is even unconditional. Our movement is independent of Moscow's policy, of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy, in the sense that it is not at all bound by this policy. Our movement does not identify it with the interests of the international proletariat and the colonial masses, but on the contrary combats this policy in all its pernicious and hostile aspects toward the world revolution. Without having thought through all these questions, without having clarified and further defined them in our minds, it would be impossible for us in the days ahead to link ourselves with the mass revolutionary movement as well as with the proletarian vanguard, which in Asia and in Europe follow Stalinist or Stalinized leaderships. It would also be impossible for us, in countries where this strong influence of the Stalinist leadership over the masses does not exist, but where on the contrary a powerful reactionary pressure from the bourgeoisie and its reformist agencies is exercised, as in the United States, England, Canada, Australia, Belgium, etc., to resist this pressure and adhere to a clear and firm class line. Without that it would above all be impossible for us, in the event of a general war, to correctly and effectively orient ourselves to assure the triumph of the revolutionary forces over capitalism and, in the course of this struggle, over the Soviet bureaucracy itself.

In all those cases where sectarian and mechanistic anti-Stalinism, which identified the leadership with the mass movement or which has not grasped the contradictory character of Stalinism, including the actions of the Soviet bureaucracy, has taken hold in our organization, it has led our movement to virtual disaster and to complete political and theoretical disorientation. Such was the case in certain of our movements during the war and since its end in Europe. Such was particularly the case in certain tendencies of our movement in China and partially in Indo-China.

Ought we to repeat such errors? Can we live side by side with a developing revolution which, arms in hand, combats imperialism and simultaneously deals weighty and sometimes mortal blows at the native possessing classes, as is the case in the current Asian revolutions, and be content with our former attitude toward the Communist Parties leading these revolutions, when these parties, applying the rigid policy of the Kremlin, collaborated with imperialism and class enemy?

Can we see the preparation and the possibility of an all-out war and neglect getting closer from now on to the ranks of the Communist Parties which in many important countries in Europe and in Asia are still the polarizing force for the proletarian and colonial masses, the readiest for struggle against the war of the imperialists and the most valuable in the struggle for the revolution?

How otherwise would we be capable of carrying on our struggle against the war-preparations of imperialism which implies the struggle to disarm and conquer the bourgeoisie through the revolutionary masses?

How could we hope to effect our link-up with the revolutionary forces which will emerge from this struggle and will inevitably launch the assault upon capitalism and imperialism and orient them in the course of this very struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy as well?

Unexpected as that may seem at first glance, the new conditions in which the Communist Parties in those Asian countries which are currently going through a revolution find themselves, dictate to us, as a general attitude toward them, by and large that of a Left Opposition which gives them critical support. That applies, for example, to China. Following the victory of Mao Tse-tung, our movement in China, instead of ignoring or minimizing this victory and continuing to attack the Chinese CP on the absolutely correct basis of the treacherous policy of this party (when it submitted to the political leadership of the bourgeoisie and collaborated with Chiang Kai-shek) should have addressed itself, in my opinion, to the Chinese masses in the following terms: The Chinese Communist Party, propelled and lifted up by the revolutionary movement of the masses, benefiting from the advanced internal disintegration of the native possessing class and the weakness of imperialism, and being compelled in the course of events and under pressure from the masses, to partially change the line which subordinated it to the political leadership of the bourgeoisie in the accomplishment of the revolution in China, has come to power. That constitutes an important victory and opens possibilities for a forward march of the Revolution and for its final triumph through the establishment of a genuine democratic power of the Chinese workers and poor peasants. For to assure the proletarian character of the power remains the key problem of the revolution. We Trotskyists, who have always championed the theory that the Chinese revolution can conquer only under the political leadership of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard, will defend the conquests achieved as well as each forward step made in the direction of the creation of a democratic power of the Chinese workers and poor peasants. We give critical support to the Chinese CP and to the government of Mao Tse-tung, and we demand our legal existence as the Communist tendency of the workers' movement.

Such a declaration and such an attitude by and large would have chances of being understood by a certain number of conscious elements in the revolutionary vanguard of China, by every class-conscious worker, and would place the leadership of the Chinese CP before this dilemma: either accept our legal existence or impose illegality upon us, which would demonstrate its bureaucratic and Stalinist character.

In Europe where the Communist Parties manipulate the proletarian masses to assure the success of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy and its special aims in each country and does not at all struggle for the revolution and the taking of power, such a policy toward these parties is naturally excluded. On the contrary, to get closer to their ranks, to link ourselves with them in all possible united-front actions against the war-preparations of the imperialists and to emphasize the revolutionary possibilities of this period that the Stalinist leadership deliberately hides, is an essential duty of all our organizations operating in countries where the majority of the working class follows the Communist Parties. Much closer to the ranks of these parties: such is our slogan in all these countries which results from the analysis of the situation and from its perspectives.

In those countries where Stalinism is practically non-existent or exercises weak influence over the masses, our movement will strive to become the principal leadership of the proletariat in the years

ahead: in the United States, England, Germany, Canada, in all of Latin America, in Australia, Indonesia, perhaps in India. The main immediate future of our movement resides far more in these places than in countries where the Stalinist influence still reigns. Certain of these countries play a key role in the international situation and because of the conditions of their economic development remain favored countries for socialist construction: the United States, England and Germany. The future of Stalinism is barred in these countries.

The development of our movement in the United States in particular would influence the entire course of the international workers' movement and would accelerate the crisis and decomposition of Stalinism.

Other variants are naturally possible, like that which appeared at a certain moment with the progressive development of the Yugoslav revolution before the latest turn of its leaders. It is difficult to foresee the precise form through which the reinforcement of the conscious revolutionary tendency will pass and the forms which the inevitable decomposition and elimination of Stalinism will take. It is also difficult to describe all the tactical moves which our movement will employ the better to link itself with the masses and to move ahead.

Since the close of the war and especially since the Second World Congress of our International, the progress of our movement has been undeniable. These gains express themselves in the decisive break effected by most of our organizations with the illusion of revolutionary activity outside of the real mass movement and its peculiarities in each country; in the real, conscious quest, felt by the cadres and the militants, for avenues of access to the movement of the masses in each country or to the essential currents of that movement; in the patient, methodical and long-range work undertaken within these tendencies in order to call forth a revolutionary differentiation within their ranks, in accord with the matured possibilities of their own experience and the objective conditions; in the advanced proletarianization of our organizations and of their leaderships, which is the surest pledge of the application and the prosecution of such a policy toward the working class and with that class.

This progress has been made possible thanks to the solidity of our theoretical orientation, to the indestructible solidity of Trotskyism and thanks to the revolutionary character of the period. It is the reinforcement of this latter in the years ahead, it is the growing revolutionary perspectives that more and more dominate the historical scene which nourish our revolutionary optimism and our absolute confidence in the destiny of Trotskyism, the conscious expression of the Communist movement in our epoch.

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