

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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The International Internal Discussion Bulletin is the English-language edition of the internal discussion bulletin of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

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Declaration of the International Majority Tendency

[The following declaration was adopted by the Steering Committee of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) at the end of February. The IMT made their declaration available to the National Committee of the SWP prior to its April plenum.]

The changes that have occurred both in the world situation and within the Fourth International require that the International Majority Tendency (IMT) redefine its political platform. The following statement represents a definition in this direction.

1. The evolution of the world situation during the past several years has been marked by a new deterioration of the relationship of forces for imperialism, a deepening of the favorable conditions for the rise of world socialist revolution. The defeat of American imperialism in Vietnam and the reunification of Vietnam into a new workers state; the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau and the outcome of the Angolan civil war, which further extended the crisis of the system of imperialist domination toward southern African and Portugal; the first generalized recession of the international capitalist economy since the second world war and the grave crisis of political leadership of international imperialism which has coincided with it; the conjunction of this economic crisis with the rise of workers struggles and a generalized social crisis in a number of countries of southern Europe, which has led or will lead these countries to the brink of revolutionary crisis (Portugal 1975) or of prerevolutionary situation (Spain, Italy, France)—such are the factors that have especially contributed to this evolution. Generally speaking, the general instability of the system is much more pronounced than it was during the 1950s and 1960s, even though there are notable differences from country to country, and even though American imperialism on the one hand and West German imperialism on the other have been much less shaken than most of their partners/competitors.

The import and objective consequences of the emergence of imperialist relays in the form of bourgeoisies in semi-industrialized countries commanding capital wealth and formidable military strength (Brazil, Iran, South Korea) must not be underestimated. Nevertheless, their capacity for counterrevolutionary action is undermined by explosive social contradictions in their own countries.

It may be thus concluded that if there have not been more victories for the socialist revolution during this phase, it is not primarily due to the intrinsic strength of the capitalist system, its reserves, and its ability to maneuver (factors which, of course, are involved to varying degrees in explaining world evolution), but more than ever to the crisis of proletarian leadership, to the disorienting, demobilizing, and divisive role of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement: Social

Democratic, Stalinist, CPs of Stalinist origin, various trade-union bureaucracies, and to the "peaceful coexistence" policy of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. It is these leaderships whose policies have once again wasted excellent opportunities for revolutionary "breakthroughs," particularly in Chile and Portugal, where the proletariat had exhibited remarkable combativity and revolutionary energy. In the present phase these leaderships are trying to repeat the same counterrevolutionary operations in Spain and Italy, and they will repeat these attempts in France in the future.

The new wave of the crisis of Stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the crisis of Maoism in China, parallel to the accentuated crisis of the capitalist system, indicates that the forces working toward a political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states are also developing. There is, however, growing interaction among the manifestations of this crisis (particularly the repression in the USSR and the "people's democracies"), the development of consciousness within the workers movement in the capitalist countries of the phenomena of bureaucratization of the workers states, the political evolution of the CPs of Western Europe and elsewhere (Japan, Mexico, etc.), and the development of new opposition tendencies within these states, oppositions more oriented toward the working class and the international workers movement.

2. The trend toward the shift of the center of gravity of the world revolution to the imperialist countries (already stressed in the documents adopted at the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses) has intensified further during the past three years. It is combined with the greater weight of urban and proletarian struggles in the semicolonial and dependent countries themselves, at least in the most developed of them. The resistance of the Argentine proletariat to the military junta, the significant struggles of the Egyptian proletariat, and the explosions in the proletarian townships of South Africa constitute the most spectacular confirmations of this trend, which is also stimulated by advances in industrialization and urbanization in a whole series of semicolonial and dependent countries. What is involved, then, is a new stage in the dialectic of the world revolution, one which in no way implies a weakening of the possibilities for revolution in these countries.

This entire evolution culminates in the trend toward a more or less combined revolutionary upsurge in southern Europe (Spain, Italy, France, Portugal). Because of the increased social weight, higher level of organization, and degree of combativity of the proletariat of these four countries, and because of the gains in experience and capacity for self-organization that have been made in the past few years, this revolutionary crisis already promises to be one of the most serious in the whole history of the capitalist system. It will last for an entire period. Since this is the first time that the world's major revolutionary crisis will occur in countries in which the Fourth International commands organizational strength and a

real capacity for intervention, the International's future development will depend in large measure on the successes or failures of its intervention in these revolutions.

For a series of both historical and structural and conjunctural reasons, the outcome of these revolutionary upsurges will depend jointly on the proletariats of these countries undergoing genuine experiences of a period of dual power—during which the superiority of proletarian democracy over bourgeois democracy will be assimilated by the majority of the workers—and on the transformation, in this context, of revolutionary Marxist organizations already rooted in the class into genuine revolutionary parties fighting to win the majority of the proletariat to their program and project of the conquest of power by workers councils.

The struggle for the realization of the transitional program as a whole, the struggle for the generalization of organs of self-organization of the working class, and the struggle to build mass revolutionary parties are but three aspects of one and the same reality: the transformation of the proletariat from a class still under the hegemony of the reformist leaderships into a class capable of successfully taking its fate into its own hands in order to reorganize the entire society on a socialist basis.

Within the workers movement, the major obstacle to the socialist victory remains the class collaborationist policy of the CPs, SPs, and trade-union bureaucracies, whatever particular forms it may take at one or another stage, in one or another country. The policy of popular front is only one of these possible forms. It must be vigorously denounced, but only as one variant of a more general orientation and political project, otherwise the workers could be disoriented if suddenly confronted with other variants of the same project of collaboration with the institutions of the bourgeois state and the employers. Is it necessary to recall that three of the cases in which policies of betrayal of the interests of the proletariat are now being applied in Europe by parties which hold a majority within the class are instances of "bourgeois workers" governments without representatives of bourgeois parties (Britain, Portugal) and support for a purely bourgeois government "from the outside" (Italy)? Our major attack must be directed against the basis of the betrayal (maintenance and consolidation of the bourgeois state apparatus, efforts to patch up the capitalist economy at the expense of the workers, while respecting the rules of the profit economy) and must place the denunciation of the alliances with the bourgeois parties in this more general framework.

3. But while betrayal of the interests of the proletarian revolution by the leaderships of the SPs, CPs, and trade-union bureaucracies has been a constant feature of the workers movement for half a century (for sixty years in the case of the Social Democracy) and remains the major threat to the rising revolution in southern Europe, a new factor must be underscored which seriously modifies the present situation compared to that of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. The grip of the traditional bureaucratic leaderships over the working class as a whole has weakened appreciably. The relationship of forces within the organized workers movement (particularly in the factories and trade unions) between these bureaucracies and the forces that escape their control at least partially and periodically has improved considerably for the latter. Granted, the tradi-

tional leaderships retain broad majorities within the class and still hold political hegemony. There has thus been no qualitative change in this situation. But the quantitative changes that have occurred are of such scope that they seriously improve revolutionary Marxists' chances to prevent prerevolutionary struggles from being stifled by the traditional leaderships.

In this conjuncture, marked by the depth of the crisis of the political, social, and economic system, the modification of the relationship of forces within the workers movement does not at all rule out phases during which the reformists and neoreformists, because of their preponderant weight within the class, may even gain an increased audience for their overall political projects. This makes a policy of united front on the part of our organizations more necessary and timely, a policy which must be concretized particularly by proposals for united action around the major needs of the masses at each given stage. The application of such a united front policy, even during such phases, is made possible by the modifications in the relationship of forces previously underlined. This means that the temporarily greater credibility of the reformist political projects does not at all imply that they will succeed as they have in the past in imposing respect for all the implications of their class collaborationist policy on the workers. On the contrary, it suggests that there will be extensive instances of the reformists' being outflanked, instances for which our organizations must be prepared.

The IMT has been calling attention to these changes and their consequences since the pre-Tenth World Congress period. There were many misunderstandings and false counterpositions in the subsequent discussion. Let us clarify a number of points.

a) What is involved in the emergence of a mass vanguard is a *social* phenomenon and not an assemblage of the so-called far left organizations. This social vanguard began to mature during the mid-1960s and has played an important role in the explosions of 1968-69 in France and Italy, in the Portuguese events of 1974-75, and in the reconstruction of the workers movement and successive waves of struggle in Spain, a country in which, because of the lack of legal structures of mass organization, this vanguard encompasses the essential portion of the workers cadres recognized by the class at the factory and neighborhood level at the present stage.

b) Precisely because of its social character, the broadening of this mass workers vanguard is also expressed in a process of differentiation within the traditional parties (a part of this vanguard began to emerge within the Socialist and Communist youth organizations, as well as within the SPs and CPs), in possible splits and left trade-union currents.

c) This vanguard's lack of programmatic and political coherence, like the partial character of its break with the projects upheld by the bureaucratic leaderships, does not at all negate the reality and importance of this phenomenon: at key moments in political, social, and economic life, hundreds of thousands of workers refuse to follow the line of their traditional leaderships. Such is the balance-sheet of Portugal in 1975, Spain at the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, Italy since Berlinguer agreed to support Andreotti's austerity policy. The same phenomenon will occur again in the future, on a grand scale in France and perhaps Britain, just as it has already occurred on a more

limited scale in Denmark, Greece, Argentina, Chile, and elsewhere. (The pace and scope with which it will spread to other countries will depend primarily on the pace and scope of the new rise of workers struggles.)

In fighting against the consolidation of the state and army of the bourgeoisie and against the projects of austerity and step by step liquidation of the major gains of the working class of the years 1974-75, the broad vanguard of the Portuguese proletariat (not grouplets, but hundreds of thousands of workers and poor peasants) *were defending the interests of the entire class*, the interests of the Portuguese revolution. The weakness of the Trotskyists (who were but a handful as of April 25, 1974) resulted in the political leadership of this social vanguard falling into the hands of centrists and ultraleftists, which did not enable control of the majority of the working class to be wrested from Soares and Cunhal and facilitated the maneuvers of these traitors in maintaining the proletariat divided and bound to the project of reconstituting a capitalist Portugal.

Likewise in Italy, because of the weakness of our section compared with three centrist organizations which hold hegemony in the far left, the enormous potential of hundreds of thousands of workers in the big factories who in practice refused to follow the traitorous policy of Berlinguer and the tens of thousands who rejected it was not transformed into a political springboard for shaking the hold of the bureaucrats over the members and voters of the Italian CP.

We must fight with all our might to prevent this from happening again in Spain and France, and to make sure that positive experiences in these countries combined with a growth of our sections, can have repercussions in Portugal, Italy, and possibly other countries of Europe, where a similar evolution may occur some time after it does in the most unstable imperialist countries.

This requires constant political and ideological battle against the confusionism and political deviations of the ultraleftist and centrist formations, combined with a policy of united front which lends credibility to our orientation toward replacing, in practice, the traditional bureaucratic leadership of the working class with a new alternative leadership.

Understanding the *uneven advance* of the class consciousness of the proletariat, we try to grasp the reality of the workers movement in all its complexity and motion. We understand that it is possible for the electoral weight of the SP and CP to increase at the same time that their control over significant portions of the working class may be loosened in day to day struggles and mobilizations. The *combination* of our policy of united front toward the mass organizations, our efforts to stimulate self-organization of the class (elected strike committees, general assemblies of the strikers and general trade-union assemblies in the factories, neighborhood committees, women's committees, etc.), and our fight to qualitatively broaden our political influence within the broad vanguard corresponds both to the precise stage of recomposition of the workers movement the class struggle has reached in the countries mentioned above and to the needs of the whole working class.

On the other hand, any policy such as that upheld by the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTF) and the Bolshevik Tendency (BT),¹ which blurs over the contradictory

features of this stage of the recomposition of the workers movement, denies the existence or does not grasp the importance and practical consequences of the social phenomenon of the broad vanguard, reduces the workers movement to the traditional organizations, and deduces the weight of various currents primarily from electoral results and bureaucratic weight, may well find itself out of step with explosive struggles. In practice it tends to lead to combining a policy of denunciation of the traitorous leaderships with a failure to take initiatives going beyond the policy put forward by these bureaucracies. It even threatens to become counterposed in practice to struggles that clearly express the interests of the entire class (such as the struggle against the various austerity policies or attempts to establish soviet-type organs during revolutionary crisis), under the pretext that these struggles are most often begun by the action of "minority" sectors.

4. The minority faction at the Tenth World Congress has divided on several occasions in face of these principal features of the new rise of world revolution: during the 1976 IEC plenum some Latin American groups broke from this tendency; a crisis broke out in the Spanish LC over the situation in Spain. The minority's line during the Tenth World Congress had not prepared it politically for these events. Its balance-sheet is one of striking failure. In face of each successive revolutionary crisis since the Tenth World Congress the LTF has made wrong prognoses and analyses and has proposed a line of action which would have been a political disaster for our movement had it won a majority in the International.

Contrary to a serious analysis of the social and political conditions in South Vietnam, the LTF obstinately persisted, right up through the collapse of the Thieu regime, in interpreting the VCP's support for the signing of the Paris accords and its explanation of the meaning of these accords as a partial implementation of a program aimed at consolidating capitalism in South Vietnam. In this the LTF based itself on a purely literal interpretation of the "program" of the Vietnamese NLF, obstinately denying the reality of the line of action of the VCP, which, though wavering in consequence of its only partial and empirical break with Stalinist doctrines and of its opportunism and bureaucratism, has nevertheless oriented itself toward the liquidation of the regime of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, toward rejection of any policy of coalition based on maintaining the system of private property, toward the creation of a workers state, albeit bureaucratically deformed from the outset.

Contrary to all evidence and to the analysis of the social and political forces involved, and once again right through the catastrophe represented for its orientation by the open intervention of the South African army on the side of the UNITA-FNLA and the deployment of military forces of the Cuban revolution on the side of the MPLA, the LTF continued to place the three organizations engaged in the Angolan civil war on the same footing, going so far as to deny the character of this civil war as a clash between formations representing different social forces and instead presenting it as an intertribal conflict or a conflict between nationalities in formation. This made it impossible for the publications carrying the LTF line or for the LTF reporter at the February 1976 IEC to give any coherent line flowing from their own correct position of support to the military struggle against the South African invaders and made it

impossible for them to explain the different attitudes which revolutionary Marxists had to take toward imperialist mercenaries and South African troops on the one hand and the troops of the Cuban workers state on the other hand.

Contrary to all evidence and to a serious Marxist analysis of the social and political forces involved, the LTF presented the systematic and deliberate offensive of Mario Soares (unanimously supported by the Portuguese bourgeoisie, the high command of the Portuguese army, and imperialism) against the revolutionary gains of the proletariat, poor peasants, and soldiers in 1975, an offensive whose main purpose was the reconsolidation of the bourgeois state apparatus and repressive apparatus which had widely disintegrated under the impact of the revolutionary upsurge of 1975, as a defense of democratic rights by the Social Democracy against a military dictatorship. It is sufficient to examine subsequent events to perceive the gross error of analysis made by the minority and the disastrous political conclusions drawn from it, which it attempts to camouflage today under the embarrassed formula: the army changed its position and wound up preferring Soares to Cunhal.

To this day the LTF has drawn no lessons from its evident inability to apply the traditional Trotskyist line of centering action during a situation that is becoming revolutionary on the extension, generalization, coordination, and centralization of the various organs of a soviet or pre-soviet type which emerged on a broad scale during the Portuguese revolution, even if in varying forms and with varying degrees of representativeness.

Finally, in the revolutionary crisis ripening in Spain the LTF kept silent on the apparently doctrinaire but actually ultra-opportunist maneuvers of the leadership of the LC, especially on the trade-union question, a decisive one in Spain today. In effect, the LC, motivated by blind Stalinophobia (going so far as to consider the Workers Commissions as anti-trade-union and as the major force responsible for trade-union division), openly opted for trade-union division and supported the demagoguery of the Social Democratic bureaucracy, to the point of stating that it favored the breakup of the Coordinacion Sindical of the Workers Commissions, UGT, and USO, and asserting that trade-union unity boiled down to UGT-CNT unity.

If such positions had been identified with the Fourth International, the Trotskyists would have appeared as dividers of the working class. This was able to be avoided only thanks to the audience of the LCR and the healthy reaction of the working class rank and file of the LC (of which the portion organized in the "Workers Tendency" has been expelled from the LC and has joined the LCR).

We find a common method in all these false positions: underestimation of revolutionary possibilities in certain countries on the brink of revolutionary crisis or already immersed in such a crisis; overestimation of reformist control over mass movements under such conditions; failure to distinguish clearly from tactics and slogans appropriate to "normal" situations to the tactics and slogans required by situations of prerevolutionary or revolutionary crisis; formalism in the approach to key problems of political and social struggles (the political forces at play tend to be judged essentially on the basis of their writings and not their objective role in the class

struggle); confusion on the problem of the state, particularly the institutions of the bourgeois democratic state and the role of the proletarian state power in the overthrow of capitalism, and confusion on the role of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism among the oppressed nationalities, with an underestimation of the influence this ideology exerts in retarding the constitution of the proletariat as a class organized separately from the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, including on the political level.

It is natural that this faction blew apart under the combined effects of the experience of the Angolan and Portuguese revolutions on the one hand and the political failure of the LTF in the four cases cited above on the other hand. It has divided into two organized groups: the BT, which includes the majority of its forces in Latin America, and the LTF, which, in addition to the important sector of North America and Australia, includes a few nuclei in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. It is significant that an important part of the Central Committee of the Spanish LC, the only significant organization supporting the LTF in Europe, has also broken with the LTF.

As for the BT, it split off from the LTF only belatedly. It has offered no credible account of the reason for which it remained so long associated with a faction that evolved toward the disastrous positions on Vietnam, Angola, Portugal, and Spain outlined above. While the BT has since declared itself generally in agreement with the positions of the IMT on Angola, and while it has adopted positions midway between those of the IMT and those of the LTF on the key importance of the struggle for the emergence, generalization, and centralization of soviet-type organs of self-organization of the toiling masses in a situation moving from prerevolutionary to revolutionary, its basic methodology remains opportunist and tailendist.

It is founded on systematic confusion between the mass movement and the bureaucratic apparatus of the organizations that hold the majority within the working class, constantly underestimating the possibility of the apparatus being outflanked by the movement, often making concessions to the orientations of the apparatus under the pretext of gaining the ear of the masses. The line of the Argentine PST during the year preceding the military coup, the line of the Uruguayan PRT during the period of the Frente Amplio and at the beginning of the Bordaberry coup, the line of the Portuguese PRT toward the Soares apparatus, and the line upheld by the BT for Spain and Italy can all be reduced to this common denominator. The BT, like the LTF, also confuses defense of democratic rights of the masses with defense of the institutions of the bourgeois-parliamentary state.

In addition, the BT is characterized by ultrafactional behavior, virtually openly theorizing the priority of building the faction over building the party and the International and overstepping the organizational norms that must regulate any Leninist organizations as soon as political differences are aggravated somewhat.

5. Between the Tenth and Eleventh World Congresses the International has gone through a period of growth, often modest, sometimes spectacular (above all in Spain, Mexico and Colombia and through the appearance and stabilization of its first daily, in France) and extension of the scope of its geographic base. In essence, this growth results from the favorable modification of the relationship

of forces, both between the classes and within the working class and the organized workers movement. The capacity of the International and its major sections to seize these opportunities, however, is a function of the correct political orientation of the general political resolution passed by the Tenth World Congress. In this sense, it may be said that the political line adopted by the Tenth World Congress has not been an obstacle but on the contrary a stimulant to building the International.

In addition, the majority of the leadership that came out of the Tenth World Congress has demonstrated its maturity by adhering against hell and high water—and in the face of genuine provocations such as the expulsion of the IT comrades from the SWP and the formation by the BT of a quasi-public faction in the Mexican PRT—to a resolutely unitary conception, defending the principle of maintaining the unity of the International. This conception is not based on “opportunist concessions” on anyone’s part, but on a correct analysis of the character of the differences, one which has been confirmed by events.

The differences that have arisen in the Fourth International turn around the analysis of some of the major focuses of the world class struggle. But despite the scope of this discussion, the gravity of the errors of analysis and political positions adopted by the minorities, and the serious theoretical confusion which has been exhibited on some questions, the IMT reaffirms that *all* the components of our International have their place in it, that none of them has degenerated, nor do any base their orientation on a revision of the Trotskyist program. The IMT consequently defines its objectives in terms of a discussion *within* the Fourth International. The aim of the IMT is to assure, through this discussion, a new political coherence of the *whole* of our movement, and not simply to win a majority, thus contributing to calling a halt to the political course now being followed by the minorities.

The capacity of the IMT to make its self-criticism on the Latin American document of the Ninth World Congress, a document which incontestably played an important role in precipitating the tendency struggle within the movement but which cannot principally account for this struggle, especially in light of the events in Portugal, Angola, and Spain, represents additional proof of the maturity of the International leadership.

Nevertheless, the balance-sheet of the International since the Tenth World Congress is not solely one of progress and success, though these are real. There have also been deficiencies and failures which must be stressed:

a) While the International center has been strengthened in accord with the decisions voted at the Tenth World Congress, and while the appearance of INPRECOR in four languages for the first time gives the International leadership an instrument for making its current political elaboration known to a significant portion of the members and sympathizers of the Fourth International, the center remains much too weak in cadres and material resources to be able to respond to all the requirements of an organization that has appreciably increased in numerical strength, implantation in the class, and geographical breadth. Important functions such as the coordination of workers work in Europe, the coordination of women’s work, support to Arab work, and support to the comrades in Asia have not been carried out or have been carried out very inadequately.

b) There has been a serious delay in political elaboration, particularly on the balance sheet of the revolution and counterrevolution in Latin America and on the new oppositions in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

c) There was insufficient reaction from the leadership to incorrect, “vanguardist” interpretations of the European document, the consequence of which has been that the necessary readjustments in orientation in countries like France or Spain have had to be made primarily on the initiative of the leaderships of sections, and inevitably belatedly. More generally, the overabundance of tasks facing the still too limited center has prevented adequate and regular discussion of the tactical problems of the European sections by the leadership of the International.

d) There were insufficient demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese left during the civil war in this country.

e) There has been a politically unjustified interruption in the regular publication of a theoretical review of the Fourth International in several languages as well as in the regular publication of the internal bulletins in the French language.

f) There is insufficient coordination in the realm of publications, an area in which there has been considerable expansion.

g) There have been hesitations, a lack of clarity, belated definition of definite criteria, and an excessively long delay in initiatives on the question of regroupments.

Correcting these errors and radically overcoming these weaknesses will be an important task for the new leadership of the International that comes out of the Eleventh World Congress. These are the essential preconditions for maintaining and accelerating the growth of the International after the Eleventh World Congress.

6. The tendency struggle within the International has created, especially since the Tenth World Congress, an abnormal organizational situation in which the elementary norms of democratic centralism have been violated. Thus, infractions of discipline have been committed in the application of the positions taken by the World Congress and the plenums of the IEC on the Portuguese revolution, and the national liberation struggle in Angola. This abnormal situation has triggered an extremely dangerous dynamic, inasmuch as this violation is beginning to be theorized and systematized at the level of principles.

The idea of an International based on democratic centralism has been defended since 1914 by international Marxists, since 1919 by all communists, and between 1933 and 1940, with determination, by Trotsky and the Trotskyists. This is not at all a question of a “separate organizational chapter” of revolutionary Marxist theory, something which has nothing to do with the program and would somehow express the “particular national experience” of the workers movement depending on whether it is accepted warmly, reluctantly, or only with lip service. *The idea of an International based on democratic centralism is an integral part of our political program. It is the logical and inevitable complement of the theory of imperialism and the theory of the permanent revolution.* Any systematic rejection of this idea (whether in theory or solely in practice) inevitably reveals deviations and leads to the practice, if not the theory, of “national” communism and socialism in one country. “Parallel with Trotsky’s irreconcilability in defending the internationalist princi-

ples of the movement was his adamant insistence upon the necessity and primacy of the international organization. 'Only an international organization can be the bearer of an international ideology.' The organizational form flows from and must correspond to the party's platform." (John G. Wright, "Trotsky's Struggle for the Fourth International," in *Fourth International*, August 1946.)

Granted, the international application of democratic centralism differs from its national application. The International does not impose national leaderships or national tactics on sections against the will of the majority of the members, not because the International leadership "lacks authority" or "has not proven itself," but because to act in such a way is ineffective, that is, contrary to the interests of party building and the proletarian revolution (a leadership commanding the authority of a Lenin or a Trotsky should be ever more resolute in not applying such mechanical discipline, for it would have much more serious consequences since it might more easily be accepted at the outset).

The objective basis for this difference in the application of democratic centralism in the national and international spheres lies in the fact that the conquest of state power by the proletariat is still essentially carried out on the national level, that the national party is an instrument that aims primarily at this. But this very definition of the problem demonstrates its full complexity. On the one hand the internationalization of the class struggle means that the proletariat is increasingly confronted by the intervention of the *international* bourgeoisie before, during, and immediately after the seizure of power (as the example of Portugal once again confirms). On the other hand, the international extension of the revolution is an indispensable condition not only for building socialism but also for an effective struggle against the bureaucratic deformations of workers power.

The existence of an international organization with an international structure and discipline thus corresponds both to the needs of the proletarian revolution and to the interests of the world proletariat in our epoch; it is not just a stylistic turn of phrase which we owe to our "tradition." The *uneven and combined* character of the process of world revolution is reflected in the *combination* of national revolutionary organizations and an International which must be a genuine world party and not a simple addition of sections, a simple body of "collaboration" and mutual consultation among national parties.

That is why on all programmatic and international questions the votes of the Congresses are binding on the national sections. Otherwise, the precise article of the statutes that asserts that those decisions which the congress *can* make must be carried out by all sections no longer has any meaning. It would have to be modified along these lines: "The decisions of the World Congress must be applied only by those sections that agree with them." We await with interest to see whether either of the existing minorities will propose such a modification of the statutes. As for us, we stick to the present text, and we will wage a vigorous campaign to see that it is actually applied. Indispensable discipline in action obviously does not mean that discussion organized by the leadership bodies (public or otherwise) of positions that have been adopted is suppressed.

Equally unprincipled is the notion of the minorities that discipline is necessarily relaxed and factions become *public* in practice when serious political differences exist. This is the argument Stalinists, Maoists, centrists, and indeed all opponents of Bolshevism use in order to claim that the right of tendencies and toleration of factions inevitably lead to splits. We reject this argument as contrary to positive experiences, such as that of the Bolsheviks during Lenin's time, the Communist International between 1919 and 1923, and the Fourth International during the past ten years. Our ability to combine a very hard tendency struggle with the maintenance of the unity of the movement as a world organization indicates that democratic centralism can be effective and productive.

Nevertheless, two series of experiences on this matter must be seriously criticized and rejected as contrary to Leninist principles. On the one hand, the transformation of minority factions into *de facto* public factions in practice publishing their own international faction organs and creating their own international faction apparatus functioning outside the normal leadership bodies of the International.

On the other hand, the expulsion of minority tendencies through bureaucratic methods, such as the expulsion of the IT by the SWP, the expulsion of first the BT and then the Workers Tendency by the Spanish LC, or threats of purge of the Mexican LS at the last congress before this organization split, threats inspired by the leaders of the present BT.

In contrast to these repeated violations of democratic centralism by the minorities, the balance-sheet of the IMT is much more positive. Neither in the International nor in any section led by IMT members has there been any expulsion of any minority. We do not deny that errors in the application of democratic centralism have also been committed by the IMT, in cases such as the splits in Australia and Canada for example, or that these errors have not always been swiftly enough corrected by a collective effort of the tendency. We simply want to stress that the major reason for the errors in the realm of organizational principles lies in the atmosphere of defiance of international democratic centralism created by the behavior of the minorities. We recognize, however, that it is the responsibility of the leadership as a whole to ensure that the internal life of the organization is in conformity with the Leninist organizational principles that it is duty bound to defend and implement.

The IMT makes the struggle for an International based on democratic centralism, on a single organization in each country, on the normal execution of their statutory duties by all sections, on the normal functioning of the leadership bodies, and on the radical and definitive halt to the practices of public factions an essential point in its fight before and during the Eleventh World Congress. The Tenth World Congress made the mistake of not recognizing the strongest organization adhering to the FI in each country as the official section (such as the PST in Argentina, and the LCR in Spain, etc.). We will fight at the Eleventh World Congress for the implementation of universal criteria, as outlined in this paragraph, for the recognition of a single section in each country. The struggle against any attempt to transform the Fourth International into a federation of factions and/or national organizations is a struggle to safeguard the programmatic

integrity of the Fourth International. It is a struggle for its survival. History has been implacable against all attempts to create national "Trotskyist" sects. They are condemned to degenerate, organizationally as well as politically. Moreover, any unprincipled practice in the sphere of international organization sooner or later has repercussions in the sphere of national organizations as well. The fight to defend the Fourth International as a democratic centralist organization is an integral part of the struggle for the transitional program and for the victory of the international socialist revolution.

7. Tendencies and a faction, with permanent contours, have existed in the International for eight years now. This is an abnormal situation in a democratic organization like ours. It is time to return to a mode of functioning more in conformity with the traditions of Bolshevism.

The IMT will henceforth act as an ideological tendency based on the four following points:

- a) the political line of the present declaration,
- b) the general line of the European document presented to the Eleventh World Congress, to which the IMT is preparing a series of amendments;
- c) the general line of the document of self-criticism on Latin America;
- d) the defense of the conception of international democratic centralism such as it is developed in the entirety of the statutes of the International and put forward in the first seven paragraphs and the last paragraph of point 6 of the present statement. We propose that a document on this question be discussed and voted on at the Eleventh World Congress.

Other documents may possibly be added to this platform (for instance, the Indochina resolution) if there is no agreement in the leadership bodies after political discussion.

The fact that the IMT will act only as an ideological tendency implies that it will not prejudge the positions taken by the entire International on questions other than those contained in its platform by raising them first within the tendency. The discussion within the tendency will thus be limited to the questions on which the disagreements within the Fourth International have already been clearly revealed. At the present stage, the IMT defines these questions as those contained in its platform. At the present stage, discussion within the tendency will hence be limited to these questions, as well as problems directly linked to the struggle to have them adopted in the sections and at the World Congress. The discussion will be extended to other questions only if proposals are made to possibly include them in the tendency platform.

It follows that the only condition for adherence to the IMT is agreement with the documents of its platform. On other questions the members of the tendency are free to adopt the positions of their choice, to write documents on these questions if they consider it necessary, within the statutory framework that regulates the discussion organized in their section and in the International. These documents will not be discussed in the tendency unless they are submitted for inclusion in the tendency platform.

Thus, the members of the IMT are not bound by any discipline in the pre-World Congress discussion, apart from the duty to fight for adoption of the line of the documents selected as the tendency platform. As for the

questions related to the struggle for this line, including those of tactical votes, discussions in this regard will take place within the tendency. But since these questions involve elements of judgment other than the political positions of the tendency, the results of these discussions will have only moral weight on the members of the tendency.

The IMT—as it has already committed itself on several occasions in the past—has brought all its weight to bear for representatives of the two minorities to command full and complete representation in the leadership bodies of the International, representation that even exceeds their proportional numerical weight in the ranks of the International. They must be still more associated with all the political and organizational decisions, both at the stage of their initial elaboration and at the stage of their execution, not in parallel ad hoc consultations, but within the regularly constituted and elected leadership bodies. All the responsibilities that devolve on them, both in the political and practical contribution they can make to the building of the International as a function of their capacities and of the weight of the real sector of the movement which they represent, must be attributed to them. The political and principled basis of this orientation lies in a correct application of democratic centralism, as well as in the conviction that the dynamic of the political differences is not on the rise, that the minorities are capable of correcting some of the serious errors they have committed, and that any obstinacy on their part in maintaining a factional attitude would be an unprincipled policy for which they would pay that much more dearly since the majority of the International shall have applied a correct policy toward them.

The IMT stands for dissolution of all tendencies at the earliest possible moment, even before the Eleventh World Congress, if it appears clearly that agreement exists on the general political line of the main documents for this Congress. It will in any case urge all tendencies and factions to dissolve at the Eleventh World Congress and allow the leadership democratically elected by the Congress to test the application of the line adopted by the Congress. Ideological tendencies may be reconstituted, if it is politically justified, during the period preparatory to the Twelfth World Congress (or when events whose objective importance for the fate of the revolution and the International is undeniable provoke serious differences within the movement, and in accordance with the discussion organized in the International by its leadership bodies).

* * *

Footnote

1. The IMT is opposed to tendencies or factions giving themselves names which tend to imply that other tendencies in the movement are revisionist. If a faction is "Leninist-Trotskyist" or "Bolshevik," does this mean that the other tendencies are neither Trotskyist nor Leninist nor Bolshevik? It would have been easy for the majority to retaliate by calling itself "Bolshevik-Leninist" or "Bolshevik-Trotskyist" or "Revolutionary Marxist" or "Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist." But we have deliberately refrained from participating in such childish games, which can only confuse the membership. That is why an

agreement was reached at the 10th World Congress to designate the tendencies as "International Majority Tendency" and "International Minority Faction." We

regret that this decision has not been implemented, and we use the terms LTF and BT in order not to confuse the membership further as to whom we mean by "minorities."

A Reply to the International Majority Tendency Declaration

By Barry Sheppard

[The general line of the following report was adopted by the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) on April 17, 1977.]

At the January plenum of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee, we outlined our response to the "Self-Criticism on Latin America" by the International Majority Tendency Steering Committee. [See "The Meaning of the IMT Steering Committee's Self-Criticism on Latin America," by Jack Barnes, International Internal Discussion Bulletin (IIDB), Vol. XIV, No. 5, May 1977.] This included our proposal that the factional structures of both the IMT and the LTF [Leninist Trotskyist Faction] should be dissolved. At the February meeting of the United Secretariat we outlined our views for all the comrades present. The IMT Steering Committee met at the end of February, and adopted a "Declaration of the International Majority Tendency," which can be considered a first response to our proposals.

The IMT declaration is a contradictory document. I will first take up a certain number of positive steps forward contained in it.

The IMT has accepted our proposal to place Latin America on the agenda of the next world congress and to explore, through discussions on the leading bodies of the international, the possibility of writing a common document on Latin America. The goal of writing such a common document is made more realizable by the decision of the IMT not to include as part of their platform the three documents on Argentina, Bolivia, and armed struggle adopted by the last world congress (1974). The new IMT platform includes only the "Self-Criticism" on this point. This strengthens the "Self-Criticism" and opens the way to a majority agreement to rescind the documents on Latin America passed by both the 1969 and 1974 world congresses.

The IMT declaration states that the 1974 world congress made a mistake in not recognizing the PST [Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores—Socialist Workers Party] in Argentina as the section. This is an important step forward, since the treatment accorded the PST by the IMT was one of the examples of the factionalism of the majority leadership that developed after the 1969 world congress, and had been a source of considerable organizational tension.

The declaration also says that the IMT made errors in the splits that occurred in Australia and Canada. This clarification should help the process of fusion of Fourth Internationalist forces in those countries.

The declaration criticizes the threats of a purge made by the majority of the Mexican Liga Socialista [LS—Socialist League] at the LS convention of December 1975, which should help the process of fusion of the Mexican Trotskyist forces. This represents a welcome reversal on the part of the IMT. [See "The February 1976 Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International," by Barry Sheppard, SWP Internal Information Bulletin (IIB), No. 6 in 1976, April.]

The declaration affirms that minorities in the international should be integrated in "all the political and organizational decisions, both at the stage of their initial elaboration and at the stage of their execution. . . ." This contrasts with the way the IMT acted in regard to Portugal, for example, in 1975, when it excluded participation by LTF members in the work of helping the Portuguese comrades. If the intention expressed in the declaration is carried out, it would mean a reversal of the factional methods utilized by the IMT in the center following the December 1972 meeting of the International Executive Committee. (It was at that IEC meeting that the IMT rejected making any correction of the line on Latin America adopted by the 1969 world congress.) Some progress in practice along these lines has occurred since the agreements reached at the October 1976 United Secretariat meeting. [See "Report on October 16-17, 1976, Meeting of the United Secretariat," by Jack Barnes and Joseph Hansen, SWP IIB No. 15 in 1976, December.]

The declaration also admits that there has been a politically unjustified interruption in the regular publication of the internal bulletins in French. Overcoming this by the IMT leaders of the French section is a prerequisite for holding a democratic and authoritative world congress.

The 'New Mass Vanguard'

The most important step forward in the IMT declaration, however, is political, and concerns the conception of the "new mass vanguard." First of all, the declaration indicates that there had been "vanguardist" interpretations of the European resolution submitted by the IMT and adopted at the last world congress. Further, it indicates that such interpretations were made by the French LCR and the Spanish LCR, whose leaderships have made recent corrections in spite of the failure of the international leadership to yet do so.

The declaration "clarifies" a number of points concerning the "new mass vanguard." This clarification includes

the definition of the "mass vanguard" as a "social phenomenon and not an assemblage of the so-called far left organizations." This vanguard includes advanced workers and youth in the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties and youth organizations. The "reality and importance of this phenomenon" has been evident when large numbers of workers have refused to follow the line of their traditional leaderships in certain important situations, even though they have not fully broken with those leaderships, and even though this vanguard does not have programmatic and political coherence. Further, it is necessary for the Fourth International to politically fight the ultraleft and centrist organizations for influence over these vanguard layers. The declaration says: "This requires constant political and ideological battle against the confusionism and political deviations of the ultraleftist and centrist formations, combined with a policy of united front . . ." toward the Social Democrats and Stalinists.

This rectification by the IMT goes a long way toward reducing the differences we had with them on this question since we gave the United Secretariat report on the international youth radicalization to the 1969 world congress. We have pointed to the importance of the existence of a social layer of radicalizing youth and young workers which the IMT was attempting to grapple with under the heading of "new mass vanguard." Our differences developed over what to do about it. We said the IMT did not differentiate between this social layer and the ultraleft and centrist groups of the "far left." It projected a strategy of attempting to coalesce the "far left" groups by organizing national political campaigns around the "concerns" of the "vanguard" and thereby create an "adequate instrument" that could outflank the traditional organizations. This concept would lead to adaptation to the ultralefts and centrists, we said, and to underestimation of the continuing obstacle that the Social Democracy and the Stalinists represent and their continuing attraction to newly radicalized young workers. [See "A Criticism of the United Secretariat Majority Draft Resolution on 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe'—An Initial Contribution to the Discussion," by Mary-Alice Waters, IIDB, Vol. X, No. 3, March 1973.]

On the basis of the corrections made by the IMT in this declaration, we believe that we should propose that there be a common discussion in the leadership bodies of the international to see if it is possible to write a common resolution on Europe, or on the imperialist countries. That is, we think we should stop the process of both the IMT and the LTF discussing these questions of strategy within each faction in order to prepare counterposed documents, and begin a common discussion the goal of which is to write a common resolution, if possible.

Steps Backward

Along with these steps forward, there are key aspects of the IMT declaration which constitute surprising steps backward.

Among the points listed in the declaration as the basis of the redefined IMT is one concerning democratic centralism. This point emphasizes sections of the declaration dealing with this question. In actuality, it is redundant of the IMT to list this as a separate point, since it has adopted the line of the whole declaration. This cuts

across a previous agreement reached in the United Secretariat that an open discussion would be held in the leading bodies on the question of democratic centralism *without previous factional lineups on the question*. The declaration is designed to do exactly the opposite. By raising a series of accusations against the LTF and the SWP to the effect that they have violated and continue to violate "elementary norms of democratic centralism," and by committing the IMT to a series of positions on the question *before* the discussion in the United Secretariat, the declaration *precludes* the kind of discussion on this question that had been previously agreed to. Once one of the factions adopts as a plank of its platform a position on democratic centralism, discussion on it will tend to occur along factional lines.

Similarly, there had been agreement to discuss the world political situation on a nonfactional basis in the leadership bodies, with the goal of writing a common document on this question. But the declaration, which is part of the new platform of the IMT, takes political positions on a whole series of questions concerning the world political situation. The declaration lines up the IMT on these political positions *before* there has been a discussion in the United Secretariat. This is just what we must get away from—discussing and adopting positions on the *new* questions and documents in the factions and not in the elected leadership bodies first.

The IMT declaration invalidates another agreement. It was agreed to discuss the Vietnam question along nonfactional lines. Leading comrades in the IMT agreed to submit a resolution not in the name of the IMT, but in their own names. A supporter of the LFT, Fred Feldman, submitted a critical reply. [See "The 'Draft Resolution on the Indochinese Revolution for the Eleventh World Congress'—Where It Goes Wrong," by Fred Feldman, IIDB Vol. XIV, No. 6, July 1977.] The discussion has therefore just begun, and there have been indications that there are differing opinions on the question that cut across the factional lines. But the IMT declaration threatens to add a document on Vietnam to its platform if there is not agreement on the leadership bodies on the questions. It also threatens to add unspecified additional documents: "Other documents may possibly be added to this platform (for instance, the Indochina resolution) if there is no agreement in the leadership bodies after political discussion." Thus the IMT assumes in advance that whatever political differences there may be on the leadership bodies on Vietnam, it will follow the old factional lines. This can only be read as a threat designed to intimidate any in the IMT who might have differences with the document of the IMT leaders to keep their differences within the IMT. It also basically precludes a real discussion in the leading bodies by in fact lining up the IMT beforehand.

Political Charges Against the LTF

The declaration contains a series of political charges against the LTF. I will list some of them. One is that the LTF pictured the counterrevolutionary policy of the leadership of the Portuguese Socialist Party "as a defense of democratic rights by the Social Democracy against a military dictatorship."

In relation to Angola, the IMT charges that the LTF was unable to give "any coherent line" during the South

African invasion and was unable "to explain the different attitudes which revolutionary Marxists had to take toward imperialist mercenaries and South African troops on the one hand and the troops of the Cuban workers state on the other hand."

The declaration charges the LTF with having "kept silent on the apparently doctrinaire but actually ultra-opportunist maneuvers of the leadership of the LC [Liga Comunista—Communist League]. . . ." of Spain.

The IMT discerns a "common method" of the LTF: "underestimation of revolutionary possibilities in certain countries on the brink of revolutionary crisis or already immersed in such a crisis; overestimation of reformist control over mass movements under such conditions; failure to distinguish clearly from tactics and slogans appropriate to 'normal' situations to the tactics and slogans required by situations of prerevolutionary or revolutionary crisis; formalism in the approach to key problems of political and social struggles (the political forces at play tend to be judged essentially on the basis of their writings and not their objective role in the class struggle); confusion on the problem of the state, particularly the institutions of the bourgeois democratic state and the role of the proletarian state power in the overthrow of capitalism, and confusion on the role of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism among the oppressed nationalities, with an underestimation of the influence this ideology exerts in retarding the constitution of the proletariat as a class organized separately from the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, including on the political level."

After all that, it is hardly shocking to learn that the LTF "confuses defense of democratic rights of the masses with defense of the institutions of the bourgeois-parliamentary state."

The picture the IMT paints of the LTF is of a sectarian tendency which is utterly worthless in any revolutionary crisis, and which has adopted outright reformist positions on key questions to boot. Small wonder that the IMT says that it would have been "a political disaster for our movement had it [the LTF] won a majority in the International."

The IMT Is a Faction

Moreover, the LTF has violated the "elementary norms of democratic centralism" and is continuing to engage in practices "contrary to Leninist principles." It broke discipline concerning "the Portuguese revolution, and the national liberation struggle in Angola." It has transformed itself into a de facto public faction, which publishes its own faction organ. The SWP leadership carried out an expulsion through "bureaucratic methods" of the Internationalist Tendency [IT], an expulsion which was a "genuine provocation." Although the IMT also made some errors in applying democratic centralism, "the major reason for the errors in the realm of organizational principles lies in the atmosphere of defiance of international democratic centralism created by the behavior of the minorities."

In order to understand the IMT position, let us assume that the charges leveled by the IMT at the LTF are true. Then the LTF is a faction that has degenerated politically

and that repeatedly carries out public violations of democratic centralism. Such a faction cannot be fought by an ideological tendency. You need a counterfaction to do that. The IMT declaration is a justification for maintaining the IMT as a faction, organized to fight the political degeneration and organizational practices of the LTF.

This is underscored by the declaration's assertion that the "IMT makes the struggle for an International based on democratic centralism" against all the alleged violations of the LTF—a struggle which includes fighting for a "radical and definitive halt to the practices of public factions"—an "essential point in its fight before and during the Eleventh World Congress." The IMT *defines itself* as a fighting formation to counter the alleged public factionalism and other violations of democratic centralism of the LTF. Such a fighting formation is known in our movement as a *faction*.

Thus the IMT declaration on the face of it contradicts the assertion included in the statement that the IMT is becoming an "ideological tendency." That the IMT intends to continue functioning in a factional manner is most clearly shown by the fact that it says that it will hold discussions on "tactical votes" concerning the struggle for the positions of the IMT, which include the political and organizational charges contained in the declaration, although "the results of these discussions will have only moral weight on the members of the tendency." Thus the IMT will continue to hold its own separate discussions apart from discussions in the leadership bodies, including on the whole range of organizational charges, and will exercise "moral weight" on its members to line up even on what are admittedly tactical items.

The IMT declaration is a rejection of the proposal we made in our January plenum that both the IMT and LTF should be dissolved. Instead, the declaration is a *codification* of the IMT as a *faction*, albeit on a new and different political foundation from the original IMT faction.

The IMT Proposal

A word should be said about the final point in the IMT declaration, which is apparently the IMT's initial counterproposal to us: "The IMT stands for dissolution of all tendencies at the earliest possible moment, even before the Eleventh World Congress, if it appears clearly that agreement exists on the general political line of the main documents for this Congress. It will in any case urge all tendencies and factions to dissolve at the Eleventh World Congress and allow the leadership democratically elected by the Congress to test the application of the line adopted by the Congress. Ideological tendencies may be reconstituted, if it is politically justified, during the period preparatory to the Twelfth World Congress (or when events whose objective importance for the fate of the revolution and the International is undeniable provoke serious differences within the movement, and in accordance with the discussion organized in the International by its leadership bodies)."

The IMT assumes that if there are differences on the general line of the main political documents before the next world congress, these will necessarily run along the lines of the old factional lineups, and on every question. The IMT faction will hold together throughout the process

of discussion in the leading bodies of the international—and after the next world congress, too, if “all tendencies and factions” do not dissolve at that time. This runs directly counter to the objective needs of the international. Responsible leaders on all sides should seriously probe the extent to which it is possible to overcome the divisions of the past, especially in light of the organizational agreements reached at the October 1976 United Secretariat meeting and the narrowing of political differences indicated in the IMT “Self-Criticism on Latin America.” To facilitate this process, we have to break up the factional structures, stop holding *any* preliminary discussions on new events and documents in the factions, allow these initial discussions to first be held in the leadership bodies of the international, and seriously work to achieve common positions. Whatever differences emerged would presumably not follow the old factional lineups. It is our opinion that if we follow this course, we could achieve common positions on a number of documents that would command the support of a large majority of the international.

Second, although the IMT declaration states it will “urge” tendencies and factions to dissolve after the next world congress, we have to put this point in the context of the practice of sections that are led by IMT supporters, such as the French section, which has in the past formally *required* tendencies to dissolve after congresses. It is true that after a congress or a convention the movement normally shifts gears to implement the decisions, and the internal discussion is closed for the time being except insofar as is decided by the leadership bodies. But this in no way implies a ban on the continued existence of tendencies or factions, which have the right to exist under the norms of democratic centralism.

The Charges Are False

I am not here going to make a point by point rebuttal of the political and organizational charges the IMT declaration levels against the LTF and the SWP, but just take up a few of them as well as discuss the method used.

The positions attributed to the LTF by the IMT are *falsifications*, as any objective reading of the LTF documents will demonstrate.

For example, the IMT declaration charges that the LTF portrayed the counterrevolutionary role of the Portuguese Socialist Party leadership in the summer of 1975 as a “defense of democratic rights by the Social Democracy against a military dictatorship.” This is a falsification and does not represent the position of the LTF.

The attempt by the IMT declaration to present the debate over Portugal in this fashion obscures the very real differences we had. These include differences over the *República* case and defense of the democratic rights of the SP when these were under attack from the Gonçalves government; differences over the importance of the fight for democratic rights, in Leninist revolutionary strategy in general and in the Portuguese revolution in particular; differences over the nature of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA); whether we should call for a CP-SP government; whether we should have defended the Constituent Assembly against attempts by the capitalist government to disband it in the summer of 1975; how to promote the development of real soviets, united-front organs of struggle of the working class; what attitude to take toward the fake

“soviets” set up by the “far left”; what attitude to take toward the “far left” front called the FUR; on the trade unions; etc. [See “The Test of Lines in the Portuguese Revolution,” IIDB, Vol. XIII, No. 2, April 1976.]

Some charges made by the IMT, such as the claim that we confuse “defense of democratic rights of the masses with defense of the institutions of the bourgeois-parliamentary state” are plainly absurd. If this charge were true the LTF should be expelled from the international as reformist.

Concerning Angola: The IMT admits that the LTF reporter at the February 1976 IEC meeting held the “correct position of support to the military struggle against the South African invaders.” The IMT thus differentiates from the lying assertion of the Bolshevik Tendency that the LTF had rejected this position at that IEC and only belatedly and shamefacedly adopted it much later after the war was over. [See “Declaration of the Bolshevik Tendency,” IIDB Vol. XIV, No. 1, January 1977.]

The position of the LTF in this regard was clearly stated in the LTF document on Angola, in its very first point: “1. With the invasion mounted by South Africa and the utilization of mercenaries financed primarily by the CIA, imperialist intervention in the Angolan civil war reached a high point at the end of 1975 and beginning of 1976. For revolutionary Marxists and supporters of democratic rights, it was an elementary duty to offer material support to the military struggle against this intervention, and to organize an international campaign under the general slogans of ‘Hands off Angola!’ ‘South Africa Out of Angola!’ and, in view of the threat from American imperialism because of Havana’s aid to the MPLA, ‘Defend Cuba!’” [See “Resolution on Angola” of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, IIDB Vol. XIII, No. 8, December 1976.]

However, the IMT asserts that the LTF position on the Angolan civil war prior to the South African attack, “going so far as to deny the character of this civil war as a clash between formations representing different social forces” made it “impossible” for the LTF to “explain the different attitudes which revolutionary Marxists had to take toward imperialist mercenaries and South African troops on the one hand and the troops of the Cuban workers state on the other hand.”

This is a dangerous argument. Our traditional position is one of opposition to any and all imperialist attacks on colonial or semicolonial countries, *unconditionally*, that is, no matter what the nature of the leadership of the colonial country. It was not “impossible” to explain why we supported the military struggle of the MPLA and of the Cuban troops against the U.S.-backed South African invasion irrespective of our political position concerning the MPLA, any more than it was “impossible” to explain our defensist position with regard to the Arab countries when they were under attack by Israel, irrespective of our political opposition to the bourgeois Arab regimes, or in many other similar conflicts.

It is true that we rejected the analysis made by the IMT that the MPLA represented “the decisive layers of the urban working class—both in industry and services—layers of the agricultural wage-earners, the plebian masses cast out of the economic and social structure by colonialism, broad sectors of the petty bourgeoisie affected by the wave of radicalization, sectors of the poor peasantry

that participated in the armed struggle directly or indirectly and underwent their first experiences in political mobilization and organization by entering into conflict with the structure of traditional rural society." Nor did we agree that the FNLA and UNITA on the other hand represented "the remnants of the colons, the well-off layers of the petty bourgeoisie, the embryonic nuclei of the national bourgeoisie, the traditional chiefs and their acolytes." [See "Resolution on Angola" of the International Majority Tendency, IIDB Vol. XIII, No. 8, December 1976.]

We said that all three organizations had participated in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism and were legitimate national liberation organizations in that sense. They all, we said, were petty-bourgeois nationalist groupings with basically identical programs and we were politically opposed to all three. The mass base of each was in three separate nationality groupings in Angola, and all three organizations had chauvinist attitudes towards the opposed nationality groupings. The "class line" was not between one of the organizations and the other two—specifically not between the MPLA on the one side and the FNLA and UNITA on the other. The interests of the workers and poor peasants were opposed to the political line of all three organizations. The civil war between the three organizations did not represent a conflict with the workers and their allies on the MPLA side and their class enemies on the FNLA and UNITA side. Therefore we were opposed to all three groups in the war, and charged that this power struggle was providing openings for imperialism to intervene.

At the same time, we supported any concrete steps taken against imperialism by any of the three organizations, and opposed any unwarranted concessions to imperialism any of them made. For example, when the UNITA clashed with the first South African incursion in August 1975 around the Cunene dam, we supported UNITA in its attempt to repel the invaders. When all three groups were making unwarranted concessions to Portuguese imperialism in early 1975 in the so-called transitional government, we politically opposed this. When the FNLA and UNITA joined forces with the South African invasion, we attacked them and supported the MPLA's military struggle against the combined assault. In this sense the IMT charge that the LTF placed the three organizations "on the same footing" during the South African invasion is false.

Our rejection of the IMT's position on the nature of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, and of the IMT line of giving support to the MPLA on a political basis in its power fight with the FNLA and UNITA, in no way made it "impossible" to explain why we opposed the imperialist attack, nor did it make it "impossible" for the publications carrying the LTF line" to give "any coherent line" during the South African invasion.

Let us take the American *Militant*, for example. It had a very coherent line. It did not give political support to the leadership of any of the three groups. It opposed their power fight and warned that it weakened the Angolan masses in front of imperialism and opened the door to imperialist intervention.

When Washington opened its campaign of threats against the MPLA, the Soviet Union, and Cuba, and stepped up its material support to the FNLA and UNITA and to the South African attack, the *Militant* launched a

campaign aimed at demanding the imperialists get out. Naturally, the *Militant* concentrated its fire on the most dangerous aspect of the imperialist attack, the intervention by Washington, which was the real power behind the South African thrust. After Kissinger's November 10, 1975, saber-rattling speech publicly acknowledging Washington's direct intervention, the *Militant* carried an editorial titled "Hands Off Angola!" The following issue carried a front-page banner headline, "No U.S. Intervention! HANDS OFF ANGOLA!" and carried news of the first reports in the United States of the South African thrust under cover of the FNLA and UNITA. The next issue, dated December 12, 1975, carried an article by Tony Thomas which pointed out that "The immediate imperialist threat to Angola is the mounting South African intervention in support of UNITA and the FNLA" and concluded: "The demand of all those in the United States who support the right of self-determination ought to be aimed squarely at Washington and its imperialist cohorts: Hands Off Angola!" The following issue carried a statement by the Socialist Workers Party presidential candidates Camejo and Reid along the same lines.

The line of the *Militant* was therefore coherent, consistent, and clear. It was aimed first and foremost against imperialism. It supported the struggle against the U.S.-backed South African thrust, opposed the complicity of FNLA and UNITA with South Africa, and did this unconditionally, that is, regardless of its political opposition to the MPLA and while it continued to maintain that political opposition.

Subsequent events have proven this position to have been correct. The military defeat of the South African attack, thanks in part to the Cuban troops, dealt a blow to imperialism in southern Africa and inspired the Black masses throughout the region. The government formed by the MPLA has repressed the workers and given big concessions to imperialism, especially to Washington. It is clearly a neocolonialist government serving the nascent national bourgeoisie, and it does not differ fundamentally from the kind of regime the FNLA or UNITA envisioned setting up.

Let's turn to the charge concerning nationalism. In what document does the LTF express "confusion on the role of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism among the oppressed nationalities, with an underestimation of the influence this ideology exerts in retarding the constitution of the proletariat as a class organized separately from the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, including on the political level"? How has this alleged position been expressed in practice? Has the LTF failed to oppose the ideologies of bourgeois nationalist formations or parties in oppressed nations, or said they were progressive? In India, Pakistan, Latin America, Iran, China, Egypt?

Where have we failed to oppose petty-bourgeois nationalist ideologies? Is it the LTF which is soft on the ideology of the MPLA in Angola? Or on the ideology of the Vietnamese Communist Party?

The IMT declaration charges that the LTF is guilty of "confusion on the problem of the state, particularly the institutions of the bourgeois democratic state and the role of the proletarian state power in the overthrow of capitalism." What the phrase "the role of the proletarian state power in the overthrow of capitalism" apparently refers to is our position concerning the establishment of

workers states in China, Cuba, and Vietnam. We will only note here that our position on the theory of these transformations is the same as the one held in common in our movement at the time of the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International. [See the appendices to "The Meaning of the IMT Steering Committee's Self-Criticism on Latin America," by Jack Barnes, IIDB Vol. XIV, No. 5, May 1977.]

As to the charge that the LTF "kept silent on the apparently doctrinaire but actually ultra-opportunist maneuvers of the leadership of the [Spanish] LC, especially on the trade union question," the LTF has never taken a position on the trade-union question in Spain. The IMT declaration itself is self-contradictory on this point—it refers to the Workers Tendency's differences with the LC leadership on the trade unions, but the leaders of the Workers Tendency (which exists in both the LC and the LCR) are in the LTF!

We could as easily charge the IMT with having "kept silent" on the positions of the Spanish LC, since this declaration is the first time the IMT has mentioned these positions. The only discussion of the union question in Spain to occur in the United Secretariat was held at the October 1976 meeting, where no vote was taken on the question. Some leaders of the LTF at that time (I was one of them) did, it is true, express differences with the position of some IMT leaders that work within the UGT [Unión General de Trabajadores—General Workers Union] was *excluded*. We said that it was a *tactical* question which had to be decided on the basis of a concrete analysis of the situation and openings for party-building work. As against the position of some IMT leaders, we held that the Social Democracy could be expected to grow, and that the union it dominated, the UGT, could also grow. It turns out we were correct. But we never held the position that the IMT attributes to the Spanish LC, that is, that the LC was "motivated by blind Stalinophobia (going so far as to consider the Workers Commissions as anti-trade-union and as the major force responsible for trade-union division)" and that the LC "openly opted for trade-union division and supported the demagogy of the Social Democratic bureaucracy, to the point of stating that it favored the breakup of the Coordination Sindical of the Workers Commissions, UGT, and USO, and asserting that trade-union unity boiled down to UGT-CNT unity."

The Principled Nature of the LTF

The authors of the IMT declaration seem to regard it as a great victory for the IMT that "an important part of the Central Committee of the Spanish LC" has broken with the LTF. At the same time, it tries to impute that the erroneous political positions of these comrades are a result of—the LTF. The same attitude is expressed in regard to the break from the LTF carried out by Comrade Moreno and the other comrades who later formed the Bolshevik Tendency [BT]. The declaration indulges in a kind of gloating over these instances.

The IMT comrades should take a more sober look at the situation. Would it have been correct for the LTF to think it was a great victory when Comrade Santucho and the Argentine PRT broke with the IMT—and left the Fourth International?

It is time the IMT comrades began to realize that

Comrade Moreno's break with the LTF began with a secret attempt to destroy comrades in Mexico who supported the LTF and with splitting one of the Mexican sympathizing groups. This procedure was repeated in Portugal. These incidents signaled a factional marauding campaign against the international as a whole on the part of the Bolshevik Tendency, which then carried out similar operations in Spain, Italy, and Costa Rica.

In reality, the breaks from the LTF initiated by some leaders of the Spanish LC on the one hand and by Comrade Moreno on the other underscores the principled nature of the LTF. The LTF did not make political accommodations to either of these forces in order to maintain a bloc with them. It is not a gang of "like-minded" people that periodically "redefines" itself, thereby perpetuating a permanent gang or faction, but a principled faction based on documents presented to the international as a whole. On the basis of political disagreement with those documents some former members of the LTF in Spain broke away, as did the comrades who have formed the Bolshevik Tendency. In addition, those comrades who were directly involved in violations of the elementary norms of the Fourth International in the split of the Mexican Socialist League were expelled from the LTF for their conduct. Adherence to the organizational norms of Leninism is part of the LTF platform.

The Organizational Charges Are False

The declaration lumps together what it calls "the expulsion of minority tendencies through bureaucratic methods, such as the expulsion of the IT by the SWP, the expulsion of first the BT and then the Workers Tendency by the Spanish LC, or threats of purge of the Mexican LS at the last congress before this organization split, threats inspired by the leaders of the present BT."

The charge concerning the Internationalist Tendency in the SWP is preposterous. We published the full and complete record of the IT affair, and all comrades can read in this record, in the secret documents of the IT itself, that the IT had rejected the SWP as degenerate, had organized itself as a disloyal faction, systematically broke with SWP discipline, and finally set itself up as a separate organization with its own separate discipline and intervention in the class struggle, carrying out a temporary entry tactic in the SWP. The IMT charges are designed merely to cover up the IMT's own complicity with this split operation. [SWP IIB No. 6 in 1974, July.]

Instead, the IMT declaration pointedly leaves out, in its listing of its "errors," its complicity in the organization of the IT split. While admitting that it had at least *something* to do with the splits in Australia and Canada, it says nothing about the IT. It continues the tactic of simply denying *any* complicity and responsibility in the IT's splitting operation directed against the SWP, in spite of the voluminous documentary evidence to the contrary. We can only conclude that the IMT is serving notice that it will act the same way in the future.

It is my personal opinion that the leadership of the Spanish LC made mistakes regarding both the supporters of the Bolshevik Tendency in the LC, and with the Workers Tendency. But the IMT declaration does not point out that the split of the BT from the LC was in large measure due to a splitting operation launched by the

Bolshevik Tendency itself against the LC.

The case of the split in the Mexican LS is entirely different. [See "World Movement Report," by Mary-Alice Waters, IIDB, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April 1977.] Throwing together these very different cases blurs over the real splitting operation that the Bolshevik Tendency has launched within the international as a whole, and disarms the international in face of this operation. It is an attempt to justify the wrong position the IMT took on the splits in Mexico and in Portugal at the February 1976 International Executive Committee meeting.

"Democratic Centralism"

The declaration raises another important question in its treatment of democratic centralism. It states that "on all programmatic and international questions the votes of the Congresses are binding on the national sections." The problem comes in the interpretation the IMT apparently gives to this, since the declaration charges that the LTF violated discipline in regard to "the Portuguese revolution, and the national liberation struggle in Angola."

This could only mean that at least in these cases it was a breach of democratic centralism for the newspapers and magazines of sections and sympathizing groups to publicly present the positions of those sections and sympathizing groups, as decided by democratic discussion and vote of their conventions and elected leaderships. If this is a violation of democratic centralism, then the IMT is introducing an extremely dangerous and unacceptable innovation.

Such a conception would mean that on all the major questions of world politics, the sections would not be free to decide what their positions are, but would have to wait for word from the international center. This would not only paralyze the sections' work in their own countries, it would mean that the sections could formulate policy for themselves on only a very narrow range of questions. It would prevent the formation of leaderships in the sections capable of developing their own positions on key questions, and take away the responsibility of the leadership and membership for deciding their positions and defending those positions in their own countries. Such leaderships and memberships would become completely dependent on the international leadership for their views. Parties based on that concept could never lead revolutions in their own countries. Therefore such a concept cuts across the central task of the international: to help forge genuine and self-confident leaderships in the national arenas where revolutions occur. The concept, if it were to be adopted, would destroy the Fourth International as a revolutionary organization and turn it into a literary circle with a few bright people in the center handing down a line to be parroted in the press of ineffectual sections.

This conception is a step backward from what many IMT comrades have said. Comrade Jones, for example, speaking at our last convention, stated that only the international, of course, through its leading bodies, and by majority vote, establishes the line of the international, and that the sections have a duty to make that line known. But, he said, the press of each section *must* be guided by the democratic decisions of that section.

This was the way the Third International under Lenin and Trotsky functioned and the way the Fourth International functioned from the beginning.

The charge that the LTF has a public faction organ apparently refers to *Intercontinental Press*. *IP*, as comrades know, is not an organ of the SWP or of the Fourth International. But as the listing of editor and contributing editors indicates (they were selected before the faction struggle began), *IP* presents the views of the international as a whole. Therefore in no sense can *IP* be considered to reflect the views of one faction only. But on this question we are faced with a Catch-22 situation. The comrades who are leaders of the IMT have refused to write for *IP*. Yet they charge that it doesn't represent their views sufficiently and therefore is a public faction organ. When the editor pleads with them to write directly for *IP* so that their views are better expressed in *IP*, they refuse. So their views are expressed elsewhere, including in obscure or bourgeois publications. Often the *IP* staff finds them accidentally and translates them. Again the *IP* is charged with being a faction organ. . . .

To top it off, the IMT states that an "essential point" in its "fight" is the "struggle" against *Intercontinental Press*. Their fight to bring a "radical and definitive halt" to *Intercontinental Press* and other manifestations of "the practices of public factions" is the central reason they give for maintaining the IMT.

When Did the Factionalism Begin?

The declaration says, "The capacity of the IMT to make its self-criticism on the Latin American document of the Ninth World Congress, a document which incontestably played an important role in precipitating the tendency struggle within the movement but which cannot principally account for this struggle, especially in light of the events in Portugal, Angola, and Spain, represents additional proof of the maturity of the International leadership."

We can agree that the self-criticism on Latin America is a demonstration of positive qualities in the IMT leadership, even if it was more than half a decade late. (The IMT leadership does not equal the leadership of the international, however. That includes non-IMT members of the United Secretariat, the IEC, and the leaderships of the sections and sympathizing groups throughout the world.) But the attempt by the IMT to say that the faction struggle did not primarily stem from the wrong line on Latin America adopted at the 1969 world congress departs from the historic facts. The faction struggle originated and became quite sharp long before the Portuguese and Angolan events (let alone Spain, where we have yet to even probe if there are differences and whether they are deep!). The factionalism began right after the 1969 world congress, or more accurately, at the congress itself, and it was begun by the majority in order to carry out its line in Latin America. [See "The Meaning of the IMT Steering Committee's Self-Criticism on Latin America," by Jack Barnes, IIDB Vol. XIV, No. 5, May 1977.]

The IMT Declaration is an Obstacle

The IMT declaration is out of harmony with the objective needs of the international, and with recent developments. It is out of harmony with the antifactional statements of several members of the IMT steering Committee repeatedly made in the last year-and-a-half.

The IMT comrades have agreed, for example, to probe

the possibility of writing common documents on every point on the agenda for the next world congress. But why even try to do that if you believe that we are sectarian, sterile propagandists in any prerevolutionary or revolutionary situations?

IMT comrades in Canada, Australia, Spain, and Mexico favor fusion to help heal splits in those countries. With people who support bourgeois parliamentarism? Who find it "impossible" to explain why they are opposed to the South African attack on Angola?

Do the IMT comrades in Canada believe that the LTF leaders of the Canadian section fail to oppose bourgeois nationalism in Québec? Apparently not, since there do not appear to be substantial differences on that score.

The Factions Should Be Disbanded

The IMT says that the purpose of its declaration is to "redefine its political platform." It no longer stands on a single one of the documents which defined it in the past. In place of the documents which formerly defined the IMT, there are now three new ones. One is the "Self-Criticism on Latin America," which reverses the IMT line on this question. The second is the European resolution which the IMT has submitted to the next world congress—but, the declaration informs us, this resolution is to be substantially amended. And the third is the declaration itself, with its conception of democratic centralism singled out for special emphasis.

This method is not correct. A faction should not be based on a group of people who were in agreement on superseded positions of the past, or who are "like-minded" or have the same "method." New questions should not be approached as if the old factional alignments will automatically apply. That can only lead to permanent factionalism. When changes in the platform of a faction of such a substantial nature as the "Self-Criticism on Latin America" are made, the only principled course is to dissolve that faction, probe the areas of agreement that the new position could open up, and only if necessary constitute a new faction or tendency, and then only after a thorough exploration of the current political positions of all concerned and without a preconception that new lineups, if any, will occur along the old faction lines.

The IMT, through this declaration, has chosen a different course. It seeks to retain the IMT grouping at all costs in spite of the fact that certain of the political differences are narrowing. It seeks to line up the IMT members on the world political situation, on organizational charges against the LTF, and on more general questions of democratic centralism before there are discussions in the leading bodies on these questions. It states at the outset that it will discuss in the IMT first every question contained in the declaration, i.e., practically all questions, and will exert "moral" pressure on its ranks to toe a common IMT line on even tactical votes. The basic justification for this stance given by the IMT is the

organizational charges against the LTF.

This doesn't jibe even with what the IMT leading comrades themselves have asked of the LTF. For example, at the August 1976 meeting of the LTF Steering Committee, the resolution "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation" was adopted as an LTF resolution. [See IIDB Vol. XIII, No. 9, December 1976.] At a subsequent meeting of the United Secretariat, leaders of the IMT expressed the opinion that it would be better if this resolution were published not as an LTF resolution but as a contribution from its principal author to the discussion on women's liberation. This, the IMT comrades said, would facilitate exploring through a non-factional discussion in the leading bodies whether it was possible to reach agreement on line on this question. Any differences presumably would not necessarily fall along the old faction lines. The LTF Coordinating Committee voted to accept this procedure. That meant that *all* discussion on this question *ceased* in the LTF, and open discussion without prior lineup was begun in the United Secretariat.

The LTF has followed the same procedure in regard to the discussion on Vietnam. Fred Feldman's article, "The 'Draft Resolution on the Indochinese Revolution for the Eleventh World Congress'—Where It Goes Wrong," is submitted as an individual contribution, and the LTF has had no discussions on this question, allowing it to be taken before the leading bodies without previously lining up the LTF.

This is the procedure which should be followed now on *all* questions. The IMT proposal that the factions could be disbanded if and only if general political agreement is reached runs exactly counter to the needs of the international at the present moment. The international is at a turning point. With the narrowing of political differences, the old factional structures are an obstacle to exploring the real areas of agreement and disagreement in preparation for the next world congress. Maintaining them will maximize the differences in the documents that will be prepared for that congress.

In Spain, Mexico, Canada, and Australia, where the movement has been split along factional lines for a number of years, there has been progress toward healing these splits. Maintaining the factions on an international scale will throw big obstacles in the path of these fusions. It would tend to block the process of both sides in these countries actually fusing, actually learning to work together without needless separate meetings of factions. Comrades in these countries from both sides report a narrowing of political differences on national politics. Maintaining the factions would be a body blow to these comrades on both sides who are trying to overcome the costly splits in their countries.

Against the policy of permanent factionalism which is outlined in the IMT declaration, the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party appeals to all supporters of both factions to break up these formations *now*.

How the Workers Commissions Developed in Portugal

By Charles Michaloux

[The following article is reprinted from the April issue of *Cahiers de la Taupe*, a French Trotskyist publication concerned with issues of interest to the labor movement. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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On May 27, 1974, one month after the overthrow of the dictatorship headed by Marcelo Caetano, Salazar's successor, the postal workers of the CTT [Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones—Mail, Telegraph and Telephone, the state postal system] decided to call a national strike. They were demanding a minimum wage of 6,500 escudos per month [about US\$290 at the time], a thirty-five-hour week, the right to have veto power over firings, the right to strike and union recognition, publication of the salaries of all top-level executives, and purging of the fascists.

During this short period, the 40,000 CTT workers nationwide had elected committees of delegates in their workplaces. These committees had begun to coordinate their work. In addition, a union organizing committee (or pre-union committee, as they call it in Portugal) had been established to draw up a list of demands. After some hesitation, it too issued a call for a strike.

The general climate at the time was permeated with demagogic appeals for "national unity" and condemnations of strikes. The big demonstration on May 1, 1974, partially reflected this. The Central Committee of the Portuguese Communist party published a communique demanding "an end to the strikes that were leading to the installation of a Chile-type dictatorship."

Under the pressure of the reformist leaderships of the SP and CP, which were included in the Spínola government along with the major right-wing party, the Popular Democratic party (PPD), workers' demands were put under wraps; for instance, the metalworkers dropped their central demand for a minimum wage of 6,000 escudos per month [about US\$270], a demand that they had been fighting for since long before the fall of the dictatorship, and which had been taken up by other sectors.

Under these conditions, the chances of organizing a nationwide strike seemed slim. The CTT workers, while a very militant sector, had no underground trade-union traditions, unlike the textile workers or metalworkers, for example. The leader-



SOARES: No friend of workers committees.

ship of the developing struggle had very little time to set up a completely new organization that would enable them to mobilize the thousands of workers at post offices scattered across the country.

There was only one answer—to use the telegraph and telecommunications system to advance the struggle. Postal equipment, therefore, was used to relay all information: news of the progress of the negotiations at first, later of the strike itself. The delegates elected in all the workplaces relayed the opinions of the workers to the strike headquarters in Lisbon, and for one week, national assemblies of delegates met every day to make plans for the strike, basing their decisions on the information they received. These decisions, in turn, were instantly reported back to the local areas. The pre-union committee was transformed into a central strike committee. All the preparations had been made.

Within two days, all the postal centers were occupied. Teams were organized to carry out a mass distribution of leaflets explaining the strikers' demands to the public. In the big cities, postal workers demonstrated in the streets. But the

response was not long in coming. The CP condemned the struggle on the grounds that it was "sabotaging the work of national reconstruction," and went so far as to organize demonstrations—with the help of its appendage, the Portuguese Democratic Movement—to forcibly reopen the occupied post offices, as in Viseu and Aveiro.

After having succeeded nonetheless in winning some of their demands, the CTT workers went back to work. The foundations had been laid for a trade-union organization. But above all, because of the huge impact this struggle had had on the working class, it pushed to the forefront the problem of the relations between the unions and the committees of delegates elected in the workplaces, the workers commissions.

The time bomb that was set to explode in the months that followed had built up over forty-eight years of dictatorship. By the end of 1973, for example, average monthly earnings were 2,600 escudos [US\$117] for men and 1,300 escudos [US\$58] for women in the textile and garment industries. In the metal and parts industries, they were 3,800 [US\$171] and 2,400 escudos [US\$108] respectively. In the plants and the large agricultural enterprises in the South, police informers and PIDE agents [the Salazarist secret police] had established an atmosphere of terror.

After April 25, the weakness of the CP's reformist infrastructure, the lack of an SP apparatus in the factories, and the shakiness of the state apparatus that emerged from the military coup at first gave almost completely free rein to the numerous struggles that broke out in all the branches of basic industry. As a general rule, these struggles began by posing the need for the workers to organize at the level of their plants.

It was in this context that the workers commissions arose. Before April 25, the CP had made various attempts to set up structures for the purpose of negotiating with the bosses, such as the short-lived "unity commissions." This approach was soon abandoned, however, and the CP's worker cadres concentrated on entering the corporatist unions. They were able to gain control of some bodies, particularly in the textile and metal industries, and they brought these together in 1970 to form the Intersindical. But the Intersindical could never claim to represent more than the three or four thousand worker activists

who were members and sympathizers of Alvaro Cunhal's party. After the fall of the dictatorship, the workers organized where they could express themselves most immediately and freely—at the level of the individual plants, which frequently were deserted by the bosses and the management.

Thus, the workers commissions represented the outcome of a threefold process. The first aspect was a lack of confidence in the corporatist union structures (as many as forty craft "unions" in some plants), together with the workers' desire for self-organization. The second was the contagious effect of the first big strikes that took place, which, like those in the CTT or the TAP [Transportes Aéreos Portugueses—Portuguese Air Transport], developed in opposition to pressure from the reformists. And the third was the need to set up structures at the plant level capable of conducting a successful struggle to win the demands that the workers raised in this period—cleaning out the fascists (*saneamento*), a chance for the workers to participate in political life, and better working conditions.

Throughout this initial phase of the Portuguese revolution, the workers commissions constituted the main axis of the working-class radicalization. In particular, in the big complexes of the Lisbon-Setúbal industrial belt, the workers commissions were the medium for the most advanced forms of workers control. In this area, measures were taken that pointed toward the socialist planned economy of the future. Forms of coordination arose, and the first steps were taken toward centralizing structures of self-organization that were actual embryos of an alternative power based on the workers and tenants (*moradores*) commissions.

In the first wave of struggles from May to September 1974, it became obvious that the bureaucratic apparatuses could not keep the social explosions from spreading. A decree was issued limiting the right to strike—which was supported by the SP, CP, and, of course, PPD ministers, all presided over by General Spínola. But it proved impossible to enforce it on a single occasion.

In December 1974, amid growing economic sabotage, the flight of capital, and phony bankruptcy claims, the situation took an important turn. Workers control became a weapon for survival. A wave of land occupations began to spread to prevent the crops and animals on the big estates from being abandoned. More and more workers mobilized to demand nationalization of the major sectors of industry and the banks. Meanwhile, most of the workers commissions had already been constituted.

In his report to the last congress of the Portuguese Communist party, Alvaro Cunhal referred to a survey taken by the party, which reported that by the end of 1973

"there were 1,250 workers commissions, half of which were in the Lisbon area." It is hard to determine whether these figures are accurate; in any case, they do give a general indication that tends to confirm the following points:

a. In all of the large enterprises, the workers commissions represented most, if not all of the workers, regardless of their party loyalties.

b. The degree of representativeness of the workers commissions sometimes varied considerably from one region to another. In the North, where the workers movement is scattered throughout hundreds of small-scale enterprises, the workers commissions sometimes existed only on paper, even when they were not an outright creation of the bosses. In the Lisbon and Setúbal regions, on the other hand, the workers commissions were highly representative. Moreover, their composition varied according to the degree of radicalization of their working-class base, which voted for them en masse. The lack of any tradition of centralized mass working-class organizations—even centralized bureaucratically by the SP or CP, as in most of the European unions—was visible in terms of the feeble coordination or centralization of the workers commissions. Thus, at its peak, the Provisional Secretariat of the Workers Commissions of the Lisbon Industrial Belt (SPCTCIL), initiated by the CP during the big mobilizations in the summer of 1975, included representatives from no more than 200 enterprises—although, to be sure, these were the largest in the country.

c. Despite this lack of real centralization,¹ the workers commissions were clearly seen by the mass of workers in struggle as *their* organizations. At the height of the crisis in the summer and fall of 1975, it was the agricultural workers commissions that organized the defense—frequently armed—of the occupied great landed estates in the Alentejo region. It was at the call of the construction workers commissions that the building-trades workers left their sites on November 12 and went to surround the São Bento Palace. Again, it was the workers commissions that issued the call for the huge demonstration on the Praza do Comercio in Lisbon November 16, the demonstration that brought Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo's sixth provisional government to its knees until the Amadora Rangers came to his rescue on November

1. One or two sectarian caricatures were set up hastily and separately by the Maoist MRPP [Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado—Movement to Reorganize the Proletarian Party] and UDP [União Democrática do Povo—People's Democratic Union] and the MES [Movimento de Esquerda Socialista—Movement of the Socialist Left], but they never succeeded in substituting themselves for the real thing.—C.M.

25.² In short, there can be no doubt that in the middle of the prerevolutionary crisis that shook Portugal from July to November 1975 the workers commissions did indeed constitute the backbone of a developing power beginning to arise in face of the paralysis and incompetence of a bourgeois state that was in an advanced stage of decomposition.

What, then, was the internal weakness of the workers commissions that prevented them from realizing their vast potential?

According to Intersindical statistics, the number of workers on strike rose from around 200,000 in 1974 to nearly 1,500,000 in 1975, representing almost the sum total of wage workers in industry and public services. Furthermore, the number of enterprises under self-management is estimated at 220 in the same period, and the number of enterprises nationalized or under state supervision, at more than 300.

These figures give only an inkling of the depth of the process that was taking place. However, this wave of strikes and occupations, the resumption of production, nationalizations imposed by the workers, attempts by the workers to reconvert factories—coming at the same time that bourgeois political domination had still not been overthrown—created new problems. How could workers control be applied to public administration? How could growing unemployment and rising prices be dealt with? These questions were beginning to become central concerns of the workers, who were confronted by virtually no established authority, either on the part of the bosses or the state. And it is precisely here that the primary limitation of the role of the workers commissions became apparent.

What strikes the reader about the documents written at the time for discussion in the workers commissions is their extremely general character, in both the good and bad sense of the term. The questions discussed, of course, reflect the strength of a working-class radicalization that is trying to respond to the country's political problems, the key to the further advance of the revolution: the nature of workers control, economic planning, the institution of different modes of production, reconversion of industry, and so on.

But the primary weakness of the workers commissions was their failure to consolidate their real base among the proletariat by taking up its most elementary material and democratic demands. In this way they could have really organized the workers and centralized their struggles nationally, under the leadership of bodies that workers would see as organs of their

2. On November 25, 1975, paratroop units in the Lisbon area occupied four air force bases and seized radio and television stations in a coup attempt that was quickly crushed by the government.—IP.

power, of an infinitely more democratic regime than the most democratic type of parliamentary republic.

Consciously or unconsciously, the majority of far-left organizations fell into the trap. They spouted "revolutionary" rhetoric. But they seldom focused their energies on getting the workers commissions to adopt a few definite goals whose achievement would unquestionably establish the authority of the workers commissions to lead struggles and at the same time promote real unity among the workers split into opposing camps by the divisive policies of the SP and CP leaderships.

Not the least paradoxical aspect of the situation is the fact that the demand for a 2,000-escudo wage increase—a demand frequently raised in the struggles that preceded April 25—is only now beginning to be raised again in a massive way, in the defensive struggles against the austerity policy proclaimed by Soares. At a time when the government was entirely powerless, this demand had all but disappeared from the written statements of the workers commissions.

To sum up, it can therefore be said that the primary limitation of the workers commissions consisted in their delay in taking up the immediate demands of the workers.

This limitation allowed a kind of division of labor to continue within the plants, between the workers commissions on the one hand and the union on the other. The latter, because of its organizational linkup with a national apparatus, played a centralizing role in practice in two major areas: establishing the collective bargaining agreements (CCT), and negotiating working conditions.

The construction workers' struggle in November 1975 is a good illustration of this contradictory situation. It was on the initiative of the elected delegates of the workers commissions that the strike was called and the struggle took the radical form it did during the siege of São Bento. However, when it came to formalizing the relationship of forces created by this impressive national mobilization, the construction workers union appeared on the scene to provide a minimal degree of coordination and to sign the contract, whose provisions were a reflection of the victory that had been won by the workers commissions.

The continuation of this same situation also explains the ease with which, during the second phase of the Portuguese revolution that began on November 25, the union leaderships (the CP in the case of the industrial unions and the SP in the white-collar unions) have been able, even without an entrenched bureaucracy to rely on, to channel the mobilizations into the frameworks of the union apparatus.

Finally, the orientation of the reformist leaderships, their consistent practice of utilizing struggles as a means of lobbying

with the successive provisional governments or with the various wings of the MFA [Movimento das Forças Armadas—Armed Forces Movement], had an impact on a large number of workers commissions. Under the fourth and fifth provisional governments, many workers commissions under CP influence adopted a "battle for production" line.

The demagogic language exemplified in the following quotation from a document published by the SOCEL [Sociedade de Industrias Celuloses] workers commission on May 5-6, 1975, shows that the "battle for production" played no small part in undermining the credibility of some workers commissions in the eyes of the workers. With a sure class instinct, the workers concentrated more on the fight for a government that would satisfy their legitimate demands. The SOCEL document said:

The workers can only be organized to carry out this vast campaign of struggle for power if they are inspired with the necessary determination to deal with the worsening economic crisis. This task can be accomplished only if a genuinely revolutionary spirit of mass enthusiasm takes hold of everyone, if a consistent and resolute struggle is waged—a struggle that consists at the moment of the battle for production! For us, comrades, there must be neither a minimum nor a maximum program; there is only one program, that of socialism. That is the minimum program we must put into practice at once. At stake are the workers' professional pride and their duties as citizens. This puts everyone of us under an obligation not to fall below a certain level of efficiency, to maintain a standard corresponding to the average abilities of each of us.

In this way, many workers commissions became isolated, allowing the unions to take the initiative in economic struggles. Thus, in a society in which the socialist revolution was still to be accomplished, the extension and coordination of the workers commissions was blocked by General Vasco Gonçalves's demagogic appeals for "socialist exertion."

While it is true, fortunately, that "the battle for production" never became a reality, the fact remains that this orientation of capitulating to the class-collaborationist government left deep wounds in the Portuguese workers movement, pitting SP workers against CP workers for a long time. In particular, because of this orientation, the workers commissions in the CP-dominated main industrial concentrations were cut off for a whole period from any chance of being recognized by all the workers—Communists, Socialists, and revolutionists—as weapons for their day-to-day struggles, instruments that could in the future develop into effective organs of power.

These limitations of the workers commissions, which were the predictable outcome of the reformists' policy, point up the full importance of a correct policy of a workers' united front. The condition for achieving

such a united front was for the workers commissions to take up all of the workers' immediate demands. This would have made it possible to unite large numbers of workers around these demands, thereby creating authoritative and representative workers organizations that would really have been capable of offering working-class solutions to the crisis of Portuguese capitalism. The workers had demonstrated their readiness to mobilize around these solutions in order to win.

The majority of workers commissions were set up around the end of 1974. However, delegates were elected in different ways. At Sorefame [Sociedades Reunidas de Fabricações Metálicas], a large metal-fabricating plant outside Lisbon, the workers commission is made up of thirty-two delegates, elected by the various categories of workers, who meet once a month. In most of the plants in the industrial belt, a similar procedure has been adopted—delegates from each shop and category are elected directly by all the workers. In some cases, these delegates are mandated to carry out a program that has been discussed in the plant. This discussion culminates in an initial vote.

It is through this process that the workers commissions have been elected in the two red bastions represented by the Lisnave and Setenave shipyards. The composition and political coloration of these bodies has changed several times in accordance with the evolution of the political situation in the country and of the orientations of the reformist and revolutionary workers organizations. But this type of democratic elections of the workers commissions by the rank-and-file workers themselves was not the general rule.

Before giving way to the first constitutional government headed by Mário Soares in June 1976, the SP and PPD ministers in the sixth provisional government made the the outgoing cabinet shoulder the blame for a decree restricting workers control to exclusively Portuguese-owned enterprises with more than fifty workers. Moreover, workers control had to be applied by workers commissions elected by secret, universal vote, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor, by which in turn they had to be recognized. The decree specified: "Workers control may not interfere with the ability of management structures or any of the various supervisors to exercise their functions."

If it were applied, this decree on workers control—which the present Soares government has of course reaffirmed—would transform the workers commissions into mere appendages of the government or the corporations. At one point, the CP, out of concern for legality did try to make the workers obey it. But the workers have ignored the decree, even in areas heavily dominated by the CP. After these unsuccessful attempts, the party headed by

Alvaro Cunhal was finally forced to condemn the measure. Nevertheless, it always left the door open for a compromise.

In his report to the party's Eighth Congress, the CP general secretary said that "workers control has been instituted gradually, as a result of employers deserting the plants." He added that, "given the demands of the process itself, the functions of supervision and control gave way to managerial functions," and finally, that "control and management were not a matter of principle or a panacea; they were an emergency measure."

It is useful to compare Alvaro Cunhal's deliberately ambiguous statements with what actually happened. It is true that the majority of Portuguese workers began to apply workers control, and in some cases forms of worker management, out of necessity in the face of sabotage by the employers. But it is undeniable that, despite all the difficulties encountered, they did consider this practice a "panacea," and correctly so. They discussed workers control enthusiastically as a means for solving the crisis of the capitalist system in their country.

The most positive lessons of this experience are far from being forgotten. There is the example of the workers at the Braço de Prata arsenal, who refused to manufacture weapons without first knowing what they were to be used for. There is the example of the workers at the giant CUF [Companhia União de Fabril] trust, who worked out a very effective system for monitoring prices and billing at cost, particularly for chemical fertilizer, in order to deliver such products directly to workers in cooperatives and collective agricultural enterprises. Another example is that of the bank workers, who went over all credit applications in order to give first priority to loans, at no interest, to enterprises under self-management or occupied farms. This list is far from exhaustive, but it says a great deal about the supposed lack of a "matter of principle."

Some workers commissions did not always manage to avoid the traps, such as comanagement, or long-term self-management, leading nowhere. In the first few months after the overthrow of the dictatorship, the TAP workers commission, controlled by the MES at the time, agreed to the inclusion of three of its members on the administrative council. While this disastrous experience was short-lived, since the workers put a stop to it by dissolving the workers commission, it created no end of confusion, as this kind of thing did in other nationalized enterprises where it occurred. In every case, these comanagement deformations were quickly corrected, simply because of the rapid pace of events in the country.

These deformations reflected, moreover, the weak tradition of independent organization among certain sectors of workers,

who embraced comanagement in the hope of thereby achieving their goal of bettering working conditions and gaining control in the plants.

Today we are faced with a very different



CUNHAL: Master of ambiguous statements.

problem, because there is a conscious convergence between the Social Democratic program of the SP and the Stalinist program of the CP in calling for comanagement of the nationalized sector. The official documents of the SP leadership—and thus of the government—no longer refer to workers control, but to "a check on management."

The positions of the CP leadership speak for themselves:

The workers' struggle must take into account the economic and social transformations that have occurred in our country. Nationalizations, workers control, agrarian reform, state intervention, and worker management, among other things, have led to the formation of a large sector of our economy that has a noncapitalist dynamic. In this sector, new relations of production are developing that lead in the direction of socialism. The workers' economic struggles cannot be separated from the need to consolidate and defend this noncapitalist economic formation and to reconstruct our economy. . . . In their struggle, the workers must take into consideration not only wage demands, even though these demands are in line with the need to better their living conditions. Limiting themselves to such demands will make the workers lose sight of the need to defend the noncapitalist economic formation and to prove that enterprises can function efficiently [*O Militante*, organizational bulletin of the Portuguese Communist party, January 1977].

This aberrant way of analyzing nationalizations under capitalism naturally amounts to a justification for holding back economic struggles on the one hand, and on the other for pressuring the workers

commissions to play the role of "efficient" plant managers. The CP does not use the word comanagement, but that is what it is talking about.

As in the past, however, the chances are slim that the CP will be able to put comanagement into practice. The economic crisis has reached catastrophic proportions, and the Portuguese workers' level of combativity is too high for the CP's pronouncements about "real austerity" or "efficient management" to take on the slightest credibility, at least for the time being.

To the contrary, the attacks on the workers' standard of living and on the gains they have won are helping to bring about a revival of the workers commissions in the plants. Assemblies are taking place everywhere, and struggles are under way in the main sectors of industry against firings, the wage freeze, price hikes, the effects of the recent 15 percent devaluation of the escudo, and in general against the austerity policy of the Soares government, which the bourgeoisie is supporting until it can come up with a regime better able to bring the workers "to their senses."

In this new upsurge of defensive struggles now unfolding in Portugal, the unions will play a primary role in defending the elementary interests of the proletariat. The fact that a nationally recognized trade-union federation now exists, after the first national trade-union congress held in January of this year, will also help put them in the forefront of the strikes brewing nearly everywhere.

But the workers commissions are far from dead and buried. The government's policies are even partly helping to resurrect them. By answering all demands with the claim that they cannot be met because of the depth of the crisis, Mário Soares is only encouraging the workers in the belief that there is only one overall solution to the crisis that can satisfy their demands in the long run, and therefore that they are fully justified in defending workers control and the indispensable tool for achieving it, the workers commissions.

Moreover, the workers commissions are organizations close to the rank and file. The delegates to these commissions are well known to the workers in the plants and offices. Given the conditions that exist, in the strikes and nationwide political struggles that are clearly on the horizon these features can make the workers commissions the crucible for forging genuine sovereign organs of workers democracy.

The workers commissions represent a great legacy of the Portuguese revolutionary experience. Despite their limitations and past errors, they remain the undisputed symbol of the proletarian revolution that began in Portugal on April 25 three years ago. □

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The Fight for Trade-Union Democracy in Portugal

By Charles Michaloux

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On January 27-30, 1977, the congress of the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers-Intersindical (CGTP-IN) was held in Lisbon, under the slogans of "workers unity" and "restructuring the Intersindical."

The "congress of all the unions," as its organizers called it, constituted an important event in the history of the Portuguese workers movement. In fact, there can be no doubt that from now on the CGTP-IN will be a united trade-union federation looked to for leadership by the overwhelming majority of Portuguese workers. This in itself is a major event, coming three years after the unfolding of the revolutionary crisis, in the course of which the Portuguese working class has often been deeply divided.

Under the Dictatorship

Between 1968 and 1970, the working class in the major European capitalist countries went through a process of radicalization. The dictatorial corporatist regime of Salazar and Caetano did not escape the effects of this, even though the radicalization took a much less striking form in Portugal.

From 1969 onward, there were numerous indications that the Portuguese workers were beginning to awaken after more than forty years of superexploitation, enforced by the terror of the PIDE hangmen, the bloody political police of the oldest dictatorship in Europe.

For the first time, thousands of bank workers went on strike to demand the

signing of collective bargaining agreements; 5,000 government employees demonstrated in front of the government building to demand a forty-four-hour week.

In October 1970, the Ministry of Corporations responded by issuing a series of decrees putting further restrictions on the already tightly controlled activities of the craft unions under its supervision.

For several years, activists of the Christian left, and particularly the underground Portuguese Communist party [PCP], had been active in the unions. Their efforts had begun to bear fruit, and to combine with the radicalizing effect produced by the new measure.

On October 1, 1970, there was a meeting of leadership delegations, which were already controlled to one degree or another by members of left organizations. Representatives of metalworkers, textile workers, and bank and office workers unions in the Lisbon area held an initial national coordinating meeting.

At this meeting, three points were on the agenda—the decree-laws issued by the Ministry of Corporations, the length of the workweek, and the question of censorship and freedom of association. This meeting was referred to as the Intersindical, a name that was subsequently retained, although to the workers who gave their all to build it, it was known as the "Inter."

Despite a wave of repression against it, the "Inter" grew steadily. In 1973, it launched a big nationwide campaign in the plants for a minimum wage, culminating in several successful struggles. In the period preceding April 25, 1974, fifty union leaderships had joined Intersindical. Their work was coordinated by a secretariat with purely administrative functions. In this body, each delegation—representing one union from the north, center, and south, respectively—had one vote.

At the time of the captains' coup, the trade-union movement emerged from the underground, organizationally still very

weak. Although it already constituted a significant force, it was in no way comparable to what the workers commissions in Spain represent today.

After April 25

The "Inter" grew rapidly. In the heady atmosphere that followed the fall of the dictatorship, the workers kicked out the fascist leaders who had held sway over the unions. The "Inter" was called upon from all sides to help in this gigantic effort.

The verticalization of the unions—that is, the assembling of scores of craft unions into industrial unions—gave the PCP leadership an opportunity to install its members at the head of the newly formed unions, without any kind of elections. Because of the euphoria and sense of unity arising from the newly won freedom, this situation caused some tension for a time but no dramatic explosions. This did not last long.

During this initial phase of the revolutionary process, the Socialist party had no organization whatever in the plants, and the far left had a very weak base. All this encouraged the CP leadership to believe that its grip on the embryonic trade-union apparatus that existed would enable it, within a short time, and without strong competition, to establish a de facto monopoly over the process of building the Portuguese workers movement.

The CP bureaucrats, who had little experience with public political activity and the pressures it generates for respecting the workers' democratic aspirations, wasted little time in converting the unions they influenced into appendages of the party, subject to the zigzags of its line.

When the first strikes broke out—in the CTT [Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones—Mail, Telegraph, and Telephone, the state postal system], TAP [Transportes Aéreos Portugueses—Portuguese Air Transport],

the Lisnave shipyard, the *Jornal do Comercio*—the CP leadership took the lead in attacking the workers involved, who it claimed were “sabotaging the work of national reconstruction.” In this way, it pitted the Intersindical against the workers in struggle, to the point of instigating physical attacks on the strikers.

For many worker militants, in whose eyes the party led by Alvaro Cunhal enjoyed tremendous prestige because of the courageous way its members had fought against the dictatorship, the CP’s attitude to the strikes was like a dash of cold water. The SP leaders, who had just returned from exile, saw that there was an opportunity to be grasped. Even though the SP’s orientation was no different from that of the Stalinist leadership, it deftly took advantage of the latter’s demagoguery in order to pose as a defender of working-class struggles as against the CP’s attempts to obstruct them.

It was for this reason that many workers turned to the SP, while simultaneously beginning to establish the workers commissions, frequently in opposition to the “Inter” apparatus, which strongly opposed such organizations. Since the SP used the workers commissions as its main propaganda weapon against the CP, the bureaucrats saw the workers commissions still more as a weapon against the unions.

March 11

The advance of the revolution, which began to gain momentum in the fall of 1974, forced the CP to change its orientation. Instead of opposing struggles outright, it now tried to win leadership of all struggles that took place, in both the workers commissions and in the unions, so as to be in a better position to channel them in a class-collaborationist direction.

The abortive coup of March 11, 1975, gave the Stalinists an opportunity to put this line into practice. The Intersindical took the lead in organizing the demonstrations that foiled the right-wing coup attempt led by Spínola. The disgrace of the monocle-wearing general, the butcher of Guinea, brought on a major political upheaval.

In the first place, the workers, propelled by the momentum of the struggles that had been spreading since the end of 1974 (and that had prompted the right to launch the March 11 adventure), occupied the plants and forced the initial nationalizations of the banks and insurance companies that hold large amounts of the capital of the major Portuguese corporations.

Secondly, the flight of Spínola and his followers heightened qualitatively the tension that already existed in Portuguese society. These pressures were even to be reflected in the MFA [Movimento das Forças Armadas—Armed Forces Movement], which, at the close of a stormy session, put General Vasco Gonçalves at

the head of the Fourth Provisional Government. This general was surrounded by a team of officers strongly influenced by the CP. From then on, the CP leadership’s entire policy consisted of using the strug-



ANTUNES: Top figure in “Group of Nine.”

gles waged by the working class as a means of lobbying with the state apparatus and the military hierarchy, in order to increase its influence within these institutions.

The Intersindical was used in this way to get the MFA to go along with the trade-union unity law proposed by the CP. By governmental decree, the “Inter” became the only legally recognized trade-union federation. The CP leadership also converted the Intersindical into its mouthpiece for the “battle for production” line, sung to the familiar tune of “work harder and better.”

There seemed to be no limits to the arrogance of the CP bureaucracy at the time. It controlled a good portion of the press and mass media. In the unions, worker militants from other tendencies were pushed around, especially if they were in the SP.

The First Congress

The resignation of the Social Democratic cabinet ministers from the Fourth Provisional Government in June 1975 was the official opening of the political crisis in which an unprecedented working-class radicalization was to founder.

The CP leadership, relying on its control over the trade-union apparatus and what it believed was an unassailable position, responded to the bourgeois counteroffensive orchestrated by Soares and the Group of Nine (officers in the Revolutionary Council led by Melo Antunes) by adopting

a line of all-out war against the SP, making no distinction between the leadership and the ranks. Once again, the Intersindical was used to do the dirty work.

This course reached its peak on June 18, when leaders of the “Inter” in the northern region called for a physical confrontation with demonstrators mobilized by the SP. Fortunately, this call was not heeded. The next day, in Lisbon, the “Inter” reissued the order to its activists—though in a less virulent form—to set up barricades on the access routes to the capital, “to stop the march of the reactionaries.”

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the Intersindical was seen by many activists, and not only those in the SP, as the tool of the CP’s bureaucratic, sectarian, and divisive policy in the labor movement.

In July 1975, the Intersindical’s first congress was called by the Secretariat for a date two weeks away, with no prior debate or discussion. In giving an ovation to the premier, “Companheiro Vasco,” this congress sanctioned the CP’s orientation of subordinating workers struggles to the MFA’s maneuvers. In practice, it gave its blessing to the violent split in the workers movement. The split was in the interests of the two reformist leaderships, which were followed by a majority of the workers.

Throughout the crisis of the summer and fall of 1975, the CP leadership was preoccupied with finding the best way to keep from going too far, while continually seeking to extend its influence in the state apparatus, and particularly in the MFA. The MFA itself was already riven by the pressures building up throughout Portugal, which was in the throes of a genuine revolutionary crisis.

The Crisis

During the dizzying spiral of working-class and popular mobilizations, from July to November, the trade unions were pushed into the background. The workers commissions increasingly became the forms of self-organization thrown up by the workers, and the CP concentrated on winning control of these bodies. Nevertheless, the trade-union apparatus was held in reserve, in view of the weak coordination of the workers commissions, to fill the need for centralization that the broad struggles shaking the country naturally came to require.

The “Inter” gave a kind of stamp of approval to the gains won by the workers organized in the workers commissions. It was the union leaderships, frequently unelected, who appeared on the scene to sign the contracts won by the metalworkers and the civil-construction workers in October and November, for example.

The workers felt the need to coordinate the massive strength that was being demonstrated everywhere, in order to offer

a solution to the crisis of a system that they no longer wanted. The CP leaders cleverly responded to this widespread sentiment by setting up central bodies controlled by CP cadres and run in accordance with undemocratic norms of functioning.

It was in this way that the provisional secretariat of workers commissions of the Lisbon industrial belt (SPCTCIL), the SPCTCIS in Setúbal, and the SPCTCIP in Oporto were constituted, on the initiative of the CP. Coordination with the "Inter" Secretariat, however, was quite well provided for—so well, in fact, that the roles of the two bodies were often interchangeable.

Still, the revolutionary upsurge had an impact. Cut off from the SP workers, and hard pressed by broad vanguard sectors that challenged its methods and orientation in practice, carrying their criticisms into the very ranks of the CP, the Stalinists had to make some tactical adjustments. Trade-union elections were held, with competing slates of candidates that reflected the views of the CP, SP, and the far left, as well as elements under rightist influence.

The results of the voting gave a clearer picture of the tendencies running through the Portuguese workers movement. The blue-collar unions were generally led by the CP and the far left, while the white-collar unions had majority SP leaderships, sometimes flanked by a few members of the ultrasectarian Maoist-Stalinist MRPP [Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado—Movement to Reorganize the Proletarian Party].

There was a deep division, then, inside the workers movement. Furthermore, this division corresponded almost exactly to the different social layers and clearly defined geographical sectors. The role played by the "Inter" during these months of revolutionary upheaval was not unrelated to this.

However, under the impact of a growing combativity, the situation began to change. In the first place, the "Inter" bureaucrats were forced, in many cases, to shelve their hopes of turning the unions into mere transmission belts for their sacrosanct "people-MFA alliance." The workers' demands for democracy and hopes for unity compelled the bureaucrats, contrary to all their expressed ideas, to accept in practice the election of trade-union leaderships on the basis of tendencies.

To be sure, the manner in which the elections were held, with their "party" slates, was like a caricature of parliamentarism. The demarcation should have been between political orientations, not just organizations. However, the precedent for representation of tendencies had been set, and this was a direct result of the rise in consciousness of broad sectors of the working class.

Secondly, the trade-union movement,

even though it was not in the forefront of the revolutionary crisis—for good reason—began to play a real role.

Finally—this, of course, is the most positive development—the mobilizations of hundreds of thousands of workers side by side, from north to south, began to partially overcome the traumatic effect of the previous confrontation between CP and SP activists and sympathizers.

To be sure, after Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo became premier in the Sixth Provisional Government, it was the SP leadership that began openly leading the attack on the workers. When this government was badly shaken by the huge mobilizations in November 1975, a large number of workers who sympathized with the SP were in the streets with their comrades. At the same time, Mário Soares and the SP cabinet ministers were on the balcony with the admiral, trying to call them back to "order." So by November 25, some of the objective conditions had been assembled pointing toward the possibility of building a united trade-union movement in Portugal.

November 25 and Its Aftermath

The second phase of the Portuguese revolutionary process opened with the military operation carried out by the Amadora Rangers on November 25, 1975. On that date, after nine months of paralysis, the bourgeoisie succeeded in regaining the political offensive, taking advantage of the pretext provided by the military left. Up until then, the workers had not run up against any resistance. Subsequently, they had to face a considerably reinforced state apparatus, even though this regime did not yet possess anywhere near the resources necessary for a full-scale offensive on the social level against the revolutionary gains and persistent combativity of the Portuguese workers. Once the initial confusion had been overcome, struggles resumed, beginning in January and February 1976. But this time, they had a defensive character—being directed against the wage restraints and the freeze on collective bargaining decreed by the government, as well as against the price hikes.

In January 1976, in response to a call issued jointly for the first time by the CP- and SP-dominated unions, trade-union rallies were held in Lisbon and Oporto. Even though the SP and CP trade-union leaderships did nothing to insure that these actions would lead to an organized response to the government's attacks, they still marked the beginning of a change in climate within the workers movement. The right wing's renewed arrogance, after the severe fright it experienced in the fall, also helped to bring about this different atmosphere.

The results of the legislative elections on April 25, 1976, helped advance the demand

for unity. The workers parties' winning a majority of the seats in the Assembly of the Republic gave additional encouragement to the proletariat. For the bourgeoisie, which had counted its chickens before they were hatched, it was a clear indication that the game was not yet over.

On May 1, 1976, large workers rallies were held throughout the country. The SP and CP trade-union leaders spoke at these rallies, the former calling for a democratically organized trade-union congress to be held rapidly, the latter announcing that they were making a commitment to convene such a congress before the end of the year. In the euphoric atmosphere of the victory won by the left at the polls, and the united May Day demonstrations, it seemed that it was only a matter of months before a single trade-union federation would be established.

"Inter" and the Other Unions

According to figures released by the Intersindical Secretariat, 307 unions existed in 1976. This includes unions by industry and by region, such as the Lisbon-area bank workers, the northern-region metalworkers, and so on. However, a few craft unions were still in existence, because the process of "verticalization" had not been completed in all cases.

Of these 307 unions, the "Inter" claimed 190, representing about 1.5 million wage workers, most of whom were employed in industry.

The 177 unions not affiliated to the Intersindical at the beginning of 1976 included about 500,000 workers. Most of them were bank or office workers, or else blue-collar workers scattered throughout the tiny factories in the north and center of the country, which employ no more than twenty to twenty-five workers on the average.

The 190 unions affiliated to the "Inter" were practically all led by CP members, sometimes in alliance with a few members of far-left organizations; the others were mostly under SP leadership. The far left, which concentrated its activity in the previous period in the workers commissions, led or participated in the leadership of about fifteen unions, nearly all of which were members of the Intersindical.

Thus the division in the trade-union movement has paralleled the major political division in the workers movement, between two large blocs respectively under SP and CP influence.

The 'Open Letter'

On April 27, 1976, the representatives of twenty-nine trade-union leaderships met in Coimbra to draft an "open letter to the Intersindical Secretariat and to the Portuguese workers."

The "open letter," which became the nickname of the groups of trade-union leaders organized by SP activists, demand-

ed "the convening of a genuine trade-union congress representing all Portuguese workers." To that end, the "open letter" group proposed that the National Secretariat of the Intersindical set up a parity commission to insure that the upcoming congress would be well organized and would have unquestionable authority. At this point, the first official contacts took place between SP and CP trade-union activists. These exchanges resulted in joint organization of May Day rallies and in the parallel positions outlined at these rallies by leaders of these two currents in the trade-union movement.

Contact was resumed after the presidential election campaign, in which both reformist parties encountered major internal problems—the CP because of Otelo de Carvalho's candidacy, which had a strong impact on its ranks; the SP because of General Eanes's candidacy, which was far from enthusiastically received by the SP workers. Contact continued regularly, culminating, on July 29, in a "general meeting of Intersindical-affiliated and nonaffiliated unions," attended by 144 trade-union leaderships from all over the country.

In an August 5 communiqué, the leadership of the bank workers union of the southern region and the islands (dominated by the SP) gave the following account of the meeting:

The aim of the meeting was not to make any decisions, but to discuss the draft of the rules of procedure in preparation for the congress, presented by the National Secretariat of the Intersindical. It was agreed that this draft would serve as a working document, to be submitted for consideration by the National Organizing Commission, which is the body that has sole responsibility for planning and carrying out the unity congress of all the unions. In any event, some basic points will remain under debate. These all flow from the central question—that is, whether the Secretariat is interested only in holding a "second congress of the Intersindical," which would perpetuate the current divisions, or whether, in fact, it recognizes the need for a genuine democratic congress of all unions for unity. For the Intersindical, this would mean accepting all the consequences of thus putting an end to the dominance of one tendency over the Portuguese workers movement.

The same communiqué went on record in favor of "the establishment of a single, democratic, and independent trade-union federation, where tendency rights would be guaranteed."

The Secretariat—that is, the central leadership of the CP's trade-union fraction—reacted to the "open letter" with delaying tactics. The fight for democracy launched by the "open letter" group found a wide hearing. It soon united sixty-nine trade-union leaderships around its two central goals: "the convening of an all-union congress" and "the constitution of a national organization commission representing all existing currents of opinion within the trade-union movement."

But the "open letter" group soon lost momentum, falling prey to its own limitations and weaknesses.

The SP trade-union leaderships did not, in fact, lead a real fight in the workers



SOARES: Took advantage of CP curtailment of workers' democratic rights.

movement to achieve the two goals outlined in their "open letter." On the contrary, they confined themselves to endless negotiations inside the apparatus, with representatives of the "Inter" Secretariat. The Intersindical leadership could not have asked for anything better, since this allowed them to stall for time.

While the objectives outlined in their declaration undeniably corresponded to the well-justified feelings of many workers about the behavior of the "Inter" bureaucrats throughout the whole previous period, the SP trade-union leaders declined to organize a real tendency, especially in those unions controlled by the CP. Such a tendency could have built a potentially very powerful current, capable of forcing the Intersindical to yield on some basic points.

From one meeting to the next, their approach seemed to consist of counterposing the demands of the SP to those of the CP, rather than trying to put democratic norms of functioning—in line with the wishes of most if not all of the workers, regardless of which party they looked to at the time—into practice in the trade-union movement.

The Stalinist leadership of the "Inter" seized this opportunity to set its steamroller in motion against the right to form tendencies, claiming that the "open letter"

group's behavior was typical: "An introduction of the norms of parliamentarism, with its endless palavers, which the workers do not understand and which bog them down. . . ."

Most of the far-left groups (MES [Movimento de Esquerda Socialista—Movement of the Socialist Left], PRP [Partido Revolucionário do Proletariado—Revolutionary party of the Proletariat], and UDP [União Democrática do Povo—People's Democratic Union]) shamefully followed in the CP's footsteps, in order to carve out a niche in the Intersindical apparatus.

Only the Trotskyists of the LCI [Liga Comunista Internacionalista—Internationalist Communist League] defended the right to form tendencies, and took a clear position, both publicly and inside the unions, in favor of supporting the democratic objectives of the "open letter" group.

These weaknesses on the part of the "open letter" group in fact stemmed from much more fundamental political deficiencies. As soon as Mário Soares, the SP general secretary who had been named premier by Eanes, announced his austerity program in September, the central focus of the concerns of the workers movement shifted to organizing a response to the government's anti-working-class policies.

By not putting forward any proposals to meet the workers' expectations, the SP trade unionists in the "open letter" group left themselves open to the demagogy of the "Inter" Secretariat, which portrayed them as quibbling about democracy at a time when the workers were under attack. "The 'open letter' group can neither take positions nor present them publicly, because it has not been elected by the workers. This can only be done separately by each union participating in the movement, in accordance with the wishes of its members," the Secretariat wrote in November 1976.

The SP activists in the "open letter" group were caught in their own contradictions. On the one hand, they were subjected to harsh disciplinary measures inside the SP at the hands of the party's Social Democratic leadership, which was seeking to push obstacles to its bourgeois orientation out of the way (more than a thousand members were suspended after the December SP congress). On the other hand, they wanted to avoid an open confrontation with Soares, for fear of wrecking the SP's outward appearance of unity.

The "open letter" group itself was a reflection of this contradictory situation. It was not a grouping of trade-union activists around a platform of clear political and economic demands; rather it originated as an extension of the SP. Several currents coexisted inside it, extending from the SP's radical working-class wing to supporters of the Soares line.

As a result, the compromises necessary to its survival required failing to take a

position on the government's policy—i.e., on the orientation of the SP leadership—even if the majority of “open letter” activists were hostile to this policy, as indicated by their campaign during the struggles against the government decrees.

This political confusion proved costly to the “open letter” group. The last meeting, held January 5 and 6, 1977, on the eve of the trade-union congress, managed to bring together only twenty-five trade-union leaderships. The scaffolding was reduced to the leaderships of the bank and office workers unions in Lisbon and Oporto, and the leadership of the high-school teachers union in the capital. Not a single significant blue-collar union was included. Since the formation of the SP government, not a single union had elected an SP leadership.

For example, the Lisbon public employees union, traditionally composed of elements sympathetic to the SP, elected a leadership controlled by the CP. The referendums organized by the leaders of the “open letter” group in their unions to win approval for their refusal to participate in the January congress resulted in setbacks. Some 12,500 members voted in the referendum in the Lisbon office workers union, while 30,000 workers had voted in the elections for the leadership of the union.

On the eve of the trade-union congress, then, the “open letter” group found itself at an impasse. Under these conditions, the right wing of the SP was in a good position to carry out its plan of building a rival trade-union federation, in league with PPD [Partido Popular Democrático—Democratic People's Party] agents in some unions. The worker militants in the SP's left wing, for their part, were trapped by their irresolution, both in dealing with the leadership of their party and with that of the CP.

The CGTP-IN

Commenting on the defeat suffered by the CP candidate, Octavio Pato, in the presidential elections of June 1976, in which half of the CP's electoral following threw their votes to Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, Alvaro Cunhal declared tersely: “We will get it all back, with interest.”

The January trade-union congress represented the most important step in this process of recovery by the section of the workers movement adhering to the CP. At the “all-union congress,” 265 unions were represented, amounting to about 1.8 million workers, or 85 percent of all organized workers. According to the CGTP leadership, eighty unions that were not previously members of the Intersindical, and which represent 300,000 wage workers, were included. The overall meaning of this is clear. The CGTP-IN represents the overwhelming majority of Portuguese workers,

and probably a near totality of the industrial proletariat.

Using its 2,500 cells in the factories, the CP combined harsh criticism of the Soares government with a tight rein on all attempts to broaden struggles around specific demands. This enabled it to maneuver its way back up to the dominant position from which it had fallen because of its policy in the first phase of the revolution. The crisis of the far left, coming after the collapse of the illusions inspired by the success of Otelo's presidential campaign, as well as its opportunistic adaptation to the CP's line on the question of trade-union democracy, left the Stalinists plenty of elbow room.

However, the bureaucratic way the congress was organized—with mainly leadership delegations attending—could not keep the radicalization of the working class and the high level of combativity maintained by the workers from finding expression there. For example, the National Organizing Commission for the Congress (CNOG) was forced at the last minute to put discussion of an immediate action campaign on the agenda. Even its last-minute draft was substantially amended to allow for the preparation of a “list of immediate demands” with a much more radical coloration.

The Stalinist faction managed, nevertheless, to eliminate an important part of the bargaining platform—the proposal for a twenty-four-hour general strike against the austerity program. The entire far left blocked together around this proposal, and it gained support from nearly a third of those attending the congress.

On the other hand, the CNOG had to yield to the intense desire for unity and the demand for democracy on the part of broad layers, by accepting the principle of participation by different working-class currents in the national leadership of the CGTP-IN—without recognition of tendency rights being included in the statutes.

The national leadership of the CGTP-IN thus includes several members of the MES and of the SP. Kalidas Barreto, a well-known SP worker militant and former SP deputy to the Constituent Assembly, is a member of the National Secretariat and a public spokesman for the federation. This concession, which the CGTP-IN leaders used to carry out a publicity operation, proved fruitful, because several members of the “open letter” group announced their union's intention to affiliate to the new federation, whose authority could hardly be questioned.

Negotiate or Fight?

The CP's line of action has not radically changed. While it obviously has trouble trying to win favor with a fragmented MFA, its orientation remains that of using working-class and popular struggles as a tool for getting pro-CP elements into key

positions in the state apparatus.

The CP has been giving more and more guarantees not to disrupt the established order, but only to improve on it. This can be seen in its numerous pronouncements in favor of a “genuine austerity program”—the Soares policy supposedly being “inadequate”!

In the trade unions, the CGTP-IN leadership has so far been able to prevent any possibility of an extension of the struggles that have begun to develop, particularly since the 15 percent devaluation of the escudo. The leadership in fact displays unusual cynicism in the arguments it uses:

The satisfaction of certain demands—such as wage increases, improvements in social services, and so on—may very well represent a temporary expedient that the bosses will use to regain control of state-run enterprises, those under worker management, and even nationalized enterprises. Having overcome the workers' resistance in this fashion, and having reestablished capitalist control over the enterprises, the real face of exploitation and oppression will soon be revealed. [O Militante, January 1977.]

These Jesuitical arguments seem unlikely to win much support from the workers, and perhaps not even from the CP's own membership. National strikes are being discussed in nearly all the key sectors of the economy. In the first two weeks of March alone, two national strikes of several hours were conducted to demand the signing of new contracts in the metal and textile industries.

The bureaucratic apparatuses have not managed to establish air-tight control over the working class. The deepgoing nature of the political, social, and economic crisis, and the workers' readiness to struggle are such that without a decisive defeat of the proletariat it is impossible to qualitatively alter the existing relationship of class forces, which is the result of three years of revolutionary mobilizations. In this situation, the recent trade-union congress represents an impetus to struggle, not an excuse for demobilization.

For the first time in its history, the Portuguese working class has a mass national organization of its own. This organization is still too young for the bureaucratic methods of the reformists to succeed in transforming it into a malleable tool for their policy of class collaboration. The future battles that are shaping up in Portugal, in which the unions will play a primary role, will soon give a concrete content to the fight being waged by revolutionists to assure that the CGTP-IN lives up to the hopes that thousands of workers have invested in it. □