

# International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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**Resolution on Latin America,  
Draft Resolution for Fifth World Congress  
Since Reunification (11th World Congress),  
Submitted by Majority of the United Secretariat**

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# RESOLUTION ON LATIN AMERICA

[Draft resolution adopted by majority of United Secretariat]

## Introduction

Although there is a great unevenness between the various countries of Latin America, and within each country, the continent as a whole is the most economically developed of all the semicolonial regions of the world. In recent years economic development has accelerated significantly, particularly in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, which together account for a big majority of the population of the continent. This is shown, in particular, by the rising proportion of the national product stemming from industrial production, the growth of the proletariat, and the increasing importance in the ruling-class bloc of indigenous industrial and banking sectors.

Despite the growing industrialization, the indigenous bourgeoisies have not been capable of carrying out the still necessary democratic and anti-imperialist tasks of the Latin American revolution. It is beyond their reach to carry out a deepgoing agrarian reform, win genuine economic independence and complete national liberation from imperialism—prerequisites for assuring a better way of life for the masses. Imperialist domination remains, with the capitalists and landlords as dependent partners, condemning the masses to a life of exploitation, repression, and poverty.

As a result, all the basic contradictions produced by the law of uneven and combined development manifest themselves in a concentrated way in Latin America. On the one hand, there has been explosive growth of the cities, the development of modern industry, and the mechanization of sectors of agricultural production. But the cities are populated by masses of poor, unemployed or partially employed; considerable small-scale manufacturing exists alongside modern industry, and industrial production still benefits only a small minority; agricultural production still does not meet human needs, while the toilers on the land, unable to compete, can barely survive. The perspectives facing the Latin American masses under capitalism remain bleak.

But the very advances made in capitalist industrial development are creating even more mature conditions for overturning capitalist property relations. On the one hand, the Latin American ruling classes, including the increasingly important industrial and banking sectors, are still dependent on the imperialists and are much less willing or able than in the past to promote bourgeois-populist challenges to imperialism and to use mass mobilizations for their bourgeois-nationalist interests. On the other hand, the wage-earning sector of the population has increased substantially. Within this sector the weight of the modern industrial proletariat in social and political life is growing. The proletariat is moving to the leadership of the class struggle as a whole, and is increasingly inclined to employ the most advanced and powerful forms of struggle.

The victory of the Cuban revolution and the creation of the first workers state in the Western Hemisphere proved that entirely new possibilities are open to the masses of Latin America. The Cuban revolution demonstrated that

far-reaching and permanent anti-landlord, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist measures can be achieved by the toiling masses when they are mobilized, provided these are combined with the struggle for socialist goals led by the proletariat. The Cuban revolution showed that deepgoing agrarian reform can be carried out and a genuine break from imperialist domination can be made. It proved that poverty can be ended, murderous Batista-type regimes swept away, and a social system founded on exploitation overthrown.

The socialist perspective, verified for all of Latin America by the Cuban revolution, is even more timely for semi-industrialized Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.

The Cuban revolution touched off a struggle of historic proportions in Latin America. The imperialists and national bourgeoisies were thoroughly frightened by the Cuban experience, and they have followed a consistent policy of trying at any cost to block the victory of another socialist revolution in the region.

Under the impact of the Cuban revolution, there was a rise in the class struggle throughout Latin America which led to prerevolutionary crises in several countries. But the strategy of guerrilla warfare promoted by Castro and Guevara failed to extend the socialist revolution. The guerrilla strategy was unable to break the hold of the bourgeois-nationalist, Stalinist, and Social Democratic misleaders over the mass movement; the promising opportunities were lost.

Since 1964, with the military coup in Brazil, a series of grave defeats were inflicted on the proletariat and oppressed peoples of Latin America. These setbacks were especially marked in the countries of the southern cone: Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina.

The Argentine military coup in 1976 was a heavy blow to the proletariat. It was followed by massacres, layoffs, and mass arrests, destroying a large part of the militant proletarian layers that had played the most important role in the uprising in Córdoba in 1969—the “Cordobazo”—and that remained in the forefront until the 1976 coup.

But the 1976 coup failed to shatter the morale of the Argentine workers or the organized labor movement on the scale suffered by the workers under the coups in Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile. The Argentine working class has succeeded in mounting organized resistance struggles, as was shown in the strikes of 1977 and 1978.

The failure to crush the Argentine working class proved to be a turning point. Subsequently there has been a recovery of the mass movement, as was strikingly illustrated in Peru and Nicaragua in 1978. This trend can be seen even in countries under the heels of the military dictatorships of Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile.

The crisis of these military regimes is occurring in the context of popular mobilizations in which the proletariat is moving more and more toward the leadership of the masses. This more prominent position of the proletariat is beginning to have greater and greater weight in determin-

ing the general political situation in the continent.

The essential next step forward for the working class is the conquest of class political independence, and the creation of a consistently class-struggle leadership of the labor movement that can challenge the treacherous leaderships that the workers and the oppressed have followed in the past: the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists, the Stalinists, and the Social Democrats. If this can be accomplished, the working class can be organized and mobilized to lead all the oppressed in struggle against the imperialists and indigenous ruling classes.

It is obvious that bright perspectives are opening for the

spread of revolutionary Marxism in Latin America. To take advantage of them, however, the key problems must be solved—the construction of mass parties of the Leninist type. This requires examination of the limitations of the strategy of guerrilla war promoted by Castro and Guevara, and a Marxist criticism of the role of the Stalinist, centrist, Social Democratic, and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist currents.

Above all, a revolutionary Marxist program must be developed specifying the main tasks facing the proletariat and its allies in advancing the struggle for socialism in the coming period.

## I.

### Recent Economic and Social Changes in Latin America

1. With the Latin American capitalist economies drawn further into the acute contradictions of world capitalism as a whole, the worldwide capitalist recession hit Latin America hard, especially because of the increase in the price of oil and the contradiction of the market in the imperialist countries. The rate of economic growth diminished; inflation and unemployment rose; trade terms deteriorated; foreign debt and interest payments to imperialist banks reached unprecedented levels; imperialist penetration gained momentum.

A few of the Latin American ruling classes benefited from the hike in oil prices. The governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, Trinidad-Tobago, Bolivia, and Mexico in 1977-78, were able as exporters of crude oil to reduce somewhat their traditional deficits in foreign trade. However, the possession of oil resources has not narrowed the gap between the economic and social backwardness of these countries and the development of the imperialist countries.

The countries of Latin America emerged from the recession of 1974-75 with enormous foreign debts. For the first time since the crisis of the thirties, the possibility has appeared of some countries, such as Peru, resorting to a moratorium in payments to the imperialists' banks. Besides this, trade deficits in 1975-76 were greater than ever, with the exception of oil, despite the decrease in growth and along with it of imports.

These debts are so enormous that some Latin American countries must utilize the larger part of their income from exports to keep current on their payments. Under these conditions, the Latin American governments are subjected to austerity policies imposed by imperialist banks through the instrument of the International Monetary Fund.

2. The close of the period of post-World War II capitalist expansion is affecting the region slowly but surely. Despite occasional periods of economic growth in some countries, the fundamental economic superexploitation of semicolonial Latin American society continues. This is marked above all by structural underemployment and unemployment of the work force. In Mexico, for example, more than 50 percent of the economically active population is affected. In some industries production has fallen far short of capacity, a problem that up to now has been relatively unimportant in Latin America. The expansion of the nonproductive, parasitic sectors of the economy is accentuated.

This is particularly true of the percentage of national income devoted to military spending which is directly linked to the fundamental objective of the ruling classes: to hold the toiling masses under conditions most favorable for exploiting labor.

Permanent inflation also reaches far more severe levels in Latin America than in the imperialist countries. In 1977 the annual rate of inflation reached 100 percent in Chile and 176 percent in Argentina (the highest in the world). The average rate of inflation in Latin America in the 12-month period from June 1977 to June 1978 was 44%. This contrasts with an average of 6.5% during the same period in the industrially-advanced capitalist countries.

The Latin American capitalist economies continue to be dependent on imperialism. But whereas the sectors of imperialist capital that dominated the Latin American economies in the past were those linked to agriculture, mining, and oil—oriented toward the export trade—new sectors have now come forward. The industrial monopolists of the imperialist countries who export machinery and equipment, and are thus interested in seeing the Latin American countries gain a certain degree of industrialization, have invested more heavily. The index of industrial production in Brazil rose from a base of 100 in 1970 to 164 in 1975, largely as a consequence of this. The main area of investment is in consumer durables and modern packaged goods. In 1977, for example, imperialist monopolies and trusts controlled 100% of Brazil's auto production and 94% of its pharmaceutical products. In Mexico in 1976, 74% of foreign investment was in industry, accounting for 40% of all industrial production, and for 80% of industrial production in sectors such as electrical, chemical, and machinery production.

Inter-imperialist competition has played a decisive role in this change in placement of imperialist investments. The U.S. imperialists remain preponderant in Latin America, but they have lost much ground to the various West European and Japanese imperialists, which have often initiated the penetration of this new sector of production.

But this partial industrialization does not cancel out the difference in productivity between the imperialist centers and the dependent semicolonial countries of Latin America. This gap in productivity not only remains, but continues to widen as a result of the imperialists' monopoly of high-technology production. Nor has the basic semicolon-

ial position of the partially industrialized Latin American countries changed in relation to the world market. Brazil, for example, exports manufactured goods (the overwhelming bulk go to other Latin American countries), but still relies on agriculture for 60% of its export earnings.

In the world market, terms of trade are as unequal as those in the previous periods of imperialism, if not more so. These terms of trade provide a source of super profits for the imperialists, among other reasons because of the payment for high-technology goods.

3. The process of "substituting for imports" (that is, domestic production of products that had traditionally been imported) that began with World War II fostered some industrialization mainly in the 1950s and 1960s. The limited character of this industrial development must be stressed. Much production remains in the small-scale manufacture and artisan sectors. In comparison with the imperialist countries, industrial production accounts for a relatively small part of the economic output of most Latin American countries. Furthermore, industrial development tends to be concentrated in a few countries, and within those countries, in small areas. One-half of Brazil's industry, for example, is concentrated in São Paulo and parts of Rio de Janeiro. In absolute terms, however, there has been a significant increase, and the impact of this partial industrialization on overall economic, social, and political developments is out of proportion to its absolute weight, and is growing.

The process of capitalist accumulation, which was fed and accompanied by this rapid industrialization, benefited sectors of imperialism in association with the national bourgeoisie. In this way the industrial bourgeoisie is tending to stand out as the most dynamic class of the dominant national ruling bloc, and within it an important banking sector has been emerging as the leading faction. Thus, in Mexico there is the "Monterrey group," the Banamex group, and the Bancomer group; in Brazil, the Bradesco group, the Itaú group, the National Bank group, and the Simonsen group.

Despite this trend, the social structure of these countries remains that of semicolonies; they have not become independent imperialist, "subimperialist," or semi-imperialist powers. The partial industrialization, in fact, has meant that the technological dependence of these countries on imperialism is greater than ever, their "national" bourgeoisies undertake more "joint ventures" with imperialist corporations, and their debts to imperialist banks and monetary institutions are increasing constantly.

These economic transformations that resulted from the expansionist course of imperialism in the period of feverish growth following World War II have produced a growing differentiation among the various semicolonial countries of Latin America. By the size of the working class, weight of industrial output, amount of exports, rate of capital accumulation and development of the banks, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico can be classified as semi-industrialized countries. Midway between these three and the most economically backward countries of Latin America are Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Uruguay, with the industrialization process growing fastest in Venezuela as a result of the great inflow of oil revenues.

In general, the industrial working class still remains a much smaller part of the active population in Latin

America than in the imperialist countries. But its absolute size and its specific weight have grown considerably as a result of the above economic processes. Concentrated in big enterprises and economically very important areas, the industrial working class plays a political and social role far out of proportion to its numbers. Thus the weight of the industrial working class in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico is becoming more and more decisive in the political dynamics of the continent as a whole.

4. Capital has likewise penetrated some sectors of agriculture in a massive way. In addition to northeast and northwest Mexico and the areas surrounding São Paulo and the south of Brazil, there has been a growing development of "agribusiness" in Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru.

The peasant subsistence economy is destroyed in this process, but agricultural production as a whole has not been transformed in a balanced way onto a modern capitalist basis. In fact, the problem of food production has been aggravated in many cases.

In Mexico, in the four northern states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California, and Tamaulipas, where agribusiness for export purposes predominates, mechanized means are used for 90-99% of food production, and the overwhelming bulk of the land is chemically fertilized. Not so in the less developed south. Agribusiness has resulted in spectacular growth for new export crops such as soybeans and sorghum, while at the same time Mexico has had to import basic foodstuffs for consumption.

With the destruction of the old peasant communities and the development of "agribusiness," a modern rural proletariat has appeared, exploited under conditions different from those of the small farmers working the land. Nonetheless, the Latin American countryside continues to present a variegated panorama combining different relations of production. The bulk of the rural population has not been proletarianized, far from it. Subsistence farming remains by far the most important. Broad rural sectors remain in the form of small farmers working their own land or holding land so small that in addition to working their land they are forced to look for work elsewhere in order to survive.

5. The process of urbanization has accelerated considerably, giving rise to some of the world's largest cities. Mexico City mushroomed from 2.8 million inhabitants in 1950 to 10.9 million in 1975; São Paulo from 2.4 to 9.9 million; Rio de Janeiro from 2.8 to 8.3 million. Lima, Bogotá and Caracas, each with a population of only 600,000 in 1950, grew to 3.9, 3.4, and 2.6 million respectively by 1975. According to official projections these cities will more than double in size in the next twenty-five years. Buenos Aires, with a "slower" growth rate, still expanded from 4.5 to 9.3 million between 1950 and 1975.

The percentage of the economically active population in agriculture in Mexico fell from 57.8% to 39.4% between 1950 and 1975; in Brazil from 57.5% to 44.3%; and in already urbanized Argentina, from 25.2% to 14.8%. But industrial growth has been insufficient to give productive employment to the broad masses that emigrate from the countryside in search of better living conditions, above all wage-earning opportunities. Nor have housing facilities or municipal services kept pace with the extraordinary urban

growth, and there is a situation of permanent crisis in these areas.

Much of the urban population consists of a huge sector of unemployed or partially employed, living in slums and shantytowns, eking out a bare living for survival. In

addition to the traditional urban artisans, new forms of artisanry have arisen as a result of uneven industrial development, for example, "handymen" tinkering with automobiles or machinery. Tens and tens of thousands of people are condemned to peddling, beggary, homelessness, prostitution, or driven to desperate acts.

## II.

### Changes and Crisis in the Political Institutions of Bourgeois Rule

6. The economic and social changes in Latin America considered above have heightened the need to expand the administrative and military apparatus of the capitalist state in order to fulfill an ever-expanding role in society: (a) expansion of the nationalized sectors of the economy; (b) increased intervention in the economic field; (c) attacks on the standard of living of the working class to facilitate capital accumulation. The expansion of the nationalized sectors of the economy, especially in the field of heavy industry and raw material production has developed because private capital is unable to provide the enormous investments that are necessary. The expanded state sector indirectly subsidizes the private sector. This, in turn, has required changes in and expansion of the governmental structures and personnel. But the strengthened and militarized bourgeois state continues to operate in semicolonial status with respect to imperialist monopoly capital.

The old landowning oligarchy and its commercial allies (the traditional comprador bourgeoisie) that long dominated the governments of Latin America have lost ground to the new sectors of indigenous industrial and banking capital. In Mexico, where this process has been among the most advanced, the old landowning and comprador sectors of the bourgeoisie have been virtually eliminated from governmental power. While this process has not gone as far in other countries, the trend is clear: a growing concentration of executive power in the hands of the industrial and related sectors of the bourgeoisie; the increased need to use this power to advance profitable industrialization.

The partially industrialized capitalisms of Latin America are too weak to permit substantial economic concessions to the workers, while increased competition and the restricted nature of the internal market force them to drive real wages down. To carry out this policy in face of a growing and increasingly powerful working class has required increased state intervention. Two basic means have been employed: (1) attempts to control the labor movement by integrating the trade-union bureaucracies into the bourgeois parties and the apparatus of the bourgeois state. The tight control over the Mexican trade-union movement by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional [PRI—Institutional Revolutionary Party] and the control by the Peronist movement over the Argentine trade-union movement are outstanding examples; (2) attempts to crush the labor movement in totalitarian fashion, as in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

As a result of this greater involvement of the government in economic and social life, huge governmental bureaucracies have flourished in countries such as Mexico,

Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela.

The bureaucracies include the technical specialists and managers in the increasingly important nationalized sector of the economy and the political and military functionaries in the government and army. Drawn from the new industrial bourgeoisie and sectors of the middle-class aspiring to such positions, they use their posts to accumulate capital.

The ideology increasingly promoted now in the highest echelons of the state in Latin America is closely linked to the role of advancing industrialization in close dependency on imperialism. The traditional "anti-imperialist" nationalism promoted by the aspiring national bourgeoisie in the first phase of industrialization in Latin America is giving way to the new themes of modernism, efficiency, and technical expertise in alliance *with* imperialism.

7. The 1964 coup in Brazil set the tone for the series of bloody dictatorships that were to arise later in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. These dictatorships, all drawing on the support of U.S. imperialism, have been marked by a greater degree of totalitarianism than was usual in the more traditional forms of military and police despotism. The widespread murders, the pervasive use of torture, the buildup of an extralegal repressive and terror apparatus, and the adoption of the most up-to-date police methods all reflect the underlying need of the bourgeoisie to resort to modern dictatorial techniques to prevent a large and powerful working class from organizing. Similar methods were also used in Bolivia to crush the revolutionary upsurge led by the powerful miners.

The Brazilian regime was able to promote economic growth and to establish a base of support among a small layer of society, primarily sectors of the urban petty bourgeoisie, while imposing harsh impoverishment on the workers (whose purchasing power fell by 30% after 1964) and on the broad masses of urban and rural poor. However, most of the economic "success" of the dictatorship occurred in the period prior to the worldwide economic depression of 1974-75; since then the flaws in the Brazilian economic "model" have become more evident, and the regime has lost some of its previous aura of economic success. In face of this situation, the class struggle in Brazil has begun to revive, as attested to by the student struggles for democratic rights in 1977 and the massive strikes for wage increases by more than 200,000 industrial workers and, in addition, by teachers and health workers in 1978.

Even by utilizing draconian methods against the workers, the dictatorship in Chile was not able to stabilize

the capitalist economy and promote growth in the first five years of its rule. The purchasing power of the masses fell by 45% during the first eighteen months of military rule. In face of this, the initial signs of a revival of workers struggles began to be seen in 1978.

In Argentina, where the working class suffered the most terrible blow in its history, the Videla dictatorship has nevertheless failed to achieve economic successes; it has failed to crush the workers movement to the same degree as its neighbors in Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. The Argentine workers proved able to launch important defensive struggles in 1977 and 1978.

The initial signs of labor and student struggles indicate that these harsh dictatorships will face increasing difficulty in the period ahead. On the one hand, a renewed escalation of repression might well fail to stop the growing opposition, while further undermining their social bases of support. On the other hand, if they relax the repression they run the risk of creating a situation that encourages a further upsurge of mass struggle.

8. More generally, throughout much of Latin America there appears a crisis of the political institutions through which bourgeois rule has been maintained. Several of the outstanding examples are the following:

a. In Nicaragua, the more than 40-year-old family dictatorship of Somoza found itself shaken to the roots in 1977-78. A series of general strikes led to a prerevolutionary situation that began to take on aspects of civil war in September 1978. These developments not only exposed the regime's complete lack of support among the masses, but also resulted in deeply undercutting its narrow base of support in sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie itself. By October, 1978 the social basis of the regime had been almost completely eroded; the Somoza family and its immediate circle rested on the naked military power of the National Guard.

b. In Peru, the ten-year experience of military rule under Velasco and Morales Bermúdez ran aground. At the outset, the regime gained support from the masses owing to its populist demagogy and popular measures such as a limited land reform, some nationalizations, and some other economic concessions. But government austerity measures eroded its support, and in 1976-78 a series of general strikes and mass upsurges had brought Peru to a prerevolutionary situation in 1978. The June 1978 elections to the constituent assembly, and then the assembly itself—conceived by the ruling class as a maneuver to gain time—became added factors undermining the legitimacy of the military regime in the eyes of the masses.

c. In Argentina, the 30-year-long method of controlling the masses through the bourgeois nationalist Peronist movement came into crisis. The material conditions that had prevailed in the 1940s when the earlier Perón regime came into office, and that had enabled the Argentine bourgeoisie to grant economic concessions to the masses, no longer existed during the 1973-76 Peronist regime. Instead, it had to carry out austerity measures. Although it had been swept into office in an overwhelming electoral victory, the Peronist regime was unable to impose austerity on the militant Argentine workers. Unable to use the Peronists to put its austerity policy over, and with sectors of the workers movement beginning to escape Peronist control, the majority of the Argentine bourgeoisie turned to Videla, while the Peronist trade-union bureaucrats proved

incapable of defending the Peronist government against the coup. The result has been an enormous loss of prestige for the Peronists within the working class, and a substantial erosion of its ability to control the workers movement.

d. In Colombia, the two-decades-long system of bourgeois rule that began with the installation of the "National Front" agreement in 1958, and that provided for the institutionalized bipartite division of posts and alternation of governmental administrations between the Liberal and Conservative parties, has run into serious difficulty. The terms of the National Front pact were officially ended in 1974, and were continued in makeshift fashion afterwards. But no stable institutional framework, taking account of the changes in relations between the classes and within the ruling class itself, has been fully worked out. At the same time, the bourgeoisie has been moving to impose reactionary legislation and politically restructure the state apparatus in a reactionary way in order to try and insure its stable domination, for example, the 1978 decree of a "statute of security" by newly-elected President César Turbay Ayala. But in the same period, the masses, with the working class in the forefront, erupted in a huge "Paro Cívico" [general strike] in September, 1977, opening up the possibility of a big rise in the class struggle.

e. In Mexico, the bourgeoisie has found itself obliged to make changes in its fifty-year-old system of extreme presidentialism, in which the PRI completely dominated the country's political life, with all genuine opposition banned. This system has been eroding in face of growing opposition, first by sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, and then, in a stronger fashion, by sectors of the working class that are looking for a way to break the iron control that the PRI's trade-union bureaucrats (the "charros") have over the unions. The regime has announced a "political reform," granting legal status to several opposition parties. While the ruling classes will find it difficult to move towards a multiparty system, the workers and their allies can take full advantage of the democratic opening to advance their own interests.

f. In the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico, the sham autonomy of the status of "Free Associated State" and the failure of the "Economic Miracle" are becoming increasingly apparent to the masses. In 1977, while the U.S. imperialists took out a record \$2.2 billion in profits, interest, and rent (over and above that reinvested in the island), real unemployment was around 50 percent, and more than half the population was dependent on welfare to survive. The "autonomous" Puerto Rican government can do nothing but beg futilely for handouts from Washington. The masses dissatisfaction was reflected in the 1976 elections, in which the pro-"autonomy" Popular Democratic Party (PPD) was swept out of office, after having been the dominant party for thirty-six years. The New Progressive Party (PNP) won, not because of its prostatehood line, but because of its promises to bring economic improvements, promises that it violated on taking office. This is leading to greater instability in Puerto Rico. The PNP, unable to solve the economic problems, instead has unleashed a campaign to impose statehood. The PPD reacted by shifting its stance towards demanding greater autonomy, and some key trade-union officials began raising the possibility of a labor party. This situation offers tremendous opportunities for revolutionary Marxists to promote policies that can advance the independence movement and

educate on the need for independent working-class political action.

The developments in these countries, under a wide variety of conditions in the class struggle, testify to the profound instability of bourgeois rule in Latin America. The mass movement can clearly wrest significant gains in the period ahead, but economic and social conditions do not allow for the prospect of long-term, stable bourgeois-

democratic openings. The rise of the class struggle will lead to a sharpening of class polarizations that will culminate either in conquest of power by the proletariat or bloody defeat, as the bitter experience of the southern cone illustrated. But experience also shows that such dictatorial solutions are themselves unstable, and will once again give way to a new round of class battles and revolutionary upsurges. The cycle will only be ended by way of the victory of the working class in a socialist revolution.

### III.

#### Imperialist Policy in Latin America Today

9. Following World War II huge upsurges in the class struggle occurred in many countries of Latin America. Among the high points were Colombia in 1948, Guatemala in 1954, and, deepest of all, the Bolivian revolution of 1952. But these upsurges, in which the masses generally followed bourgeois-nationalist leaderships, were all defeated.

The Cuban revolution brought this period of defeats to an abrupt end. It stimulated a new rise in the Latin American class struggle. It showed that victory for the socialist revolution was possible, that U.S. imperialism, for all of its power, could be defeated.

In face of this the imperialists stepped up their direct and indirect intervention throughout the region to prevent any repetition of the Cuban experience. Imperialist policy since the Cuban revolution has been to crush in the egg all movements that threaten or could potentially threaten the stability or existence of capitalist rule. This has constituted the essence of White House policy, despite such window-dressing as Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress."

Only in exceptional cases has U.S. imperialism been able to rely on a relatively stable bourgeois-democratic regime to defend its interests. For the most part the period since the Cuban revolution has been marked by the large-scale "counterinsurgency" programs of the 1960s, the direct U.S. military invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the instigation of brutal military coups in a series of countries.

The 1964 military coup against Goulart, carried out by the Brazilian generals, in close alliance with the U.S. State Department, inaugurated a long-lasting, brutal dictatorship in the largest country in Latin America. This set the tone for the military dictatorships and hard repression that were to be imposed in Bolivia (1971), Uruguay (1972), Chile (1973), and Argentina (1976). This brought the majority of the countries and the great majority of the people of Latin America under military rule.

U.S. imperialism's stance towards the Cuban workers state has remained aggressive: harassment and economic sabotage; direct invasion in 1961; naval blockade and threat of world war in 1962; a sustained economic boycott; continual CIA plots, sabotage and provocations; renewed military threats over Cuba's current role against imperialism in Africa.

10. The worldwide recession of 1974-75 and the historic defeat it suffered in Vietnam weakened U.S. imperialism. Washington's capacity to contain the class struggle is more restricted today than in the past, owing both to the financial and military limitations on its worldwide "obli-

gations" and to the increasing political repercussions, particularly within the United States itself, that it would risk from direct intervention. Additional factors weighing on Washington's policy in Latin America are the continuing revival—despite defeats—of the class struggle, particularly in the form of mass action by the urban proletariat, and the erosion of the stability of some of the dictatorships it has relied on.

Without abandoning its aggressive line against the Cuban revolution and the Latin American revolutionary movement, imperialism now has to be more careful about the forms that its intervention takes.

Washington is at the same time probing the possibilities for containing the class struggle through "liberalization" schemes. These are restricted, however, by two built-in limitations: (1) incapacity to grant any substantial economic concessions to the masses; in fact, greater austerity measures are being imposed; (2) growing difficulty to counter the upsurges of the increasingly strong working class.

The problems of imperialist foreign policy offer opportunities to the working masses. One example is the "human rights" rhetoric of the Carter administration. This demagogic publicity is not primarily oriented towards Latin America, but is designed to whip up sentiment against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it has put Washington in an awkward public position in relation to some of the brutal Latin American dictatorships, and the working class can take advantage of this in its struggle for democratic rights in these countries.

Since the 1960s various European imperialists and the Japanese imperialists have considerably increased their penetration of Latin America, mostly in the form of investments. They have also increased their sales of military equipment. New industries, such as automobile production, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and certain food products are among the areas in which they now have major investments. From this has flowed a growing political influence. Despite the economic competition, in the overall strategic politics of the region their interests are identical to those of U.S. imperialism. They try to convey a liberal image in contrast to the discredited U.S. imperialists. This enables them to play a role in trying to contain the class struggle through support to "liberalization" schemes by the ruling class.

Conflicts between the imperialists and various sectors of the national bourgeoisie remain inevitable. In some cases, the national bourgeoisie can take advantage of inter-imperialist rivalries—in the areas of arms sales or nuclear



reactors, for example. However, the increasingly close ties of dependence on imperialism are also narrowing the bourgeois nationalists' room to challenge the imperialists, and are tending to turn their anti-imperialist posturing into sheer demagoguery. The case of Torrijos in Panama is instructive in this regard, especially if compared with some of the past bourgeois nationalists, like Arbenz in

Guatemala and Cárdenas in Mexico, who carried out real, if limited, measures against the imperialists, such as nationalizations. Behind Torrijos's stance of opposition to the United States was concealed a fundamental conciliationism that preserved the essential aspects of imperialist domination of Panama and the Panama Canal.

#### IV.

### The Working Class Moves to the Forefront of the Class Struggle

11. In the years following the 1976 defeat in Argentina the struggles of the exploited masses in Latin America have been on the rise, under different conditions in each country. The huge mass upsurges of 1977-78 in Nicaragua and Peru, leading to prerevolutionary situations, have been the deepest. The strikes of the Argentine working class in 1977-78; of the Brazilian workers and students in 1977-78; and the series of strikes in Bolivia and Ecuador in 1977 are signs of revival after defeats. The 1977 general strike in Colombia and the big trade-union mobilizations in Mexico in 1975-76 have eroded the capitalist stability of these countries.

In the renewal and rise of the mass movement a continuing trend can be seen for the axis of class struggle in Latin America to be one in which the proletariat takes the initiative, playing a vanguard role with respect to the broad masses as a whole. To the extent that its class independence is asserted, the proletariat will be able to lead the revolutionary masses (the peasantry, the urban and rural poor and petty bourgeoisie) and will avoid the defeats and collapse of promising mass movements as has occurred so often in the past. Thus, the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1917 is becoming more and more timely for Latin American revolutionists.

12. The trade-union movement in Latin America was initially centered in construction, textiles, and the export-oriented industries such as railroads, maritime, and mining. From the end of World War II until the 1960s, the unions grew in industries that arose to produce for the expanding internal market, such as canned food products, new textiles, and the electrical and metals industries. Since the 1960s unions have developed in new industries such as automobile, petrochemicals, and modern electrical appliances.

The trade-union bureaucrats allied with the national bourgeoisie on the ground of sharing a common interest in developing an internal market. For decades this alliance helped to keep the workers movement politically subordinate to the bourgeoisie and ideologically dominated by bourgeois-nationalist conceptions. Outstanding examples are those of Peronism in Argentina and "charrismo" in Mexico.

The Communist parties, with their Stalinist concept of forging alliances with sectors of the bourgeoisie, played a decisive role in enabling the bourgeois nationalist trade-union bureaucracies to consolidate. During World War II and the postwar period, the CPs promoted a line of "antifascist fronts" and "national unity," in accord with Moscow's search for diplomatic alliances. In Brazil, Chile,

Mexico, and Cuba this led them to subordinate the workers movement to authoritarian regimes that used populist demagoguery. In Argentina and Bolivia during the same period, the Stalinist version of "antifascism" caused the CPs to unite with oligarchical and proimperialist forces, and to characterize Peronism and the MNR [Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionaria—Revolutionary Nationalist Movement] respectively, as fascist. This left the field clear for Peronism and the MNR to portray themselves to the workers as the sole standard-bearers of the anti-imperialist struggle.

As a result, the Stalinists themselves were unable to make gains in the trade-union field in comparison with the potential. In most countries of Latin America outright bourgeois political forces control most of the trade unions.

13. The development of the consumer durables industries in the relatively industrialized countries has brought about the growth of new sectors of the proletariat concentrated in big industrial complexes. As was seen in the semi-insurrection in Córdoba, Argentina in 1969; in the huge strikes in Brazil in May and November 1978, initiated by the auto workers; and in the series of city-and-province-wide general strikes sparked by the struggles of steel and shipyard workers in Chimbote, Peru in 1978, the workers in these industrial centers of production will tend to come forward as vanguard sectors of the class.

The workers in the big centers of industry and mining are the ones most ready to assert their power self-confidently, acting both through the official union structures and ad hoc committees in the plants. Thus, these sectors of the working class can be mobilized to confront the ruling classes on a broad economic and political front, and to initiate effective challenges to the trade-union bureaucrats in order to fight the bosses.

The spread of technology and the resulting proletarianization of white-collar labor has also enlarged the organized sector of the working class. Organized in trade unions that are often new and less bureaucratized than some of the older unions, these workers have often carried out militant struggles, for example, the teachers, bank workers, and health workers in Colombia. Although their social weight and political importance is less than that of the industrial workers, they are also playing a role in this stage of the revival of working-class militancy. In Peru, for example, there were big strikes of health and hospital workers as well as copper miners and steelworkers in December 1977. In July 1978 the teachers and health workers were in the forefront, and in August and September public employees went into motion alongside the

miners and metalworkers. The wave of strikes by industrial workers in Brazil in May and June 1978 was followed in August and September by big struggles of teachers and bankworkers.

In Mexico in 1977-78, hard hit by an economic crisis and government austerity drive, the electrical, telephone, rail, and mine workers, and the teachers have spearheaded a generalized working-class response against the bourgeois offensive. This has put considerable pressure on the powerful, corrupt bureaucracy that controls the unions. As a result, the bureaucracy, while continuing to resort to repressive attacks against the ranks, has had to take a more verbally aggressive stance toward the employers. It has threatened to call large-scale mobilizations for the first time in forty years. The workers are being drawn to the trade unions, and are seeking to turn them into instruments of struggle against the bosses.

14. To transform the unions into instruments of revolutionary struggle, a class-struggle leadership must be created to replace the class-collaborationist bureaucrats. This will not be an automatic or purely spontaneous process. To the degree that a mass class-struggle alternative does not arise, the old leaderships, despite their betrayals, will appear to the workers as their only recourse, and the bureaucracies will be able to reassert their weight, aided, to be sure, by the bourgeois governments. Even where the trade unions have been crushed, as in Brazil, Uruguay and Chile, elements of the old trade-union bureaucracies, themselves the victims of repression and thus able to retain a certain prestige in the eyes of the workers, are held in reserve by the capitalists for future use. Elsewhere, even while workers struggles are on the ascendancy, or are reviving after defeats, a recovery by the discredited bureaucracies can be observed alongside the emergence of militant moods in the working class: this is the case for the Peronist trade-union leadership in Argentina and for the Lechin leadership of the Bolivian miners. In Peru, while the APRA [Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana—American People's Revolutionary Alliance] has been singularly unsuccessful in reestablishing its once-hegemonic position in the trade unions, the Communist Party has been able to maintain control over the apparatus of the main union federation, the CGTP [Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú—General Confederation of Peruvian Workers].

On the other hand, a layer of militant activists and organizers has developed out of the experience of working-class struggles. This layer includes many shop stewards, activists in the internal commissions and factory committees, representatives of coordinating bodies, and activists in various trade-union currents, and, in some cases, officials of the trade unions on the plant level. They constitute the recognized leadership of the class in the centers of production. Their weight has proved decisive at key moments in the class struggle in shaping the views of their fellow workers and helping to develop organs of struggle. In many cases this layer has been able to maintain a continuity over the years in spite of the ups and downs of the mass organizations. Thus, the working class vanguard has been able to function, to a certain extent, as the "memory" of the class, transmitting experiences of past struggles to the next generation of militants.

Examples of this phenomenon include the leadership

core of the current known as "working-class Peronism" in Argentina, which maintained semilegal forms of organization in the plants during the two decades in which Peronism was proscribed; the vanguard of the mine workers in Bolivia, which prevented the consolidation of various dictatorships there; the vanguard sectors of coal, copper, and steelworkers in Chile; the vanguard metalworkers, miners, and the militant (*clasista*) tendencies in the trade unions in Peru; the most combative sectors of the electrical, telephone, railroad, and mine workers in Mexico.

But these *clasista* tendencies lack political clarity and organizational stability. The process of organizing the fight against the ruling class and replacing the bureaucratic misleaders with a politically clear and consistent class-struggle left-wing leadership, including militant layers like those above, requires the political involvement and leadership of the revolutionary Marxist party.

15. In the interplay between the revolutionary Marxist party, the militant vanguard of the proletariat, and the class as a whole, the party pays special attention to the vanguard. But the program and policies around which it seeks to organize this vanguard are not different from the program and policies it puts forward in the class struggle as a whole. The objective is simply to promote a program of action that will enable the proletarian vanguard, organized in a class-struggle left wing, to organize, mobilize, and lead the class and its allies against the ruling class offensive, and in this process replace the class-collaborationist bureaucrats.

To meet the offensive of the bosses requires mobilization around a broad program of action, corresponding to the most acute problems facing the workers and all the oppressed. Beginning from the defense of the unions, working conditions, and standard of living of the masses, this program will point towards workers control of production and a workers and *campesinos* government. The workers must learn to think socially and act politically: to understand the broad social and political questions facing all the oppressed and exploited, to champion their needs as the workers' own, and to unite and lead the oppressed and exploited to act independently on the broad political arena as well as on the economic front. In defending the interests of the working class and all the oppressed, and fighting to mobilize them along these lines, a class-struggle left wing can emerge that can transform the unions and other mass organizations into instruments of revolutionary struggle.

This process will be uneven. Militant tendencies and struggles will initially arise around some, but not all points of a rounded program of action. Revolutionary Marxists will support such developments as a step forward, while at the same time seeking to win adherents to a more advanced and comprehensive program of action.

An example of the unevenness of this process is the development of the Democratic Tendency of the Mexican electrical workers, which has been in the forefront of many struggles. In 1975, a mass meeting of Mexican electrical workers, on the initiative of the Democratic Tendency, adopted the Declaration of Guadalajara, which put forward a broad trade-union platform of economic demands and demands for trade-union democracy, but did not clearly break on the political level with the bourgeois government of the PRI. While supporting the steps forward taken by the Democratic Tendency, a fight must still be waged for a break with the PRI and for a program of

action that meets the needs of all the oppressed.

The construction of a class-struggle left wing requires the leadership of the revolutionary Marxist party. This, in turn, requires that the party itself be rooted in the key sectors of the working class, particularly the industrial

workers, who will be the backbone of class-struggle leadership for the class as a whole. In the course of fighting for a class-struggle leadership in this way, the party will grow into a mass proletarian party.

## V.

### The Mobilization of the Allies of the Working Class

16. The development of capitalism in agriculture took place through the destruction or absorption of the primitive agricultural economies. But this development was incomplete. Thus, today, there exists a spectrum of social relations in the countryside, ranging from those under which peasants live on a marginal subsistence basis, including in some cases, in pre-Colombian forms, to modern agribusiness.

The contradictions that developed in Latin America have brought together the impoverished masses of peasants, the agricultural proletariat, semiproletariat, and the migrant workers on one side against the ruling-class bloc made up of larger landholders, the modern agrarian bourgeoisie, and the imperialist-owned companies associated with the agrarian bourgeoisie on the plantations. All of the latter fall into the framework of imperialist financial domination.

The peasant masses who cannot meet their needs by working their small plots (the minifundistas) or those who have been dispossessed continue to demand land as their main goal. The bourgeois land reforms of all types, whether won by mass movements as in Peru, or initiated by bourgeois regimes for the purposes of agricultural modernization, have proved totally incapable of meeting the demands of the majority of the Latin American peasants. As a result, land occupations continually arise.

The land reforms won by the Bolivian and Mexican revolutions have also failed to satisfy the needs of the masses. The land reform in Mexico was the deepest of all the agrarian reforms under capitalism in Latin America. The land won by the *campesinos* in struggle was declared public property by the bourgeois government; these lands (*ejidos*) were supposed to be protected from a return to latifundia status—as long as the land was worked it belonged to those who worked it, it could be rented or passed on to their heirs, but not sold. But the small farmers could not stand up to the big mechanized farms or, especially in northern Mexico, to the growing agribusiness linked to imperialism, which dominates through its control over agricultural machinery, chemical fertilizer, the food processing industries, and marketing. As a result, the *ejidatarios* have been forced, more and more, to “rent” their land to the big agribusinesses, and then to go to work as agricultural laborers. In the state of Sonora, 70% of the *ejidos* are rented, and in Sinaloa more than 40%. In all of Mexico there were 2.5 million small peasants in 1970 working their land, but 3.3 million without land (a jump from 1.5 million landless in 1950).

Thus the small farmers and landless of Mexico face the task of carrying out a new agrarian reform based on the conquests of the past, but going much further. The socialist revolution in Cuba offers the only example of a successful agrarian reform in Latin America.

Millions of peasants in Latin America see their livelihoods threatened by the inexorable advance of large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprises and the processes of agricultural modernization, carried out to the benefit of imperialism.

Throughout Latin America an immense mass of impoverished peasants has been created, eking out a living on the fringes of the process of production. They stream into the cities, swelling the ranks of the unemployed and urban poor, or they remain on the countryside as a reserve army of migrant labor that can be drawn upon to meet the seasonal needs of capitalist agriculture.

In several countries the ruling class has initiated an agrarian counterreform, seeking to reverse the limited gains of earlier periods. The Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, for example, has not only restored nearly all the land that had been expropriated from the big landholders during the Allende period, but has also moved to take away land distributed under the earlier Christian Democratic governments. Revolutionary Marxists, at the same time that they explain the limited character of the current agrarian reforms, defend the gains that the masses have won.

Thus a thoroughgoing agrarian reform is more necessary than ever. This requires not only the nationalization of the huge ranches and plantations (the latifundias) and the distribution of the land to the landless, but also the establishment of the means necessary to aid the small farmers, such as establishment of easy credit, irrigation projects and other technological aids. Measures to break the control of the profiteering distributors, benefiting the working farmers, while keeping retail prices down, are especially important in helping forge an alliance between the farmers and the workers.

The contradictory process of capitalist expansion in the countryside is creating a growing sector of agricultural workers, primarily in the agricultural and livestock sectors that are most tied to the development of agribusiness. Often the work is seasonal, and the agricultural workers are condemned to a marginal existence as unemployed or toilers on very small plots of land during the rest of the year.

These workers can be mobilized together with the peasants in land occupations and other forms of struggle around demands for land. They can also be mobilized around demands specifically appropriate to their status as agricultural workers (wage increases, hourly wages rather than payment by production, limitations on the working day, health and retirement benefits, etc.). Of particular importance is the right to form trade unions, which has been one of the key axes of attack by the ruling class.

The bourgeois regimes have employed various methods of trying to prevent the peasants from organizing to fight

for the land. These range from outright repression as in Chile, where all independent peasant organization is prohibited, to manipulation of agrarian organizations such as the Mexican National Peasant Confederation and the National Association of Tenant Farmers in Colombia. In Peru the military government dissolved the National Agrarian Confederation when it threatened to escape its control. In some cases, such as the "military-peasant pact" in Bolivia and the Confederation of Peasant Settlements of Panama, the governments have fostered local peasant leaderships tied to them.

Under these conditions, the struggle for the independence of the peasant organizations from the bourgeoisie and landlords is a key step in the struggle for the liberation of the peasant masses in Latin America.

Outstanding examples of these kinds of struggles were those of the peasant unions in the valley of La Convención and Lares in Peru in 1962-63, the Agrarian Leagues in northeastern Brazil in 1961-62, and the 1975-76 struggles of the Mexican peasants who today are grouped in the Independent Revolutionary Peasant Coordinating Committee.

Guerrilla struggles rooted in mass peasant upsurges have been endemic to Latin America, as in Colombia in 1948 and afterwards. They are quite different from the *foco* experiments of the 1960s, in which small guerrilla bands tried to establish themselves on the countryside. But in the majority of cases, even the mass-based guerrilla struggles have been incapable of helping the masses of peasants and semiproletarians to go forward towards national forms of organization, towards political independence from the bourgeois state, and towards linking up with the working class in the cities.

Only when the working class takes the lead of all the oppressed sectors of society can the alliance between workers and peasants be forged and a successful struggle against the common bourgeois enemy be waged.

17. The fight against racism and national oppression within Latin America is a major issue in the class struggle, and in several countries is decisive for the socialist revolution.

The two main groupings of nationally oppressed peoples are the Indians and the Blacks (each grouping consists of many components).

(a) *Indians*. There are about 30 million Indians in Latin America, most of them concentrated in the areas that had been the centers of pre-Colombian civilization: Mexico and Guatemala; Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Elsewhere they have a numerical importance in specific regions. And everywhere their struggle has a great moral weight owing to the history of Latin America.

Most Indians still live in the countryside and form the most poverty-stricken strata of agricultural laborers, tenant farmers, poor peasants, and the landless. Growing numbers, however, have been forced into the urban slums and shantytowns. Income levels, literacy rates, the life expectancy and infant mortality rates—these and other key statistics all show the terrible oppression of the Indians. The theft of their lands, the suppression of their languages and various cultural heritages, their legal disbarment from civil rights in some cases (such as the right to vote) all reinforce and help maintain their superexploitation. It is essential for the workers movement to take up the struggle around the Indians' lands and around the

other key issues they face.

In some countries where the Indian population is small, such as Chile and Argentina, their existence has been deliberately ignored by the bourgeois regimes, and virtually no provisions have been made to enable them, if they wish, to preserve their languages or cultural heritages. The Indians living in the forests (about one million in number) suffer the most. In Brazil and Paraguay they have been viewed as barriers to progress, and they have been subjected to the fiercest repression, including genocidal slaughter, intentional starvation, and induced epidemics. In Paraguay today some are still forced into conditions of virtual slavery.

The Mexican and Bolivian revolutions brought about significant reforms for the Indians. But the policy of "indigenismo" [nativism] developed by the bourgeois governments is fundamentally paternalistic, composed of social work projects and the encouragement of some features of Indian culture as a means of trying to assimilate the Indians into capitalist society. In the absence of major socioeconomic improvements, this policy has failed, and in some cases has begun to give way to repressive measures, as for example, the massacre of Indians in the Mexican state of Hidalgo in 1977.

The oppression of the Indians will only be abolished through their own independent mobilization, as part of a broader revolutionary upheaval. The Mexican and Bolivian revolutions, as well as the Guatemalan upsurge in the early 1950s were all accompanied by the mobilization of the Indians, principally through the land reform measures and the beginning of the elimination of language discrimination and the other means through which the Indians have been traditionally oppressed. As a result, the Indians became increasingly involved in political life during these events. One of the best examples of how to mobilize the Indians was provided by the Peruvian peasant mobilization in 1962-63. Whereas the workers movement had previously paid lip service to this question, Hugo Blanco and the other leaders saw the need to develop a Quechua-speaking indigenous leadership that could instill the Indian peasant masses of the La Convención area with pride and self-confidence, and organize their struggle for land in an effective way.

(b) *Blacks*. Black people, brought to Latin America as slaves, continued to be subjected to an entire system of racist practices after the legal abolishment of slavery. As a consequence, Blacks are nationally oppressed in Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

The largest Black population is in Brazil. According to the 1950 figures, 11% of the people identified themselves as

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1. Point 17(b) raises new and very important issues for the revolutionary Marxist movement that must be discussed thoroughly. The general line of this point, stressing the importance of the struggle against the racist oppression of Blacks in Latin America, and outlining the revolutionary Marxist approach in fighting this oppression, is part of the line of this resolution, and is being submitted to a vote. The specific characterization of this oppression as *national* oppression, and of Blacks as oppressed nationalities or national minorities, and thus with the right to a separate state or states, is included in this document to initiate a discussion, but a vote on this characterization is not being proposed.

Black, and 26.6% as of mixed race. Together they form the majority of the population in some important regions of the country. So sensitive is this issue to the ruling classes in this country of 115 million people, that since 1950 all indications of race have been eliminated from the census data released by the government.

Racist oppression is built into the social structure of Brazilian class society. Whites monopolize the best jobs, housing, and social services. On the countryside, Blacks are the poorest, most oppressed layer of peasants and workers. The 1950 census statistics on education dramatize this oppression in the starkest way. Those who identified themselves as Black were only 4.2% of the primary school graduates, 0.6% of secondary school graduates, and 0.2% of university graduates. Those who identified themselves as of mixed race were only 10.2% of primary school graduates, 4.2% of secondary school graduates, and 2.2% of university graduates.

No mass Black movement has yet developed in Brazil, and the regime is hostile to any attempts by Blacks to form their own organizations. Nevertheless, under the impact of the African revolution and the Black struggle in the United States, the first signs of a Black movement have reappeared. On July 7, 1978, more than 1,000 Blacks rallied in São Paulo to protest racial discrimination. An organization called the United Movement Against Racial Discrimination has emerged, the first such organization since the Black Front was banned by the Vargas regime in 1937. Another form that the emerging nationalist consciousness in Brazil has taken is the adoption of some of the aspects of Black culture of the United States.

The national oppression of Blacks is also an important issue in Central America, the Caribbean islands, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Blacks are important in certain industries, such as those related to the Panama Canal. Even where Blacks are a small minority, they are often concentrated in certain regions where their social weight is thus greater, such as the Limón area of Costa Rica and the Pacific and Atlantic coastal areas of Colombia.

In addition to the oppression suffered in terms of jobs, housing, education and similar areas, three particular issues can be noted.

i. In Central America, the first language of many Blacks is English, which is suppressed in the schools and media.

ii. A legacy of British colonialism in Guyana and the Caribbean, particularly Trinidad, and of Dutch colonialism in Surinam, is social tension between the Black and East Indian populations, both of which are oppressed.

iii. In addition to the influence of the African revolution and the Black struggle in the United States (and also in Britain), the impact of the Cuban revolution is particularly important in the Caribbean area. The giant strides taken towards eliminating racial oppression against Blacks in Cuba stand in sharp contrast to the racism practiced in the capitalist countries of the area.

Racism is built into Latin American class society on all levels. A color gradation exists, whereby those closer to the European racial norm have privileges compared to others. This generalized racism is based on the institutionalized racism against Blacks and Indians. Only in the process of ending the oppression of Blacks and Indians can this more generalized racism be eliminated.

The reformist leaders of the workers movement have betrayed the oppressed Black and Indian peoples of Latin America. Revolutionary Marxists are the only ones who

will champion the interests of the Blacks and Indians and fight against this oppression whenever and wherever it occurs. Given the social weight of the oppressed national minorities, placing stress on this issue and adopting a correct policy to fight and eliminate racist oppression is vital for the success of the socialist revolution.

Historical experience has shown that the rise of struggles against national oppression is accompanied by a growing pride and self-confidence on the part of the oppressed, and a growing insistence on the part of the oppressed of the need to determine their own affairs. Although it is premature to predict all the exact political forms that will be necessary to guarantee an end to racism and national oppression against Indians and Blacks, the socialist revolution will have to provide whatever means are necessary to do so; this includes the possibility of territorial autonomy or independent states. Only by championing the right of self-determination can revolutionary Marxists win the oppressed to the fight for socialism.

A different aspect of the national question in Latin America is that of the immigrant workers. The Guatemalans in southern Mexico, the Colombians in Venezuela, the Haitians in the Dominican Republic, the Paraguayans and Bolivians in Argentina, and others are all subjected to discrimination on the basis of nationality or race. The fight against this oppression is an important part of the fight to unite the working class.

The most important component of immigrant Latin American workers are the Mexicans in the United States, as well as Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians, Haitians, and others. In Britain and Canada there are a large number of Blacks from the West Indies, and in France immigrant workers from the Antilles. The struggle against deportations or discrimination against these or other immigrant workers is a means of educating and establishing links with the workers movement in the imperialist countries and of dealing blows to the imperialist powers.

18. The huge new concentrations of urban poor are a social factor of immense importance. Netzahualcōyotl, for example, one of the slum and shantytown districts—"proletarian cities"—of Mexico City, has grown in the past twenty years from an illegal squatters district to a population of around two million people. Half the population of metropolitan Lima lives in the slums and shantytowns—the "barriadas"—that surround the Peruvian capital.

In Puerto Rico, Washington's "showcase of democracy," tens of thousands of people live in shantytowns with houses of tin, cardboard, and plywood, and without plumbing, running water, or electricity. Similar examples can be found in all cities of Latin America.

Two of the key issues of specific concern to the urban poor are:

(a) Jobs. The great mass of urban poor, many of them just recently driven off the countryside for want of land or work, find themselves unemployed or minimally employed in the cities. With unemployment a growing structural problem (in Lima, for example, almost 50% of the city's work force was considered unemployed or underemployed in 1977), there is no prospect for a solution under capitalist rule.

(b) Housing and Municipal Services. The feverish growth of these huge urban concentrations has occurred in the absence of adequate, balanced industrial growth and urban planning. As a result, there is a critical shortage of

housing and a woeful lack of adequate facilities such as water, electricity, transportation, sewage treatment, health services, education, etc.

These concentrations are social tinderboxes that can easily erupt in elemental explosions, as occurred in Lima in February 1975, when, after a year of rapidly rising prices, the masses took advantage of a conflict between the police and the army to engage in widespread looting and the burning of government newspaper offices. The lack of cheap public transportation helped spark one of the mass mobilizations in Managua, Nicaragua, toward the end of 1977. (Important working-class residential areas that were built up after the 1972 earthquake are located so far away from the industrial area that workers had to pay up to 15% of their income just for transportation.)

It is a key task of the labor movement to provide leadership and political direction for the discontent of the urban masses. The potential for labor initiatives in this area was illustrated by the Colombian general strike, organized by the trade-union movement in September 1977, and hundreds of regional and local general strikes in the same period, and by the successive general strikes in Peru in 1977-78.

19. As in other semicolonial countries, the oppression of women in the countries of Latin America has been particularly acute in comparison with the advanced capitalist countries. The relatively backward economic and social system has prevented women from obtaining the possibility for economic independence and thus has meant the preservation of many more archaic social practices against women and the maintenance of the family, including the extended family, in stronger fashion. Two of the specific features of the oppression of women in Latin America are the weight of the Catholic Church and the omnipresence of *machismo* as ideology and social practice.

Objective changes, such as those already noted in the economic and social situation in Latin America, are laying the basis for the development of a women's movement. These changes include: the expansion of education for women and their involvement in production outside the home; the growing urbanization; the breakdown of traditional socioeconomic relations on the countryside; the weakening hold of traditional Catholic ideology; the influence of the new international women's liberation movement.

The deeprooted prejudices against the participation by women in political life has inhibited the early development of a women's liberation movement comparable to that which has appeared in the advanced capitalist countries. It is only a matter of time, however, for such a movement to develop. The severity of the oppression of women and the great social weight of this oppressed sector has created the potential for a mass women's movement of explosive potential.

Initial signs of the development of a women's movement in Latin America can already be noted:

(a) The appearance, in many countries, of women's groups that explicitly consider themselves to be feminist organizations. Though they are still small and mostly student or petty-bourgeois in composition and audience up to now, feminist organizations will certainly grow among women of the exploited classes.

(b) The growing participation by women in political life. In this process some specifically women's groups have

appeared, such as the housewives committees in the Bolivian mining areas and the women's committees of the Democratic Tendency of the Electrical Workers in Mexico. These reflect a growing self-confidence of women. Although these are not explicitly organized as feminist groups, and although they are not even necessarily based around specifically women's issues, these developments are the first signs of what will become a mass women's liberation movement.

Specific struggles by women will develop around a variety of issues. Among the key issues that can be listed are: full civil and legal rights (such as the right to divorce, and juridical equality); the right to abortion and against forced sterilization; for child-care facilities; against discrimination in job opportunities and on the job, for equal pay for equal work.

20. In contrast to teachers, health workers, technicians, and white-collar employees of various kinds, who live by selling their labor power and are a part of the working class, the urban petty bourgeoisie, strictly speaking, consists of layers such as artisans, shopkeepers, the small owners of business enterprises, upper level engineers and scientists, the administrators in government and big enterprises, and professionals. These strata are not consistent allies of the working class, but many can be won.

The importance of this question for the class struggle was illustrated in Chile during the Allende regime. As the class polarization intensified, and as the economic crisis deepened (exacerbated by the economic sabotage of the imperialists and Chilean bourgeoisie), these petty-bourgeois layers saw what appeared to be only temporizing and equivocation by the SP and CP, the large workers parties. They saw no clear solution to the crisis put forward by the organized workers movement. Little by little they were alienated from the working class and won over by the anticommunist hysteria of the right. The reactionary truck owners' and shopkeepers' strikes of October 1972 and July 1973, and the September 1973 anti-Allende march by 150,000 middle-class women were key signposts leading up to the Pinochet coup.

This experience need not be repeated elsewhere. Although some petty-bourgeois layers, especially the upper strata and those most closely linked by profession to maintaining bourgeois relations of production, cannot generally be won over to the workers, the middle classes can be divided. A clear working-class solution to the economic crisis can win over artisans, small shopkeepers, merchants, truck owners, etc. Professionals such as physicians, engineers, and scientists can be inspired with the perspective of putting their valuable skills at the service of the masses, as has happened in many cases with physicians in the countryside supporting peasant struggles. Political decisiveness by a capable working-class leadership can win large sectors of the urban middle classes and neutralize others.

21. The importance of winning the rank-and-file personnel of the armed forces to the side of the working class was also illustrated by the experience of Chile. As the class polarization intensified there, divisions developed between the officer corps, increasingly inclined towards a reactionary coup, and the ranks, attracted to their working-class and *campesino* brothers and sisters. But the SP and CP had futile hopes that the bulk of the officer corps would

remain loyal to the Allende regime. They stood aside as rank-and-file sailors and soldiers, particularly the Valparaíso sailors, sought to organize against the coming right-wing coup and were subjected to repression from the officers. The ranks were abandoned by the government and the parties they sought to defend. With this, the reactionary outcome was sealed.

Whereas the revolutionary workers movement seeks to win the ranks of the armed forces, it does not orient towards winning the police or the specialized repressive military units such as the National Guard in Nicaragua. These police forces are not composed of workers or peasants temporarily in uniform. Although individuals in the police may be influenced by the workers and peasants struggles, the overwhelming bulk of the police will not. They are corrupted and transformed through years of experience, becoming a social layer hostile to the working class and its allies, who must be prepared to defend themselves against these repressive police forces.

22. As a result of the growing need for skilled technical, service, and administrative workers, there has been a tremendous expansion of higher education in many countries of Latin America. Huge university complexes, such as the Autonomous National University of Mexico, with more than 200,000 students, illustrate the transformation that has occurred. In the old "liberal" university system, the student composition was mainly limited to the children of the bourgeois and upper petty-bourgeois elite. In the mass

university of today many of the students originate from the lower levels of the petty bourgeoisie and more privileged sectors of the working class.

Economic development, however, has not kept pace with the growth of education, so the perspective facing students is often one of joblessness. Concentrated in huge numbers, having many social links to the less privileged layers of society, radicalized by general social issues as well as their own perspective of a bleak future with no work, the students of today can play a greater role than ever before as an ally of the working class and oppressed masses.

Student struggles continually arise over a variety of issues. In Brazil in 1977-78 mass nationwide student upsurges spearheaded the struggle in behalf of democratic rights and against the dictatorship. In Panama in 1977-78 students were in the forefront of struggle against the Panama Canal treaty. In the Dominican Republic in 1977 students protested austerity programs threatening the education budget for the University of Santo Domingo. In Mexico in 1977 huge contingents of students participated in the demonstrations of support for the striking university workers. High school students in Peru backed the militant 80-day nationwide teachers strike in 1978.

Students must link their struggles and concerns to the labor movement. Key areas to establish such links include the fight for jobs; the struggles by teachers and school employees; initiatives taken by the labor movement in general social struggles.

## VI.

### The Revolutionary Marxist Balance Sheet of Other Political Currents

23. The strategy of guerrilla warfare, which was promoted by a large number of revolutionary-minded militants in Latin America during the 1960s, has proved to be a failure.

The guerrilla warfare currents became important throughout Latin America after the Cuban revolution. An entire generation was inspired and radicalized by the Cuban revolution and the prospects for repeating the Cuban success elsewhere in Latin America. Many rejected the two-stage theory of revolution, which until then had been dominant in the left, owing to Stalinist influence. They saw in Cuba proof that a socialist revolution was possible, even in face of attempts by the imperialists to crush the revolution. They rejected the peaceful road of class collaboration promulgated by the Stalinists and other reformists.

But the strategy of guerrilla warfare, in both its rural and urban varieties, remained peripheral to the main needs and concerns of the masses. The essential feature of the guerrillaist line was reliance on the exemplary actions of small groups. The guerrillaist currents did not advance a program capable of leading the workers and drawing behind them the peasants and oppressed masses in a consistent struggle against the ruling classes. They fell victim to the stepped-up repression. They were generally isolated from the masses at the very time that huge proletarian upsurges took place.

The Castroist leadership of the Cuban revolution sought to extend the revolution in Latin America. But, misreading the lessons of their own revolution, in which massive mobilizations of workers and peasants overthrew the capitalist state, the Castroists used their enormous prestige to promote the line that, in view of the explosive political conditions, armed actions by small groups would eventually spark the masses into action. The generation of revolutionists that was inspired and radicalized by the Cuban leadership, followed the Cuban lead and were crushed in courageous, but politically ineffective actions. The Castro leadership bears considerable responsibility for the strategy that led to these defeats.

Some elements in the guerrillaist currents, whose break with the Communist parties was limited to the question of armed struggle versus the peaceful road, accepted the Stalinist line on other basic questions of political strategy, such as the two-stage theory of revolution. This explains the ease with which many partisans of guerrilla warfare, such as Héctor Béjar in Peru and the ALN [Accção Libertadora Nacional—National Liberation Action] in Brazil, later turned to collaboration with bourgeois political forces.

The position of revolutionary Marxism, which has been fully confirmed by the experience of the last two decades, including the Cuban revolution, flows from the fact that the socialist revolution is not the work of an armed

vanguard, separate from the masses, but of a class-conscious and organized proletariat, leading exploited masses numbering in the hundreds of thousands and millions. This is the only force that can stand up against the repressive forces of the bourgeois state.

History has shown that on the road to the socialist revolution the workers will have to defend themselves against a violent bourgeois counterrevolution, and that the organization of this self-defense cannot be considered in isolation from the organization and mobilization of the masses. Self-defense, as an activity of the mass movement, cannot be grafted onto the movement from outside. It must correspond to the level of mobilization, organization and consciousness of the masses. It has to be conceived of and led by the party in such a way that the masses themselves, organized democratically, decide on the necessary means for their own self-defense. Self-defense against the day-to-day threats that it faces is a key means by which the working class prepares to defend a government of workers power against the bourgeois counterrevolution. The reliance on the armed action of "specialized" groups of militants, organized outside the structures of the mass movement, and in neglect of the central political tasks, leads to isolation and defeat.

The lesson of Chile is enlightening in this respect. The Chilean workers were organized on a massive scale, and they had set up their own structures of organization and mobilization, the *cordones industriales*, that could have developed into organs of workers power. The workers, however, still looked to the SP and CP for political leadership, and these parties followed the class-collaborationist policy of subordinating the workers to the bourgeois Allende government, in which they participated. Instead of orienting toward a workers and farmers government, based on structures like the *cordones*, they counseled trust in a government that relied on and at times included some of the generals who were later to carry out the coup. So, in face of the counterrevolution the masses were left leaderless, and fell victim to the military's offensive. With an orientation toward a workers and farmers government, the correct course of self-defense against the coup would have been clear: the armament of the workers through their own organizations like the *cordones*, and the development and growth of similar rank-and-file-based councils in the armed forces.

The MIR [Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left], the MAPU [Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria—Movement for United People's Action], and the sectors of the leftwing of the SP with a similar approach did not promote a revolutionary strategy as an alternative to the Unidad Popular line of the SP and CP; in fact, they generally supported the Allende government and were absolutely incapable of providing the leadership that the masses needed in the crucial hours. Although they prided themselves for "specializing" in preparations for armed action, their small-scale response was totally ineffective, and they, too, were crushed by the coup.

One of the tasks of revolutionary Marxists in Latin America is to explain the crucial lessons of Chile with regard to the correct course through which the workers can organize to defend themselves against the bourgeois counterrevolution. Only a clear understanding of this can prepare them for the concrete tasks that will arise as the

class struggle sharpens, and prevent another crushing defeat like that in Chile.

24. The Fourth International promoted an incorrect political orientation in Latin America for several years. The clearest and most developed expression of this incorrect line is contained in the following report and resolutions on Latin America adopted by a majority vote at the 1969 and 1974 world congresses of the Fourth International (Ninth and Tenth World Congresses—Third and Fourth World Congresses Since Reunification):

a. At the world congress in 1969: the report and "Resolution on Latin America."

b. At the world congress in 1974: the report and resolution on "Balance Sheet and Orientation for the Bolivian Revolution"; the report and resolution on "Argentina: Political Crisis and Revolutionary Perspectives"; the report on "Armed Struggle in Latin America." [See footnote.]

As a result of this erroneous line, many of the cadres and parties of the Fourth International were politically disarmed in face of the widespread, but false idea that a small group of courageous and capable revolutionaries could set in motion a process leading to a socialist revolution. The process of rooting our parties in the working class and oppressed masses was hindered. The line that was followed not only cut across the possibility of winning cadres from the guerrillaist tendencies to a revolutionary Marxist program, but also led to adventurist actions and losses from our own ranks. The consequences for our small movement were most severe in Argentina and Bolivia.

Accordingly, the Fourth International rescinds the erroneous line on Latin America adopted at the 1969 and 1974 World Congresses. The line of this resolution on Latin America now supersedes the previous line.

One of the most important tasks for the education of the revolutionary Marxist forces in Latin America is the critical evaluation of this whole experience. With the debate now over, the documents can be studied in an educational way, as part of the history of our movement.

25. In the initial period after the Cuban revolution, the Communist parties suffered setbacks owing to the wave of radicalization that generated and strengthened currents to the left of the CPs—a process encouraged by the Castro leadership. In a few cases, most significantly in Venezuela, the CPs were pushed to the sidelines or isolated. But in most countries the Stalinists were able to retain significant cadres and an apparatus in the trade unions and other mass organizations.

With this core of strength remaining, the CPs were partially able to recover from their initial reverses, owing to:

(a) The failure of the guerrillaist strategy, leaving no strong organizations behind and leading ultimately to the disillusionment of many of the guerrillaist cadres, and a turn on their part towards the CP brand of reformism, which appeared to them as the only coherent alternative.

(b) The weakness of the revolutionary Marxist parties, organizationally and politically. They were not strong

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[See "Documents of the World Congress of the Fourth International," *Intercontinental Press*, Vol. 7, No. 26, July 14, 1969 and Vol. 12, No. 46, December 23, 1974 for reports and resolutions on Latin America listed above.]



enough to attract the bulk of those revolutionary-minded militants who were beginning to reevaluate the guerrillaist line. Nor were they strong enough to offer a credible alternative to the left of the CPs that could attract the masses who were radicalizing again under the impact of the new rise in class struggle in the urban proletarian centers.

After the failure of the guerrillaist strategy, the Cuban leadership moved to heal the earlier breaches with the Latin American Communist parties. This move by the Cubans was exemplified at the 1975 Havana conference of Latin American Communist parties, where a common document, compatible with the Communist parties' traditional class-collaborationist positions towards Latin America, was adopted. The Communist parties were able to regain some of their previously diminished authority by drawing upon the prestige of association with the Cuban leadership.

In some countries—Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay, Chile, and Uruguay, for example—where the CPs suffered severe repression from the bourgeois dictatorships, they were nevertheless able to make relative gains in the workers movement as a result of their role in the resistance. Elsewhere, as in Peru and Mexico, the CPs benefited as the support of the bourgeois-nationalist currents within the working class eroded. The Argentine CP is also trying to make gains in this regard. In Panama and Mexico, Stalinists have been able to profit from the lifting of certain restrictions on democratic rights.

All of the Latin American Communist parties pursue the counterrevolutionary policy of shoring up bourgeois rule. Under various rubrics—"popular front," "anti-fascist front," "democratic unity," etc.—the common orientation is that of seeking alliances with one or another sector of the bourgeoisie. Some of the Stalinist betrayals have been quite brazen; for example, the Argentine CP supports the military dictatorship of Videla under the rationale that it represents the lesser evil in Argentina, and because it has expanded its commercial relations with the USSR.

Only the Mexican CP has taken a few timid steps in sympathy with "Eurocommunist" CPs. The other Latin American Stalinist parties continue to present the old-style uncritical stance towards the Soviet bureaucracy.

Despite a partial recovery from their earlier reverses, the Communist parties of Latin America, even where they are very strong, do not enjoy dominance in the workers movement. Currents to the left of the Stalinists, including the revolutionary Marxists, have the possibility of challenging the CPs for influence in the working class. This was most strikingly illustrated in the 1978 Peruvian elections, when the FOCEP slate [Frente Obrero, Campesino, Estudiantil, y Popular—Workers, Peasants, Students, and Poor People's Front] received twice the number of votes as the CP.

While the Peruvian CP is still much stronger than the Trotskyists in terms of size and its weight in the trade unions, it faces a growing challenge.

The CP policy against the Trotskyists has been carried out either by tactics of trying to ignore us or to respond to our political ideas by slander and violence, as in Costa Rica. As we grow, however, the Stalinist methods backfire, and the Trotskyists can deal political blows to the Communist parties whenever they resort to such tactics.

In several countries the growing strength of the Trotskyists has enabled us to draw the CPs into common activi-

ties, for example, in the Constituent Assembly in Peru and in the campaign for legalization of the workers parties in Mexico. Such united-front-type activities aid the class struggle, and can also help create an atmosphere in the workers movement favoring objective discussion of our respective political views.

26. Maoism had little organized influence in most countries of Latin America in the initial period of the Moscow-Peking split. But it grew in the late 1960s and early 1970s as disillusionment set in among the proponents of the Castro/Guevara variety of guerrilla warfare. The Maoist line was adopted as an alternative by those who still saw armed struggle as the central question, and who remained hostile to the pro-Moscow CPs. The populist demagoguery of the Maoist groups, and their emphasis on "people's war" seemed to provide answers to the question of how to link up with the masses.

The main growth of the Maoists was in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic. But even during their high point, the various Maoist groups were never able to unite in a single organization. As Maoism declined in the late 1970s, with the crisis of the Chinese bureaucratic caste, this fragmentation became even more pronounced. Many of the Maoist groups splintered, losing numbers and influence. Thrown into ideological disarray by the foreign policy maneuvers and domestic turnabouts of the Chinese bureaucracy, some of these groups have been evolving away from orthodox Maoism towards centrism, while others have taken refuge in pro-Albanian positions. The Maoist-leaning groups are considerably weaker than the pro-Moscow Communist parties, but are stronger than the revolutionary Marxists in some countries, and are a serious, if weakened, challenge to us. In Bolivia, in contrast to the situation elsewhere, the Maoists managed to grow stronger in the recent period by bringing together most of the currents into one organization, the CP(M-L).

The Maoists promote a class-collaborationist, Stalinist policy, along the same fundamental political lines as the pro-Moscow Communist parties, but with a pronounced sectarian posture, for example, splitting the trade-union movement. This sectarianism makes it difficult to draw the Maoists into common activity with other tendencies in the workers movement. Nevertheless this objective can be pursued with a measure of success, as in the fight for ballot status for FOCEP in the Peruvian election campaign in 1978.

27. Under the impact of the Cuban revolution and the radicalization of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a spectrum of centrist groups of diverse origins emerged in Latin America, for example, the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria [MIR—Movement of the Revolutionary Left] of Venezuela, a split-off from the Acción Democrática [AD—Democratic Action]; the Vanguardia Revolucionaria of Peru [Revolutionary Vanguard], which arose out of bourgeois populism and passed through Maoism; and the MIR of Chile, whose roots included a component in the Trotskyist movement.

With a political line oscillating between revolutionary and reformist positions, the centrist organizations are inherently unstable and generally short-lived politically. They were never able to organize any long-lasting continental or regional structure. The most significant attempt

to do so was the formation of the Junta Coordinadora Revolucionaria [Revolutionary Coordinating Council] in 1974, which included the MIR of Chile, the PRT-ERP of Argentina [Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores/Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo—Revolutionary Workers Party/Revolutionary People's Army], the Tupamaros of Uruguay, and the ELN [Ejército de Liberación Nacional—National Liberation Army] of Bolivia. This proved to be short-lived, as each of its components went into crisis. Most of the important centrist groups that arose in the 1960s and 1970s have either collapsed or degenerated in a reformist direction. The MIR of Chile, a victim of both severe repression and the proven failure of its political strategy, is in deep crisis aggravated by a pro-Moscow turn on the part of its leadership. The PRT-ERP has likewise made a pro-Moscow turn. Other centrist groups that remain important, such as the MIR of Venezuela, are suffering from reformist pressures of both a Social Democratic and Stalinist variety.

Although the centrist organizations are heterogeneous politically, with their actions marked by a range from ultraleftism to opportunism, some will move toward revolutionary positions under the impact of the class struggle. This will offer opportunities for common action. While ruling out adaptation or concessions to them, it would be an error for revolutionary Marxists to adopt a sectarian stance towards leftward-moving centrist currents, or to conclude fatalistically that their degeneration towards reformism is certain. On the contrary, recent experience has confirmed the possibility of winning leftward-moving centrist formations to revolutionary Marxism, for example, the Bloque Socialista [Socialist Bloc] and the Comandos Camilistas [Camilista (Camilo Torres) Brigades] in Colombia.

28. Reformist parties of a Social Democratic type have existed at one time or another in most of the Latin American countries. But strong and long-lasting Social Democratic parties, originating out of and based in the working class, were built only in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. However, the Argentine Socialist Party foundered, losing ground to the Peronists in the 1940s. In Uruguay the impact of the postwar upsurge in Latin America and then the Cuban revolution caused breaks between the party and its base in the rightist trade-union bureaucracy. By the late 1960s organized Social Democracy had become marginal in those two countries. In Chile, however, the SP adopted a more leftist posture than the CP, allowed diverse currents to function inside it, and won over currents attracted to the Cuban revolution. It was able to develop a trade-union base in the CUT [Central Unica de Trabajadores—United Federation of Workers] equivalent to the CP's as well as a larger electoral following.

The Second International has also had relations with Latin American bourgeois parties. But it generally showed little concern with developing influence in the colonial and semicolonial countries of Latin America, Asia, or Africa. A turn was made, however, at an international gathering in Caracas in May 1976 attended by European Social Democratic leaders and Latin American bourgeois figures long associated with the Social Democracy, such as Romulo Betancourt and Carlos Andres Pérez of the Venezuelan AD; Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, leader of the Peruvian APRA, and Ricardo Balbin of Argentina's Radical Party. This was followed by the world congress of the Second

International in Geneva in November 1976, where for the first time the problem of establishing links with Asia, Africa, and Latin America was accorded high priority. The bourgeois PRD [Partido Revolucionario Dominicano—Dominican Revolutionary Party] of the Dominican Republic and the PLN [Partido Liberación Nacional—National Liberation Party] of Costa Rica were also formally brought into the Second International at that congress, and close links were established with the middle-class Puerto Rican Independence Party. Further developments along the same line were implemented at the international conference in Vancouver in late 1978.

The trend toward growing Social Democratic influence in Latin America has developed in the wake of the increasing penetration of European imperialist capital. The Social Democrats are subordinate to imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, and promote an anti-working-class line that must be unmasked in order to advance the development of revolutionary Marxism.

The orientation of the Second International reflects a means by which the leaderships of the Social Democratic parties of Europe, in the service of their own imperialist ruling classes, can facilitate the increased economic and political intervention of the various European imperialists in Latin America. This orientation is twofold: (1) to try to establish Social Democratic parties based in the trade-union bureaucracies where possible; (2) to draw in populist-nationalist and liberal bourgeois parties and political figures, especially where they control trade unions. The Second International hopes to make gains from the problems facing the bourgeois-nationalist parties. But the prospects for the growth of Social Democratic parties in Latin America are somewhat limited by the bourgeoisie's opposition and incapacity to grant economic concessions to the workers.

29. The disintegration of the social structure in the countryside and the impact of the growing urbanization on social relations have had an effect on the lower levels of the Roman Catholic Church. A sector has sought to develop an ideological expression for the radicalization of broad layers of the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and part of the proletariat (for example, the radical priests and Catholic students who helped organize the Peasant Leagues in northeastern Brazil). Archbishop Dom Helder Câmara of Recife has attempted to channel this radicalization in the direction of Social Christian reformism. But Camilo Torres in Colombia broke with Social Christian positions and came out in favor of the socialist revolution.

Where dictatorships have smashed or paralyzed the organizations of the mass movement it has often been possible, as a result of the radicalization in sectors of the church, for workers organizations, including the most militant and politically advanced, to operate under the protection of church structures. This has been the case in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Central America.

This field should not be overlooked by revolutionary Marxists. Ways and means should be sought for drawing Catholic radicals into common actions in defense of the working class and the oppressed masses. In the course of such common actions it is possible to help the most advanced elements move beyond Social Christian positions to proletarian politics, scientific socialism, and the revolutionary Marxist movement.

30. In summary form, the position on Cuba that the Fourth International adopted in previous documents is the following:

(a) The revolution culminated in the overthrow of capitalism in Cuba and the establishment of a workers state. This marked a historic advance for the Cuban masses, resulting in immediate economic and social gains on a broad scale, and setting an example for all of Latin America.

(b) The Castro leadership of the revolution came from radical petty-bourgeois layers, independent of Stalinism. In the process of carrying out the bourgeois-democratic tasks and leading the Cuban masses in a socialist revolution, it acted as a revolutionary leadership.

(c) The Cuban workers state was marked from the beginning by the absence of democratic workers councils as the basis for the government. Although bureaucratic deformations existed in Cuba from the outset, they were not deep or far-reaching enough to indicate the existence of a hardened bureaucratic caste or the need for a political revolution.

After nearly twenty years since the revolution a further evaluation of the achievements and problems facing the Cuban revolution is in order. Such a broad assessment will not be taken up in this document, but the two key sets of questions that must be considered in making an assessment are the following:

(a) To what degree do parasitic economic privileges exist for the leading strata and to what degree have such privileges become entrenched? To change the previous position it would have to be proved that a crystallized bureaucratic caste exists, whose interests are antagonistic to those of the toilers in Cuba and throughout the world. It would have to be shown how this qualitative change took place. If this were shown, it would then follow that this caste could only be removed by the process of political revolution.

(b) Should the Fourth International continue to act toward the Cuban leadership on the basis that, under the impact of revolutionary advances in the class struggle, especially in Latin America, and under the influence of a growing Fourth International, differentiations will take place and major components can evolve towards Leninist policies and norms of workers democracy?

31. In its international policy, the Castro leadership from the beginning was subject to pressures emanating from both Washington and Moscow, designed to discourage the Cubans from promoting revolutionary developments. Nevertheless, the Castro leadership defied these pressures and sought to spread the example of the Cuban revolution in Latin America and also in Africa. However, the Cuban leadership promoted the strategy of guerrilla warfare, a fundamentally inadequate strategy, that led to failure.

The delay in the extension of the revolution and the failure of the guerrilla line increased the effects of the

objective pressures from U.S. imperialism and Moscow.

In response to this pressure the Castro leadership adopted some positions contrary to proletarian internationalism; in particular it lent political support to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (although Castro did make strong criticisms of Moscow at the time). Earlier errors were continued and reinforced, in particular support to bourgeois regimes, such as that of Díaz Ordaz in Mexico, Velasco in Peru, and Torrijos in Panama, and failure to seek opportunities to encourage the class struggle in the advanced imperialist countries. In place of the earlier attempt to encourage the development of alternative currents to the left of the Latin American Communist parties, the Cuban leadership moved to establish collaborative relations and to conclude political agreements with the Latin American CPs, as was exemplified by the 1975 Havana conference of Latin American Communist parties.

The Castro leadership played an important role in Black Africa in the mid-1970s. Disregarding the possible improvement of diplomatic and economic relations with Washington, and risking new aggressive measures, including military ones, against Cuba itself, the Castro leadership defied U.S. imperialism and threw considerable resources into helping defeat the imperialist military intervention in Angola. The South African invaders were driven out of Angola and a huge impulse was given to the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. Imperialist threats against Cuba were raised once again in opposition to Cuba's role in the Horn of Africa.

Revolutionary Marxists oppose any attempts by the imperialists to turn back the revolutionary process in Ethiopia; at the same time they struggle for the independent organization of the workers and poor peasants, and for self-determination and defense of the rights of the oppressed nationalities against all opponents, including the Dergue.

The increasing imperialist aggression against the African revolution, and the step-up of imperialist threats against Cuba makes it imperative that anti-imperialist and revolutionary Marxist forces combine their defense of the African revolution with strong support for the right of independence of the Eritrean people. The Cuban government should reject participating in any invasion of Eritrean territory or any attempt by the Dergue to reestablish Ethiopian rule in Eritrea. Cuban recognition of the right of the Eritreans to decide their own fate would strengthen the defense of the Cuban workers state against imperialism.

The step-up of imperialist threats against Cuba brings to the fore once again the need to defend the Cuban revolution as a key task of the workers movement in Latin America.

The Cuban revolution and the achievements of the Cuban workers state continue to be a source of inspiration and revolutionary action for the people of Latin America. Revolutionary Marxists continually champion this experience in their action and propaganda.

### The Strategy of Revolutionary Marxists in Latin America

32. The economic and political changes noted earlier show that after a period in which the role of peasant struggles or petty-bourgeois guerrilla warfare experiments stood out, the trend of revolutionary developments in Latin America is shifting to the following general lines: the working class is moving towards the forefront, towards leading the struggles of the peasant masses, the urban poor, the oppressed nationalities, women, and all oppressed and exploited layers of society. This conforms to the experience of the Russian Revolution, which showed that the working class if capably led, can lead all the oppressed to victory. Success hinges on the construction of mass revolutionary proletarian parties based on a Leninist program of struggle. The parties of the Fourth International are the nuclei aspiring to become such Leninist-type parties.

The main guidelines of the revolutionary Marxist strategy are contained in the resolutions of the first four congresses of the Communist International and *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (the "Transitional Program"). Beginning with the need to defend the democratic rights and social conquests of the working class and the other oppressed strata, and the need to fight for new gains, this program advances a clear line of class independence and a series of easily comprehensible, immediate, democratic and transitional demands that can lead ultimately to the mobilization of the masses for the socialist revolution.

Based on these guidelines, many of the specific tactics will vary from country to country. But in the elaboration of a revolutionary program today, major consideration must be given to one problem that has stood out in the experience of the class struggle in Latin America: while extraordinary mass mobilizations have developed repeatedly and while the willingness of the masses to struggle has been exceedingly high, the organizations of the working class and its allies have been greatly weakened as a result of political subordination to the capitalist class.

The key to overcoming this contradiction is twofold: (a) the creation of mass working-class parties independent of the bourgeoisie; (b) the transformation of the trade unions into consistent instruments of class struggle.

33. The trade unions, the most powerful of the existing organizations of the working class, are at present generally controlled by class-collaborationist bureaucratic leaderships that hold the unions back, preventing their potential power from being used to defend the full interests of the working class and its allies in face of attacks by the ruling class. A key problem, therefore, is the need to construct an alternative class-struggle leadership that can turn the trade unions into powerful instruments of struggle. As struggles arise, this will stimulate the development of other instruments of struggle, including strike committees, factory committees, committees of action, and the creation, in a revolutionary upsurge, of workers and peasants and soldiers councils that can challenge the state power of the bourgeoisie.

A class-struggle leadership can be constructed around a

clear program of action designed to unite the working class in its own class interests and mobilize all the oppressed behind the workers, independently of the ruling class. In the process of building such a leadership, militant tendencies will emerge and partial struggles will develop that point in this direction. It is necessary to generalize and deepen such developments so that a politically rounded class-struggle left wing can emerge and fight to win majority leadership in the trade unions.

Some of the key points that will define the platform of such class-struggle leaderships will be the following:

(a) *For trade-union democracy.* The prerequisite for mobilizing the power of the trade-union movement against the bosses is to insure that the full decision-making power is in the hands of the rank and file. Trade-union democracy not only includes the right to vote, but also the right to full access to information affecting the workers, frequent membership meetings and national congresses, the right to recall officials, the right to form tendencies, and other such measures. Democratic internal functioning, from the election of the leadership to the setting of policy, is not an abstract moral principle, but a necessity to guarantee that the full power of the unions is used. Only a membership that thinks for itself, that fully understands and decides the next steps to take, will be capable of mobilizing the full power of the ranks and drawing in the allies beyond the union.

An example of the importance of this issue is that of the electrical workers in Mexico. At the end of 1971, when the smaller but relatively more democratic electrical workers union, the STERM [Sindicato de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana—Electrical Workers Union of the Mexican Republic], came under strong attack from the bureaucratic *charros* of the larger electrical workers union, SNESECRM [Sindicato Nacional de Electricistas, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana—National Trade Union of Electrical Workers and Affiliated Trades of the Mexican Republic], the STERM workers were able to appeal for support to broader forces among workers, students, unemployed, and peasants, who saw the fight against the *charros* as their own. The *charros* had to retreat, and offer the compromise of unification, which was accepted. Then, in the new united electrical workers union, SUTERM [Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana—United Electrical Workers Union of the Mexican Republic], the desire for more internal democracy proved infectious, leading to the creation of the Democratic Tendency, which was able to mount a serious challenge to the *charros*. In 1975-76 the electrical workers and their supporters mobilized in mass demonstrations of up to 150,000, and have been spearheading some of the most militant labor struggles in Mexico in recent years.

One organizational conquest of the workers movement in Argentina, where the trade unions have been very strong, but tightly controlled by the Peronist bureaucrats, are the *Cuerpos de Delegados* (delegate bodies) and the *Comisiones Internas* (internal committees). These factory committees, looked to as the organs of all the workers and

subject to a great measure of rank-and-file control, were the backbone of the militant workers struggle during the period between 1969 and 1976.

In both cases the fight for trade-union democracy correctly centered around the question of how best to turn the unions into effective instruments to fight the bosses.

(b) *For full trade-union rights.* The elementary right to strike and to organize is often a key issue that has come under attack, not only from the individual employers, but from the bourgeois state as well—as shown by the frequent resort to police and military intervention to break strikes, or the prohibition of trade unions among some public employees. In the countries ruled by dictatorships the trade unions have virtually no rights.

To counteract government suppression or control, various bodies will develop such as workers commissions that have arisen as *ad hoc* committees in some of the plants in Brazil. These can help regenerate the trade unions or themselves become embryos of independent trade-union organizations, especially insofar as they take on a regular existence and internal life.

In Mexico, the struggle against government interference in and control of the unions takes the form, in some cases, of democratic union oppositions, through which the rank and file strive to regain control of the trade unions from the bureaucratic *charros*, tied to the bourgeoisie.

Another key issue is the fight against ruling-class attempts to impose binding arbitration on the trade unions (with the bourgeois state, of course, as final arbiter), to exact no-strike pledges from the trade unions, or commitments to accept government austerity measures, including wage freezes.

On another level, a struggle is necessary against outright imperialist interference in the trade-union movement, often carried out in complicity with bureaucratic leaders of the North American AFL-CIO.

(c) *For expanded and more powerful trade-union organizations.* Historically, except for Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil, and in some specific industries elsewhere, such as mining in Bolivia, trade-union organization has been very weak in Latin America involving only a small percentage of the working class. The organization of workers into trade unions has grown somewhat in recent years. In Peru, the number of recognized unions jumped from 500 in 1955 to 5,000 in 1978, with most of the growth concentrated in Lima, where 25% of the work force is now in unions.

But this is still a weakness of the Latin American labor movement. The goal of reviving the trade unions in Brazil and Chile and of building a strong independent and militant trade-union movement in countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and in Central America is a top priority. In Peru, Mexico, and Argentina, large sectors of the workers still must be drawn into the trade unions.

Related to the task of unionization is that of organizing the basic units of the trade unions according to the criterion of workplace, rather than just on a geographical or industry level, as often exists. Workplace units of the trade unions, in which the rank and file can meet together and democratically decide their own affairs, are essential to assert the power of the ranks. The lack of this form of organization in many cases was a weakness of the CUT in Chile in 1971-73.

Similarly, a key need is for *industrial* trade unions, rather than the weaker plant-by-plant or craft-based

unions, which, except for Argentina, have predominated in Latin America. This is a weakness of the Mexican CTM [Confederación de Trabajadores de México—Mexican Workers Federation], for example, and of the Puerto Rican trade unions. The only way to effectively organize the big new industrial plants is on an industrial union basis, particularly if the entire work force at the plant level can be drawn into the union.

(d) *For trade-union unity.* Colombia offers an example in which the division of the trade-union movement—in this case, into four major trade-union federations, as well as several important unaffiliated unions—is a major obstacle to organizing the power of the working class effectively. When the unions can unite in action, as occurred in September 1977, a powerful impetus can be given to the class struggle, and broader social layers can be drawn in. In Colombia the pressure of the ranks forced the leadership of the UTC [Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia—Union of Colombian Workers] and the CTC [Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia—Confederation of Colombian Workers]—the big federations linked to the Conservative and Liberal parties—into agreeing with the mobilizations that the CSTC [Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Colombia—General Trade-Union Confederation of Workers of Colombia], the CGT [Confederación General de Trabajadores—General Confederation of Workers], and independent unions had been planning. The formation of the unified national trade-union committee and the agreement to fight for a uniform national contract set the stage for the massive nationwide general strike.

In Peru, rank-and-file pressure was essential to the success of the big general strikes of July 1977 and February and May 1978. These strikes came about as the result of unity in action among the Stalinist-dominated CGTP, the big independent unions, and the smaller CTRP-Lima [Central de Trabajadores de la Revolución Peruana—Central Workers Union of the Peruvian Revolution] and CNT [Central Nacional de Trabajadores—National Workers Federation] federations.

A common error of many militant anti-bureaucratic opposition currents in the trade unions has been to form separate trade unions. Although these may in some cases organize sectors of the working class, they are cut off from the bulk of organized workers. In other cases, independent trade unions have arisen in some sectors of the working class, owing to the failure of the big trade-union federations to carry out organizing campaigns. The fight for trade-union unity includes the need to draw the independent trade unions into the larger, organized trade-union movement.

In general, it will require mobilization of the ranks to impose long-lasting trade-union unity in places where the movement is seriously divided. The fight for trade-union unity in Colombia and Peru is closely linked with the fight for independent working-class political action.

e) *For the unity of the working class.* The working class in Latin America is divided by capitalist society in many ways: employed and unemployed; unionized and non-unionized; skilled and unskilled; men and women; workers of oppressor nationalities and those of oppressed national minorities; white collar and blue collar; urban and agricultural; old and young; citizens and immigrants.

The ruling classes seek to preserve the existing divisions, hoping that those in a more privileged position compared to the rest will turn their backs on their fellow

workers. In this way labor solidarity and unity—and thus the power of the labor movement—would be weakened. A major problem in Latin America is to prevent the unions from becoming entrenched bastions of the skilled, relatively privileged workers, unconcerned with the much larger layer of poor and unskilled workers.

A key feature of a militant class-struggle leadership in the unions will be its stance on overcoming these divisions within the class. This can only be done on the basis of championing the needs of the most oppressed sectors. This not only means fighting against discrimination whenever it occurs, but also fighting for special programs to overcome the effects of past discrimination. In many cases it will mean a political fight within the working class to overcome the deeprooted prejudices of the more privileged sectors. But such fights must be carried out. An example is the fight of the Argentine women textile workers to obtain proportional representation in the factory committees.

Since the Latin American trade unions generally organize only a part of the class, often only a minority part, a key task is that of uniting the unionized and non-unionized workers. One of the main ways this can be accomplished is by the creation of factory committees in the plants; these can begin, for example, in struggles over working conditions, safety, and speedup, or in broader political struggles.

In the big Volkswagen plant in Puebla, Mexico, the workers took the initiative to organize and coordinate departmental factory committees over such issues; this reinforced their capacity to struggle and greatly strengthened the union, which had previously been weak.

In times of upsurge, the example of factory committees, as organizations uniting *all* workers, can spread on a broader level, beyond the factory, and can help lead to the formation of soviet-type organizations.

f) *For the trade unions to take the lead on all social questions.* If the trade unions are to be transformed into fighting instruments of class struggle, they must break out of any narrow framework that sees their role limited to the economic concerns of their own members. They must build solidarity and link their struggles with the struggles of the peasants and oppressed national minorities, women, and the unemployed and urban poor. This, too, will increase the strength of the unions.

As the most powerful existing organizations of the working class, the unions, under a class-struggle leadership, have to play a central role in the struggle for full democratic rights and against imperialism. With their potential for establishing international links with trade unions in other countries, the unions can not only win solidarity throughout Latin America, but can play a role in dividing the workers of the imperialist countries from their own ruling classes, and winning their support for the struggles of the oppressed and exploited peoples of Latin America.

g) *For independent class political action.* The major political weakness of the labor movement in Latin America is the absence of mass working-class parties—except for Chile, where the SP and CP did achieve mass influence, but promoted a class-collaborationist line. In some countries where the trade unions have been strongest, like Argentina and Mexico, the full power of the unions has never been used, owing to their subordination to bourgeois-nationalist parties: the Peronist organizations and the PRI. In Bolivia the strong miners union has been

tied, via the Lechín bureaucracy, to the bourgeois-nationalist MNR.

The experience in Colombia in 1977-78 offers a good illustration of the scope of the problem. In September 1977, the trade unions were able to call a massive nationwide general strike that challenged the ruling class on a whole series of crucial economic and social questions. But this show of independent strength was not translated onto the political arena. Three of the four main union federations remained directly tied to bourgeois political parties, and the fourth, led by the CP, promoted popular frontism as its strategy. In the elections of 1978, except for the relatively small campaigns for the socialist candidates that were run by UNIOS [Unidad Obrera y Socialista—Workers and Socialist Unity] and the PST [Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores—Socialist Workers Party], there was no major independent class alternative, and thus no opportunity for the masses to express their repudiation of the ruling class. The result was a blow to the masses that had waged such a militant struggle only a few months earlier.

The fight for independent working-class political action can be waged over an initial step, such as the fight in the Mexican unions against obligatory affiliation to the PRI. It can be waged in a more advanced way through a struggle for the trade unions to organize a mass workers party, as in Argentina. It can be waged over a break with the ruling class on the governmental level during a prerevolutionary situation, as was crucial in Chile during the Allende regime in order to develop the full potential of the *cordones industriales* as soviet-type formations that could organize the workers for the seizure of power. But whatever the appropriate form at any given time, this is a central question that must always be raised.

The unifying axis of the fight for a class-struggle leadership in the workers movement is the struggle for class independence from the bourgeoisie, particularly the fight for mass workers parties capable of challenging the ruling class on all political levels. Fighting for this perspective is a key step on the road to mobilizing the masses towards the overthrow of the capitalist governments and their replacement by workers and peasants governments.

34. The ultimate objective, on the road to independent working-class political action, is the construction of a mass revolutionary Marxist party capable of leading the socialist revolution to victory. But the revolutionary Marxist organizations are still only small nuclei and cannot yet present themselves in the eyes of the broad masses as a credible alternative to the bourgeois parties. Nor is it likely that the first results of the coming waves of class upsurge and radicalization will be to transform these nuclei into mass parties of the working class.

Thus the likely way in which the need for independent class political action will express itself is in terms of steps to be taken by the workers organizations that the workers already look to as their own instruments. In some cases this will mean challenging the CPs (or other working-class parties, if they are looked to by large numbers of workers) to break from their class-collaborationist course and strike out on an independent path. But, except for Chile, the CPs tend to represent only a fraction of the class and do not have great authority. For the most part, the only truly mass organizations of the working class are the trade unions. Thus the fight for independent working-class

political action will tend to center around the need for the trade unions themselves to take this step; that is, for the trade unions to take the initiative in creating mass workers parties.

This perspective is consistent with past experience in Latin America. The workers have often pressed their trade unions into initiating actions tending to go beyond the economic arena and towards confronting the bourgeoisie on the broader political front. The weakness has been that up to now these political steps have been only temporary and partial.

An example is the June 1975 general strike in Argentina, the first ever to confront a Peronist government. The strike brought down the hated minister and "strong man" of the regime, López Rega, as well as economics minister Celestino Rodrigo, and it won a big wage increase. But while the workers, especially through their factory committees, had created the conditions that forced the national Peronist union officials to officially call the general strike, the latter were able to keep it from becoming a more generalized political mobilization against the Peronist government.

The need, in cases such as this, is to make the break with the bourgeoisie permanent and complete.

The call for political action by the trade unions in no way implies confidence in the class-collaborationist leaderships that dominate the trade-union movement today. On the contrary, the fight for the unions to initiate mass working-class parties is linked to the broader fight to create an alternative leadership that can transform the unions into fighting instruments of class struggle. In other words, the fight to create mass workers parties is linked to the fight for an overall program of action capable of uniting the working class and its allies against capitalist rule.

As in all other aspects of the class struggle, it is likely that movement by the trade unions in the direction of independent working-class political action will be uneven, especially to the degree that the existing bureaucratic leaderships hold sway. But any step in this direction, however partial or flawed, is to be supported. Whatever the initial leadership of such a mass workers party might be, its very formation would set a dynamic into motion that would be difficult to confine to class collaborationism. In the process of fighting for the establishment and growth of mass workers parties, and for a class-struggle program, the political influence of the revolutionary Marxists will grow and they will come into position to contend for leadership of the class as a whole.

A glimpse of the potential for such a development was given in the 1978 constituent assembly elections in Peru. Despite the undemocratic election procedure, more than 20% of the votes were cast for working-class candidates; 12% were cast for the class-struggle FOCEP slate. This was one of the clearest electoral expressions yet seen in Latin America in favor of independent working-class politics. The strong support for the FOCEP slate also shows that when sentiment for a working-class political alternative is expressed, it need not automatically favor the reformists; thus, a mass workers party will not of necessity be led by the reformists. The leadership will be decided in struggle. In conditions where the Communist parties or other class-collaborationist forces are not exceptionally strong, the revolutionary Marxists can place themselves in a good position from the outset to contest for leadership of a mass workers party.

From the point of view of political education, the FOCEP experience also provides a positive counterexample to that of the Unidad Popular in Chile and the Frente Amplio [Broad Front] in Uruguay. The latter two were not expressions of independent working-class political action, but of class collaboration; they were multiclass political blocs including bourgeois forces. Part of the process of popularizing independent working-class political action is that of exposing the incorrectness of advocating a vote for multiclass blocs.

A mass independent workers party would run candidates in elections. But this should not be its reason for existence. The kind of party that is needed is not an electoral party but an organization that mobilizes the workers and their allies *in action*—in strikes, demonstrations, etc.—challenging the ruling class on all the political issues of the day. Within this framework, participation in elections is useful for propaganda purposes.

Part of the job of political education in favor of a mass workers party is that of presenting the aim of establishing a workers and peasants government as an alternative to the existing capitalist government. Thus a mass workers party would have to present itself as the champion of all progressive social struggles and the leader of all oppressed classes, in particular, the peasantry.

35. Economic and social conditions in Latin America do not permit long-term stable bourgeois-democratic openings. This gives special importance to the fight for democratic rights, as one of the fundamental issues of the class struggle.

The fight for democratic rights directly concerns the organization and mobilization of the workers as such (the right to strike and the right to organize unions, for example). It is crucial for the revival and reorganization of the workers movement in countries under military dictatorships. It is part of the fight for a class-struggle leadership to replace the bureaucrats in the mass organizations. Democratic liberties, in short, provide the most favorable conditions to defend the living conditions and promote the organization of the working class.

In the fight for democratic rights, many types of common *actions* for *specific* demands are possible between a wide range of political forces in the mass movement. These opportunities should be sought out in non-sectarian fashion. Common activities will also be possible at times with bourgeois groups, in defense of political prisoners, for example. Alliances on such issues are valuable, provided that they do not run counter to the political and organizational independence of the working-class organizations and do not imply their subordination to bourgeois forces.

The importance of the fight for democratic rights was shown in stark fashion in Argentina in 1975-76. As the class polarization intensified, the danger of a military coup against the bourgeois-democratic regime was increasingly apparent. In fact, bourgeois democratic rights were severely eroded even prior to the coup as the Isabel Perón government began shifting more and more to the right itself, laying the ground for its own overthrow.

The primary aim of the coup was to wrest away the democratic gains that the masses had won and to crush the mass movement. In face of dangers such as these—and the experience is certain to be repeated—it is crucial for the workers movement to mobilize against the reactionary threat, as the lesson of Chile so well demonstrates. Limited

tactical agreements are possible with any forces to prevent a bourgeois-democratic regime from being overturned by a military coup. But in so doing it is a grave error to give political support to the bourgeois-democratic regime or to conclude long-term blocs or adopt common general political programs or strategies with bourgeois forces. The need is to present a line of class independence and to promote the use of proletarian methods of struggle and self-defense. This should be a constant element of revolutionary Marxist propaganda in Latin America.

In some situations the crisis of the dictatorships obliges them to seek a way out through electoral openings. Such conjunctures, however restrictive, offer big opportunities for organizing the mass movement.

More generally, running independent working-class candidates in elections offers a means of raising the level of understanding of the masses. Participation in elections in this way, or in bourgeois parliaments if elected, does not mean legitimizing the democratic pretensions of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it can be useful as a forum to expose the real nature of bourgeois rule and to help the masses break with bourgeois institutions and shed their illusions in bourgeois-democratic ideology.

As the dictatorships go into crisis, the slogan of the constituent assembly will often become a pressing issue for the workers movement to take up as a means of counterposing popular sovereignty to dictatorial rule and to pose the need for a workers and farmers government. The experience in Peru in 1978, in which the revolutionary Marxists took advantage of such an opening and utilized it effectively, offers many lessons for the workers movement.

The military dictatorship in Peru, confronted by a big rise in the class struggle in 1977-78, decided to hold elections to a constituent assembly. According to the plans of the military regime, the aim was to draft a new constitution, ostensibly to prepare the way for civilian rule two years later. This was not a real guarantee of democratic rights, but rather a maneuver by the ruling class to defuse the mass movement and gain time.

In this situation revolutionary Marxists were able to reach broad masses with an independent working-class policy, along the following broad outlines:

a) Participation in the elections, through the working-class slate FOCEP, which stood for independence from the bourgeoisie and which counterposed class struggle to class collaborationism. At the same time, they exposed the fraudulent character of the constituent assembly as conceived by the generals, and denounced the undemocratic character of the elections, such as the ballot law requirements that were an obstacle to working-class participation, the refusal to allow illiterates—mainly Indians and other sectors of the most oppressed—to vote, and the deportation of popular mass leaders, including candidates. Thus, the revolutionary Marxists showed themselves to be the strongest and most consistent defenders of democratic rights.

b) The revolutionary Marxists were able to utilize the election campaign as a propaganda forum to raise a working-class solution to the key political problems of the day. This included propaganda for a socialist constitution and for a workers and peasants government.

c) After workers candidates were elected, the constituent assembly itself could be used as a forum. It then became possible to advocate that the constituent assembly be in no way bound by the restrictions that the military govern-

ment sought to impose, that it exercise its powers on behalf of the masses, for example, to repudiate the foreign debt, to order the reinstatement of fired union militants, and to grant free land to the peasants. It became possible to advance a line designed to expose the military usurpers of popular sovereignty, as well as the bourgeois parties that gave backhanded support to the continuation of military rule. Proposals could be made in the constituent assembly to bring down the military government, to declare itself sovereign, to call free elections based on universal franchise, and to counterpose a workers and farmers government to all forms of bourgeois rule.

In this way it was possible to combine consistent defense of democratic rights with specific demands in the class interests of the workers, peasants and all the oppressed.

To the degree that the bourgeois parties, which represented a big majority in the constituent assembly, hesitated or rejected such proposals, they stood to lose the confidence of the masses. This was particularly important in the case of APRA, which has strong mass support. It was necessary to find a way to help the masses break from the APRA and see the need for a mass workers party and a workers and peasants government.

It was also possible to use the constituent assembly as a means to promote class-struggle unity between the deputies from all workers parties—thus helping set an example for the mass movement as a whole.

d) The overall aim was not to score electoral or parliamentary points. Rather it was to press for the full utilization and extension of democratic rights and to use the parliamentary forum as a means to promote the education, organization, and extraparliamentary mobilization of the masses.

36. Except for Cuba, all countries south of the Rio Bravo [Rio Grande] are dominated by foreign imperialism, principally U.S. imperialism. Outright colonies of U.S., British, French and Dutch imperialism remain, in particular Puerto Rico, in which the U.S. imperialists have nearly \$20 billion in investments, and which is used as a key military base for U.S. imperialism in Latin America. The struggle for full national liberation against imperialist domination and superexploitation is a burning issue to the masses of Latin America, and anti-imperialist struggles are some of the most important forms of the class struggle.

Bourgeois-nationalist tendencies in Latin America have often portrayed themselves as the champions of anti-imperialism, and on this basis have been able to disorient large sectors of the mass movement. Peronism in Argentina, the MNR in Bolivia, the APRA in Peru, the AD in Venezuela and the PRI in Mexico are classical examples. More recently, sectors of the military, as illustrated by Torrijos in Panama, Torres in Bolivia, and Velasco in Peru have sought to stake out claims as anti-imperialists. But none of the bourgeois-nationalist tendencies has ever been willing or able to break completely with imperialism; nor, for fear of setting their own masses onto an uncontrollable course, will they ever do so. At best they have been able to use the pressure of the masses to wrest some concessions from the imperialists.

The experience of Cuba shows that a thoroughgoing struggle for independence from foreign imperialism must inexorably grow over into a socialist revolution. But the masses will come to this understanding only through their own experience. Thus, the working class must be orga-



nized to stand at the head of the anti-imperialist movement, and an alternative class-struggle leadership and program must be counterposed to that of the bourgeois nationalists. In this way a bridge can be built from the anti-imperialist consciousness of the masses to a broader understanding of the need for a socialist revolution and of the means of carrying it out.

To the extent that the classical bourgeois-national tendencies prove themselves incapable of breaking with imperialism and as newly-emerging industrial sectors of the national bourgeoisie ally openly with imperialism, the banner of anti-imperialism can more easily devolve to the working class—but only if a class-struggle leadership emerges at the head of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Such a leadership will seek to achieve unity in action with whatever forces are willing to participate in specific actions against imperialism. Tactical ad hoc agreements can be concluded with petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois elements provided that they actually participate in such actions, although in the latter case it is not likely that such agreements can be long-lasting. Critical support can be granted to practical measures, as distinct from mere rhetoric, against imperialism taken by bourgeois governments (for example, nationalization of imperialist companies). The radical difference between the class-struggle approach and the bourgeois or reformist concept of anti-imperialism is that the latter, in the name of "unity," seek to hold the struggle within limits acceptable to the national bourgeoisie. A class-struggle leadership, by contrast, will not only be the most consistent and intransigent champion of anti-imperialist actions, but will at the same time promote the independent class interests of the workers and the most oppressed masses.

Some of the main issues around which anti-imperialist activities can be organized are the following:

a) Defend Cuba against U.S. military threats and economic pressure. End the economic blockade. U.S. out of Guantanamo naval base. For the diplomatic recognition of Cuba by all Latin American governments.

37. Building revolutionary parties rooted in the working class is the central strategic task for the Latin American Trotskyist movement.

The struggle to build mass revolutionary parties is, in the last analysis, that of overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective conditions for socialist revolution in Latin America, as illustrated by the repeated revolutionary upsurges, and the proletariat's lack of a capable class-conscious leadership to guide the masses to victory.

Although the forces of the Fourth International are still weak in relation to the enormity of the task we propose to fulfill, although we have been cruelly decimated by repression in several countries, we can count on favorable openings to arise in the period ahead. If these opportunities are well utilized, decisive steps can be taken to solving the crisis of revolutionary leadership in Latin America.

b) For the independence of Puerto Rico. For the independence of all countries that are still subjected to domination by U.S., British, French and Dutch imperialism.

c) For the immediate return of the entire Canal Zone to Panama. For the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Panamanian territory. Abrogate the Carter-Torrijos treaties.

d) For the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist military and police missions and bases from Latin America. Stop CIA intervention. End imperialist arming and financing of dictatorships.

e) Repudiate foreign debts to the imperialists. Against special economic privileges for the imperialists in trade and investment. Against the economic maneuvers and blackmail of the International Monetary Fund.

f) For the expropriation of all imperialist-owned enterprises. For the defense of nationalized enterprises against imperialist economic penetration.

g) Against the deportations of Latino working people from the United States. Defend the struggles of Latinos in the United States, West Indians in Britain and Canada, and Antilleans in France.

h) Support to the anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of the world.

Despite the diversity and uneven development that exists within Latin America, the history of the region as a whole shows that it constitutes an economic and social unity. Imperialist domination tends to exacerbate divisions artificially, while upsurges in the class struggle tend to draw the peoples of Latin America closer together. Progress for the masses can be brought about by pooling the economic and social resources of the entire region, and making the tendency towards unity a living reality.

The socialist revolution will have its own rhythm and peculiarities in each of the countries of Latin America. But the culmination of the revolutionary process will bring about the organization of a federation of Latin American socialist republics: the Socialist United States of Latin America. This is the long-term programmatic objective of the Latin American Trotskyist movement.

## VIII.

### Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International in Latin America Today

This involves three intertwined processes: (a) the defense and enrichment of the revolutionary Marxist program; (b) the recruitment, political and practical education of revolutionary Marxist cadres; (c) winning mass influence.

The following are among the immediate tasks of the parties of the Fourth International in Latin America:

a. The development of roots in the working class. To win the workers and all the oppressed and exploited masses and to lead them to victory over the ruling classes requires a party that is not only proletarian in program, but in composition as well. Only such a party can earn the respect of the workers because of its leadership role in the class struggle, and show the workers how to think socially and act politically. Only such a party can fully understand the needs and concerns of the workers and provide leadership in accordance with those needs.

The development of parties rooted in the working class

will advance our work in all sectors of the mass movement and among the allies of the proletariat: the peasants and agricultural workers, the oppressed nationalities, the urban poor, women, and youth.

As the preceding analysis of political and social trends in Latin America shows, the working class, particularly the industrial working class, is more and more in the center of the class struggle. Thus, it is not only strategically correct, but also timely, to make a central effort at building our parties as parties that are working class in composition. The Argentine PST has done well in this regard, and Trotskyists elsewhere, as in Brazil and Mexico, are making progress.

It is especially important to develop functioning party units in the industries where the workers have been playing a vanguard role in the class struggle. By putting ourselves forward as the proponents of a class-struggle leadership of the working class, along the lines developed earlier in this document, the Fourth International stands to gain cadres and influence in the period ahead. Functioning cells or fractions in the important industries will not arise spontaneously. Conscious leadership effort, however, can overcome this problem, enabling our parties to make a turn towards rooting our cadres in the industrial working class. The key is to inspire and convince our parties of the political possibility and need to do so.

b. Gaining influence in the struggles of peasants, oppressed nationalities and national minorities, and the urban poor. Most of our organizations do not yet have the forces to develop a strong base in these movements, although some specific opportunities will arise in which Trotskyists can become actively involved, such as the Mexican Trotskyists' participation in the peasant movement in Sonora and elsewhere, the initiatives by FOCEP in Peru to organize shantytown dwellers, and the experience of the Costa Rican OST [Organización Socialista de los Trabajadores—Socialist Workers Organization] in the struggles of the Limoncito Black community. All organizations of the Fourth International in Latin America can, however, develop solidarity activities with such struggles and present our programmatic solutions to the problems they face, along the lines developed in this document.

Within the trade unions and other mass organizations our forces can initiate steps to develop alliances between the workers and peasants. Specific attention should be paid to aiding the organization of the agricultural and migrant workers.

c. Continuing active participation in the student movement and among broader sectors of youth. This has been one of the main arenas of political work and recruitment up to now, and it will continue to offer considerable opportunities for growth. The experience of the organized student movement in Mexico and Brazil illustrates the opportunities and shows the need for revolutionary Marxists to participate in the most effective organized manner. The formation of Trotskyist youth groups, organizationally independent of the party, would be of considerable aid in our work in the student and youth movement. It would also enable us to increase our work among working-class youth and students in the technical schools.

d. Participation in the newly developing women's liberation movement. Our organizations already possess many experienced women political cadres who can play a leading role in the development and orientation of the newly emerging women's movement in Latin America. The

Trotskyists are in an excellent position to make gains in comparison with other left-wing political tendencies that ignore or belittle the women's movement. But this potential can be realized only if the entire party—men and women—assumes responsibility for guiding our work in the women's movement, and integrates the issue of women's liberation in all areas of political work. The party leadership must also develop internal educational programs on this issue and insure that any manifestations of *machismo* within the party are combatted.

e. Defense of democratic rights. Broad international campaigns are often possible in defense of the victims of repression in countries under the yoke of dictatorships, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, and Uruguay. Such international efforts can be of great value in preventing the bloody dictatorships from acting with impunity. Even under less restrictive conditions defense campaigns can be extremely important, as in Mexico, where tens of thousands of people demonstrated in July and October, 1978 for the release of all political prisoners and an end to the repressive policies of the Mexican government.

Important victories can be won as a result of the work of our movement, for example, the Costa Rican OST's efforts on behalf of imprisoned Sandinista leader Plutarco Hernández, and the international campaigns in defense of our own comrades such as Trotskyist leaders Hugo Blanco, Hugo Bressano (Nahuel Moreno), Rita Strasberg, as well as the Brazilian socialists. The fight for the legalization of Trotskyist groups is an important part of our work in Latin America. As experiences in Brazil and Mexico show this is not a mere matter of legal proceedings, but primarily of broad political campaigns that in themselves help build the organization.

f. International political solidarity campaigns. It is of great political and educational value to build international solidarity for and popularize the lessons of important upsurges such as those in Peru and Nicaragua in 1977-78. Some revolutionary developments elsewhere in the world have an impact in Latin America that call for special initiatives, such as defense of the African liberation struggle, linked with the defense of Cuba, against imperialism.

Often collaboration can be established between Trotskyist groups in countries directly affected by the same events, such as the efforts by U.S. and Panamanian Trotskyists against the Carter-Torrijos pacts on the Panama Canal, or U.S. and Puerto Rican Trotskyists for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Defense of the millions of undocumented Mexican, Dominican, Colombian, Haitian, and other Latin American workers in the United States is very important, especially in view of the huge step-up in repression by Washington, which deports nearly one million undocumented workers each year. Héctor Marroquín's fight against deportation has proved to be a way to bring this issue to the attention of many people. In western Europe, where there are several hundred thousand Latin American political refugees, important collaboration can be carried out, not only in defense of democratic rights in Latin America, but also in defense of the rights of the Latin Americans in Europe.

g. Election campaigns. Within the organizations of the mass movement, we propose that independent class-struggle candidates be run. We vigorously support and popularize independent working-class campaigns when-

ever they occur, while at the same time promoting a clear class-struggle program for such campaigns. This is a priority in line with the preceding analysis of the need to fight for mass workers parties capable of challenging the ruling class on all political levels.

In recent years our movement in Latin America has gained more experience in running Trotskyist election campaigns. These offer a means of popularizing our ideas and of winning greater standing as a serious political current in the eyes of the masses. Running in elections also helps to preserve our legal rights.

The choice of candidates can be a useful means of popularizing the image of the Trotskyist parties as active participants on all fronts of the class struggle. This was the experience of the Argentine PST campaign in 1973, the Trotskyists on the Peruvian FOCEP slate in 1978, the UNIOS campaign and the PST candidates in Colombia in 1978, and the OST campaign in Costa Rica in 1977. The parties ran candidates known for their activity and symbolizing the parties' stands in the trade-union, peasant, and women's movements, and other areas. Through campaigns like these, our movement and some of its leaders became much more established in the eyes of the masses of these countries, and elsewhere in Latin America.

Sometimes it will be possible to participate in electoral alliances with other working-class and socialist forces, provided that they are clearly independent of the capitalist class, present a clear line of class struggle as opposed to class collaboration, and the revolutionary Marxists can defend their own program without restriction.

38. The forces of the Trotskyist movement in Latin America have been badly divided in recent years. This is one of the damaging legacies of an internal political struggle in the Fourth International. The unification process in Mexico that led to the establishment of the united PRT [Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores—Revolutionary Workers Party] in 1977 offers a model of how this problem can be overcome. In Colombia and Peru initial steps have also been taken to unify some of our divided forces. Much still remains to be accomplished elsewhere. Progress in party building can be greatly

enhanced if principled unifications can be carried out, and the Trotskyist movement can speak to the masses through the voice of a united organization in each country.

New regroupments are also possible. In face of the crisis of various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist policies and reformist and centrist strategies, revolutionary-minded groupings will develop toward our anticapitalist, socialist conceptions. Revolutionary Marxists should take full advantage of the opportunity to actively work with these currents, with the aim of winning them to our movement.

As our organizations grow, the need will become ever greater to insure strong norms of organizational functioning, including the publication of a regular, frequent press and self-sufficient financing adequate to guarantee that the main political needs can be carried out. Of particular importance is the need to develop teamwork in the party leadership and in the organization as a whole, to maximize the strengths and skills of all.

Special efforts should be made to create the conditions enabling all party members to participate fully in the life of the world Trotskyist movement. This can be facilitated through collaborative efforts to publish a Spanish-language journal and to publish the international discussion bulletins in Spanish.

Continual political experience and theoretical education is necessary to develop a membership capable of thinking for itself and acting self-confidently in the class struggle. Conscious attention must be paid to the development of workers, women, and comrades of nationally oppressed peoples as rounded party leaders. A fully democratic internal party life must be guaranteed.

Strong organizational structures and norms such as the above are especially important because our forces in Latin America are often compelled to adjust their functioning to conditions of political instability, including extreme repression in some cases.

Choosing the most appropriate political tasks to concentrate on, increasing our capacities to participate in the class struggle, and developing strong organizational norms are three mutually interrelated aspects of party building, each of which will aid the others.