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To the Latin American Comrades: Notes on the Bolshevik Tendency

By Hugo Blanco July 14, 1978

Prefatory Note

I am leaving for Peru tomorrow. Things are too hectic now to write an organized document. But I have to leave something in writing, in case anything happens to me.

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To the Latin American Comrades Notes on the Bolshevik Tendency

The oldest and most experienced current in Latin American Trotskyism is the one now known as the Bolshevik Tendency.

This fact in itself, as well as the geographic extension of this current, clearly show its importance, especially for Latin America. It has a lot to contribute to building the Fourth International.

The author of these notes learned Trotskyism inside this current, and I stand by the positive things I learned from it. Among these could be mentioned the training of a dedicated active membership and how to work in the mass movement.

This particular current in Argentina arose around 1945. It was represented by Comrade Nahuel Moreno, who is still the central leader. On a world scale Trotskyism was much weaker at that time than it is today, in quality, as well as in numbers and geographic breadth; as a result, this tendency developed in an almost completely isolated fashion, in one of the regions most cut off from the rest of the world, and whose industrial development is in no way comparable to that of Europe or North America. These factors undoubtedly hampered the political and methodological development of the current. Some of its weaknesses were probably related to this fact, for example, it does not promote the education of the membership; arguing that "we are training activists, not intellectuals," the rank and file is immersed in super-activism. In contrast to other sections of the International the bulk of the theoretical work of the Bolshevik Tendency is the work of a single comrade, who writes on everything from an analysis of the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal to a document on sexual morality. The lack of education as a part of the party's overall political activity, which is characteristic of the Bolshevik Tendency, is also a clear product of our semi-artisan societies.

There was another factor that contributed to the isolation of this tendency. In the 1950s there were two important currents in Argentine Trotskyism; the so-called Moreno current and the Posadas current. The international leadership supported the Posadas current and took it under its wing. Today, as we know, this current is advocating a united front with flying saucer people and raises other themes of similar importance. Toward the end of the 1960s there was another debate, this time between the current led by Comrade Moreno and that of Comrade Santucho. And we know what happened to the guerrillaist current. So no one should be surprised that the members of the Argentine PST think that all you need to do to work

out a correct line is to listen to what the International leadership says, and then do the opposite.

* * *

The Bolshevik Tendency thinks that it is the only capable leadership for the International, and that Latin American Trotskyism thus has nothing or nearly nothing to learn from the Trotskyists in the rest of the world. According to Bolshevik Tendency mythology the sections that are not led by the Bolshevik Tendency are falling apart and in disarray. The Bolshevik Tendency members believe that none of the other Trotskyists know how to work in the mass movement or build revolutionary parties.

So, the development of the Bolshevik Tendency is not viewed as part of the general development of Trotskyism in our time, but as a Bolshevik Tendency product exclusively. The geographic isolation of Latin America, the language factor, and the lack of adequate information, all help to keep the myth alive; but it begins to break down whenever the Bolshevik Tendency envoys see other parts of the world. As a result, no other important non-Argentine leader of the Bolshevik Tendency (maybe there is an exception) has stayed with the Bolshevik Tendency after having had a period of time to observe sections which are not led by the Bolshevik Tendency.

The Bolshevik Tendency has a monolithic conception of building the International and the sections. It does not believe it is correct for different positions to coexist inside the party; for the Bolshevik Tendency this is an obstacle that must be overcome. So, if the Bolshevik Tendency is in a majority it tries to crush the opposition. The various maneuvers it has used towards this end have been denounced many times, and it is not the object of this document to discuss them. But we can point out some of the basic theories that are used to justify this.

"Leadership discipline." According to this Bolshevik Tendency concept, the members of a leadership cannot present their own positions to the rest of the party, but must present the position of the majority in the leadership; if they tell the ranks what they themselves think, this is a serious violation of discipline. The Bolshevik Tendency is more flexible, of course, if it finds itself in a minority in the leadership.

The members of the Bolshevik Tendency have been convinced that it is a Trotskyist concept to compel tendencies to dissolve after a congress, and that they can exist only in a pre-congress period. The correct criterion—that the leadership determines the periods for discussion, during which the bulletins are published and the internal party discussions are organized—is extended to stifle dissent. There is a dangerously Stalinist aspect to this.

According to the Bolshevik Tendency every deviation has a class origin. A deviation is any discrepancy with the Bolshevik Tendency leadership. Thus, those of us who are not with the Bolshevik Tendency are petty bourgeois or lumpen. The Bolshevik Tendency, of course, always has a "proletarian" position.

According to the Bolshevik Tendency, there is one comrade who is never wrong, Comrade Nahuel Moreno. If

Comrade Moreno ever made an error, it was discovered only after he himself pointed it out. There is no other possibility. These errors, of course, do not have a class origin.

Unfortunately, of all the leading members of this current during its initial phase, only two remain, Comrade Moreno and Comrade Anibal. The rest all broke with them, one by one—in general because they suffered from petty-bourgeois deviations. As a result, the gap in knowledge and experience between these two older leaders and the new cadres becomes wider and wider. Since everyone with a disagreement is treated as a political enemy and crushed, there is no way to build a tendency without a split.

When Bolshevik Tendency policy leads to failure this is not attributed to an incorrect line or a deficient methodology: the fault lies with those who carried it out. It is not unusual to hear Bolshevik Tendency comrades say, "I'm an idiot, that's the problem." The road is full of scapegoats.

It is common to make turns of 180 degrees, without making any balance sheets. This has broken many people.

The obligation to make "self-criticisms" is another ugly characteristic that the Bolshevik Tendency unfortunately shares with Stalinism.

The Bolshevik Tendency has correctly criticized the search for "shortcuts" in party-building. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik Tendency conception also seeks shortcuts.

- There is no time to educate the minority opposition, which stands in the way of carrying out the "correct line." So the minority is to be treated like an enemy and crushed.

- When the Bolshevik Tendency is in a minority, even more time would be lost in trying to educate the majority from within while following its discipline. The best course is to split, in order to gain the freedom of action to apply the "correct line," which, carried out successfully, will show the others.

- The role of the international leadership is to "set the line" for all the sections, including the tactical aspects. "It is criminal" to allow the sections or young groups to develop through their own experience and their own errors. There is no time for that.

- When the class struggle intensifies in some country "aid" has to be sent "urgently"—consisting of a line, material resources and cadres. Not to do so is to shirk internationalism, and since the present leadership is not doing so it is "inept."

* * *

This Bolshevik Tendency logic has done a lot of damage to the real development of Trotskyism, especially in Latin America.

Our parties and their respective leaderships cannot develop if their maturation is stunted by Bolshevik Tendency paternalism which promotes an artificial growth and development, but which fails in the end; even more so if a balance sheet of the failure does not point out that the Bolshevik Tendency method is at fault, but rather a scapegoat—which, of course, is never Comrade Moreno.

Unfortunately our parties in Latin America, precisely because they are weak and inexperienced, are easy prey for the Bolshevik Tendency apparatus.

It would be incorrect to impose other cadres, other means, and another line to counteract Bolshevik Tendency colonialism; this would only be to fall into the methodology that we have to combat.

The road ahead is more difficult. We must resist, even though we are at a disadvantage, but we have the courage to do it.

Now that the danger of ultraleftist deviation has been overcome in Latin America;

Now that the two major international tendencies have been dissolved;

Now that Latin America is experiencing an upsurge that offers us magnificent opportunities for the development of Trotskyism;

Now, the main obstacle to this development are the negative features of the Bolshevik Tendency.

When I speak of negative aspects I am referring mainly to the colonialism and factionalism of the Bolshevik Tendency. The struggle against this takes place through the struggle for the unity of Trotskyism and against interventionism.

It is not a matter of excluding the comrades of the Bolshevik Tendency from our respective sections; it is a matter of teaching them how to live in the same party as those of us who are Trotskyists "despite" not belonging to the Bolshevik Tendency. In this sense I believe that the Mexican section has made a big advance.

The growing interrelation between Latin American Trotskyists, the interchange of experience, will help us to win the battle. We should not be sectarian toward the Bolshevik Tendency comrades. Let us not forget that among those who are today fighting against those harmful methods are some of us who were once the favorite sons of that current.

Peru 1961: A great upsurge of the peasant masses. Our group is heading up the process and learning to build itself through its own mistakes.

Then comes the "aid" from the current that is today the Bolshevik Tendency—with a line, leading cadres and material resources.

The initial "aid" and then the withdrawal of that "aid" later on, led to the destruction of the organization.

Scapegoats were found, myself included. At the request of Comrade Nahuel Moreno, I was "expelled" from the organization.

I didn't have to make a self-criticism, nor go through a period of reeducation, in order to get back into the party, because, unfortunately, the organization disappeared.

Peru 1978: A great upsurge of the masses. Our group proves to be "the outstanding force on the left" in the elections, learning to build itself through its own errors.

Then comes the "aid" from the Bolshevik Tendency, with a line, etc.

The rest of the story remains to be told. . .

Paris
July 14, 1978

Women's Caucuses Within a Revolutionary Organisation

Adopted by IMG National Conference

April 15-18, 1978

Introduction

This resolution was adopted by the 1978 IMG Conference (April 15-18, 1978). The vote was: 74 full delegates in favor, 30 full delegates against, 16 full delegates abstaining.

This resolution is a substantially amended version of the resolution submitted by the outgoing National Committee. The amendments accepted by the Conference were put to it by a tendency set up prior to the Conference. The vote of the outgoing National Committee on this final amended resolution was: 3 in favor, 16 against, 7 abstentions.

The original unamended National Committee resolution was not voted on by the Conference.

Preamble

The IMG is a combat organisation fighting to unite the working class and all oppressed in society to take state power and to achieve human liberation. For this we understand the necessity of organising as a Leninist democratic-centralist party.

Two Questions Then Concern Us Here

How best to aid the organisation's intervention into the class struggle and participation in the movements of the oppressed? How best to build up the collective strength of the IMG? Therefore our starting point in this discussion is the collective needs and development of the whole organisation. In starting from the needs of the whole organisation, are we in some sense minimising the needs of women comrades? In the same way that we have rejected notions of 'dual loyalty' (to the IMG or to the WLM [Women's Liberation Movement]) in the WLM or NAC [National Abortion Campaign], we also reject similar distinctions between members of the revolutionary organisation.

As revolutionary Marxists we argue that there is a unity of interests among all members of the organisation which is expressed in our commitment to the revolutionary programme. However, our programme must be more than a list of demands on a page: it must be our day-to-day intervention into the class struggle. The struggle against sexism within our own ranks is the counterpart of the struggle against sexism in the working class. We must fight to make the concept of unity of interests as meaningful as possible.

1. Sexism in society finds its reflection inside the IMG. It finds expression in a number of ways:

(1) The lack of consciousness in the IMG as to how and why sexism operates in its own ranks.

(2) A concept of cadre which can be interpreted as a stereotype of traditional male behaviour.

(3) Insufficient understanding of women's educational needs.

(4) A tradition of political discussion which encourages individual competitiveness and dismissiveness rather than collective dialogue.

(5) Lack of confidence of women comrades induced by

conditions within and without the organisation.

(6) A division of labour which creates a distinction between (mostly male) producers of theory, and the practical activists.

(7) Insufficient action to deal with the problems of childcare.

A discussion of these difficulties sheds light on many general problems of the development and integration of all comrades in the IMG—both men and women, e.g., educational development, methods of discussion and debate which generate confidence, etc.

For a revolutionary organisation to develop and synthesise the strengths, capacities, and experience of all its comrades—women and men—methods must be sought to overcome some of the problems—or at least begin this task. Thus the struggle against sexism is not exclusively an area of external intervention for a revolutionary organisation.

Clearly no revolutionary party can seek to eradicate sexism from its ranks until the conditions have been created in society as a whole to achieve this task, i.e., the conditions for liberation have been set by the overthrow of bourgeois power in society.

However, the revolutionary party must challenge sexism if it is to fulfill its political tasks.

Within a revolutionary organisation, there is an identity of interest between all its members—whatever their sex, race, or area of intervention. This unity of interest flows from the concern of a revolutionary organisation to collectively develop and struggle for a revolutionary programme based on the analysis and experiences of all layers of society.

Insofar as the unity of interests at a programmatic level is not developed at a practical level, it is essential for the whole organisation to fight against sexism at every level of its operation.

However, this synthesis of the theoretical and the practical gains of the Women's Liberation Movement with the revolutionary programme and the methods of organisation adequate to the understanding of women comrades' experiences and capacities, is the collective responsibility of the whole organisation.

This must be reflected in the concerns and discussions of the collective bodies of the organisation (branch and national leaderships, aggregates, national conferences) which must take responsibility to explore solutions to the problems of involvement and development of women comrades.

3. Through their direct experience, women comrades are in a good position to identify and understand the problems specific to women members of a revolutionary organisation. Through participation and debate in the WLM, many comrades have experiences to contribute to the organisation's discussions on methods of overcoming these problems.

In a situation where women comrades are not adequately integrated into a revolutionary organisation, discussions with other women comrades will aid women to find confidence and mutual support to explore and synthe-

sis their experiences and to highlight problems of sexism existing in the organisation. Discussion in the whole organisation on overcoming specific problems of sexism are enriched by the contributions emerging from these discussions of women comrades. Caucuses of women comrades are therefore an important element in the steps taken by the IMG as a whole to understand and adopt measures to develop the struggle against sexism within the IMG.

4. The functioning of women's caucuses is to make contributions to the collective development of the organisation as a whole.

The caucuses of women are therefore accountable to the collective structures of the whole organisation, which in turn has a responsibility to discuss seriously, and where there is agreement, take proposals and contributions emerging from caucus discussions.

5. This understanding of collective interests at the level of the programme between men and women within the revolutionary organisation distinguishes the operation of women's caucuses within a revolutionary organisation and the mass organisations. Whilst measures are necessary in a revolutionary organisation to check sexist practices, and whilst women's caucuses have a contribution in this, there is no need for women comrades to organize autonomously from the structures of a revolutionary organisation (i.e., in "self-governing" independent structures).

However in the labour movement we understand the need for autonomous independent forms of organisation as an essential aspect of a struggle for democratising that movement and, by challenging sexist ideology within the working class, forcing a struggle for women's liberation. Thus the autonomous organisation of women is essential in the mass organisations to ensure that the struggle on women's oppression is to proceed and the leadership of the traditional organisations is forced to take it up.

6. From this general framework we can derive guidelines for the operation of women's caucuses in a revolutionary organisation.

i) The meeting of women comrades in caucuses encourages the organisation as a whole to come to grips with the problems of sexism. Caucuses are not a solution in themselves to the problems facing women comrades.

They play an important role in tackling the problems referred to in the seven points in paragraph 4. An essential foundation for tackling sexism within a revolutionary organisation is a theoretical and political understanding by all its comrades of the oppression of women in all its forms—economic, social, sexual, ideological. The education of all comrades on these questions is essential to any attempts to challenge sexism in the daily actions of revolutionary militants.

ii) Women's caucuses should be convened in a way that facilitates the fullest discussions within the collective structures about their tasks and content. They should be convened in consultation with the relevant bodies. Reports back are the crucial way that discussion held in women's caucuses can be generalised throughout the organisation.

The national conference of the IMG must assert the need for women's caucuses. We would like to make the following concrete proposals about the organisation of women's caucuses, in order to provide a clear basis for discussion.

Women's caucuses should be called by women comrades in collaboration with branch leaderships as and when

necessary. There should be no 'secret caucuses'; women comrades have a responsibility to the organisation to announce when caucuses will be held and to ensure that all women in the branch are notified of their occurrence.

Timing: These caucuses should be timed as far as possible not to clash with other branch activities; on the other hand, branch leaderships should assist in ensuring that time is allocated for caucuses when requested by women members.

Conflicts between branch leaderships and women comrades which may arise over frequency of caucuses or any other issue connected with them should be referred to higher bodies (area leaderships, if necessary the NC); the Women's Commission should also be notified of any such disputes.

National Women's Caucuses: Coordinated by the Women's Commission, National Women's Caucuses should be called as and when necessary. Local women's caucuses and fractions working on the question of women's liberation should make requests to the Women's Commission for calling of the National Caucus, and this request should then be circulated to branches to assess demand.

National Caucuses should only rarely be needed if local caucuses function adequately. Their tasks should be to synthesise the discussions at the local level, and to feed this discussion back through the organisation. They will also assist in establishing greater cohesiveness and support among women comrades.

Leadership Women's Caucuses: These should be called by women on the NC/PC in collaboration with these bodies as and when necessary.

Conjunctural Caucuses: These should be called as and when necessary on particular issues, again in conjunction with the relevant bodies; for example, women comrades may find it necessary to hold a caucus at national schools, at events such as the Marxism Symposium etc., in order to help women comrades with problems of contributions, or to make suggestions to the organisers of such events about organisation, facilitating participation of women and so on.

Obviously all such general proposals are subject to the general financial constraints operating on branches and other bodies of the organisation.

Caucuses should make every effort to be accessible to all women members, not just those involved in the WLM. All caucuses have an absolute duty to make the substance and the proposals from their discussions available to the local and national leadership and to the organisation as a whole. The leadership of the organisation should have a positive attitude to women's caucuses and encourage women comrades to organise such meetings. Leading women comrades can play a particular role here especially if women comrades are experiencing problems in this regard.

Discussion within Women's Caucuses

1) Women's caucuses cannot be rigidly defined, partly because they will be experimental structures for some time to come. The authors of this resolution do not have sufficient knowledge of the specific problems facing women individually or in a particular area, to be able to outline and identify topics for discussion arising out of the needs of women involved and their role in the IMG.

2) The function of caucuses is not to seek a common basis among women comrades on general political issues. Any discussion arising on such issues should be carried out in the existing structures of the IMG, although caucuses may make suggestions to branches, etc., about the conduct of such discussions and the role of women comrades within them.

3) Women's caucuses should not be used to prepare contributions to the external work of the organisation.

4) Women's caucuses should not substitute for general discussion within the organisation about women's liberation and male chauvinism, although they will obviously make an important contribution to such discussion and help where necessary to initiate them and focus on specific problems facing women comrades. They should assist, but not substitute for, the education of women and men comrades in the IMG. Neither should they substitute for the involvement of women comrades in the WLM.

5) Women's caucuses are not legislative or executive: they are *advisory*. They have no independent powers to decide anything about the external work or line of the IMG. They should exist to recommend changes in the practice of the IMG on sexism in the IMG. They are also voluntary bodies and they are unelected. As such they are unlike any other body inside the IMG.

Our experience of the problems of different branches and sections of the IMG suggests that it is very difficult to state *in advance* exactly the type of discussion needed in every particular circumstance but we suggest the following broad outlines for caucus discussion, pending precise definitions which can only be made after full discussion.

Consciousness raising: Discussion of relevant personal problems; discussions of male chauvinism. Identification with the needs of women comrades with respect to *education*. Needs of women comrades in relation to the *leadership*; examining of the role of the leadership and identifying areas where women need specific help and support from the leadership, or particular types of action to be taken. Problems of the role of *women comrades in the leadership*. Help in integrating new women comrades into the organisation; discussions of recruitment and relationships to women contacts. We expect initial discussion in women's caucuses to concentrate on problems women comrades find difficult or impossible to discuss in the presence of men: political inadequacy, insecurity, male chauvinism, education, conflict between personal and political life, children, marriage relationships, political solidarity.

For these particular reasons (i.e., women need caucuses to identify the problems of sexism) branch or fraction leaderships should not be entitled to the extra authority of determining agendas before the problems of sexism have been identified by women comrades themselves. Reports back will be the arena where a positive dialogue between all comrades, male and female alike, can occur.

The debate about the distinction between 'personal' and 'political' matters has just begun, and will continue after the conference. We would like to point out that, although we recognise that the revolutionary organisation should

not take positions on many questions regarded as personal, it may yet be essential to discuss and analyze them within the organisation. However we are opposed to any conception of caucuses as a basis for launching personal attacks upon, or dictating to, individual comrades. Consciousness of oppression is a *collective* matter.

The incoming Women's Commission should make recommendations to the national committee about a reformed educational programme, nationally and in the branches. This would obviously concentrate on the questions of the needs of women comrades and style of discussion. Local caucuses, branches, fractions, could send suggestions to the Commission on this.

The Women's Commission should also request that the leadership open a discussion on the whole question of childcare. An issue that is in no way the responsibility of women's caucuses nor the Women's Commission to solve; unfortunately it is the case that women in the organisation have to initiate the discussion on this question.

Sensitivity to comrades' individual and personal situation (e.g., personal relationships, responsibilities for children) in the structuring of comrades' work and the demands placed on them, will be assisted by the contribution of women's caucuses.

The questions raised by the debate and experiences of the WLM must be evaluated and integrated into the *programme* of the revolutionary organisation. This programmatic development, and the intervention in the class struggle that flows from it, are the responsibility of the bodies which collectively develop the programme and activities of the organisation. The women comrades active in the WLM will make their contribution to this evaluation and integration particularly through the discussions of the WLM fraction, but also through the other structures set up to evaluate external areas of intervention (branch and national leaderships, commissions, fractions).

The experience of the WLM will also be reflected in the contributions women comrades make in the discussion of sexism in the organisation, both in the women's caucuses and in the collective structures. In this way experiences of the WLM can be reflected in changes made in the practice of the organisation and will also enable women comrades to participate more fully in the organisation.

Women comrades have an enormous potential contribution to make to the life and politics of the organisation. This potential is still far from being realised, despite certain advances in theory and practice made by the IMG over the past few years. Only the establishment of women's caucuses will help to realise this principle. At least, we should free ourselves from all prejudice about this issue, and try to investigate the various positions and options open to the IMG as frankly and as carefully as possible. The aim is not to ghettoise women's issues and problems, but to make them the property of the IMG as a whole, and its concern. Women's caucuses will help to stimulate a more outgoing approach by women comrades rather than a concentration among themselves on informal discussion and unresolved conflicts.

Contribution on the Specific Oppression of Women in Latin America, Their Struggles, and the Orientation of the Fourth International

By the Women's Commission of the PRT,
Mexican Section of the Fourth International
May 1978

Introduction

The sections of the Fourth International, like the centrists and reformists, have gotten off to a slow start in adopting a consistent policy toward women's liberation. This is due to several factors.

1. The absence of a massive radicalization among women in Latin America with regard to their specific oppression.

2. The strength of male-chauvinist ideology in Latin America is reflected within the sections themselves, and this has delayed even more examination and concern with this question by the sections and their leaderships.

Despite this, the sections of the Fourth International are the political organizations that are best equipped to begin carrying out work among the women of this continent because:

a. In spite of their slowness on this question, they are the most conscious vanguard on the continent.

b. They are part of an international that can transmit experiences on a world scale through discussion and exchanging ideas. The Fourth International puts forward a strategy of building an independent women's movement, a fact that tends to provide an impetus for concretizing this strategy at the level of the national sections.

In spite of this, to successfully develop our intervention we need a specific analysis of the oppression of women in Latin America, since it is impossible to apply the analysis of all the elements that make up this oppression in the colonial and semicolonial countries. Hence the need for this contribution to the international discussion.

Considering that the oppression of women existed prior to capitalism, that it is not a phenomenon that is peculiar to capitalism, but rather that it took on special characteristics with the development of the mode of production that is now dominant in the world, and given the generally acceptable analysis that the forms and manifestations of women's oppression are to be found in the institution of the family, we feel it is necessary to pay special attention to that institution in our analysis. Moreover, we think it is in the family that the key can be found to the special nature of women's oppression, in this case to the oppression of Latin American women, to the manifestations of their struggles, and thus to the forms that intervention by revolutionary Marxists should take in order to develop the organization and mobilization of women.

I. The specific characteristics of the oppression of women in Latin America.

II. Women's struggles and movements in Latin America.

III. What should the Fourth International's orientation be?

I. THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

A. General Framework

It is impossible to understand any aspect of Latin American reality without understanding that the continent has not had a linear economic, political, social, and cultural development. It is deeply marked by the combination of various types of productive relations, most especially those brought on by the European conquest of the continent, and the sudden, forced, and bloody integration into the world market that this led to. Although the dominant mode of production in Latin America today is capitalist, capitalism has not created a homogeneous Latin American economy. The relationship of dependency imposed by the imperialist countries on the countries of the subcontinent make the rise of a robust capitalism, marked by highly developed capitalist relations of production, impossible.

The conclusion is obvious. In the countries of Latin America, what exists is underindustrialization, growing economic, political, and cultural dependence on imperialism, and broad agrarian and marginal sectors without any prospects of their own, as well as a "national" bourgeoisie completely beholden to imperialist capital and its policies, and thus incapable of meeting the growing economic, social, and cultural demands of the population.

This means that the crises of the capitalist system have a profound effect on Latin American societies. In the countryside there is a crisis brought on by the partial implementation of capitalist relations of production in agricultural labor, and the corresponding increase in the productivity of unskilled labor. At the same time the peasant masses find it impossible to go on sustaining themselves with subsistence agriculture on family plots of land owing to the growing integration of agriculture into the capitalist market.

These developments are causing massive unemployment in agriculture, and the migration of thousands and millions of peasants to the cities in search of jobs. The level of industrialization does not offer the possibility of providing jobs to all who need them, leaving a 25% rate of unemployment and underemployment (according to CEPAL figures) among the active population. These figures obviously do not include women who need to work but have never been able to.

This situation is chronic and cumulative: the same CEPAL report points out that without a future growth rate of at least 6.5% annually in the gross national product (which represents 50% more than the rate in 1970), unem-

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ployment will inevitably rise, both absolutely and relatively (Gunder Frank, *Lumpenburguesía: lumpendesarrollo*, 1971).

The same worldwide crisis is leading to an intensification of the structural dependency of the Latin American economies, which grow continually more indebted to worldwide private and public financial institutions, such as the IMF, the World Bank, Eximbank, etc. Production and the state's policy toward the masses are increasingly tied to the demands of imperialism, which take the form of "suggestions" made by these institutions.

In earlier years, especially during and immediately after the Second World War, many populist governments arose that carried out their policies using their close links with the mass organizations. However, under conditions of a generalized crisis and greater dependency, the national and international bourgeoisies must increasingly resort to military dictatorships to "resolve" the crisis, using force to impose the superexploitation of the work force and tight control over the peasant masses.

Added to this economic and political dependence is the penetration of imperialism at the ideological and cultural level. The values of the imperialist bourgeoisie, propagated especially by the schools and the communications media, confront and encompass the traditional values that come from archaic modes of production and the Catholic Church.

For the masses, this situation means an intensification of oppression and class exploitation on all levels. The need for control on the part of the state, for example, leads to measures such as forced sterilization, which is practiced on a massive scale in Chile, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, etc., and to other measures such as the restriction or elimination of most basic civil rights such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

However, traditional social institutions and values still retain enormous influence in Latin American society. This is most particularly reflected in the importance of the Catholic Church, in the ideology manipulated by the ruling classes, especially male-chauvinist ideology, in the strong vestiges of social relations corresponding to archaic modes of production, and in the persistence of these relations in the face of attempts to introduce new norms.

In this sense, the family, as a crucial social institution for our analysis of the character of the oppression and forms of radicalization of women, is central to our analysis.

B. The Family in Latin America

The family in Latin America is patriarchal and oppressive, for both the women and the other members, in all the significant cultures, including those that are based on archaic communal relations of production. Nonetheless, it is necessary to examine the family's development, the function it plays for the individual, and its internal organization, if we are to understand the historical and potential forms of participation and the present incipient radicalization of women.

In archaic modes of production, the family represents the basic unit of production. But this is not the family restricted to the mother, father and children. Rather it is a family that, given the needs of agricultural labor, includes brothers and sisters, sons and daughters-in-law, uncles and aunts, and their children. In this way, the family itself

represents a small community, gathered around a patriarch who is usually the oldest active male.

Despite the often rigid distribution of roles within this grouping, which generally puts women in the lower rungs in the hierarchy, both in formal and real decision-making, women are integrated into the productive activity of the community and are necessary for its survival.

There is a distribution of the necessary tasks, despite the more or less sharply defined division of labor along sex lines: the women and the young girls take part in the work of sowing, in the harvest, the care of animals and of the garden, and develop the primitive artisanry for the manufacture of necessary articles such as clothes, shoes, utensils, furniture, etc.

Obviously, at the same time that they are carrying out these productive tasks, the women are also responsible for preparing food, caring for the children, and cleaning the home. But this domestic work has a very primitive character among the Latin American peasants, primitive and extremely burdensome.

Under the conditions of life of the peasantry, preparing food means beans and rice and so forth. This is a process that requires interminable hours of work. The care of children and cleaning the home are equally burdensome. When all this is added to more or less regular work in the family plot, women commonly have a working day of 18-20 hours, seven days a week, from the time they are very young.

However, the life of the peasant man is no less extreme, despite his acknowledged status as the pivot of the family. The hardship of peasant life extends to all members of the family, and it is very difficult for a woman to recognize the differences between her condition and that of the man in terms of work, since both lead an exhausting existence.

Today the family still exists as the unit of production in the countryside in Latin America, in some places in a complete form. Nonetheless, it is increasingly affected by the impossibility of continuing to subsist in this way. This is due to the ever greater concentration of land and the lack of a far-reaching agrarian reform, and to the penetration of the market into the countryside, which makes the exchange of use values impossible and drives forward the production of commodities. The small family plot cannot compete with this production and thus the peasants have to seek other, supplementary means of gaining their livelihood.

Faced with this necessity, the peasant family sends members—first and foremost the men—to work for wages in the countryside, leaving the women in charge of the family plot where subsistence farming is still carried out.

In this form, the family remains the basic unit of production, but now the women have greater responsibilities. Here, the women still have a role in the production process. However, as in the communities where the family stays together the whole year around, her participation is not seen as a central one, but as part of the collective effort of the family to gain its subsistence. This is not the type of role in the productive process that would lead to a consciousness of the individual and of his or her independence within the collective body. Instead it is seen as the fight of the entire family for its survival, in which the individual is of little importance, and where their potential for development is totally frustrated by their abject poverty.

In some cases, all the members of the family work for wages in the fields of the large plantations. However, as is

the case in Brazil, there are forms of employment where the individual is hired, and other forms where the entire family is hired as a unit. Women normally come under the second type of relations. That is to say, the woman often does not receive the wages for her labor, which is received by her father or husband on her behalf.

In cases of extreme necessity, which appear more and more often, families send some of their members to the cities to seek employment. In this case, they still maintain economic ties with their relatives in the countryside. They send money if they find work, and look for employment possibilities for other members of the family, including parents, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts, etc.

Thus the extended family continues to exist, even though it is no longer a closed unit of production, which was its former basis for existence. Its continued existence is due to the precariousness of life in the city as well as in the countryside, and the necessity of maintaining the family as the only social institution that is capable of providing a certain minimum of security.

Faced with the lack of employment, with the lack of state services such as unemployment benefits or easily accessible education, the family remains the necessary framework for the individual in the search for survival.

However, the crisis existing in the countryside, due to the increasing inroads being made by the market economy, is not solved for the peasants by migration to the cities. The majority of the millions of people who are attracted to the cities do not find any permanent work, do not become part of the stable working class: but go to live in shanty towns as semiproletarians, subject to strong pressures towards lumpenization. In these cases, the family also retains its characteristics as a circle of solidarity, of defense against the vicissitudes of city life, the lack of steady employment and the lack of the possibility to become integrated into the productive workforce.

In these cases, the extended family suffers important internal deformations, without being eliminated altogether. That is, the woman or even the children may become the economic axis of the family, its principal support. This occurs when, due to the pattern of industrialization in the country, only the woman can find employment in a particular region. This is the case in the northern frontier cities of Mexico, where in some cases the manufacturing workforce is composed 80% of women, given the characteristics of the factories called *maquiladoras* [light-assembly plants].

This is also the case with women who obtain employment as servants, when their husband cannot find work, or those who work in stores and markets at wages that, although desperately low, are still the principal support of the family. In many cases, when the parents cannot find work, it is the labor of the children that provides the only, miserable income for the entire family.

However, despite these changes from the classical mode of the patriarchal family and the changes in attitude and interpersonal relations that they imply, the family is not transformed into the bourgeois model of the family. That is to say, the extended family is subjected to disintegrating tendencies, without the possibility of moving towards its historical transcendence. Due to the prevailing conditions of misery, the extended family has no possibilities of restricting its membership to the father, mother and children.

Within the working class itself, the family fulfills similar functions, since the wages of the man are usually not enough to support all its members. The male worker in Latin America is subject to economic superexploitation. If the woman cannot obtain regular employment, in order to survive she must contribute to the family income by selling food, articles of clothing, and carrying out other occasional or regular work, in addition to doing the housework and handicraft labor such as making the family clothes.

In some layers of the working class, those most affected by the dominant ideology, and in the case of the better-paid layers in the more industrialized countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, women do not contribute to the family income, even though the man's wages are inadequate. This is due to the traditional norm that says it "is not proper for women." However, with the sharpening of the crisis, it is becoming less possible to adhere to this norm.

In general, women are not involved in social production to the degree that they are in the advanced capitalist countries since it is not possible to employ all the available workers, not even the men. Thus the proletarian woman faces extremely grave economic problems every day, and the first resistance she carries out is against these problems, which are the most pressing for her. For individuals in the working class, their first conception of security is not an organized working class, but a united and protected family.

One of the most important deformations that the family suffers as far as women and their condition is concerned is the massive increase in the numbers of abandoned mothers. This is attributable to the economic instability, the social decomposition that this provokes, and especially the macho ideology. This ideology assigns all responsibility for caring for the children to the woman, and leads the father to see the family as a burden on him, given the ideal that he be the principal support for it, and it leads to a deep disdain for the needs of women in general.

When this burden is too great to bear, when he can no longer fulfill this responsibility—something that occurs frequently under the present economic conditions—the father, who is not tied as closely to the children as the mother is, seeks to escape his failure, rejecting all responsibility and conflict. For this reason, there is a very large number of single mothers, whether married or members of "free unions."

In conclusion, we can say that under these conditions, the family suffers strong pressures towards disintegration. But it is even less able to adopt the bourgeois model than is the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries. Nonetheless, because individuals need things that neither the dependent economy nor its state can provide—such as medical services, unemployment benefits, easy access to food-preparation services, clothing, child care, or even public services like water, light, gas, and paved streets—they must maintain the family ties to survive.

In this respect there is a difference between the function of the family among the peasantry and proletariat in the underdeveloped countries and in the developed countries.

Within this framework, women face an extremely oppressive situation. Their dual oppression manifests itself in an acute form that is inconceivable to most women in the advanced countries. The woman's perception of her oppression is first and foremost connected with poverty

itself, with the daily struggle to feed and clothe herself and others in the family.

The family and the situation of women is qualitatively different between the working masses on the one hand and the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie on the other.

Bourgeois families follow the classical forms of the bourgeois organization, since their economic situation allows greater stability and less emphasis on pure survival. However, due to the strength of the macho ideology in Latin America, this family retains many of the features of iron control over its members. It is also affected to some extent by the economic situation, which is reflected in the fact that the children cannot leave home as easily as can youth in the advanced capitalist countries.

It is especially difficult for women to leave home, due to the influence of machismo. It is common to find women who are working, who could lead an independent existence economically, but who are still in the paternal home under the control of the parents at the age of 25 or 28 years. However, the principal factor here is not economics, but ideology.

There is one important fact that distinguishes the situation of petty-bourgeois women in Latin America from those in the advanced countries: the availability of thousands of women ready to work as salaried domestics. This means that the petty-bourgeois woman suffers oppression mainly in a social and ideological form.

Despite the great differences in the situation faced by peasant and proletarian women on the one hand, and those of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie on the other, there is a common aspect to the life of all women in Latin America, due to the role that the family plays for these different social classes. They live in a society where machismo is deeply imbedded, is a part of the dominant ideology that permeates every class of society.

C. The Oppressive Ideology: Machismo

Today machismo is used as a synonym for sexism by many women in the liberation movements around the world. However, this can tend to obscure an important fact for our analysis: machismo is a very specific form of sexism. It is the sexism peculiar to the Latin societies, including Spain, Italy, and above all the countries of Latin America.

To understand the ideological oppression of Latin American women, we must analyze precisely the specific traits of this machismo, comparing it with the sexism that exists in the advanced capitalist countries like the United States, England, France, Germany, etc., (the advanced countries of the West, in this case excluding Japan, which has its own specific traits).

Here, parenthetically, we can point out a debate that underlies these definitions. Is sexism the special form that the ideological oppression of women takes under capitalism, or does this word really describe the more general oppression that women as women have suffered in all class societies, in all societies where private ownership of the means of production exists? For the purposes of this document, we prefer to use the term sexism to define the dominant ideology of all patriarchal societies, an ideology that justifies and perpetuates the oppression of women.

Two basic concepts provide the fundamental underpinning of this ideology. First, that women are congenitally and biologically inferior to men, and second, that women

are creatures whose purpose in life is to be a mother, to reproduce the human race.

All other aspects of the ideological oppression of women flow from these two conceptions: that women are things, the private property of men; that women must be faithful to a single man; that women are weak beings, incapable of leading an independent life in any way.

Latin American machismo is an especially acute, extreme, and specific form of sexism. Although sexism is very strong in the more developed capitalist countries, it is not expressed with the brutality and barbarity that is widely found in Latin America.

Under the pressure of the women's movement in recent years, sexism often expresses itself in relatively sophisticated and toned down forms in the advanced capitalist countries. And the massive entry of women into the workforce, with the ideological modifications that this necessarily requires, opens the door to a certain bourgeois liberalism.

In Latin America however, in spite of the fact that there has also been a significant increase in the number of women who participate in the workforce during the last 30 or 40 years, by 1973 the percentage had not exceeded 13.1% in South America and 14.2% in Central America. These national economies are not able to incorporate women into industry and services in the same way that they are in the advanced capitalist countries. Hence there is no need for the bourgeoisie in most of these countries to modify their ideology regarding women in any substantial way.

Beginning with education, both in the family and in school, young women are separated and their social and individual roles are clearly delineated. Their abilities are totally scorned in all aspects except where they conform to socially acceptable behavior.

This macho ideology includes some extremely backward aspects. The myth of virginity among women is taken to an extreme degree, deeply influenced by the Catholic Church. Women must at all costs be virgins when they are married.

In many Indian communities, the practice of showing the (supposedly) bloody sheets to the guests at the wedding still persists. In cases where an Indian woman is not a virgin when she marries, the groom has the right to publicly disavow her. While this archaic custom has disappeared in the cities, its ideological counterpart remains and expresses itself in the extreme preoccupation of both women and men with the virginity of women.

At the same time, married women are rigidly constrained to be faithful to their husbands. There are many women who are locked in the house when their husbands leave, leaving them prisoners in case of an accident or fire. This extreme method of control is used in all classes of society, including the bourgeoisie, where one finds cases of women who, in all their years of marriage, have left their houses only to give birth (despite the fact that they may well have a university education).

In general, women do not have the right to even speak with men who are not their husbands, much less to dance with them at a social gathering. It is ironic that these practices are part of the mechanism needed to protect and maintain the myth of male virility, an ideal that is based on the idea that a man can and must have various women, have mistresses by the score, and be the most violent and aggressive in order to survive. Here, for most of the population, the word "macho" is a symbol of pride for

men, and in no way is it seen as an insult. For many women, it is a mark of pride to "have a macho man."

The control exercised over women by their husbands or close male relatives is accompanied by the repressive methods needed to make it work: that is to say, it is common for Latin American women to be beaten, often daily. It is very unusual for a neighbor to intervene to prevent a man from beating his wife, since it is felt that the man is simply exercising his "natural" right.

One aspect of Latin American machismo that we cannot let pass is the extreme veneration of the mother figure, which, contrary to first appearances, does not relieve the oppression but actually reinforces it. In the advanced western capitalist countries, it is true that women are seen simply as procreators of the human species, not as individual human beings. However, this conception takes an extreme form in Latin American reality, sometimes exalting the mother to the level of the saints and the Virgin Mary.

Despite all the oppression to which the mother is subjected, she is considered the center and pivot of the universe of the children. This is emphasized by the extraordinary affection of the mother for her sons, and the stereotype impression of denial and suffering that is considered the norm of her behavior.

Today in Latin America, especially in the urban sectors of the population, we see the increasing influence of imperialism. The cultural oppression of women now also includes many factors introduced by the mass media, such as magazines, television and radio, all of which are relatively new phenomena.

The ideals of beauty (definitely European), compulsive and conspicuous consumption, and the internalization of the values presented by these media are being rapidly incorporated into daily life in Latin America, even though they are relatively new phenomena for the masses of people.

But at the same time this conflicts with the reality of life for broad layers of women in Latin America, who have no perspective of being able to dress well, of meeting standards of Cosmopolitan-style beauty (which tries to impose norms of beauty that are totally foreign to the physical features of women of this continent—the myth of the tall and slim blonde), of becoming educated and cultured, when their main preoccupation is with daily food, a roof for their family, with bare survival. Nonetheless, this imperialist penetration remains a source of new contradictions in the life of women.

The Catholic Church is a fundamental factor that sustains all the traditional conceptions of women. At the time of the conquest, the Spanish church was the church of the Inquisition, with its attitude of total intolerance and its rigid imposition of norms. While the church is still an extremely rigid and doctrinaire authority, it was even more so in the sixteenth century, and then it held even greater political power.

This institution, taken by itself, with its economic, political, and social power, is the biggest factor in the maintenance of the macho ideology. Even though the church has undergone some transformations and crises, notably in some of its sections in Latin America that are struggling against the deplorable conditions of life of the oppressed classes, this phenomenon is relatively recent. Its structure and ideology, its moral, political, and social demands remain at root profoundly reactionary, especially

in relation to women and the family.

This institution has taken very few progressive steps since the days of the Inquisition, and in general it has allied itself with the most retrogressive forces in Latin American society.

The Catholic Church has enormous political, as well as social and cultural weight in Latin America. In Argentina, Catholicism is the official religion; in Colombia, the church holds veto power over governmental decisions; in Mexico and Uruguay, even though there has been a sharp division between church and state, the church's social power is enormous, influencing not only the decisions of the state (in spite of specific conflicts that may arise), but also having vast influence over huge sectors of the population.

One of the reasons why the church still has this extraordinary power is that during the colonial period the Spanish state realized that it was necessary to dominate the population ideologically, and used the Catholic religion as its main weapon in this task, giving it free rein for the subjugation and incorporation of the indigenous and mestizo population.

This was accomplished to a large degree, and this has led today to the influence that the church has among the peasants.

The economic underdevelopment and the abject poverty suffered by the Latin American people constitutes another factor that contributes to the reproduction of the macho ideology. Because the Latin American man is highly exploited, alienated, repressed, often without any possibilities for an organized response to his class situation, the only power he still retains is the power that he exercises in the home, the power over the lives of his wife, his sisters, and his children.

Marx and Engels saw this phenomenon even among the European proletariat in the past century, but they never idealized the working class as the reformist parties do. These reformist parties say that what really exists within the proletarian family is a union of misery between two equally oppressed and exploited beings.

No! Marx and Engels always recognized the alienated forms taken by the relations within the family, the oppressive relationship of the man against the woman, which is a reflection of the structure of the capitalist system, and a support for this system. The greater the misery of the working class and the greater the economic, social, and cultural backwardness of the peasantry, the more barbaric is the specific oppression of women in the society.

In Latin America, we cannot forget this reality; it is seen in the differences between one country and another, depending on their degree of industrialization, and between one class and another, depending on their degree of superexploitation and backwardness.

One important aspect of the effect of machismo among women is their acceptance and deep internalization of it. The vast majority of Latin American women accept and in some form even defend the macho ideology. They transmit it to their children, especially to the girls, and take charge of seeing that its norms are strictly upheld among the youth.

This follows the pattern of reproduction of ideology that occurs in every class society, but here it is heightened due to the family structure and the perspectives and functions of women within the family. Young girls are conditioned

in the whole mystique of what it means to be a woman: submission, weakness, timidity, etc.

While young, these women continue to believe to a greater or lesser extent that these norms represent the role that best leads to the self-fulfillment that everyone seeks. As a married woman, as a mother, she faces the poverty, oppression, frustration, and concerns that characterize the life of women in the dependent capitalist countries.

It is this condition that permits this ideology to be transmitted easily by these very women described above. Under this structure older women are more likely to express their frustrations in the form of "vengeance," transmitting this same ideology to their daughters, controlling their daughters-in-law and granddaughters.

While in the advanced countries the same degree of control of one generation by another does not exist due to the atomization of the family, women also have another avenue of escape (despite its limitations): entering the workforce. In Latin America, however, the state of the economy does not allow women access to paid employment, and the family situation provides a perfect arena for the necessary affirmation of their lives.

The objective and subjective conditions faced by women are so oppressive that the very mechanism they must adopt for survival necessarily includes the affirmation and justification of a life of repression, frustration, pain, and neurosis. For them, "acceptance" means life and "rebellion" means death.

D. The Economic Exploitation of Latin American Women

The economic exploitation of Latin American women can be analyzed by beginning with an examination of the forms and periods in which women entered the paid workforce. This, in turn, is related to the phases of development of the capitalist mode of production in Latin America in general.

Briefly, over the past century one can point to three periods of economic development of the productive sectors where capitalist relations of production have prevailed. First, the development of isolated sectors of the economy: the extraction of minerals (silver, coal, and iron in Mexico; tin in Bolivia and Peru; and copper in Chile); the exploitation of petroleum (Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela); the development of the economic infrastructure with the construction of highways, railways, and ports (especially in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile); and the beginning of large-scale textile industry (Chile, Mexico, Colombia).

In this period, women began to participate in social and organized production mainly in the textile industry, but the number of women working for wages still remained low. Despite this, women participated actively in the first strikes in this industry, both as workers and as people living in the textile towns.

The second phase of development, called the "model of import substitution," began in the 1930s with the great world depression, and came to dominate Latin American international and national economic relations from the Second World War. This phase marked the development of consumer goods industries (clothing and food), and involved almost all the Latin American countries, from the southern cone to Mexico, including Central America and the Caribbean. Since the industries that grew up in this

phase of development used mainly unskilled labor, women were employed in massive numbers.

With the arrival of the multinationals in Latin America, the third phase of development began in some countries, the phase of semi-industrialization (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and to a lesser extent, Chile). Many countries, such as Ecuador, all of Central America, the Caribbean, Paraguay, etc., have remained stuck in the second phase, without developing the industries characteristic of semi-industrialization.

Semi-industrialization involves the creation of the automotive, petrochemical, electronic, chemical-pharmaceutical, and canned foods industries, as well as some capital goods industries. At the same time, there is an enormous development of the service sector, both to make possible this industrial production, and to provide the internal market necessary for these products. Hence this semi-industrialization is naturally accompanied by the creation of a new proletariat and sectors of wage laborers. Women's participation in production jobs is almost exclusively limited to the chemical-pharmaceutical industry—which means that the majority of this new proletariat is male. However, there is a massive influx of women into the service sector, both public and private.

This general panorama gives us a framework for examining the economic exploitation of women, keeping in mind that their economic activity is not always reflected in the figures, not only for peasant women, but also for women in the cities. The large mass of women, those married to workers, those who are part of the enormous semiproletariat concentrated in the large cities (particularly in the semi-industrialized countries), and even segments of the petty bourgeoisie, contribute to the family income.

In the countries that have not undergone a process of semi-industrialization, agricultural labor plays a fundamental role in the economy. In these countries, some of which are still one-crop exporters (Guatemala, for example), women find work mainly in the countryside. Since this is not paid labor in the majority of cases, it is not reflected in the statistics. However, the relations that are found in the countryside range from work carried out in communities whose only contact with the capitalist market is through intermediaries (and where at times there is not even an exchange of money but rather bartering), to production on small plots, to plantations where the system of peonage still operates (Colombia, certain parts of Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Central America, etc.). This means that cultivation of the land takes place within an extremely varied range of productive relations, and therefore the situation of peasant women takes on extremely diverse forms. (Here the contributions of comrades from the different sections in Latin America are needed to provide a much richer analysis.)

However, we should note that there is a growing tendency to incorporate the agricultural economy into the capitalist market, and that for women this means greater exploitation, and the tendency for them to have contact with the outside world, both through the mass communications media, and through their direct, personal contact with capitalist production relations.

In these "intermediate" countries, the figures on the proportion of women that are economically active vis-à-vis the total female population is very low. According to United Nations figures for 1976, in Nicaragua 11.5% of the

women have paid jobs; in Peru, 11.8%; in Costa Rica, 12.1%; in Guatemala, 8.4%; in Ecuador, 9.8%. Women in these same countries make up the following percentages of the total economically active population: Nicaragua, 21.85%; Peru, 20.67%; Costa Rica, 19.3%; Guatemala, 14.03%; and Ecuador, 16.94%.

Due to the nature of the wage labor that these women carry out—in the textile industry, the garment industry, the preparation and sale of foodstuffs, and in the service sector—the wages of these women are generally lower than those of men.

This is due not only to the fact that women are paid less for the same work, a common practice despite the fact that some countries have legislation that stipulates that there must be equal pay for equal work, but also because these industries use women's labor precisely because it is cheaper, less skilled, etc.

In Colombia, for example, according to a study by CEPAL, in 1970, 47% of women working for wages received "low wages," while only 38% of the men working for wages fell into this category. In Chile, the relation was 27% of the women against 7% of the men outside of agriculture in 1968; while in Panama in 1972 it was 34% of the women and only 6% of the men in the low-income category.

One phenomenon that contributes to this fact is that a disproportionate part of the female urban economically active population work as domestics in household labor. For example, in Colombia it was 45% and in Peru 31% in 1976. This is due to the fact that the mass of women migrating from the countryside and seeking employment have little or no training, and yet find it harder and harder to survive in the rural areas. They find employment in the cities as domestic servants because of the lack of modern household services such as those that exist in the advanced capitalist countries.

In the cities servants live in the worst conditions of exploitation. Generally, they have a very low level of education, in many cases they are illiterate; they work without fixed hours, at the whim of the employer; they are subject to sexual pressures from the employer, etc.

Their situation is aggravated by the fact that they live in isolation, without much contact with other workers, other women, or with society in general, except through the mass communication media. Furthermore, the statistics, as in the case of the underemployment of housewives, often conceal the real situation since in many cases servants are not paid a regular wage, but rather get room and board (especially in the case of servants who work in the homes of workers or the well-to-do peasantry).

The same situation that leads to the massive employment of women as servants, also contributes to the fact that thousands and millions of women make their living through prostitution. The fact that in Panama the state has seen to the unionization of prostitutes testifies to the massive level that prostitution has reached in some countries due to the lack of jobs.

In the semi-industrialized countries, the percentages of women in the economically active population in relation to the total female population are higher: in 1976—Argentina, 19.4%; Brazil, 23.6%; Uruguay, 19.3%; Venezuela, 17.3%; Mexico, 12%. The percentage of women in the total economically active population is also higher. In 1976 the percentages were: Mexico, 21.57%; Argentina, 25.4%; Brazil, 30.9%; and Venezuela, 27.81%. This is basically due

to the development of consumer goods manufacturing, the corresponding development of the service sector and the state bureaucracy.

The majority of the women in these countries are employed in the service sector and in retail trade, which develops along with the new industries. However, since the Second World War and the process of economic development through import substitution, there has been a marked increase in their participation in industry, because of the type of manufacture that has been developed and the ease of finding cheap and unskilled female labor.

Industries where women are the main workforce include textiles, even though hit by the closing of many plants since the economic crisis of the 1970s; garment manufacturing; the preparation and sale of foodstuffs; and—among the new industries—the manufacture of electronic and chemical-pharmaceutical products.

While in the semi-industrialized countries there has been an increase in the application of modern technology in the countryside, even in the countries where this has not taken place, peasant women are being rocked by the crisis in agriculture. Because of the crisis in the countryside women are increasingly forced into the masses of unemployed. Either they have to find work as agricultural day laborers (with exceptions as in Brazil, for example, where they do not always receive wages as an individual, but as part of the family), or they migrate to the cities in search of the work that the urban centers, with their large industrial concentrations, seem to offer.

This also leads to unemployment and underemployment, and to a large number of women working as servants. In Brazil, servants were 36% of the urban female economically active population in 1976; in Chile 36%; and in Mexico 20%.

In these countries we also see that prostitution is a phenomenon that exists on a massive scale in the cities due to the lack of available jobs. For example, studies done in the Mexican cities on the U.S. border, where the principal industries are the *maquiladoras* that employ mainly women, show that when there are fewer openings in the factories, the level of prostitution increases.

2.* The Effects of the Situation on Working Women

Due to the characteristics of the industries and other sectors where women are employed in Latin America, women suffer inequality with respect to men both in terms of the wages and the benefits they receive. For example, health services in many countries are not available for the spouses of working women (the case of Mexico); women are not considered heads of the family in many cases where this classification brings with it benefits and/or rights (such as the right to land in some agrarian reforms); and even when some countries do include the right to pregnancy leave from work in their laws, in practice this right is totally ignored and nonexistent.

The nature of the jobs women hold also makes their unionization much more difficult, given that large numbers of women work in isolation (domestic workers; work done in the home, such as garment manufacturing; in small trade) or in industries where they are hired for

*Point 1 was not specified in Spanish-language original—Translator.

very short periods of time and where the workers change factories very often (the *maquiladoras* of northern Mexico).

Besides this factor, the unionization of women is made difficult by the way in which they themselves see their employment. First, they are completely aware that in the majority of cases their labor is unskilled, and that they can be replaced easily if they strike or organize a union. Secondly, the training they receive in the family and in society in general leads them to see their life and activity revolving around the family life. Added to this is the limited experience and the lack of union traditions in this sector, and the fact that the right of women to organize is especially violated.

In terms of hiring, selection, promotion, and placement, women workers are discriminated against by the bosses, whether public or private, with the exception of those sectors that employ mainly women. As in the advanced capitalist countries, obviously, when it is a question of choosing between a woman and a man for a job, of deciding who will get a promotion, or deciding who will fill a specific post in some company, the norm is to favor the man. In this way the bosses not only express their ideological preference for men, but also save the expenses related to the bearing and raising of children.

The following situation follows from this: even in those countries that have legislation protecting the rights of working mothers, the bosses seek ways to avoid complying with the laws. For example, when a worker becomes pregnant in many cases she is asked to resign "voluntarily," is ordered to move to a branch in another city, is made to work harder, or other ways are found to make it impossible for her to continue at the job.

Similarly, even when the law stipulates that the employer has to provide childcare services for women workers, the bosses in many factories see to it that the number of women working there does not reach the minimum number set by the law, and in this way avoid the expenses of maintaining the child-care facilities. It is also very common that when a woman looks for work, she has to have a medical examination to prove that she is not pregnant. Without this proof, she cannot obtain employment.

As has already been mentioned, the peasant woman takes part in productive labor not as an individual, but as an extension of her domestic work. This holds her back from developing consciousness as a worker, as well as consciousness of her oppression as a woman.

3. The Essential Differences with the Advanced Capitalist Countries

In the first place, the economic dependence and the deformed way in which the economies of Latin America develop make it impossible for capitalism to absorb all the available work force, masculine as well as feminine. With real rates of unemployment and underemployment of 40-60% being the norm, that get worse in times of crisis, women suffer more unemployment than men, due to all the factors already mentioned.

In the second place, it must be pointed out that industrial workers in Latin America, men as well as women, are superexploited. In some cases this superexploitation manifests itself in the form of wages that are lower than the level necessary to reproduce the labor force, that is to say, lower than that needed so that the worker can survive for

what is now the lifespan of a worker in the advanced countries. This is the case in the coal mines of Chile, the tin mines of Bolivia, etc.

But this also manifests itself in paying wages that do not allow the worker to fulfill the needs created by capitalist imperialism in its most general sense, and in the impossibility for the working class as a whole to improve its situation through raising new generations that are capable, educated, and trained to continue producing.

These two factors explain the massive underdevelopment of women. While even in the advanced countries the reason why a woman enters the work force has to do, from her own point of view, with the fact that her husband's income is insufficient, it is much easier in these countries for her to find paid employment. In the second place, the fact that "the income of the husband is insufficient" has a very different meaning in the advanced countries than in the colonial and semicolonial countries.

In the advanced countries it generally means that the wage is insufficient to meet the general needs created in the most advanced society in the world, cultural, social, and educational needs. In the colonial and semicolonial countries it means that the wage is literally insufficient for food, clothes, and housing, i.e., for the basic necessities of survival. It is in this sense that these factors explain the massive subemployment of women, since if they did not find even this minimal work, the individual members of their family would not physically survive. This situation means fewer possibilities for women to obtain economic independence, even a precarious one.

Obviously the picture of unemployment and underemployment gets continually worse given the dynamic of the Latin American economy, where the crisis in the countryside impels ever greater numbers of people to go to the cities, where possibilities for employment, housing, and education do not exist.

E. The Social and Political Institutions That Confront Women

Apart from the family, the two institutions that most influence the lives of women in Latin America are the state and the Catholic Church. In the last analysis both are institutions that are used to bolster the survival of capital. Of course, each has a relative autonomy and at certain times one or the other may be the better tool for controlling the masses. The interplay between these two institutions as tools of the national and international bourgeoisie has been expressed repeatedly in life in Latin America.

In Latin America, the struggle for power over the state has been a struggle directly related to the forms of economic development: the state has played a preponderant role in the economy, both in the creation of the infrastructure and in direct subsidies to private enterprises. This has made it necessary for the state to deal with vital questions, such as the regulation of prices, that directly effect the life of the masses.

At the same time, the relative political instability these states have experienced in this century, due in turn to the explosive class struggle on the continent, has made it necessary for the state as such, or sectors of it, to seek allies wherever it can find them.

A curious example is the fact that in some countries the right to vote was extended to women under dictatorships,

as happened in Colombia, Chile, Haiti, and Argentina. This reflects the fact that women as a whole, including in the petty bourgeoisie, have traditionally been a more conservative political force than men in Latin America, and further reflects the need of the regimes to win adherents among numerous sectors of the population. (In Chile and Mexico some people argued against giving women the right to vote because they feared the reactionary influence of the Catholic Church among women.)

The laws relating to the family are in general very discriminatory against women and children. Obviously, this formal situation is aggravated by the social reality, which is much *more* discriminatory. A few examples will suffice to indicate the backwardness of the institutions in Latin America. In Argentina, divorce does not exist; Catholicism is the official religion. When a couple separates, the woman can make no decisions concerning the children, even if they remain in her custody, without the permission of the father. In Colombia until recently, women had the legal status of a minor; they could not legally appear before a court. In that country divorce exists only for those who were not married by the church, but since civil marriage was recognized only two years ago, divorce is possible for at most 5% of the population.

In Mexico, divorce exists, but in practice it is very difficult to obtain—without the agreement of both parties it is virtually impossible. In reality, the laws relating to the contributions the father must make to the maintenance of the children are totally ignored, and a woman has virtually no legal recourse to see that they are fulfilled.

One of the state institutions that most influences the oppression of women is the educational system. In general the level of education of women is lower than that of men. The illiteracy rate is much higher; the number of women who complete primary, secondary, high school, and college is lower in every case. This situation is obviously not the result of any particular state policy at any one moment, but stems from the general social situation in our countries, where it is generally accepted that it is not necessary for women to receive instruction, or even that it is hardly necessary for them to be able to read.

Where the state does have an influence is in the quality of the education that is received. Girls who do manage to pursue their studies are subjected to an education designed to shape them along the extremely restricted patterns of what a girl or woman should be.

Discrimination in the schools is notorious against women, even in the universities, where it is not unusual to find teachers who demand sexual favors before they will pass a female student, or who prevent women students from speaking in class.

A clear example of the effects of dependency and the uneven and combined development at the level of the superstructure is the policy adopted by many Latin American states with respect to the rate of population growth.

Following the policy originally laid out by Robert McNamara, they adopt the neomalthusian policy that it is necessary to lower the population growth rate to alleviate the misery in the colonial and semicolonial countries. To do this many Latin American states have adopted a policy of birth control programs and promote the use of contraceptives, sometimes distributing them free.

It is interesting to note, however, that this policy is not generally accepted by the masses. The distribution of contraceptives is not accepted because it is seen as heresy,

since it threatens the mythical virility of the male, and because the only readily acknowledged function of women is to be mothers. There is also resistance to the contraceptives because of the imposed character of the birth control programs.

These programs are rejected not only for moral and religious reasons, but also because of a deep lack of confidence in any state policies that manipulate people. Obviously, this rejection becomes all the stronger when the state takes more drastic measures: massive forced sterilization, which is a common measure to overcome the resistance of the masses.

In some cases, as in Mexico, sectors of the state toy with the idea of legalizing abortion for the same reason. Obviously, while there is opposition from the church to the use of contraceptives and sterilization, this can be overcome by appealing to the political need for these programs. However, up until now, no state has taken the drastic measure of legalizing abortion, given the pressure that the church has brought to bear on this question.

It is clear that none of these policies have any concern for giving a woman freedom in her sexual life, nor giving her the right to determine her life and choose whether or not to be a mother. On the contrary, these policies are correctly seen by the masses as political manipulation designed to subject women to even more controls.

This situation raises serious problems regarding the form of agitation and the formulation of demands around the right of women to control their own bodies.

The importance of women as a social base of bourgeois political movements has not been forgotten in Latin America. It has been the practice for many parties, especially those with a populist tinge, to organize women on a massive scale to strengthen themselves against their opposition.

This was the case with the Partido Justicialista during the period of Peron and Evita; it is the case with the PRI in Mexico, which has its organization of "revolutionary" women. The MNR in Bolivia organized its female followers in groups that the workers organizations called the *barzolas*; groups whose function was to sabotage and attack the meetings and demonstrations of workers in the name of decency and Bolivian motherhood.

This tactic has also appeared, with all its consequences, in Chile and Brazil, where women organized by the bourgeois parties were mobilized against the reformist regimes and had a deep impact on the events in those countries.

At the same time, with more women participating in the ranks of the unions, and democratic and revolutionary organizations, the number of women political prisoners is increasing. These women receive especially brutal treatment at the hands of their jailers and torturers. Besides being part of movements that threaten the established regimes, women militants represent another danger: the rejection of the role traditionally accepted by women. In the eyes of their oppressors, their participation threatens the perpetuation of the family institution, an institution that the state counts on for socialization and repression.

In connection with this need, the states also maintain a constant interest in programs, investigations, and institutions for the "strengthening of the family" and in many cases for the "integration of women into society," etc. These programs often promote the organization of women around activities such as learning handicrafts, preparing

food, basic nutrition, etc. Obviously, the aim of these programs is to keep women in their role as mother and wife, slightly increasing their ability to play some role outside of the home, but at the same time reaffirming that the home is their place in society and life. The idealization of the family is a basic element of the daily demagoguery of spokesmen for the Latin American states.

II. WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLES IN LATIN AMERICA

A. The History of Women's Participation in Struggles

Women's struggles have always developed in close connection with social movements in general. In this way we can see how women came on the political scene in the key movements in Latin American history: in the period of resistance to the Spanish colonization and in the wars for independence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Latin America the nineteenth century was a long period of interbourgeois conflicts within each country that had recently gained independence and between these countries. Complicated internecine power struggles developed among the different sectors of the national bourgeoisies. The numerous wars (in 1825-28 between provinces of La Plata and Brazil; in 1836-48 Chile and Argentina against Bolivia and Peru; in 1865-70 between Paraguay and the triple alliance of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay; in 1879-83 among Peru, Chile, and Bolivia) exemplify this period when "stabilization" of the national bourgeoisies was impossible, while the workers movement still did not exist as an independent political force.

The twentieth century marked the birth and development of the Latin American workers movement, the great class confrontations between national bourgeoisies, supported by imperialism, and the working class and peasantry (the Mexican revolution, the Cárdenas period, etc.). The period following the Second World War, with its uninterrupted series of working-class insurrections and coups d'état (Brazil in 1964, Bolivia in 1971, Chile in 1973, Argentina in 1976, etc.).

The participation of Latin American women goes back a long way. But what is known concretely is limited to symbols or heroines, with no mention of the role played by the masses of women. There were famous women who at a particular time stopped playing their "traditional role" as servants for their children, husbands, or fathers, and joined struggles, even occupying important leadership posts. Examples are, among others: Baltazara Chiza in Ecuador (1778), who led the Guano rebellion against the Spaniards; Manuela Beltrán, who led the struggle of the tenure-holders and other insurrections against the Spaniards in Colombia (1780); Bartolina Siza was one of the first women who fought for independence in Bolivia (1781), as did Micaela Bastidas in Peru (1780).

In the nineteenth century the following were prominent: Lorenza Avemanay in Ecuador, who participated in the revolt against the Spaniards in Guamonte (1803); Juana Arzuduy, who took part in the guerrilla wars of 1809 and 1825; Policarpa Salvarrieta, who was shot in Colombia in 1817; and many others who, because they were not recognized by (masculine) history, are forgotten today but who participated in combat in the ranks of the movements.

During the nineteenth century practically no women's

movements existed. The bourgeois feminist movements that arose in Europe at that time did not find the objective conditions for developing in Latin America (the weak development of capitalism, the political weakness of the national bourgeoisies, the great influence of the Catholic Church). At the end of the nineteenth century and especially in the twentieth century, with the rise of the workers movement and the imperialist penetration, bourgeois feminist groups arose, as did women's organizations linked to, or rather dependent on, the workers movement.

Women have participated in two kinds of struggles and movements in this part of the American continent. On one hand, we have the organizations of women who fight for women's own demands; on the other hand, there are organizations of women that are created to support the struggles of the working class. Another type of women's organization, which we should not omit, are groups created by working women fighting for their demands at their workplace, whether they are set up inside the unions or separate from them.

The first organizations of women fighting for their interests in Latin America were formed to struggle for the right to education. Some of them were: the Association for the Instruction of Women, which appeared in mid-1850 in Puerto Rico; the Benevolent Society, formed by women of the ruling class in 1823; the League for the Intellectual Emancipation of Women in Brazil in 1919; the women organized around the newspaper *Siempre Viva* in Mexico in 1870, etc. However, the demands that most brought women together, though never in a way comparable to what was seen in the United States and some European countries, were for the right to vote and hold office and for civil equality between men and women. In Mexico the Workers Congress of 1933 launched a program for the feminist struggle, one of whose points was a campaign for the right of women to vote; in 1935 the United Front for Women's Rights appeared. In Montevideo, Uruguay, the National Council of Uruguayan Women was formed in 1916, and the Uruguayan Alliance for Women's Suffrage was founded in 1919. In Brazil, the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress appeared; in Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican Women's League.

The women's groups that have come into existence as part of the workers movement are not only qualitatively, but also quantitatively, different from the above-mentioned groups. They are mass organizations that include thousands of women and have been well-known for some time. One of the first organizations of this kind, called Women's Committees, was formed in Chile at the end of the nineteenth century, and carried out the cold kitchen stoves strike in support of the miners strike. In recent decades organizations of women have been formed with similar activities. In Bolivia, the Housewives Committees were created in 1961, composed of wives of Siglo XX miners at first, and later extending to other mines. These committees are represented in the Bolivian Labor Federation (COB) and from their founding have demonstrated great combativity in the struggles waged by the Bolivian working class. In Mexico, there are the Women's Committees of the Democratic Tendency of the electrical workers union; in Ecuador, the Women's Committee for Solidarity with Labor Struggles; in Colombia, the Wives Committees.

In the countries of the southern cone, organizations

operate from outside. In Chile, there are Committees of Chilean Women of the popular resistance movement supported by the MIR, which publish a clandestine newspaper. Their objective is to raise women's consciousness so they will join the resistance and to raise feminist demands. In Brazil, there are groups that are exposing the situation of Brazilian women from outside the country, as with the Brazilian Women's Circle, which operates out of Paris. Likewise Uruguayan women have organized to denounce and expose the situation of women in their country.

The present situation of the feminist movements in Latin America is characterized by their petty-bourgeois composition, their marked tendency to link up with the popular-democratic movements, and their lack of members. In Mexico there is the Coalition of Feminist Women, uniting a number of feminist groups, which emerged in 1976 with a main focus of struggling for liberalization of abortion laws. Today its struggle is not limited to that. It is also trying to make women aware of the special problems and conditions they face and it is fighting to change these conditions. In Colombia there is the Women's Liberation Front (FEM) in which women of different ideologies and political positions participate, as in the case of the Mexican Coalition.

B. General Characteristics of the Radicalization Of Women in Latin America

To undertake this analysis it is necessary to make a distinction between the objective situation and the forms of radicalization of women of the working class and peasantry on the one hand, and women of the petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie on the other. There is a very important difference in the way women become aware and organized, depending on the class they belong to.

Working-class and peasant women have always had an important part in struggles of workers and peasants against exploitation, poverty, repression, etc. They participate through organizations composed of members of both sexes, such as unions and united-front committees, as well as through all-female organizations such as those mentioned above.

These women's, but non-feminist, organizations have the objective of bringing women of the oppressed classes into the struggle against this oppression. From the documents that define them, it is clear that these are organizations to support the struggles of the male comrades. The concept of "special oppression" of women almost never appears in these documents: either this is totally denied or, at best, it is considered completely secondary in comparison to the oppression of the general class. For instance, the women organized in these committees do not want to be considered "feminists," they decline to support demands for the right to free, legal abortions, and react negatively to the demands of lesbians or prostitutes.

In general they distrust the women's movements in the industrialized capitalist countries, suspicious that they are manipulated by "bourgeois interests." On the other hand, and this aspect is fundamental for understanding the dynamic of these organizations, women in this type of organization have a very strong and deep-going class consciousness. In addition, simply in order to organize, they have objectively been forced to confront their special oppression, in the form of the rejection by men and many

women who are their class brothers and sisters, of their groupings and organized struggle. An organization of women whose goal is to actively participate in popular struggles takes on a dynamic that, in the long run, *tends* to favor the development of feminist consciousness. This can be seen in the formation of certain organizations at particular points in history, such as the rise of the United Front for Women's Rights, which had a short life in the 1930s in Mexico, and which united thousands of women around the special demands of women. Although it cannot be said that it took up all the demands that are today considered specific demands of women, it did take up demands such as the right to own property under the agrarian reform, the right to education, etc. This organization arose years after the end of the Mexican revolution, in which many of its members and leaders had taken part. It emerged at a time of upturn for the workers movement, etc. In terms of feminist consciousness, this organization was a step ahead of the common support committees, but it arose at a particular moment in history and disappeared due to the cooptation of the workers movement by the policy of the state and the lack of a feminist leadership of its own that was capable of proposing an independent policy for the long run. Nevertheless, it indicates the underlying possibilities in organizations of women of the oppressed classes when a series of circumstances favor their developing feminist ideas. These circumstances are not only objective but also subjective.

The small nuclei of feminist women that emerged in the petty and middle bourgeoisie since the beginning of the twentieth century and especially in recent years have tended to spread and unite, but at a much slower rate than the movement in North America and Europe. An example of this unification and growth is the Coalition of Feminist Women in Mexico.

In general, the three classic feminist currents are found in these small nuclei: the liberal-bourgeois feminist; the radical; and the Marxist. The latter two currents appeared recently, while it was the first that generally carried on the struggle for the right to vote and other democratic demands.

The radical current, which was actually imported from the United States and Europe, has a much less intrasigent appearance than in these countries, considering that the women who are part of it tend to be from the universities and are heavily influenced by the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which in Latin America have oriented much more toward the oppressed classes than in the advanced capitalist countries. Through the student movement the Cuban revolution also has a certain influence, which tends to make it more difficult to draw a neat line between the struggle of women and that of the oppressed in general. Although they can be called radical feminists, in Latin America these women tend to have a populist outlook that often makes it possible to engage in unity in action with them.

The Marxist current has really only barely started to emerge because the left organizations have little interest in feminist questions. Even today it can be said that only the organizations of the Fourth International are concerned about building a women's movement (and even this overstates the concern of some of the sections of the Fourth International in Latin America).

We must next examine two fundamental questions.

First, why there is no mass radicalization of women against their oppression and, specifically, the reasons that in most cases feminist consciousness has failed to develop in the popular women's movement. Second, why the petty-bourgeois feminist groups remain limited to a few dozen women, when they have already acquired a mass character in the advanced countries.

To explain the first phenomenon, we need to refer to the analysis we have made of the family, especially in the working class and peasantry. The fact that the woman has an indispensable economic role in the family in the survival of everyone explains why there is practically no rebellion in the working class and peasantry against the limitations of the family structure. If no family solidarity existed, life would be even more difficult for the great majority of women—difficult in terms of survival. Unmarried women, abandoned women, and widows with or without children dream of having a companion to help them support their family . . . because they have no other outlook. The testimony of Domitila, the wife of a Bolivian miner, is very clear in its understanding: for her, the family is a necessity not only of life, but also of struggle. For her, it is in their family that the children of workers must learn about the class struggle and revolution.

The second factor explaining the low feminist consciousness of women of the oppressed classes is the extremely sharp nature of class antagonisms throughout Latin America. In the face of the severe exploitation and repression experienced by the workers and peasants and their families, the special oppression of women seems concealed and secondary. The most extreme but abundant examples are to be found in the countries under military dictatorships. All the testimony by Chilean, Argentine, Uruguayan, and Brazilian women, and women from similar countries, states that the main necessity is to first overthrow the dictatorship and to insist above all on solidarity between men and women. While this argument is used by reformist parties to justify a strategy of revolution that excludes women's liberation as a fundamental task—and we reject this argument—objective conditions are obviously more an obstacle than in the advanced countries to a general understanding of the interrelation between the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the liberation of all the oppressed, including those suffering from special oppression, such as women. In Latin America, the objective conditions result in trade-union consciousness among women being much stronger than feminist consciousness.

The violence of the class antagonisms in Latin America also explain the limited credibility and the weak development of radical feminist currents—the struggle between the sexes, the myth of the sisterhood. Their lack of foundation is much more obvious than in the advanced capitalist countries. So great is the disparity, the difference between bourgeois women and women of the oppressed classes (the first almost always oppress the second as servants, for example), so fierce are the exploitation, the poverty, the repression, that there is no danger that feminist theories that view the roots of oppression as sexual will develop on a mass scale. Because of this, the false theory that the liberation of women is possible without a structural change in the society, without the elimination of class exploitation, of private property, will find few adherents in our countries.

Nonetheless, precisely the opposite danger does exist: the false theory that the liberation of women will take

place almost automatically after a socialist revolution, that women do not suffer from a specific oppression, and hence that it is not necessary for them to organize independently, as is necessary for *all* the oppressed sectors, in order to be able to struggle effectively against their oppression. This theory, which has many adherents within the Latin American left, and even among women militants, will be a brake not only on the self-organization of the masses of Latin American women, but also on their developing class consciousness in the broadest sense. Rather than keeping the working class from being divided, as is claimed, it strengthens the present division of the class between members of the first and second category, men and women.

To explain why petty-bourgeois women have not radicalized in mass it is necessary to take into consideration the economic underdevelopment. Dependent capitalism does not permit the majority of women of the petty and middle bourgeoisie to take part in economic activity. While university education is accessible to more women than before, it has not been made available to middle-class women to the same degree as in the advanced countries. At the same time, middle-class women have the opportunity to “liberate” themselves from domestic chores, or at least a good proportion of them, through the use of servants. Though their life is quite boring, limited, and frustrating, this is more a source of neurosis than radicalization. The expectations of women from the petty bourgeoisie do not radically clash with their real life experience in the sense of being prevented from working, being limited in their freedom of personal activity, etc., inasmuch as their whole education leads them to think that their *only* means of self-realization is to be mothers, their freedom of activity is limited because it is a privilege not to have to work in an office or factory. (In the advanced countries, the events of the last twenty years have created a contradiction between widespread aspirations and the ability of bourgeois society and the state to satisfy them, thus contributing to the mass radicalization of women of the middle class.)

For that reason small groupings of women have emerged only among intellectual sectors. But these groups have the potential to grow. First of all there is the growth in the number of students, even though it has not reached the level of the advanced countries. The ever-increasing number of students find ever-diminishing numbers of jobs to receive them. Then too the crisis of bourgeois values, though less widespread in the petty bourgeoisie than is the case in the advanced countries, has penetrated deep into the student youth. Thus, not only for economic reasons but also for ideological ones, it is possible to foresee a growth of feminism starting with women students.

A fundamental factor in the delayed development of feminist consciousness in *all* social classes is ideological: specifically, the profound influence of the Catholic Church and the weight of macho ideology.

In conclusion, the situation of women in Latin America is characterized by a weak development of feminist consciousness generally and by the sharp differentiation between the feminist groups of the petty bourgeoisie and the organizations of working-class and peasant women. This dichotomy was also flagrant in Europe at the outset of the rise of the labor movement and with the rise of the bourgeois suffragist movements. It has also been seen in less acute form in the last ten years with the new radicalization of women; but in the past two years or so, a feminist

radicalization has begun among working-class women, especially in Spain and Italy, and less obviously, in France. This feminist radicalization among working-class women is the indispensable precondition for building a women's movement on a class basis.

In Latin America, for all the reasons we have noted, the coming together of the small groups of feminist women and the masses of women of the toiling classes, whether organized as women in unions or not organized, will present greater difficulties. Nevertheless, it is necessary from the strategic standpoint.

III. WHAT ORIENTATION FOR THE SECTIONS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL?

A. Programmatic Questions

The general program of the Fourth International on the woman question must be valid internationally. The document (by Mary-Alice Waters) that serves as the basis for drafting the next international resolution puts forward a program that appears to correspond to this requirement. It is obvious, however (as the document itself notes), that a general program will have to be adapted to the concrete conditions of each country. In the case of Latin America, in line with the analysis we have previously sketched out, it will be necessary to strike a balance between the different demands. Our presentation of our program will be quite different in form from its presentation in the advanced capitalist countries. The international resolution will need to be quite clear in this respect. It is impossible to mechanically transplant the main axes for building a mass women's movement from an advanced capitalist country to the underdeveloped countries.

The discussion on the possible axes of mass mobilization of women in Latin America has barely begun. So far, unfortunately, we can only draw on the experiences of the sections of the Fourth International in Mexico and Colombia in trying to systematically carry out work among women. For the discussion to advance much further it will be necessary to have more concrete experience both in the sections mentioned and in the others.

However, even now we can make some observations on the basis of the little experience we have had. First, the demands that led to broad mass mobilizations in the advanced capitalist countries—free and legal abortion and contraception—have not had the same impact in Latin America. They are defended by the small feminist groups but have not met much response from the masses of women, and even less in the labor movement. We think the reason why the women's organizations of the working class and peasantry (such as the Women's Committees of the Democratic Tendency and the Bolivian Housewives Committee) refuse to demand the right to abortion is explained in the first chapter of this document. The pressure of the Catholic Church and the idea that abortion is a crime and women's liberation is degenerate have penetrated deeply and inundated the society, including the left parties. Moreover, the birth-control policies of imperialism and the various governments, which involves free distribution of contraceptives with the manipulative aim of reducing the birth rate, as well as forced sterilization, have created much confusion. In any case, it is necessary to raise the demand of free, legal abortion, making sure to carefully explain its meaning (the right of

women to choose) and linking it with other demands, especially those regarding public health care.

Two other demands which have sparked major struggles in Europe and the United States are the issues of rape and battered women. In Latin America these two phenomena occur to a degree unknown in the advanced capitalist countries, and there are indications that they can be the focus of mobilizations of women, including trade-union women, and possibly of activities of certain organizations made up of both women and men.

On the other hand, more general political problems, such as the struggle for freedom of political prisoners, the struggle for the right to education for children, etc., have mobilized women organized as women despite their not being organized around *their* demands *as women* (hunger strikes of mothers and wives in Bolivia and Chile in 1978, and of the "Locas" ("crazy women") in Argentina, all of which were for freedom for political prisoners; occupation of schools by mothers to prevent their demolition, Mexico, 1978; the spontaneous organization of housewives around problems of the environment, Mexico, 1978).

In general it must be pointed out that economic and democratic demands take on even greater importance than they do in the developed capitalist countries. Precisely because of the underdevelopment—which brings with it abject poverty, the absence of social services subsidized by the state, the lack of democratic rights, etc.—struggles for child care, schools, medical aid, the right to adequate housing, involve a high level of participation by women in the poor neighborhoods. This should demonstrate to us the importance that we must give to these aspects in our program. At this time, these demands have an agitational character among the broad masses of women.

We also have the obligation to propagandize around demands that refer to the special oppression of women in all the organizations where we work (the right to employment, education, and training for women, the fight to free and legal abortion, against the sexist ideology, etc.).

We must keep in mind that this type of division between agitational and propagandistic demands carries with it a big danger. Due to the backwardness that exists in our society regarding the oppression of women, it would be very easy to concentrate solely on economic or democratic demands, agitational demands, and leave aside propagandizing around the other demands.

This would totally weaken our strategy, since a demand passes from the level of propaganda to agitation due to a change in the political conjuncture not only at the objective level, but also at the subjective level. If our cadres fail to propagandize around strictly "feminist" demands, they will not have the possibility of keeping in touch with the sentiments of women, of knowing at what point these demands remain at the level of propaganda, but to struggle for a women's movement that fights for *all* their demands. If it is not possible to do so on a massive scale today, this is due to the very backwardness of the Latin American societies.

B. Our Strategy

We must put forward the position that it is necessary to build an independent women's movement, a massive movement around the specific demands of women. Such a movement will be multi-class due to the common oppression of women. The construction of this movement is

indispensable not only before and during the revolutionary process, but also after.

Latin American left organizations do not recognize this need, and even in the sections of the Fourth International there is much opposition to even discussing it. Many militants and organizations (the Chilean MIR, for example) believe it is quite sufficient to organize women in organizations including both women and men (parties, unions, united fronts, defense committees, etc.), within which women can get together in women's commissions or committees. We should not underestimate the importance and difficulty of the debate with the comrades who hold this position.

First, women of the oppressed classes themselves accept this idea. Second, this position has a "theoretical" basis in the fact that the ferocity of class oppression is much more visible than that of sexist oppression. Third, it is necessary to take into account that neither the First, Second, or Third Internationals ever said there was a need for a women's movement as the Fourth International does today. Many of those who oppose building such a movement base themselves on this fact.

Therefore, we must tirelessly explain, outside and (unfortunately) inside the sections of the Fourth International, the reason for our position in favor of an autonomous women's movement and what "autonomy" means to us (political and organizational autonomy in relation to the state and the bourgeoisie, organizational autonomy in relation to the workers movement). Here we will refer comrades to the documents already published in the international bulletins, which clearly put forth the positions of the Fourth International.

Strategically, then, we point out the need for an autonomous women's movement. But the other facet of our strategy, without which it would be quite imbalanced, is the struggle within the workers movement to make it take up feminist demands. We understand that we will never be able to influence the workers movement in this direction without the external pressure of a women's movement. And on the other hand we will never be able to build a movement on a class-struggle basis if we do not do feminist work in the unions.

Our work in the unions does not face theoretical problems so much as the practical political problem of the refusal of many male and female comrades to carry out this type of work, and the problem that on this question there is a sharp clash with the various wings of the union bureaucracy.

In brief, our task is to propagandize and explain in the unions the meaning of the special oppression of women, carefully showing what its manifestations are in daily life in the factory, in the streets, in the family, etc.

At the same time it is necessary to fight for the inclusion of specific demands in the programs of the unions—such as equal pay, childcare centers, and social services, without leaving out the demands for abortion rights and free and legal contraceptives, and the fight against all forms of sexual aggression, both verbal and physical.

Along with this struggle to raise consciousness, it will be possible in the concrete mobilizations of the workers organizations to put forward demands and propose organizational solutions in order to have more weapons for the struggle: women's commissions, departments, committees, and rank-and-file groups, for example. Of course, it is necessary to insure that these bodies are not manipulated

by the trade-union bureaucrats and that they link up with other women's groups (even if not a hundred percent feminist) in order to further the building of a mass movement.

At the same time, it is necessary to carry out work among peasant women where we have the opportunity pushing forward their self-organization, their participation, and their connections with other women's organizations. The same is necessary among housewives, especially in the neighborhoods where mobilizations take place.

To close the gap that exists today between women in these sectors and the small groups of feminist women will be much more difficult than it has been in the advanced countries. The process will probably be slower. However, this should be our long-range objective. It is possible right now to take steps in this direction. The example of Mexico proves this. On the one hand there are comrades who intervene in the Women's Committees of the Democratic Tendency, in the women's departments of unions or among wage-earning women (though there are still few comrades working on this) trying in a pedagogic way, little by little, to introduce feminist ideas and to propose linking up with other women's groups. There are also comrades intervening in the Coalition of Feminist Women, which is changing and adopting a broader program and is bringing together not only groups defined as feminist currents, but also rank-and-file groups.

The Coalition's participation in the initiative taken by a union to hold March 8 activities shows that it is possible that even the currents that see sexual oppression as the primary oppression can be convinced of the need to link up the feminist movement with the workers movement, or at least with women organized in trade unions. Thus, perhaps through united-front-type structures, it will be possible to establish the first coordinating committees of the various women's groups. This whole situation obviously poses many tactical problems which we will not take up here, so as not to go into too much detail and make this document excessively heavy reading.

C. Internal Problems

To carry out any strategy or tactic it is necessary to have the understanding and cooperation of the organization and its members. This presents us with our first difficulty: the lack of understanding of and attention to the political question of women's liberation in the Latin American sections of the Fourth International. Other sections have already gone through this experience; but because there is still no large Latin American women's movement, it is very difficult to convince the comrades—both rank and file and in the leadership—of the need to fully assume this responsibility. However, there have been advances in some sections, specifically the Mexican section and the sympathizing group in Colombia. In Colombia the fact that a woman comrade was chosen as presidential candidate served very well to show the usefulness of including feminist demands in the program, propagandizing around them, and mobilizing and organizing sectors of women workers around them.

There is a long way to go on this road, however, in Mexico and Colombia as well as in the other organizations of the Fourth International in Latin America. It is necessary to carry out educational work internally on women's oppression. In this task, we believe that the pre-world-congress discussion and the resolution itself will be very

useful to give the question the weight it deserves. The leaderships of the organizations must be involved in the process of discussion and development of positions, in order to accelerate the process of raising the consciousness of the members.

In addition, it is necessary to go further than simply discussions. We must go through the first experiences,

deepen the intervention that now exists, systematize it and evaluate it so that there can really be a qualitative advance both on the theoretical level and on the political level in the work of the sections of the Fourth International in Latin America and worldwide. These are some of the ways we can contribute to the advances of the Fourth International.

Exchange of Correspondence Between United Secretariat Bureau and Revolutionary Communist Group of Lebanon

March 22, 1978, USFI Statement, 'Israeli Troops Out
of Lebanon!' (Published in 'IP/I,' April 10, 1978.)

[The following statement was issued
March 22, 1978, by the United Secretariat
of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The Zionist state has unleashed a new war of aggression against southern Lebanon. It has bombed Palestinian refugee camps and Lebanese cities and villages. It has used the most barbaric weapons employed by American imperialism in Vietnam. It has massacred hundreds of men, women, and children. It has caused a tragic exodus of people driven from their land and stripped of all means of support. It has launched a wave of repression in the territories already under occupation. Once again, it bears the responsibility for creating a situation with the potential to lead to a war that might have fearful consequences for the entire world.

Cloaking its move with false pretexts, Jerusalem hoped to inflict on the Palestinian resistance one of the heaviest blows it has ever taken. It seeks to establish control over southern Lebanon—which includes collaborating with Lebanese reactionaries—in order to ease the way for establishing a "peace" accord based on denying the Palestinian people their most elementary rights, and on preserving all the territorial conquests of Zionist expansionism.

sionism.

At the urging of the U.S. government, which wants to enable the Arab ruling classes to save face, the United Nations has adopted a hypocritical resolution that avoids explicitly condemning the invasion of Lebanon in any way, and calls for a fresh dispatch of "blue helmets." Their job can only be to protect the new status quo from the Palestinian movement, once the Zionist army has carried out its "mopping up" operation.

Once again, the Arab states have revealed their basic aims. The so-called steadfastness front remained immobile, thereby proving that its resounding declarations were nothing more than demagoguery.

The Egyptian government fears the outbreak of a crisis for its regime as a result of the pitiful bankruptcy of Sadat's "peace" diplomacy. Syria, which oversees the "Arab peacekeeping force," was hardly about to rush to the aid of the Palestinians. In fact, all of the Arab ruling classes proved by their attitude that they do not wish to take any risk in order to defend the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. They are looking forward with cynical complacency to the weakening of the Palestinian resistance, which is now tragically isolated.

The Zionist authorities seized on the

terrorist action in Tel Aviv to try to justify the invasion of southern Lebanon, with the support of the world press.

The truth is that this military operation had been planned for some time. They were only waiting for an excuse. The disastrous action by the Fatah commandos unfortunately provided them with one.

Alone and desperate, the *fedayeen* put up a fierce resistance to the Israeli blitzkrieg. Abandoned by the Arab states, and driven into a blind alley by the strategic orientation of the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership, the courageous fighters of the Palestinian resistance are more than ever in need of the broadest international solidarity.

Working-class organizations the world over must mobilize in opposition to the genocide committed by the Zionist government. They must demand immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and condemn the deployment of UN troops, moving in behind the Israeli tanks. They must protest the closing down of PLO offices, which some governments are contemplating.

We should support the Palestinian movement in its heroic struggle for existence and for its legitimate rights.

Israel out of Lebanon!

No to UN intervention!

**March 24, 1978, Letter from United Secretariat Bureau to
Political Bureau, Revolutionary Communist Group of Lebanon**

March 24, 1978

Political Bureau
Revolutionary Communist Group
Beirut

Dear Comrades,

The next meeting of the United Secretariat, which will take place in Brussels on March 31-April 2, will hear a report from the fact-finding commission designated by the United Secretariat on the Lebanese section and the sanctions taken against two of its members, Comrades Magida and Selim. We would very much like to have a representative of the RCG leadership at this meeting, if possible Comrade Jaber, who is a member of the IEC.

As well, the United Secretariat Bureau read an article in *Rouge* (Thursday, March 23) reporting that "the RCG has decided to join its forces with those of the PLF [Palestine Liberation Front]" on the southern Lebanese front.

On the basis of this information, and, obviously, insofar as it is accurate—the Bureau unanimously expressed its disagreement with this political decision on the part of the Lebanese section. Under these conditions, the presence of Comrade Jaber at the next United Secretariat meeting is even more indispensable, so that a discussion can be held immediately on this matter.

Fraternal greetings,
The Bureau of the United Secretariat
of the Fourth International

**April 9, 1978, Letter from RCG Central Committee
to the United Secretariat Bureau**

Beirut
April 9, 1978

Bureau of the United Secretariat
of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

The March 22 declaration that you issued in the name of the United Secretariat as well as your March 24 letter to our Executive Bureau were a bitter disappointment to us, one which can't be compensated by the (belated) circular letter of March 22 concerning the reorganization of Arab work, with which we entirely agree.

We are sending you separately our comments on the "United Secretariat declaration" and we ask that they be published in *Inprecor/Intercontinental Press*. As for the publication of the declaration in Arabic, we're giving you a choice between having it published with our comments or not publishing it (which is preferable in our opinion). This regrettable incident is unquestionably due to the method that consists of writing and publishing a declaration concerning the situation in a country without bothering to consult the (official) section in that country, which could be done simply by telephoning.

As for your letter of March 24, it is really stupefying. How can a body as responsible as the United Secretariat Bureau have "unanimously expressed its disagreement with this political decision on the part of the Lebanese section" on the basis of a single line read in *Rouge*, ambiguous to boot, written by someone who isn't even a member of the section? Elementary political correctness and the slightest sense of responsibility should have prompted you to ask the section about the accuracy and meaning of the line in question BEFORE expressing your unanimous disagreement.

Furthermore, the ambiguity of the line in question is only equalled by the mystery of your disagreement, which you don't at all explain. What political error can there be

in the fact that Trotskyist fighting groups participate *with full political, organizational, and military independence*—but collaborating unconditionally on a strictly military level (providing materials and provisions, common trenches) with a radical nationalist organization whose anti-imperialism is beyond doubt—in a fight which all anti-Zionist forces of their country are waging against the invasion by the Zionist army of the territory of that country. (Besides, in addition to the unconditional logistical aid we're given by the PLF, our common military front in the field includes several other groups.) Inasmuch as we think we've assimilated the Bolshevik conception of an anti-imperialist front, we think our attitude is indisputable from the *political* point of view. If you're still in disagreement after this precision, we ask that you explain this immediately.

That said, this isn't the first time that in a particularly critical situation in our country (this time the Zionist invasion, last time the Syrian invasion), **INSTEAD OF CONTACTING US, ORGANIZING AN EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH THE MASSES IN STRUGGLE IN OUR COUNTRY (COLLECTING MONEY, DEMONSTRATIONS, ETC.), ORGANIZING A CAMPAIGN FOR AID TO OUR SECTION IN STRUGGLE, WHICH IS UPHOLDING THE BANNER OF TROTSKYISM DESPITE ITS LIMITED MEANS, THE UNITED SECRETARIAT BUREAU FAVORS US WITH ITS DISAGREEMENT.**

Consequently, comrades, we ask (1) that this correspondence be made known to members of the United Secretariat; (2) that it be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the United Secretariat; (3) that it be published in its entirety in the international bulletin.

Communist greetings,
Central Committee Revolutionary Communist Group
Lebanese section of the Fourth International

April 9, 1978, Declaration of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Group of Lebanon

April 9, 1978

On the Zionist Aggression in Lebanon

The declaration of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International dated March 22, 1978, and published in *Inprecor/Intercontinental Press* (No. 24, March 30, 1978) [Published in English in *IP/I*, No. 14, April 10, 1978] prompts us to draw up the following main remarks (in their order of importance):

1. The use of the terms "terrorist," "disastrous," and "unfortunately," in relation to the operation of the Fatah commandos north of Tel Aviv is particularly unfortunate. These terms are politically wrong and can only harm our movement by providing arguments to imbeciles of all stripes who like nothing better than to show that they're more anti-Zionist than we are. The attitude of the sections of the Fourth International in the region is totally unambiguous: the RCG's attitude is contained in an interview with one of our comrades conducted by *Inprecor/IP* on April 2. [For the English translation see *IP/I*, No. 17, May 1, 1978.] It completely concurs and thoroughly parallels that of our comrades of the LCR (Matzpen-Marxist) [of Israel] whom we take this opportunity to salute for their international courage. We are enclosing a translation of Matzpen-Marxist's position. Like the interview we mentioned, it indirectly replies to the formulations used in the

United Secretariat declaration, which we are persuaded are a result of the fact that the authors of this declaration were ill informed.

2. The slogan "No to UN intervention," stated in categorical fashion, is wrong in the case of Lebanon. Our attitude on this subject is also explained in the April 2 interview: it combines positive and *tactical* neutrality in regard to *the replacing of the Zionist troops by those of the UN with opposition to the deployment of these UN troops into the areas not occupied by the Zionist army*, and it pledges to defend the freedom of anti-Zionist Lebanese-Palestinian struggle against anybody who tries to stop it—UN forces, Lebanese, Syrians, or others.

3. The last line of the first paragraph, "Once again, it (the Zionist state) bears the responsibility for creating a situation with the potential to lead to a war that might have fearful consequences for the entire world" has a distinctly pacifist connotation. Is it necessary to recall that our movement calls upon the Arab regimes to launch a sweeping *prolonged war* for the liberation of Palestine?

4. The declaration totally ignores the fact that the forces fighting in South Lebanon are combined Lebanese-Palestinian ones, and not only Palestinian resistance fighters as the Zionist and Lebanese reactionaries claim.

Central Committee Revolutionary Communist Group
Lebanese section of the Fourth International

April 17, 1978, Letter from United Secretariat Bureau to Revolutionary Communist Group

April 17, 1978

RCG
Lebanon

Dear Comrades,

We're sorry that Comrade J. wasn't able to attend the last meeting of the United Secretariat and that it wasn't possible to have a telephone conversation despite our repeated attempts to reach you. There were three points in the interview with a member of your Executive Bureau published in number 26 of *Inprecor* [See English-language *IP/I*, No. 17, May 1, 1978] with which the members of the Bureau disagreed. We'd like to explain our positions on these three points so you can think them over and discuss them.

It would be preferable to be able to discuss these questions directly with you. Moreover, it would be important to have a more extensive discussion on how to improve relations between the RCG and the international center. We therefore ask that if it's possible a member of your leadership come here for discussions with us. In the event that you can't do this, we're ready to send a member of the United Secretariat Bureau to Beirut. We await your reply on this matter.

The most important political point on which we disagree is the following. In his answer the RCG comrade explains "the dual character of the UN intervention": "Insofar as

they are able to force the Zionist army out of southern Lebanon and to protect the Lebanese border against the intervention of that army, we cannot oppose the UN troops; to do anything else would mean to allow the occupation to continue.

"On the other hand, to the extent that these troops try to quell the fight of the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese left, they will be treated like anyone else who undertakes such a task, whether they are French, Norwegian, Iranian, Senegalese, Syrian or Lebanese (. . .) The flexibility of our position on the UN troops flows from the fact that the only alternative right now seems to be the continuation of the Israeli occupation and of the misery it has caused for tens of thousands of refugees. In no case should the anti-imperialist forces appear as responsible for the continuation of the occupation (as for the liberation of southern Lebanon through a people's war, it is not a realistic alternative in the short term). Rather they have to throw the ball back into the Zionist camp."

We think this puts forward a wrong concept of the nature of UN troops and of the real purpose of their intervention. Ever since the Korean war launched by American imperialism in the name of the United Nations and its "peace-keeping" role, the Fourth International has not had the slightest doubt: UN troops constitute an army that defends the interests of world imperialism, whatever pretexts are conjured up at any given time. Those who have nurtured illusions about their "neutrality"—like the

Congolese nationalists did in 1960—have paid a terribly high price for their error.

Even if all the Israeli forces left Lebanon under the “pressure” of the UN troops, it would result in the replacement of one proimperialist army by another proimperialist occupying force. The intervention in Lebanon has the effect of giving international legitimacy to the occupation of South Lebanon as well as to the attempt to expel the Palestinians from this region. In this regard it is interesting to read what the April 18, 1978, *Herald Tribune* had to say: “In Jerusalem yesterday, Prime Minister Menachem Begin told his parliament’s Foreign Affairs and Security Committee that the establishment of a UN peace-keeping force on Israel’s northern border has been a political achievement, but that its long-range effectiveness is still in doubt.”

While the UN intervention can go against certain choices of the Zionist leadership—in the framework of the discord between Tel Aviv and Washington—its strategic goal is totally indisputable: it is a question of imposing a *Pax Americana* in the region with the collaboration of the Arab regimes, in particular Sadat’s Egypt, at the expense of the Palestinian resistance and the Palestinian people as a whole.

Such an operation may succeed or fail; that’s not the question we’re dealing with now. But the UN troops are there to facilitate it and not in any way whatever to hinder it. That’s why revolutionaries must not leave any room for doubt on the nature of UN troops. The Fourth International must demand their total and immediate withdrawal at the same time as the withdrawal of the Zionist army. The sections in the countries that have provided contingents for this international police operation must be in the front lines of this battle. On this point, what should the orientation of these sections be if they base their policy on the judgment expressed above as to the character of the UN intervention?

Second, we would like to deal with the question of the participation of “fighting groups of our organization in the military effort in South Lebanon, in collaboration with the PLF.”

We don’t think this is a correct orientation for our organization. The fact is, according to reports we have received, that we are at the embryonic stage of a long process of building a revolutionary party in Lebanon. The participation of our comrades in the military effort risks having very little effect other than disorienting and perhaps dealing a heavy blow to the small nucleus of a

revolutionary organization which is in need of strengthening. It seems to us that the priority for the RCG is not to involve our weak forces—or even a part of them!—in such risky operations, but, particularly in the present situation, to continue the difficult work of building an organization: that is, an effort to regularly publish a paper, which is a central element of our work of propaganda and political clarification, an increase in our work “to accumulate cadres,” an insertion among the toiling masses and the development of the long term education of cadres, especially given your role on a regional scale.

We think the above points are valid no matter what judgment we could have of the orientation of the PLF or other organizations of the Palestinian resistance. On this matter, we would be interested in reading the joint communiqué that you signed with the PLF and another far-left Lebanese group. We haven’t received this particular communiqué. Can you send it to us as rapidly as possible?

Now let’s deal with the question of the Fatah commando operation on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road. Frankly, we don’t understand why it wouldn’t be appropriate for revolutionaries to “pass judgment on such an operation.” Once the revolting hypocrisy of the Zionist propaganda has been unambiguously condemned and the pretexts Begin used to cover his aggression in South Lebanon have been denounced, we have the right—and even the duty—to express our opinion on such an important question. First of all, such an operation, which fits into the framework of the general political orientation of the PLO, does not help to assure the long-term mobilization of the Palestinian masses in the struggle. But it also harms the goal of dividing the Zionist camp and winning the Israeli workers to support the rights of the Palestinians. In fact, such an initiative wins sympathy for the Zionist regime and masks the fact that this regime represents the real terrorists in the region. The Zionist bloc is not inevitably a social and political monolith. Recent events, especially the large demonstration in Tel Aviv, point to the possibility that the Israeli masses could be mobilized against the policy of the Zionist regime. This shows the importance of developing actions that can correspond to the strategic goal of dividing the Israeli workers from the Zionist bourgeoisie.

We hope to be able to discuss all these questions directly and thoroughly with you soon.

Awaiting your reply.

Fraternally,
The United Secretariat Bureau

June 1978 Letters from RCG Leadership to the United Secretariat Bureau

Beirut
June 4, 1978

United Secretariat Bureau

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed you will find the unanimously approved reply of our Central Committee to your letter of April 17. We ask that you communicate it to all concerned, especially to our comrades of the LCR (Matzpen-Marxist); place it on the agenda of the next United Secretariat meeting; and pub-

lish it along with your April 17 letter and the earlier letters (March 24 and April 9) in the international bulletin.

As well, we’re still waiting for the publication in *Inprecor/IP* of our April 9 declaration (not April 2—please correct this typing error).

Fraternally,
s/Jaber for the
Executive Committee
of the RCG

* * *

June 1, 1978

United Secretariat Bureau

Dear Comrades,

Your letter of April 17 informs us that you have made "repeated attempts" to reach us by telephone. Allow us to doubt the seriousness of these attempts, especially because since March 15, the day the Zionist aggression in South Lebanon began, we've received several telephone calls from Paris, none of which, unfortunately, were from Bureau members. Telephone contact with Beirut has been continuously possible these past months for anybody who wanted to get through. We are persuaded that if the Bureau had *been determined* to contact us BEFORE publishing its March 22 declaration and expressing its disagreements of March 24, it would have been able to do so without difficulty. As for your proposal for direct discussion *a posteriori*, this must not supplant the present *written, public discussion within the international*, to which we attach great importance. No member of our leadership is in a position to leave the country for several days under the present circumstances. It would therefore be preferable for a Bureau member to come to Beirut, especially since *we've been asking for such a visit for nearly two years!*

Let's go on to our disagreements and examine the three points they deal with in the order that you presented them in your letter of April 17.

1. *The United Nations intervention in South Lebanon.*

First of all, let's suppose, as you affirm, that the UN troops constitute a proimperialist army. According to you the intervention of these troops in South Lebanon has no other purpose than to replace the Zionist occupation, which under the circumstances is illegitimate according to the norms of the UN, with an occupation enjoying international legitimacy but identical in character to that of the Israelis. You write, "Even if all the Israeli forces left Lebanon under the 'pressure' of the UN troops, it would result in the replacement of one proimperialist army by another proimperialist occupying force." Again according to you, as a result the Fourth International must demand the full and immediate withdrawal of the UN troops at the same time as the withdrawal of the Zionist army.

In our opinion this attitude is a model of schematism and abstraction. One has only to examine the demand that flows from it: the total, immediate, and simultaneous withdrawal of UN troops and Zionist troops from South Lebanon. The least cunning Shiite peasant or Palestinian refugee will answer you: "thanks a lot, but how do you propose to force this double withdrawal?" How would you answer him? That our sections in Europe, Africa, and Asia will force the withdrawal of the UN troops at the same time as our section in Israel will impose this on the Zionist army? This is too ridiculous to be believed. Maybe you'd counsel him instead to take up arms in order to force this double retreat. He'll answer you that while it's possible for the patriotic forces to force the retreat of the UN troops, they're in no shape whatsoever to rout the Zionist army. So then what? The only thing you'd have left to say to him, in his own language, is "rely on Allah!"

This, comrades, because basically your attitude is emi-

nently abstract, because it is not at all based on "a concrete analysis of the concrete situation." A little analogy will demonstrate this to you more clearly.

Take a city in the United States, Boston, for example. Bands of white racists, superior in numbers and arms, invade the Black ghetto following demonstrations by the population of that ghetto against segregation. Federal troops then intervene and ring the borders of this ghetto, stopping the racists from getting in. Question: What should be the slogan of the American Trotskyists? Answer of the USec Bureau: The intervention of the federal troops has replaced the probourgeois bands with another repressive bourgeois force; we therefore demand the simultaneous withdrawal of the federal troops and the racists. Our answer is different: we'll demand that the federal troops enforce the application of anti-segregation laws and not intervene in the internal affairs of the Black community, without, however, demanding the withdrawal of these troops. We'll call on the Black population to continue its struggle for its rights and not hesitate to confront the federal troops if they try to oppose this struggle. You know that during the racial violence in Boston the American Trotskyists did more: they organized a campaign demanding the intervention of federal troops! If memory serves us right, the USec Bureau approved of this campaign.

But getting back to South Lebanon: Especially since the war in Lebanon began in 1975, the Zionist invasion has always been the sword of Damocles, constantly invoked by Lebanese and Arab reactionaries in order to strangle the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. What stopped this invasion—which was compensated for by limited interventions of the Zionist army on several occasions—was above all the attitude of the Americans, who were worried about preserving the fragile Lebanese bourgeois equilibrium. Since 1970, every time the Zionist army intervened in South Lebanon the American government has demanded its total and immediate withdrawal. During the Lebanese war, the Zionist army succeeded in protecting its borders through a practically impenetrable network of barbed wire, electronic detection systems, and mine fields, along the 77 kilometers of the line separating Lebanon and Israel. In addition, it armed reactionary bands of Christian peasants in the frontier villages to broaden its "safety belt" in Lebanese territory. This belt was particularly necessary because the Zionist army could not stop the bombardment of border kibbutzim by the Palestinian resistance or the training of commandos for penetration into Israel either through Jordan or by sea. But, especially in the beginning of March, the evolution of the fighting in South Lebanon between the reactionary Christians and the patriotic Lebano-Palestinian forces clearly demonstrated that the former were not in shape to buckle the "safety belt." That's why the Begin government judged it necessary to invade South Lebanon, this time ignoring American injunctions in order to complete the belt of occupied territories with which the Zionist state had encircled itself in 1967.

By getting the UN to intervene, the American government is trying to impose its own concept of a settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. "It is a question of imposing a *Pax Americana* in the region." We're all agreed on that. But precisely what does this *Pax Americana* consist of? As far as Israel's security is concerned, we think that it is based essentially on the principle of an international guarantee of the 1949 borders of the Zionist state, with the

reactionary Arab forces (in Lebanon: the Lebanese army and possibly Syrian troops) taking the responsibility themselves for repressing all attempts at anti-Zionist armed struggle launched from their territories once the Zionist army has withdrawn behind its borders. (The Soviet Union shares this conception, with the slight difference that it is trying to make sure that its own "clients" participate in the settlement.) The Zionists have an opposed conception: Israel must count only on itself; for security reasons it is out of the question that the Zionist army retreat from all the territories occupied in 1967. This is the main disagreement between Washington and Tel Aviv, between the best interests of American imperialism and those of the Zionist establishment.

In light of the above, it would appear clear that the UN troops didn't intervene in order to "smash" the Lebano-Palestinian patriotic forces as some have maintained, including inside our international. It would be completely absurd from the point of view of accomplishing such a task to replace 30,000 Zionist soldiers supported by artillery, air, and naval power with 6,000 poorly-armed and not at all motivated UN troops. The UN troops can (just barely) stop the infiltration by small groups of combatants into the territory under their control. In order to do this, they're counting on the rightist leadership of the Palestinian resistance itself! They can in no way eliminate the armed presence of the patriotic Lebano-Palestinian forces in the rest of South Lebanon; they can't at all effectively protect the Zionist state. However, their presence can stop the Zionist army from reoccupying South Lebanon. The Zionists have understood this, as have the reactionary Lebanese Christians who, because of the UN intervention, have been deprived of their trump card: the Zionist intervention. That's why they strongly protested against the UN intervention. The declaration by Begin to which you refer in citing the *Herald Tribune* is a pitiful attempt on his part to justify his action and the results to which it has led in face of criticisms from the opposition. Besides, read it carefully: "Its long-range effectiveness is still in doubt." Itzhak Rabin was much more direct in an interview he gave to *Paris-Match* (May 19, 1978):

"*Paris-Match*: Is the presence of UN troops on the Lebanese border a constriction on Israel?

"Rabin: That can happen and I think it will be inevitable; suppose the Palestinians succeed in what they're now trying to do, that is, retake their South Lebanese bases for attack against Israel. The UN troops are incapable of stopping them from moving south. That's already been proven. But the UN troops will prevent Israel from effectively responding to any Palestinian attack launched from South Lebanon. You see where this leads us. The Palestinians are going to act anyway, in spite of the UN presence. But Israel risks having problems in defending itself. In the end, we're the ones who are going to suffer from this."

The UN protection of the Lebanese border is in the interests of the patriotic Lebano-Palestinian forces. The UN troops can't hamper the anti-Zionist struggle of these forces if they are deployed along the border: it's impenetrable in any case for the resistance fighters. The presence of the UN troops makes it impenetrable for Zionist army (by land), thus facilitating the activity of the patriotic forces throughout Lebanon. That's why we don't demand a pure and simple withdrawal of the UN troops. However, the presence of these same UN troops in the nonborder regions

and their attempt to stop the armed patriotic fighters from penetrating into these regions constitutes interference in internal Lebanese affairs. We are firmly opposed to this and demand *the withdrawal of UN troops from these regions and their deployment along the border*. We call upon the UN to force the total, immediate, and unconditional withdrawal of the Zionist army from South Lebanon (if not, it will be considered that its troops are protecting the Zionist occupation of Lebanese territory and they will be treated accordingly). Moreover, we think that the French troops, though intervening in the framework of the United Nations, have a special reactionary task that devolves on them as a result of their character of imperialist intervention troops, as well as the French designs on Lebanon. We demand the withdrawal of these troops from Lebanon.

These are the general lines of our position on the subject of the UN troops in South Lebanon. This position is detailed in a long resolution that we adopted on May 1. We think that the Fourth International as a whole should adopt the same position. The total withdrawal of the UN troops—in the framework of the current relationship of forces—can only lead to a reoccupation by the Zionist army of everything south of the Litani River. In the present circumstances, the demand for total withdrawal is a grave political error. It is also totally rejected by those mainly concerned: the peasant masses of South Lebanon.

Up to now we have stayed in the framework of the Boston analogy, the framework of defining the UN troops as a proimperialist army. But while no debate is possible as to the character of American federal troops, the same is not true for UN troops. You say, "Since the Korean war the Fourth International has not had the slightest doubt: UN troops constitute an army that defends the interests of world imperialism." This is serious, comrades! It's serious that the *dubito* of the leadership of our international is so slight. Because just as the productive forces have continued their growth after 1938, the relationship of forces inside the UN (and outside the UN!) has evolved, and evolved considerably, since the Korean war! At that time, the UN was exclusively dominated by American imperialism; People's China was excluded; the Soviet Union did not attend the meetings of the Security Council that decided on the Korean intervention. Today the USSR and People's China participate in Security Council meetings as permanent and full members with veto rights (it's true that China's role is rather modest). The relationship of forces within the General Assembly is no longer favorable to imperialists. Under these conditions, could it be possible that nothing has changed in terms of the character of UN troops? Then why didn't they intervene in Vietnam, thus giving "international legitimacy" to the imperialist occupation? Why didn't they intervene recently in Zaïre? Come on, comrades!

UN troops are no longer an imperialist intervention force; they rather constitute an *army charged with preserving the status quo jointly agreed to by American imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy*. Their role is not always and everywhere reactionary: from 1956 to 1967 the UN emergency forces deployed along the Egyptian-Israeli armistice line much more protected the radicalization of Nasserist Arab nationalism than the "interests of world imperialism." It would have been stupid to demand their withdrawal; we hope that no component of the Fourth International did so. In South Lebanon, the UN troops

have no *offensive* role. The Soviet Union can force their withdrawal at any time. For our movement, this isn't just some trifling nuance. Insofar as we haven't changed our analysis of the nature of the USSR and insofar as the political map of the world has changed since the Korean war, it's high time to correct our analysis of the role of the United Nations.

2. *The participation of the RCG fighters in the military efforts in South Lebanon.*

On this subject we admit we were surprised, unpleasantly surprised, to see that your disagreement didn't concern the modalities of the participation (with whom? under what conditions?) but the participation itself.

Your point of view comes close to caricature: our Lebanese organization being at embryonic stage, "the participation of our comrades in the military effort risks having very little effect other than disorienting and perhaps dealing a heavy blow to the small nucleus of a revolutionary organization which is in need of strengthening." So how can it be strengthened? The method is the tried and true old tactic: "effort to regularly publish a paper. . . , increase in our work to accumulate cadres (?), insertion among the toiling masses (???)".

We don't know if the author or authors of the April 17 letter are great builders of organizations implanted among the toiling masses. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: their concept of the building of an organization implanted among the masses is diametrically opposed to that which presided over the founding of our international. Without reviewing the attitude of our European sections in the struggle against Nazism (they were almost all embryonic at the time), we'll be content with quoting the resolution of the 1938 founding congress concerning the Far East. The tasks of the Chinese section *which was super embryonic*, were defined in this way:

"In China, in particular, the Bolshevik-Leninists must participate bravely in the anti-Japanese struggle and raise thereby slogans corresponding to the needs of the struggle and the interests of the masses at each new stage. By these means they will win the confidence of the masses and will be able to mobilize them in their own independent organizations for revolutionary action." *Documents of the Fourth International, 1933-1940*, Pathfinder Press, p. 241.)

Yes, comrades! It is by participating bravely in the struggles of the masses that we gain their confidence; it's in this way that the propaganda we put out gets the slightest hearing from the masses and "cadres"; it's in this way that a revolutionary organization acquires even the slightest chance to strengthen itself. Because the "cadres," that is, revolutionaries committed and devoted to the struggle, have all participated in the combat against the Zionist invasion of their territory and country. We're not going to recruit the militants our organization needs from among the cowards safely entrenched in their own homes.

If we had followed your recommendations, comrades, our group (and therefore Trotskyism) would have been irreparably discredited; we wouldn't even have been able to distribute any written material. Even more, not only would our organization have been "disoriented," but it would also have assuredly lost its best militants, who from the outset of the Zionist invasion insisted that we participate in the fight of the Lebano-Palestinian resistance. In our case, to take account of the weakness of our forces means not to send all our comrades into South Lebanon at the same

time and not to expose comrades to serious dangers on the battlefield. It didn't mean to watch from afar while ALL the left parties and groups of our country were fighting and then lavish our lessons of "political clarification" on them.

Comrades, we acted with full understanding of the motive and not out of "romanticism." We think we fulfilled our duty; we think we've strengthened the cause of Trotskyism in our country, if not in the entire region (all the left from neighboring countries is represented in Beirut); we think we've increased our opportunities. We think your attitude is shameful; we feel that you should have instead organized a multileveled campaign of support for our organization; we think that a new self-criticism on your part is entirely called for, a genuine self-criticism that is sincere and consistent, and not another consolation prize that you would award us.

This said, there are two comments that seemed to us necessary in relation to this question:

—The first concerns the political conduct of the leadership of our international. It can be described by a stock formula: a 180 degree turn! How can it be described otherwise when the leadership of our international, after having advocated a "guerrillaist" orientation for our Latin American embryos, an orientation scarcely "implanted among the toiling masses," comes around to reproaching our Lebanese embryo for having participated in an anti-imperialist resistance war waged by the entirety of the political mass movement of its country? The stick was bent in one direction, agreed! In order to correct this maybe it was necessary to bend it in the other direction, agreed again! But it is now high time to correct this definitively; if not, a danger even graver than leftist infantilism will threaten us: rightist senility, refossilization!

—Our second remark deals with the criteria of size used in our international: they must be made relative. It's impossible to evaluate the political role of an organization solely by considering the number of members it has, without taking into account the population of its country. Our RCG would be totally insignificant in India; in Lebanon it is a well-known component of the far left with a political audience that is not insignificant. In the United States the SWP is embryonic; an organization of its quantitative importance in Lebanon would be sufficient for leading the toiling masses toward the seizure of power! !!

3. *The Fatah commando operation.*

We don't contest the right of revolutionaries to pass judgment on this operation. Only we think it is inappropriate for them to pass judgments of "a moral or pseudo-political order" (see the text of the interview in *Inprecor/IP*) on this type of operation.

To characterize it as "terrorist" (sic), "disastrous," and "unfortunate" as you did in your March 22 declaration has a rather moralizing connotation.

The arguments you put forward in your April 17 letter are clearly pseudo-political.

We are not going to go back over the actual circumstances of this operation, the fact that it was the intervention of armed Zionist bands that transformed it into a slaughter, as even some survivors stated. Let's also leave aside the humbug that consists in saying that this operation "fits into the framework of the general political orientation

of the PLO," whereas in past years the PLO has abandoned armed struggle for strictly political and diplomatic struggles, before being betrayed by Sadat. Let's just consider your arguments:

"Such an operation," you say, "doesn't help to ensure the long-term mobilization of the Palestinian masses in the struggle." What do you know about it? ? ? This is a pedantic and gratuitous affirmation, a worn-out cliché. In fact, Fatah's operation greatly increased the morale of the Palestinian masses and their vanguard fighters; it created the conditions for mobilization which enabled them to valiantly resist the Zionist invasion of South Lebanon. All military operations of the resistance in occupied Palestine to the extent that they do not end in defeat—that is, in a sacrifice of the participants without anything gained in return—fuel the mobilization of the Palestinian masses in the short, medium, and long term. They signify that the Palestinian people will not give Zionism any respite.

—You also say that such an operation "harms the goal of dividing the Zionist camp and winning the Israeli workers to support the rights of the Palestinians." For, you explain, "the Zionist bloc is not inevitably (fortunately!) a social and political monolith." The proof: "Recent events, especially the large demonstration in Tel Aviv, point to the possibility that the Israeli masses could be mobilized against the policy of the Zionist regime." Congratulations, comrades! You have mastered the boomerang technique. Haven't you noticed that the events you're talking about took place precisely AFTER the Fatah operation? It's *after* this operation that the Zionist state experienced one of the most important strike waves in its history, the first to unfold while a military mobilization was under way, as well as the most important and most representative pacifist and "anti-extremist" demonstration in its history. This should have at least prompted you to think twice before preemptorily affirming that the Fatah operation "harms the goal of dividing the Zionist camp"! In fact, it's by creating a permanent climate of insecurity within Israel—despite all the "safety belts" surrounding the Zionist state—that the Palestinian resistance can divide the Zionist camp, convince a section of the Israelis of the fact that the intransigence of their government places them in direct danger, and induce them to demand "peace now" and "de-Zionization" tomorrow!

Your arguments are pretty weak, comrades, and you don't explain at all *in what way* the Fatah operation "doesn't help" and "harms," etc., contenting yourselves with gratuitous statements. You don't explain how, according to you, the Palestinians can continue their war of national liberation, their anti-Zionist military operations, without running the risk of slaughters like the one on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road, given the military inclinations of the Zionists. That's why we think what's involved are pseudo-political arguments, behind which are the outline of "fear of bourgeois public opinion" in the imperialist countries, which finds the pale reactions of the Palestinians against Zionist atrocities "abominable," Zionism being a defender of Western civilization or the incarnation of its guilt

complex (depending on the political leanings of the opinion groups). To conclude, we can't resist the temptation to remind you of Trotsky's point of view on the taking and executing of hostages, expressed in, oh, so very brutal terms:

"However, it is possible and even probable that our moralists will refuse to say candidly that which is, and will attempt to beat about the bush: 'To kill at the front is one thing, to shoot hostages is something else again!' This argument, as we shall shortly prove, is simply stupid. But let us stop for a moment on the ground chosen by our adversary. The system of hostages, you say, is immoral 'in itself'? Good, that is what we want to know. But this system has been practiced in all the civil wars of ancient and modern history. It obviously flows from the nature of civil war itself. From this it is possible to draw only one conclusion, namely, that the very nature of civil war is immoral . . .

"Entangled in his contradictions, the moralist might perhaps try to argue that an 'open' and 'conscious' struggle between two camps is one thing, but the seizure of nonparticipants in the struggle is something else again. This argument, however, is only a wretched and stupid evasion. In Franco's camp fought tens of thousands who were duped and conscripted by force. The Republican armies shot at and killed these unfortunate captives of a reactionary general. Was this moral or immoral? Furthermore, modern warfare, with its long-range artillery, aviation, poison gases, and finally, with its train of devastation, famine, fires, and epidemics, inevitably involves the loss of hundreds of thousands and millions, the aged and the children included, who do not participate directly in the struggle. People taken as hostages are at least bound by ties of class and family solidarity with one of the camps, or with the leaders of that camp. A conscious selection is possible in taking hostages. A projectile fired from a gun or dropped from a plane is let loose by hazard and may easily destroy not only foes but friends, or their parents and children. Why then do our moralists set apart the question of hostages and shut their eyes to the entire content of civil war? Because they are not too courageous. As 'leftists' they fear to break openly with revolution. As petty bourgeois they dread destroying the bridges to official public opinion." (*Their Morals and Ours*, pp. 55-57, Pathfinder Press edition, 1975.)

We hope, comrades, that we've won you to our point of view. In any event, we are ready to continue the discussion and we ask that you (1) add your April 17 letter and our reply to the dossier that we've asked be put on the agenda of the next United Secretariat meeting; (2) publish them in their entirety along with the previous letters in the international bulletin without delay, especially since the debate has direct bearing on the next world congress, at least concerning the general political resolution.

Communist greetings,
Central Committee Revolutionary Communist Group
Lebanese section of the Fourth International

July 11, 1978 Letter from United Secretariat Bureau
to RCG Central Committee

July 11, 1978

Central Committee
Revolutionary Communist Group
Lebanon

Dear Comrades,

We have received your letter of June 1. As you already know from the telephone conversation between a comrade of the United Secretariat Bureau and Comrade Jaber, the Bureau decided to invite a representative of the RCG to participate in the July meeting of the United Secretariat, where the exchange of correspondence between the Bureau and the RCG leadership was on the agenda. At that meeting, the United Secretariat decided to publish in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin this correspondence, including this letter.

1. *The United Nations intervention in southern Lebanon.*

You draw a parallel between your position and the position adopted by comrades of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States during the events in Boston in 1975. But the analogy does not stand up. In the case of Boston, the SWP comrades demanded, as part of their campaign to mobilize the Black community and its supporters against racist attempts to block school desegregation, that the federal government utilize troops to stop the racist attacks and to enforce the desegregation of the schools. It was a demand upon a bourgeois government to enforce its own laws and court rulings, in its own territory, against racist discrimination and violence—laws and rulings which, while limited, our movement supports. The UN occupation of southern Lebanon is not at all analogous; rather the opposite. The UN is not a government but a pious fraud covering for imperialist objectives. Its occupation of southern Lebanon is an imperialist project aimed at the Arab masses and which violates their right to self-determination, carried out by troops under foreign imperialist control for imperialist objectives which we not only do not support but which we oppose.

In analyzing the reasons for the UN occupation, you state: "By getting the UN to intervene, the American government is trying to impose its own concept of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. 'It is a question of imposing a *Pax Americana* in the region.' We're all agreed on that. But precisely what does this *Pax Americana* consist of? As far as Israel's security is concerned, we think that it is based essentially on the principle of an international guarantee of the 1949 borders of the Zionist state, with the reactionary *Arab* forces (in Lebanon: the Lebanese army and possibly Syrian troops) taking responsibility themselves for repressing all attempts at anti-Zionist armed struggle launched from their territories once the Zionist army has withdrawn behind its borders. (The Soviet Union shares this conception with the slight difference that it is trying to make sure that its own 'clients' participate in the settlement.) The Zionists have an opposed conception: Israel must count only on itself; for security reasons it is out of the question that the Zionist army retreat from all the territories occupied in 1967. This is the main disagreement between Washington and Tel

Aviv, between the best interests of American imperialism and those of the Zionist establishment."

Your conclusion is that "The UN protection of the Lebanese border is in the interests of the patriotic Lebanese-Palestinian forces," and that we should call for the deployment of the UN forces along the border while calling for their withdrawal from the nonborder regions.

Your conception appears to be that there is a basic clash of interests between Washington and Tel Aviv, which you deduce from their diplomatic positions regarding their proposed "settlements" of the Middle East question. There undoubtedly are frictions and clashes of interests between the Israeli ruling circles and the U.S. imperialists. In each phase of the struggle in the Middle East, whether in open war or in negotiations, the Israelis will look out for their interests first and foremost, and vice versa for Washington. But you give far too much weight to the diplomatic stance taken by Washington, as opposed to its basic policies.

First of all, even if you were correct that there is a basic clash of interests between Washington and Tel Aviv, in any case, Washington's objectives can be no other than to maintain imperialist domination in the region in general, and to defend U.S. imperialist interests in particular. Any utilization of UN troops by the Americans can only have as its objectives to further these interests. One imperialism—especially the world's most ruthless and powerful—cannot be viewed as a "lesser evil" to another. Our job is to point that out to the toiling masses.

But over and above this, it is wrong to view the aim of U.S. imperialism as to first and foremost achieve a "settlement," much less any particular "solution" being peddled at any one time by the State Department. Imperialism is *expansionist* and *aggressive* in its very nature; any "settlements" it agrees to are made within the context of the protection and extension of its interests. Fundamental to U.S. policy in the Middle East is maintaining the Israeli state as an imperialist beachhead in the whole region. Thus there is an overriding, fundamental *identity* of interests between Washington and Tel Aviv.

It is false to say that the Zionists believe that "Israel must count only on itself." Israel always has and for the foreseeable future *must* rely upon the United States, and the U.S. utilizes Israel to defend its own interests in the region. This fact is underscored by the massive U.S. military aid Israel received following the 1973 war, which has put Israel in the position of being able—militarily—to wage offensive war against all the Arab powers combined. One of the objectives of the Israeli action was to demonstrate this fact. U.S. policy has been based on achieving this capacity for Israel. It is on the basis of this *threat* that Washington seeks to impose a "settlement" in the region. Therefore U.S. objectives were not *harmed* by the Israeli invasion, they were *enhanced* even if Washington, for diplomatic and domestic reasons, took some verbal distance from it.

We should remember that in the situation following the Vietnam war, the antiwar attitude of the American people is a factor Washington must take into account. It is less able to intervene either directly or openly around the world. For example, when they could not intervene directly

into Angola for this reason, they supported covertly the South African invasion, while publicly denying any involvement with it. Also involved, as you point out, is a diplomatic stance toward the Arab regimes; Washington does want the help of these regimes in "disciplining" the Palestinians. It has already gotten such help, most notably in Jordan in 1970, and more recently in the Syrian attacks on the Palestinians in Lebanon. But Israel shares these same objectives.

What are the real results of the Israeli invasion and UN occupation?

Let's ask the question, could the United Nations have sent troops to occupy southern Lebanon before the Israeli invasion? If it had tried, wouldn't the UN troops have more nakedly appeared to be what they in fact are—tools of imperialism? The invasion set the stage for the entry of the UN troops under the guise of "peacemakers." Of course, we can say that the Israelis would prefer to occupy southern Lebanon themselves. They would have undoubtedly done so if they could have gotten away with it politically. But for international as well as domestic political reasons, the Israelis could not occupy the region for a protracted period. Consequently Tel Aviv has its own reasons for viewing the UN intervention as a political success. The Israeli invasion achieved creating a situation where the Palestinian forces were compelled to leave the area, and be kept out by a supposedly "neutral" UN force that is in fact under imperialist control. This allowed the Israelis to gradually withdraw—all the while threatening to reintervene if the UN forces are not able to contain the Palestinians. This was also useful for the Zionist rulers in attempting to defuse the opposition to the invasion that developed among the Israeli Jewish masses themselves, as well as among other peoples including the American people. That is why Begin said that the UN occupation was a "political achievement" for Israel.

Your argument that the UN troops can "stop the Zionist army from reoccupying the south of Lebanon" but can only "just barely" stop the infiltration of Palestinian commandos is self-contradictory. More important, it would be a great illusion to think that the UN troops could or would stop another Israeli move into the region, should the UN's "long-range effectiveness" not measure up to Israeli standards.

A more dangerous argument you raise is that the nature of the United Nations itself has changed. The point made in the letter of April 17 by the Bureau of the United Secretariat that UN troops have always intervened in order to carry out imperialist interests remains a fact. You do not reply on this point, particularly concerning the intervention in the Congo in the early 1960s. You state, however, that from "1956 to 1967 the UN emergency forces deployed along the Egyptian-Israeli armistice line much more protected the radicalization of Nasserite Arab nationalism than the 'interests of world imperialism.'"

This interpretation is false. In reality a conflict broke out in the imperialist camp in 1956 between those who considered that it was still possible to successfully apply the classical colonialist methods (France and England) and on the other hand, Washington, which had understood that such methods would only lead to catastrophe. Moreover, Washington was interested in furthering its own interests in the region at the expense of its imperialist allies. Given the relationship of forces on a world scale and the attitude of the Soviet bureaucracy, the line of the United States

came out on top, and this was in the long-term interests of imperialism. This is the context in which the UN sent its troops (emergency forces): not to protect—even if only objectively—"the radicalization of Nasserist Arab nationalism," but rather to prevent the possibility that this nationalism could take on a much more dangerous dynamic and spread throughout the Arab world.

"UN troops are no longer an imperialist intervention force," you go on to write, "they rather constitute *an army charged with preserving the status quo jointly agreed to by American imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy.*"

Let's accept this statement for a moment. What would that mean? What is the "status quo" in the Middle East? In the world? In other words, the function of the UN troops would be to defend the status quo of the world capitalist system against the development of the socialist revolution. The fact that the Soviet bureaucracy can support such an operation says nothing about any change in the nature of the UN. Ever since the 1930s the bureaucracy of the USSR has sought compromises with the imperialists which were fundamentally aimed at preserving the status quo or a readjustment of the status quo made necessary by wars, revolutions, etc.

This counterrevolutionary role of the Kremlin (and Peking) was exemplified in its refusal to vote against the U.S. motion to send the UN troops to Lebanon in the Security Council—leaving aside the question that they shouldn't be covering for this imperialist setup at all by being members of it.

The character of the United Nations has in no way changed. It is not basically different from that "thieves kitchen" the League of Nations, which Lenin denounced. It has not become, as you suggest, a kind of agency jointly dominated by American imperialism and the Kremlin, with troops at its disposal for "jointly agreed" progressive causes like invading Lebanon. It remains dominated by imperialism. The "relationship of forces" in the General Assembly far from being "no longer in favor of imperialism," remains one, even in terms of votes, where the imperialist powers and the capitalist semicolonial powers under their domination (most under reactionary dictatorships) remain an overwhelming majority as against the bureaucratic workers states. No one speaks for the working people and oppressed masses of the world. In the Security Council, the imperialists have a veto. But more important, the UN is of use to the imperialists only insofar as it serves as a useful cover for some of their operations. It has no *power* at all. *All* important decisions of world politics are made outside its "deliberations." Whenever its "decisions" run counter to imperialist interests, they are ignored. If ever the imperialists decide the UN no longer serves their interests they will abandon it just as they did the League of Nations. Your position that the presence of the Soviet Union and China has transformed the UN so that it is no longer a tool of the imperialists naively rejects world realities. Your position that it has become a force "charged with preserving the status quo" and that this can be progressive, at least in the case of Lebanon, borders on accepting the Stalinist conception that the world relationship of forces has so changed that imperialism can be forced to accept "peaceful coexistence" with the world revolution.

To conclude, changes have indeed taken place in the composition of the UN, but this has not produced any qualitative change in its nature. UN troops intervene at

times when the decisive imperialist countries judge it necessary for counterrevolutionary purposes in situations where the imperialists themselves are unable or find it difficult to do so directly. In the case of Lebanon, we repeat, the UN troops have intervened as an instrument of a strategy corresponding to the long-term interests of imperialism, an instrument of the "*Pax Americana*," which will not have much "*pax*." It is simply grotesque to make subtle distinctions between the various national contingents, as if the French could have one function and the Swedish another. Do you perhaps think that the Fourth International should ask that the LCR carry out a campaign for withdrawal of the French troops but that the KAF should remain silent or give advice about the deployment of the Swedish contingent?

We will be briefer concerning *the question of the raid by Fatah*.

The reason that the Palestinian resistance was able to withdraw without excessively grave consequences on the military field of the invasion of Lebanon was because its contingents avoided frontal confrontations with a technically superior army and resorted to the usual kinds of operations which the *fedayeen* have long been trained in. They had no other choice and the Tel Aviv operation had nothing to do with this.

It is not true that the mass mobilizations in Tel Aviv demanding "peace now" were a result of the Fatah operation. The mass actions were in response to the *invasion of Lebanon* which dashed the hopes for peace developing in growing layers of the Israeli Jewish masses. This new mass movement is of singular importance. Tactics in Israel should be geared to linking this sentiment to the concrete struggles of the Arab masses living under the Israeli state. Tactics such as the Fatah raid cut across this perspective giving no lead to either oppositionist Jewish masses or the Arabs in Israel.

In discussing what tactics and strategy the resistance should utilize in Israel, we have to break out of the framework of the false dichotomy: "continuation of the armed struggle (by which is meant actions like the Fatah raid)" or "acceptance of a peaceful solution (by which is meant acceptance of the Zionist state)." Nor is it a matter of supporting spontaneous actions by Arabs living under direct control of the Zionist state, or feeling that we cannot criticize actions by the resistance within Israel. The fact is that the PLO has not given the masses of Arabs living under the occupation a political strategy that can carry forward the strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of mass struggle we have seen develop in the past year or two; nor has it shown how to link these struggles of the Arab masses with the beginning of the movement among Israeli Jews, including the struggles of the Israeli working class. Isn't *our* program much better suited to deal with these problems than the simplistic answers given by the PLO, which, moreover, have been tried and found wanting? Applying the method of the Transitional Program to these struggles and thereby coming up with a concrete program for them seems to us the indicated way forward. Within this framework we have to say what we think about the Fatah action.

Thirdly, concerning the "*participation of the RCG fighters in the military efforts in South Lebanon*."

The quotation you cite from the documents of the founding conference of the Fourth International concerning China do not seem to us to have much to do with the operation you were engaged in. First of all your action was not part of the apparently well organized retreat of the Palestinian forces from the region as the Israeli army advanced, since it took place after that. There was no massive resistance at the time of your action which you were a part of. Since your operation lasted only a few days and you were careful "not to expose comrades to serious dangers on the battlefield," it appears that it was more designed as a symbolic gesture than as participation in a mass movement.

Comrades, the Lebanese section has very few members. Actions by yourselves or other small left groups cannot substitute for the failures of the Arab regimes (and the Soviet Union) to effectively counter the Israeli aggression. And merely symbolic military actions do not advance the struggle of the masses or our section. Our tasks lie in another direction: to participate in the genuine mass movements with a clear political line to build the Lebanese section. In this framework we can develop effective propaganda, recruitment, and cadre building. This will often mean swimming against the stream—for example, countering the positions of the PLO and other petty-bourgeois nationalists and the Stalinists on the nature of the UN and of its intervention in Lebanon.

This mass orientation should take into account the overall dead end of the line followed by the PLO, from their reliance on the bourgeois Arab regimes, hopes in big power diplomacy, to their "militarist" strategy of relying on military actions by a dedicated vanguard as opposed to the mobilization of the power of the masses. We should ask ourselves, why was there no *organized* massive opposition among the Lebanese and Palestinian masses to the Israeli invasion? Although our forces are small, shouldn't we be pointing in the direction of building such a mass movement which can take up the question of self-defense in a real and massive way, rather than engaging in actions that at best only reinforce the false strategy presented by the PLO? It is not a question of counterposing "propaganda" to "action," but *which* actions and orientations we should support.

We understand that you are working in a difficult situation. We understand the efforts you are making to establish links with the Palestinian movement. But if we want to build a revolutionary party in Lebanon we will have to politically counter the false conceptions dominant in the Palestinian movement, while we at the same time participate in the real struggles of the Palestinian and Lebanese masses to the best of our abilities, and defend unconditionally the Palestinian and general Arab struggle against Israeli, U.S., and all other imperialist attacks.

Communist greetings,
s/Stateman,
for the United Secretariat