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# Workers States and Stalinism After the Second World War

Y. Sakai

[The following article, *Workers States and Stalinism After the Second World War*, was written and presented for discussion for the ninth national congress of the Japanese section, which was held in October 1979.

[The Japanese section took a "new mass vanguard" type orientation in 1968-71, when the mass of students and a significant layer of organized young workers exploded in militant radicalization. In 1972 the section recognized the political defeat of the students/young workers' radicalization and the beginning of the organized workers to move as a class, and the section, at its early 1973 national congress, adopted a rather classic position of the proletarian united-front tactics. This was our basis on which we took a critical attitude toward the spontaneist "new mass vanguard" aspect of the tenth world congress *Capitalist Europe* document. However, our sixth national congress of 1973 had an illusion on the spontaneous capacity and possibilities in the new rise of workers mass struggles in the framework of Japan and at the level of international class struggles. Empirically the leadership of the section realized our spontaneist limitation in 1975 and 1976, and we made a major turn of our political orientation, keeping our position of the proletarian united-front tactics, through our Sanrizuka struggle against the new Tokyo international airport in 1977 and 1978.

[The October 1979 national congress has been a systematization of our basic ideas about the new structure of the current East Asian scale international class struggles and Japanese class struggles toward the 1980s. In this context of the ninth national congress of the Japanese section, we have been forced to reassess the basic problems of the world revolution and especially those of the Stalinism after the World War II. — Sakai, February 1980]

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## I

1) Until the 1950s since the victory of the 1917 Russian revolution, there had been a historical international concentration of the proletarian leftwing movements centered around the Soviet workers state. In the 1950s the leftwing workers mass movements in Western Europe and Japan and the radical petty-bourgeois nationalist movements in the colonial world gathered internationally around the Soviet and Chinese workers states. There was the worldwide Stalinist political hegemony of the international class struggles, and this global Stalinist hegemony was historically destined to develop its deepening internal crisis and nationalist differentiations in the 1960s and 1970s.

With the workers states as its central basis, and composed of the communist parties as working-class political formations in the imperialist and colonial countries, the Stalinist political hegemony of the international class struggles was proletarian in its basic class nature. But, at the same time, the precise political character of this Stalinist hegemony was fundamentally reformist and status-quo maintaining,

being opposed to the perspective of international proletarian permanent revolution.

And what is extremely important in this context is the decisive historical fact that it is only the Vietnamese people who have maintained a living revolutionary struggle in its direct continuity for the two decades all through the 1950s and the 1960s since the worldwide rise of worker-peasant mass-struggles were broken down halfway and got various major political defeats under the global hegemony of Stalinism and communist parties in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The actual international proletarian class struggles of the 1950s did not have any subjective force as an international motor-force of the proletarian permanent revolution. In other words, there was no actual proletarian motor-force which could overcome the Stalinist hegemony as a reformist and status-quo maintaining hegemony of the international proletarian class struggles, along the course of the international proletarian permanent revolution.

Consequently, the global Stalinist hegemony necessarily developed its internal crisis and nationalist decay in the 1960s and 1970s.

2) The crisis and nationalist decay developed first of all among the workers states themselves. The very status-quo maintaining character of the worldwide dual-power relations, definitely cut off from the perspective of international proletarian permanent revolution, was the heaviest burden for all the workers states. All the contradictions of the "socialism in one country," cut off from and opposed to the perspective of international socialist revolution, were necessarily reproduced among the workers states under the new situation and conditions after World War II.

Rather rapidly recovered from the economic blows during WWII, the Soviet nationalized planned economy made a relatively rapid growth in the 1950s, and the Soviet Union developed its nuclear missile weapons in confrontation with U.S. imperialism. Behind the Soviet economic growth and military strengthening there were the worker-peasant masses under the bureaucratic dictatorships in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European workers states. Under the bureaucratic dictatorships those masses were forced to support the economic growth and the military development in order to establish a status-quo-maintaining balance of forces between the Soviet Union and U.S. imperialism, without the perspective of international proletarian permanent revolution. The Kremlin bureaucracy's international reformist orientation of status-quo maintaining and the Soviet and other Eastern European dictatorial bureaucratic regimes were opposed to the worker-peasant masses' demands for their freedom and better lives. The contradictions were reflected by the rise of the East Berlin workers in 1953, the Polish workers' struggles and the Hungarian uprising of workers and peasants in 1956 and Khrushchev's political ropewalking of "de-Stalinization" in the Soviet Union.

We must see the same burden and contradictions in the case of Chinese workers state in the 1950s. The North Korean workers state was established through the Soviet mil-

itary occupation, and it was the newly established Chinese workers state which defended the North Korean workers state militarily in the Korean war as a class war with U.S. imperialism. However, the Soviet bureaucracy did not share the economic costs of the Chinese war-efforts in the Korean war, and the Chinese workers state had to pay for the costs by itself; in the 1950s China paid for the weapons which it bought from the Soviet Union for the Korean war! The workers state of China completed the land reform all over the country in the first half of the 1950s, and in the latter half of the 1950s it made the first step for a planned industrialization of the economy, modeled after the Soviet bureaucracy's "socialist construction in single country" and industrially relying on the Soviet economy and the Soviet bureaucracy. But the Soviet economy, which itself concentrated on developing the counter-balancing military capacity in face of U.S. imperialism, did not have a capacity to give its international leadership and effective material support to the general industrialization of the backward Chinese economy based on the vast peasant economy, and the nationalist egotism of the Kremlin bureaucracy's "socialism in one country" necessarily hindered truly cooperative relations between the two economies. The Soviet bureaucracy gave some international credits to China, but the Chinese workers state had to extract the "surplus" from the peasant economy and to sell it to the Soviet Union in order to buy Soviet machines and facilities for industrialization of the Chinese economy. This economic relation between the Soviet Union and China was a pure commercial deal, and it was necessarily unfavorable for economically backward China. Thus, when China made the first step for industrialization of economy, the Chinese leadership was forced to realize that the pace of the industrialization was definitely determined by the situation and possibilities of the rural peasant economy. Then the CCP took the policy of agricultural collectivization, an attempt to introduce a direct party-leadership and an organization into the peasant economy, but there was no qualitative rise of the agricultural labor productivity without a full support from the urban industries. Here was the unsolvable absolute contradiction. At the time China was under the economic blockade by the international imperialist system, and it was extremely difficult for China to utilize the advanced productive forces of the imperialist industrial economy even through a pure commercial deal.

Thus, the situation of the Chinese workers state was nearly hopeless under the status-quo maintaining structure of the worldwide dual power relations, cut off from the perspective of overthrowing the imperialist international system through the proletarian international class struggles, the perspective of international proletarian permanent revolution. China was encircled politico-militarily by imperialism; her population grew very rapidly; the economic industrialization could only expect a tortoise's pace definitely depending on the situation of the peasant economy; and China had to buy the industrial machines and facilities mainly from the Soviet Union in exchange for agricultural products and related light-industrial goods, but the Kremlin bureaucracy was very much cunning in the business. The logical conclusion was very clear; the absolute difficulties would continue "forever", the Chinese workers state and its bureaucracy would be forced to deepen their subordination to the Soviet Union and the Kremlin bureaucracy, and the former would necessarily be forced to have a deepening crisis in relation to the vast masses of Chinese workers and peasants. There were no other perspectives as long as the CCP kept the bloc

policy with the Kremlin bureaucracy and it did not stand for the perspective of international proletarian revolution. Attempting to revolt against the extremely difficult hopelessness, Mao introduced the "Great Leap Forward" movement of People's Communes as a single-country-socialist substitute of the proletarian international revolution. It was a nationalist orientation of adventure which tried to overcome the objective wall of the world proletarian revolution in the national framework of China through radically mobilizing the political enthusiasm and spontaneity of the peasant masses; this adventure of Mao reflected the deep distress of the third Chinese revolution. Here the Sino-Soviet conflict had already started. Mao's adventure ended as a total failure and collapse. At the same time the Sino-Soviet differences developed on the international policies and the Kremlin bureaucracy withdrew all its economic help to China very brutally. Thus, the extremely painful 1960s started for the workers state of China.

3) Already in the 1950s there were elements of crisis and nationalist differentiation among the workers states under the global Stalinist hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy. There underlay the following historical fact. Stalinism, which embodied the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state of the Soviet Union, had not been overcome through major and decisive advances of the international proletarian revolution during and immediately after WWII; the balance of forces between revolution and counter-revolution had been decisively improved in favor of the former with the formation of the worldwide dual-power relations between the workers states and imperialism, but the post-war Western European revolution failed under the Stalinist betrayals, the second East Asian revolution of the 1940s and 1950s was forced to a halt halfway, and thus the Stalinist political hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy became the overwhelming hegemony of the international proletarian class struggles in the 1950s.

The 1949 victory of the Chinese revolution was realized outside the direct control of the Kremlin bureaucracy and, under the impact and support of the Chinese revolution, the Vietnamese communist party was radicalized politically and carried out the Dien Bien Phu battle. Nevertheless, confronted with the international imperialist system reorganized around U.S. imperialism, these two East Asian revolutions could not overthrow nor be independent from the global Stalinist hegemony of the Kremlin bureaucracy based on the degenerated but strongest workers state of the Soviet Union. There were no independent revolutionary forces of the international proletarian class struggles, on which the two East Asian revolutions could rely in confronting the status-quo maintaining international hegemony of the Kremlin bureaucracy. This had been shown by the Yugoslav experience. The Yugoslav communist party carried out the revolution based on the popular armed struggles, and, when the party was drawn into an open clash with the international hegemony of the Kremlin bureaucracy, the Yugoslav workers state threw off the Greek communist party and its armed struggle and made an international political compromise with the international imperialist system.

The Kremlin bureaucracy represents and embodies the thermidorian degeneration of the first workers state as the international result of the stagnation and final defeat of the Western European proletarian revolution in the 1920s and 1930s and the defeat of the second Chinese revolution in the 1920s. The international hegemony of this conservative Kremlin bureaucracy dominated the inter-relations among

the workers states and their internal domestic situations in the 1950s, and it had prepared the deepening crisis and nationalist differentiation among the workers states in the 1960s and 1970s.

4) The crisis and differentiation of the Stalinist international hegemony developed progressively in the 1960s.

In the 1960s the Sino-Soviet conflict became open and sharpened, and the Kremlin bureaucracy's relations with the various communist parties entered a period of crisis. What hardened the Chinese attitude toward the Kremlin bureaucracy were the brutal withdrawal of the Soviet economic and engineering support to China and the formation of the status-quo-maintaining bloc between the Kremlin bureaucracy and U.S. imperialism to isolate the Chinese workers state internationally — that is, the Kremlin bureaucracy's acceptance of U.S. imperialism's policy of anti-Chinese U.S.-Soviet peaceful-coexistence. The Soviet bureaucracy's new approach to Yugoslavia angered the Albanian bureaucracy, and the latter sided with China in the Sino-Soviet conflict. While the Sino-Soviet conflict evolved sharper and sharper, the Rumanian bureaucracy took a neutral position on the conflict, developed its nationalist autonomy from the Kremlin bureaucracy and made its own compromising approach to the imperialist and neocolonialist bourgeoisies.

In the 1950s the workers states realized relatively rapid economic growth, but the economic growth began to stagnate in the 1960s. The economic situations were extremely difficult especially in China, North Korea and North Vietnam. In the same 1960s the imperialist economy, especially the Western European and Japanese economies, had overall expanding growth with the vast technological renovations. Consequently the productivity and technological gap deepened between the imperialist economies and the economies of the workers states; the leading position of the imperialist economy was strengthened further in relation with the workers states in the whole world economy. Thus, the 1950s' economic attraction of the workers states for the colonial bourgeoisie decreased, and the imperialist bourgeoisie strengthened their neocolonialist relations with the colonial bourgeoisie. Furthermore, since the latter half of the 1960s, the workers states themselves began to expand their economic relations with the imperialist economy. First the Soviet Union and other Eastern European workers states took the initiative, China followed them in the 1970s, and Vietnam took the same economic orientation toward the imperialist economy immediately after the 1975 victory. These moves reflect the fundamental economic difficulties of the workers states, which have been cut off from the most advanced system of productive forces in the imperialist economy and which have been under the enormous military burdens in confrontation with imperialism; the fundamental difficulties of the workers states as the result of the very facts that the world socialist revolution has not been accomplished, that the danger of worldwide class war exists and that the whole world economy has not been unified globally. In other words, being under heavy military burdens, the Soviet economy and its productive forces under the bureaucratic dictatorship does not have such a truly hegemonic capacity as is enable to unify the economies of workers states internationally. Its best evidence are the crisis and difficulties of the Soviet agriculture. The Vietnamese leadership is very much aware how much economic support Vietnam can expect from the Soviet Union and what quality it will be, so the leadership adopted the policy to introduce the advanced technologies from the imperialist countries just af-

ter the 1975 victory.

The coming of the DeGaulle bonapartist regime and the major political retreat of the French proletariat in 1958 and the major retreat of the Japanese Sohyo workers movement and defeat of the left-reformist Kakudo current in 1957-60<sup>2</sup> were the political starting point of the stagnation and the strengthening of economist rightwing tendencies in the Western European and Japanese workers movement of the 1960s. Through the 1960s the international bloc between the workers states and the proletarian movements of Western Europe and Japan was weakened progressively, and at the same time the communist parties of Western Europe and Japan became more and more rightwing and deepened their national reformism. In the case of the Japanese CP, the extreme difficulties of the Chinese workers state under the Sino-Soviet conflict accelerated the rightwing opportunist evolution of the JCP, which was pro-Peking at the time, in the reality of the Japanese class struggle. In any case, the global Stalinist hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy was weakened in relation to the proletariat of Western Europe and Japan.

In the colonial world the Stalinist hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy was weakened through the 1960s. In the early 1960s U.S. imperialism adopted the active expansionist economic policy and made the new neo-colonialist approaches to the colonial bourgeoisie actively, mobilizing the neo-imperialist Western Europe and Japan, and on the other hand U.S. imperialism started the new efforts to develop its own global military system in confrontation with the Soviet Union and became aggressive against the mass radicalization of the colonial liberation struggles. Thus in the colonial world the class struggles and the class polarization sharpened; the international "popular frontist" bloc between the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union and the colonial bourgeoisie retreated, and the neocolonialist and counter-revolutionary coups were organized in various colonial countries. The U.S. imperialist counter-offensive in the colonial world intended to finalize the international isolation of the Chinese workers state, and its final link was the direct military intervention of U.S. imperialism into Vietnam. In any case, the Kremlin bureaucracy's influence decreased in the colonial world through the sharpening of the class contradictions and the new mutual approach between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the neocolonialist bourgeoisie in the 1960s.

## II

5) Such were the realities of the crisis, national differentiation and weakening of the global Stalinist political hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy in the 1960s. The Vietnamese struggle against the U.S. imperialist military intervention since 1965 was carried out under such a situation of the Stalinist international hegemony and the extremely difficult situation of the international proletarian struggles as a whole.

This revolutionary struggle, as a combination of the South Vietnamese popular armed struggle and the North Vietnamese workers state, had a very specific combined nature and structure in relation to the actual Stalinist international hegemony.

First of all, in spite of the progressively developing nationalist differentiation and disintegration of the global Stalinist international hegemony, the North Vietnamese workers state and its Workers Party (communist party) leadership remained objectively and consciously under the general

framework of internally disintegrating Stalinist international hegemony, while developing its own national autonomy in the framework itself. And it is the North Vietnamese workers state and the Workers Party leadership which led and organized the South Vietnamese armed liberation struggle and which gave the final anti-capitalist class nature to the Southern struggle. This has been shown by the facts that the Northern regular army was mobilized fully at the final stage of the Southern military liberation and that the national unification of Vietnam was realized as the workers state under the overwhelming hegemony of the northern state.

Secondly, the South Vietnamese armed liberation struggle was a genuinely popular and national liberation struggle composed of the South Vietnamese popular and revolutionary anti-Ngo-Dinh-Diem armed struggle and the active support by the North Vietnamese. In other words, a worker-peasant alliance between the North Vietnamese workers state, based on the northern workers and peasants who supported the southern liberation struggle very actively, and the struggling southern peasant masses — this was the basic class structure of the national armed struggle for liberation of South Vietnam in the direct confrontation with the U.S. military intervention. And here was the very source of the subjective capacities for the prolonged and difficult struggle.

Thirdly, the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle as such carried out the whole struggle until its final victory, drawing a certain military and economic support from the workers states, with the balancing politico-military situation between imperialism and the workers states as its decisively important international background, in spite of the extremely betraying political roles of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. In this context, the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle was a forefrontal revolutionary war of the workers states against the international imperialist system under the worldwide dual-power relations, being out of the direct international control of the Soviet bureaucracy, and in spite of the conservative status-quo maintaining character of the global Stalinist political hegemony.

This very complex and combined character of the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle reflects all the contradictions and difficulties with which an East Asian revolution of the 1940s and 1950s under the leadership of the communist party, having come from the degenerated Third International, had to accomplish its final victory through the military struggle with the strongest imperialism of the U.S.A., having survived through the late 1950s and early 1960s when there was no subjective driving-force of the international proletarian revolution. The newly established North Vietnamese workers state could not follow the Yugoslav compromising international orientation of Tito, without totally giving up the southern revolution. After the rupture with the Kremlin bureaucracy, Tito's Yugoslavia stopped supporting the armed struggle of the Greek communist party, took the "neutral" stand toward the Korean War and signed a military agreement with U.S. imperialism in 1951. The North Vietnamese workers state accepted the Stalinist international hegemony jointly headed by the Kremlin and the Chinese bureaucracy, both of which had forced the Vietnamese to accept the reactionary northern and southern division of Vietnam at the Geneva conference.

At the same time, the new rise of the southern revolutionary struggle forced the northern leadership to develop its national autonomy especially in relation to the Kremlin bureaucracy. This difficult and contradictory situation did not

change all through the ten years struggle against U.S. imperialism from 1965 to 1975. In spite of the reactionary betrayal roles of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, the Workers Party leadership of the northern workers state, as the class leadership of the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle, had to rely on the Soviet and Chinese workers states internationally and to draw the military and economic supports as much as possible from both workers states. Without these difficult and contradictory efforts, there would not have been the final victory of the South Vietnam liberation struggle against gigantic U.S. imperialism.

6) The 1968 Tet offensive revealed the upper-limit of the U.S. counter-revolutionary military intervention and its definite lack of a perspective for the counter-revolutionary victory at Indochina; the 1972 great spring offensive opened the perspective for the final Vietnamese victory, and the final victory was realized in 1975. Through the whole process Laos and Cambodia became part of the Indochina liberation struggle, and Cambodia and Laos were also liberated from imperialism.

Through the uncompromising carrying-through of the struggle until the final and total victory over the U.S. direct military intervention, the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle has given a decisive international blow to U.S. imperialism as the central axis of the whole imperialist-colonialist international system, has opened the new rise of the international proletarian class struggles since 1968 and has changed the objective balance of forces between revolution and counter-revolution and the character of the whole world political situation. The Vietnamese blow to U.S. imperialism has undermined the international and domestic balance of the U.S. economy, thereby having opened the new period of crisis in the world capitalist economy. Under the new political, economic and military crisis of the whole international system centered around U.S. imperialism, the mass struggles of workers and peasants have begun to develop in the imperialist and colonial countries since 1968. Thus with the years 1968-71, the whole imperialist-colonialist international system has entered an overall crisis period, and a new historical period has been opened for the international proletarian class struggles, including the workers states. That is, the combined South Vietnam armed liberation struggle of the northern workers state and the southern masses has played the great role of a historical bridge from the proletarian international class struggles of the 1940s and 1950s to the new rise of the international class struggles since the end of the 1960s.

7) While the U.S.-dominating international imperialist system has drawn into the new crisis, and the proletarian international class struggles have begun to develop anew, dragging the workers states, the actual evolution of the proletarian international class struggles have been very contradictory, combining the old elements of the Stalinist international hegemony of the 1950s and the new elements of the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, the old elements since the 1950s have not disappeared from the scene immediately, but they have been projected on the scene of the proletarian international class struggles under the new conditions in the 1970s. Here were the political difficulties for the Vietnamese final struggle in 1972-75; here are the international difficulties for the nationally unified Vietnamese workers state today; and here is the cause why the proletarian international class struggles have developed and evolved in the intermediate, centristic, contradictory and limited manners since 1968-71.

The pro-imperialist and anti-communist rightwing Social Democracy and the global Stalinist political hegemony were the two major political forces of the international proletariat in the 1950s and 1960s; there was no subjective driving force of the international proletarian permanent revolution other than the Vietnamese struggle. These historical facts have been projected on the actual scene of the international class struggles in the 1970s. Here is the central question of the contemporary proletarian world revolution, the question of a new revolutionary proletarian subjective factor on a global scale.

In this context, there are two fundamental questions. First, the contradictions, difficulties and present crisis of the workers states, the perspective to solve the difficulties and crisis through the international proletarian revolution, and the day-to-day practical struggles along the course of the perspective. Second, the political characters of the international class struggles of the metropolitan proletariat and the colonial workers and peasants since 1968-71 and the question of formation of a new revolutionary proletarian subject on a global scale.

### III

8) The South Vietnam armed liberation struggle has created a new international balance of forces between imperialism and the workers states, under which it would be unquestionably possible to throw the whole international imperialist system and U.S. imperialism itself into a real falling-down crisis, if the Soviet and Chinese workers states were to stand strongly united behind the Vietnamese struggle and if the both were to call on the workers and peasants of all the imperialist and colonial countries. In fact, there was a global rise of the worker-peasant mass struggles in the imperialist and colonial countries since 1968-71. However, the improved international balance of forces for the workers states and the new spontaneous rise of international class struggles in themselves cannot solve the politico-economic difficulties and crisis of the workers states and cannot change the nationalist and conservative political nature of the bureaucracies. On the other hand, although there have been various important gains for the international proletariat, the post-1968-71 new rise of worker-peasant struggles under the imperialist-colonialist system have developed very spontaneously and have not been able to break through the limits of the reformist and bourgeois nationalist leaderships, thereby being unable to drag the workers states positively in their own class struggles and unable to assert their international control over the bureaucracies of the workers states.

Furthermore, the crisis of the workers states deepened more and more all through the 10 year period of the heroic Vietnamese struggle. When U.S. imperialism started the full scale military intervention into Vietnam in 1965, the bonapartist Sukarno regime was overthrown together with the Indonesian communist party by the counter-revolutionary coup and there was a wavering in the Liu Shaochi leadership of the CCP on the question of its relation with the Soviet Union. But Mao's cultural revolution finished the possibility of a Chinese approach to the Soviet Union definitely. At the final phase of the cultural revolution, the Soviet bureaucracy mobilized the armed forces along the Soviet and Mongolian borders with China and built up a heavy military pressure on China; thus the Sino-Soviet conflict entered a qualitatively higher stage. Under such a sharp confrontation with the Soviet Union, the bankruptcy of Mao's cultural

revolution, the necessarily deepened crisis of the Chinese bureaucracy and the deep crisis of the Chinese economy were gathering the forces for a great turn of the Chinese international policy toward U.S. imperialism. Its main responsibility was on the side of the Soviet bureaucracy. On the other hand, Brezhnev replaced Khrushchev in 1964, and the Brezhnev regime stopped the "de-stalinization" policy and tightened the bureaucratic control over the masses, and it began the effort to expand the military forces in confrontation with the newly expanding U.S. armed forces. The neo-conservatist Brezhnev regime made the military invasion of Czechoslovakia to crush the popular democratic movement in 1968. While U.S. imperialism deepened its crisis through its counter-revolutionary intervention into Indochina, the Soviet military forces were expanded and entered a new stage of the worldwide deployment. The strengthened Soviet military forces have become a new pressure on U.S. imperialism, and the Soviet military strength is acting as a factor to aggravate the crisis of imperialism. But at the same time the Soviet economic growth has stagnated more and more; the economic difficulties of other Eastern European countries have become worse and the bureaucratic regimes have sharpened their crises in relation to the economic demands of the masses. In spite of the Soviet military suppression of the Czechoslovakian masses, the masses' resistance and pressures are mounting against the bureaucracies in the Eastern European countries and among the various national minorities of the Soviet Union. A new rise of independent mass movements has become a definite new feature of the Chinese situation since the Tienanmen uprising of 1976; now the Chinese bureaucracy must take the moves of the masses into consideration.

The built-up internal contradictions and crises of the workers states and their nationalist bureaucracies have taken more and more open and sharpened forms, combined with the decline of international imperialism and the imperialist international maneuvers. The foremost expressions are the generalization of the anti-Soviet and pro-imperialist international policy by the Chinese bureaucracy and the aggravated Sino-Soviet confrontation and international rivalry as the further political degeneration of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Here we must see the extremely worsened contradictions and almost unbearable difficulties of the workers states caught in between the single-country-socialist selfish conservatism of the Kremlin bureaucracy and the prolonged delay of the proletarian world revolution, and their bureaucratically degenerated expressions. In combination with the anti-working-class role of the national reformist leaderships in the imperialist countries, the degenerated expressions of the built-up contradictions and difficulties of the workers states are playing the extremely reactionary role to give supplementary support to the crisis-ridden imperialist international system, thereby prolonging the contradictions and difficulties of the workers states themselves further.

9) Under new conditions of the international class struggles after the final victory of the South Vietnam liberation struggle, problems of the world proletarian revolution are posed as follows in relation with the workers states.

(a) Having given the major blow to U.S. imperialism, the South Vietnam liberation struggle has turned the objective balance of forces between imperialism and the workers states as a whole in favor of the latter, has thrown the international imperialist-colonialist system into a new crisis-ridden period and has opened a new period of rising international class struggles of the metropolitan proletariat and the

colonial workers and peasants. However, the actual and meaningful advance of the world proletarian revolution to overthrow the imperialist state-powers and the colonial bourgeoisie is impossible without consistent and uncompromising struggles against the extremely reactionary role of the various national bureaucracies of the workers states, especially that of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies in the whole international class struggles.

The reactionary international role of the Soviet, Chinese and other nationalist bureaucracies of the workers states have been caused by the sharpened contradictions and difficulties of the workers states themselves and their bureaucratic systems. Therefore, the problems of the workers states are the burning and truly practical subjective problems for the actual advance of the world proletarian revolution. That is to say, there will be no successful advance of the worker-peasant class struggles, without considering the problems of the workers states as our own subjective problems and without having and fighting for our own independent perspective to solve those problems.

(b) There is categorically no reformist possibility to solve the sharp contradictions and extreme difficulties of the workers states under the bureaucracies. Of course, this does not mean that we are exempted from taking precise attitudes toward the problems of the workers states and from presenting our own practical policies to various workers states and their workers and peasants, according to the method of the "Transitional Program" and the proletarian united-front tactics.

The fundamental causes of the current contradictions and difficulties of the workers states lie in the facts that the whole world is even now divided between the two categories of states, which have different class-natures, under the worldwide dual-power relations — that is, the socialist unification of the whole world has not yet been realized, and that the worldwide dual-power relations have been maintained as the status quo basically by the global Stalinist political hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy since the 1940s.

However the worldwide dual-power relations may be maintained conservatively as the status quo, and however revolutionary elements of the class struggles under the imperialist-colonialist system may be betrayed and oppressed for the purpose of maintaining the status quo, the essentially hostile class contradiction is not to disappear between the workers states and the imperialist and neocolonialist bourgeois states. Therefore, the workers states have to have their own self-defense military forces in confrontation with imperialism, and the huge expenditures for the military forces are to become heavy burdens for the economies and the worker-peasant masses of the workers states. Here is one of major factors which cause the difficulties of the workers states. Besides, having started from the backward economy, the Soviet workers state even now has various economic difficulties, and the Chinese economy is yet at the difficult initial stage of its industrialization. Consequently, the economic burdens of the military expenditures have been further more serious. It is exemplified crystal-clearly by the glaring contrast between the production of highly technological nuclear-missile weapons and the very primitive difficulties of the agriculture in the case of the Soviet Union and by the current Chinese effort to develop its own nuclear missile weapons and its extremely backward agricultural production.

There is another side of the economic difficulties. The orig-

inal economic bases of the most of current workers states were backward, and the original economic backwardness has not been overcome in an overall way or has not been changed so much even now. This is a question which cannot be separated from the fact that the economies of the workers states have been cut off and isolated from the highly developed international system of productive forces under the control of imperialist bourgeoisie. The high importance of this question has recently been reconfirmed explicitly by the stagnating economic growth of the workers states, the new growth and technological renovation of the imperialist international economy and the consequent new economic gap between the nationalized planned economies and the capitalist industrialized economies in the 1960s and after, and the general trend of the workers states to make new approaches toward the imperialist economies at the level of finance and technologies since the latter half of 1960s. At the end of the WWII, the Czechoslovakian economy had relatively advanced industries as a part of the imperialist international system of productive forces through the German economy. But now the Czechoslovakian industrial productive forces have been outmoded, having been cut off from the technological renovation wave of the imperialist international economy. Of course, the economic difficulties, caused by the isolation from the advanced industrial productive forces under the imperialist capitalism, are far sharper in the case of the Asian workers states. Now almost all the workers states are more and more enlarging their marketing, financial and technological approaches toward the imperialist international economy. However, those "East-West" economic relations have their limitation doubly by the political class-caution of imperialism toward the workers states and by the very objective difference of the class nature between capitalism and the nationalized and planned economic system. That is to say, the underlining central question here is the fact that the economies of the workers states have been confined internationally under the status-quo-maintaining worldwide dual-power relations.

Finally, there is the question of the "single-country-socialist" bureaucracies in the workers states. In the workers states the bonapartist bureaucracies control the economy, rule the masses and monopolize the states. The bureaucratic systems, which oppress the positive spontaneity and autonomy of the masses, have made the objective contradictions and difficulties malignant. And these "single-country-socialist," conservative nationalist bureaucratic systems are the very forces which have caused various national conflicts and contradictions and prevented democratic relations and cooperation among the workers states. They are the very forces which have pursued the status-quo-maintaining international policies in relation to imperialism.

(c) Hence, the proletarian solution of the difficulties, contradictions and crises of the workers states poses the central task of political revolution to overthrow the "single-country-socialist" bureaucracies by the proletariat, allied with peasant masses, in the global perspective to overcome the worldwide dual-power relations through overthrowing the international imperialist system; that is, to overcome the situation of worldwide military confrontations through the international proletarian revolution and to combine and unify the international system of productive forces, which is under the international imperialist bourgeoisie today, and the economies of the current workers states through a global joint economic planning. Our perspective is to struggle for the single world proletarian revolution as an organic combi-

nation of the struggles for the international permanent revolution by the urban proletariat and the colonial workers and peasants on the one hand and the struggles by the proletariat and peasants to overthrow the "single-country-socialist" bureaucracies in the workers states on the other.

10) Revolutionary advances of the international class struggles by the urban proletariat and the colonial workers and peasants are opposed to the reactionary international policies of the Soviet, Chinese and other nationalist bureaucracies. The proletarian way out for the worker-peasant masses from the present crises of the imperialist-colonialist international system lies in the socialist unification with the workers states, and here the conservative nationalist bureaucracies stand as major obstacles on the way forward. Thus the struggles for victory of the international proletarian revolution in the imperialist and colonial world in themselves pose the task of political revolution to overthrow the "single-country-socialist" bureaucracies in the workers states.

A political revolution in a workers state presupposes the international defence of the given workers state; and the proletariat of the country organizes itself as a political class definitely independent from the ruling bureaucracy, gets the active support from peasant masses, overthrows the dictatorial system of bureaucracy and, finally, realizes itself as a direct ruling class in the workers state. That is, a political revolution is for the proletariat to eradicate a bonapartist rule of the bureaucracy and to organize itself as an actual ruling class in a workers state. The political revolution as such is impossible, unless the proletariat of the given workers state does not have its own independent proletarian policies and programmatic perspectives to solve the basic contradictions and difficulties which the conservative nationalist bureaucracy can never solve; that is, the proletariat should have its own independent policies and program which would enable it to become as an actual ruling class. And the central axis of the independent proletarian policies and program to solve the contradictions, difficulties and crises of the workers states is the active alliance with the international class struggles of workers and peasants under the imperialist-colonialist international system and the combination with their victorious advances for the international proletarian revolution. That is to defend the workers states internationally through maintaining certain self-defending military forces and actively relying on the international class struggles of workers and peasants under the imperialist-colonialist system, to utilize the capital and advanced productive forces of imperialist bourgeoisie tactically in order to strengthen the economies of the workers states, and finally to be freed from all the military burdens and realize the global socialist unification of the whole world economy through joining with the victorious urban proletarian revolution and colonial permanent revolution. Only with such international perspectives, the proletariat of the workers states can convincingly struggle for the proletarian democracy against the bonapartist rule of bureaucracy, for democratic and equal mutual relations among the workers states against the bureaucratic nationalist conflicts, and for truly cooperative politico-military coordinations, non-discriminatory international divisions of labor and joint international economic planning among the workers states. Therefore, formation and development of the conscious and vanguard proletarian currents of political revolution in the workers states depends internationally on the actual advances of the worker and peasant international class struggles

under the imperialist-colonialist system, especially on the degree of the formation of internationalist revolutionary proletarian currents in the imperialist countries.

11) Under the deepening crises of the international imperialist-colonialist system and the more and more sharpening difficulties and crises of the workers states with the more and more reactionary roles of the nationalist bureaucracies, our task of the day is nothing other than the struggle for the single world proletarian revolution as an organic combination of the international proletarian permanent revolution to overthrow the whole imperialist-colonialist system and the proletarian political revolution in the workers states. The Soviet military victory over the imperialist Nazi Germany at the WWII, the Western European failure of proletarian revolution under the Stalinist political hegemony after the war and the East Asian partial victory of colonial revolution, represented by the three workers states of China, North Vietnam and North Korea, in the 1940s and 1950s, brought about the unique global situation of the worldwide dual-power relations between imperialism and the workers states. The character of the worldwide dual-power relations after the WWII was very specific to tend to maintain the status quo conservatively, on the one hand, due to the facts that U.S. imperialism was strong enough to confront politico-militarily with the whole workers states and that, however, its international footings in Western Europe, Middle East, Indian subcontinent, East Asia and Latin America was not strong enough for it to have a war to crush the workers states, and, on the other, due to the facts that the newly established global Stalinist political hegemony headed by the Kremlin bureaucracy was essentially defensive in face of U.S. imperialism and very much status-quo-maintaining in itself and that there was no subjective revolutionary driving force especially in the Western European and Japanese proletariat. Such were the structural conditions of the global international class struggles in the 1950s and the first half of 1960s. Those were the real difficulties for the South Vietnam liberation struggle, and it was historically inevitable for the liberation struggle to be isolated in the whole international class struggles. The Vietnamese struggle was a historical challenge to break through the very conservative, status-quo maintaining character of the worldwide dual-power relations from the side of the revolution and the workers states, and it has been successful. U.S. imperialism has received a major blow and the whole international imperialist-colonialist system has entered a new period of historical decline; the global balance of forces has turned objectively in favor for the workers states and the international proletariat and colonial oppressed masses; and the international class struggles of workers and peasants have entered a new rising period with all their empirical spontaneities under the imperialist-colonialist system. A genuine actuality of the international proletarian revolution has been recovered objectively by the South Vietnam liberation struggle. The proletarian task of the day is to overcome the historical limitations of the proletarian international class struggles in the five decades of 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and to overcome the specific situation of the worldwide dual-power relations after WWII. Our task of the day is deeply historical to overcome the Stalinist phenomenon of the proletarian international class struggles fundamentally and thoroughly through a full realization of Trotsky's program of permanent revolution. The proletarian task of the day is to practice the fundamental theories and



program of proletarian permanent revolution — the theories and program of the single proletarian world socialist revolution as an organic combination and global unification of the international defence of the workers states and the anti-bureaucratic political revolution, the urban proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries and the worker-peasant

permanent revolution in the colonial world, under the very specific global structure of the international class struggles after the WWII, following the lead of the South Vietnam armed liberation struggle.

January 1979

### Footnotes

(1) The idea of "worldwide dual-power relations" was adopted by the Japanese section at its fourth national congress in 1970. The idea is to see the post-World-War-II world situation basically as a worldwide, international dual-power situation between the international imperialist system, organised around and by U.S. imperialism, on the one side, and the bloc of workers states, headed by the USSR, although the Sino-Soviet bloc has been broken since the middle of 1960s, on the other side. The basic concept is a dual-power situation between the imperialist-neocolonialist bourgeois states, on the one hand, and the workers states, on the other, on the global scale; both categories of states are essentially irreconcilable due to the fundamental difference of their respective class natures. "Worldwide dual-power situation/relation" is a concept on the international relations mostly between the bloc of imperialist states, headed by the USA, and the bloc of workers states, headed by the USSR, on the global scale. Therefore, when we use the wording "an international or worldwide dual-power situation", it does not imply "a universal dual-power situation simultaneously in all of the given countries."

The basic idea of the worldwide dual-power situation/relations came from the Third World Congress (1951) resolution on the world situation, in our case, and we have modified it. As a matter of fact, in our opinion, it is too clear that the international relations between the imperialist international system and the bloc of workers states headed by the USSR

has been one of the major and fundamental elements of the actual world political situation since the end of World War II. Some West-European members of the International consider this Japanese idea as a kind of "campist"/Posadist one (see "Current Stage of the World Revolution", by Ernest Mandel, which was originally his reply to me).

We use this concept of "international dual-power situation" in a regional scale. For example, we sometimes talk about a regional dual-power situation in South East Asia (mainly between the ASEAN countries and the three Indochina countries) or in East Asia as a whole. Or, it seems that there is developing a new regional dual-power situation in Central America and Caribbean Sea.

(2) Sohyo was a reformist national federation of trade unions, with an overwhelming majority both in the private manufacturing sector and the public sector in the 1950s. From the middle of 1950s to 1960, rank-and-file mass militancy developed in the reformist framework of Sohyo, and the Kakudo current of lower-level trade-unionists represented the mass militancy as a minority tendency of the Sohyo. Internationally, the Kakudo took an anti-imperialist position, seeking an alliance with the workers states of China and the USSR, and the Kakudo current was rather pro-CP. The mainstream majority leadership of Sohyo was affiliated to the Socialist Party, taking an international position of non-alignment/third-camp/neutralism.

# How Sectarians Misrepresented Trotskyism in Cuba

by José G. Pérez

[The following article first appeared in the May 11, 1981 issue of *Intercontinental Press*.]

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On December 31, 1978, Jack Barnes, National Secretary of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, gave a speech celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. It was one of the highlights of the eighteenth national convention of the Young Socialist Alliance.

He contrasted this anniversary to the twentieth anniversaries of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, noting that in Cuba, twenty years after its revolution, a privileged bureaucratic caste does not govern. He pointed out that there have been no purges of the original revolutionary cadres, no turning back from proletarian internationalism, and no abandoning of egalitarian domestic policies.

He described some of the impressive achievements of the revolution and noted some of its problems. He explained how the Fourth International including the Socialist Workers Party, its fraternal organization in the U.S., from the beginning has unwaveringly defended the Cuban revolution.

Barnes also cited two opportunities to develop collaboration with the Cuban leadership that were missed by the world Trotskyist movement.

"The first was right after the victory over Batista," Barnes said. "Unfortunately, in Cuba Trotskyism was misrepresented by a group that followed a cult leader named Juan Posadas. Their specialty was passing out leaflets demanding a march on the Guantánamo naval base, while the Cubans were trying to consolidate the revolution. They denounced the leaders of the revolution for not being socialists."

Barnes recounted his own experience in Cuba in the summer of 1960 as a young, unaffiliated radical, and how he came to learn "that there was quite a difference between Trotskyism and the Posadista insanities."

"But the Fourth International lost an opportunity to influence the Cuban leadership as much as it could have because of the character of the Cuban organization that called itself Trotskyist," Barnes said. "This resulted, in part, from an unnecessarily long and brutal split in the Fourth International. This split, which wasn't healed until 1963, weakened the world movement, and blocked the international leadership from using its full strength to influence the Cuban Trotskyists."\*

\*The Fourth International was founded in 1938 and led by Leon Trotsky until his assassination in August 1940. In 1953 the international split into two public factions, the International Executive Committee—more often identified by its subordinate body, the International Secretariat (IS)—and

The second missed opportunity, he said, occurred during the period "from about 1967 to a little more than a year ago. During this time a majority of the leadership of the Fourth International themselves turned toward a strategy of guerrilla warfare. The Cuban leadership was trying to think out how to move forward in the aftermath of the collapse of the guerrilla orientation in Latin America, symbolized by the defeat in Bolivia and the death of Che. At that very moment, several sections of the Fourth International were speeding right past the Cubans in the opposite direction.

"The Trotskyist movement was giving the Cubans an outmoded answer that the Cubans themselves were trying to move beyond.

"It took some years and much discussion, but the Fourth International has now rejected these errors and puts forward a revolutionary strategy for Latin America that does provide answers to the questions the Cubans

the International Committee (IC). It was reunified on a principled basis in 1963.

Among the most prominent supporters of the IC were James P. Cannon (U.S.), Joseph Hansen (U.S.), Farrell Dobbs (U.S.), Nahuel Moreno (Argentina), Gerry Healy (Britain), Pierre Lambert (France), and P'eng Shu-tse (China). Leaders of the IS included Ernest Mandel (Belgium), Pierre Frank (France), Michel Pablo (France), Sal Santen (Holland), Livio Maitan (Italy), and Juan Posadas (Argentina).

The groupings headed by Healy, Lambert, and Posadas refused to take part in the reunification. All of them split from the Fourth International. Pablo was expelled from the International in 1965.

The Latin American Trotskyists supporting the IS were affiliated to the Latin American Bureau, which had its own secretariat headed by Juan Posadas. In April 1962, Posadas and his followers consummated their split from the Fourth International. They organized an "extraordinary congress" that "expelled" all other Trotskyists in the world and set up a "Fourth International" of its own.

The IEC and IS publicly denounced the Posadas group's use of the name of the Fourth International in June 1962. Their statement, published in the July 1962 *Quatrième Internationale*, said that the Latin American Bureau "does not in the least way represent the Fourth International or its political line and that the positions expressed by the Argentine newspaper *Voz Proletaria*, particularly on the question of nuclear war and the Second Declaration of Havana, do not correspond to those of the Fourth International."

Gilly implies in his letter to Barnes that the 1962 split marked the beginning of the "Posadista" tendency. Before this, he says, "Posadas considered himself a 'Pabloist.' Furthermore, he was not by any means saying the kind of crazy things he came up with in later years, since he was subject to the control, the influence, and the political life of what

were weighing. But valuable time was lost in this process."

Barnes noted that the world Trotskyist movement once again has excellent opportunities to collaborate with and learn from the Cuban leadership. He specifically pointed to the changes coming in the United States that "are a great opening for deeply influencing the Cuban revolution. The rise of working-class struggle in this country and the role Trotskyists will be playing in it is going to spark some new thinking in Cuba about the revolutionary prospects in the imperialist countries."

Shortly following the publication of Barnes's speech, Adolfo Gilly and Angel Fanjul, two Latin American revolutionists, addressed open letters to Barnes disputing what he said about the first of these missed opportunities. They had nothing to say on the second missed opening and the opportunities that are unfolding today.

They take issue with Barnes's statement

was then the Fourth International-IS."

Gilly is essentially correct in noting that the "Posadistas," as a political tendency, distinct from the line of the IS, did not emerge until after the split. Long before the split, however, Posadas had developed a core of followers, personally loyal to him. This core followed him out of the Fourth International and supported "the crazy things" that Gilly concedes Posadas came up with in subsequent years.

The process that led to the split by Posadas began following the January 1961 world congress of the IS. Posadas opened up a public attack on Pablo in the press of the Latin American sections of the IS. On September 29, 1961, he sent a letter to these same parties calling for a new world congress.

Even as this split was being prepared in 1961, the political differences were not clear. In reply to Posadas's September 29 letter, the IS sent a letter to its Latin American sections that states that "this document [the September 29 letter], of around 10 pages, contains no exposition of political differences, with the exception of a few allusions to points of view formulated by Comrade Pablo on nuclear tests in which no one could find a valid reason for breaking with the International."

The IS further states that, "It is undeniable that the political debate of the Sixth Congress [January 1961] was not exhaustive. It did not have documents before it containing differences; at most, there were amendments proposed. The differences appear at most in the form of different emphasis in the course of the discussion."

The IS letter also pointed out that at every international meeting of the IS through the 1961 congress, Posadas had supported the other leaders of the IS, especially Pablo. It adds that, "The publications of the International, *Quatrième Internationale* in particular, have reserved a big space for writings of the Latin American comrades. . . . This was true through 1961.

that the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Trotskyista) [POR(T)—Revolutionary Workers Party (Trotskyist)] the IS group in Cuba, “misrepresented” Trotskyism. The positions of the POR(T) at that time were generally correct, they claim, despite some minor errors. They say that the Stalinists originated the lie that the POR(T) called for Cuba to attack the U.S. base at Guantánamo. They accuse Barnes of repeating this alleged slander.

Gilly and Fanjul, both Argentines, were active in the Latin American Bureau. After the split, both continued to be leaders of the Posadista current. Gilly has also been a prominent journalist and figure in the Latin American left since the early 1960s. He is the author of several books and now is a frequent contributor to the Mexican daily *Uno más Uno*. By the 1970s the Posadistas had all but ceased to exist, and Gilly had broken from them. Fanjul also broke from them and returned to the Fourth International.

Gilly states that he was active in the Cuban POR(T) from July 1962 until October 1963. Fanjul describes his visit to Cuba in the summer of 1960. Speaking from memory about their experience, they question Barnes’s credibility as a witness to the activities of the Cuban “Trotskyists.”

When Barnes visited Cuba in 1960, Gilly says, he was “barely starting to come around the Trotskyist movement” and “didn’t know Spanish.” He suggests that a review of relevant articles and documents, published in official organs of the International Executive Committee, the Latin American Bureau, and the Latin American parties of the International Secretariat, will prove that Barnes is wrong.

The SWP’s archives have an extensive collection of publications and leaflets published by the Cuban POR(T) and some from the POR(T)’s cothinkers in Latin America. We have complete sets of *Quatrième Internationale* and *Fourth International*, the French- and English-language organs of the International Executive Committee.

An examination of these materials incontrovertibly confirms that Barnes is correct, and that Gilly and Fanjul misremember what happened. The facts show that the Cuban POR(T) *did* have an ultraleft sectarian line that included passing out leaflets demanding a march on the Guantánamo naval base.

Like Gilly, we believe that the history of our movement is important and that clarifying the historical record of what the Cuban “Trotskyists” did in the early 1960s can serve a useful purpose. Reviewing this missed opportunity of the world Trotskyist movement is especially relevant today in light of the extension of the socialist revolution to Nicaragua and Grenada and its impact on Cuba. These developments are offering excellent opportunities for the Fourth International to develop fraternal collaboration with the revolutionary leaderships in these countries in defense of their revolutions and other revolutionary struggles.

To evaluate the views and actions of the Cuban POR(T), it is necessary to place them in the context of what was happening in Cuba during the first few years after the revolutionary government came to power.

Those years saw the revolutionary organization and mobilization of the workers and peasants that transformed Cuba from a virtual colony of U.S. imperialism into the first Free Territory of the Americas.

The provisional government that came to power immediately following the January 1, 1959, revolutionary victory was a coalition government of the various forces that had opposed the dictatorship. While it included leaders of the July 26 Movement, which had led the fighting, the most important posts went to bourgeois figures.

The government proved to be unstable, because the bourgeois figures were determined to block implementation of measures such as slashing rents and utility rates and a thoroughgoing land reform. Faced with the resistance of the capitalist politicians, the Castro leadership turned to the Cuban masses. During the course of a series of massive mobilizations supporting the government’s radical measures, one bourgeois figure after another left the government.

Key turning points in this process included the replacement of Prime Minister José Miró Cardona by Fidel Castro in February 1959 and the resignation—under intense popular pressure—of President Manuel Urrutia in July.

The development of the Castro team as it led the revolution forward produced fissures along class lines within the July 26 Movement and its Rebel Army. The most important of these was the attempt by Huber Matos to split the army in October 1959 when he was military commander of one of Cuba’s six provinces.

This last-ditch attempt by the bourgeois forces to reverse the course of the revolution led to the launching of the popular militias and the replacement in November of Felipe Pazos by Ernesto Che Guevara as head of the national bank.

These events closed this early chapter in the revolution’s history. They made clear that the capitalists had lost control of the government. Cuba now had a workers and farmers government, although much of the economy was still in capitalist hands.

The workers increasingly asserted control over production and conditions on the job in order to counter economic sabotage by the employers.

In February 1960 trade was established with the USSR. At the beginning of June, the Soviet government announced that Premier Nikita Khrushchev would visit Cuba. Later that month, imperialist-owned refineries responded by refusing to process Soviet crude oil purchased by the Cuban government. Cuba answered by taking over the refineries of three U.S. companies, occupying them with workers militias.

In September, the democratic organization of the masses took a major step forward

with the formation of the block-by-block Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.

Between July and October, all remaining major capitalists were expropriated. The Cuban workers, led by the Castro government, had established a workers state, extending the socialist revolution to the Americas.

The following year, 1961, was marked by the massive literacy campaign and by Washington’s attempt to crush the revolution militarily. In April, the U.S. government staged an invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs with a mercenary force of nearly 1,500 counterrevolutionaries armed, trained, and led by the CIA. The invasion was crushed in less than seventy-two hours.

During the April events, Castro proclaimed the socialist character of the revolution. At the end of the year he gave a major address where he explained the evolution of the political thinking of the leadership and its adherence to Marxism-Leninism.

### The Position of the SWP

The approach, at the time, of the Socialist Workers Party to the revolutionary process unfolding in Cuba was clearly laid out in many articles and documents, the most important of which have been reprinted in *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, by Joseph Hansen (Pathfinder Press, 1978). Among these is a document, “The Character of the New Cuban Government,” that SWP leader Joseph Hansen wrote in July 1960. It gave a positive assessment of the nature and direction of the Castro leadership and the Cuban government.

Hansen, who along with SWP presidential candidate Farrell Dobbs toured Cuba in early 1960, explains that:

The Castro government has proved that its responses to the mass revolutionary movement in Cuba and to the counterpressure from the U.S. are not simply passive. The new government has courageously defied American imperialism, resisting blandishments, threats, and reprisals. On the domestic side, it has repeatedly mobilized the Cuban workers and peasants in political demonstrations, in taking over landlord and capitalist holdings, in disarming the forces of the old regime, and in arming the people.

The Castro leadership has shown awareness of its own origin and its own leftward evolution, including the stages through which it has developed. What is remarkable is its acceptance of this development and its repeated declarations of intent to follow through to the end, “no matter what,” and despite its own surprise at the turns that open up. The constantly emphasized concept of the Cuban revolution as an example for Latin America, as the first link in a new chain of revolutions in Latin America against Wall Street’s domination, is especially to be noted as an indication of awareness that the leadership of the Cuban revolution faces great historic responsibilities.

The dynamic rather than static character of the Castro leadership, of extraordinary interest to the revolutionary socialist movement, is undoubtedly ascribable in large part to the world setting in which the Cuban revolution occurs.

In addition, this leadership is close to the mass movement of both the peasants and workers, who

have solidly and militantly supported each revolutionary measure and inspired their leaders to go further. The popular response throughout Latin America has had a further effect in the same direction.

All this points to the conclusion that the new Cuban government is a workers' and farmers' government of the kind described in our Transitional Program [adopted at the founding congress of the Fourth International in 1938] as "a government independent of the bourgeoisie."

In December 1960 the SWP Political Committee adopted a resolution which also appears in *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, characterizing Cuba as a workers state.

### A Sectarian Approach from the Beginning

Gilly and Fanjul accurately state that the International Secretariat and its Latin American Bureau supported the Cuban revolution from its beginning, approved of its key social and economic measures, and defended it against imperialism. By the beginning of 1961 they had recognized that Cuba had become a workers state.

But during the first period of the revolution, they took a sectarian attitude to the leadership team around Castro and sought to organize a left wing against it.

In March 1959, the Latin American Bureau issued an appeal on the rising tide of revolutionary struggles in Latin America. It was reprinted in the Spring 1959 *Fourth International*. In passing, the appeal refers to the July 26 movement and similar movements as being led by "bourgeois parties and agents of imperialism," whose anti-imperialist stance was due only to "the enormous pressure that the masses are bringing to bear on them."

Of course, this might simply have been an initial sectarian reaction easily corrected as the revolution unfolded and as the revolutionary character of its leadership emerged even more clearly. But this did not prove to be the case.

By 1960, the Latin American supporters of the International Secretariat codified their sectarian view of the Cuban leadership into a fully worked-out line that was reflected in several articles printed in *Fourth International* and *Voz Proletaria*, the newspaper of the Cuban POR(T).

The Latin American Bureau believed that while the Castroists had taken some progressive measures due to mass pressure, they were trying to hold back the struggle. In the view of the POR(T), a major conflict was developing in Cuba between the masses on one side and the Fidelista leadership on the other. It foresaw a coming confrontation between the mass organizations—the unions, peasant cooperatives and militias—and the Castroist-led Rebel Army.

Underlying this conflict, the POR(T) believed, was the struggle between a petty-bourgeois current, which was trying to limit the revolution to reforms within a capitalist framework, and the proletariat, which was trying to push the revolution forward to socialism. To the Latin American Bureau of

the IS the split between the Castro leadership and bourgeois forces such as Urrutia was "infinitely" less important than the confrontation they predicted was coming.

These views were clearly expressed in an article by A. Ortriz, a central leader of the Latin American Bureau, dated October 1, 1960, and published in the Autumn 1960 *Fourth International*. Ortiz writes:

There is in fact a parallel process going on: to the degree that the intervention of the masses ceases to be by mass-meetings and simple support, and that the movement is getting channelized into organizations and is intervening through its trade unions, militia, and coöperatives, the old political apparatus of the insurrection, based on the action of the petty bourgeoisie, is becoming inadequate and entering into conflict with the new forces.

Behind this dual process lies the basic contradiction in the development of the Cuban revolution and the elements of its most serious internal crisis, infinitely more serious than the crises with Urrutia, Díaz Lanz, and other capitalist elements.

Ortiz was elaborating the line laid out by Posadas in a feature article in the previous issue of *Fourth International* (Summer 1960). At the same time that a workers and farmers government had already been established that was on the road to consolidating a workers state in a couple of months, Posadas asserted that the masses were fighting "despite the leadership's hesitations, fears and raising of obstacles."

He argued that, "The Cuban working class must be in the first ranks in defense of its revolution against Yankee imperialism. . . . But it must do so directly and in a form independent of its own Cuban government." (Original emphasis.)

Posadas—in the summer of 1960!—called on the Cuban workers to "struggle for a workers' and peasants' government in Cuba." He warned against certain measures taken by the Castro government, such as organizing a student wing of the militia "directed by the state" instead of the trade unions, saying it was "a step backward" and at the present stage an embryo of a capitalist army. . . .

The general approach of Posadas and Ortiz was fundamentally the same as that of the International Secretariat. For example, an editor's footnote to Posadas's 1960 article stated that developments in Cuba since it was written "fully confirm the line indicated in this article."

The same issue of *Fourth International* that carried Posadas's article also included an editorial on Cuba that stated:

. . . the Fidel Castro leadership is advancing in an empirical way. It is taking steps forward under the pressure of the masses, but it remains a prisoner to its own conception of "humanist capitalism." There is a permanent contradiction between its underlying paternalism concerning the participation of the masses, and the impact made on it from below by those same masses who would like to control and even run the economy. At this level, when the centre of the tasks of the revolution is shifting from the countryside to the cities, it is evident that the revolutionary army cannot be the only source

of cadres for the revolution, the only "party" that organizes the masses. . . .

In the 26 July Movement, in the trade unions, there is a left tendency that is heading towards an understanding of the turning-point that the revolution is reaching. This tendency is posing itself the task of building, on revolutionary Marxist bases, a leadership that will apply in a conscious way a workers' programme for the purpose of overcoming the revolution's national and international contradictions, and ensuring a Latin American extension of the Cuban revolution. . . .

The action of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, Cuban Section of the Fourth International, has as its aim to aid the development of this tendency, to speed up the building of a workers' leadership for the revolution, and to orient, by means of a workers' programme, the course of the revolution and the formation of the leading cadres of the next stage.

This orientation of building a "left wing" against the revolutionary government and the Fidelista leadership led the POR(T) to misjudge the situation in the summer of 1960 when a workers state was being established in Cuba.

For example, its first reaction to the August 6 expropriations of all imperialist companies in Cuba was to downplay their significance and to belittle the role of the Castro leadership in carrying them through. This is laid out in a speech by Posadas, excerpts of which were printed in the September 1960 *Voz Proletaria*. Posadas states:

Between what the rank and file wants and what the leadership wants there is a tremendous distance, no matter how radical this leadership might be. . . .

Fidel said on the sixth [of August]: we are going to expropriate with compensation and the masses shouted NO! . . . When collectively, at the rally, they shouted NO! it's because they want to go further. And when they shout "Arms to the militias!" it's because they want to advance, to go further. The masses were shouting "Militias!, Militias!," not army, but militias, because they have confidence in them.

Apart from the infantile ultraleft nostrums (counterposition of militias to a revolutionary army and elevation of noncompensation to a principle), the Posadas speech was dishonest. It was the Castro leadership that had organized workplace and neighborhood militias beginning in 1959. And the Cuban government offered compensation to the imperialist corporations on terms that would have meant the U.S. ruling class abandoning its economic war against the revolution.

The Cubans, for example, proposed to pay compensation only on the basis of property values officially listed by American companies with the Cuban government for tax evasion purposes. If the imperialists wanted higher compensation for their properties, they first had to pay off back taxes and penalties.

So there was little surprise when the U.S. imperialists refused this reasonable offer and no compensation was paid. In fact, later in his speech, Posadas acknowledged that the nationalizations were "really without compensation," apparently not noticing that

this contradicted his earlier argument.

It should be noted that Castro's political approach was clearly superior to refusing to pay compensation on the basis of principle as Posadas proposed, because it helped educate the Cuban masses about the extent of U.S. imperialist robbery and showed the entire world who was in the right.

The most striking thing, however, was not that, but rather where Posadas drew the battle lines. In the same speech he says, "But what's fundamental is that the proletariat is not in power, is not leading or intervening in the process of the Revolution, but rather is only a base of support."

He adds that:

Unless the Revolution advances it will stagnate and that is the greatest counterrevolutionary danger. The danger is not in an invasion, although there is a danger of an invasion. . . . But the biggest danger is that, while they speak of invasion, if the Revolution does not advance with the intervention of the masses, there is a risk that in the near future it will decompose.

That is, at a time when the Cuban masses were solidly arrayed behind their revolutionary government, responding blow for blow to the imperialist enemy, Posadas drew the line between the Cuban masses and the Cuban leaders.

A similar example is the POR(T)'s handling of the September 2, 1960, Declaration of Havana. This was Cuba's answer to the U.S.-inspired, anticommunist "Declaration of San Jose, Costa Rica," which had been adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) shortly before.

Presented at a mass rally in Havana by Fidel, this declaration forthrightly condemned imperialism and proclaimed:

The right of peasants to the land; the right of the workers to the fruit of his labor; the right of children to receive education; the right of the sick to receive medical and hospital care; the right of the young to work, the right of students to receive free instruction, practical and scientific; the right of Negroes and Indians to "a full measure of human dignity;" the right of women to civic, social and political equality; the right of the aged to a secure old age; the right of intellectuals, artists and scientists to fight through their work for a better world; the rights of states to nationalize imperialist monopolies as a means of recovering national wealth and resources; the right of countries to engage freely in trade with all other countries of the world; the right of nations to full sovereignty; the right of the people to convert their fortresses into schools and to arm their workers, peasants, students, intellectuals. Negroes, Indians, women, the young; the old, all the oppressed and exploited; that they may better defend, with their own hands, their rights and their future. [*The Second Declaration of Havana, With the First Declaration of Havana*, Pathfinder Press, 1979.]

It affirmed "the duty of oppressed and exploited nations to fight for their liberation," and predicted that the toiling masses of Latin America, "the heirs of Zapata and Sandino," would "take up the arms of liberty."

It appealed to the Latin American masses for solidarity against the growing imperial-

ist plot to use the Latin American governments against Cuba.

In order to counter the imperialist lie that the Cuban revolution did not represent the interests of the Cuban people, the declaration was made in the form of a resolution adopted by an assembly of hundreds of thousands of Cubans.

"The people of Cuba, Free Territory of America," the declaration begins, "acting with the inalienable powers that flow from an effective exercise of their sovereignty through direct, public and universal suffrage, have formed themselves in National General Assembly close to the monument and memory of Jose Marti."

*Voz Proletaria* replied with a center-spread feature by Angel Fanjul in its October 1960 issue. After a few sentences of praise, Fanjul launched into an attack against Castro's "Bonapartist sui generis government" for having taken a vote on the declaration at the mass meeting.

"To which class does this so-called Direct, Universal, and Public Democracy correspond?" Fanjul asked.

It is based on an idealization and abstraction. It is based on the idealist conception of unity, which seeks to ignore or overcome the class struggle, to go above the classes. It is the negation of the existence of the class struggle, the idealization of democracy, and the ignoring or idealizing of the character of the State as an organ of class rule.

Fanjul's blindly sectarian potshots at one of the outstanding manifestos of the Cuban revolution totally missed the mark. His implication that the revolutionary government was unclear about bourgeois parliamentary democracy was absurd. The rally and the declaration, calling on the toiling masses of Latin America to revolutionary struggle, represented the exact opposite. They reflected the deepening of the Cuban revolution as a proletarian revolution and were part of its determined struggle against U.S. imperialism.

### Organizing a "Left Wing"

The ultraleft approach of the Latin American Bureau and its Cuban affiliate was also shown in their view of the fusion between the July 26 Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the People's Socialist Party (PSP). Discussions around this proposal were in the air in 1960, and by July 1961, the three groups were fused into a single party, the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations. In 1965 this became the Communist Party of Cuba.

Criticizing the proposed regroupment in an article on "The Unification of the Forces of the Revolution" in the June 1960 *Voz Proletaria*, A. Ortiz argued:

The Party of the Revolution should be, not the sum of the "26" [of July Movement] and the old parties and movements, but rather, a new Party, structured around a revolutionary program. . . .

It should not be based on simple party organizations. It should be based on the already existing mass organizations. . . . It should be, therefore, a

labor party based on the unions and other organizations of the exploited masses.

The following May, in another article, Ortiz counterposed the formation of a "revolutionary Marxist Party" to the unification of the three main organizations supporting the revolution. In this article, published in the Spring-Summer 1961 *Fourth International*, he wrote:

The alternative to the Single Party is the achievement of political cohesion in the working class and the formation of its own party, of a revolutionary Marxist leadership which would not be swallowed up by the state apparatus, but would impose its will on that apparatus. There is a political force in Cuba which expresses that alternative, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers' Party), the Trotskyist Party of Cuba.

This made no sense, unless one thought, as the POR(T) did, that the purpose of a new party was to represent the masses *against* the government and the Castro leadership. But this flew in the face of the way the leadership question was unfolding in the Cuban working class.

The July 26 Movement was a revolutionary organization that by its actions had won the loyalty of the toiling masses. Due to the revolutionary mobilizations of the masses, by 1960 the July 26 Movement was running the government and the armed forces and leading the workers to take over the economy.

The Revolutionary Directorate was based among the students and played a significant role in the struggle against Batista, especially in Havana.

The PSP was the old-time Stalinist party which had been bypassed by the July 26 Movement. It had many cadres, however, especially in the labor movement. Under the impact of the revolution and the rise of the July 26 Movement, thousands of PSP members were radicalized and were putting pressure on the party's leadership.

Joseph Hansen explained this process in a 1977 article, "Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution":

This pressure mounted greatly after the victory as Castro initiated measure after measure advancing the *socialist* revolution in Cuba. In view of its disintegrating base, the PSP faced a bleak perspective. It could collapse or it could possibly join the July 26 Movement. To succeed in the latter move it had to prove its reliability and loyalty to the July 26 Movement.

On August 21, 1960, Blas Roca, the general secretary of the PSP, made a collective self-criticism of the party's past errors, particularly the error of not having recognized the historic merits of Fidel Castro. The ranks of the party had already demonstrated their views by the way they pitched in to carry out the immense tasks facing the country. And during the Bay of Pigs invasion the following April they showed their capacity to carry out the directives issued by the government.

From this it ought to be clear to everyone that in moving toward a fusion of the July 26 Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the PSP, Castro was engaging in a simple political operation. He was responding positively to overtures from political forces that had previously fought the July 26 Movement and had committed grave errors. He

did this in a generous way, making it easier for his former opponents to complete their turn. He did not even insist that the name of his own organization be kept. He assured posts for the leaders of the former groups in the top bodies of the new formation. All his moves were calculated to bring the greatest possible unity among these disparate currents in facing American imperialism. [*Revolutionary Cuba Today: The Record of A Discussion*, Education for Socialists bulletin, Pathfinder Press, 1980.]

Instead of becoming part of this important process that led to the formation of a new revolutionary workers party, the POR(T) remained outside of it, counterposing its own tiny organization to it. This sectarian folly was an obstacle to advancing the development of revolutionary leadership in Cuba and served to discredit the POR(T) among Cuban workers.

To this day Fanjul apparently considers this course to have been correct. In his letter to Barnes, Fanjul recalls approvingly informing Che Guevara that he was going to tour Cuba in order to organize the POR(T) and set up a branch in Guantánamo. Yet in the same meeting, Che had told him about the plans to establish a new unified party!

#### Intervention at the Latin American Youth Congress

Gilly and Fanjul devote a big part of their letters to defending what the Latin American affiliates of the IS did at the First Latin American Youth Congress held in Havana, July 28-August 6, 1960.

Gilly was not in Cuba at the time. But Fanjul, who was part of the Latin American Bureau's delegation to the congress, gives a vivid, blow-by-blow description of the conflict between the Stalinists and his delegation, creating the impression that this conflict dominated the proceedings.

Both the *Militant* and *Voz Proletaria* covered the congress at the time, and the SWP archives contain a record of the congress published by the Cuban government in the pamphlet series, *Obra Revolucionaria*. From this material, it is clear that Fanjul's memory is inexact on many points. For example, the public accusations of the Stalinists against the IS delegation, far from dominating the proceedings, were launched only on the next to the last day of the meeting.

Nevertheless, Fanjul's recent account and the September 1960 *Voz Proletaria* article do coincide in their analysis of the political forces involved in the youth congress.

According to *Voz Proletaria*:

Two conceptions clashed at this Congress. One, which had a majority, led by the communist tendencies allied with the right wing of the "26" [of July Movement] and with the most conservative tendencies, wanted to make the Congress a "Festival of Latin American Youth" with purely verbal support to the Cuban revolution. And the other conception, which found in our faction conscious, homogeneous, and coherent expression, fought to make this congress a real center of ideological debate, which would tend to lay down the programmatic, political, and organizational foundations of

the Latin American Anti-Imperialist United Front. . . .

There is no indication who represented the "right wing" of the July 26 Movement or where the "left wing" fits in. Since the bourgeois forces in the July 26 Movement had left the year before, did the Latin American Bureau consider the Castro leadership to be the "right wing"? This would be consistent with the sectarian approach to the July 26 leadership that was being put forward in *Voz Proletaria* at the time.

But to make an amalgam of the Stalinists and the Castroists missed what was really happening in Cuba and at the congress.

In 1960 the revolution was rapidly advancing in a socialist direction, and the Castro leadership was leading this process. These gigantic events were the dominant theme at the youth congress and the source of tremendous enthusiasm for the delegates who came from many countries.

Leaving aside *Voz Proletaria's* prejudice that it is somehow suspect to have a youth festival, it must be stressed that the Cuban leaders did not view the congress as some kind of extended party. Raúl Castro and Che Guevara gave major speeches to the gathering, and Fidel symbolically inaugurated the congress with his July 26 address and closed the congress on August 6 by announcing the expropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars of imperialist property.

The central theme that ran through the speeches of the Cuban leaders and the resolutions approved by the congress was to extend the revolution. The objective of the Cubans was succinctly stated on a banner that decorated the congress hall: "Make the Andes the Sierra Maestra of Latin America."

The congress was clearly a move by the Cubans to win over the new generation of fighters inspired by the Cuban example to revolutionary positions. This was a constant axis of the Cuban leadership's activities at that time (and today). Among those who were inspired by the example of the Cubans, and who responded to their appeals to make a revolution in their own country, were the founders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua.

In carrying out this strategy, the Cubans did not rely primarily on polemical denunciations of the Communist parties or other reformists. They realized that many who still looked to these forces were sincere and dedicated militants who could be won over to a revolutionary outlook. The Cubans tailored their tactics so that they could get a favorable hearing among such people.

In doing this, the Castro leadership was applying on a broader arena the lessons they drew from the evolution of these kinds of forces within Cuba itself.

#### Stalinists Resist Revolution's Course

The PSP leadership, which before 1959 was openly hostile to the July 26 Movement, had been adapting more and more to it under the pressure of its own membership. By

mid-1960, the PSP was headed on a course toward fusion with the July 26 Movement.

At the same time, however, differences continued to be expressed, although less directly. For example, at the same PSP congress in August 1960 where Blas Roca explained that the PSP had been wrong about Castro, he criticized the idea that the revolution was "Communist." His report, reprinted in the October 1960 *Political Affairs*, magazine of the U.S. Communist Party, took to task many revolutionists who answered "The revolution is not Communist. It is Cuban." to the charge that the revolution was Communist.

"This is an unbecoming reply," Blas Roca argued.

Communism does not refer to the nationality of the revolution but to its character. . . . The reason our revolution is not Communist is . . . because it is not applying Communist methods or laws. . . .

The Cuban Revolution is not a Communist revolution; it is anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. . . .

The social classes that are objectively interested in the fulfillment of these historic tasks are the workers, the peasants, the urban middle classes and the national bourgeoisie.

Blas Roca's remarks were a thinly-veiled polemic against the central leaders of the July 26 Movement. In truth, the answer of many Fidelistas that the revolution was *Cuban* was not such a bad one, since the imperialists claimed that it was a plot cooked up in Moscow or Peking. But the July 26 leaders were already beginning to go beyond that formula. Only three weeks before, Che had announced to the youth congress that the Cuban revolution had "discovered, through its own methods, the roads pointed out by Marx." Far from looking to the national bourgeoisie for support, the workers led by the Fidelistas were expropriating them! Blas Roca's speech was a thinly-veiled attack on that course.

The differences between the Fidelistas and the Stalinists in Cuba in 1960, which were reflected at the youth congress, were far more central than any debates with the delegation from the Latin American Bureau. The truth is that the activities of this delegation were a convenient target for the Stalinists, who did not want to directly attack what they considered to be an ultraleft and adventurist line promoted by the Fidelista leadership.

In spite of the scandalous attempt of the Stalinists to exclude the delegation from the Latin American Bureau and to create a witch-hunt atmosphere against them, the majority, to their credit, refused to go along.

Peter Buch, who headed the delegation of seven observers from the Young Socialist Alliance (the only national youth organization from the United States to send an official delegation) noted this in his report on the congress in the September 5 and 12 *Militant*. Writing under the pen name "Peter Allan," he said that:

On the closing days of the Youth Congress, Gerardo Figueras, chairman of the Cuban delegation and president of the Congress called for unity

among all tendencies represented at the parley—including the Trotskyists—to pursue the common struggle against imperialism.

Blinded by sectarianism, Fanjul and his colleagues totally missed the real battle-lines at the congress. Instead of forming a bloc with the Fidelistas, who were putting forward a revolutionary perspective, the followers of the Latin American Bureau centered their intervention on maneuvers designed to “expose” the Castro leadership. Instead of supporting the forces presenting a revolutionary outlook, the Latin American Bureau delegation counterposed to the resolutions backed by the Fidelistas their own sectarian manifesto. The full text of that manifesto—but not even a brief summary of the resolutions approved by the congress as a whole—appeared in both *Voz Proletaria* and *Fourth International*. Major excerpts from it were published in *Quatrième Internationale*.

The proposed manifesto attempted to present a comprehensive and ideal anti-imperialist program without relating concretely to the issues being discussed at the congress. For example, its proposals for anti-imperialist organizations included:

A Latin American Anti-Imperialist United Front; a Proletarian United Front; an All-Latin-American Trade Union Organization; single United Trade Union Organizations for each country; a Central Latin American Students' Association; and a Latin American Raw-Materials Pool.

As if all of these suggestions weren't enough for a youth conference, the Latin American Bureau manifesto also called for the Federation of Socialist Republics of Workers' and Peasants' Councils in Latin America and popular militias in all countries.

A section on the United States recommended replacing the leadership of the AFL-CIO. Almost as an afterthought, it threw in establishing a “... true workers' democracy in a planned economy with workers' management and a workers government” in the United States.

It's no wonder that the resolution was voted down with only five Latin American Bureau delegates voting for it. But not to be put off by that overwhelming rebuff, they proceeded to reintroduce the document piece by piece in the form of amendments to other proposals. The purpose of this exercise was to “expose” the congress majority, especially the July 26 Movement.

This is explained in the September 1960 *Voz Proletaria* account of the conference, which denounced “the sectarianism and opportunism of the majority of the delegations” for rejecting such motions as one calling for “a general strike in all Latin America the day of the meeting of the OAS.”

In spite of all this, eighteen years later in his letter to Barnes, Fanjul boasts:

Objectively, we changed the course of the congress. It had been expected to take two sessions, with things being approved by acclamation, without presentation of documents and without discus-

sion. But the small Trotskyist delegation imposed a frank, open, and loyal debate. . . . The discussion was intense, and the resolutions adopted were oriented along the lines of proletarian internationalism.

Fanjul then goes on to describe Castro's speech at the closing rally on August 6:

Fidel Castro denounced the OAS, and announced the expropriation without compensation of all the sugar refineries and the main imperialist companies. The revolution was back on its course—the course that we had been fighting for. The first workers state in Latin America was born that night, and Trotskyists participated in its birth.

Fanjul seems to be suffering from delusions of grandeur. The implication that the small sectarian delegation that he was part of seriously influenced the youth congress, or even more preposterous, helped put the revolution “back on its course” is ridiculous and flies in the face of all the facts. (It should be noted that the law authorizing the nationalization of all imperialist properties was adopted on July 6, 1960, three weeks before the youth congress began.) And, of course, this assumes that the revolution was ever off its course.

Fanjul's recollection that the revolution got “back on its course” is particularly puzzling in light of the fact that following Castro's August 6 speech the POR(T) continued, and even deepened, its sectarian approach to the Cuban revolution and its revolution and its revolution.

#### What Che Guevara Said

Evidence of the POR(T)'s sectarian course is corroborated by the one Cuban leader who both Gilly and Fanjul speak highly of as a person of integrity, Che Guevara.

Gilly refers to the imprisonment of POR(T) activists while he was in Cuba. “I know,” he writes, “that more than once Che intervened on their behalf. He never would have done that if he considered them a bunch of irresponsible provocateurs, as you [referring to Barnes] make them out to be.”

In a September 14, 1961, interview with Princeton University professor Maurice Zeitlin, published in a U.S. radical quarterly, *Root and Branch*, and excerpted in the April 9, 1962, *Militant*, Guevara was asked about the suppression of *Voz Proletaria* and *The Permanent Revolution* by Leon Trotsky. Guevara explained:

That did happen. It was an error. It was an error committed by a functionary of second rank. They smashed the plates. It should not have been done.

However, we consider the Trotskyist party to be acting against the revolution. For example, they were taking the line that the revolutionary government is petty bourgeois, and were calling on the proletariat to exert pressure on the government, and even to carry out another revolution in which the proletariat would come to power. This was prejudicing the discipline necessary at the time.

#### The March on Guantánamo Issue

One of Gilly's sharpest charges is that Barnes lied in saying that the POR(T) advo-

cated that Cuba militarily take over the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo.

Gilly says:

The center of your [Barnes's] argument . . . is that their “specialty” (by which I understand main or almost exclusive activity) consisted of proposing a march on Guantánamo.

That's a lie.

The rest of your argument also collapses along with this point.

And earlier in his letter Gilly says:

The Trotskyists, like all the Cubans beginning with the revolutionary government itself, denounced the military presence of imperialism in Guantánamo, and called for its expulsion, just as in our propaganda we call for the expulsion of imperialism from Latin America. It should not be forgotten that the recovery of Guantánamo was among the five points of the Cubans during the October 1962 crisis.

First, we should do away with a misunderstanding. Gilly interprets “specialty” to mean “main or almost exclusive activity.” However, “distinguishing characteristic” would be a better definition. For example, a restaurant could advertise that “desserts are our specialty” without implying that customers would find desserts the “main or almost exclusive” item on the menu.

More important to note is how Gilly throughout his letter confuses the demand on the imperialists to *withdraw* from Guantánamo with the call to *expel* imperialism from Guantánamo. The same misformulation occurs consistently in Latin American Bureau publications from the early 1960s, as well as in Fanjul's letter.

This distinction is not a question of playing with words; it has considerable practical significance. The demand to expel imperialism from Guantánamo could only be read as a demand on the government of Cuba to attack the U.S. military base. However, by focusing on the demand for withdrawal the fire is placed on imperialism, where it belongs.

It is certainly the right of the Cuban people to get rid of the imperialist base by whatever means they consider necessary. But if the Cuban government were to move toward expelling U.S. forces from the base, it would have had to weigh carefully the relationship of forces between the United States and Cuba.

Such moves would undoubtedly have been used as a pretext by Washington for invading Cuba. The Cuban leadership realized this and acted accordingly.

Gilly is simply wrong in implying that the Cubans included a demand to expel the United States from Guantánamo in their five point program in response to the 1962 missile crisis. The Cubans demanded that Washington *withdraw*; they were very careful *not* to make threats to expel.

Fidel presented this point precisely in a radio and television speech November 1, 1962, reprinted in the November 12, 1962, *Militant*. He stated that the Cuban government demands “the *withdrawal* of the naval base at Guantánamo and the *return* of Cu-

ban territory occupied by the United States." (Emphasis added.)

This point simply reaffirmed the revolutionary government's position on this question. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960, Castro stated:

The Revolutionary Government of Cuba has repeatedly expressed concern at the fact that the imperialist government of the United States of America may use the base in the heart of our national territory as a means of promoting a self-aggression, to justify an attack on our country.

... we have never spoken one single, solitary word of aggression, or any word that might be taken as implying any type of attack on the Guantánamo base, because we are the first in not wanting to give imperialism a pretext to attack us.

In polar contrast to this approach, *Voz Proletaria*, from its first issue in April 1960, waged a campaign to demand of the Cuban government that it expel the U.S. navy from the base at Guantánamo. In other words, their proposal would have led the Cuban government to fall into the trap Castro had warned against—giving "imperialism a pretext" to attack Cuba.

But the POR(T) and Latin American Bureau not only advocated expulsion. *They agitated for it and organized demonstrations demanding it. At one point they even proposed that the time had come to launch a military attack.*

Gilly claims that Barnes lies about this. In defense of Barnes, the following items are submitted:

- The centerfold article, "The Conflict at the Guantánamo Naval Base," in the April 1960 *Voz Proletaria* declares: "Although there be periods of 'armistice,' the workers of the Naval Base, the people of Guantánamo and Caimanera, the Cuban masses as a whole should prepare the struggle for the definitive expulsion of imperialism."

- The manifesto introduced by the Latin American Bureau delegation at the youth congress stated: "Here, in Cuba, the Congress vigorously reasserts its determination to liquidate the aggressive military bases of imperialism by expelling it from Guantánamo (Cuba), Ezeiza (Argentina), Fernando de Noronha (Brazil)."

- *Lucha Obrera*, newspaper of the POR, the IS section in Bolivia, in its issue for the second half of August 1961, ran an article under the headline, "Expel Imperialism from Guantánamo." The article proposed that, "Among the anti-imperialist measures of the Cuban revolution, the fundamental point must be the nationalization of the North American Naval Base at Guantánamo."

"This measure is today more important than ever, as the Revolutionary Workers Party (Trotskyist) of Cuba states. . . ."

- In the next issue of *Lucha Obrera*, an article under the headline, "Last Minute," declared:

We have received a letter from the Revolutionary Workers Party (Trotskyist) of Cuba, through which we are informed that the comrades distrib-

uted some leaflets calling the workers to a demonstration to ask for the expulsion of imperialism from the Guantánamo base.

The Stalinists were able to arrest the comrades to put them on trial for "distributing counterrevolutionary propaganda." The judge read the leaflet, and immediately freed them, saying there was nothing counterrevolutionary about the leaflet.

- In the February-March 1962 *Voz Obrera*, the Mexican paper of the Latin American Bureau, there is a reference to this demonstration. It says, ". . . the masses proposed to organize their own offensive to expel the imperialist aggressor from the Caimanera base in Guantánamo." Later, in the October 1962 issue of the same paper, a front-page headline, screamed, "For the Expulsion of Imperialism from Guantánamo."

- We also have the testimony of an expert and, moreover, one called to the stand by Gilly himself—Che Guevara.

In the interview printed in *Root and Branch*, previously referred to, Che was asked about the Trotskyists in the United States who were "enthusiastically approving" of the revolution.

Guevara commented, "I do not have any opinions about Trotskyists in general. But here in Cuba—let me give an example. They have one of their principal centers in the town of Guantánamo near the U.S. base. And they agitated there for the Cuban people to march on the base—something that cannot be permitted." (Emphasis added.)

- Finally, we have it from Juan Posadas himself. In an article mimeographed in the "Supplement to the Latin American Marxist Review, Cuban Edition" dated October 1962, he wrote:

"Yankee imperialism organizes a new invasion of Cuba. Fidel Castro charges that from Guantánamo the counterrevolution is being organized. The concrete measure to be adopted is the immediate expulsion of Yankee imperialism from Guantánamo." (Emphasis added.)

To underline that he was not just issuing demands on the imperialists but making concrete proposals for action, Posadas added, "The Workers States, the Communist Parties, the unions, the labor federations of the Workers States and the whole world, should openly come to the aid of Cuba, sending armed militias and all sufficient means to crush Yankee imperialism."

As Gilly himself explains, there is a "qualitative difference" between raising "propagandistic slogans and concretely proposing to organize a march right now on the Panama Canal. It's the difference between propaganda and provocation. It was the same in the case of Guantánamo."

We rest our case.

### The Missile Crisis

The POR(T)'s position on Guantánamo was all the more dangerous, and "insane" if you will, given the situation Cuba faced at the time. Throughout 1962 President John F. Kennedy was looking for a pretext to invade Cuba with U.S. troops.

After the April 1961 invasion organized by Washington, Cuba asked the USSR to install nuclear missiles on Cuban soil to discourage a future invasion attempt. In October 1962, Kennedy "discovered" that the missiles were there and threatened nuclear war if they were not removed.

Kennedy sent U.S. warships to stop Soviet freighters on the high sea. Simultaneously he prepared a full invasion of Cuba.

The revolutionary government called the Cuban people to arms. The entire population rose up as one to defend their revolution. From one end of the island to the other workers took to the trenches with their rifles, while others poured into the factories, not only maintaining, but increasing production during the crisis.

The Soviet ships stopped at sea to avoid a confrontation. The Kremlin agreed to withdraw the missiles in return for a pledge by the Kennedy administration not to invade Cuba. Nikita Khrushchev's decision defused a U.S.-provoked confrontation that could have led to a nuclear holocaust. However, the way this decision was made—without consulting the Cuban government—was publicly criticized by Castro.

While the future of humanity hung in the balance, what was the POR(T) doing? It called on the Kremlin to launch nuclear war against the United States!

"General Strike and Worker-Peasant Insurrection in all the Capitalist Countries! Let the Soviet Army Strike the First Blow!" read a POR(T) Political Bureau statement issued October 23, the day after Kennedy's televised speech threatening war with the USSR.

"Atomic War Will Be Followed Instantaneously by the World Revolution" read the title of an October 26 letter from Posadas (under the name Luis) to all "Comrades, parties and Leaderships." This was published in the second half of November issue of *Voz Proletaria* in Cuba.

Such ultraleft ravings really leave one speechless. They were used by Stalinists all over the world to attack Trotskyism and the Fourth International, since the statements were signed by Posadas's bogus "Fourth International."

To give Gilly his due, he does admit that today he has "no interest in defending the political cadaver that Juan Posadas has become, a model slanderer (as shown first of all by his slander about the death of Che)."

This is an especially noteworthy criticism, since internationally one of the most prominent spokespersons for the Posadista slanderer that Castro ordered Che's death was none other than Gilly himself.

After Che dropped from public view in early 1965, there was considerable speculation about what happened to him. The Posadistas advanced the notion that to cement the political alliance with Moscow and support peaceful coexistence Castro did away with Che.

Gilly, writing in the April 1966 *Monthly*



Review, stated that, "The vertiginous political evolution of the Cuban leadership in recent months confirms the opinion that it is true that they have either assassinated Guevara or that they are restraining him by some means or other from expressing himself politically."

This scurrilous attack on the Castro leadership was shattered when Che later surfaced as a leader of the guerrilla struggle in Bolivia.

In a March 1978 article, entitled "Guerrilla, Program and Party in Guatemala," published in *Coyoacán* magazine, Gilly explained that, at the time, he repeated these slanders, although he knew that they were false, "out of a bad understanding of party discipline," and that he "shares, therefore, complete responsibility for these political insanities."

This rectification is welcome, of course. But why is Gilly so reluctant to apply the same corrective to the earlier "political insanities" of the IS section in Cuba in opposing the Castro leadership?

The answer is that Gilly still basically holds the same sectarian position on the Cuban revolution and its leadership that he held in the early 1960s.

In the same article from *Coyoacán* referred to above, Gilly argues that Che's leaving Cuba "was indisputably a defeat for the left wing of the Cuban revolution. . . . It would mean that the Cuban leadership would progressively take its distance from its policy of extending the revolution in Latin America. . . ."

This is an updating of the old Latin American Bureau line that Castro headed a "right wing" in the Cuban leadership that carried out progressive measures only when forced to by mass pressure and by the "left wing."

The attempt to pit Guevara against Castro by placing him in this imaginary left wing is too shameful for words.

Che himself most clearly refutes this insin-

uation in his farewell letter to Fidel written in April 1965. He wrote:

My only serious failing was not having confided more in you from the first moments in the Sierra Maestra, and not having understood quickly enough your qualities as a leader and a revolutionary.

I have lived magnificent days, and I felt at your side the pride of belonging to our people in the brilliant yet sad days of the Caribbean crisis.

Seldom has a statesman been more brilliant than you in those days. I am also proud of having followed you without hesitation, identified with your way of thinking and of seeing and appraising dangers and principles. [*Che Guevara Speaks*, Pathfinder Press, 1980.]

Gilly's assertion that the Cuban leadership stopped trying to extend the revolution in Latin America falls apart when confronted by the facts of the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions and the deepening struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala, which the Castro leadership clearly supports and seeks to advance.

The depth of Gilly's Castrophobia is most clearly seen in an article in *Coyoacán* written in March 1979 entitled, "The China-Vietnam War: 'National Socialism' and Bureaucratic Nationalism." Gilly wrote that, "The theory and the practice of all these leaderships—Tito, Kim, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Pol Pot—is national-communist."

This outrageous amalgam was made only weeks after Pol Pot had been overturned and reports of the unspeakable atrocities committed by his dictatorship were making their way into the international press.

Does Gilly really believe that Tito—who backed U.S. imperialism in the Korean war and led the wing in the Movement of Non-aligned Countries most conciliatory to imperialism—can be lumped together with Castro, who has consistently opposed imperialism and has struggled for that course in the Nonaligned Movement? Does Gilly think that all these "national-communists" are

part of "a typical current of centrist revolutionaries," which is how he characterizes the Castro leadership in his letter to Barnes?

Throughout the March 1979 article in *Coyoacán* Gilly repeatedly indulges in formulations like "the bureaucratic workers states," "the bureaucracy that dominates the states in transition [to socialism]," and "the struggle against bureaucratic power and for the socialist regeneration of the workers states" without attempting to distinguish between the workers states where a Stalinist bureaucracy is in power and Cuba, which has a revolutionary government that, as Castro explains, is consciously combating bureaucratic deformations.

By throwing these countries together in this all-inclusive way, Gilly leaves himself open to the charge that he favors the same course for Cuba as the Trotskyist movement advances in such countries as Yugoslavia and China, that is the overthrow of the present government by the working class. Such a position in relation to Cuba is counterrevolutionary and has nothing to do with Trotskyism or the positions of the Fourth International.

Gilly and Fanjul's attempt to discredit Barnes's evaluation of the Cuban Trotskyists in the early 1960s falls flat on its face when confronted with the documentary record. Not only does this record disprove their unrestrained charges, but it places them in the position today of defending and praising the sectarian policies that led to one of the most significant missed opportunities for the world Trotskyist movement.

We should not apologize for these sectarian blunders as Gilly and Fanjul do, but instead learn from them in order to get rid of the method underpinning them and their remnants today. This will help us to better meet the challenge we face in establishing collaborative relations with the new revolutionary proletarian leaderships and class-struggle currents that are coming forward from Central America to Poland.

## For an Independent, Federal and Socialist Afghanistan

[The following resolution was adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International at its meeting May 12, 1981. The vote was: 20 for, 13 against, 6 abstentions.]

1. In April 1978, the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overturned the Daud regime and took power in Kabul.

This was in response to a new wave of repression unleashed by Daud, who for several years had been increasingly moving to the side of imperialism and the Shah of Iran.

On April 17 Akbar Kyder, a political theorist of the Parcham faction of the PDPA, was assassinated. This assassination provoked the resentment of layers of working people in Kabul. A significant protest demonstration, accusing the CIA of the murder, was held in front of the American embassy. On April 26 many PDPA leaders were arrested, among whom were Babrak Karmal, Hafizullah Amin and Noor Mohammed Taraki. The PDPA then used its implantation inside the armed forces to fight back and carried out the victorious coup.

Initially the new PDPA regime received support or at least a favourable judgement from sectors of the masses. Also in Pakistan left wing forces positively welcomed the "April Revolution."

In less than twelve months this capital which the PDPA disposed of had been frittered away. Basing itself on the state apparatus, all its actions were carried out "from the top." It adopted a line proper to this type of petit-bourgeois radical party which was stalinist in its ideological formation and in its practice.

Thus through bureaucratic methods which became more and more directly repressive it tried to impose progressive reforms which could correspond to the needs and expectations of the masses. Under Amin's regime a wave of terror was unleashed (there were several thousands imprisoned and many executions) against, among others, factions of the PDPA, former supporters and people favourable to the regime in April 1978.

The overall programme of the regime was made up of half-measures applied in an order of priorities that was contradictory with the necessity to break the hold of the ruling layers on the rural masses.

The PDPA made no prolonged effort to independently structure or raise the level of consciousness of the poor peasants, small farmers, tenant farmers or agricultural workers. Such an effort would have been an indispensable condition for launching the agrarian reform, neutralising and fighting against the reactionaries and big landowners and for forging an alliance between the urban masses and the poor peasantry.

On the contrary they pushed through a series of measures bearing on the customs and social/cultural organisation of village communities. However, such transformation in order to succeed would have required from the PDPA not only a different political and cultural sensitivity but also the understanding that they had to be subordinated to the masses

having the real possibility of self-organising and practically carrying out an agrarian reform. The latter should have involved the setting up of a system of credit and seed distribution, the guarantee of the maintenance of irrigation and giving the poor peasants the means to defend themselves against the extortions of their age-old oppressors. The rural masses therefore found themselves at one and the same time victims of the increasingly repressive methods and policies of the PDPA and the enslavement perpetuated by the reactionary tribal chiefs. The masses were thus pushed into a passive or active resistance which both reactionary forces as well as imperialism were able to exploit.

The PDPA kept well away from organising or mobilising the workers and poor peasants in an independent way. It institutionalised the trade union movement, but forbid it the right to strike.

From April 1978 on, the big landowners, the tribal chiefs who were only recently made legal owners of the land, the mullahs as well as fundamentalist Islamic Pushtuns already opposed to the Daud regime, started armed struggle against the regime and brutally attacked PDPA militants and supporters. In spite of their social base of support, these reactionary leaders were engaged in a struggle against any reform in order to safeguard their position as exploiters and oppressors. From this point of view, even though the PDPA base was limited it was opposed to the reactionary camp in a civil war.

In 1979 movements inside the national and ethnic-cultural minorities in Hazaradjah, Tadjikistan and Nuristan appeared. Above all they expressed opposition to the central state and to a PDPA which was identified with traditional Pushtun domination. The fact that retrograde social forces may have been able to make use of this rejection in no way changes the reality of this movement against national or ethnic-cultural oppression.

Furthermore, nationalist and anti-imperialist organisations which had their roots in maoism or the populist Islamic currents, were from this period engaged in armed struggle against the regime. A maoist group, Setham-i-Melli, was even represented in the government after April 1978, but it rapidly entered the opposition. The evolution of these groups can be understood as a result of several factors: the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet conflict which was exacerbated by the continually increased control of the Soviet bureaucracy on the workings of the Afghan state; their nationalist reaction doubled up by their maoist conception of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy and the fact that they were rapidly the object of police repression.

These organisations have a real implantation, even if this is very regional. Since the end of the sixties they went into competition for influence with the PDPA in the urban centres. There they succeeded in winning a certain audience

among the Hazaras and the Tadjiks. They are the origin of the creation in 1978-9, of regroupments and fronts such as the SAMA (Peoples Organisation for the Liberation of the Peoples of Afghanistan) and the Front of Mujahed Fighters of Afghanistan initiated by the Revolutionary Group of the Peoples of Afghanistan (Marxist Leninist).

2. Imperialism, indirectly through Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Pakistani dictatorship was encouraging, even if in a very limited way, the reactionaries based in Peshawar (Pakistan). Furthermore, it stopped allocating new credits to the Taraki-Amin regime. China also gave its support to the Islamic fundamentalist forces.

The PDPA was incapable of implementing its programme. The growing resistance of the rural population as well as a part of the urban masses, the appearance of ruptures inside the Afghan army, all accentuated the isolation of the regime. There were more and more settling of accounts inside the PDPA between the two main factions (Khalq and Parcham) including inside the Khalq itself. In turn, reciprocal liquidations paralysed the action of the regime and eroded even further its credibility in the eyes of the masses. It therefore found itself in a total dead end on the social and political levels, even if it still managed, with the aid of Soviet armed forces, to carry out victorious military counter-offensives, like in October 1979 in the Paktia region.

Soviet intervention was to become heavier after the uprisings in Herat (March 1979) and Jalalabad and especially the mutiny at the Bala-hissar fort (near Kabul) in August 1979. This resulted in repeated conflicts between the Kremlin advisors and some PDPA elements. It is in this framework that the bureaucracy judged it urgent to liquidate Afizulah Amin, who had prevented, in September 1979, the success of the palace revolution which aimed to ensure the pre-eminence of Taraki, a protege of the Soviets, and less worried about independence from them. From this period the Soviet bureaucracy was more and more pushed to make a direct large-scale intervention if it was necessary to control the situation.

In December 1979, within the continuity of its orientation the Soviet bureaucracy responded militarily to the complete failure of its policy and that of the PDPA. The massive Soviet intervention and occupation of Afghanistan is explained by several interlinked factors.

The Kremlin was looking to avoid the situation getting out of its control, to put a stop to the paralysis and bankruptcy of the PDPA regime leading to a dislocation of the Afghan state, even if none of the main reactionary forces or coalitions based in Peshawar could claim to be able to take power and control the whole country.

Co-guarantor of stability in a zone shaken up by the developments of the Iranian revolution and undermined by the crisis of the Pakistani state as well as by the explosiveness of the national question (Pushtunistan, Baluchistan), the Soviet bureaucracy wanted to try and profit from the conjunctural weakness of imperialism in the region. After the failures of its policies in the Middle East, the Kremlin was trying to get further security, to back up its geo-strategic positions against imperialism and to make gains in its struggle for influence with the Chinese bureaucracy. This explanation of its initiative has even more weight, given that imperialism has started a counter-offensive on the political-military level since the end of 1977 (non-ratification of the Salt II agreements, development of the cruise missiles in Europe, relaunching the arms race). The very nature of the armaments brought into Afghanistan as well as the setting up of

a "heavy" infrastructure also illustrates this objective of the Kremlin.

The decision to bring back Babrak Karmal, leader of Parcham, with the 'supply airlift' of the Soviet armed forces, and to base themselves on his weak minority in the party indicates that in order to control and to try and stabilise the situation in its favour the bureaucracy was ready to pass a new stage in its control over the Afghan state apparatus and in determining all the policy of the new government.

One fact stands out very clearly from the evidence: the intervention, occupation, as well as the policy followed since then, were all decided by Moscow outside of the Afghan government and the PDPA majority.

If we take it only on this level, no analogy is possible with the aid given by Cuban and Soviet troops to regimes like those of Angola and Ethiopia. In these countries, an autonomous revolutionary process was developing with mass mobilisations. Help was requested by the governing regimes one of which had to face up to a South African military intervention and the other to a war with Somalia. Despite even significant military dependence, the Kremlin and the Cuban leadership had to account politically for their actions to the governments which maintained an autonomy. This aid was also welcomed, in differing degrees, by the fighting masses as a contribution to their struggle.

In the case of Afghanistan, the Soviet bureaucracy has shown by its action that, in order to follow its own objectives it does not hesitate to refuse any grain of political sovereignty or right to self-determination of the peoples of this semi-colonial country. There is no doubt that there was a violation of self-determination. Furthermore, from the point of view of the general or particular interests of the proletarian revolution such an orientation and initiative cannot be justified.

3. The military occupation of Afghanistan cannot be justified in the name of the defence of the USSR. At no time during the developments in the class conflicts in Afghanistan — which certainly could have resulted in the fall of the PDPA regime — could there have been an outcome consisting in the coming to power in Afghanistan of forces capable of attacking the USSR or leading to a generalised conflict involving imperialism and putting into question the *social foundations of the USSR*. The past and present policy of the Kremlin towards the worst capitalist and dictatorial regimes on its frontiers (Daud's Afghanistan, the Shah's Iran, or Turkey) and in turn the attitude of the latter to the USSR confirms this appraisal.

Furthermore, the Soviet occupation produces negative effects from the point of view of the proletariat internationally. By sweeping away the right of self-determination of the peoples of Afghanistan and by intervening militarily in an essentially rural and backward country, the bureaucracy erects a new and weighty obstacle in the path of permanent revolution in the whole region.

Indeed here the question of national oppression cannot be separated from, or even less opposed to, class struggle processes; on the contrary it is an important element in anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist mobilisations. The action of the Kremlin bureaucracy strikes a serious blow against the international unity of the proletariat.

The occupation by the Kremlin's troops becomes an arm in the reactionaries' hands to be used to counterpose "socialism" to the struggle for national liberation and democratic rights. The projects of bourgeois nationalist and reactionary Islamic sectors latch on to precisely such a situation

in order to refurbish their image among the toiling masses.

The Soviet invasion politically disorients workers at the international level by striking a new blow against the idea of proletarian internationalism, in the name of which the bureaucracy shamelessly justifies its policy in Afghanistan. It also facilitates the anti-marxist and anti-communist campaign of the bourgeoisie. It serves as a pretext for imperialism to justify its rearmament policies and its attempts to demobilise a mass opposition to military expenditure. It allows imperialism to claim a legitimacy for its interventionist policies in the Middle East, Iran and Central America.

The defence of the social foundations of the Soviet workers state becomes in fact weakened by the Kremlin's intervention. For this defence is not only a military question but it is also based on the activity and level of consciousness of the toiling masses at the international level, in particular in the imperialist centres.

Thus from the point of view of the defence of the workers state, as well as the repercussions on the level of consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the *Soviet intervention can only be condemned*. Certainly, once the Soviet troops had massively gone in and carried the essential burden of the war effort, they were "at the side" of the Babrak Karmal regime in the conflicts which pitted them against, among other forces, the reactionaries.

4. But the evolution of the situation demonstrates that the objective role of the Soviet troops can only be invoked in order to abandon the defence of the right to self-determination for the peoples of Afghanistan or in order to present the presence of USSR troops as a "lesser evil."

a) The generalised rise of the resistance in the big majority of the twenty-eight Pushtun and non-Pushtun provinces of Afghanistan has drawn its force by placing itself under the banner of the struggle against the Soviet occupiers. It puts itself in the continuity of an historic tradition of struggle for independence. It also expresses the massive rejection of a government which has openly lost all autonomy in relation to the USSR. This rejection interconnects with the permanent conflicts against the central state which marks the whole history of Afghanistan. Finally the reactionary and traditional chiefs have been able to exploit this overall movement against the occupier to camouflage, under the mask of the struggle against the "churavis" (the Soviets), the defence of their own interests, their fierce opposition to any progressive reforms. The type of confrontation imposed by the occupation of the Soviet troops reinforces the ancestral norms of tribalism with all its hierarchies, and the notion of belonging to the same ethnic group. The reactionaries find a favourable field of action here for their projects.

On this level, it is evident that the intervention and occupation by the Kremlin's army favours the counter-revolution.

b) Opposition to the presence of the Soviet army is practically unanimous. The Russian troops have not received any support from the population or from sectors that have any real social significance. *Sectors of the population that up to now were more or less favourable, neutral or passive are, in varying degrees, joining the resistance.*

The rebellion has not remained localised, even if it is linked to regional and tribal particularities. Its geographical extension and its massive support among the people explains why a rather rapid differentiation is taking place between the "internal resistance" which is largely spontaneous, and the Islamic political movements based in Peshawar, some of whom have been there for more than a decade. Anyway

the latter are above all active in the frontier and Pushtun zones and remain very divided.

Among them, the most important fundamentalist organisation is represented by the Islamic party of Afghanistan (Hizb-i-Islam) of Gulbudin Hekmatiar, which refuses to participate in the "Islamic Alliance." The latter initially united five of the weaker movements: the Front for the Liberation of Afghanistan, led by the Imman Seghbatullah Mughaddedi; the Movement for the Islamic Revolution of Mohammad-Nabi-Mohammadi; the National Liberation Front (or Pact for Islamic Union) of the big landowner Sayed Ahmed Giliiani; Islamic Regroupment of Professor Borhanuddin-Rabhani and finally a wing of the Islamic Party led by old Islamic leader Mohamad Younes Khales. These last two movements have broken with the Islamic Alliance and are looking for a rapprochement with Hekmatiar.

But the resistance cannot be reduced to the activities of these organisations. The non-Pushtun oppressed minorities have from the beginning taken on a preponderant weight inside the internal armed resistance. The Hazari, a Shi'ite minority of Mongol origin, who are very poor mountain farmers, porters in the towns, subject to feudal-type fees and extortion of unpaid labor by the Pushtuns, liberated their region through armed struggle. They have set up their own administration.

The Nuristani, an ethnic-linguistic minority, have done the same. In Badakhshan, the Tajiks, a minority comprising about 30 percent of the peoples of Afghanistan have been in large scale conflicts with the Soviet columns who are trying to occupy their valleys. In the same way most of the Baluchi,<sup>1</sup> who are certainly very much a minority in Afghanistan, but up to then more or less favourable to a regime which, for its own interest in the region (above all the effects of the struggles of the Baluchi on Pakistan) allowed them a certain liberty of initiative, are today opposed to the Babrak Karmal regime and to the Soviet forces.

Resistance is also expressed in strikes, demonstrations and open support to the resistance in the towns of Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Jalalabad.

Who forms the majority of the ranks of this "internal resistance" and who suffers from the Soviet repression? In the main it is the poor peasants whose leaders are most often, certainly, the traditional chiefs and other notables. They have been joined by sectors of the traditional petit-bourgeoisie, intellectuals (as the exodus accelerated), civil servants (the February 1980 strike) and the urban salaried and plebian layers. Among the students and secondary school pupils where the Khalq and Parcham traditionally drew their forces, a strong opposition movement has emerged resulting in violent exchanges. In April/May 1980 in Kabul, male and female students who were demonstrating for the withdrawal of Soviet troops underwent brutal repression at the hands of the PDPA militia — Afghan army soldiers had refused to fire on them.

In a country such as Afghanistan, an extremely weak working class has to know how to win over these forces to its positions. Without them, all the more so against them, and without responding to the legitimate aspirations of the oppressed minorities, any mass mobilisation with the aim of social transformations, not to speak of the struggle for the socialist revolution, is doomed from the start.

1. Source: G. Chalian, *Nouvel Observateur*, December 7, 1980 and J.C. Blanc, *Temps Modernes*, July/August 1980.

c) The experience of the masses under the Taraki and Amin governments, the methods used by the PDPA and the Soviet advisors, the means by which the intervention was carried out, the Soviet occupation itself and the objectives pursued by the bureaucracy means that the "Red Army" forces could not, and cannot, become the instrument for an effective battle against the reactionaries. This is even more the case given the battle cannot be won only militarily.

The Soviets and Karmal, in order to try and win a certain base, look towards an alliance with the traditional chiefs and the Mullahs, even to the extent of buying them! Such an allegiance can only be fragile! To cajole fractions of the commercial bourgeoisie, the government has given back twenty or so nationalised export-import companies. Some of the bourgeoisie have had wealth which had been confiscated returned to them. Not only are the plans for the agrarian reform revised downwards but they are undermined from the beginning by the absence of any mass support, indeed even by the government's incapacity to control the territory. Land is being given back to tribal chiefs who had been expropriated during the first phase of the agrarian reform.

Far from welding together the ranks of the PDPA — all estimations give it a maximum membership of 5000 — the intervention and the occupation have accentuated the conflicts between the Khalq and Parcham. Babrak Karmal "united" the PDPA by liquidating and sacking opponents, many of whom rejected the intervention and continued to oppose the presence of Soviet troops. Since June 1980, many Khalq ministers, civil servants and military officers have been executed or marginalised. In his speech for the anniversary of the 'April Revolution' in 1981 Karmal banded new threats against the Khalqi.

The extreme tensions between the Parcham and Khalq have obliged the continued postponement of the project, which was already difficult, of the constitution of a National Front, proposed from January 1980 by Babrak Karmal. This has also torn the state apparatus apart and pushes Karmal to try and square a circle — to try and take the state apparatus under control with the Parcham faction alone!

The army does not escape the generalised crisis of the regime and its institutions. Khalqi officers resist orders, desert or even join the resistance. Nationalist officers who had rallied to the 'April Revolution,' do the same, largely followed by their soldiers. The conscription crisis can be added to this. There is no inclination on the part of youth to do their military service. The regime is forced to create a real mercenary service, both for the army and for the Parcham militia, based on material privileges. A soldier earns 3000 afghanis a month while a worker gets about 900. All that has not prevented a continued erosion of the Afghan army forces.

The splits inside the Afghan state apparatus and the PDPA, the growing social isolation of the regime set up by the Kremlin, its incapacity to carry out a proper reform policy, including to effectively channel the material aid of the USSR, constrains the Soviets to increasingly substitute for the 'phantom' Afghan state apparatus. In July 1980 Afghanistan was divided up into seven military regions — each headed by a Soviet general. The Soviets exercise direct control on the administrative, institutional, military and even the nationalised state sector. The USSR has its hands well-fixed on the mineral and gas sectors. The Karmal government is more and more the facade for the occupation authorities whose action is essentially reduced to carrying out repression (bombings, transfer of population etc.). In

April 1981 the four regiments of the Afghan army stationed in Kabul were replaced by USSR troops.

In these conditions, and taking account of its material and political interests, it is inevitable that the Kremlin is not only opposed to independent mass mobilisations but even to any independent activity of a leadership situating itself in the camp opposed to the reactionaries. From this flows the placing under supervision of the Afghan army and the refusal to allow the free distribution of certain types of arms to Khalqi sectors of the army whose allegiance is not assured. This substitutionist logic pushes the Kremlin to develop a system of police control including in the ranks of the PDPA itself and its supporters.

The intervention and the occupation have therefore proved to be obstacles to the reinforcement of the workers and peasants movement, to the emergence of a leadership capable of carrying out a social, political and military battle against the reactionaries. Thus nothing justifies the abandonment of the defence of the right to self-determination, which takes on all its concrete meaning in this situation where the Soviets have *de facto* substituted for the PDPA and decide everything themselves. This principle is one of the absolutely necessary elements of *any strategy for struggle against reaction and imperialism*, in Afghanistan and the region.

5. To win the struggle against all the reactionary forces, against the fundamentalist Islamic forces and others in Peshawar and against those who have won over and organised broad sectors of the "internal resistance," it is not sufficient to inflict a series of military losses on them when they make an offensive or during 'sweep' operations in a valley or even less bomb where people live. In fact the decisive question is the capacity of reactionary forces to find reserves and support in the masses in order to re-organise, to relaunch attacks and ensure their political influence. The outcome of such battles cannot be determined only militarily, but socially and politically, by taking the masses' potential support away from the reactionary forces in the leadership.

To carry out and organise the battle against the reactionaries, it is necessary to have a social base among the urban layers who are most susceptible to providing support to a policy of democratic reforms and social transformation. But without an *alliance* with the poor peasantry and oppressed nationalities a dead end will be reached just as quickly. Therefore the crucial problem of developing the class struggle in the countryside is posed. How to forge today the beginnings of *unity* between the exploited and oppressed masses of the towns and countryside by combining the defence of the principle of self-determination with a programme of social transformations and independent organisation.

*More concretely, in Afghanistan today two aspects of national self-determination are superimposed: on the one hand the defence of political sovereignty and independence faced with the Soviet occupation and on the other hand, the rights and aspirations of oppressed national minorities in the framework of the Afghan state and of the region as a whole (Baluchistan).*

The problem of the combination of these tasks, which conditions the possibility of defeating the reactionaries, is objectively posed by the course of events. In fact the movement of resistance to the occupation includes social forces which are tendentially contradictory and political polarisation, though certainly limited, exists at the level of the organisations involved in the resistance.

The split between a fragmented internal resistance and the "external resistance" accounts for the mistrust of the

Islamic fundamentalist Pushtun organisations who want to impose their line on all the resistance. The massive integration of the national minorities into the resistance assumes traditional tribal structural forms and even reactivates them, but it stimulates in its turn the struggle for emancipation which can base itself on arming the masses and the creation of liberated zones. Finally any prolonged struggle can only bring out and ripen the contradictions between local chiefs, landowners and poor peasants.

Furthermore, organisations such as the SAMA or the Front of Mojahedin Fighters, even if their audience is limited and if they are on the sharp end of hard repression from the Karmal regime, are often in conflict with the fundamentalist Islamic organisations. These conflicts are produced as a result of struggles for influence over such or such a sector of the resistance, but also on the basis of opposition between their respective political and social platforms. In the overall movement against Soviet occupying forces the social conflicts specific to a country like Afghanistan are slowly but clearly being marked out.

Today a shift has taken place at least initially, in the social conflicts whose line of cleavage does not solely overlap with what separates the PDPA from the reactionaries but also can be found within the resistance movement against the occupier in the guise of a social, ethnic, national and political polarisation.

The crisis in the PDPA and the opposition of Khalq factions are largely determined, in the present stage, by the interaction between the extreme reduction of the social base of the Karmal regime, the development and the breadth of the internal resistance to the Russian occupation and the expression of social conflicts within that overall movement. With that background the traditional clashes between PDPA cliques are all the more exacerbated.

6. In this context revolutionary Marxists define their line on the basis of the defence of workers' and peasants' interests and of the struggle to defeat the reactionaries and imperialism. They do this by taking into account the level of consciousness of the masses, the social organisation given to them by history, as well as their recent experiences. The independent organisation and mobilisation of the masses is the only effective assurance for a defence of their gains — however minor they might be — for the conquest of democratic rights and reforms and social transformations as well as for an effective struggle against the reactionaries and their international supporters.

However if those who defend the interests of the masses do not declare themselves clearly for the right to self-determination of the peoples of Afghanistan and for the respect of its political sovereignty, a gigantic obstacle will be placed in the way of this.

It would be radically false to reject this approach to the right of self-determination by counterposing, for example, the right to "the self-determination of the workers in the towns and countryside," on the pretext of the retrograde character of very broad sectors of the resistance. Such a position simply does not at all take account of the difficulties with which *class differentiation* is produced inside such social formations and the complex paths it can take. In reality putting forward such a slogan or call simply ends up denying the regressive effect provoked by the Soviet intervention on class differentiation in Afghanistan.

To win an influence among the urban working masses and to prevent their control by the reactionary forces it is vital to precipitate this social differentiation. For that democratic

and social demands must above all be put forward, gains must be defended *and* a position taken against the hold of the USSR. Such an approach can also provide a solution to those who supported the regime and its various progressive measures (despite the way in which they were carried out) but who are splitting from it and refuse to back the policy of the USSR.

The combination of the struggle for self-determination and for democratic and social demands is, in the fight against the reactionaries, a lever which can right away help the winning of concrete support in the real movement of opposition and resistance to the occupation.

Re-affirming the right to self-determination of the *peoples* of Afghanistan and to political sovereignty is also an indispensable condition, in the present circumstances, in order to be listened to by the oppressed national minorities. The latter are fighting against the Soviets and also, occasionally, against the fundamentalist Islamic and Pushtun centralist forces. It is the only way to defend the interests of the exploited layers inside these minorities, to speed up their class polarisation and in the last analysis to unify the exploited and oppressed masses of Afghanistan as a whole in their struggle for social emancipation.

Only the development and defence of such a strategy can help the political and ideological clarification of organisations such as the SAMA of the Mojahedin Fighters Front. Only that allows one to combat any orientation leading to the liquidation of their own independence in the face of reactionary forces in the name of the struggle against the occupying forces, a temptation which is especially strong given their strong nationalist and maoist characteristics. These organisations defend a programme *whose social content* is at least as advanced as the PDPA one. They could become an active pole of opposition to the fundamentalist Islamic or pro-imperialist forces.

The independent mobilisation and organisation of the masses are therefore conditioned, on the subjective level, by the question of self-determination, by the refusal to support maintaining the presence of the occupying troops. Because of the very nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, any eventual hypothetical growth of an *autonomous* mass movement, having *its own leadership*, struggling for radical social transformations will come up against the military and police forces of the Kremlin. Trotsky, in relation to the Russian intervention in Finland, forcefully underlined this particular concretisation of the counter-revolutionary policy of stalinism.

7. Imperialism, above all the United States, has accentuated its efforts to have a direct presence and intervention in the region. It is doing its utmost to consolidate the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship in Pakistan. It has increased its support to the Afghan resistance forces based in Peshawar. The interests and policies of imperialism go totally against not only the democratic rights and social interests of the workers and peasants, but also against the right to self-determination and political sovereignty of the oppressed peoples of the semi-colonial states of the region. A victory of the reactionary forces and imperialism would also be a blow struck against these rights in Afghanistan. The reactionary leaderships in the name of 'nationalism' seek to sell out the struggle of the Afghani peoples to imperialism in exchange for a fictitious independence. This in turn facilitates imperialist projects.

For this reason, any real defence of workers and peasants interests as well as the peoples of Afghanistan, has to include an intransigent struggle against the reactionary Af-

ghan forces and imperialism.

In this part of the world the process of permanent revolution is closely interlinked with the struggle for national and social emancipation. In order for the masses to look to socialism in the process of trying to solve the problems they come up against in their struggle, it is necessary that the revolutionary proletariat unambiguously defend their right to self-determination and political sovereignty. It is even the condition for socialist and federalist solutions to receive a hearing inside the militant vanguard of these countries.

The workers movement of the imperialist countries must support these demands for national and social liberation against imperialism. It is a supplementary element for stimulating the development of a socialist consciousness in the indigenous anti-imperialist movements.

A clear position of the workers movement on the international scale, against imperialist and reactionary plots and for the right of self-determination in Afghanistan and the region takes on its full significance in relation to the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It is one of the most effective political instruments for neutralising Zia's manoeuvres. This is even more the case given that the Pakistani regime is being eroded by national liberation struggles. It permits the weakening of the fundamentalist forces, who are beginning to be discredited for their methods, and favours the organisations struggling for the masses social and national rights.

All things lead us to suppose that after a withdrawal of USSR troops there would be a new phase of centrifugal crises, of struggles between different groups and nationalities. In this framework social and political differentiations could develop. Furthermore there is nothing to indicate that a reactionary Pushtun movement would be able to ensure its hegemony, take control of the whole country and impose its authority.

The minorities are hardly prepared to accept a central regime in Kabul — even more since they are armed and have begun to liberate their territory.

In addition, imperialism is hesitating to qualitatively increase its aid to the resistance organisations based in Peshawar for it knows full well, as Zia does as well, that this could result in arming rebel movements who have ephemeral allegiances. Rifles provided today to certain Pushtun forces could tomorrow be turned against Islamabad or end up in other hands (Baluchis).

A withdrawal of Soviet troops would doubtlessly put into danger the partisans of the existing regime and the progressive elements which were linked with it. The Kremlin's policy will have contributed to worsen their position against the reactionaries.

Finally the real question of the 'risks' run by PDPA members and supporters of the April 1978 regime, can only be dealt with in relation to the overall negative effects of the maintenance of Soviet troops for the development of the class struggle on the national and international level. To have a position in favour of Soviet troop withdrawal is in no way opposed to an unconditional defence of PDPA militants and sympathisers against the reactionaries.

8. Revolutionary marxists do not confuse the principle of proletarian internationalism, effective aid to freedom-fighters in a developing revolution, with the military intervention of a workers state, fallaciously presented as an "extension of socialism," while it prevents any possible independent activity of the masses. Underlying these two opposed conceptions in the last analysis, is the difference between a line of defence of the permanent revolution and support for a policy

of "building socialism in one country."

That is why revolutionary marxists denounce any orientation which considers a perspective of "structural assimilation" as a "lesser evil" or "historical progress." The essential criteria for determining their attitude cannot be the changing of property relations in Afghanistan, but the effects of the bureaucracy's policy from a threefold point of view: the evolution of the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of the latter's capacity to defend its conquests and its aptitude to win new ones.

If the hypothesis of a "structural assimilation" cannot be excluded, it nevertheless remains the case that the Kremlin is simultaneously making openings towards the traditional chiefs and carrying out a military occupation. Annexation and structural assimilation imply a frontal showdown with practically the whole population. As previous historical examples prove, the effects of such a process would be extremely negative from the point of view of the development of the class struggle in the whole region as well as in relation to the level of activity of the masses and the raising of their consciousness in Afghanistan.

In this respect the policy followed in Afghanistan by the Brezhnev leadership breaks one hundred per cent with the policy defended by Lenin who insisted, right in the heart of the old Tsarist state, that it was necessary: "to recognise each nation's right to self-determination, which contributes to the emancipation of the workers."

Revolutionary Marxists continue to defend this right for *national minorities in the USSR*, in the more general framework of the struggle for the *political revolution*. They understand the links that can be worked out between this demand put forward in the USSR and the one put forward today in Afghanistan and in the region. That is why, in the USSR, revolutionary marxists would declare themselves for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

More generally they denounce the barbarous methods used by the Soviet bureaucracy in Afghanistan. This denunciation facilitates, in reality, a battle for the rehabilitation among workers of the idea of the defence of the social foundations of the USSR — which are not to be confused with the bureaucracy itself — against imperialist operations. Revolutionary marxists will campaign to unmask the hypocrisy of imperialism, which while claiming to be the "defender of the freedom of the Afghan people," gives support to the reactionary forces in the same way that it arms the criminal dictatorships in the area, in South Korea, the Philippines and in Central America.

Revolutionary Marxists are opposed to any sort of line giving undifferentiated support to the "Afghan resistance." The axis of their intervention is based on the following themes: against all imperialist intervention in the region, support to the workers and peasants and to organisations struggling against the reactionaries and Soviet repression, for the defence of the right of the Afghan peoples to self-determination and for the full sovereignty of Afghanistan.

The Fourth International declares itself:

- Against imperialist intervention in the region!
- For the dismantling of imperialist bases!
- For the support of the struggles of the toiling Pakistani masses against the Zia dictatorship!
- In support of the democratic and social demands of the peasants and workers of Afghanistan!
- For the unconditional defence of the right to self-determination!
- Support to the progressive organisations in their strug-

gles against the reactionaries and Soviet repression!  
● Against any terror measures taken by the reactionary forces against militants and sympathisers of the PDPA!

● For an end to the occupation and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan!  
● For an independent, federal and socialist Afghanistan!



## Against the Attacks of the Reactionary Forces and the Imperialist Maneuvers, Fight for an Afghan Workers State!

[The following resolution was rejected by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International at its meeting in May 1981. The vote was: 9 for, 24 against, 6 abstentions.]

\* \* \*

### I

The attitude of the Fourth International regarding the December 1979 events in Afghanistan had been fixed in relationship to a series of political analyses and judgments that can be summarized as follows:

a) The April 27, 1978 coup, which overthrew the Daud regime, was organized by a faction of officers linked to the PDPA and by the PDPA itself. It had been welcomed favourably by the Soviet bureaucracy that wanted to reinforce its political influence and its strategic positions in a particularly explosive region. The coup had been preceded by mass demonstrations which, however, were not in themselves the determining factor in the overthrow of Daud.

b) The PDPA especially expressed the views of the layers of the "middle classes" and the urban petit bourgeoisie and enjoyed a certain influence amongst students. It was strongly marked by a Stalinist ideology and advanced the strategic perspective of a "democratic and national revolution." With its coming to power, it launched a series of democratic reforms comprising amongst others an agrarian reform, state control over foreign trade, an end to ancestral reactionary morals, limitation of the mullahs' influence, the union organization of the working class (albeit without the recognition of the right to strike). These reforms, in spite of their limits could only provoke uprootings in a society which remained among the most backward in the world.

The leadership of the PDPA conceived its policies as a "revolution from the top." It did not in any way stimulate a real mobilization of the masses in order to apply in an efficient and consequential way the reforms that had been adopted and to break the resistance of the reactionary dominant classes. Insofar as they were applied in practice, the reforms were achieved bureaucratically, under the control of the state apparatus and with the utilization from the beginning onwards of repressive methods. Especially in the countryside such methods could only have negative effects. On the one hand, they prevented the taking up of the difficult problems that the reform posed, in real terms, taking into account the specific interests of different sectors of the peasantry. On the other hand, the lack of mobilization facilitated the political and ideological campaign against the reforms led by the possessing classes. All that was the result of both the false conceptions inherited from Stalinism and of the fact that the PDPA, whose composition was primarily urban, appeared in the countryside as a force coming from outside.

In addition, the difficulties in applying the agrarian reform nationwide were aggravated by the largely Pushtun composition of the PDPA and in particular those officers who had

been the motor force of the April 27 coup, and by the incapacity of the leading group to offer a democratic solution to the problems that were created by the existence of a series of minority ethnic groups and national minorities.

All these errors and contradictions weighed heavily from the beginning in making the situation very precarious for the new regime. A few months following April 27, they led to a new wave of factional struggles inside the PDPA, not only between the traditional wings of the Parcham and Khalq, but also infighting within these two groups. This inevitably resulted in a weakening of both the state apparatus and the administration and the army itself. Thus, the new regime could only partially count on those who should have been, according to its conception, the essential instruments of the "democratic and national revolution."

c) As had happened in previous attempts to change Afghani society, this time again the central power devoid of real democratic bases proved itself incapable of opposing the regional centrifugal forces and of breaking the conservative and reactionary structures of the tribes. The overwhelming historic responsibility of the PDPA leadership resides precisely in this failure which it underwent because it had refused to struggle for the destruction of the old state apparatus and for the erection of a qualitative new state. Similarly, it had neither mobilized nor organized the masses within the framework of revolutionary democratic organizations.

In this situation the reactionary forces were able to counterattack, not only in opposing the reforms but also in unleashing a real civil war. They based themselves upon the old structures and the ancient customs. Insofar as the regime that was set up on April 27 did not succeed in shattering these traditional structures from within (which it could only have done through mass mobilizations, implying their politicization), the traditional factors, i.e., ethnic, tribal and largely religious, did not cease to play a powerful role in determining the relationship of forces in the civil war which was unfolding.

This cleavage had already occurred, essentially, in the course of 1979, i.e., before the Soviet intervention. Therefore, it was not provoked by the attitude of various political and social forces in the face of this intervention, but by their attitude toward the reforms that were started by the new regime and their possible dynamic. *Any denial or underestimation of these basic facts implies a misunderstanding or a falsification of the genesis of the conflict and its fundamental social content.*

The progressive broadening of the reactionary front was facilitated by the limits of the reforms, and by contradictory aspects in the agrarian reform and thus the difficulty felt

by peasant layers in grasping its significance. It was also facilitated by the bureaucratic methods used by the ruling group, by the exploitation of anti-Pushtun feelings amongst the other ethnic groups or nationalities, and also by the call for the defense of the religious traditions. As regards this last fact, we must stress the fundamental difference which exists with the case of Iran. In Iran the religious ideology has been exploited in relation to a powerful mass movement which mobilized against the autocracy of the Shah and against imperialism; it has objectively played, during a whole stage, a role of ideological cement for that movement. In Afghanistan religion has been exploited in order to set up and ideologically arm an opposition front towards the democratic reforms and to maintain, above all, the peasant masses in a state of submission to the tribal authorities, the landowners and the mullahs. It is not by chance, moreover, that the opposition, composed for the most part of reactionary and ultra-reactionary forces, has established ties with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, countries which certainly are not championing "progressive Islamism," on top of the links they had with Egypt whose role in the Middle East in this present stage does not need further comment.

d) The civil war particularly worsened from spring 1979 onwards and, despite a few partial military successes won by the government in the autumn of the same year, it evolved in favor of the reactionary forces. At the end of December, the ruling group around Amin was then incapable of controlling the situation and the danger of the overthrow of the regime by the counter-revolutionary opposition came more to the fore; this counter-revolution opposition was linked with some of the most reactionary governments in the region and through them with imperialism. The latter was not as yet in a position to launch a counter-attack in the region after the failure it experienced in Iran, but it was ready to do everything possible to exploit a favorable situation that would emerge independently from its direct initiative.

This was the context in which the Kremlin decided to intervene militarily and replace Amin by Karmal, improving the image of the Parcham. Its policies in Afghanistan had been dictated at the morrow of April 27, 1978, by its preoccupation with reinforcing its position in the region, while avoiding major confrontations. This is why, while backing the government of the PDPA, Moscow had opted for moderate solutions in making overtures and even recommending a slowing down of the rhythm of the application of the agrarian reform. *De facto* the Soviet bureaucracy had contributed to the negative evolution of the situation. In the face of a concrete threat of the crumbling of the regime with unfavorable consequences for its own positions, it took the ultimate recourse of military intervention.

2) In its resolution of January 26, 1980, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International affirmed unambiguously that Marxist revolutionaries did not accept any responsibility for the action of the Kremlin to which they refused "the slightest political support." The United Secretariat reiterated that it could not have "any truce nor sacred union with the Soviet bureaucracy whose counter-revolutionary policies discredit socialism and constitute a major obstacle to the development of the world revolution." But at the same time the United Secretariat explained that "independently of the specific aims that the Soviet bureaucracy pursues, its intervention places it in the situation where it has to fight against the forces of a reactionary social bloc which has nothing to do with a national liberation movement, but which — on the contrary — fight to maintain their

privileges and suppress the gains of the masses." It was on the basis of this consideration and the appreciation of the foreseeable consequences of the overthrow of the April 27 regime that the Fourth International did not call for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

## II

3) The USSR military intervention could have created more favourable conditions for the progressive forces if the ruling group of the regime had adopted a political orientation radically different from the one they had followed up to then. The Soviet army and Afghan armed forces, as underlined in the January 1980 resolution, could not have inflicted a defeat on those alien to the interests of the worker and peasant masses, except if the gains of the workers had been consolidated, if radical social and democratic measures had been taken and if the masses had been organized and armed to defend them.

The Soviets did not follow this course. The government combined attempts to compromise and overtures towards conservative forces with new measures of repression shortly after the liberation of part of the political prisoners. In the context of a civil war where the Soviet army played a larger role, overtures towards conservative forces could not find a real echo. Furthermore, the maintaining of a repressive regime that violated the most elementary democratic rights, the extreme difficulty in assuring the improvement of the standard of living of the workers and the frictions flowing inevitably from the presence of a strong foreign military contingent provoked grave tensions even in sectors which before had constituted the base of the regime or, at least, had expressed no hostility towards it.

As a result of all this, the reactionary opposition has in the end reinforced itself in making the anti-USSR fight its ideological cement without any concrete political measures being able to thwart this action; the centrifugal movement of the national groups and the nationalities broadened all the more; movements against the regime have taken place in the towns and among the layers of the petit bourgeoisie and the students.

Thus, not only was the government incapable of regaining the ground it had lost, but it was further weakened, even at the level of the apparatuses, because of, among other things, deadly conflicts that took place between the two factions of the PDPA. This could only increase its political and military dependency in relationship to the USSR and, therefore, facilitate in the end the reactionary propaganda and deepen the defiance shown by the masses.

4) On the international level, the Soviet bureaucracy got bogged down in an action that it cannot hope to come to terms with in the short term and could be damaging in other areas of the world. Imperialism, on the contrary, has seen its margin of maneuvers increase in a region where it found itself in a difficult situation and still does; it can now start to draw the basis, however partially, of an offensive policy and, especially it can start to hope to exploit to its advantage, more than in 1978 and 1979, an eventual crumbling of the Kabul regime.

The civil war continues, therefore, in conditions noticeably more favorable to the counter-revolutionary forces.

## III

5) The forces that oppose the regime are very different politically as well as ideologically and socially. They are

made up of, more or less, three components:

— the reactionary forces that have their centre in emigration in Pakistan, but also operate in the country, in spite of difficulties they meet with working inside the country, as well as the incapacity to develop a concerted action on an overall scale (organizationally, their divisions seemed to have deepened in the last period);

— the fronts that embrace the ethnic groups or nationalities, mainly those from the Hazaras and the Nouristan, which have their own internal dynamic, and gather the support — in spite of their inner bickering — of the indisputable majority of the population in these regions;

— the organizations which identify themselves with neither of the aforementioned components, such as the SAMA, the Front of the Mujhaden Fighters and oppositional Khalq groups. This last component operates especially in the cities.

The Maoist origins of some of these groups is not in itself proof that they can be considered an integral part of the workers movement and even less that their opposition to the regime has a revolutionary orientation. In a number of countries the Maoist ideology has been yet another misadventure of petit-bourgeois ideology. The influence of Peking, moreover, has sometimes led some of these organizations to adopt a point of view even more opportunistic than that of the pro-Soviet factions. The presence of Maoist or Maoistic elements or groups in the Afghani opposition does not prove, therefore, in any way that it is progressive. Their presence indicates today that the opposition front is even more heterogeneous than it was at the beginning. This is why it was able and it will be able to have a resonance in certain petit-bourgeois layers in the cities.

But no detailed analysis of the different components of the opposition can allow us to forget the essential fact: those components have an overwhelming preponderance and play the leading role in the civil war against the regime and in the military operations against the Soviet army they are conservative and out-and-out reactionary. The third component represents only a very small minority.

6) Because of this relationship of forces — hardly disputable — the crumbling of the regime would imply in the present stage the preponderance of forces which have risen up against the newly established regime immediately following April 27, 1978, because they considered themselves wronged or threatened in their fundamental interests. There is no analysis of value that can put forward a contrary hypothesis.

One can consider the different possible solutions in this framework, the weight of the different organizations or different fronts, the role that could be played, respectively, by the forces inside and outside the country. Roughly, one can think of two issues:

— the restoration of a conservative or an ultra-conservative central regime based on a compromise between the different regional or ethnic components, each one enjoying a very wide freedom of action in its own zone, which would represent, therefore, just from the perspective of the power structure alone a return to the past;

— a situation of generalized chaos where one would see local potentates involved in skirmishes and feuds.

Both solutions would objectively be a regression compared with the regime that emerged with the April 27 coup. Even the most moderate reforms would be swept aside. The progressive political forces would certainly not have a wider freedom of action; they would incur, on the contrary, heavy

repression.

Such a judgment of the dynamic of the situation is based primarily on the analysis of the political and ideological nature of the forces that are predominant in the opposition. But this analysis is reinforced when the analysis of their social nature is taken as a starting point. In the framework of tribal and semi-feudal structures or, at least, pre-capitalist structure and in a political context such as would be determined by a victory of the existing opposition formations, the social dynamic in itself would veer towards the conservative side. The progressive political forces, in a small minority, would in no way be able to oppose the dynamic. *Besides, the hypothesis of the breaking up of the framework of the Afghani state there would not be a flowering of independent nationalities in the heart of which objectively positive social differentiations would develop, but the emergence of states or embryonic states on a tribal or in any case an extremely backward base, deprived of real independence, and, therefore, condemned to becoming direct or indirect instruments of reactionary regimes in the region and in the end of imperialism.*

The latter up to now has had serious difficulties in exploiting the situation in Afghanistan to its advantage. At the time of the Soviet intervention it was unable to launch a counter-attack; it only stated that it would not have allowed the USSR to set foot in other countries of the region and primarily Pakistan. American imperialism only scored propaganda points; but in the event of the collapse of the PDPA regime and the success of the reactionary forces, it would endeavor by all means possible to exploit the favorable situation in order to consolidate a regime or reactionary regimes and to widen its strategic positions, thus compensating, however partially, the setback incurred in Iran.

A fall of the April 27 regime would correspond, in that context, to an evolution of the relationship of forces unfavorable to the revolution under the perspective of both the internal and the international dynamics.

7) The attitude of Marxist revolutionaries, confronted with the presence of Soviet troops, could not ignore the aforementioned facts.

Marxist revolutionaries, it should be recalled, do not oppose in principle the military intervention by a workers state in the course of a war or civil war to assist the defense or the victory of a revolution. They reject the principle of "non-intervention in the affairs of other countries" argued hypocritically by the bourgeoisie and the reformists. Besides, they do not ignore the fact that a military intervention by a bureaucratic leadership does not have the same motivation or dynamic that an intervention of a workers state directed by revolutionaries would have.

Precisely because they were aware of the contradictions that would have been caused by the intervention of the Kremlin, they stated that "they did not take any responsibility in the military intervention of the Kremlin" and that they condemned its "overall orientation."

This is why they considered, and that they consider all the more so today, that an essential task of the struggle of the masses and of the Afghani revolutionaries is to create the conditions for a withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

Our position would change in the case of a change in the relationship of forces and therefore, of the dynamic of the situation, more exactly, in the case when the withdrawal of the troops would not necessarily imply a victory of the reactionary forces followed by a repression against those that opposed the Kabul regime and the Soviet bureaucracy in a rev-

olutionary and progressive way and in the case when there would exist in the region a situation preventing imperialism and the reactionary indigenous forces to take advantage of the departure of the Soviet soldiers.

8) The attitude of the Fourth International towards the events in Afghanistan can only be criticised and rejected in a truly consistent way by characterizing the war as a war of national liberation, and not as a civil war, thus giving priority to the national question.

For Marxist revolutionaries the national question does not represent an absolute priority, but it is subordinated to the interests of the development of the proletarian revolution on a national and on an international scale. We reject the thesis of self-determination only limited to workers which was put forward by Bukharin in his famous polemic with Lenin. We fight for the right of self-determination of peoples, independently of the social nature of the leadership of the national movement at a given state — starting from the position that the setting up of a national state is historically progressive, that it facilitates social differentiation within the nationalities themselves and that the struggle for independence in itself is a factor that contributes to weakening the imperialist system.

In the case of Afghanistan *in the present stage*, one has to first of all remember that the struggle against the regime had started before the Kremlin military intervention, under the initiative, as underlined in the January 1980 United Secretariat resolution of “a bloc of forces which struggle to maintain their privileges and destroy all the gains of the masses” and “have nothing to do with the movement of national liberation.” Secondly, how would one pose the national question more concretely? Shall we demand the independence of the pre-existing Afghani national state that the Soviet intervention would have abolished? Should we be in favor of the setting up of a series of new national states corresponding to the various ethnic groups or national minorities? Should we take a position in favor of the smashing of Afghanistan and a national and state recomposition in the region in its entirety?

For us the question is not to advance a whole number of hypotheses. The question is to judge from the real context and the concrete perspectives at this present stage. The reality is that for the large majority of the forces that are dominant in the opposition, as the United Secretariat document stated, “the demand for an Afghani national sovereignty is only a democratic cover for the projects of reaction and of imperialism.” The most concrete perspective is that of a return to the Afghanistan prior to 1978 or the perspective of the breaking up into a number of states or pseudo-states based more on ethnic groups than on nationalities and destined, in the given context, to become instruments, direct or indirect, of imperialism.

The problem posed is to know how to develop social and political struggles independently from the leadership of the PDPA and the Soviet bureaucracy and to oppose on that terrain the negative repercussions of the presence of the military forces from the USSR. In this framework, we will have to fight for the respect of the democratic rights of all the ethnic groups and national minorities. The withdrawal of the troops will have to be demanded as soon as a new situation emerges, and this withdrawal will not automatically imply a victory of the reactionary forces and a victory for imperialism in the region.

9) Marxist revolutionaries have to place themselves in the arena of international class struggle, the self-organization of workers and peasants, in a perspective of consistent struggle for democratic objectives leading to the formation of a workers state. They fight to insure that this formation is the result of the struggle of the masses and their independent revolutionary-democratic organisation. They struggle to force imperialism to stop its maneuvers and aid in favour of the reactionary forces and to dismantle its bases in the area. In that sense, in no way do they bank on a perspective of destroying the capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production through a process of structural assimilation to the USSR.

They do not hide the extreme difficulty in accomplishing the tasks of revolutionaries in an economically and socially very backward country where the working class has a minimal specific weight and where the peasants have not done away with the yoke of tribal structures, where the religious ideology weighs heavily on the conservative side, where the organization of the workers movement, having only a recent history, and the misdeeds of the PDPA leadership and the political bureaucracy have erected powerful extra obstacles to the gaining of political awareness of the masses.

In the present stage they will fight for:

- democratic rights;
- the organization of the workers movement without any limits;
- defense of national minority rights.

In light of this, they are in favor of maintaining all the progressive reforms that have been adopted since April 1978 and for their extension. They also fight against all forces that want to annul the reforms and restabilise the country on a conservative basis. This does not prevent them from struggling for the defense of the specific interests of the working class and all other toilers, which should not be sacrificed for any sort of tactical consideration. Any abandoning or weakening of this struggle would create supplementary obstacles in the battle for democratic objectives and an eventual socialist transformation. In the case when conflicts take place between workers struggling and the Soviet army, Marxist revolutionaries will still unconditionally side with the workers developing at the same time political propaganda directed at the Soviet soldiers.

To struggle for such perspectives means concretely to struggle for the building of a political force against the Kabul government in a way diametrically opposed to that of the reactionary forces which presently constitute the large majority of the armed resistance. The growth of such a force is vital to avoid the crisis of the regime and/or the withdrawal of the Soviet troops leading to the victory of reaction and the strengthening of imperialist positions in the region. For a whole period the activity of revolutionaries will have to be concentrated primarily amongst layers of the working class and the urban petit bourgeoisie.

10) Marxist revolutionaries will have to denounce any action by imperialism aiming to rebuild a strategic stronghold in the region. They will denounce the hypocritical campaigns of those that pretend to be indignant at the intervention of the USSR in Afghanistan while supporting in other parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America forces and regimes which organize massacres bordering on genocide. They will

call for the setting up of campaigns against Washington's and its allies' arms race and for the dismantling of all their military bases. They will help the struggle of the masses against the reactionary regimes in the region primarily against the sinister regime of Zia in Pakistan.

— For the defense of democratic reforms adopted after

April 1978 and their broadening!

— For the organization without any limitation of the workers movement!

— For the respect of national minority rights!

— Against the presence of imperialism in the region and for the overthrow of the reactionary puppet regimes!

# The Vietnamese Communist Party and the Leadership of the Colonial Revolution: Old Debates and New Ones

by Roman

It is probable that the coming debate inside the Fourth International will particularly centre on the analysis of the parties which have led revolutionary processes to victory in the colonial and semi-colonial world. The case of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) is obviously one of the most important of these. The discussion on the course of the Vietnamese revolution and the role of the VCP is not new inside our movement. But the terms of the debate have been thoroughly changed. This was already clear during the preparation of the last World Congress where several counterposed resolutions were proposed. Simplifying things a great deal one could say that during the debate from 1972-78, the SWP leadership of the United States (SWP) defended an analysis of the VCP that the majority of the time defined as deeply sectarian. In turn the then minority attacked the majority for being opportunist on this question. Now in 1979-80 during the debate on the Sino-Indochinese crisis, the majority of our movement insisted on including in the adopted resolution an explicit condemnation of the policies followed by the VCP in 1976-78 on the Cambodian question which resulted in the Vietnamese military intervention. On the other hand the SWP leadership refused to accept such a criticism being included in the resolution — an attitude which is, to say the least, “opportunist” on this question.

We have seen no SWP document which systematically presents the evolution of their positions and clearly outlines this leadership's present analysis of the VCP. Furthermore it is not certain that there is a ‘traditional position’ of the SWP on this question. In the past the SWP leadership voted, with the leaderships of the European sections, for documents which did not define the VCP (or the Chinese CP) as Stalinist or counter-revolutionary. However during the seventies the SWP leadership's position was crystal-clear: the VCP was considered a petty-bourgeois, counter-revolutionary Stalinist party whose leadership strived to consolidate the power of a national bourgeoisie in Vietnam by opposing the revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

The report given by Steve Clark to the August 1981 SWP national convention shows that the leadership of this organisation has abandoned this analysis of the VCP. The evolution that is underway is very important because of its political and theoretical implications. It generally modifies the terms of the debate we have had up to now. The object of this discussion article is above all to redraw the parameters of yesterday's debate to prepare for the future discussion. The present evolution of the analysis of the SWP leadership, if it is confirmed, has indeed positive effects but it also presents worrying aspects. It is important therefore to see what old differences are in the process of disappearing in order to better understand what new differences are perhaps emerging.

More generally in this article I want to go back over the method and the framework of analysis through which we can understand the character of communist parties formed in the course of the colonial revolution. We have to deal here

with a whole series of complex phenomena which have posed difficult problems throughout our movement, including in what we are used to calling the ‘majority.’ Therefore the following article does not only try and redraw the lines of the majority versus SWP debate and its present developments. It also aims to clarify questions of method which are important for us all — and important for defining the way in which we act today in order to intervene more deeply in the process of the colonial revolution. The political implications of different analyses of a party like the VCP (during the revolutionary struggle and today) are as important to discuss as the underlying questions of method.

## The 1972-8 discussion: the VCP — a counter-revolutionary Stalinist party?

For reference here I want to take the debate published in *International Socialist Review* sparked off by a polemical article by Feldman and Johnson (*ISR*, July/August 1973). My response and a new polemical article from Feldman and Johnson were published in the April 1974 issue of *ISR*. Finally my reply to the second Feldman/Johnson article has remained unpublished to this day. It should be recalled that these articles cover a crucial period for the Vietnamese revolution: from the signing of the Paris Agreements from January 1973 (1 — see footnotes at the end of article) to the 1975 victory.

For Feldman/Johnson the VCP was a Stalinist petty-bourgeois and counter-revolutionary party. They stated:

“In the colonial countries, the CP attempts to carry out the programme of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. To do so it seeks an alliance with the bourgeoisie, to which it tries (sic) to cede the power and political leadership if this can be negotiated. . . .

“ . . . The key element in the coming to power of one of these parties is not its conscious decision to fight its own bourgeoisie but either the refusal of the bourgeoisie to collaborate (China) or the weakness and totally pro-imperialist character of the ‘national’ bourgeoisie (Vietnam). Thus the willingness of a Stalinist party to participate in or even lead a prolonged revolutionary struggle for bourgeois-democratic demands does not at all automatically lead to a socialist victory. That step depends on wholly unpredictable actions by the bourgeoisie or on its near nonexistence — conditions that are quite exceptional” (2).

(This last sentence perhaps ‘explains’ why the victory of the revolution in South Vietnam was ‘generally unforeseen’ by the SWP comrades; we will see this later.)

Feldman/Johnson also noted:

“The fact that the struggle has been carried on for three decades without being decisively defeated should not be permitted to influence our evaluation of the programme of the leadership. . . . The fact that the struggle has sustained itself for thirty years is a tribute to the persistence and iron

will of the Vietnamese people" (3).

It is crystal-clear: the extraordinary capacity of resistance of the Vietnamese people has nothing to do with the organising and leadership role of the VCP. It is due only to the psychological qualities of this heroic people.

We should note that the SWP majority was not alone in defending the idea, inside our movement, according to which the victory of the Vietnamese revolution was achieved against the will of the VCP — defined as a 'Stalinist party.' It is also the case with comrades Jerome and Matti in their criticism of the report given by Segur to the French section's Central Committee. They even call it the "main paradox of the world revolution during the last forty years." This fact that all the victorious revolutions (except the Cuban and Nicaraguan ones) were carried out "against the will of the parties which found themselves in the leadership of them" (4).

For all these comrades the victory of a revolution like the Vietnamese revolution was due to 'exceptional circumstances' — the combined factors of upsurge of the masses, weakness of the national bourgeoisie and imperialist errors. In a different framework of analysis and while recognising the *active role* played by parties like the VCP in the victory of the revolution, a number of 'majority spokespersons' have themselves used the expression 'exceptional circumstances' to explain how such victories were possible in the absence of the 'revolutionary marxist' party in the sense we understand this (i.e., having a programme responding to the problems of the world revolution in *all its sectors of development* and explicitly in favour of resolving the crisis of the world communist movement opened up by the bureaucratisation of the USSR and the rise to power of the Stalinist faction inside the Soviet CP).

I think that once and for all we should bury such expressions as 'exceptional conditions or circumstances.' Instead of contributing to clarify the problem with which we are confronted, they obscure them even further. Exceptional means . . . that it is an exception. Now we are discussing all the victorious revolutions up to today . . . with the exception of the Russian revolution. The absurd and fetishist way in which this term is used comes through in this quotation from Jerome and Matti:

"It is important to underline what comrade Mandel himself admits, mainly that "*exceptional circumstances*" have been the rule, not only in each of the revolutions at hand, but also as a *general characteristic which has marked the whole post-war period* [i.e., survival of stalinism]" (5).

The exception therefore becomes the rule! It is not surprising that common mortals occasionally find it difficult to understand our debates! Let us recognise that we are discussing the general course of the colonial revolution since about six decades, that all revolutionary crises are in themselves expressions of a combination of exceptional circumstances (particularly with regard to the crisis of the bourgeoisie) and that the ritual reference to '*exceptional conditions*' explain *nothing*. So let's stop using this term.

### **An explanation that poses more problems than it solves**

For the leadership of the SWP (at least in the 1972-78 period) and for comrades Jerome and Matti today the victory of the Vietnamese revolution was achieved against the programme, the orientation and the will of the VCP. But this 'explanation' *contradicts historic reality and poses a lot more problems than it solves*. Here we can only rapidly enumerate

some of the problems produced by this analysis of the Vietnamese revolution without being able to refute them in detail.

1. On the theoretical level this analysis raises a question of major importance which puts into question our fundamental conception of the party's role in the revolution. Feldman/Johnson's position implies that a proletarian revolution was carried out under the leadership of a petty-bourgeois and peasant party. Furthermore this took place in a country where the "pressure of the masses" could only be, especially given the circumstances, that of vast petty-bourgeois masses, above all peasants, but also urban petty-bourgeois and lumpen proletarian layers, in an advanced state of social decomposition under the impact of war and displacements of the population. Furthermore this victory is supposed to have been made not only without a 'revolutionary marxist party,' but also against the only significant existing organisation, the VCP — without even provoking an internal crisis or producing the emergence of an alternative leadership. The only leadership capable of having an influence on the course of events wanted at all cost to avoid the victory of a socialist revolution — which nevertheless happened.

A remarkable set of circumstances — this 'spontaneous' revolution triumphed after a desperate thirty-year struggle against formidable enemies — French colonialism and American imperialism. Both of them threw enormous resources into this battle and there has never been, in the history of wars and revolutions, a more terrible military escalation than American escalation of the war in Indochina. Out there, there was no 'surprise victory.'

If it is true that the Vietnamese revolution was achieved without a revolutionary organisation and against the existing and omnipresent party . . . then yes, we have to re-discuss the party's role in revolutions. Particularly since this analysis would be also valid for Yugoslavia, China etc. This problem (for us of monumental importance) cannot even be outlined . . . if historical reality is how our analysts, Feldman/Johnson and Jerome/Matti, would like it to be.

2. Fortunately for our programmatic tradition the historical course of the Vietnamese revolution was not how they describe it — nor for that matter was the Chinese or Yugoslav revolutions. Neither in 1954 or 1975 was there a spontaneous uprising of the masses which would have forced the VCP to take power. The peasant uprising for land reform in 1953-54 was largely provoked by the appeals of the VCP itself. And in 1975 in the Saigon region the only sectors of the masses which intervened actively in the seizure of power were those which were organised by the VCP. Other sectors of the masses (and this was a serious problem) were spectators. The VCP policy in the fifties, sixties and seventies was always to refuse to share *real* power with the bourgeoisie (or even with petty-bourgeois forces). The VCP ensured that it had strict control first of all of the military and political apparatus of the resistance and later of the country itself. After the victory of the revolution it immediately dismantled the bourgeois state apparatus in the South and immediately began a process of reunification with the socialist North which was formally institutionalised in 1976.

More fundamentally in all research and studies published on the Vietnamese, Chinese or Yugoslav revolutions the decisive role played by the VCP, CCP and YCP comes out clearly. This is true both for the daily resistance and in terms of the big political options which marked the course of the struggle. All these parties obviously took account of the

'pressure of the masses' which was occasionally very important in the adoption of new positions — particularly with regard to the agrarian reforms in Vietnam and China. They occasionally retreated when faced with big new events. They hesitated from time to time. They influenced the evolution of the struggles in a contradictory way. But the big advances in the revolutionary struggles in these three countries were not for all that due to a spontaneous and irresistible outflanking by the masses of the framework imposed by the party. The real activity of these three parties in the struggle for power is a fundamental element of *these revolutions which confirms rather than invalidates the correct bases of our theoretical analysis of the party's role in the revolutions*. On this the experience of the colonial revolution continues to confirm that of the Russian revolution.

3. The implications of Comrades Feldman/Johnson's wrong positions on the VCP come through also in their analysis of the evolution in the relationship of forces inside Vietnam between 1973 and 1975. For them the signing of the Paris Agreements expressed the deepgoing willingness to compromise of the Vietnamese leadership and contributed to disarming the masses. The SWP in a *Militant* editorial, published during the preliminary negotiations for the Paris Agreements, stated:

"The nine points [of the Vietnamese PRG] represent a formula for maintaining the capitalist system and a foothold for U.S. imperialism in Vietnam. . . . The agreement thus represents a setback to the decades-long struggle of the Vietnamese people for independence and social justice" (6).

As for Feldman/Johnson, they noted in their 1974 article:

"Only the future will determine whether the January 1973 Accords were merely a temporary setback to the liberation struggle or if they marked a major retreat. . . . The experience of the first year, however, sharply belies the claims of the DRV and of the NLF that the accords were a great advance for the anti-imperialist struggle" (7).

The articles from the SWP press show that their authors analysed in a pessimistic way the 'degradation' of the relationship of forces in 1974 and 1975. To such a point that *Intercontinental Press* dated 28th April 1975 headlined an article from Dick Fidler: "PRG signals readiness to compromise with Saigon." This issue of *IP* was distributed . . . after the victorious seizure of Saigon by the North Vietnamese Armed Forces and the NLF. If ridicule was mortal . . . so, in January 1973, the Vietnamese revolution 'suffers a serious setback.' In 1974 the situation is getting worse. In April 1975 the Vietnamese leadership re-affirms its willingness to compromise' . . . and the 1st of May triumphantly went into the history books as the 1st of May of the victory in Vietnam. Try and make sense of that if you can!

The majority's theses permitted us to understand the course of events. The resolution adopted by the December 1972 IEC (while the Paris Agreements had not even yet been signed) explained that in that eventuality:

"A retreat of U.S. armed forces from Vietnam and a halt to the bombings in the North and the South, would constitute in any case a change in the relationship of forces in favour of the revolution. They would express imperialism's incapacity to break the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese masses as well as its retreat given the force of anti-war feeling in the USA itself.

"But such a retreat does not guarantee in itself victory of the permanent revolution in South Vietnam. It only means that this revolutionary process could develop in the context

of a reduced, but not eliminated, foreign intervention" (8).

The analysis of the relationship of forces and the prognoses which flow from them are tests of the analyses made by different currents of the International of the VCP's policy. The minority saw the Paris Agreements as the proof of the VCP willingness to betray. The majority knew that the VCP was fighting with all its forces for victory and the seizure of power. The majority's analysis of the Paris Agreements allows us to understand how the final victory came two years later. The minority's analysis certainly did not.

Before taking up other problems, like that of the political revolution in countries like Vietnam and China, it must be pointed out that the positions of the SWP leadership from 1972-1978 break with those presented in important documents of our movement — *documents that the SWP, as a fraternal organisation, had voted for*.

### The traditional political positions of the Fourth International

The Fourth International has adopted few documents on the nature of the revolutionary process in Vietnam and the VCP. There were more on China. I want to refer to the latter in order to recall what was the framework of analysis then used to define this type of party.

In June 1952 the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International (IEC) adopted a resolution on the Chinese revolution. I think it merits a critical analysis. But we can note for the moment that its approach was opposed to the method of approach adopted in 1972-78 by the leadership of the SWP and today by Jerome and Matti.

"Neither its programme, nor its traditions or the dynamic of its political line can justify putting the Chinese CP in the same category as a peasant party. . . . Under the pressure of antagonistic social forces the Chinese CP, in a hesitant, contradictory and opportunist way, took the revolutionary road and not the path of counter-revolution. That is the surest proof confirming the class character of the Chinese CP as that of an opportunist workers party. . . . In the imperialist epoch a peasant war, that is, a peasant uprising under a peasant leadership, cannot overthrow feudal-bourgeois power in a backward country. Only a peasant insurrection centralised and led by a workers party can begin to resolve the problems of the revolution" (9).

We can see therefore that at the June 1952 IEC future 'majority' and future 'minority' both considered the victory of the Chinese revolution had only been possible because the CCP had (even if in a contradictory manner) taken the revolutionary road, because it had preserved its proletarian character (even if in an opportunist way) and because it was able to lead and centralise the peasant insurrection. This was *before* the 1952-3 split. What was the position at the time of our movement's reunification. Both the 7th World Congress (1963 Reunification Congress) and the 8th World Congress (1965) still refused at this time to define the Chinese leadership as 'Stalinist.' Both congresses analysed the specificity of the latter in the framework of the crisis of Stalinism, of the end of Stalinist monolithism on the international scale. The 8th World Congress resolution, after a long analysis, concluded unambiguously:

"The Chinese Communist Party cannot be considered a party which has been Stalinist in the strict sense of the term, that is to say subordinated from the 20s to the bureaucratic leadership of the Kremlin" (10).

Leaving aside these unanimously voted resolutions it is



true that the exact characterisation of the Chinese leadership has *always* been a problem in our movement. But I think we can nevertheless say that the 'majority' of the seventies were more within the *common* tradition of the re-united International as a whole than yesterday's SWP leadership and Jerome/Matti's today. This is confirmed if we take up the problem of the political revolution in countries like China or Vietnam.

### The problem of the political revolution

For the SWP leadership in the 1972-78 period and for Matti/Jerome today *there is no problem* with calling for the political revolution in countries like China or Vietnam where the 'leading' party is qualified as Stalinist (as contrasted with the Cuban leadership). These workers states:

"were bureaucratised from their birth, under the guidance of the Stalinist parties."

Consequently, for example in the case of China, "from the beginning of the new workers state, it was correct to call for a political revolution" (11).

To read Jerome/Matti or Feldman/Johnson that seems such a simple 'home truth' that it is 'self-evident.' However this way of taking up the problem of the political revolution in cases like that of Yugoslavia, China or Vietnam is profoundly different from the method adopted unanimously in the past inside our movement.

I will only take up one example, that of the resolution adopted on this question by the 8th World Congress (1965) — let us remind ourselves of it again. The least one can say is that the judgement made by the Congress on the Chinese leadership was very prudent. In the resolution on the Sino-Soviet conflict, the Congress posed the following question: Is there a definitive process of Stalinisation underway in China? The answer was negative, in the following terms:

"It is undeniable that bureaucratisation is one of the evils which every victorious revolution has to confront, and more than anywhere else in countries of a low economic and cultural level. . . . The development of the Chinese revolution after the seizure of power in 1949 has provided its own dossier on this question. The first tendency to bureaucratisation was reinforced by the fact that the Mao grouping did not have a Leninist/Trotskyist understanding of the phenomenon and of its dangers. On the contrary it was going to go as far as erecting the very incarnation of bureaucratisation, Stalin to a key position in the official iconography of the state. . . .

"Can we say consequently that China was going through the same experience as the Soviet Union with all the logical consequences that flow from that and that a universal necessity for a Stalinist phase exists? . . . The facts argue against that.

"First of all, the international relationship of forces which spawned and nourished Stalinism and which in the last analysis was responsible for its victory, has irrevocably changed. . . . That alone allows us to create a decisive difference in the establishment of economic bases permitting a higher rate of growth in China than in the Soviet Union during the first years. . . . Furthermore the Chinese people is looking to a world rocked by revolutionary developments . . . (in particular the Cuban revolution, victorious ten years after the Chinese revolution). Above all world capitalism has much narrower and undoubtedly weaker foundations than in the decades preceding the Second World War. The importance of all this is, in relation to the theory of an inev-

itable period of Stalinism, is that the material forces which spawned a bureaucratic caste as hardened and totally crystallised as that which emerged in the USSR, do not exist anywhere else in the world.

"Thus in light of the international relationship of forces, of the dynamic of the Chinese revolution and the particular characteristics of the Mao leadership we can say that the bureaucratisation in China is not the same as that which developed in the Soviet Union in the form of a powerfully consolidated caste. Trotsky's point of view was that the Stalinist experience, examined in all its concrete aspects, was due to quite a particular combination of forces and circumstances" (12).

Surprising is it not for those who have a short memory?

Jerome and Matti ingenuously ask, what would have had to happen for the majority (in fact the whole of our movement) to have changed its position on the call for the political revolution in China. Well, here is one 'small' event: the 1966-9 Cultural revolution and its aftermath. That is, a major crisis of society, the state and the party during which a whole series of social and political relations, which for a long time were ambiguous, ended up becoming crystallised and were clarified in the *consciousness of advanced sectors of the masses thanks to the practical experience of this global crisis of the bureaucratic system*. The relationship party-masses was finally transformed. The populist vein within Maoism was exhausted, leaving only its repressive and nepotistic face — bleakly incarnated by the "Gang of Four." *The actuality of the struggle for the anti-bureaucratic political revolution has become a reality and not a prognosis* — the first faltering emergence of the Democracy Movement in 1974 and then its triumphant intervention (1976) is the demonstration of this.

The turning point which the Cultural revolution represents in the history of People's China is also expressed on the international level. As soon as the 'troubles' finished, the Chinese leadership made a big diplomatic turn which led it to recommend the establishment of an anti-Soviet bloc — even including the United States and Japan in the framework of the notorious 'Three Worlds' theory. We should remember how during the 1960-65 period, at the time of the Sino-Soviet split the Chinese leadership launched a vigorous international campaign denouncing Moscow's policy of peaceful co-existence. We do not overlook the opportunist support given for diplomatic reasons by Peking to the Pakistani regime, nor the responsibilities of the Maoist leadership in the terrible Indonesian defeat in 1965. But Peking called then for the development of national liberation struggles and was linked to various anti-imperialist Third World movements left abandoned by the Khrushchev leadership. China has not always been what it is today!

We can discuss when the struggle for the political revolution became concretely relevant and visibly inevitable in China. Some people would say after the repression of the *100 Flowers Movement* and the failure of the *Great Leap Forward* (around 1968). I think for my part that the general crisis of the Cultural revolution represents the real turning point in this process. We can discuss the terms and formulations of the 8th World Congress analysis. *But the basic problem remains* — this precise problem which the SWP leadership of the '70s as well as Matti/Jerome today try and dodge. In the case of living revolutions, such as the Yugoslav, Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions, one cannot call for the political revolution the same day as one celebrates the victory of the revolutionary struggle!

The problem is not one of psychology. It is not a case of giving them a decent trial or delay! The problem is fundamentally political. The only way of justifying an appeal for the political revolution right from the formation of a new workers state, is to consider the party coming to power as a counter-revolutionary party, that at the moment of taking power it remains a party first of the bourgeois counter-revolution and then of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. At the end of the day it only accepted to take the power the masses handed to them in order to avoid the worst — the development of a living socialist democracy. We have already dealt earlier with this line of argument.

We have to recognise what we are dealing with — the YCP of 1944, the CCP of 1949, the VCP of 1954 and 1975 were revolutionary parties. The word will make Jerome/Matti leap out of their seats and will raise many an eyebrow in our movement — at least in our movement today. However, how do we otherwise define parties which have wanted and been able to play an active and decisive role in the organisation and leadership of revolutionary struggles and, in the cases we are dealing with here, victorious ones at that. It is a bit difficult to call them counter-revolutionary parties!

It is not by avoiding such words that we erase reality. These are parties which have led anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist revolutionary struggles of major importance for the world class struggle. Certainly these are also parties profoundly marked by bureaucratism, nationalism, authoritarianism and paternalism, the absence of democratic-centralist functioning, the military character of the liberation struggle and the socio-economic backwardness of the country.

These are revolutionary parties. *However, and that is the other side of the problem we are confronted with here, the process of bureaucratisation in fact started from the first period in the formation of the new workers state.* That was due partially to the nature of the orientations put forward by parties like the YCP, the CCP or the VCP. But much more *fundamentally this was due to the international context and the concrete evolution of these revolutions. The problem is historical rather than purely political.* All successful revolutions since the victory of the Russian revolution were marked by:

- \* the failure of revolutionary struggles in the imperialist West and their isolation relative to the world counter-revolution;

- \* the fact that at one moment or another they had to turn towards the USSR (and therefore the Soviet bureaucracy);

- \* their military and national character (long struggles of national liberation);

- \* they developed in very economically backward poor countries where the social weight of the proletariat was weak.

None of them spontaneously produced an overall network of workers and peasants councils whose centralisation would have permitted the founding of a workers state of socialist democracy. In this sense not only were these parties permeated by bureaucratism but the very 'evolution' of these revolutions was deformed. We have a deeper, more difficult problem to solve.

*Just after the seizure of power and the establishment of a new workers state one can say that the Communist party in such cases is still the party of revolution while it is already becoming the party of a bureaucracy in the process of being formed.* The absence of centralised workers and peasants councils; the abandonment of Leninist norms of giving the 'communist maximum' and the existence of institutionalised

privileges for cadres; and the ideological and material weight of the Soviet bureaucracy and the 'socialist' bloc, all aided the step by step constitution of the bureaucracy and its control over the party and state. This process was checked by the following:

- \* the masses were not defeated after the victory in the same way as the Soviet masses in the thirties;

- \* the extreme social problems due to the poverty of the country;

- \* the long confrontation with imperialism which wanted its retribution;

- \* later on, regional revolutionary developments.

The regime established on the basis of the revolutionary victory remained for a long time marked, even dominated by this contradictory situation. And experience shows that if processes of bureaucratisation started from the beginning of the new workers state, a long time was needed before the ultimate stage is reached. The process began sooner and under more generalised forms than in the USSR. But in general it took more time for the bureaucracy to take complete control of the state apparatus and for the internal transformation of the bureaucracy from 'privileged layer' to 'crystallised ruling caste.'

Here we have a fundamental theoretical problem: 'the' bureaucracy is not an homogenous category because it is not properly speaking a social class. It does not exist under the form of a crystallised ruling layer at the moment of the seizure of power. It exists first of all as individual bureaucrats, then as a politically and socially privileged layer before being really able to impose itself as a crystallised ruling caste. It is formed inside the revolutionary and workers movement itself. For a long time it was not at all external to it. The bureaucracy step by step raises itself over and above the workers and mass movement, progressively snuffing out its revolutionary character before being able in practice to stand up as an independent and antagonistic power. To treat the bureaucracy as an homogenous layer in time and space is indeed to deal with it fundamentally as a new class in the full sense of the term.

This is the type of problem which permits us to understand what we are faced with after a victorious revolution — parties which are both revolutionary and bureaucratic and even political currents at one and same time revolutionary and bureaucratic. That obliges us to analyse the concrete process of bureaucratisation in each revolution. It is this that leads us to be so prudent with regard to the call for the political revolution.

Let's take the example of Vietnam from 1956-59. In North Vietnam the new workers state showed evident bureaucratic deformations. In 1956 the regime was rocked by a significant political crisis in the countryside as well as with the intellectuals. It had recourse to repression against the peasants and numerous members of the party (before making a scathing self-criticism) and against an anti-bureaucratic intellectual opposition. It blocked the spontaneous developments of new popular struggles in the South. The VCP, still in the South was decimated by the Diem regime's repression without the North seeming to react. Is not this the proof of bureaucratic betrayal? Jerome/Matti explain to us that it was necessary to call for the political revolution from 1954 in the North. With even more reason in 1957-9! However from 1959-60 on, the VCP relaunched revolutionary struggle in the South. It organised the insurrection and centralised the peasant uprisings. It contributed to the urban mass mobilisations. In 1964 the NLF was on the point of winning. In

1965 the American troops disembarked. The escalation of the second Indochinese war had begun. And the VCP in the North as well as in the South wrote some of the most moving, terrible and inspiring pages in the history of revolutionary struggles. The Vietnamese 'bureaucracy' also paid a price in blood in doing this.

Did we have to call for the political revolution in North Vietnam (that is to say, for the revolutionary overthrow of the regime) when the party as a whole, the regime and the country were engaged in a colossal test of strength and the VCP was again the leading party of an authentic revolutionary struggle in the South. Perhaps Jerome and Matti (and yesterday Feldman and Johnson) will nonchalantly say yes. For my part I am happy for the honour of our movement that we did not do the same.

Does this mean that we must put off indefinitely the struggle against the bureaucracy and for socialist democracy? No, and we must here make an important distinction between: making a struggle against the rising bureaucracy and for the socialist democracy of the masses *and* a call for the political revolution. The experience of the colonial revolution shows to what point the absence of a real socialist democracy based on centralised workers and peasants councils, is a fundamental problem. No revolution can escape being rapidly confronted with the problem of bureaucracy.

Such is the double lesson we must draw from this question. We must be immediately on our guard against the dangers of bureaucracy, defending (concretely) our programme of socialist democracy while recognising the objective difficulties faced by colonial revolutions, and supporting the first anti-bureaucratic struggles in the party and society. But we must also base a call for the political revolution on living reality, on the concrete test of events which are related both to the national and international evolution of the regime in question and not as an estimation of the 'degrees of bureaucratisation and on the chances of this worsening.' The call for political revolution is a serious act which must be decided in a responsible way. To the extent that we commit ourselves to the anti-bureaucratic struggle without waiting for this call for the political revolution it is not harmful to be prudent on this!

### A first balance sheet

1) First we should note that the present evolution in the SWP's political line can have a positive aspect. The generalisation of a line denying that parties like the VCP and the CCP have any revolutionary character, any active role in their revolution is mortal for our movement, for its relations with the revolutionary movements in the semi-colonial world, for the construction of the FI as a world organisation. Two documents permit us to measure the importance of the turn being made today by the SWP leadership in their analysis of the VCP. First of all there is a resolution adopted by the National Convention of the U.S. SWP in August 1981. This resolution credits the VCP as such for its battle against imperialism and its solidarity with the Central American revolutions. It notes the VCP's role:

"It has polemicized against the Maoist substitution of military tactics for a strategy rooted in the social and political centrality of the proletariat in our epoch. . . . These polemics open the door to advancing discussion on the proletarian strategy for national liberation and socialism in the Communist parties and among the oppressed and exploited toilers in Asia, especially in Thailand and the Philippines" (13).

Furthermore Steve Clark speaks at length on Vietnam in the report he gave to this congress. He notes — something which is perfectly true, that we have not (and that includes everybody) put into practice the resolutions calling for the defence of the Indochinese revolution. But what is most striking, is the way in which he retraces the past course of the Vietnamese revolution, he states that after 1975:

"The Vietnamese leadership organised and mobilised that revolutionary energy over the subsequent three years to reunify the country and lead the workers to expropriate the bourgeoisie and carry out overthrowing the old property relations and extending the workers state to the south" (14).

Going back over the pre-war years and then the liberation struggles Clark affirms — in a way which to say the least is surprising — that:

"It has never been the SWP's view that the Vietnamese leadership can simply be lumped together with Moscow and Peking. It has been at the head of an awesome struggle against imperialism for more than thirty years and today faces the relentless pressure and threats of the imperialist powers" (14).

This is practically word for word the opposite of what the SWP wrote in the polemics against us in the 1972-8 period. I refer comrades on this question not only to the documents which we have referred to in the previous pages but also to the debate from 1972-8 on the formation of the workers state in Vietnam. Nevertheless one must point out that a critical balance sheet of their own history, presenting the real evolution of their positions would be welcome from the SWP leadership!

The present evolution of their position also seems to put into question the distinctive method largely used in the past by the SWP leadership to justify its sectarianism towards parties like the CCP and VCP. The parties of 'stalinist origin' were summarily denounced as counter-revolutionary. Those parties with a different origin (like the 26th July Movement in Cuba and the nationalist movements of the Third World) were on the other hand defined as revolutionary or progressive. I would like to deal now with these distinct methods of analysis.

2) *Can one have different methods of analysis for the Vietnamese and Cuban Communist Parties?*

I want to particularly insist on this point because these distinct methods of analysis are expressed in a quasi-natural way not only by the U.S. SWP, not only by Jerome/Matti but also by various "majority" spokespersons (I particularly have in mind Claudio's report on Cuba at the last IEC). Since it relates to our method of analysis and our overall policy towards these revolutions, these different methods appear to me false. And dangerous.

Let's be clear what I mean by that. I do not deny that it is necessary to make a distinction in the concrete analysis of these movements. I am also convinced that we cannot develop a serious judgement of these parties of the colonial revolution without a real knowledge of their own history and without understanding their specificity. One of the most important specific characteristics of the Castroist leadership was, it is true, that it did not emerge from the Stalinised Comintern. This fact permitted the Castroist leadership, in the 60s, to play a specific role, which was considerable in Latin America but also important in other continents, in the development of the revolutionary movement and the weakening of Moscow's political control. But we need to add the following remarks:

a) *The same method of concrete analysis* must be applied to different parties of the colonial revolution. Parties that emerged from the Stalinised Comintern cannot *a priori* be qualified as counter-revolutionary (as the cases of the YCP, CCP and VCP demonstrate). Conversely parties of a petty-bourgeois nationalist origin *can* be counter-revolutionary. This is an important question of method — and a major political question in the analysis of our own history, of our successes and failures, of our errors in our relationship with the colonial revolution. It is sufficient just to remember the way in which our Chinese organisation did not see in the 1948-9 period that there was a revolution underway in the country, to be convinced of this. And this is not just a problem of the past — the confusion which still reigns in the FI's ranks today on the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions is further testimony of this.

b) *We must not have a unilateral analysis* of the significance of the specificity of the Castroist leadership. The history of the Cuban leadership gave it much greater political/ideological freedom *vis-a-vis* the Soviet leadership and it is very important — the launching of OLAS showed this. The fact that Cuba belongs culturally to the Christian and Latin world favoured an assimilation of ideological elements common to the Western workers movement (at least I imagine that is the case). Consequently the identification of radicalised youth in the imperialist centres with the Cuban leadership has been facilitated (a cultural phenomenon which in my opinion weighs in the debate in our movement). The relative cultural and economic hegemony of Latin America has generally contributed to the diffusion of Cuban influence . . . which works again in favour of the dialectic between the Cuban revolution and the Latin American revolution.

But the Cuban experience has its own weaknesses relative to the Sino-Vietnamese processes. We talk about them a lot less often in our movement. Let us give two examples. The absence of a developed party at the time of seizing power is a weakness and not an advantage. A weakness which has not been a minor factor in the phenomenon of the 'personal' leadership of Fidel. This problem perhaps also partially explains why the distribution of Moscow literature is today much more massive and direct in Cuba (particularly concerning textbooks) than in Vietnam.

c) I am not trying here to make an 'equivalent' balance sheet of the Cuban and Vietnamese communist parties. I am not capable of making a comparative analysis of these two parties. But I am convinced that we must carry out a collective effort aiding the FI to assimilate much more the lessons of the various colonial revolutions and to draw together information from solid comparative studies on the experiences of taking power as well as on the present problems of transitional societies. *This work will be of great utility for us and for the anti-imperialist movements with whom we can have a dialogue.*

It is clear that in such a work of political research, the origin of the leaderships in question cannot be the only factor in our judgement and analysis. It is necessary to take into account the differences (such as the origins) and the similarities (such as the weight of the international context, the position as the forward post of the 'socialist camp' in the case of Cuba and Vietnam etc.).

d) If we discuss the way in which we can link up with the revolutionary movements in the Third World it is necessary to make a *distinction between movements in struggle for power* (like the Philippines for instance) and *the party-govern-*

*ments in power* (like in Vietnam . . . and Cuba). The nature of the eventual 'integration' into a power bloc (in this case the Soviet Bloc) being obviously different in the two cases.

e) When I say that we cannot apply *two methods of analysis*, two different political approaches, I think in particular of the *problem of the political revolution*. The analysis of the reciprocal specificities of the Cuban and the Vietnamese leadership can be an element (among others) in the appreciation of the process of bureaucratisation and its dynamic in these two countries. But we cannot base a call for the political revolution on a prognosis on the evolution of the regime, even if this prognosis is very pessimistic.

The position of the Cuban leadership faced with the present Central American revolution show that it would have been catastrophic to call for the political revolution in Cuba. But that is not enough to justify on the contrary an appeal for the political revolution in Vietnam. The comrades today who lean towards such a position are often those who only a few years ago envisaged such a line for Cuba (whose continental diplomacy was during a whole period not so revolutionary and which contributed in a specific way to the strengthening of the Ethiopian regime involved in the smashing of the Eritrean resistance). Remember also that in 1975-8 the Vietnamese leadership offered the Thai Communist Party a multiform and massive aid to accelerate revolutionary developments underway in this period in the Thai kingdom (the Thai CP, linked to Peking, twice gave a negative response to these proposals which they later denounced as the proof of the 'hegemonist' intentions of Vietnam).

The VCP was therefore in 1975 and 1978 ready to directly commit itself to a process of regional extension of the revolution beyond the Indochinese frontiers.

In line with the resolution of the last World Congress, I do not think in the last analysis that the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia justifies a call for the political revolution — although the VCP leadership's policy faced with the problems posed by the Pol Pot regime indeed had bureaucratic characteristics.

Whatever may be the real differences in the history of the Cuban and Vietnamese leadership's it appears to me therefore false to want to apply *two different methods* with respect to the question of the political revolution, as Jerome/Matti still today seem to propose. One question on this — do the SWP comrades still call for the political revolution in Vietnam?

3) *We must avoid mechanical thinking when we study processes as complex as the colonial revolution.*

Jerome/Matti quote Trotsky who speaks of something quite different (centrist currents of the time, specifically inside the European workers movement). According to them an arrow has to be pinned on each centrist current to indicate if it is going from the right to the left or vice-versa. This shows they have not understood the fundamentals of the question.

The development of parties and leaderships that have emerged from present colonial revolutions is dependent on the experience of their own revolution as well as the regional and international situation. They put forward programmes and political positions which respond in a rather coherent way, for a whole period, to the problems of their revolutionary struggle (but not to those of other sectors of the world revolution). They place themselves in a longterm way in the 'Soviet Bloc' without losing, *ipso facto*, all their revolutionary potential. If you want to pin an arrow on them it should

be pointed above all to themselves (which incidentally can lead them to take internationalist positions). In the long term and to the extent that the regional and international context remains what it is today, these parties will be confronted with a *crisis of regime* — connected with the deepening of the processes of bureaucratisation. But this long term tendency can be periodically counter-balanced by internal (mass mobilisations) or international (new revolutionary) developments. This game of arrow-signs does not help us a great deal: they can point at one and the same time to the right (on Poland) and to the left (on Central America).

The concrete policy of these leaderships is likely to vacillate — and for a long time — in function of the regional relationship of forces and changing diplomatic interests. What is possible and necessary is the analysis of *the periods* which mark the evolution of these leaderships once they have won power. Periods delimiting important modifications of the overall policy (national and international) of these party-governments.

### The beginning of a new debate?

I have tried to underline the very positive aspects of the evolution of the SWP leadership's positions. We seem now to have gone beyond some of the debates that divided us in the past. But to finish I would like to express a real worry I have — that the SWP is going from a sectarian position (when the liberation struggle in Vietnam was continuing) to an opportunist one (when the VCP is now in power throughout the country).

The first worrying sign of this possibility was shown during the debate on the Sino-Indochinese crisis from 1979-80. On this question I refer you to the discussion article written in December 1979 ("Debate on the Origins of the Indochinese Crisis" (15)). I would simply like to point out here that one of the main *political* disagreements concerns the judgement of the role we have to play — over and beyond the indispensable solidarity tasks with the Indochinese revolutions. In other words concerning the various political responses we should propose for such a complex crisis. This disagreement relates both to the judgement of the Vietnamese leadership's political line (and its consequences in the world anti-imperialist and workers movement) and to what we have to say to revolutionary movements in South East Asia, shaken by the shockwaves of the Sino-Indochinese conflicts.

The second worrying indication was the publication of an article from the "Courrier du Vietnam" in the *Militant* and *Intercontinental Press* analysing in a comparative way the history of the Vietnamese and Chinese CPs (16). I have nothing against the principle of publishing such an article (in the past it was the SWP leadership which accused me of opportunism for my references to Vietnamese documents, such as during the stormy 10th World Congress debate). But it is the choice of text and its publication without any comment which preoccupies me. In effect this article explains that there was a difference of nature between the VCP and the CCP. The first being a proletarian and internationalist party while the CCP had become, under the Maoist leadership, a peasant, nationalist party. Now by doing this the article 'rewrites' the history of essential elements of the Chinese revolution and the role of the Maoist leadership. Mao's oppo-

nents seem to be considered as representatives of the proletarian and internationalist wing of the CCP . . . and in the event they could well be talking about Wang Ming — Stalin's envoy inside the CCP.

However it was thanks to the victory of the Mao faction in its struggle against the Wang Ming faction that the CCP was able to escape the direct influence of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy. And it was thanks to this that the CCP was able to break at a crucial moment with Soviet diplomacy and ensure the victory of the Chinese revolution. That was not such a minor affair!

In my opinion the 're-reading' of the history of the Chinese revolution by the Vietnamese leadership reflects a very dangerous evolution of this leadership in a *nationalist* sense at the time of the hardening of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. Vietnamese historiography is also getting closer on this question to official Soviet 'history'. And I raise this point here much more readily since the worrying character of this evolution of the theses of the Vietnamese leadership had already been taken up in *Rouge* article (September 21, 1978) written before the appearance of the text reproduced by the *Militant* and before knowing that the SWP leadership would make the present turn on the VCP — that is the *Rouge* article was not written out of any internal polemical concern.

I want to pose the following problem which I would like to discuss out with the SWP comrades: what is our role faced with the crisis traversing the Communist movement of SE Asia and given the re-thinking of positions underway in the Thai and Philippine revolutionary movements? We all recognise the importance of this question for the future of the struggles in the region and for our future relationship with the Asiatic revolution. Chinese influence over the regional revolutionary movement is being challenged head on and for the first time Maoism is being extensively re-discussed in a critical way by militants in SE Asia. This is of fundamental importance. But two roads are opening up to the currents coming out of Maoism — to leave one Bloc to go into another (break with Peking and then turn towards Hanoi, Havana and then Moscow) or else to seek to win the aid of the workers states while remaining politically independent of the Soviet Bloc.

This choice is a living, present-day choice for these militants. They are occasionally ready to discuss it with us. What should we do? Push them to become part of — via Vietnam — the Soviet Bloc? Or help them to maintain maximum political independence faced to the crisis of the 'socialist camp'? If one understands all the counter-revolutionary significance of the Sino-Soviet conflict, if one does not forget the historic responsibilities of the Soviet bureaucracy in the matter and if one weighs the influence of 'Realpolitik' on Vietnam, then the choice appears to me to be clear: it is necessary to aid them to maintain a real political independence (which is shown for example in the importance they give to the Polish question). But I am afraid that the consequences of the policy followed by the SWP on the Indochinese question will be to push these militants to join a 'bloc' in the name of realism. The problem is in my opinion a *key one*, and not only for SE Asia. I hope the debate will help us clarify things.

March 25, 1982

## References

1. There were very hard negotiations at the Paris talks of January 1973 between the revolutionary forces and the American government which resulted in the Paris Agreements. The latter involved a 'ceasefire on the terrain' and various political clauses. But, and for us this was the key element, they included the retreat of American forces and the halt of American bombing of Vietnam.

2. Feldman and Johnson, "Vietnam, Stalinism and the Post-war Socialist revolutions," *International Socialist Review*, April 1974, p. 41

3. Feldman and Johnson, "Contribution to a debate: On the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party," *ISR*, July/August 1973

4. Jerome and Matti, "A Contribution to the Debate on Castroism and the Fourth International" published in English language *IIDB* #2, May 1982 p. 4

5. *Ibid.*, p. 4

6. Editorial from the *Militant*, November 10, 1972, signed Linda Jenness, SWP candidate during the Presidential cam-

paign in the USA

7. Feldman and Johnson, 1974 article, *ibid.*, p. 53

8. See *Quatrieme Internationale* #6, March/April 1973

9. *Quatrieme Internationale*, Jan. 1954

10. See *Quatrieme Internationale*, Feb. 1966, p. 77

11. Jerome and Matti, *op.cit.*, p. 23

12. *Quatrieme Internationale*, Feb. 1966, pp. 76-77

13. "The Deepening Proletarian Turn in World Politics" in *IIDB* #1, 1982

14. "New Steps Toward Resolving the World Crisis of Working-Class Leadership," published in *IIDB* #1, 1982

15. Published in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, May 1982

16. The article in question appeared in the September 25, 1980 issue of *Courrier du Vietnam* under the title "Differences between the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions." It was reproduced in *Militant* and *Intercontinental Press* (March 23, 1982, p. 282).

# The Basis and Contradictions of Cuba's International Policy

by Claudio

In the debate which is beginning in the International on Cuba there is a risk that a false division will emerge. On the one side there will be comrades emphasising the role of the Castroist leaderships in the revolutionary situation which exists in Central America and on the necessity of a mobilisation of our movement in relation to that situation. On the other side are comrades above all concerned with putting in the forefront what differentiates them from the Cuban revolutionaries and more generally from the Castroist current.

It is imperative to prevent the discussion taking place on this sort of basis. Nobody challenges, in any way at all, the key importance of the present events in Central America, nor the role played there by the Cuban leadership. The resolution adopted by the May 1981 IEC explained the fundamental dynamic of Cuban policy in Central America in the following terms:

"The significance of such an orientation is clear: the Cuban leadership is banking on the extension of the revolution in Latin America which it considers possible and necessary and which, in the last analysis, represents the only real guarantee for the survival and development of the revolution in Cuba itself."

Nothing needs to be added to this overall judgement which has been confirmed since then. Furthermore it must be noted that the dynamic of the Central American situation makes more urgent than ever a mobilisation of our forces against North American imperialism's threats, for the defence of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada and for the support of the revolutionaries' struggle in El Salvador and Guatemala. As a first balance sheet we must add that the big majority of our sections have already been very much involved, occasionally in a decisive way, in the mobilisations that have taken place in the period following the IEC.

This was particularly confirmed by our very significant participation in the Mexico Forum in Solidarity with El Salvador and the activity of our sections in the preparation of the Forum.

On all that there are therefore no differences. But the comrades from the SWP leadership pose another problem: the question of whether we fix as an objective the creation of a revolutionary mass international with the integration of the Cuban leadership and the Castroist current.

In principle we have always explained since the 1930s that the mass revolutionary International will not be a result of a simple linear growth of the Fourth International but that it will emerge from the convergence of revolutionary currents of different origins, coming to the essential ideas of revolutionary marxism on the basis of their own experience. Neither on this terrain are there any differences. The problem is however posed in much more concrete terms: is it possible to envisage *now*, or in the relatively short term, a convergence of our forces with the Castroist current and the Cuban leadership in building a mass revolutionary International?

It is on this terrain that we should situate the debates, avoiding above all mistaking our own desires for reality. For us, at this stage, the problem is not posed, because despite their present orientation to the rising revolution in Central America, the Cuban leaders base themselves on ideas which are different from ours on essential aspects and, *furthermore, have major practical implications*. In this article we want to deal with the problem from the angle of international policy.

The IEC resolution pointed out:

"The specificities and internal contradictions of the Cuban workers state cannot but be reflected in its international policy" (p. 12, pt 16, IEC documents, IMG edition).

It also specifically points out:

"The alignment of a number of key policy stands of Moscow's political line led the Cuban leadership group to accept the theory of two camps" (*Ibid.*, p. 12, pt 16).

The events since May 1981 have conformed this judgement — particularly the position of the Cuban leadership on the Polish events. This is also confirmed by the analysis of some important documents. This contribution will focus on these.

We draw comrades' attention to an article that appeared in the first issue of *Cuba Socialista* (end of December 1981) entitled "The strategic basis of Cuba's Foreign Policy" (reproduced in *IP*, Vol. 20, No. 21, pp. 498-503). The fact that this article was published as the main article in the theoretical review of the party and was written by one of the most representative members of the leadership team, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, indicates its importance. An interview that the same Rodriguez gave to *Revolution* (weekly of the French CP) a month later is a useful complement to this article.

Rodriguez synthesises the premises of Cuban foreign policy in the following points:

1) "Since 1917, and to an increasing extent as the circle of socialist countries has grown, the class struggle on a world scale is expressed in the basic historical contradiction that marks our epoch, which counterposes capitalism and socialism as antagonistic systems.

"Our Marxist concept of history also contains another premise: that the historic march of contemporary societies — i.e. the functioning of capitalism in its imperialist phase and the counterposition between the capitalist and socialist systems — *leads* the world toward socialism" (*IP, Ibid.*, p. 498).

2) "Our Marxist conception of history leads us to conclude that in order to pass from capitalism to socialism, a *revolutionary break* must take place" (*IP, Ibid.*, p. 498).

3) "We Marxist-Leninists have always rejected the idea of a world conflict as the way toward socialism.

"Therefore, we Cuban communists feel that any contribution to the victory of socialism is perfectly compatible — and we could even say *necessarily compatible* with peaceful coexistence. . . .

"Peaceful coexistence between two antagonistic systems

entails, *presupposes*, not only the continuation of the ideological struggle, but the maintenance of the class struggle, in the local and worldwide arenas" (*IP, ibid.*, p. 498).

It must be added that for the Cuban leadership this reaffirmation of the concept of peaceful co-existence is linked with insistent denunciations of the dangers involved in a world war. On the occasion of the WFTU Conference Fidel Castro correctly pointed out:

"For the first time in the several thousand year history of man the real possibility has emerged of seeing destroyed all things created by the intelligence and work of people and the elimination of humanity."

4) Cuba subordinates its own interests: "to the general interests of the struggle for socialism and communism, national liberation, the defeat of imperialism, and the elimination of colonialism, neocolonialism, and all forms of exploitation of and discrimination against people and men . . ." (*Plataforma Programatica del Partido Comunista de Cuba* published by the Revolutionary Orientation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. Havana, 1976, p. 103; *IP, ibid.*, p. 498).

5) The internationalist duty of fighting against imperialism as the "historic enemy" must not make us overlook the fact that while being a system it is not ". . . a single, homogeneous whole. Rather it is a mass that is not only heterogeneous, but inherently contradictory" (*IP, ibid.*, p. 499).

This last point is in reality the central part of the article which extensively refers both to Lenin's polemic against the Theses on Ultra-Imperialism as well as the Bolsheviks' tactical positions toward the imperialist powers in the first years of the revolution.

### Two camps or dynamic of the three sectors of the world revolution

The first thesis outlined by Rodriguez reflects — that goes without saying — reality itself: in a whole part of Europe, in various Asiatic regions and in Cuba capitalism has been overturned and workers states exist. In this sense there are indeed two opposed systems on a world scale. But the question is whether we stop at that statement of reality and also then what conclusions do we draw from it.

During Stalin's time the central idea was that the interests of the world workers movement as a whole had to be subordinated to the necessity of defending the "fatherland of socialism" (of course, as interpreted by the bureaucratic ruling caste). Not only Communist party members but also large sectors of the most political workers accepted the idea that the progressive strengthening of the Soviet Union would be the principal motor force of the transition to socialism in the world. After Stalin, particularly under Khrushchev, the bureaucracy's ideology on this was outlined in a revised form: the decisive terrain of struggle was economic competition between the USSR and the United States. The victory of the USSR — which according to Khrushchev was certain and furthermore could be won in a relatively short period — would decide the outcome of the historic battle between the two systems in favour of socialism. Certainly Khrushchev could not ignore the working class of the industrialised capitalist countries nor the peoples of the colonial or semi-colonial countries, but he only assigned them a supporting role. The essential thing was the opposition between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp. Peaceful coexistence itself was justified — on the ideological terrain — precisely from this point of view. If peace was guaranteed, the

socialist camp would inevitably end up on top, thanks to the superior dynamic of its economic development.

In the Brezhnev era the bureaucracy has had to water down a great deal its ideology on economic competition. This was for the simple reason that the fateful date for the USSR to overtake the USA was increasingly pushed forward into a hazy future. But the fundamental idea is still there — the struggle between capitalism and socialism is essentially identified with a struggle between two "camps" (although as a consequence of the well-known conflicts of the last twenty years, the frontiers of the socialist camp are no longer so clearly defined).

Is there any need to recall that for us, revolutionary marxists, the defence of the production relations of the workers states has always been and is still one of the pillars of a strategic conception that differentiates us from other anti-Stalinist currents? But from that we do not draw the conclusion that the struggle for socialism is decided in the last analysis on the terrain of the opposition of two "camps." For us there is the working class "camp" which is opposed to the bourgeois "camp," just as it is opposed to the bureaucratic "camp" in the bureaucratised transitional states. Our strategy is based on the conception of the dynamic of the three sectors of the world revolution in their reciprocal relations. This implies, we repeat, the defence of the workers states against any danger of capitalist restoration both externally and internally. But this means at the same time, and above all, *an understanding of the contradictory nature of transitional societies which are characterised by the domination of a bureaucratic caste*. The workers states must not only be defended against imperialist threats or internal restorationist operations but also against the bureaucratic caste which, while basing itself on the existing relations of production, severely undermines them at the same time.

It undermines them internally to the extent that it becomes more and more a brake on the development of the productive forces.

Immediately after the Second World War we perhaps committed an error of estimation of the rhythm of events when judging the economic consequences of bureaucratic administration. Today in any case it is difficult to deny that the bureaucracy tends to transform itself more and more from a relative brake to an absolute one (that is a lesson one can draw from the disintegration of the Polish economy).

It undermines the relations of production on the international scale because it continues to subordinate the necessities of the struggle of the working class and of peoples exploited by imperialism to its own conservative interests and it discredits the very idea of socialism, by holding back in this way the numerically biggest sectors of the proletariat of the capitalist countries from becoming conscious of the necessity of a revolutionary socialist transformation.

*We are dealing here with a central aspect of the concrete dynamic of the struggle for socialism on a world scale. One cannot ignore it or underestimate it without this having major theoretical implications and very serious practical consequences* (let us leave on one side here the question of knowing in which cases it is a question of practical consequences of theoretical errors and in which a question of mystifying theorisations aiming to justify an opportunist or utterly counterrevolutionary one). *Now it is precisely this central aspect which is absent from Rodriguez's article, as from all Cuban documents — whether theoretical generalisations, political analyses or propaganda formulations*. The Cuban leader-



ship, in the last analysis, accepts the conception of two camps, by blurring over, or worse, by mystifying the counter-revolutionary role of the bureaucratic caste, both of the USSR and in the other workers states. This comes through in the *Cuba Socialista* article, as it does in innumerable speeches from Fidel Castro. Do we need to remind comrades of the report from the second CCP congress which accepted all the practical implications of such a conception, including the "right of the socialist camp to defend its own integrity" — that is, the right of the USSR bureaucracy to invade Czechoslovakia to restore order or to instigate Jaruzelski's coup against the rise of the political revolution in Poland?

### Can Cuba's political positions be identified with the USSR's policy?

Nevertheless, having said that, we do not think that the Cuban leadership shares all the conceptions or even less approves in practice all the actions of the Soviet bureaucracy. We neither ignore the fact that occasionally they can give very different meanings to the same formulas (this applies for example to "peaceful coexistence"). Furthermore as the IEC document points out, the key point is that: "Cuba continues to make a major contribution to the victory of the revolution in Latin America, particularly in Central America which is today one of the epicentres of the class struggle on a world scale. One could add that in the eventuality of a global agreement or detente between the USSR and the USA, Cuba could be led to differentiate itself, even explicitly from Moscow, renewing the practice followed on several occasions in the 1960s (in spite of the agreements that existed then, the economic and military aid etc)." On this there is an interesting comment made by Rodriguez in his interview with *Revolution*:

"If the tensions between the two big powers disappear or decline this does not mean that relations between the United States and Cuba would improve. On the contrary within the framework of a certain overall negotiation relations between Cuba and the United States could worsen."

But it is still the case that in the present phase the points of agreement, even identity have major implications.

For us it is not a question of being excessively preoccupied with theoretical purism as opposed to political realism. Rather it is a case of taking note of *concrete* acts and *practical* consequences such as approval of the Jaruzelski crackdown. Incidentally, the Cuban position on the Polish events of 1981 is even more grave than its position on the Czech events of 1968. In Fidel's speech in August 1968, approval for the Kremlin's action was given alongside a rather closely argued critique of certain aspects of bureaucratic degeneration which also implicitly included the Soviet Union. Today the Cuban press and Fidel himself limit themselves to talking about errors in similar terms to those used by Kania (and before him in 1970-71, Gierak) and Jaruzelski himself. The Cuban position is also more serious because the Polish movement was incontestably more massive and directly working class than the Czech movement. In other words we are dealing with an unambiguous, practical choice in a major confrontation between the near totality of the working class and workers, mobilised in a powerful revolutionary-democratic and anti-bureaucratic movement and therefore working as a motor force of the world revolution (independently of the level of consciousness that different sectors in struggle had of this role) and a bureaucracy which not only generally compromises the prestige of socialism in the world

but also directly undermines the collectivist relations of production, the Cuban leadership have chosen to place themselves on the side of the bureaucracy (their main worry being the possible weakening of the "socialist camp" which can result from the Polish crisis and not the fate of workers in struggle against the ruling caste). *There is a combination here of a theoretical negation of an essential aspect of the dynamic of world revolution and a practice that in this case is counter-revolutionary.*

Furthermore it would be wrong to underestimate the implications of the Cuban leadership and press's current apologetic attitudes towards the Soviet bureaucracy and to other bureaucratic leaderships. It is not just tactical opportunism. When *Granma*, on the occasion of his last birthday and just after the Warsaw crackdown, presented Brezhnev, a mummified quintessence of the bureaucracy, to its readers as "the giant of a people of giants," it is not just grotesque sycophancy. It is mystifying reality for the Cuban masses who, we have to note, do not have any possibility of having any other judgements on the person in question. It is even worse when the 25th CPSU congress is presented as an "internationalist congress" (headline in *Granma*), "a success for the party of Lenin which has reaffirmed once more its intelligence, its constancy and its fidelity to Marxist Leninist principles," "a success for the international communist movement," "an eloquent illustration of the democratic character of the Soviet party." Once more the victims of this mystification are the Cuba masses to whom they present a party incurably bureaucratized for 50 years as an example of internationalism and democracy. Such positions can only have deep miseducational effects and produce cynical practices.

Over and beyond the essential difference pointed out in the IEC document, there has been and there is undeniable differences between Cuban policy and Soviet policy. In his interview with *Revolution* Rodriguez said among other things:

"We are accused of having convergent positions with the USSR. Certainly since we use the same compass, Marxism-Leninism. If you use the same diagnostic instrument you normally come to the same conclusions. But there are variations, for example, in Cuban foreign policy. We do not have the same point of view on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The Soviets support this treaty and urge us to sign it, a position we understand but we ourselves have not signed because we are only 90 miles from the United States which is stacked up with nuclear weapons."

Further on he adds, alluding to two specific cases:

"We have never intervened in the internal problems of Angola or Eritrea. In the latter we have never had a military presence."

At least in one of these specific cases, Eritrea, some distance was taken from Moscow's position. However this is a very relative difference. If it is true that Cuban units were never directly used in the Eritrean war, it is also true that their presence on other fronts permitted Ethiopia to release forces to fight against Eritrean fighters. If Cuba has indeed declared itself in favour of a political solution this solution is conceived in the framework of maintaining the Ethiopian state — which quite simply means the refusal of Eritrea's right to self-determination.

The example of the non-proliferation treaty also have a limited value. It is not a difference which flows from an overall difference of strategy. It is a case — to use Rodriguez's words of: "differences deriving not from contradictions but

from what you have called the specificity of Cuban policy." In other words each has its own demands whose legitimacy is not contested. That is clearly stated in the *Cuba Socialista* article: "the diversity of situations with which the USSR and Cuba are confronted necessarily determine different ways the two countries deal with the countries of the world capitalist system."

### Should we exploit imperialism's contradictions?

As we have said, Rodriguez insists most on the necessity of exploiting the contradictions of imperialism. Nobody wants to seriously question this necessity either politically or theoretically. However, this problem implies another one: if the exploitation of the enemies' contradictions, diplomatic manoeuvres, even political compromises, are legitimate, is it correct to give a false image of the people with whom one is manoeuvring or compromising or to change your basic judgements of them in function of manoeuvres or compromises or worse, having recourse to abusive generalisations or even ideological mystifications?

Let us take an example we have already dealt with on several occasions. At the end of the Sixties in the difficult situation created by the defeat of a series of armed struggle movements, Cuba was right to politically exploit the emergence of military reformism in Peru. But when this regime was presented as revolutionary when they characterised as revolutionary an army which was the pillar of the maintenance of the neo-colonial system, we cannot have the same judgement and any reference to Lenin becomes abusive. The evolution of the situation led Havana to rectify its approach on Peru. But a completely analogous approach continues to be adopted on Mexico, one of the key countries for the future of the revolutionary struggle in Central America. Nobody should criticise Cuba for having, since the beginning of the 1960s, exploited the "specificities" of the Mexican regime and its foreign policy and to now exploit the diverse operations of Lopez Portillo. But when the Mexican government and the PRI are quite simply presented as the champions of anti-imperialism, we cannot at all be in agreement. To quote from the IEC (1981) document:

"The least one can say is that such an attitude, precisely because of the prestige of Cuba, can only complicate even more the difficult task of those who struggle in Mexico for the essential objective of the political independence of the workers movement in relation to the bourgeoisie."

Unfortunately, an FSLN leader, Jaime Wheelock went even further. He participated in a PRI electoral meeting. He declared firstly that Mexico was a "perfect dictatorship because there was a dictatorship of the majority over the minority" and he then clarified further saying that if one accepted that perfection was possible, one could speak of a "perfect democracy" (*Bandera Socialista*, February 15, 1982). Our Mexican comrades were right to publicly criticise Wheelock's statement, which outside of this particular case, implies a methodologically false approach. In the past this has had *disastrous practical consequences for the international workers movement.*"

Some people think that such attitudes are just part of a clever tactic which aims to trick the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie makes diplomatic agreements and political compromises in function of its needs — it does not pay much attention to the other forces propaganda nor to flattery. Once again mystification tends only to have effects on the masses, especially if such positions are taken by leaders respected for

their contribution to the revolution.

Similar considerations are in order concerning the Cuban line on the so-called "non-aligned movement." It is absolutely correct to exploit the contradictions which exist between imperialism and the regimes of the colonial or neo-colonial countries. But that does not lead us to put into cold storage the analysis and denunciation of the nature of these regimes, the majority of whom are anti-democratic and outright reactionary. It is necessary to help — and not hold back — the masses' coming to consciousness of the need to fight for their overthrow.

Rodriguez dealt with this problem from the point of view of the "new international economic order." In the interview already mentioned, he states:

"Many people see this new international order as an end in itself in a reformist perspective. We look at it from a revolutionary point of view, for we know that when all that is involved in this new order is achieved the contradiction between imperialism and national independence, between capitalism and socialism will remain."

Rodriguez's analysis is not totally coherent: on the one hand, he admits that the "new order" is a "catch all into which each person throws their own projects and aspirations." On the other hand he advances the hypothesis that it may be achieved and in this eventuality he supports the Leninist conception of the reform revolution dynamic, which sees reforms as a "starting point towards the revolution," while for the reformists, reforms are an "end in themselves."

We must not confuse different problems. Cuba should indeed support the action of certain neo-colonial countries which try and get the terms of exchange on a world scale changed in their favour, to assure themselves some defence against the murderous vacillations of raw material prices. But that does not at all imply that it is necessary to give any sort of legitimacy to the eminently ideological notion of a "new international order" which, in the hypothesis where it could in practice be concretised, would cover up the reality of a new division of labour on a world scale, permitting a recovery of the capitalist economy at the expense of a super-exploited working class and the peoples of even more pauperised and marginalised semi-colonial or colonial countries. It is not surprising — Rodriguez himself explains this — that on this problem critical voices were raised in Cuba (to our knowledge, not publicly), some people wanting precisely to denounce the mystification of the "new order."

As is also confirmed in another recent interview of Rodriguez (with Agence France Presse) the Cuban leaders have disagreements with the CPs of the industrialised countries, particularly with the PCI (Italian CP). But as is borne out, by among other things, the declarations and commentaries made on the occasion of Berlinguer's visit to Cuba last year, these differences concern precisely the critical positions of these Eurocommunist parties towards the USSR and the "socialist camp." As regards their neo-reformist strategy — contrary to what happened in the 1960s — it is impossible to detect the slightest criticism, even implicit. The article in *Cuba Socialista* even indirectly supports it, since it explains that:

"... that to the extent that the crisis of capitalism sharpens and the number of socialist countries and their strength grows, it becomes ever more possible to have a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, a transformation of one into the other" (*Ibid.*, p. 498).

This is not a new idea — Khrushchev elevated it more or less in the same terms a quarter of a century ago at the 20th

Congress of the CPWU. It backs up in any case the present strategy of the Eurocommunist parties, which furthermore, are presented by the Cuban leadership as defenders of the interests of the working class and their legitimate representatives.

All that has nothing to do with the necessary exploitation of the contradictions of imperialism. It rather flows from the conception according to which the CPs in question — bureaucratised for half a century and bogged down in class collaboration — are “sister” parties which are members of the same international communist movement to which the Cuban CP belongs.

The political and theoretical influence of the Cuban leaders in the workers movement of the industrialised capitalist countries is in general very limited. But to the extent that Fidel Castro and his comrades have a certain prestige (they benefit from this, for example, among Italian CP members) that complicates even more the task of all those who fight against the neo-reformist opportunism of Berlinguer, Carillo and Co.

Let us be clear. Rodriguez states:

“A Social Democratic presence in a government does not in itself guarantee a policy that abandons the imperialist objectives that persist in the structure of the society. But there is no doubt that the Social Democrats owe their political victories primarily to the working class and to sectors of the petty-bourgeois youth. When they govern, they must continue to take into account the aspirations and views of these classes and social layers” (*Ibid.*, BS article, IP version, p. 502).

We can agree with him too when he points out the political significance of the presence of communists in the French government. Also there are no differences on the fact that the Cuban government has every interest in exploiting the existence of Social Democratic or Social-Communist governments. But this does not authorise any ambiguity on the nature of these governments or on their aims and the dynamics of their policies.

Now the expression used by Rodriguez: “A Social Democratic presence does not in itself guarantee” is already somewhat euphemistic. Far from being a guarantee in the sense suggested by Rodriguez, the Social Democratic presence in the government — as demonstrated both by an already long history and the present practice — is rather a “guarantee” of the contrary, that is, the framework of the system and its fundamental mechanisms will not in any way be put into question. Furthermore this is what is said in the same article from *Cuba Socialista* about the Mitterand government:

“Its domestic economic program has clear elements that are in contradiction with the rule of monopoly capital. Although its program of nationalizations is not sufficiently broad to definitively eliminate the rule of the great monopolies over the French economy, the nationalization law that is being discussed is undoubtedly very different from the ‘nationalizations’ carried out by the British Labourites after the Second World War. The Labourites set out to save English capitalism, by taking off its hands branches of the economy that were unprofitable or could only be made profitable with great difficulty — such as the mines, transport, etc. Through the nationalizations, the state took over the losses in these branches, while facilitating the delivery of these raw materials and services to the remainder of the important surviving capitalists at cheap prices, in order to increase their profitability.

“The French nationalizations, on the other hand, are an attempt by the state to assume economic control over production as a whole, in order to lead it toward social transformations” (*Ibid.*, BS, IP version, p. 502).

Contrary to what Rodriguez thinks, the present French nationalisations are basically inspired by the same logic as Britain’s and other countries’ nationalisations carried out at other times (including France). Whether a company or a trust is profitable or in deficit is not decisive. (Besides there have been other cases of nationalisations of non-lossmaking sectors and we must not forget either that at least the present nationalisation of the French steel industry is tied up with a rescue operation by the state). Essentially capital can accept and even desire nationalisations, including large-scale ones, within a perspective of overall rationalisation and provided that the “market economy” is not put into question. This was the case with the British nationalisations, it is the case with the French nationalisations today — which, let us recall, allow for generous compensation and will certainly not be carried out under workers control. In this sense it is difficult to see how they could aid a ‘real social transformation’ which, furthermore, is not even an objective of the government in question, whose project is clearly and explicitly reformist (and a rather moderate reformism at that).

### Two more general considerations

At this point a more general consideration is in order. The absence or the extreme dilution of the distinction between legitimate tactical operations and abusive generalisations — indeed mystifications having practical consequences — is linked in the last analysis to the absence of distinction, both in the conceptions and, *a fortiori*, in the practice of the Cuban leaders, between the role of the government and the party.

The government of a workers state has not only the right but also the duty to work and manoeuvre on all levels, to make agreements and compromises with bourgeois governments including with the government of the United States. The party must place itself on another terrain — that of revolutionary action, mobilisation and education. Its interlocutors are not governments or states; its interlocutors are parties and mass organisations, the legitimate representatives of the working class and other exploited layers. When Rodriguez recalls the attitudes of the Bolshevik government immediately after the revolution, he overlooks the fact that while this exploited all the contradictions of the enemy by making even considerable compromises, at the same time the Bolshevik party took the initiative of founding the Communist International and made a major contribution to the theoretical and political arming of this party of world revolution, which did not at all hide its objectives — the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism on a world scale. Neither the Bolshevik party nor the Communist International ever presented in a favourable light or in apologetic terms bourgeois governments or political representatives with whom the Moscow government were negotiating or making compromises (it was with the arrival of Stalin that a radical change was made in this domain too).

This then is another essential aspect on which we must be absolutely clear. Only people blinded by a polemical mentality or deliberately falsifying the positions of the other person can accuse us of writing off Cuban internationalism. There is no question that the Cuban leadership has proved, and

continues to prove, its internationalism. *But they differentiate themselves from revolutionary marxism on one point which was fundamental for Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and which remains fundamental for us: complete internationalism is internationalism concretised in the building of an International, a party of the world revolution.* On this terrain the Cubans have taken a step back from the OLAS period. In any case for them internationalism implies a conception of struggle between two camps as the essential struggle between capitalism and socialism on a world scale; the acceptance of the framework of the communist movement as fixed by the Berlin conference of Communist Parties in 1976; and the practice of bilateral relations expressed in stereotyped communiques in which the parties concerned reciprocally issue good conduct certificates. This also implies — do we have to repeat it for the *n*th time to comrades who have ostrich like positions — the approval of even military actions of the USSR bureaucracy in “defence of the socialist camp” against the rise of the masses’ anti-bureaucratic revolution.

Finally in his criticism of Cuban “errors” on Poland David Frankel, SWP spokesperson, states that: “the approach followed by the revolutionary leadership in Cuba in dealing with the problems of bureaucratism is the opposite of the course followed by the PUWP in Poland” (*IP*, No. 6, 1982, p. 135).

We will not go back over the characterisation of Cuba adopted by the majority of the IEC. A qualitative difference exists between Cuba and the other workers states and we do not call for political revolution in Cuba. But such a judgement and orientation does not prevent us stating that the CCP is inspired by a series of conceptions proper to other parties in power in the workers states and, what is more important, undeniable analogies exist in practice (cf. on this question, pt. 13 of the IEC resolution). We do not think that the Cuban leaders have the same idea as us of socialist democracy — such as it has been conceived on the basis of the theoretical gains of marxism and Leninism and the dramatic experiences of more than a half-century by *revolutionary*

*movements.* To be concrete, we want to ask Comrade Frankel a question (who forgets a little detail, that in the case of Poland the Cuban leaders in practice choose the camp of the bureaucracy and not the masses) — does he think that those people who might in the event share the criticism of the CCP’s position on Poland will have the possibility of expressing their point of view either publicly or in the internal debates of the party, in the internal bulletins, from the platform of the congress, etc. in line with the most elementary norms of Leninist democratic centralism? For us the answer is clear. We hope that it is the same also for Comrade Frankel, that he draws some conclusions from that and especially that he becomes convinced that the question of knowing to what extent there is socialist democracy in Cuba is not resolved by quotes, which in the event are debatable anyway, but on the basis of the analysis of reality which remains, we must say, contradictory.

Comrade Frankel parades an explanation of Carlos Rafael Rodriguez on bureaucratisation (interview with Marta Harnecker, Dec. 1980). Let us leave on one side the fact, moreover essential, that Rodriguez does not grasp the *social dimension* of the bureaucratisation process. Let us just take the following quote:

“In the last analysis the essence of bureaucratisation resides in substituting the role of the masses in the process of decision-making, whatever may be the level at which these decisions are taken; in the imposition on the masses of an administrative and political apparatus and in not taking into account the workers and their organisations.

Limiting ourselves to the subject of this contribution — international policy — was the position on Poland for example, with all its enormous implications, taken after taking account of the feelings and opinions of the Cuban workers? Was there any sort of democratic consultation on this question? Was this decision taken at least in this national peoples assembly which in principle should be the supreme expression of popular sovereignty?

For us once again the answer is clear.

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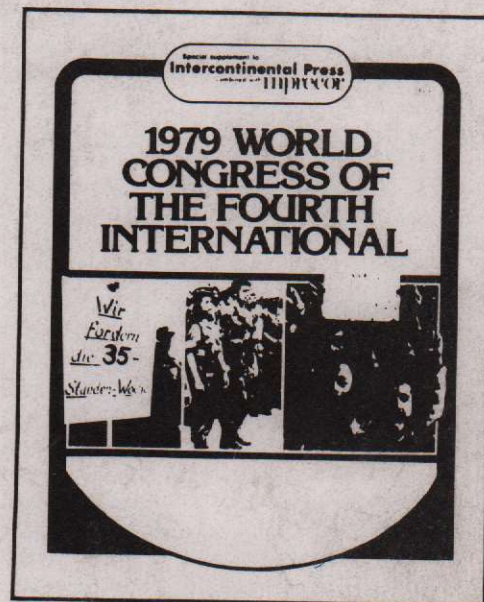
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