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Building a Party of Revolutionary Workers

by Adair, Clynes, and Ellis, Socialist League, Britain

(The following are two sections of a resolution submitted by 20 Central Committee members to the December 1982 International Marxist Group (IMG)/Socialist League (SL) conference. The full document contained two other parts: a Part II entitled, "Building the Fourth International," and a Part IV outlining concrete tasks. Some cuts were made in the sections we are submitting to meet limitations on word length. However, the general line of this document has been maintained and in our opinion has stood up well. This document formed part of the platform of the minority tendency which considered itself in solidarity with the minority at the May 1982 International Executive Committee meeting. The minority in the IMG/SL received 36 percent of the conference votes.)

Part 1. Building a Combat Party

The IMG has been built primarily outside the industrial unions. This is abnormal for an organisation claiming to be Marxist. For a long period, objective circumstances prevented us from qualitatively changing this situation. But this is no longer true.

In the student field, in the women's liberation movement and through mass campaigning, we got a certain education in the mass movement. Then, as our student membership graduated, we spontaneously went into the white-collar unions. Whilst we directed some comrades into the health service, our experience of trade union work was almost totally gained outside of industry.

Our membership is still predominantly in the white collar and public sector unions. The 20 per cent of our members in basic industry are still scattered, in largely non-prioritised targets, and are obviously very new to industry and the industrial unions. We are by no means a recognised component of the shop stewards movement. And we are virtually absent from such crucial industries as coal and steel.

Our turn to industry is of central strategic significance. It is only the industrial working class that has the social weight and cohesion to lead the British working class to a socialist victory. This is why we project the need to build a proletarian party based in the core industrial regions and unions.

To place ourselves amongst the industrial workers and proletarian youth will demand a wrenching turn. All our efforts will have to be concentrated on making the turn, on recruiting industrial workers and building our intervention amongst proletarian youth. This will require new party-building methods.

Yet our party-building methods still largely correspond to our social composition. It is an oft-repeated truism that we are the best builders of the united front, but the worst at making organisational gains from our work.

The answer to this is not appeals to increased efforts "to give greater profile to the IMG" in our united front work, or promises to give "greater attention to the details of party-building". What is required is a change in our theory and practice of party-building.

We are the programmatic nucleus of the revolutionary party required to lead the socialist revolution. We have to take seriously our indispensable role. All our work must be situated within the perspective of building a mass revolutionary party. We act on Lenin's injunction that the only truly revolutionary work is

that which helps this party take shape and grow stronger.

Other activity — socialist societies, trade union workshops, socialist centres and so on — done "on behalf" of the working class can be more or less useful in the class struggle. But unless such work has as its aim the building of a revolutionary party, it is essentially of secondary significance lacking any guarantee of success or dependability, and in many cases can be directly detrimental to the main revolutionary work necessary today.

Trotsky posed the matter this way: "... unless a revolutionist has arrived at a correct attitude towards the fundamental task of building a party and towards the methods by which a party functions, there can be no question of any correct, stable or consistent participation by such a person in the labour movement. Without the proper mutual relations between doctrine, slogans, tactics, and the work of the party organisation, there can be no revolutionary marxist — Bolshevik — politics." (Our Differences, *Challenge of the Left Opposition*, Vol 1, p. 265).

Our starting point is not the building of united fronts but the building of the party. This is not to be sectarian or parasitic. As the *Communist Manifesto* explains, communists "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole". Nor do they "set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mould the proletariat". Starting from what best builds the party *means* participating in every truly mass action of our class and its allies. It means fighting to overcome all the obstacles to the united mass action of the class erected by the bureaucratic leaders. Bringing the whole power of the class to bear through united action will increase the confidence and combativity of the class. It will deepen the political differentiations. This will more clearly expose the conservative and cowardly role of the bureaucracy and push new leaders to the fore. This is the most favourable condition for building the party.

The fight for the united front is therefore the path which we go through to build our organisation. But our goal is to build the party. Unless there is a residue in terms of an increase in proletarian class consciousness and especially in new recruits to our organisation, then a particular class battle has not reached its full potential.

We approach every class battle from the point of view of attempting to win the leadership. This has nothing to do with issuing commandist instructions or absurd posturing. It is about fighting for the correct programme, strategy, and tactics. In this fight, we strive to develop an active relation with the mass struggle and its leadership. Yet we must carefully select on the basis of our real influence and resources those struggles in which we can participate in the leadership and those mass campaigns that

we can initiate. We must learn how to combine effective propaganda with our involvement in action — as we did against the Malvinas war and in the rail strikes. But in many more instances our role will be to make propaganda, including through the actions we promote, rather than being absorbed in simple activism or involving ourselves in a committee without contact with real forces.

We do not see ourselves as “advisors” to the class struggle leaders. We see ourselves as fighting alongside such leaders in common combat, sharing the experience of the struggle and developing a dialogue about the correct solutions to the problem. We aim to be part of the recomposition of the leadership of the workers’ movement *from the inside*. The turn of our party to industry means a fundamental re-orientation of our organisation and is a precondition to building the sort of party necessary.

The turn: a precondition for building a combat party today

Only a party which is proletarian in both programme *and* composition will have the confidence to link up with these new revolutionaries of action. In order to link up with these leaders and attract them to the programme of the Fourth International, we need to shift our concerns and pre-occupations and root ourselves in industry, especially amongst young workers. We need to build a combat party capable of engaging in action and solidarity with the best class-struggle leaders of our class and amongst youth; solidarity with the rebellious Black youth and occupying workers, the women workers in struggle and the mass of youth mobilising against war, the youth and workers driving forward the social and political revolutions in Central America, the Caribbean and Poland.

The turn of the Fourth International and the IMG is a turn to place ourselves alongside these new leaderships in the three sectors of the world revolution. This is part of a long-term orientation and is the opposite of a get-rich-quick scheme.

Our turn to industry is a turn to the masses and their organisations. Our aim is to place the decisive weight of our organisations in the core sectors, that is the industrial unions. For a prolonged period in the post war years, we have not been able to situate ourselves within the strongholds of our class. These conditions no longer pertain. If we do not situate ourselves in the heartlands of our class when it is possible to do so, then we will inevitably degenerate.

If we continue to be based primarily on non-proletarian forces, we will come under the pressure of the moods of this layer as it moves rightwards under pressure from imperialism, as transmitted through social democracy. Some comrades, basing themselves on the moods of this layer during and after the Malvinas war, have begun to give undue weight to chauvinism inside the working class and have developed an unwarranted pessimism. The Malvinas-Falklands war has just given us a first taste of the pressure that imperialism can apply. Only a perspective which comes from a vantage point in the heartlands of the working class can develop a real appreciation of the political situation and only this can allow us to advance a correct perspective.

We are not the first revolutionaries to have to make a turn to industrial workers. Our turn is similar to that led by Lenin after the 1905 revolution opened up a new generation of industrial workers to revolutionary politics; and by Trotsky in relation to the radicalisation of industrial workers in the United States in the 1930s.

The combat party and the class-struggle left-wing

The main prop of capitalist rule in Britain is the bureaucracy. This bureaucracy does not “summarise and organise” the so-called political weaknesses of the working class, as the Jones-Cannon grouping declares. The bureaucracy is a petty-bourgeois

social layer with its own interests counterposed to the interests of the working class. The supposed “political weaknesses” of the class do not arise from the working class itself, but are the reflection of the policy and positions of the bureaucracy. They are accepted by the working class, not because of some innate “backwardness” but because of the absence or weakness of an alternative leadership. The notion that the bureaucracy “summarises and organises” the weaknesses of the working class turns things on their heads and gives a political justification for bureaucratic domination. It perpetuates the backward notion that the working class basically gets the bureaucratic leadership it deserves.

Experience proves, however, the contrary. The bureaucracy cynically betrays the aspirations and strivings of working people. There are countless contemporary examples, let alone historical ones where the bureaucracy, rather than “summarising and organising” the supposed “backwardness of the class”, was far to the right of the masses. We only need refer to British Leyland or the rail strikes. The problem that the working class faces is not “political weaknesses”, but the crisis of leadership. This is why the fight to build a combat party involves the battle to construct a class-struggle left-wing which can challenge and defeat the bureaucracy.

A class-struggle left-wing will be organised from the top to the bottom of the labour movement, to fight for the leadership of the class and its allies over the decisive political questions. It is an indispensable instrument for transforming the unions into organisations of class combat and for creating a mass basis for a revolutionary combat party. It will need therefore to be led by revolutionaries. The Minority Movement, led by the revolutionary Communist Party, is the most developed historical example of the sort of class-struggle left-wing we are striving to build.

Such an approach encompasses four themes or elements: the fight for class independence, the fight for class unity through the struggle for solidarity, the fight for democracy through developing means to make the leadership more accountable to the ranks. And the fight for self-activity for the oppressed.

Our Orientation to the Labour Party and the building of a class-struggle left-wing

The formation of the Labour Party as a party organisationally independent of the ruling class was a massive gain for the working class. It represents a historic leap forward in consciousness — of the need to fight the bosses not only in the factories, mines and plants, but also in the political arena. This is an enduring gain.

Yet from its inception, the Labour Party was dominated by a bureaucracy which gave it a programme, and apparatus, dedicated to defending the capitalist order.

The depth of the present crisis in the Labour Party can only be explained in terms of this deeply contradictory character. Despite the attachment of its leadership and apparatus to the capitalist order, the fact that the Labour Party rests on the trade unions and the votes of millions of workers makes it directly subject to the degree of organisation and combativity of the working class. This directly effects the ties between the capitalist state and this party and serves to weaken them. We summarise this contradiction by calling this party a bourgeois workers party.

Yet the Labour Party is an instrument of the bureaucracy. It is not the “political wing” of the trade unions. Its programme represents not the interests of the working class, but of the bureaucracy which sees its interests best served by collaboration with and subordination to the bourgeoisie. The Labour Party bureaucracy is simply a political transposition of the trade union bureaucracy. As Trotsky put it, “The Labour Party and the trade unions — these are not two principles, only a technical division of labour. Together, they are the fundamental support of the

domination of the English bourgeoisie”.

The strategic line of building a class-struggle left-wing rests on this fact that the main prop of capitalist rule in Britain is the bureaucracy. But the fight to build a class-struggle left-wing will be unsuccessful if it is not prosecuted into the Labour Party itself. This is why the organisation of our supporters in the Labour Party is just as much a part of our long-term work as organising our fractions in the industrial unions.

The combination tactic

We do not go into the Labour Party to reform it into a revolutionary instrument. We are there for one reason: to build the revolutionary party. In this task, we help lead all challenges to the bureaucracy, all democratic reforms, and take sides in the fight between the left and right of the bureaucracy to create better conditions for this task. We seek to link up with all leftward-moving currents differentiating at the base of the Labour Party, particularly in the industrial unions.

But for such work to be successful, we have to build our own independent organisation. All sorts of tactical options may be considered in the building of this party. But whatever profile we advance at any particular stage — from that of a more or less fully open organisation to that of Socialist Challenge supporters pure and simple — our aim is to reach out and help lead the struggle of the class and participate in the training of a new generation of proletarian leaders.

The norm will be for an open organisation and paper. This approach to a permanent fraction of supporters and of an open organisation is known as a combination tactic — the exact weight or balance of resources given is decided according to a concrete analysis of each phase of the class struggle.

Our commitment to this approach flows from the following considerations:

- We see the revolutionary party being built out of splits at the base of this party, particularly its trade union base. We seek to win leadership of the affiliated organisations and mass membership.

But its programme, apparatus and leadership is bourgeois. This bureaucracy dominates the Labour Party. It would rather destroy this party than allow revolutionaries to win the majority. The revolutionary party cannot be built through a strategy of attempting to reform the Labour Party.

- Dominated as it is by the bureaucracy, parliamentary leadership and bourgeois programme, we can only respond to class struggle developments in the masses through building an organisation independent of the rhythms of the Labour Party.

Our party is not an ideological advisor to sections of the bureaucracy moving leftwards. Our programme is a guide to action for the masses in motion against exploitation and oppression. Our programme and party therefore have an active relation to the class struggle itself — which is neither “structured” nor politically “centralised” by the Labour Party. Its apparatus, leadership and programme are a block to this mass struggle.

- We need our own independent party with its own structures based on democratic centralism in order to draw the correct historical lessons from the class struggle. We need a party newspaper to transmit the historical experience of the class through promoting a line of march for the struggle of the class. Such a party is an indispensable vehicle for educating and training a new generation of revolutionary leaders in the programme and practice of class struggle politics.

Accordingly, we reject the approach of the British Socialist Workers Party of sectarian abstention from the developing fight inside the Labour Party. We take a stand in relation to all left-wing challenges against the right-wing, whoever leads them. It is through such battles that the emerging revolutionaries of action

develop politically and achieve class independence. However, we do not confuse this fight within the bureaucracy with the anti-bureaucratic fight of a class-struggle left-wing.

Our approach cannot, however, be confused with the orientation of Militant. The orientation of this formation puts them at odds with the class struggle leaders. Its attachment to deep entryism and the building of a “Marxist current” of the Labour Party cuts it off from and places it against the real mass movement and mass struggle. The evolution of Socialist Organiser should show us that such an orientation does not flow from some original revision of programme. Rather, the adaptation to a framework of politics defined by social democracy is what leads to programmatic revision. Deep entryism necessitates such adaptations and leads to degeneration. For this reason, our approach to building a class-struggle left-wing — a new leadership in the unions and the Labour Party — is combined with a permanent commitment to building a mass revolutionary party independent of the apparatus, programme and leadership of the Labour Party.

We reject deep entry of our organisation on principle for this reason. To be sure, at a certain point — not even yet on the horizon — the Labour Party may be so shaken by the class polarisation, the bureaucracy so out of control of the Labour Party, that its character as a bourgeois workers’ party may be undermined. This is what occurred with the French Social Democratic party in the 1930s when Trotsky proposed the “French turn”. This envisaged the organisational dissolution of the forces of Trotskyism for a short period in order to remove all the organisational obstacles to rapidly fusing with mass revolutionary currents. Even this tactic was very short term and it was aimed at strengthening the membership of the independent revolutionary party. A proposal for deep entry today — even under the guise of the “French turn” — would be a catastrophe.

The LPYS and the building of a class-struggle left-wing

Although we stress that today it is impossible to give the developing class-struggle left-wing a precise or fixed organisational character, we must make one very important exception to this. We can point today to one organisation which has the *potential* to form a key component of the class-struggle left-wing. That organisation is the LPYS [Labour Party Young Socialists]. Given the obvious fact that this organisation is based on the most dynamic section of society, given the general political attraction of the Labour Party as the crisis intensifies and given the relative degree of freedom from direct domination by the labour bureaucracy which the YS enjoys, we can draw some important conclusions about it.

Were the YS to turn outwards, to base itself on the mass activities and campaigning organisations of the youth, then we can say without hesitation that the YS could rapidly build itself into a mass campaigning socialist organisation. This is the lesson of history. In the 1930s, mass youth wings developed around all the major social democratic parties. In many of these organisations the Trotskyists played a major role.

Today, a mass YS forged through participation in the battles of our class, based on young workers, would necessarily play a leading role in the development of a new leadership of the whole working class. It would be compelled to engage in a life-or-death struggle with the bureaucracy. In such a battle, it would also come to play a major role in the decomposition of social democracy and in the construction of a mass revolutionary party. That is the strategic weight which we must give to the LPYS.

Clearly, however, the YS is not going to transform itself in this way. The present leadership of the YS, the Militant, seals it off from participation in mass campaigns and social movements. By the same token, they make programmatic concessions to the bureaucracy in order to remain within the structures of the

Labour Party. In essence, this centrist leadership is building a large sect.

Our approach, therefore, is to point out that a mass campaigning YS *will not* be built without authentically revolutionary politics playing a leading role within it. For this reason, the comrades of Revolution-Youth are now engaging in a battle for the leadership of the YS. This battle will be a protracted one. It will combine a fierce ideological struggle with the Militant with a practical activity which builds the YS in practice through relating to the mass campaigns of youth — in the anti-missiles movement for example.

This fight is just beginning. Through grasping its strategic importance for every single area of the class struggle, the IMG must increasingly place the construction of a mass YS and the support of the comrades of Revolution-Youth right at the centre of its own activity.

The combat party and youth, women and Blacks

Central to the building of a combat party is the existence of a revolutionary youth organisation. Such a youth organisation needs to be organisationally independent from the IMG, but in political solidarity with it.

The youth, particularly Black youth, will be most receptive to our revolutionary ideas and most inspired by the new revolutionary leaders emerging in Central America. A youth organisation which is organisationally independent of the IMG is the best forum for training up new leaders for the party.

A youth organisation is not built through taking up different issues from the IMG. Unless the IMG also takes up youth questions, the political solidarity between the two organisations will weaken.

The IMG is not freed of responsibilities for working amongst youth by the existence of Revolution-Youth. Rather, its responsibilities increase. It has to work in the closest possible collaboration with Revolution-Youth and aim to win its best elements to full membership of the IMG. The common concerns of the two organisations is not ensured through abstract political connection between different issues, but by common fight, shoulder to shoulder, over the same class battles.

The IMG has a major role to play, in collaboration with the Revolution-Youth leadership, in educating the youth. We encourage Revolution-Youth members, whether in the IMG or not, to sell Socialist Challenge as the paper of the movement and to identify with it.

This is why we say that our movement will be built by walking on two legs — reaching out to the political vanguard as a whole through the IMG and drawing the young militants who will often be to the forefront of the radicalisation towards our programme and party through the training-ground of Revolution-Youth.

This is why we insist upon the need for political solidarity of the youth with the IMG, but its organisational independence.

Finally, a combat party cannot be built today in Britain without women and Blacks being in the ranks and in the leadership. Clearly, women are assuming an ever-more important role in the struggle of the class as a whole and winning the labour movement to defend their rights. These fighters must be recruited to our organisation and occupy a genuine role in our leadership.

Our biggest default to date has been in relation to Black workers. They occupy a disproportionate weight in industry. Their double oppression and ties to the more volatile struggles in the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent makes them much more open to revolutionary ideas. The role of Black youth as leaders of the youth rebellion is just a harbinger of what is to come. Such is now the key task of the IMG.

The Labour Party and the turn to industry

In no area is our turn to industry more essential than in relation

to the work of our supporters in the Labour Party. Without the turn to industry, we will be incapable of building a combat party. It is not a matter of good intentions. Without being with the real vanguard, the youth and those in basic industry, we will be incapable of real *political* battles with the left-reformists. The reformists will not be shifted by the strength of our arguments. Rather, it will be our ability to move forces in industry who have the real social weight that will make our arguments count.

Without such a backbone to our work in the Labour Party, we can be no more, whatever our intentions, than ideological advisors or clarifiers.

Moreover, it will not only be an organisation with a backbone formed of industrial militants that will have the weight to profit from the differentiations at the base of the Labour Party. The new revolutionaries of action that will emerge will not be won simply through ideological clarification. It will depend on the outcome of a real fight with the bureaucracy which succeeds in polarising the ranks against the bureaucracy during real class battles that develop.

All the previous lessons of the work of our movement in the social democratic parties show that without a backbone in basic industry, those currents which do emerge, breaking towards revolutionary Marxism, will not be consolidated around a revolutionary Marxist Programme and organisation.

* * *

Part 3. British Political Situation

The project of the Thatcher administration has been to halt the 100 years and more decline of Britain's economy. To restructure and rationalise Britain's industrial base at the expense of the British working class. This is not as an alternative to Britain's world military and economic role, but because of it.

The ruling class is fundamentally united around the international orientation of British capitalism. Britain has more of the biggest international companies than any other country except the United States. Forty per cent of all production of these companies is carried on overseas. The operation of these companies is completely intertwined with British banking and financial capital. £10 bn or over 50 per cent of all British profits is earned abroad.

It is this which is the background to the deepening involvement of British imperialism in fighting the liberation movements around the world. Britain's war against Argentina was not just in aid of safeguarding the Malvinas-Falklands as a British colony. It was not just about holding back uppity ideas other people might get over Gibraltar, Hong Kong, or where ever. Neither was it just simply greed for the oil reserves around the islands or the potential rich pickings of Antarctica.

No, the fundamental motivation was to ensure the freedom of British capital to continue to have free-range over the world and to be able to continue to exploit the under-developed, semi-colonial world.

Thatcher's task force demanded the backing — and got it — from U.S. imperialism. It confirmed the close ties between the U.S. and British imperialism. The next period will witness the much greater involvement of British imperialism in putting down liberation movements in Latin and Central America, and other parts of the globe.

Britain is not a "dependency" of the United States as some Bennites and Militant foolishly assert. Its close alliance with the U.S. flows from its fundamental need to develop itself as an imperialist power in its own right. With the U.S. it is committed to containing and then rolling back the gains workers have made in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, whatever the protestations that develop in Britain, it will firmly pursue its policy of developing its Trident missile programme and siting U.S. Cruise

and Pershing missiles on British soil.

It also has its own special interests to preserve — with the U.S. — in Southern Africa, and, in its own right, in subjugating the Irish people.

An offensive on both fronts

The international economic and military position of British capitalism now stands in absolute contradiction to the state of the domestic economy. During the boom post-war years, Britain's economy grew at a higher rate than at any other time in its history. Yet, relative to its imperialist rivals, it fell further and further behind.

The overall expansion of the world economy masked this catastrophic relative decline. With the ending of the conditions for expansion, British imperialism stands in real danger of losing out to its more competitive imperialist rivals.

Thatcher has responded to the onset of the second slump with gusto. In order to restore the conditions for the re-expansion of British capitalism, the rate of exploitation and therefore the rate of profit has to be dramatically increased. This means the qualitative weakening of the organisational strength of the working class. The industrial workers, those that produce the wealth, have to be taken on and defeated.

But in its drive to increase the rate and mass of surplus value, capital must also concentrate and be centralised. This means the destruction of great quantities of "surplus" commodities and of capital. This is why we have witnessed the greatest number of bankruptcies ever recorded and a level of unemployment unknown even in the 1930s.

This process is the basis for the re-expansion or re-industrialisation of British capitalism. Thatcher is not involved in a process of "de-industrialisation". As the war in the South Atlantic shows, the British ruling class will not willingly give up its position to any other competitor without a fight.

The changes that the British bourgeoisie requires will only be accomplished through breaking the backs of the industrial unions. No tightening up of the legal structures, ideological appeals to national unity or any other such approach can hope to have any success by themselves. They require the lash of mass unemployment as a material lever against the historic strength of the working class.

In pursuit of this objective, the Thatcher government has launched a determined war against working people. Wage rates have been cut, speed-ups introduced, work discipline increased and health and safety conditions eroded.

But this is only a taster. A major defeat of the industrial unions would open up a frenzied assault on the living standards and democratic rights of all working people. Already youth, Black and women workers are taking the brunt of the offensive.

This attack is a life-or-death question for the British ruling class. Whilst it may back off from this or that unfavourable situation — as with the threat to close down a large number of coal mines — it will come back later. There can be no prolonged period of concessions and compromise.

The SDP and the question of government

British politics is characterised by the polarisation between the classes. The Social Democratic Party is simply a function of that. It is not an independent force.

It was Thatcher who "broke the mould" of British politics. It was the ability of the ruling class to make concessions to the working class in the post-war years which allowed a regular alternation of Labour and Tory governments through the first-past-the-post British electoral system. Such concessions can no longer be made. Now the ruling class has the imperious necessity to break the back of the working class. It is this which has "bro-

ken the mould".

Part of this project is breaking up the Labour Party. The shift to the left in the base of the Labour Party and the consequent differentiation in the bureaucracy makes the Labour Party too unstable an option for the ruling class. Even a Healey-IMF Labour government would stimulate too much confidence in the working class for such a project to get the blessing of the ruling class in the present relation of class forces.

The SDP-Liberal alliance has failed to date to assure itself of a permanent important place in bourgeois politics. Its [rest of word missing] justification from the point of view of the ruling class is as a replacement for the Labour Party. But to date, it has taken more votes from the Tories — only therefore to plummet in support when the electoral fortunes of Thatcher rise. The success of the SDP is dependent on the success of the Tories in breaking the organisational strength of the class. The SDP and the Tories are not alternatives for the ruling class: they are terrible twins.

To concentrate attention on the SDP and possible constitutional re-arrangements like proportional representation is a major error. It is absolutely obvious that any move to proportional representation would be in order to facilitate a Tory-SDP/Liberal coalition. Such a move would be designed to prevent another Labour government — under any political coloration. It would therefore be an anti-democratic measure and should be opposed by the labour movement.

The programme of the SDP is designed to appeal to the utopian middle ground of post-war "consensus". The ruling class cannot tolerate any period of concession and compromise. Such an option would therefore only represent a short-term period of regroupment for the ruling class in the face of the Tories having been defeated by the resistance of the working class.

The ruling class is not preparing for democratic reforms. If Thatcher scores successes against the working class, it will follow through with greater restrictions on democratic rights. If it fails, it will prepare an even more ferocious government to assault the rights and prerogatives of the working class and its allies. The perspective is one of more determined attempt to strengthen the state.

The developments within the Labour Party

The developments in the Labour Party are a product of two essential factors. They are a response to the Tories' "breaking the mould". But they are also a product of the turn of the rank and file leadership of the class to intervene in the Labour Party to get a government which will defend its interests rather than attack them. The entry of these forces into the fray is what changed a normal out-of-office "left turn" into a recomposition of the labour movement.

Even so, these forces were always a small minority of the class. Democratic gains have been achieved because the right-wing was and remains on the defensive. First, because of its responsibility for and complicity in the disaster of the last Labour government. But more fundamentally because the right-wing bureaucracy has no alternative to Thatcherism.

The right-wing, therefore, is banking everything on a defeat of the class. Such an eventuality would once more make the bureaucracy a reliable instrument for the bourgeoisie. But without the serious defeat of the class, the bourgeoisie figures that any sort of Labour government which came into office would give a major stimulus to the class struggle — irrespective of its formal programme. In the present relationship of forces, an IMF-Labour government would be wrecked on the rocks of working class resistance.

To campaign openly for coalition with the SDP is not a serious option for the right-wing in the present relationship of forces. Of course, such a government might be formed out of a process of

wheeling and dealing in a hung parliament. But it would play into the hands of Benn to openly campaign for such an outcome.

The right-wing doesn't, therefore, have any serious alternative programme with which to fight Benn. This really restricts their room for manoeuvre even though they control the apparatus. Thus, while it has been able to reassert itself somewhat, it is incapable of halting the left advance, except temporarily. This is why the Bishop Stortford truce is "phoney". It cannot last. The main tactic of the right-wing will, therefore, be witch-hunt. But this is posed in an entirely different way than it was in the early '50s, for example.

The bureaucratic offensive against Bevan was successful because the right-wing had a clear and coherent perspective in the context of the economic boom. This was the precondition for the success of the witch-hunt against the left and the defeat of Bevanism. Conditions today are quite different.

What the right-wing counter-offensive highlights today for a whole layer of advanced militants is the need to extend the battle — not to keep their heads down. It is the unions which are the main target for the Bennite base.

Benn's leadership campaign consolidated and deepened the class-struggle opposition to the labour bureaucracy. It gave expression to the fight for national government solutions breaking from the open class-collaboration of Healey and Callaghan. It strengthened the opposition to wage restraint, EEC, the war drive. It gave a stronger profile to the struggles to make the Labour leadership accountable to the rank and file. Benn's importance as the leading Labour left retains this importance today.

The Benn campaign and the shift to the left in the Labour Party reflected and reinforced developments already going on in the mass movements outside the Labour Party — particularly in the industrial unions. Benn's leadership challenge became a serious one because of the balance of forces against the Healey/Callaghan leadership created by the winter of discontent, the miners strike, the mass mobilisations for unilateralism, the rebellions of the young Black communities. The impact of the Benn campaign inside the industrial unions, even traditionally right-wing unions like the ISTC, could be explained by differentiations already occurring in these unions against the leaderships (related to anti-Tory mobilisations like the 1980 steel strike).

The fight for united action with the Bennites

It is vital to understand the character of Benn's base in order to know how to fight for unity in action towards Benn. Many industrial militants look to Benn to express on a national level opposition to the class-collaboration of Healey-Foot-Duffy-Weighell. Benn champions their battles. Yet he does not lead the fight in the NUM, AUEW, and the NUR. He does not reach out to organise them.

This layer which looks to and responds to Benn cannot be politically defined as "Bennite". Benn's project is one of changing society through gaining left councillors, left MPs and left bureaucrats in the higher echelons of the unions. It is one for taking over the reins of the existing set-up through which to implement the Alternative Economic Strategy — a proposal for reform of the system.

Certainly, there are many in the industrial unions that will endorse this approach. Yet there is also a layer of newly-emerging rank and file leaders that has a more radical vision. These are more internationalist, more sensitive to the oppressed and stand for a total rejection of Thatcher's ruling class strategy. They promote a root and branch opposition to proposals for "slimline", productivity measures at working class expense, wage cuts, in-

comes policy, and so on. These are revolutionists of action. They are not yet consolidated into a coherent layer. Their radicalisation is still at a molecular level.

It is not the label that is important, but the existence of such forces prepared to respond to our revolutionary alternative. It is to them that we orient in fighting for the united action with Benn. Unless we understand the existence of this layer, we will be prone to opportunist adaptation to Benn — that is, reformism.

For there is a layer ideologically committed to Benn. It is found in the middle layers of the union bureaucracy — often supporting various Broad Lefts — it is found amongst a whole new generation of left Labour councillors and prospective parliamentary candidates. They are found in "left caucuses" based on the Labour Party wards.

We have a totally different attitude to this Bennite current than we do to the Benn base in the industrial unions. Specifically, it is the worst sort of mistake to identify the project of organising the Benn base with participating and organising "left caucuses" in the Labour Party. It is disastrous to equate organising these layers with the building of a class-struggle left-wing.

We fight for Benn to organise his base in the industrial unions. We are sensitive and help encourage any moves to open a second front for the battles in the Labour Party in the industrial unions. We have an orientation by forcing Benn to take a stand on crucial issues: the Malvinas war, the rail strike, CND and so on. But our eyes are not on middle-ranking bureaucrats, nor on the participants of "left caucuses", but on the new leaders emerging in the industrial unions.

For a Labour Government committed to socialist policies

Given this situation, our governmental slogan is of key importance. We have no truck with any "truce". Faced with the right-wing witch-hunt, we fight to extend the struggle against the Thatcher offensive. We cap this with the call for a government committed to promoting the anti-capitalist demands of the masses and defending their anti-capitalist actions. In this way, we give *our* content to the socialist policies that we demand a Labour government should stand on.

Our slogan places no conditions on our support for the election of *any* Labour government — whether committed to socialist policies or not. But it orients us to fight for adequate left-wing policies in the Labour Party and helps us explain the need for a workers government.

In this framework, therefore, our proposal is counterposed to the call for a Labour government committed to the Alternative Economic Strategy. Our demand is for a government committed to nationalisation of the monopolies and banks under workers control, for a crash programme of public works, for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for the 35-hour week, for immediate unilateral disarmament, for withdrawal from the EEC and so on. We link this with the actual struggles of the working class and oppressed and as a means of mobilisation.

This represents a transitional approach and corresponds to the method advanced in the *Transitional Programme*: "of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road for the workers and farmers government. On this road, we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should, in our opinion, form the programme of the workers and farmers government".

Why the Resolution "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland" is a Fundamental Challenge to the Marxist Foundations of the Fourth International

by John Steele, Revolutionary Workers League, Canada

The following is the edited version of an oral report presented to the May 22-30, 1982 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International by John Steele, a member of the Political Committee of the Revolutionary Workers League of the pan-Canadian section.

The report was given in response to a resolution drafted by the United Secretariat Bureau and sent to section leaderships on the eve of the May IEC meeting. The reporter for the United Secretariat Bureau draft resolution at the IEC was Ernest Mandel. The general line of the draft resolution was adopted by a vote of 31 for, 19 against, zero abstentions, and 2 not voting. The general line of the report by Steele was rejected by a vote of 14 for, 30 against, 3 abstentions, and 2 not voting.

The edited version of Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland was published in English in the July 19, 1982 (11) issue of International Viewpoint and in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin Vol. VIII, No. 6. Published here as an appendix to the report are sections 11 through 14 of the original resolution drafted by the United Secretariat Bureau.

During the discussion at the IEC, a number of comrades who in the end voted for the general line of the draft resolution expressed unease at the revisions to Marxist theory contained in the resolution. Several even suggested that sections 11 through 14 be removed. Comrade Mandel insisted that these sections, which contain the most glaring challenges to the Marxist theory of the degenerated and deformed workers states, were integral to the line and political thrust of the resolution. Mandel expressed the opinion that there was no political necessity in the light of the discussion to change even a comma or a period in the draft resolution.

A number of comrades voted for the draft resolution on the basis of written amendments made to sections 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. These were incorporated in the edited version that appeared in International Viewpoint and the International Internal Discussion Bulletin. They change nothing of substance to the line put forward by comrade Mandel and the United Secretariat Bureau in the original draft resolution. However, because the changes are cosmetic, they camouflage to some degree the errors of the original draft.

I. The stakes in the discussion

The draft resolution *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland*, submitted by the United Secretariat Bureau for adoption by this plenum of the International Executive Committee, contains fundamental theoretical and political revisions of our movement's program for the world proletarian revolution.

If adopted here, it will mark the beginning of a reversal of the revolutionary working class approach to the political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states that we learned from Trotsky in *Revolution Betrayed, In Defense of Marxism*, and other writings that has been the position of the Fourth International since our founding.

- In place of our movement's longstanding position that the bureaucratic caste is a *parasitic* layer on the workers state, the resolution introduces the idea that the Polish working class is "*exploited*" by the bureaucracy through its control over state property and the social surplus product. Trotsky repeatedly warned that this position is the essence of a bureaucratic collectivist view that the bureaucracy is a new ruling class.

- The resolution introduces the new idea—new for the Trotskyist movement—that the strategic line of march of the Polish working class is to smash the state. This is a position that can rapidly lead to reactionary political consequences if not reversed, since the Polish state is a deformed *workers state*. It throws overboard our programmatic understanding of the contradictory character of the deformed and degenerated workers states, labeling these *states* as solely parasitic and oppressive, serving no function of guarding the workers' conquests against imperialist counterrevolution.

- These errors are combined with several paragraphs that explicitly belittle the stakes for the Polish workers in defending state property in Poland. State property is counterposed to concepts of social property and the withering away of the state in a short-term sense. This borders on anarcho-syndicalist and councilist ideas combatted by Lenin, Trotsky, and other Bolsheviks during the early years of the Communist International.

Despite an interlacing of occasional correct and orthodox-sounding positions, the political direction of the revisions introduced in this resolution are clear and alarming. Its adoption would bring the Fourth International to the brink of a total break from its position of unconditional defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states against imperialism's unceasing attempts to roll back state property in order to replace these working class acquisitions with the iron dictatorship of finance capital.

These revisions inevitably feed all the adaptations by currents in our world movement to social-democratic, third-camp, and other petty bourgeois forces in the workers movement, who in turn adapt to capitalist propaganda and the political pressures of the imperialist war drive.

Only absolute clarity on these questions can enable our movement to make a contribution to the forging of a Marxist program, strategy, and proletarian lead-

ership of the Polish workers and their allies in their battle to throw off once and for all the totalitarian bureaucratic caste that oppresses them.

These questions go to the heart of the Marxist program for the world socialist revolution and for the political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states. The challenge before the membership of the Fourth International in the fight to reject the line of this draft resolution represents big stakes in the struggle for the international workers party and Marxist program for the world proletarian revolution that the Fourth International has been fighting for since its inception.

Sweeping programmatic changes

The language in which the draft resolution is written actually acknowledges that sweeping programmatic changes are being made. The Polish events, it says, "have cast new light on the nature of the society under bureaucratic dictatorship that exists today in the USSR and the so-called 'socialist' countries as a post-capitalist society."

It is certainly true that this most powerful and protracted workers struggle ever in any bureaucratized workers state has cast new light from concrete experience on the political revolution, its problems, its organizational forms, and so on. But has it cast new light on the *class* nature of the degenerated and deformed workers states? Does it require a fundamental change in the Marxist program and strategy in regard to the workers states?

The resolution seems to say yes.

II. Marxist theory of the workers states

The question of exploitation

Are the Polish workers exploited by the bureaucratic caste?

The United Secretariat Bureau majority says yes. Their resolution says the following: "We should not hesitate to recognize that in transitional society under bureaucratic rule, the exploitation of man by man survives. It often takes on forms of superexploitation. The Polish revolution clearly demonstrated that the abolishment of private property of the means of production does not eliminate exploitation since the workers do not collectively determine the rate of surplus produced any more than they control its utilization. Revolutionary Marxists cannot be standoffish about this problem. The fact that they felt exploited was part of the reason for the Polish workers' decision to organize a trade union. The fact that the bureaucratic power is not rooted in the contradictions of the process of production does not contradict the existence of workers exploitation.... To achieve exclusive control of the statized means of production and social surplus, the bureaucracy exploits the workers, even though 'control over' is not the same thing as private appropriation of the surplus product. Exploitation is only abolished insofar as the socialization of the means of production advances and the state withers away, which is impossible without the overthrow of bureaucratic rule."

The resolution goes on to explain the bureaucracy's mechanism for this "exploitation of man by man."

It says: "The transformation of the means of production expropriated from the bourgeoisie into state property is obviously a formal-judicial means of prime importance for the socialization of the means of production. But just as in a workers state, power can be either in the hands of the workers or in the hands of the bureaucracy, so the means of production can be controlled either by society or by the bureaucratic state apparatus."

There is no terminological confusion here. The comrades mean exactly what they say. The Polish workers, the Soviet workers and the workers in all the degenerated and deformed workers states are *exploited* by the bureaucracy *by means of the existing system of state property*, which decades ago replaced the capitalist system of private property. State property, like capitalist property, turns out to be the social foundation of exploitation. This particular system of exploitation is maintained by the bureaucracy, in its own interests, by means of its "bureaucratic state apparatus."

The question must be posed. How far is this view from the non-Marxist idea that some new form of ruling class exists in the deformed and degenerated workers states today?

The answer is—not very far!

Smashing the state

But the logic of the United Secretariat Bureau's revisions takes them further. To sustain the theory of "exploitation of man by man," the comrades are forced to jettison any dialectical Marxist view of the Polish state and the tasks of the Polish workers in relation to it.

The resolution says that the strategic line of march of the Polish working class is to smash the state in Poland. It quotes Lenin from *State and Revolution*:

"Smashing the bureaucratic and military machine: these few words express concisely the main lesson of Marxism concerning the tasks of the proletariat towards the state during the revolution."

The resolution then says: "This is the essential political task of the working class in the antibureaucratic political revolution as well as in an anticapitalist socialist revolution." It then quotes Trotsky about the need for "the violent overthrow of the political rule of a degenerated bureaucracy" to suggest that Trotsky agrees with the view put forward in the resolution that workers under capitalism and in workers states have the *same* job to do in relation to the state. This ties into the failure of the resolution to even once refer to the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the form of class rule in Poland. It fails to reaffirm our traditional view that the working class remains the ruling class despite the political domination of the bureaucracy.

Trotsky *never* had this view of the need to smash the state in degenerated workers states, since he fought against the theory that the bureaucracy exploits the workers. But since the Bureau now believes that the state in the degenerated and deformed workers states defends the material interests of the bureaucracy, which exploits the workers through state property, it follows that the state has to be smashed by the working class, just as in a capitalist society.

Trotsky's real views

Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet workers state was his single greatest and irreplaceable contribution to Marxist theory and to our program for the world proletarian revolution to overthrow capitalism and begin the march towards socialism. These views are explained in detail in *The Revolution Betrayed*, *In Defense of Marxism*, and *The Transitional Program*, all published by Pathfinder Press.

Trotsky explained that the Soviet working class had been politically expropriated by a privileged, petty-bourgeois caste. The government under Stalin and his heirs became a dictatorship of the bureaucracy, which politically usurped the working class. *But the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers state, survived, since the nationalized and planned economy based on state property remained.*

Trotsky said that "the working class of Russia accomplished the greatest overturn of property relations in history" and that the bureaucratic caste, despite its murderous repression, was unable to overturn these property relations.

Forty years after Trotsky's death, world imperialism has not only failed to achieve a counterrevolutionary restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, but it now confronts 13 more workers states and several others on the way in Central America and Indochina.

State property, planning, the monopoly of foreign trade—these economic conquests of the Soviet workers have not been rolled back. This is true despite the fact that for half a century the Soviet Union has been governed by a privileged bureaucratic caste, a crystalized petty-bourgeois social layer with interests alien to the workers and farmers.

Trotsky put it this way in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray is not enough; you have to overthrow it."

"The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution."

This explains the undying hostility of imperialism to the Soviet Union, Trotsky explained, and its determination to overthrow state property and smash the workers state.

Imperialism certainly understands that the expropriation of the means of production of the bourgeoisie by the working class is much more than a "formal-judicial" change. Years ago, that revolutionary change determined which class would rule in Poland.

This is the situation in the Soviet Union, Trotsky explained. The bureaucracy, although holding a monopoly of political power, is not a ruling class. The workers state, though horribly deformed, remains the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is because the working class is the class necessary for the further development and extension of state property. The Stalinist bureaucracy, on the other

hand, is not only not necessary for this but it is a big obstacle to achieving the transition to socialism. It is not only an obstacle to the further development of state property and the extension of the socialist revolution, but in the long run weakens state property in face of imperialist pressure.

Nonetheless, in order to ensure its own survival and the survival of the source of its privileges, the bureaucratic caste must defend state property. It does so inadequately, with counterrevolutionary methods which weaken and in the last analysis risk destruction of the workers state at the hands of imperialism. A similar kind of relationship exists between the privileged trade union bureaucrats, the union, and the employer.

The bureaucracy's position—squeezed between the working class and imperialism—is a key aspect of Trotsky's analysis. He taught us that it is the counter-revolutionary pressure from imperialism against the workers states that is *above all else* responsible for the bureaucracy's grip on political power over the workers.

It is world capitalism that exploits the working class of the workers states—through the world market, inflation, and the banks. It is imperialism that is the root of oppression in the degenerated and deformed workers states.

"One can with full justification say that the proletariat ruling in one backward and isolated country still remains an oppressed class," Trotsky said in 1937. "The source of the oppression is world imperialism: the mechanism of the oppression—the bureaucracy."

"If in the words 'a ruling and at the same time an oppressed class' there is a contradiction, then it flows not from the mistakes of thought but from the contradiction in the very situation in the USSR. It is precisely because of that that revolutionaries reject the Stalinist theory of socialism in one country."

There is not one word of this analysis about the workers being exploited by the parasitic caste through state property forms. This is because at the very time he was writing these words, Trotsky was leading a struggle to the end *against* those in our movement who had concluded that since the Soviet workers were being exploited by the caste through state property, there really wasn't much of value, if anything, in the Soviet workers state for workers to defend.

Trotsky sharply polemicized against this idea of exploitation by the bureaucratic caste.

"If [the bureaucracy's] marauding parasitism is 'exploitation' in the scientific use of the term," he wrote in *In Defense of Marxism* a few months before his assassination, this means that the bureaucracy possesses an historical future as the ruling class indispensable to the given system of economy. Here we have the end to which impatient revolt leads when it cuts itself loose from Marxist discipline."

Elsewhere in the same book, Trotsky argues against those who talk of the relation of the bureaucracy to the toilers as one of "collective exploitation," with the working class "transformed into the slaves of totalitarian exploiters."

Trotsky never had the view that the political struggle against the theory of "exploitation" in the Soviet Union was over some kind of terminological misunderstanding. Neither did the Fourth International as a

whole. It was a life and death struggle to maintain the Marxist foundations of the Trotskyist movement.

Trotsky and the state

Let's turn now to the question of where the state apparatus fits into the process of political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers states. Trotsky never held the view that the main task of the workers in the political revolution was to "smash" the state. This view has *never* appeared in any of Trotsky's writings or the documents of the Fourth International.

Trotsky did believe, of course, in the necessity for the "violent overthrow of the political rule of a degenerated bureaucracy." The comrades who try to use this particular phrase, or others like it, to prove that Trotsky viewed the dynamic of political revolution as essentially the same as that of an anticapitalist revolution should note that Trotsky says nothing about the state and the need to smash it. He talks only of the revolutionary overturn of the *political domination* of the bureaucracy—a domination maintained by force and that can only be thrown off by force.

Consistent with all his writings on this question, Trotsky means, of course, the need for the workers in the degenerated and deformed workers states to organize independently of the bureaucracy and through proletarian mass action to wrest control of the workers state from the bureaucratic caste itself.

The strategy or process of political revolution is the *total series of transitional measures to democratize the workers state gained through militant mass struggle, culminating in the revolutionary struggle to transfer power—governmental power—from the bureaucratic caste to the workers.*

Not a struggle to "smash" the state. But a struggle to democratize it. Not a struggle to build a new state on the wreckage of the old, though it will mean a radical reorganization of the workers state from top to bottom. But above all it is a struggle to wrest control of the *existing state* from the bureaucracy, which means in the final analysis a struggle for *governmental power*.

This view is fundamental to the Marxist framework for the political revolution. It is summed up clearly in the final words of the section of the Transitional Program on the political revolution, which says: "Only the victorious uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its full development towards socialism."

This is the process which began unfolding in Poland in August 1980. Millions of Polish workers and peasants have been struggling to democratize or "revive" the Polish workers state and increasingly assert their control over it. Despite the serious setback to the Polish workers' struggle in December, 1981, the power of the bureaucratic caste has been seriously undermined. It has been unable to reimpose stability and prevent continuing outbreaks of mass resistance to its totalitarian practices. To carry this struggle to victory, the Polish workers and peasants will have to sweep aside the bureaucratic caste and establish a government that advances their own class interests. They will establish new forms and political institutions—councils and so on—in the cities and the countryside, in the factories and workplaces along the way.

This was the dynamic set in motion by the development of the Solidarity trade union and the mass organizations of workers, peasants and other social layers that rallied around it.

The end result of a successful political revolution will mean the elimination of the bureaucratic caste and the democratization of the Polish workers state from top to bottom. This process will deeply affect the working class and peasant base of the Polish army, who will send the current reactionary and corrupt officer corps packing.

The workers and peasants will get rid of the bureaucracy's hideous apparatus of secret police, political prisons and concentration camps.

The fight to wrest control of their state from the bureaucratic caste, the fight to replace the government of the caste with a genuine workers and farmers government—that's the strategic line of march of the *political revolution in Poland today*. It is a fight to *strengthen—not destroy*—the Polish workers state. It is a fight to make it the kind of class struggle weapon that is needed to stand up to the imperialist class enemy, advance the interests of the Polish workers and peasants, and help extend the socialist revolution.

Solidarity's struggle on higher level

The struggle of the Polish workers and those in other workers states starts on a higher level than those of workers in capitalist countries. They don't have to start from scratch. As the ruling class, based on state property, the workers have the job of democratizing their state. It's a revolutionary process, to be sure, but it is a different process than revolution in a capitalist society.

The process takes place within the framework of a state which is a contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, because of its state property foundations, it is an historic acquisition of the class struggle and it guards these conquests from destruction at the hands of imperialism. On the other hand, it is the state apparatus that feeds the bureaucratic caste and through which the caste opens up the working class to imperialist pressure and represses their efforts at independent struggle and organization.

This is true for many of the *institutions* of the degenerated and deformed workers state. The Polish Army and secret police defend both the political rule of the bureaucracy *and* state property relations.

When we speak of the Polish workers state, we are not simply referring to state property and planning—to the economic foundations. We are also referring to the *state* that defends those economic conquests—"...the regime which guards the expropriated and nationalized property from the imperialists is, *independent of political forms*, the dictatorship of the proletariat," Trotsky wrote in 1937.

"The Soviet government represents an instrument for the preservation of conquests of an already accomplished overturn," he wrote in 1933. This shows, he said, "How and why the Stalinist apparatus could completely squander its meaning as the international revolutionary factor and yet preserve a part of its progressive meaning as the gatekeeper of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution."

Stalinism, however—that is, the political expression

of the privileged caste interests of the privileged bureaucracy—does *not* have a contradictory character in that sense. It is completely counterrevolutionary, counterrevolutionary through and through. It is entirely alien to the class interests of the workers and peasants.

But as Trotsky explained, the degenerated workers state is different. It's contradictory. This is true too for the *policies* that the bureaucracy is sometimes compelled to carry out because it is based on state property.

For example, today the Kremlin materially aids the survival and development of the Cuban revolution. Is this because the Stalinist bureaucracy has some sort of proletarian internationalism? No. It's fundamental policy is counterrevolutionary. At the same time, it must defend the workers state on which its political power and material privileges depend. It aids the Cuban revolution because the insatiable drive by imperialism against the Soviet workers state, creates a world situation in which the Kremlin has been forced to give aid to Cuba and some other revolutionary struggles, for example to the Vietnamese.

Our understanding of these political questions is rooted in our Marxist approach to politics, the state, and the world revolution. If we are unable to distinguish between the Polish state, the bureaucracy, and the particular *form* that the state institutions take in Poland because of its bureaucratic deformations, then we have abandoned the Marxist approach. This danger confronts the United Secretariat Bureau. Symptomatic of this are the serious political errors the draft resolution makes in relation to the events in Poland themselves and the framework in which the Bureau majority views the Polish revolution.

The question of the Polish army

In the imperialist countries, the program of the proletarian revolutionists is: "Not one man (or woman), not one cent for the military."

Is that our slogan in the workers states? Do revolutionists in Poland or other workers states stand in opposition to the state having an armed force? Military conscription? Nuclear weapons? No. We consider these part of the necessary military defense of the workers state.

Instead, we oppose the use of those armed forces by the bureaucracy to preserve its parasitic interests and oppress the workers and farmers since this weakens the defense of the workers states. At a certain point in the struggle the workers will need to form their own independent defense units to defend themselves against repression by the bureaucracy. And a successful political revolution will have to break up the officer corps and reform the army from top to bottom.

But we do *not* have the same attitude toward the armed forces of a workers state as we do toward the armed forces of an imperialist state, which plays *no* progressive role and must be smashed.

In relation to the Polish army, however, the Bureau's draft resolution doesn't reflect this reality at all. It says: "Just as is the case in bourgeois society, in the transitional society where totalitarian power is exercised by the bureaucracy, the repressive machine of the state and its various apparatuses are parasites on

the body of society."

Since parasites are unhealthy and can be fatal, it follows that they should be cut out, removed, or destroyed. The resolution appears to take this position in relation to the Polish army.

But as we explained earlier, the position of our movement is that the Polish state and its institutions like the army are not simply parasitic institutions serving the bureaucracy. They play a necessary role vis-a-vis the workers states, inadequately and with counterrevolutionary methods.

Should the Polish workers be fighting for the "smashing", for the destruction of the Polish army? Should this be the political approach of the Polish workers when the Polish army stands as one of the main weapons against the imperialist armies of the NATO forces?

The draft resolution levies a criticism against the Solidarity leadership for failing to pay sufficient attention to the need for fraternization with the Polish armed forces. This may be true. But the resolution speaks only of work around the *rights* of soldiers. This is completely consistent with the Bureau's view that the Polish army serves only the interests of the bureaucratic caste and that the process of the political revolution is more or less identical to that of an anticapitalist revolution. As a result, the resolution says nothing about what *political line* revolutionists should take to the workers and peasants in the Polish army.

But shouldn't class conscious workers try to instill their fellow toilers in the Polish army with a working-class outlook on world politics? Wouldn't they contrast the way the Polish bureaucracy uses the army to the way the Cuban government uses theirs, not only in the interests of the Cuban workers and farmers but of struggles in Africa, the Mideast and around the world?

The Bureau's "smash-the state" rhetoric results in an irresponsible and politically ultraleft approach to the Polish army which class conscious workers in Poland should reject. The error flows directly from the theoretical revisions which are at the heart of the draft resolution.

What Solidarity is fighting for

In the framework of Trotsky's Marxist analysis of political revolution, the process of political revolution reconditions and revitalizes the workers state so that it can fulfill its basic function of defending state property relations, planning the monopoly of foreign trade, and advancing the world socialist revolution. The demands that make up the program for political revolution have this as their fundamental or immediate goal.

But the Marxist framework of the Bureau is so badly shaken that the draft resolution talks about the "socialization of the means of production" and the "withering away of the state" as an immediate goal of the political revolution in Poland.

The resolution states: "In his criticism of the totalitarian power of the bureaucracy, Trotsky clearly indicates that the socialization of the means of production only begins and advances when the state begins to wither away, that it begins to be absorbed by a self-managed society. He states that social pro-

erty begins not at the point where private property stops, but where state property stops. This is precisely the view which gained currency in the Solidarnosc mass movement.

“The close connection between the process of socialization of the means of production and the process of withering away of the state unveiled by revolutionary Marxism, was present both in the consciousness and the practice of the Polish workers who struggled at once to socialize the state sector of the economy and to socialize the state itself.”

This can only mean that the Bureau thinks that the withering away of the state is on the agenda today in Poland as a result of Solidarity's struggle for democracy.

This is a completely utopian and therefore dangerous idea in relation to the task of deepening the socialist revolution and defending of the state property forms in Poland today.

The society of associated producers that Marx talked about, where functions are reduced to the administration of things rather than people, is some distance away. It is only possible within the framework of the abolition of the profit system as a world system and the existence of a world-wide system of planned economies producing enough food, goods, and services for all.

The struggle of the Polish workers is taking place in a different context altogether. On a world scale, the majority of humanity is still fighting not to abolish the state, but to replace capitalist states with powerful workers states—that is proletarian dictatorships, based on state ownership, planning and the monopoly on foreign trade—and to defend the ones that already exist: from the Soviet Union to Vietnam and Cuba. Strong workers states are needed for defense against the imperialist enemy and for building of planned economies, in the framework, as Lenin put it, “from each according to his-her ability, to each according to his-her work.” The Marxist view also explains that workers states can maximize their potential only when the producers are more and more involved in running the state—that is, on the basis of workers democracy. This process is most advanced in Cuba today, and is reflected in the fact that the Cuban workers and peasants are the most class conscious and internationalist in the world.

The Bureau's utopian view of the struggle in Poland flows directly from their view that the abolition of “exploitation of man by man” does not end with the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the winning of state property merely signifies a “juridical-formal” change in property relations. If what stands between the Polish workers and an end to their “exploitation” through state property is the Polish state, why should the Polish workers want to strengthen their state and its state property foundations? Better to fight for the abolition or “withering away” of the state and the “socialization of the means of production.” In this utopian framework, the Bureau simply gets rid of the real and complex problems of the struggle to deepen the socialist revolution in post-capitalist societies.

For the Bureau, the relationship of the Polish working class as the ruling class to the government, the

bureaucratic caste, the state structure, and state property at any given point in the struggle for workers democracy is not a question. Locked into the schema of the “withering away of the state”, the comrades develop the far-fetched view that Solidarity failed in its objective task to take power and establish some kind of system based on socialized property relations, council democracy, and self-management.

III. Sectarian stance towards Solidarity's leadership

The political ramifications of this “analysis” are immediate and disastrous. The draft resolution ends up measuring the fibre and direction of the Solidarity leadership in relation to a task which is not and was not objectively posed. This gives the resolution a deeply sectarian stance towards Solidarity's class-struggle leadership.

The comrades insist, for example, that dual power existed prior to the December 13 crackdown and that an historic opportunity to take power away from the bureaucracy was missed. They blame this on the Solidarity leadership, or at least its predominant wing—the wing of Walesa and others—and their alleged failure to prepare an insurrection.

The classic example of “dual power” existed during the Russian revolution. In the period between the February and October revolutions, a new governmental power emerged based on the workers and peasants, alongside the bourgeois government of Kerensky. This power was rooted in the workers councils or soviets, which became the sole political authority for the vast majority. This fact was capsulized in the Bolshevik slogan, “All power to the Soviets.” It was mass support for this idea that enabled the 1917 insurrection to put the Bolsheviks into power.

But there was no dual power prior to December 13, 1981 in Poland—that is, no alternative governmental power to the government of the bureaucracy. Solidarity commanded no troops, had no *de facto* veto power over the decisions of the government, and controlled no geographical area of the country. There was no Marxist leadership, no mass Leninist party to consciously take the struggle forward step by step. What existed prior to December 13 was a massive trade union with a leadership independent of the Polish government, a Stalinist party, and the Catholic Church. With whatever weaknesses and divisions—and there were many—this *class struggle* leadership sought to advance the interests of the Polish workers and their allies.

As the struggle intensified, the workers and peasants broadened their demands. Solidarity began to play the role of a political opposition to the Stalinists. It became a lightning rod for all those oppressed by the bureaucracy—the farmers, the students, and the professionals, etc. The logic of this was very dangerous for the bureaucratic caste in Warsaw and Moscow, and for imperialism.

Solidarity's efforts to have its right to exist legalized within the framework of the Polish workers state were pushed back on December 13. But it is clear that repressing the Polish masses and Solidarity once and for all is beyond the grasp of the regime. Solidarity is imbedded in the consciousness of millions of Polish workers and peasants. That is an historic achievement.

It's a solid basis from which the fight for a genuine workers and peasants government can continue.

Marxists have an important and indispensable role to play in the next phases of this struggle. But this can't be done by imposing utopian schemes on the revolutionary process, schemas which have nothing to do with Marxism and the lessons of the anti-bureaucratic struggle led by Lenin and Trotsky. This can't be done if we dissolve real strategic and tactical problems like the threat of Kremlin military power into calls for smashing the Polish army or the need to establish "socialization" of the means of production. And it can't be done by labeling, as the resolution does, those who don't follow such "advice" as "moderates", reformists, or sell-outs, who bend to the bureaucracy by consciously trying to hold back the struggle of the Polish workers with a strategy of "self-limitation."

Marxists have the responsibility to explain to the Polish workers where Solidarity fits into the world-wide struggle against imperialism and for a world-wide system of proletarian dictatorships: workers states based on state ownership, planning, and the monopoly of foreign trade. This means explaining the connection between Solidarity's struggle and the Cuban revolution, the colonial revolution in general, and the struggle for socialism in the imperialist countries. Our role in explaining these questions is vital because it is political clarity of *this* kind, above all, which is needed to deepen the political revolution in Poland. Not advice on when and how to prepare an insurrection to smash the workers state and socialize the means of production!

A clear Marxist perspective is what is required to win the fight for a government that will defend state property effectively, develop it through democratic planning and help extend it in the only way possible, through the extension of the world revolution. Only thus will Polish workers get to a position where socialization of the means of production and the withering away of the state becomes a possible perspective.

IV. Defense of the workers states against imperialism

A dangerous thread runs through the entire body of the Bureau resolution. The comrades completely abstract the Polish events from the world-wide struggle of the workers and peasants against imperialism and for socialism.

But this was precisely the framework in which Trotsky and the Fourth International developed our view of the character of the degenerated and deformed workers states, the process of political revolution, and where it fits into the world socialist revolution.

This framework has a direct bearing on our political tasks in relation to the defense of the Soviet Union and the other workers states against imperialism. Trotsky explained it this way in *In Defense of Marxism*: "We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy), and against whom (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of pro-

duction in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

This is the fundamental strategic framework for the political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states. Trotsky's first point is that the political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy for us is subordinate to the task of defense of the workers states. His second point is that the defense of any particular workers state is a subordinate task to the extension of workers states on a world scale, as the part is subordinate to the whole.

What Trotsky is discussing here is the proletarian internationalist approach to the defense of the workers states and to the political revolution, neither of which can be disconnected from each other. His starting point is the unending counterrevolutionary pressure from imperialism against the workers states, aimed over time at replacing the state property relations with capitalist property relations.

The innovations of the USEC Bureau once again prove Trotsky's point. Once you step outside of this Marxist—that is proletarian internationalist—framework; once you start to think and act like the bureaucratic caste is an exploiting class rather than an agency through which world capitalism exploits the workers; that the state in a workers state is purely parasitic and must be smashed; that "formal-juridical" state property exploits the working class and so isn't really all that much of a gain anyway; that socialization of the means of production is the goal of political revolution rather than defense of state property—then the the Marxist class-against-class framework is called into question and just about anything can happen.

This is dramatically expressed in the resolution's false view of the relationship of world imperialism to the workers states today. The resolution takes the correct point that we are on the verge of a nuclear war launched by Washington against the workers states to the absurd conclusion that there exists no current imperialist military threat to the workers state.

In the present situation of deepening class polarization, revolution, and imperialist war, this approach will disorient the Fourth International. It will undermine our ability to fulfill our historic task of defending and extending the gains of the existing workers states.

We should remind ourselves of what happened on December 13, 1981. On the day the Polish generals moved, imperialism also went into action. It moved on *both* the political and military level.

In the Middle East, Israel, with Washington's go-ahead, stepped up its repression of the Palestinian people. More directly, Washington stepped up its military activity against the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean. The Cuban workers state issued an appeal to the workers of the world to protest against Washington's preparations for military action against the Nicaraguan, Grenadian, *and* Cuban revolutions.

Washington and its imperialist allies also used the opportunity provided by the counterrevolutionary actions of the Polish bureaucracy to step up their anti-communist propaganda. This campaign, most clearly expressed by imperialist politicians like Reagan and

Thatcher, is designed to convince the workers of the world, especially in the imperialist countries themselves, that it is the workers states rather than imperialism that are the source of totalitarianism and war.

The underlying goal of this campaign is to turn back the "Vietnam syndrome"—that is, to convince the working classes in the imperialist countries that imperialism is worth fighting and dying for against the liberation movements in the semi-colonial and colonial countries.

Imperialism has no choice in this matter. It has no choice but to go to war with ever increasing ferocity against the people's of the semi-colonial world. And in the final analysis, this means war against the vanguard of this struggle, the Cuban workers and peasants and their *workers state*.

This was the world context of the Polish events and the declaration of martial law December 13. It was in this context that world imperialism promoted its "solidarity with Solidarity" campaign—a campaign aimed at politically weakening the workers states.

Just as in previous periods of rising class struggle and deepening class polarization and imperialist war, world Social Democracy gave significant aid and comfort to the class enemy. The Mitterrands, Brandts, Broadbents, and others played their role of labor lieutenants of the capitalist class by manipulating the progressive sentiments of tens of thousands of class conscious workers who wanted to aid Solidarity's struggle into a campaign designed to strengthen the imperialist war drive.

It is a grave warning sign that the draft resolution says virtually nothing about this general context in which the Polish events have taken place, nor of the political disorientation expressed by a number of sections under the pressure of the Social Democrats and third-campists.

Some sections even ended up politically supporting worker or union-organized economic boycotts of the Soviet Union and Poland. Ever since the October revolution, the trade boycott has been one of the main weapons of class warfare by the imperialists against the workers states. The ongoing economic boycotts against Cuba and Vietnam are a case in point. Economic boycotts weaken the workers states. They reinforce the hold of the bureaucracy in the degenerated and deformed workers states and make it more difficult for a democratic workers state like Cuba to advance.

This is why the Fourth International has always opposed such boycotts, whether carried out directly by imperialist politicians, or by their labor lieutenants or well-intentioned but misguided workers. In the final analysis, a workers state is, like a trade union, an instrument of class struggle for the workers and the oppressed. In our view, a trade boycott of a workers state is like crossing a picket line. In political terms, it is *scabbing*.

The fact that the Bureau draft resolution failed to take up the errors made by the sections who supported trade boycotts, including those initiated by trade unions, is an even more shocking indication of how the false framework of the Bureau, and its sweeping challenge to the Marxist analysis of the workers states,

has become a *direct challenge* to one of the most basic programmatic acquisitions of the Marxist movement: *the unconditional defense of the workers states against imperialism*. [The comrades of the majority included opposition to union-initiated trade boycotts of the workers states in the edited version of the resolution.]

These are the stakes in the discussion on the resolution *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland*. The resolution [including the original sections 12-14] needs to be read carefully and discussed by every member and party of the Fourth International so that its significance can be fully understood and its challenge to our Marxist program decisively rejected.

Appendix

The following are sections 11 through 14 of the original draft resolution Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland drafted by the United Secretariat Bureau.

11. Just as is the case in bourgeois society, in the transitional society where totalitarian power is exercised by the bureaucracy, the repressive machine of the state and its various apparatuses are parasites on the body of society. Parasites produced by the internal contradictions of this society where power has been usurped by a privileged minority, and parasites which stifle society.

" 'Smashing the bureaucratic and military machine': these few words express concisely the main lesson of Marxism concerning the tasks of the proletariat toward the state during the revolution" (Lenin). This is the essential political task of the working class in an antibureaucratic political revolution as well as in anticapitalist social revolution. The realization of this task embodies the convergence of the interests of the working class, the poor peasantry and all the other layers of society oppressed by the bureaucracy. In bourgeois society as well as in a transitional society subjected to bureaucratic dictatorship, all these layers are "united by the fact that the bureaucratic and military machine oppresses them, crushes them, and exploits them. *Smashing* this machine, *demolishing* it, this inevitably is the interest of the 'people', of its majority" (Lenin).

The bureaucracy is not a class with deep roots in the postcapitalist socio-economic system as the bourgeoisie was, but this is precisely why it clings to the apparatuses that provide it both with its livelihood and monopoly over the exercise of power. In the course of the political revolution, the bureaucracy is forced to resort to repression against the workers even more brutally than usual and this leads it to beef up the state machine.

What Lenin taught us in *State and Revolution* and what Trotsky defined as the tasks of the political revolution—"the violent overthrow of the political rule of the degenerated bureaucracy"—was confirmed in two ways by the Polish revolution.

For one, the first victory of the Polish workers over the bureaucracy was reflected in the destruction of one

of the apparatuses of bureaucratic power. The strike committees' conquest of the workers' right to organize independent unions in August 1980, later, when Solidarnosc appeared, turned into a fight in which the state trade union apparatus was in great part dismantled and demolished (not completely though, since the bureaucracy remained in power). Even though the power of the bureaucracy was not challenged as such, the self-organization of the workers involved the destruction of one of the apparatuses that make up the state machine under bureaucratic rule.

As the movement for economic reform based on workers self-management developed, other state apparatuses—those that give the bureaucracy its economic power—were subjected to pressures aimed at destroying them. An often fierce struggle to prevent the nomination of enterprise directors on the basis of the "nomenklature" of the PUWP, and to get the compulsory enterprise associations and branch ministries disbanded broke out. The workers proposed various solutions to replace the bureaucratic apparatuses that they sought to destroy, including public competitions to be organized by the workers councils of the enterprises, the restriction of the role of enterprise administrators to mere implementation functions under the aegis of organs of workers self-management, and the formation of voluntary enterprise associations based on workers councils.

On the other hand, the fundamental weakness of the Polish revolution was that it did not concentrate all its forces on the destruction of the repressive apparatus of bureaucratic rule. It is true that Solidarnosc did demand that a part of the police apparatus—especially its buildings—be returned to society and used to meet the needs of the majority. It supported the formation of the independent union of functionaries of the Civil Militia. And in the last days before December 13, its revolutionary sectors called for the formation of workers guards. But no struggle was organized, inside or outside the army, to eliminate the bureaucratic apparatus of the armed forces. This was precisely the bureaucracy's last basis for hope and the one it relied on to carry through its political counterrevolution.

12. The Polish revolution is the first anti-bureaucratic revolution in which the mass movement was able to find a solution to the problem of self-organization of the workers. In all previous revolutions, the working class had equipped itself with combat organs and dual power organs—the workers councils or strike committees which tended to turn into workers councils. This is what happened in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968-69. However, the workers council is an institution which doesn't confer an organized character on the mass movement. One of the great weaknesses of the workers movement in previous political revolutions in Eastern Europe concerned precisely the question of organization. This is the source of the superiority of the experience of Polish revolution.

The inter-enterprise committees of August 1980 did not turn into workers councils but into organizing committees of the union. The overwhelming majority of wage earners, organized at the grass roots in enterprise union sections, joined this union. Solidarnosc is not organized according to trade categories of econ-

omic activity sectors, but on a territorial basis (the regions). The horizontal structure completely outweighed the vertical structure—although they did exist, the sections based on economic activity sectors had a very small role. This method of organization insures the unity of all workers, regardless of the trade they ply or the economic sector they produce for. The specificity of Solidarnosc as a trade union organization lies in the fact that it does not bring together economic sector federations and trade corporations. All the enterprise sections are united in a regional organization, and the regional organizations in a national organization.

Another particularity of Solidarnosc is the fact that its union democracy has many features of council democracy.

Because of this, Solidarnosc is a majority workers organization whose leading organs also assume the role of organs of counterpower.

It is not by chance that the Polish workers organized in the framework of a union that would protect their rights, their dignity, and their interests, both material and spiritual, against the state—which they themselves designate as the state-boss. This is a very accurate reflection of the situation of the workers in a transitional society, especially under the rule of the bureaucracy. Given the survival of commodity based categories, labor power also partially preserves a commodity character.

The fact that in a transitional economy, the plan and the market are both united and opposed, in a contradictory combination. The level of remuneration of labor power depends partly on the plan, partly on the market.

Nevertheless, it is the bureaucracy that decides the standard of living of the workers on the basis of its own specific caste interests. The bureaucratic plan which tends to turn over to the bureaucracy an ever increasing share of the social surplus, often brutally interferes with the material preconditions for the reproduction of the labor force.

This is the reason, along with the fact that labour power preserves a partial commodity character, that the workers need a trade union.

We should not hesitate to recognize that in a transitional society under bureaucratic rule, the exploitation of man by man survives. It often even takes on forms of superexploitation. The Polish revolution clearly demonstrated that the abolition of private property of the means of production does not eliminate exploitation since the workers do not collectively determine the rate of surplus produced any more than they control its utilization. Revolutionary Marxists cannot be stand-offish about this problem. The fact that they felt exploited was part of the reason for the Polish workers decision to organize in a trade union. The fact that bureaucratic power is not rooted in the contradictions of the process of production does not contradict the existence of the workers' exploitation. In his study on pre-capitalist forms of production, Marx noted that one could find a system of exploitation by parasitic capital even when the mode of production was not capitalist. Likewise, the bureaucracy can exercise a power of exploitation in a post-capitalist society, even though its role may be parasitic. To achieve exclusive

control over the statized means of production and social surplus, the bureaucracy exploits the workers, even though "control over" is not the same thing as private appropriation of, the surplus product. Exploitation is only abolished insofar as the socialization of the means of production advances and the state withers away, which is impossible without the overthrow of bureaucratic rule.

13. One of the essential lessons of the Polish revolution was the questioning by the working class of the concept of social property as it had been presented by the bureaucracy in power. This questioning is justified and revolutionary Marxists must embrace it as their own. The Polish workers rejected the identification of state property with social property. The slogan "Give us back our factories!" put forward during the first meeting of delegates of the self-management movement on July 8 in Gdansk, expresses this reaction very concretely, just as the emergence of the concept of "social property" counterposed to the concept of state enterprise, and as the distinction between juridical property and *social* control of the means of production, also did.

The transformation of the means of production expropriated from the bourgeoisie into state property is obviously a formal-juridical means of prime importance for the socialization of the means of production. But just as in a workers state power can be either in the hands of the workers or in the hands of the bureaucracy, so the means of production can be controlled either by society or by a bureaucratic state apparatus. In the latter case, the state form of property does not take on an immediately social content.

The means of production which are not the real collective property of the working class and of society as a whole are at the disposal of the bureaucracy even though it does not own them. The bureaucratic caste, afflicted with all the defects of a ruling class, profits from the statized means of production as if it were their true owner, but it doesn't assume any of the responsibilities of a true owner. This dual characteristic of the bureaucracy justifies the wide-spread feeling in transitional societies under bureaucratic rule that state property in fact belongs to no one.

Revolutionary Marxists defend state property in the workers states against internal tendencies and external threats that seek to restore the regime of private property of the major means of production; but, at the same time, they advocate the transformation of state property into social property. Undoubtedly, the *complete* socialization of the means of production will only be possible when social classes, commodity production, and the state have completely disappeared. But the experience of the Polish revolution, especially that of the self-management movement which developed under Solidarnosc's leadership, contributes to our understanding of the moment when socialization of the *major* means of production *begins*. In his criticisms of the totalitarian power of the bureaucracy, Trotsky clearly indicates that the socialization of the means of production only begins and advances when the state begins to wither away, that it begins to be absorbed by a self-managed society. He states that social property begins not at the point where private property stops, but where state property stops. This is

precisely the view which gained currency in the Solidarnosc mass movement.

The close connection between the process of socialization of the means of production and the process of withering away of the state unveiled by revolutionary Marxism, was present both in the consciousness and the practice of Polish workers who struggled at once to socialize the state sector of the economy and to socialize the state itself. The struggle for workers self-management of the enterprises rapidly took on a broader dimension. The mass movement wanted to replace the bureaucratic state institutions with different institutions that would insure the existence and the expansion of a genuine democracy of workers and citizens. The construction of a "self-managed republic", as advocated in Solidarnosc's program, would have tended to set up apparatuses suitable for a state in process of socialization, apparatuses that by the same token would be withering away as they merged with the masses, submitted to their direct control, and associating them to the exercise of power. The bureaucratic caricature of planning would have been replaced by a democratic elaboration of the plan thanks to the broad participation of the organs representing the workers and the citizens, and to the possibility of submitting and discussing alternative proposals.

The Polish revolution once again confirms that in all workers revolutions, whether anticapitalist social revolutions or antibureaucratic political revolutions, the working class seeks to concretize its power in its own institutions of council democracy that combine the advantages of mass direct democracy with the advantages of representative democracy. The organs of struggle for power (or dual power organs) thrown up by the mass movements when they are led by the working class, naturally tend to adopt the form of workers councils in the enterprises and the form of councils of workers delegates on the territorial level—two institutions whose historical precedents are the 1917 Russian revolution's factory committees and the soviets.

As previously stated, the leading organs of Solidarnosc in the enterprises, at the regional level, and at the national level, were in fact important organs of a democratic counterpower of the workers. The union democracy whose norms governed the functioning of these organs had the features of a council democracy. The workers councils, organs of workers control over production and of struggle for workers self-management of the enterprises, based on general assemblies of the workers (or of the delegates in the larger enterprises) corresponded exactly to this type of institution. The regional coordinations of workers councils showed the way to workers power on a territorial basis, and the emergence of the organizing committee for the National Federation of Self-Management (which was preparing the summoning of the first congress of delegates of councils) showed the tendency toward centralization on a national scale. The independent peasant movement organized in the union of individual farmers of Solidarnosc, also called for the setting up of new forms of power in the rural zones based on the general assembly of the district. The new organs of democratic management that appeared in

the universities struggling for their autonomy also were close to the form of councils.

It is the working class that is the bearer of the tendency toward council democracy. The Polish revolution demonstrated that when the working class exercises its hegemony in the mass movement, the model of democracy and democratic institutions which it puts forward is also followed very closely—with some unavoidable variations—by the other oppressed social sectors involved in the revolution. This was the case in many other revolutions—think of the councils of poor peasants in the Russian revolution, of soldiers in the Russian, German, and Spanish revolutions, and of student youth during the French May 68. The question of the form of democratic representation and self-management of the social forces other than the working class in a workers state thereby finds its solution in the very forms of workers democracy, or in the forms which are, at any rate, close to it or inspired by it.

This doesn't mean that the advance or even the triumph of the antibureaucratic revolution brings about the immediate disappearance of the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the complete rule of council democracy.

The traumatizing experiences of Stalinism and the bureaucratic dictatorships have unquestionably rehabilitated in Eastern Europe the image of a parliament, however tarnished it had become. The idea of electing a parliament by universal suffrage, with several slates, and the citizens genuine right to present candidates and choose among them, was very popular during the revolutionary rise in Poland. It ill behooves revolutionary Marxists to oppose what emerges as a legitimate democratic demand of the broad masses. But they cannot therefore abandon their criticisms of parliamentary democracy and must clearly indicate its limitations. The main point to delineate the jurisdiction of parliamentary-type institutions in a workers state so that they don't undermine the power of the workers whose democratic legitimacy is based on one decisive point: *Those who produce the material wealth must have the priority right to decide how it will be used.* This idea is no newcomer in the history of the international working class movement and was already put forward in Poland in 1956 by Oskar Lange and then picked up by Solidarnosc as a means of resolving the problem at hand. It was the origin of the idea of a second chamber of the Diet, the Social and Economic or Self-Management Chamber that, according to the most advanced projects elaborated by the revolu-

tionary current of Solidarnosc, was to be elected exclusively by the direct producers and to concentrate in its hands all the economic power of the state. Such a Chamber must be considered as a transitional form toward council democracy in a situation where the institutions of parliamentary democracy continue to exist. At the same time, it is no substitute for—and is not in contradiction with—a national congress of delegates of workers councils or a permanent body originating in such a congress. In a transitional society in which various forms of ownership of the means of production survive, the system of workers self-management represents the power not of all the direct producers, but of the producers of the nationalized sector of the economy. The working class, even though hegemonic, must guarantee the democratic expression in the organs of economic power of all the direct producers, including the peasants and the other layers of small owners of the means of production.

In both capitalist society and the transitional society between capitalism and socialism, the working class is the most consistent bearer of the tendency toward political democracy. This is so because it is the bearer of a new mode of production that, in its higher phase, will institute absolute, unlimited democracy, that is a democracy in the process of withering away. By attacking the power of the bureaucracy, the working class aspires not merely to replace the existing totalitarian dictatorship by workers democracy, but also to insure democracy for all citizens. From the classical point of view, this involves two opposite forms of democracy. Citizens' democracy embodied in parliament, was created by bourgeois society. It is based on a territory whose unity is not determined by collective labor but by the market and leads the workers to dissolve as individuals in the people as a whole. Workers democracy is based on the cooperation of producers and rests mainly on the workers councils that arise in factories. The experience of the Polish revolution confirms that citizens democracy, as it emerges in the framework of a revolution led by the working class, is profoundly different from the distinctive forms of bourgeois democracy. Although it does not completely merge with workers democracy, it borrows the latter's features. This was obvious in the embryos of territorial self-management, that appeared in Poland in the last phase of the revolutionary rise under the impetus of workers self-management. The newly emerging territorial self-management was a citizens' democracy based not on the market but on cooperation and on mutual help of consumers, neighbours or the solidarity of families.

The International Counter-offensive of Imperialism and the Tasks of the Fourth International

by Alan Jones, Socialist League, Britain

Part One: The General Character of the International Class Struggle and the Programmatic Differences in the Fourth International

I. The overall character of the present world political situation

1. The central feature of world politics today is the confrontation between a rising struggle of the world working class, propelled by a deepening crisis of capitalism, and a massive international counter-offensive launched by imperialism, and U.S. imperialism in particular.

The general dynamic is for imperialism to be weighed down and increasingly stretched by the total series of crises it confronts, which creates the conditions for imperialism to break at its weakest links even to the point of the establishment of new workers states. Such struggles throughout the imperialist system in turn help drive forward the class conflict in its most decisive centres.

The class struggle therefore constitutes a world wide clash between the capitalist class and its supporters, and the working class and its possibilities for the victories of every other.

2. This dynamic is shown clearly in the highest point of class struggle on an international scale today — Central America. Here the upturn of class struggle, faced with weak ruling classes and led by currents looking to the Cuban Communist Party, has reached a point making possible the creation of new workers states.

This process in Central America itself reflects profound developments on a world scale. U.S. imperialism possesses overwhelming military power with which it could materially crush the Central American revolutions. It has however so far been unable to intervene on the scale that it did, faced with far less threats to its positions, in Guatemala in 1954, Lebanon in 1958, or the Dominican Republic in 1965.

While the United States has already started its military intervention and war against the Central American revolution, it has so far been forced to limit itself to intense indirect support and limited direct military aid, without the massive use of U.S. ground and air forces it would previously have adopted without hesitation faced with such challenges.

This delay has allowed the working class of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Grenada to mount a deepening revolutionary struggle posing the creation of new workers states.

3. This problem for U.S. imperialism exists because of the weight of international crises which confront U.S. imperialism.

These crises include: the deep capitalist economic recession, growing opposition to U.S. military and nuclear policy in Western Europe and inside its own borders, the problems of its attempted policy of a renewed confrontation with the Soviet Union, increasing instability in the major Latin American dictatorships, crisis in the Middle East, growing inter-imperialist competition, and the aftermath of the Vietnam war.

II. Defenders of the imperialist system

4. Within this framework of rising class struggle and its international offensive the imperialist system is defended not only by its own forces but by the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies and the semi-colonial bourgeoisies. Of these the most powerful force aiding imperialism within the workers movement is the Soviet bureaucracy.

The international policies of this bureaucracy are those of political support for, and subordination of the working class to, so-called 'progressive' sectors of the bourgeoisie whose defining character is held to be clashes of interest with U.S. imperialism. This means alliance with sections of the West European imperialists, support for 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' sections of the semi-colonial bourgeoisies, and appeals to 'liberal' or 'realistic' sections of the U.S. ruling class.

5. These policies of the Soviet bureaucracy constitute a massive obstacle to the working class on a world scale. The last generalised international example of such a course was the acceptance by the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies of 'detente' at the moment when the imperialist system was the point of maximum crisis over Vietnam. This policy demobilised in a significant way the international working class, particularly in the imperialist centres, and allowed the ruling class to reorganise their forces for the new offensives under Carter and Reagan. On a regional level a typical example of the debacle of the results of this Soviet policy may be seen today in the Middle East, following the uncritical political support given to the 'progressive' Arab bourgeoisies.

While it is necessary for the working class to ally in certain concrete struggles against imperialism and capitalism with the Soviet bureaucracy, the semi-colonial bourgeoisies, and the Social Democracy, the strategic line of advance of the working class lies through the overthrow of these forces.

The defence of the workers states, whose existence is a tremendous part of the strength of the world working class, and the defence of the semi-colonial states against imperialism, is more and more necessary as the class struggle intensifies. But the intensification of the struggle against imperialism and capitalism also involves an intensification of class struggle against the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies and against the semi-colonial ruling class. The international crisis of the capitalist system takes the form of a simultaneous crisis of imperialism and Stalinism.

6. These developments confirm once more in striking fashion the international character of the world revolutionary process. They also explain why the struggle in Central America has been produced, and accompanied, by a shift in the international relation of forces and a rise in the class struggle in all three sectors of

the world revolution.

The largest international movement seen since the Second World War against missiles and nuclear weapons in the imperialist countries; the most advanced development towards a political revolution ever seen in a bureaucratised workers state in Poland; the movement to political independence of the Argentinian, Brazilian, and Mexican working classes; the deepening crisis in Eastern Europe; the continuing resistance of the West European working class to austerity, the depth of the economic crisis of imperialism itself. These are among the major struggles which weigh down on the imperialist system in general, U.S. imperialism in particular, and also the defenders of their international interests.

The attempt and violence of the imperialist counter-offensive to these, symbolised most clearly in the policies of the Reagan administration in the United States, but also seen in the Israeli attack on Lebanon and the British aggression on the Malvinas, is only too clear.

The chief objective task confronting the world working class, and therefore also the Fourth International, is throwing back this imperialist counter-offensive and thereby creating the conditions for advance of the working class in Central America and all other sectors of the world revolution.

III. The central line of advance of the international working class

7. This international political situation confirms once again, as the sole means of advancing in the international class struggle, the line summed up in the phrase of Che Guevara to, 'Create Two, Three, Many Vietnams.'

Despite its decline imperialism continues to possess colossal economic and military strength. One nation by itself, the United States, produces over one quarter of world output. Its military budget alone is twice the entire output of a state such as the People's Republic of China.

For any class struggle to succeed, including those of Central America, imperialism must be stretched to the utmost by the international class struggle, unable to concentrate its overwhelming resources against any single problem, and therefore brought to break at its weakest points by the total series of crises bearing down on it.

This means building direct worldwide solidarity with the most advanced struggles taking place in the world, particularly in Central America, and pushing forward and supporting every progressive struggle of the working class: in the semi-colonial countries, in Poland, in the anti-missiles and anti-nuclear movement, in the fights against austerity, etc.

8. Despite the severity of the imperialist counter-offensive the resistance of the international working class, and the multiplication of international crises, create favourable conditions for building the Fourth International. This is particularly because these developments strikingly confirm the analysis of the basic features and dynamic of world revolution made by Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution which is at the base of the programme of the Fourth International.

Permanent revolution analyses that the centre of the strength of the capitalist system is the imperialist bourgeoisies. These constitute overwhelmingly the strongest ruling classes in the world and are therefore qualitatively the most difficult to overthrow despite the strength of the working classes in their states. These imperialist ruling classes are however also supported by the bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial states and by the bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and other deformed and degenerated workers states.

Precisely because the semi-colonial bourgeoisies and Soviet and other bureaucracies defend imperialism, every upturn of the

world class struggle involves a rise in all three sectors of world revolution. Increase in struggle against capitalism and imperialism will also involve intensified struggle against the semi-colonial bourgeoisies and for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracies. As long as no adequate worldwide mass revolutionary international exists imperialism will continue to snap at its weakest links. These victories in turn will prepare more favourable conditions for struggle in the imperialist states.

IV. Programmatic differences in the Fourth International

9. This analysis of the dynamics of international class struggle of permanent revolution is in direct contradiction to other conceptions of world politics including, as this has been raised in the Fourth International, the campist one of the Cuban CP.

On this campist conception the Soviet bureaucracy is seen not as a reactionary and counter-revolutionary but as a progressive force, and as a leading part of the 'socialist camp.' Sections of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie are held not to defend the interests of the imperialist system, no matter what particular clashes they may have with it, but to be 'progressive' or 'revolutionary.' Conceptions of socialist democracy are put forward which include the systems in Eastern Europe.

These campist positions do not prevent the Cuban leadership and similar currents from having the potential to overthrow capitalism in certain particularly underdeveloped semi-colonial states where the ruling classes are particularly weak, such as in Central America. These positions however do make the Cuban Communist Party incapable of providing a revolutionary leadership on an international level or in the majority of countries in the world.

Such a campist view also has a false position on the relation between the three sectors of world revolution. It supports counter-revolutionary actions by the bureaucracy in the deformed and degenerated workers states and urges political support to allegedly progressive bourgeois regimes such as the Ethiopian Dergue, Peruvian military dictatorship of the early 1970s etc. It therefore does not have a perspective that each rise of international class struggle will involve an upturn in all three sectors of world revolution but on the contrary creates a hierarchy in which some sectors of world class struggles are downplayed or opposed.

Inside the Fourth International adaptation to this campist line is expressed in explicit rejection of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution (carried out for example in the Jenness articles supported by the leadership of the SWP), revision of the theory of political revolution so that it does not involve confrontation with and destruction of the existing bureaucratic and military apparatuses in Poland, redefining the nature of working class democracy so as to falsely assert that one exists in Cuba, covering over the nature of and refusing to seriously criticise semi-colonial bourgeois regimes such as that of Khomeini in Iran, and creating a new 'hierarchy' of sectors of the world revolution in which the struggle for the political revolution is placed at the bottom.

10. The famous words of the *Communist Manifesto* that revolutionaries, "have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole" acquire a particular importance in world politics. A line based on permanent revolution allows all the struggles in all three sectors of world revolution to be taken up, stretching and weakening imperialism to the utmost, creating the most favourable conditions for the victorious outcome of the most advanced class struggles such as those of Central America. It allows the Fourth International to link up with all the vanguard forces emerging on an international scale.

The line of campism in contrast, by downplaying key struggles of the world revolution, or even directly supporting blows struck against them, fails to maximise the international relation

of class forces or to aid the most advanced struggles taking place. In reality it cuts the Fourth International off from new vanguard forces emerging in key sections of the world revolution.

While therefore supporting totally the struggle of the Cuban-influenced currents in Central America and the Caribbean to overthrow capitalism, we have to argue, that a different programme, that of permanent revolution, is required for the tasks of international revolution.

Part Two: The Rise of International Working Class Struggle and the Counter-offensive of Imperialism

V. The crisis of 1968 and its consequences

11. The present situation of world politics has its direct origins in processes which crystallised in the year 1968.

The year 1968 not merely represented a major upward turn in class struggle but altered its pattern drastically. From 1947-68 the working class in the imperialist countries had rebuilt its organisations after the crushing defeats of fascism but had not engaged in open mass struggles. There had been two extremely powerful but isolated explosions in Eastern Europe in East Germany and Hungary but with general stability outside these struggles in most of the bureaucratised workers states. Only in the semi-colonial countries were there fairly continuous decisive open class struggles — with the Chinese revolution, the Algerian war of independence, the Cuban revolution, and the Vietnamese revolution representing the most advanced expressions of this.

After 1968 this situation altered dramatically. A new upturn of struggle started in the semi-colonial states — which was dramatically heightened after the final U.S. defeat in Vietnam in 1975 and which culminated in the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the current revolutionary struggles in Central America. This upturn in struggle in the semi-colonial countries was now however joined by mass working-class struggles and political discontent in major imperialist countries and the beginning of a continuous and deepening crisis in Eastern Europe. It was the combined impact of these international struggles which forced U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the major turn in world politics which followed this.

12. Faced with this deteriorating international situation the imperialist ruling classes, led by the United States, began to develop a major international counter-offensive. This has culminated in the creation of the Reagan administration.

VI. The offensive of U.S. imperialism and the Reagan administration

13. The combination of massive economic recession, detente, and the reactionary nature of the bureaucracies in Eastern Europe allowed the United States and its imperialist allies to gain significant successes against the working classes of their own countries after 1975. In two areas of the world however the very economic counter-offensive of imperialism and the United States combined with political developments to create a new major upturn in struggle.

(i) In Eastern Europe the huge loans from the imperialist states did not succeed in overcoming the mounting economic crisis created in 1970 and broke out again in 1976. In 1980 they moved towards a fully fledged struggle in head-on conflict with the domination of the bureaucracy. By 1982, despite the serious defeat of the imposition of martial law in December 1981, resistance continued in Poland. Meanwhile discontent and various types of oppositional movements had developed also in East Ger-

many, Rumania, and Hungary.

(ii) In the semi-colonial states imperialism gained certain victories in the early 1970s. The crushing of the Palestinian resistance in Jordan in September 1970, the overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile in September 1973, the creation of the Uruguayan military dictatorship, the military coup in Argentina in 1976, and the process which finally led to the Camp David accords were among the most important of these.

But the general situation in the semi-colonial world was dramatically shifted against imperialism by the final victory of the Vietnamese revolution in 1975. The effects of this were further deepened by the onset of the world-wide capitalist recession in the same year. Imperialism found itself in the semi-colonial world faced with rapidly mounting economic and social dislocation under conditions where the United States had suffered a severe military and political defeat.

From 1975 up to the present, there has been a major upturn of struggles inside the semi-colonial countries. This started with the victory of the MPLA and Cuban troops over the South African invasion of Angola. It intensified qualitatively in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in January, the Gairy dictatorship in Grenada in March, and, most significantly, the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua in July. This final development spread into full scale civil war in El Salvador and the beginning of a major conflict in Guatemala.

A further deterioration of the situation of imperialism in the semi-colonial states set in with the 1980 world capitalist recession. The more industrialised semi-colonial countries, with the aid of huge loans, had been able to withstand relatively well the 1975 recession and even increase their share of the world market. The 1979 recession however, with tremendously high interest rates and stagnant world trade, hit with tremendous severity the more industrialised semi-colonial states.

By the beginning of the 1980s therefore the United States, despite its successes and that of its allies inside the imperialist countries, had not gained its international objectives. In particular it was faced with a major upturn of struggle inside the semi-colonial countries — above all in Central America. It was to attempt to reverse this situation that the U.S. ruling class stepped up its counter-offensive under Carter and then qualitatively reinforced it with Reagan.

14. The policies adopted by the Reagan administration were simple and coherent: to rebuild by any means necessary the economic and military power of the United States, and to use it to crush all challenges, from anyone, on a world scale. The comprised confrontation with the colonial revolution, increased military blackmail against the Soviet Union, and increased imposition of austerity, militarism, and war on the working class of the imperialist countries.

The immediate centre of this policy is a colossal buildup in military expenditure. The first budget introduced by Reagan projected U.S. military spending over the next five years at 1.5 trillion dollars. Until 1987 U.S. military expenditure is scheduled to rise at 17 percent a year compared to a 14 percent annual increase even at the height of the Vietnam war. In Central America the largest military intervention since the Vietnam war was started.

The U.S. ruling class understands however that the long term key to military strength is economic power. Therefore it has embarked on a tremendous drive to revitalise the sagging U.S. economy. The first target of this is the U.S. working class.

In order to pursue its goals however the United States is also forced to carry out a major offensive against its imperialist rivals — notably Japan and Western Europe. High interest rates in the U.S., protectionist tariff moves, attempts to block the USSR-West Europe natural gas pipeline are all part of this process. They promote increasing conflicts with U.S. imperialist rivals as the latter are forced to strike back both against the United States

and to recoup their losses by increasing the exploitation of their own working classes. In Japan this was carried out relatively successfully but in Western Europe, where the working class is far more strongly organised, it helped lay the basis for rising political discontent.

15. The final element promoting a new rise of working-class movements and struggle inside the imperialist countries was the necessity of the Reagan administration to attempt to tie together its policies through openly launching a new cold war against the Soviet Union. This was aimed to 'justify' the colossal military buildup, provide a rationale for counter-revolutionary interventions and wars in the semi-colonial world, and force imperialist allies to break trade links with the Soviet Union. Its aim was to blackmail the Soviet Union to cut off aid to struggles in the semi-colonial states.

This policy however meant the working class of the imperialist countries being faced both with the threat of new colonial wars and with the possibility of nuclear annihilation. This provoked the mass anti-missiles and anti-nuclear weapons movement and a new upturn of actions in solidarity with Central America. This former struggle has become the largest international movement on a single question since the Second World War. It profoundly altered the political situation in a number of key West European countries, above all West Germany, and in the United States helped to build on June 12 the largest political demonstration in U.S. history.

In addition certain West European countries saw an upturn in struggles against austerity. In France, Greece, and Spain major electoral advances of Social Democratic workers parties took place — although in Britain and West Germany they suffered significant electoral defeats coupled in the latter country with an advance of forces to the left of the SPD.

The result of the Reagan offensive against the colonial revolution and the workers states, has therefore been to begin to destabilise again the situation in the imperialist countries and to undermine some of the successes which the bourgeoisie had gained there after 1975. Coupled with the crisis in Poland and Eastern Europe, imperialism by the middle of 1982 faced far greater problems on a world scale than at the beginning of the Reagan administration. This was despite undoubted particular successes such as in the Middle East.

16. The fundamental reason for the deteriorating position of U.S. imperialism is that the Reagan administration started its offensive not from a position of strength, but after a long period where the international relation of forces had been moving *against* U.S. imperialism. This placed Reagan in a strategically weaker position than any previous administration carrying out such an offensive. Previously U.S. imperialism's world economic policy may be termed 'stick and carrot.' The U.S. possessed colossal military strength to confront any challenges. The U.S. however also possessed tremendous economic strength to shore up regimes favourable to it. Western Europe was aided after the Second World War with the Marshall Plan. The Japanese economy was rebuilt with U.S. aid after 1949 to confront the Chinese revolution. The same was done with South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore faced with the Vietnamese revolution. The economies of the Latin American dictatorships were aided to confront the Cuban revolution. Finally even the policy of detente with the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies was backed up by massive U.S. economic aid and loans.

The decline of the U.S. economy however means that today its world role is the exact opposite. Its high interest rates, protectionism, boycotts, manipulation of balance of payments deficits and the international monetary system, mean that it no longer aids but *intensifies* the crisis of the individual national capitalist economies. U.S. imperialism has the stick but it no longer has the carrot. The drive to rebuild its economic and military position

creates increasing international disorder.

17. Within this overall framework, British imperialism plays a subordinate but specific role. It is the West European imperialist power with the greatest overseas economic investments and the most closely aligned on the positions of the United States. It is the only West European state to have agreed to send observers to the U.S.-sponsored election in El Salvador, the most closely tied into specifically U.S. military strategy through the Trident missile system etc. At the same time for fundamental economic reasons, as its economy is now integrated far more with that of Western Europe, British imperialism aligns itself with the positions of the EEC, and against the U.S., on issues such as the Siberia-Western Europe gas pipeline, the steel tariff issues, the Middle East, etc.

In this overall situation British imperialism together with French, plays the most directly aggressive and military role of any of the European imperialist powers. This is reflected in the speed and violence with which British imperialism, most closely supported by the French, reacted to the attack on its positions in the Malvinas. It had to demonstrate it could defend its interests no matter what consequences for any other force such as the pro-imperialist Argentinian junta.

The struggle against these policies of British imperialism, over the Malvinas, on nuclear weapons, in the Arab gulf, and all other fields must be at the centre of the work of the British section.

VII. The crisis of leadership of the international workers movement

18. The reorganisations and changes within the imperialist system combined with the crisis of Stalinism help define more clearly the line of the various currents within the international workers movement. They have also brought about important shifts in the relation of forces between these currents and define more clearly the tasks of the Fourth International.

(i) The historical strength of U.S. imperialism following the First World War allowed it to organise international forces to support its goals.

Following the Second World War U.S. imperialism aimed above all to impose its cold war goals. This meant aiming to totally isolate the Communist Parties, split those Socialist Parties (Italy) and trade union movements (France) where this could not be achieved, oppose European adventures not in line with the goals of U.S. imperialism (Suez), and align the labour movement on the positions of the United States. This was organised directly and also via the vast CIA-funded international operations of the AFL/CIO.

The increasing development of international class struggle and the decline of U.S. imperialism have increasingly isolated these currents and reduced their weight, including in particular inside the Social Democratic parties.

(ii) The second declining force inside the workers movement, reflecting the crisis of Stalinism, are the pro-Moscow Communist Parties.

The line of these forces is support for the repression carried out by the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe, support for sections of West European imperialism (previously deGaulle, today sections of West German heavy industry) against the United States, and support for 'national and progressive' semi-colonial bourgeoisies which are considered in particular to oppose U.S. imperialism.

The decline of the pro-Moscow Communist Parties has been particularly sharp in Western Europe, and also Japan, under the impact of the example of Stalinist repression in Eastern Europe. It has also been speeded by the rise of West European imperialism which appeared to give an alternative focus for hostility to the United States and its policies than the traditional one of

support for Moscow.

On the electoral level the Communist Parties have undergone qualitative declines compared to the Social Democratic parties in France, Spain, and Greece. The Italian CP has maintained most of its support but only at the expense of putting a greater and greater distance between itself and Moscow. On the trade union field, and that of activists, the shift in the relation of forces against the Communist Parties is less qualitative but here also the SP-dominated union federations (CFDT in France, UGT in Spain) have made significant advances at the expense of the CP ones.

In the semi-colonial states the Communist Parties have also suffered significant setbacks with the debacles of Soviet policy in the Middle East, and their long policy of failure to fight for class independence in Latin America. The pro-Chinese forces suffered catastrophic declines as a result of the ultra-right wing turn of the Chinese bureaucracy during the 1970s.

(iii) The reformist force within the workers movement which has strengthened itself in the last period is the pro-European imperialist Social Democratic Parties. This reflects both the decline of Stalinism and the relative strengthening of West European imperialism compared to the United States.

Within Western Europe itself the mainstream currents of Social Democracy, being oriented to big capital, are the most enthusiastic supporters of the institutions of the EEC. They orient themselves not only against the USSR but also, where this corresponds to the interests of their bourgeoisies, are prepared to criticise or oppose the policies of the United States. An example of this policy in its most right wing form is that of Schmidt in West Germany with a combination of strong support for the military alliance with the United States but strong opposition to it on the Siberian-West European gas pipeline and refusal to send observers to the El Salvadorian elections. With tactical differences, for example a more overt link with the Mexican bourgeoisie on El Salvador, a similar policy is pursued by Mitterrand.

In the semi-colonial countries this pro-West European imperialist line is particularly expressed in the drive of the Second International to establish itself in Latin America. The orientation of these Social Democratic forces in Latin America is collaboration with capitalist layers which may have conflicts with the United States and are more open to the West European imperialists. This has a certain credibility in parts of Latin America as it involves at least a sharp verbal criticism of the United States.

In addition to the central developments of European Social Democracy the pressure of the working class and conflicts with the U.S. produce also a significant growth of left social democratic and centrist currents. Bennism in Britain, Eppler in West Germany, CERES in France, and Papandreou in Greece are examples of such a line. These both reflect pressures of the working class and are more open to concessions to, and collaboration with, national bourgeois sectors and with the Soviet and East European bureaucracies. They are, particularly in rhetoric, strong critics of U.S. tactics and policies, and advocate 'détente.'

In certain countries the extreme right wing line of the Social Democracy in office means that these left social democratic currents express themselves in formations outside the Socialist Parties (e.g., Democratic Socialists and Alternative Lists in West Germany).

(iv) The current looking for leadership to the Cuban Communist Party has been strengthened by the revolutionary struggles in Central America and earlier successes in Angola and Ethiopia.

The overall policy of the Cuban Communist Party is a militant projection of a campist political line — with the anti-imperialist camp conceived of as a bloc including the Soviet bureaucracy

and certain 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' sections of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie.

Under the conditions of the weak bourgeoisies in Central America, which are closely tied to imperialism, this line can lead to the overthrow of capitalism.

On an international level however the ability of the Cuban current to grow as an organised force, as opposed to general sympathy, is greatly limited by its campist politics. This places it against key struggles in crucial parts of the world revolution, above all in the bureaucratised workers states, and its line of support to 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie (Ethiopian Dergue, MPLA, Mexican bourgeoisie, Peruvian military dictatorship of the late 1960s) makes it unable to lead the fight for class independence in a major series of semi-colonial states. Its support of the Soviet bureaucracy makes it incapable of organising significant forces inside the imperialist countries.

(v) The upturn of international class struggle without a mass revolutionary leadership on an international level promotes the appearance of particular national vanguard forces. These are naturally particularly marked by the countries in which they emerge and often have one-sided or wrong views on international questions — e.g., the positions of the New Jewel Movement and FSLN on Poland, the lack of perspective of solidarity with the colonial revolution of many of the forces in Solidarnosc. Others, for example currents in the Brazilian PT, are more developed as regards international politics.

The Fourth International has to orient in a totally non-sectarian way to all these currents. Its role is however not of as a 'go-between' various currents, which often have quite contradictory conceptions and lines but as fighting for an orientation corresponding to the interests of the working class in all key developments of the world revolution.

Part Three: The Tasks of the Fourth International

19. The international crisis of imperialism develops in an uneven and combined fashion in line with the degree of working class struggle, the nature and strength of the enemies confronted, and the overall international situation. This also explains the uneven and specific developments within the vanguard of the working class. The chief tasks of the Fourth International in the various sectors of world revolution may be outlined as follows.

Under the impact of the deepening imperialist crisis the more underdeveloped semi-colonial countries face complete economic and social disaster. Their already weak ruling classes are further thrown into crisis. Under these conditions a working class leadership without a correct programme on world revolution, or an adequate one for confronting stronger ruling classes in more capitalistically developed semi-colonial states, can in a number of countries nevertheless overthrow the bourgeois order if it has a line fundamentally oriented to the destruction of the state power of its own bourgeoisie. This development is taking place in Central America, and in Grenada, with leaderships decisively influenced and inspired by the Cuban Communist Party. Other struggles of the same type, with leaderships of a campist type even if not explicitly defining themselves in relation to Cuba, will develop during the 1980s.

20. The campaign in solidarity with Central America is the largest international solidarity movement built by the Fourth International since the Vietnam war. It was able to take a qualitative step forward with the world solidarity conference on El Salvador organised by the Mexican PRT. This succeeded in involving almost all political views in the workers movement including the Cubans and an official message from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The success of the work carried out by our Mexican comrades shows the correct line on this solidarity work. The tradition of building the broadest possible mass solidarity, while not concealing political differences, is the one which the Fourth International used with the greatest success ever seen internationally on the Vietnam war. It is the one which must be used on Central America.

Comrades supporting the false positions of the SWP majority state that solidarity cannot be built if it is combined with explaining of important political differences with the Cubans and leaderships of the struggles in Central America. This is false. On the contrary our Mexican comrades have been forced to engage in a political argument with the Cubans and the FSLN because of the incorrect political support given by the latter to the regime of president Lopez Portillo. This in no way however blocked the Mexican PRT from doing the most advanced solidarity work in the Fourth International with the Central American revolution.

We may expect to see in other countries during the 1980s serious and determined struggles for power led by forces very far from us programmatically. Other examples already developing today are those of the Thai and Philippine Communist Parties. There will be further developments of the same type.

These forces will not at all have the same overall programme as we do and will have false positions on key events in world politics. Our practical attitude to them however should be based on whether they are waging a serious struggle for working-class power in their own countries. Regardless of any differences with them we should attempt to develop the closest possible contact with these struggles and their leaderships, learn from the most advanced mass aspects of these struggles, invite them to our own activities.

It is *within* this framework of total solidarity that it is not merely acceptable but on occasion may be necessary to explain that we have important differences with these currents on international political questions:

21. The process of imperialist development in the last fifteen years has profoundly increased the uneven development within the semi-colonial states. A combination of imperialist-backed military dictatorships and massive loans has brought about a major industrialisation in a number of important semi-colonial states (Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, etc.). A similar process, with different causes, has occurred in a number of other semi-colonial states which historically had stronger ruling classes, including the major oil exporting states (Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia etc.) as well as India and Argentina.

In these countries an extremely explosive combination exists of very large industrial working classes, in certain cases with almost an equivalent weight in the country to in an imperialist state, but with agricultural and service sectors, and insertion in the world economy, which is that of a semi-colonial country.

During the period prior to the 1970s imperialism and the ruling classes of these countries were able to contain politically this explosive situation, through bourgeois populism and nationalism (Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico) or harsh national dictatorships linked to imperialism (Iran, South Korea). They were able to surmount the first synchronised international recession of 1975 and even to increase their position in world trade.

The second world imperialist recession however struck these regimes devastating blows. The industrialisation process was sustained by massive foreign loans, 110 billion dollars to Latin America alone, on which the debt burden has now become crippling with high U.S. interest rates. These loans were to be repaid through exports — which have now been blocked due to the stagnation, and even decline, in world trade.

The result of these processes is that these economies, and in particular the Latin American dictatorships, have gone into sharp crisis. The result is a major crisis of the regimes. This started

with the crisis of the second Peron government in Argentina in 1973-76 but has now spread into the other states — notably Brazil and Mexico. It also lay behind the attempt of the Argentinian military dictatorship to gain political support by liberating the Malvinas.

The content of the political development in these countries is the decline of bourgeois populism, the crisis of the dictatorships, and the conquest of political independence by the working class. The most advanced expressions of this so far are the development of the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil and the decline of the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico.

These movements towards class independence of extremely large and powerful working classes are a major development in world politics. Under the conditions where these states will enter a far deeper crisis during the 1980s these will not only be crucial developments in world politics but be major openings for building Trotskyist organisations.

This line of class independence in these states is all the more important for the working class of those countries where this has not been achieved in the last period. In the Arab states in particular, under the influence of the Soviet bureaucracy, the working class and peasants remained subordinated to 'progressive' sections of the national bourgeoisie. Here heavy defeats have been suffered in the last decade. Similarly the strategic line of advance of the Iranian working class in its struggle against imperialism lies through the conquest of class independence from the Khomeini regime.

22. In the bureaucratised workers states, in particular Eastern Europe, a tremendous economic, social, and political crisis is developing. Without working class democracy it is not possible to develop the planned economy of a modern industrial state. The suppression of this democracy by the bureaucratic caste has therefore led to greater and greater economic stagnation in these states which has now reached the point of profound crisis. This is only made worse by the attempts of the bureaucracy to find an alternative to workers democracy through closer collaboration with the imperialist bourgeoisies.

While the struggle in Poland is qualitatively the most advanced development ever seen towards a political revolution it is not isolated. Political opposition movements, most immediately in East Germany and Hungary, are growing in all the East European states. They are going to deepen under the impact of the crisis developing in these states.

The Fourth International must work as closely as possible with, support, and participate in these developing oppositions.

23. Inside the imperialist countries the working class is directly confronted with the most powerful ruling classes in the world. They can only be overthrown by leaderships embodying a full programme of socialist democracy and basing themselves on the struggle not only of the working class in the imperialist countries but also of that of the semi-colonial states and of the fight to overthrow the bureaucracy in the deformed and degenerated workers states.

This struggle in the imperialist countries, with the most powerful working classes in the world and also the strongest bourgeoisies will be extremely long and extremely bitter. We are only just beginning to enter into the first stages of the crisis that will finally allow the overthrow of these ruling classes.

The most advanced contradictions in the imperialist countries exist today in Western Europe due to its place between the United States and the Soviet Union, the division of the continent between capitalist and deformed workers states, and the inability of the West European ruling classes to create any centralised state capable of confronting the U.S. in inter-imperialist competition.

This crisis in Western Europe has now reached the point of beginning to create a significant crisis and recomposition of the

parties of the working class. The rise of Bennism in Britain, the rise of the 'Alternative Lists' and emergence of the Eppler wing of the German SPD, the rise of the left Socialists in Denmark, the crisis of the Spanish CP, and other developments represent the most advanced expressions of this crisis.

Under these conditions the decisive struggles in Western Europe will throughout the next period be those against imperialist war, militarism, and austerity — the axis of 'Jobs not Bombs.' These however have two increasingly clear dynamics. The first is to challenge the entire system of NATO and alliances with the United States — a crucial blow which the West European proletariat can strike for the world working class. The second is to increasing interrelation with the struggle in Eastern Europe — something already seen in its beginning in the impact of Solidarnosc in Western Europe and the resonance of the West European anti-missiles movement in East Germany.

No single tactic is correct on a West European level for relating to these diverse developments. But it is out of these political crises and recompositions in the working class parties that the forces for building mass revolutionary parties will come. While adopting different organisational tactics it is to these developments that on a political level the Fourth International must be orienting itself.

24. The most decisive country for the struggle against imperialist war is of course the United States. The reaction to imperialist war in the United States has been transformed by two events. The first was the experience of the Vietnam war. The second is the increased military strength of the Soviet Union. These combine with the economic and social crisis in United States to produce qualitatively increased opposition to war.

Vietnam proved the colonial revolution was a strong and dangerous opponent capable of inflicting severe casualties and producing strain on the U.S. economy to the point of severely holding down living standards and producing major attacks on democratic rights. This explains the continued mass opposition to the major use of U.S. ground troops in Central America, to the reintroduction of the draft etc.

As for war with the Soviet Union this means, for the first time in history, the certainty of the annihilation of the greater part of the population of the United States. *Fear* is what explained the 1 million people on the streets of New York on June 12. But that fear, both as regards the Soviet Union and of the colonial revolution, and moods of 'pacifism' in the U.S. working class is one of the greatest and most progressive forces in world politics. Coupled with a rising struggle against austerity, and for class independence, it is what can defeat the moves of the U.S. ruling class and allow the rise of every other sector of world revolution.

The revolution in the United States itself, the final decisive act of the world revolutionary process, lies in the distant future. But the movement of the U.S. working class, and wide layers of the population, has deepened under Reagan. It will inevitably start around the most basic questions — today against intervention in El Salvador, against austerity, and in developments out of the heterogeneous nuclear freeze movement. These will both aid the working class throughout the world and, after a protracted struggle, culminate in creating the conditions for class independence of the U.S. proletariat.

25. In regard to the crucial tasks of the world revolution today, the struggles that can strain imperialism and allow the advance of the class struggle, the key priorities on an international scale for the Fourth International are

(i) Solidarity with the Central American revolution as the most central international task of the Fourth International as a whole.

(ii) Building the anti-missiles and anti-nuclear weapons movement.

(iii) Building solidarity with the struggle in Poland.

26. The developments in the different areas of the world rev-

olution increasingly interrelate and interact in the process of world politics.

This is most obvious between the struggles in the semi-colonial states and the solidarity movements in the imperialist centres which are necessary for their victory. However this interaction is increasingly beginning to apply to other key developments of the class struggle as well. Particularly notable here is the impact of Poland in important semi-colonial countries — the first time ever for such a struggle in a bureaucratised workers state; the increasing impact of the struggle in Eastern Europe on Western Europe and the impact of the anti-missiles movement in Western Europe on East Germany and potentially other East European states. These latter developments begin to give real concrete contents on the strategic question of the United Socialist States of Europe. Also notable is the impact of the anti-missiles movement in Western Europe on the United States. This increasing interrelation of world politics will increase during the 1980s.

Part Four: Building the Fourth International as a Centralised and Functioning World Organisation

27. The aim of the Fourth International is to build the mass revolutionary international which the world working class requires for its victory. Such an international cannot be built by simple arithmetical growth but only by a process of splits and fusions within the international workers movement. These in turn can only be the product of great world events that will also produce similar shifts on the national level. The building of a mass revolutionary international, as of national parties, will therefore only be around a programme which corresponds to the fundamental interests of the working class and oppressed and not on the basis of secondary, partial questions.

Advancing the class struggle on an international scale thus also corresponds to the line of building the Fourth International itself. It is precisely because it bases itself on the interests of the international working class, expressed in the theory of permanent revolution, that Trotskyism is the only political current simultaneously supporting the revolutionary struggle in Central America; participating in and helping push forward the moves of the Argentinian, Mexican, Brazilian and other working classes of the semi-colonial countries to gain class independence from their bourgeoisies which defends the Khomeini regime against imperialism but which understands that the strategic line of advance of the Iranian working class lies through politically breaking with and overthrowing this regime; which supports the struggle for political revolution against the Polish bureaucracy; and which builds the anti-missiles and anti-nuclear weapons movement and anti-austerity struggles, in the imperialist countries.

It is this political programme which makes the Fourth International capable of relating to currents with diverse ideological and political origins. This has been shown not simply in Central America but in Poland, the industrialising semi-colonial countries, and the imperialist states. It however also involves having a concrete common perspective that the building of a mass revolutionary international is a vital necessity for the world working class and oppressed. With forces committed to such a task Trotskyists are prepared to find themselves in a minority in such an International.

Today however the only forces that are organised in the fight for such an International are those of the Fourth International. There is no other tendency which has both the objective and the programmatic and organisational capacity to carry forward such a task.

The route forward for building a mass revolutionary interna-

tional today is therefore precisely in building the Fourth International. This involves much tactical flexibility, particularly on the national level, but defending both the programme and the organisation of the Fourth International. These are not an obstacle but an aid in building a mass revolutionary international and national parties.

28. It is therefore not a turn to campism and adaptation to the international line of the Cuban CP that will allow the Fourth International to link up with the developing vanguard sections of the world revolution. On the contrary such a line would cut us off from large parts of such forces.

29. Finally building the Fourth International means building an international revolutionary *organisation*. It means building its publications, its leadership bodies and in building a centre for the international which gives it the capacity to conduct centralised initiatives and collective political work.

One of the expressions of the programmatically wrong positions of the SWP majority leadership is its political decision not to build the centre of the Fourth International. This shows the way in which its programmatic false positions lead to a failure in practice to build the International, and thus to aid the real and practical next step in building a mass revolutionary international — the construction of the Fourth International.

On the Workers and Peasants Government

by Ernest Mandel, Revolutionary Workers League, Belgium

As a governmental slogan 'workers and peasants government' or 'workers governments' crowns in all cases the program of transitional demands. Thus it has a general value. The objective of the transitional program, starting from the struggles and immediate concerns of the masses, is to bring them, with their given level of consciousness to the stage of understanding the importance of taking power; to win them to the perspective of exercising power. Any program of transitional demands which aims to avoid the reformist swamp — which does not want to limit the struggle to one of reforms to be achieved in the framework of the capitalist economy, of bourgeois society and the bourgeois state — must be completed with a governmental slogan.

'Workers and peasants government' (or 'workers government') expresses this demand in its most general form.

How was the seizure of power carried out in Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam

If we examine the course of victorious socialist revolutions since the Second World War we note that by and large they fit into the framework of general analysis of the Transitional Program of the Fourth International on the central problem of state power.¹

In Yugoslavia there was a coalition government imposed on the Yugoslav CP by Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at the Teheran and Yalta conferences. The Yugoslav CP leadership accepted this government with extreme reticence and in its public propaganda. But in practice it stuck to its strategic perspective, adopted in 1941, of the CP seizing power. It concentrated its efforts on the mobilization and organization of the poor peasant masses from the beginning of the 1941 insurrection, and of the urban masses (we are obviously talking here of organization and not self-organization) from the liberation of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana.

On the 21st November 1944, all the companies and wealth of the Germans and their collaborators were confiscated and from that day on the nationalizations already included 82% of Yugoslav industry. When the coalition government was set up, the Popular Front, whose president was Tito, and which had more than 7 million members organized in local structures (right down to neighborhood level), was formed. The latter recognized the leading role of the Communist Party and in fact controlled the country's political life. Given all this, given the fact that the National Liberation Army had more than 1/2 a million members, was the only armed force in the country and was entirely controlled by the CP, we can say that Yugoslavia was then already a workers state. This was definitively consolidated after the 1945 referendum on the monarchy — the bourgeois ministers had just been token figureheads without real power.²

(1) We have cut out from this part of the article the quotations and comments concerning the Transitional Programme and the Tactics Resolution of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International — in order to keep within the commonly agreed limits for articles going in the IIBD of 50,000 characters (this is in reply to a document of 300,000 characters).

(2) "... all this served to go beyond the traditional position of Marxism and the Third International concerning the two stages of the revolu-

The Chinese revolution went through a very similar development to that of the Yugoslav revolution. The Maoist faction which led the Chinese CP from 1934 had drawn its own conclusions from the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution in 1927. The lessons it drew were neither those drawn by the Stalinist faction nor by the Trotskyist current. This conclusion can be summarized in a simple formula: avoid 1929-style disasters by forming an armed force independent of the bourgeoisie, under the exclusive leadership of the Chinese CP. This was a central strategic orientation established as early as 1934 or even from 1929.

True, this army was essentially made up of peasants (but not under peasant leadership or with a peasant strategic perspective). True, this strategic approach to the seizure of power through armed struggle was at times (especially in 1937-38 and 1945-46) sugar-coated in public propaganda statements which accepted and urged (on the express orders of Stalin) a coalition with Chiang Kai-shek. True too, from the programmatic and theoretical point of view, the Maoist faction for a long time held an intermediate line between the objective of the democratic revolution (resulting in a bourgeois-democratic republic with the maintenance of capitalist property) and that of the dictatorship of the proletariat resulting in not only the destruction of the bourgeois state and the disarming of the bourgeoisie, but also in the suppression of capitalist property. This 'intermediate' line was codified in the theory of the 'new democracy' and a 'state that is neither bourgeois nor proletarian,' but this was mitigated by the constant affirmation of the leading role of the Communist Party, presented as a proletarian party which had to lead the peasantry. This line sowed enormous confusion in the minds of Chinese Communists and especially among all Communists in Asia (beginning with the unfortunate Aidit and the Indonesian CP, which paid for their tail-endism of theoretical Maoism, with a million dead) — as well as on other continents. All these statements and deeds are manoeuvres and confusion which should be condemned and not excused, in spite of the victory of the Chinese revolution. These manoeuvres and confusion are not what made victory possible. On the contrary victory was achieved in spite of them. Furthermore such lack of clarity played a nefarious role by holding back, or even preventing victory in other countries.

But when all this is duly noted, as materialists we must still recognize that in reality, despite their opportunism and theoretical/political confusion the Maoists disarmed the bourgeoisie, destroyed the bourgeois state and generally expropriated the big bourgeoisie. This was done in the 1938 (Yenan) to 1950 period, in a series of territorial, not political stages. The Peoples Republic of China proclaimed on November 1st 1949 on the Tien An-Min square in Peking was, and remains, a dictatorship of the proletariat — something which the Maoists denied at the time but admitted later. A state defined as a 'democracy of a new type' has never existed in real life. From 1938 to 1949-50 there was

tion, the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution (the Yugoslav resolution had already gone beyond this idea, as Comrade Tito said as early as 1945). . . ." (Milos Nikolic: The Basic Results of the Development of Contemporary Marxism, in "Socialism in the World", International Journal of Marxist and Socialist Thought, Belgrade 1983, VII, No. 38, p. 58.)

territorial dual power in China — on one side a bourgeois state and army in decomposition but still surviving in the territory controlled by the Kuomintang, and on the other an incipient workers state in the territory controlled by the People's Liberation Army. After 1949-50 only one state existed in the country — a dictatorship of the proletariat with deepgoing bureaucratic deformations from birth (a bourgeois state still survives today in Taiwan).

In order to 'discover' between 1949 and 1953 a 'workers and peasants government' in China distinct from a dictatorship of the proletariat bureaucratized from birth, you have to overestimate the real power of these bourgeois hostages, in other words to mistake appearance, or even worse misleading propaganda, for reality.³ You end up with an insoluble theoretical problem. It was this state formed in 1949 and this army (which from 1949-50 controlled all mainland China) that went to war against American and international imperialism in Korea, supported (certainly with sectarian, adventurist, inadmissible and ineffective methods) the extension of the socialist revolution towards South Korea, supported (and saved) the Vietnamese revolution after the big offensive of French imperialism against the liberated territory of the North in 1947-48, confiscated capitalist property in stages and eliminated nearly all private peasant property in successive waves.

You get lost in an absurd paradox if you claim that a bourgeois state or a 'peasant government' (or one dominated by the peasantry) can, without any discontinuity, (the Chinese CP of 1953 is not in any way different from what it was in 1948) carry out such an anticapitalist undertaking.

Right from the beginning of 1950 — in other words in a shorter period than after October 1917 in Russia — exactly as Trotsky had predicted — something like 65% of all Chinese industrial capital and 80% of modern industrial capitalism were nationalized. These nationalizations preceded the land reform in the South of the country. So where is the 'democratic phase?' It is not possible to wriggle out of it with the argument that there was no total abolition of bourgeois property — something that neither Trotsky nor any serious Marxist has ever proposed.

The case of the *Vietnamese* revolution is once again similar to that of Yugoslavia and China. The Ho Chi-Minh leadership had a clear orientation to the seizure of power resulting from the

armed struggle under its exclusive leadership right from the beginning of 1945, and possibly even before this date. But it hesitated on its definition of the precise class content of the state and economy which would emerge from this seizure of power. Furthermore it was placed in such a difficult military situation through the successive (and combined) aggressions it suffered from French, Japanese, British, the French again and American imperialism etc. that we have to be careful not to interpret tactical, territorial military retreats — made after the 1946 attacks on Haiphong and Hanoi and during the 1954 Geneva agreements as a *long-lasting political and social compromise* (i.e. maintenance of bourgeois property or 'bourgeois order'). Certain sectarian Trotskyists 'pinned' such intentions on the Vietnamese leadership. The latter clearly did not have such a project. History has already rendered its judgement on this. The balance-sheet of the official line of the Fourth International regarding the interpretation of the 1954 and 1974 agreements is fortunately much more positive than that of the sectarian tendencies inside and outside our ranks.

Again was there a 'workers and peasants government' distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat in Vietnam? In North Vietnam this was obviously not the case. There was an anti-imperialist war combined with a civil war (the latter was less extensive than in the South given the weakness of the local bourgeoisie). When victory was achieved in the North and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam set up in Hanoi, there was dictatorship of the proletariat albeit bureaucratized from birth (less than in China, but to what degree? That is the subject of a separate discussion inside the Fourth International). As for South Vietnam where there was a long civil war it seems to us impossible to prove in reality, and contradictory from a theoretical point of view, to say that there was a 'workers and peasants government' distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat between the fall of Saigon and the expropriation of the Cholon Chinese comprador bourgeoisie.⁴

Right after the fall of Saigon a *fusion took place in practice* between the Hanoi state apparatus and the new state in the South. If the state that emerged from the fall of Saigon was a workers state, the 'workers and peasants government' of South Vietnam is synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat — bureaucratized from the beginning.

How was the seizure of power carried out in Cuba and Nicaragua?

The Cuban and Nicaraguan cases are different from those of the USSR, China, Yugoslavia and Vietnam. In those two countries there were authentic people's revolutions (unlike in Eastern Europe where society and the state were structurally assimilated to the USSR through essentially military bureaucratic means without a real people's revolution). But these people's revolutions resulted in the destruction of the dictatorships' armies while leaving intact part of the bourgeois state. There was a transitional period of coalition government with *real* bourgeois forces (not simple 'hostages') both in Cuba and Nicaragua. But in both countries revolutionary forces had a hegemonic role.

In both cases the dictatorship of the proletariat was in the process of *being established* but at that time had not been definitively installed. Whereas the October revolution established the dictatorship of the proletariat by a *single event* in Cuba, as in China and Vietnam, it emerged through a *progressive process* of dual power (territorial in China and Vietnam, sui generis in Cuba) and not by a single resolute blow struck in favour of the proletariat.

(4) See the USec resolution on *The Indochinese Crisis* (April 1974) — Indicative vote taken on the general line of this resolution at 1978 World Congress (11th). (See *IP* special World Congress 1980).

(3) The introduction written by the *Intercontinental Press* editors and inserted above my article, "In Defense of the Permanent Revolution" when it was published in that magazine on the 8th of August 1983, contains a blatant case of falsification. We are reproached for having said:

"for more than two decades we [the reference is unclear] systematically warned the comrades leading the SWP of the dangers" in its "sectarian and dogmatic position" on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Mandel thus dates the continuity of his differences with the SWP leadership on such questions as Cuba and the workers and farmers government to before the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963. (*IP*, Vol. 21, No. 15, p. 446.)

Now if the reader refers to my article, published in the same *IP* issue and also as a special *IV* supplement 13th June 1983, he/she can immediately see that it is not at all a case of Cuba *but of China* (that the Reunification Congress decided to leave in suspense) and of the authentically "sectarian and dogmatic" position the SWP leaders adopted towards the leaders of the Chinese revolution. We predicted then that they would not be able to maintain such sectarianism and that it would lead them to a total change of their positions in the long term. This is what is happening now. Obstinate refusing to recognize the dictatorship of the proletariat already existed in China at the end of 1949, they were led to conclude that the dictatorship of the proletariat was not even established by the October revolution! Comrade Jack Barnes himself admits elsewhere in his report on the workers and peasants government that our forecast was correct. Since he states that it was the Chinese revolution which caused them a "gigantic problem."

But we have to be even more precise, the *FSLN* and the state power it represents in this situation of *sui generis* dual power, incarnates neither a 'bourgeois state,' nor a 'two-class government' nor a 'popular front,' but a *dictatorship of the proletariat*, a *workers state in the process of being constituted* but which has not yet definitively triumphed over its enemies *on the social-political terrain*.

In any case nothing justifies distinguishing a phase of 'workers and farmers government' from a phase of dictatorship of the proletariat in Cuba or Nicaragua any more than it justifies seeing such a separate phase in Yugoslavia, China or Vietnam. In the 6th World Congress resolution and the Fourth International Reunification Congress documents (7th World Congress), such a distinction was not introduced to characterize the victory of the Cuban Revolution.

It should be further noted that the 6th World Congress resolution on the birth of the Cuban workers state points out that while the Cuban state became a workers state after October 1960 (the Cuban leadership sets the transformation date at the end of August 1960): "on the level of political leadership, the evolution has been much more one of form than anything fundamental, real power being in the hands of the *Ejercito Rebelde* and the Fidelista team, even during the period of *sui generis* dual power going from the seizure of power to the fall of Urrutia."

The same remark can be evidently applied to Nicaragua. We must not underestimate the reality of the bourgeois state in Cuba before the revolution — much more solid than Somoza's dictatorship where there was only a clique of gangsters linked to the army. But, we have to recognize that *capitalist underdevelopment* poses specific problems that further accentuates the possibility of de-synchronization between the destruction of the *political* power of the ruling classes and the destruction of their economic power. This de-synchronization was even foreseen by Marx and Engels if we look at their first formulations on the dictatorship of the proletariat in the *Communist Manifesto*. Trotsky makes the following point in *Permanent Revolution*:

The possibility of success in this struggle is of course determined to a large extent by the role of the proletariat in the economy of the country, and consequently by the level of its capitalist development. This, however, is by no means the only criterion. No less important is the question whether a far-reaching and burning problem 'for the people' exists in the country, in the solution of which the majority of the nation is interested, and which demands for its solution the boldest revolutionary measures. Among problems of this kind are the agrarian question and the national question, in their varied combinations. With the acute agrarian problem and the intolerable national oppression *in the colonial countries, the [emphasis added] young and relatively small proletariat can come to power [emphasis added] on the basis of a national democratic revolution sooner than the proletariat of an advanced country on a purely socialist basis. . . . A country can become 'ripe' for the dictatorship of the proletariat not only before it is ripe for the independent construction of socialism, but even before it is ripe for far-reaching socialization measures [emphasis added], (The Permanent Revolution, [New York:Pathfinder, 1969], pp. 254-5).*

The separate workers and peasants government stage extended to all capitalist countries, including the imperialist countries.

Comrade Jack Barnes' report "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States" (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Volume 18, Number 5, June 1982) widens the differences inside the Fourth International by bringing into the debate tactical questions concerning the overthrow of capitalism in the imperialist countries. The intrinsic dialectics of his line of argument remorselessly operates. After having attacked the theory of the permanent revolution and the Marxist theory of the

state, the SWP leadership majority is now attacking a substantial part of the Transitional Program.

As was already the case with Comrade Doug Jenness' article,⁵ Comrade Jack Barnes' report thoroughly muddles up the question. He leaps from the immediate tasks of the revolutionary government in Nicaragua to those of a similar government in the United States, in other words from an extremely underdeveloped country to the most developed imperialist country in the world. He mixes up the expropriation of the big bourgeoisie with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie "as a whole," and even the "total" collectivization of agriculture. He lumps together the NEP, an economic policy carried out by the Bolsheviks under the dictatorship of the proletariat, with a policy of maintaining a significant private sector without the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the predominance of capitalist property. Let's try and unravel all this tangle.

Comrade Jack Barnes explicitly extends the idea of a "necessary workers and peasants government stage" *distinct from* the dictatorship of the proletariat to *all* the capitalist countries:

. . . what is a workers and farmers government? . . . the first form of government that can be expected to appear as the result of a successful anticapitalist revolution.

Not just in *some* countries, not just in *backward* countries, not just with *inadequate* leaderships, but "the first form of government that can be expected to appear as the result of a successful anticapitalist revolution." Period.

. . . a workers and farmers government is *independent* of the bourgeoisie, but at the same time still *stands on* capitalist economic relations. . . .

Joe wrote that a workers and farmers government begins "on the basis of the capitalist economy and even part of the capitalist state structure.

This is the conclusion that we had reached by 1978, as a result of thinking about and generalizing the lessons from workers and farmers governments established since World War II. . . . (Barnes, "Workers and Farmers Government," pp. 5-6.)

Comrade Jack Barnes tries, with some difficulty, to insinuate (*ibid.*, pp. 12-13) that Trotsky would have indeed implicitly shared the revisionist ideas of the SWP majority leadership on the workers and peasants government. But Trotsky had explicitly rejected this in 1937. This is borne out by the following extract from his writings:

I just want to say something here on the slogan 'workers and peasants government.' *We always argued against this formulation when the Stalinists counterposed it to the 'workers government' and to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.'* At the same time we accepted the label of 'workers and peasants government' for the Soviet government. Everything depends on the real content given to this formulation in function of the situation, the policy and party in question.

. . . We can very well accept the slogan of workers and peasants government in Spain as a common base with the Poumist and anarchist workers. But this slogan has to be immediately turned back against the POUM leaders. Workers and peasants government? Okay. But we must then begin by kicking the bourgeoisie, who exploits the workers and peasants, out of the government. Workers and peasants committees should be set up etc. In this way we will be able to take this popular slo-

(5) Comrade Doug Jenness' article "How Lenin Saw the Russian Revolution" was published in November 1981, in the *Militant/International Socialist Review*. My answer, "The Debate over the Character and Goals of the Russian Revolution" was published in April 1982, in the *Militant/ISR*. Comrade Jenness continued the polemic with his "Our Political Continuity with Bolshevism" in the June 1982, issue of the *Militant/ISR*; my second answer, "In Defense of the Permanent Revolution," dated December 1, 1982, was published in *International Viewpoint's* special supplement of June 13, 1983, and in *Intercontinental Press*, with an introduction by the *IP* editors, on August 8, 1983.

gan away from the POUM leaders by giving it a clearly revolutionary meaning, in other words, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' (Leon Trotsky, "The Workers and Peasants government," 26th May 1937, translated from the French *Oeuvres*, Letter to Jean Rous, Volume 14, pp. 73-74, our emphasis.)

To defend his far-fetched thesis, Comrade Jack Barnes — without saying so clearly and frankly — implicitly assumes:

a) that before the seizure of power there has never been a broad sector of the proletariat already conscious of the necessity of expropriating big capital, i.e. a deepgoing anticapitalist consciousness;

b) that there will never be generalized and centralized soviets before the seizure of power;

c) that the workers will never occupy and take over the main workplaces (or even most workplaces), restart production under their control within a revolutionary process before this seizure of power;

d) that a revolutionary party actually working for the dictatorship of the proletariat will never win over a majority of wage earners (in other words the *absolute majority of the working population* in the industrialized countries) inside the workers councils and/or peoples councils mentioned in 'c)', before the seizure of power;

e) that this seizure of power by the soviets (workers councils and people's councils) will never coincide with the destruction of the bourgeois army and the other repressive forces of the bourgeoisie, with the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, with the general arming of the workers and with the beginning of the building of a state of an entirely new type, as outlined in Lenin's *State and Revolution*, that is a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For it cannot be denied that if these five conditions, or most of them, exist, the power emerging from the victorious insurrection has already destroyed the bourgeois state, confiscated most capitalist property and entered a head-on confrontation with the national and international bourgeoisie. Consequently it is difficult to see in what sense this workers and peasants government (or workers government) would be different from the dictatorship of the proletariat, and what supplementary 'stage' it would have to go through in order to reach the latter.

It is easy to understand why Comrade Jack Barnes is embarrassed in openly and frankly recognizing the presuppositions that underpin his thesis. For the implication is that he must pronounce dead and buried not just two chapters of the Transitional Program (on the theory of the Permanent Revolution and on the Workers and Peasants Government) but at least seven of these chapters, if not the whole program. Just refer to the following passage from the chapter 'The expropriation of separate groups of capitalists': "Only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie *on the order of the day*. The task of transitional demands is to prepare the proletariat to solve *this* problem." (Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, p. 122, our emphasis.) (i.e., the general expropriation of the bourgeoisie and not just some sort of 'mixed economy' — E.M.)

Need we also recall the following chapter on the Soviets:

If the factory committee creates a dual power in the factory, then the soviets initiate a period of dual power in the country.

Dual power in its turn is the culminating point of the transitional period. Two regimes, the bourgeois and the proletarian, are irreconcilably opposed to each other. Conflict between them is inevitable. The fate of society depends on the outcome. Should the revolution be defeated, the fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie will follow. In case of victory, *the power of the soviets, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist reconstruction of society* will arise. (Ibid. pp. 136-137, our emphasis.)

It is worth pointing out that there is no mention here of any sort

of "intermediate stage" of the workers and peasants government distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat. But then Trotsky, Cannon and other participants at the Founding Congress of the Fourth International were undoubtedly "hopeless sectarians" (Chicago speech).

It is true there were no soviets and no seizure of power by the soviets in the Cuban, Nicaraguan, Yugoslav, Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions.

But the fact that these five revolutions did not reproduce the course of the October revolution is hardly a sufficient basis for founding hypotheses on *future revolutions*. Indeed it is an especially inadequate basis for proclaiming in a peremptory fashion today that there will be always and everywhere "a workers and peasants government stage" *distinct* from the dictatorship of the proletariat, particularly since this stage did not even exist in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua.

In order to identify the *objective and subjective roots* of the particular course taken by the revolution in the five countries where it has been victorious since the Second World War, we have to be clear about *the socio-economic and political specificities* of these countries in relation to the rest of the world:

a) The proletariat as a class — not to speak of the industrial proletariat — was not a majority of the working population in any of these countries.

b) The proletariat was not the main spearhead in the revolutionary process in any of these countries (this does not at all mean that it did not play a very important role in Yugoslavia *after* the military victory and *before* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; or in Cuba through the success of the second general strike for the overthrow of Batista and the role played by the sugar plantation proletariat in the course of the revolutionary process).

c) The workers did not set up soviet-type structures in the course of this process in any of these countries.

d) The parties which led these revolutions did not have a clear programmatic line on the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat (with the exception of the Yugoslav CP) and in any case, they did not systematically educate and prepare the masses for this objective. But they had a conscious perspective of seizing power, although the precise *class character* of this power remained vague (except in the case of Yugoslavia and partially in Nicaragua).

Looking at the world today in the light of these conditions what can we observe?

The first two conditions hold neither for the imperialist countries, nor for the main semi-industrialized dependent countries, nor for the big majority of the bureaucratized workers states. A revolution in any of these countries *without the participation of the majority of the urban and rural proletariat* would be a minority revolution, a 'Blanquist' putsch, of the sort Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades always rejected in their struggle for a mass Communist International.

The fourth condition presupposes that one has declared the effort to build the Fourth International a definitive failure — i.e., the fight to build a new revolutionary leadership of the *proletariat* with a clear perspective of the seizure of power and the self-organization of the toiling masses in structures of a soviet type.

If that is Comrade Barnes' opinion then let him say so openly. At least we would know what we were really discussing.

As for the third condition — the most important of the four — it actually means projecting the Cuban and Nicaraguan model "onto" the rest of the world, overlooking the lessons of the *totality of revolutionary experiences since the October revolution*, and arbitrarily deriving these lessons from only five cases of revolutionary victories which, as if by chance, took place in more or less underdeveloped countries.

The real record of the world revolution 1917-1982

Now the real record of the world revolution over the 65 years since the victory of the October 1917, socialist revolution in Russia is a balance sheet that has to include at least 30 countries and not just five. Furthermore in the majority of these cases, in fact in *all* cases where these revolutions spread from the town to the country and not vice-versa, that is, in all countries where the urban proletariat was the main motor-force, the main themes of the Russian Revolution have been confirmed. Strikes with factory occupations and the self-organization of the proletariat played a central and determinant role.

This was the case with: the Finnish revolution in 1918, Germany and Austria in 1918-19, Hungary in 1919, the beginning of the Italian revolution in 1920, Germany 1923, Spain in 1936-37. June '36 in France, the postwar revolutionary crisis in Italy culminating in the 14th July 1948 events, May '68 in France, the Italian "Hot Autumn" of 1969, the Chilean revolution of 1970-73 and the Portuguese revolution in 1974-75. As proletarian revolutions the antibureaucratic political revolutions in Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968-69 and especially Poland 1980-81 also confirm this.

To recognize that all these beginnings of proletarian revolutions had a great number of common traits with the 1917 Russian revolution (and that of 1905) is not a sign of any "Trotskyist dogmatic sectarianism" on our part.

It is the product of real life, real history and experience, just as the real revolutionary process in Cuba, Nicaragua, Yugoslavia, China or Vietnam is not a product of 'revisionism' but of real life. To deny the reality of the other revolutionary processes on the pretext they were not victorious is just as dogmatic, sectarian and idealistic as to deny the reality of revolutionary victories in the five countries we have referred to on the basis that the revolution was not led by a revolutionary Marxist party.

All revolutionary processes which have shaken bourgeois stability to its foundations since 1917 are part and parcel of the real development of the world revolution. It is inadmissible from the point of view of scientific socialism, of Marxism, to exclude one part of that real development from being part of the laboratory of examination and experimentation which helps us *assess what will happen in future proletarian revolutions*. (Particularly since the part left out concerns the big majority of those involved in revolutions and the overwhelming majority of proletarian participants).

The emergence of soviet-type structures (or in more general terms: "the dynamic of the masses towards self-organization") stems from the *basic reality of proletarian existence*. In turn, such forms of self-organization correspond to the fundamental political demands of the class struggle once it has reached a certain level of maturity. That is why this type of body (or the dynamic towards self-organization) emerges in the imperialist countries, in the semi-industrialized dependent countries and the bureaucratized workers states, independently of the different strategic objectives of these three sectors of the world revolution. *Soviet-type forms of organization do not appear as a result of the strategic aims of the revolution but because of the social composition of the majority of people involved.*

The proletariat instinctively turns to soviet-type forms of organization because it is the only means of forming a united class front against the enemy or enemies it is fighting. It is the only instrument of organization and struggle which by definition unites all wage-earners. Neither the trade unions, nor a united front of parties (or parties and trade unions) nor *a fortiori* a single party (however revolutionary) can attain the degree of unification of the workers or people's councils.

It also makes it possible to integrate into this self-organization all those, male or female, who don't work in the capitalist work-

place.

Moreover, this thesis of the generalization of the Cuban and Nicaraguan experiences actually presupposes that the "ultraleftism," "impatience," "sectarianism," or, put more crudely, the 'excesses' of the soviets, were the basic reasons for the revolutionary defeats in Germany, Italy, Spain etc. We categorically reject such an argument. Our position is that the defeat of these revolutions is not due to the 'ultraleftism' of the workers and their experience of 'self-organization' but to the rightist opportunism of the parties leading the workers movement of these countries, to their refusal to break with bourgeois order, to smash the bourgeois state. It was due to the absence of a revolutionary leadership, to the bankruptcy of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement of these countries.

Furthermore, the Russian bourgeoisie, however weak it was compared to the Western bourgeoisie, was infinitely stronger than the Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese (not to mention the Nicaraguan) bourgeoisies. Remember Lenin explicitly classified it among the *imperialist* bourgeoisies. The Russian urban working class was also much stronger than the working class of the 5 countries mentioned above. In such conditions only a higher degree of self-organization, education and consciousness of the masses as well as a revolutionary leadership (or leaderships) that is (or are) programmatically and strategically better equipped than the leaderships who led the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions to victory, will be able to bring down a much stronger and politically experienced enemy that is also far more capable of engaging in maneuvers — including daring maneuvers — to preserve its class power.

Is it possible to have a mixed economy regime in the course of a proletarian revolution — neither capitalist nor socialist?

In his article Comrade Jack Barnes imprudently links the question of the "two-class government" to that of the non-expropriation of the big (and a part of the medium-sized) bourgeoisie. In fact he defends the idea that a "transitional stage" of "workers and farmers government" before the dictatorship of the proletariat is generally applicable by arguing that it is impossible to 'immediately' expropriate big capital. He does not beat about the bush, he characterizes the economy of this transitional stage as a 'mixed economy':

There is another sense in which such a government can be called petty bourgeois, the only sense that holds true for all of them. That is the fact that the job such a government must accomplish in establishing the domination of proletarian economic forms is not yet done. As long as that job is not completed, there is no way it can base itself on something different from the bourgeois economic forms it inherited, even if increasingly diluted with a "mixture" of the proletarian economic forms it is heading towards, i.e., state property (Barnes, "Workers and Farmers Government," p. 7).

Let's leave aside the fact that to characterize not only the Sandinista government but even Lenin and Trotsky's government as "petty-bourgeois" is the height of arrogant sectarianism. The more serious implication in our opinion is that the concept of the mixed economy is the traditional formulation of the social democratic reformists, taken up again later by Khrushchev and the neo-Stalinists and then by the Eurocommunists. The parallel with the idea of "advanced democracy" put forward by the Western European CPs is striking. Revolutionary Marxists have always stated that a strategy based on an "intermediary" period during which the economy would stay formally capitalist and the state bourgeois, although workers would exercise political power in an "anticapitalist" way, is utopian in reality and misleading as propaganda (of course the *rhythm* and precise degree

of expropriation of the bourgeoisie is something quite different — it depends on judgements about the relationship of forces, i.e. as a purely tactical problem).

What exists in reality under the false term “mixed economy,” in the imperialist countries and most of the semi-industrialized dependent countries (including India), is a *capitalist* economy with a more or less extensive nationalized sector. Falsely dubbing this economy “non-capitalist” — as does the CPSU program adopted at its 22nd Congress — in no way changes this reality.

There is a basic criterion for deciding on whether a “national” economic system (having even a slightly stable process of reproduction) is capitalist or not: does the law of value still *basically determine* its motion? Are investments made as a priority in the most profitable sectors in relation to current prices on the world market? Does industrial development essentially depend on sector by sector estimations of profitability? Does the state systematically block such a tendency by steering the majority of *all* investment towards sectors considered as a priority on the basis of non-profit criteria? Does it maintain full employment, or progressively try and achieve this objective (the right to work for everybody), by virtue of its decision-making power over all investment? Is the economy as a consequence generally protected against the danger of being drawn into international capitalist crises? Does this economy continue to grow when the international capitalist economy declines?

Certainly we do not define the alternative to the capitalist economy as a *socialist* economy. The full and complete achievement of socialism is impossible in a single country or in a small group of countries. The real alternative to the capitalist economy, in one or several countries, before the victory of the world revolution, or at least its victory in the main industrialized countries, is not the socialist economy but a largely (or predominantly) *socialized* economy, the economy of a transitional period between capitalism and socialism. In such an economy the law of value no longer dominates productive activity but continues to influence it. These economies are not dragged into the storm of capitalist crises of overproduction, but are affected by their consequences.

Both forms of economy are *possible*, the last 65 years of experience has taught us that. What is impossible on the other hand is an economy that is regulated and yet at the same time not regulated by the law of value; where commodity production prevails and yet does not prevail; an economy integrated and yet not integrated in the international capitalist market; and where the state both has and does not have the decision-making power over overall investment, over its shareout between the main different sectors of the national economy and the resulting general level of employment. Such a ‘mixed economy’ is, to paraphrase Lenin, a hollow dream. It has never existed. It will never exist.

Even if out of necessity, due to the depth of the crisis in a semi-colonial country and given the international context, maintaining a dominant private sector can be politically correct, it still remains the case that the economic effects of this policy will be difficult to control. The key question is that such an economic policy must not become an obstacle to the self-organization and mobilization of the masses.

While the negative effects are already evident for the most backward semi-colonial countries any institutionalization of a “mixed economy” in a semi-industrialized dependent country, indeed in an imperialist country, is a dangerous, even blatantly reactionary, utopia. In the latter countries — with a few exceptions — there is already a big nationalized sector *before* the revolutionary crisis. A *long time before* the revolutionary crisis there is already a tradition of demands for nationalization, even expropriation of the additional sectors of the economy, by the trade union and workers movement — not to mention demands

for the expropriation of big capital put forward by revolutionaries in their transitional program. An “instinctive” dynamic already exists among a significant sector of the working class to occupy the factories and take control of the machines, etc., during each mass strike.

In these conditions opposing the ‘immediate’ expropriations of Big Capital, means stirring up a process of division of the working class between the politically advanced and politically backward sectors. In other words deliberately basing oneself on the most politically backward sectors. Not only does this mean refusing to take on a vanguard role in the revolutionary process but it also opens up the big risk of having to carry out repression against the vanguard workers, including against the core sectors — in defence of private property!

The only argument put forward by Comrade Jack Barnes in support of his thesis on the necessity of a transitional “mixed economy” without expropriating Big Capital, is that this “immediate” expropriation would cause — economic chaos: “A revolutionary government can’t simply *decree* the disappearance of capital. It can try, but it won’t work and will create needless chaos.” (Barnes, “Workers and Farmers Government,” p. 6.) “So the workers and farmers government opens up an entire new dynamic and direction, an anticapitalist dynamic and direction. This is not an instantaneous transformation of the economy; that’s not feasible.” (Ibid., p. 8.)

In reality the argument should be turned on its head. *What causes chaos and economic collapse in the course of the revolutionary process* in countries with medium industrial development, and still more in highly industrial countries *is precisely the desperate attempt by leaders of the mass movement to hang onto a mixed economy*. It is the pursuit of this myth which leads rapidly to the near total halt of the economy.

Private capitalists stop investing. They organize the flight of capital on a large scale. The only valid response is the immediate seizure (indeed this is a preventive measure) of their factories and their bank accounts, the state monopoly of foreign trade, the substitution of public investment for private investment, radical monetary reform — in other words the socialization of the economy. If this is not done, the result is a brutal drop in production, massive unemployment, shortages, galloping inflation, a decline in living standards, growing discontent, etc. (it is interesting that Comrade Barnes hardly mentions unemployment among the problems with which the workers and peasants government have to grapple immediately). There is nothing inevitable about all that — except if one thinks it is out of the question to break with the market economy, to firmly end links with the national and international bourgeoisie on the economic level, to expropriate capital. *Maintaining the “mixed economy” equals worsening chaos. Large-scale socialization of the economy equals positive outcome to the crisis: this is the dilemma.*

Comrade Jack Barnes gets the question confused (just like the new Social-Democrats, Euro-communists and Stalinists) by confusing preponderant socialization of the economy with *complete* socialization. No serious-minded person inside the revolutionary movement or the Fourth International has ever recommended the total nationalization of the economy 24 hours, 24 weeks or even 24 months after the victory of the socialist revolution in the USA, Great Britain, France or Germany, and in Poland or the USSR after the victory of the antibureaucratic political revolution. We are talking about the nationalization of the *key sectors of the economy*.

It permits the workers state or better still the national congress of workers councils (or soviets) to issue binding instructions and determine the general development of the economy — *to end its subordination to the needs of profit, the law of value and commodity production.*

There can be no principled objection to allowing the survival of a private sector of varying size in small scale industry, for artisans, in the distribution and certain other service sectors — and of course in agriculture — once there is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the economy is regulated by socialist planning (or even better — planned and democratically centralized workers self-management). But this private sector must be sufficiently limited and controlled so that it does not go beyond certain limits. Private accumulation must not be allowed to get the upper hand over planning, nor the private sector link up with the world market.

Comrade Jack Barnes reaches the height of confusion when he mixes up the question of the “mixed economy” with the NEP in Russia. It is evident for anybody who knows the writings of Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders on *this that events forced the Bolsheviks to adopt war communism and was neither the product of their political project nor an ideal model to follow*. For us it is the ABC that the NEP was a salutary reaction against the excesses of “war communism.” We could remind Comrade Jack Barnes that Trotsky stated that he demanded such an NEP since 1919. Let’s hope he is not also going to challenge Trotsky’s evidence.

But what was the NEP? *It was a tactical retreat by the Russian Communists*, made possible by the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat already existed (that is, it did not lead to capitalist restoration). In other words the Communists already held all political power, all basic industry, all large-scale commerce, all the transport system, all foreign trade, all the credit system was already nationalized. Lenin repeated this dozens of times. The NEP did not signify a retreat to capitalism precisely because *there was no “mixed economy” in Russia but a solid base of workers power and the socialized economy*. As against the claims of the Mensheviks, SRs, Social Democrats, and certain ‘Left’ Communists in the West, the NEP preserved the possibility of beginning to build a socialist economy and society (the *beginning* and not the end). By identifying “NEP” and “mixed economy,” Comrade Jack Barnes contradicts all the Leninist analysis of 1920-21 as well as the real course of USSR history.

Even in these “ideal” conditions — i.e., its introduction after the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, after several years the NEP involved major risks for the Soviet economy. After 1923 the ‘scissors effect’ between agricultural and industrial prices began to make itself felt. From 1923-24 the problems of stepping up industrialization and the growing differentiations inside the peasantry were posed. The *Kulaks* were in control of a major part of the agricultural surplus — i.e., the main potential source of funds for primitive socialist accumulation.

At that time two opposed political lines existed inside the CPSU. Zinoviev/Stalin/Bukarin proposed a more or less long term ‘harmonious’ continuation of the NEP with the peaceful integration of the *Kulak* and NEP men into this ‘accumulation’ (particularly through the mystification of a ‘sale of state bonds’ to the well-off bourgeois and petty bourgeois sectors, bonds to be used to finance industrialization). The Left Opposition (which Zinoviev later supported) predicted an *inevitable exacerbation* of the contradictions between the private and socialized sectors of the soviet economy, a growing tension between the *Kulaks* and the workers state, the need to step up industrialization, to give poor peasants the choice of voluntarily joining the *kolkhozes* equipped with agricultural machines and starting with levels of productivity, production of surplus and peasant family income *higher* than those of the *kulaks*.

Was this battle of Trotsky and the Left Opposition from 1923 “mistaken,” “sectarian,” “underestimating the peasantry?” We would like to know Comrade Jack Barnes’ answer on this one.

If the answer is negative then what remains of the thesis concerning a long “NEP” period? Shouldn’t we rather say that by alerting the party and proletariat to the contradictions and dangers of continuing the NEP, Trotsky and the Left Opposition saved the USSR from capitalist restoration? We could also add that the Zinoviev/Stalin/Bukarin refusal in 1923-24 to adopt the course proposed by the Opposition was one of the decisive factors leading to the Soviet Thermidor. It produced a catastrophic delay in the industrialization of the country, in the mechanization of agriculture. Pursuing such a policy led to the *kulak ‘supplies strike’* in winter 1928 — which was one of the factors that triggered off the panic reaction of the bureaucracy — the forced collectivization of agriculture. Didn’t this in turn result in the brutal decline in workers living standards, gigantic social tensions throughout society, the creation of a climate of generalized repression and the destruction of the final remnants of soviet democracy — including inside the CPSU?

And if this battle was sectarian, if Bukarin was right, wouldn’t we have to look again at the whole role of Trotsky and the Opposition in the USSR, in the CPSU and the Communist International after 1923? Wouldn’t it then be necessary to revise even more than seven chapters of the Transitional Program?

In his December 31, 1982 speech, reproduced in the magazine *New International*, No. 1, Autumn 1983, Comrade Barnes makes a new 180 degree turn. He now states (p. 76) that a workers and farmers government is “the first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” But his contradictions do not become in any way more explicable. This all has to mean one thing or the other. Either (the first possibility) the ‘first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat’ implies there is already a workers state. If that is true then what becomes of all the “theoretical innovations” of these last years? So we can have a dictatorship of the proletariat without ‘total nationalization of capitalist property.’ So obviously the socialist revolution of October 1917 created a workers state and the Chinese People’s Republic was a workers state bureaucratized from the time it was born. We deserve at least a self-criticism for the incredible off-handed way with which Comrade Jack Barnes treats Marxist theory. The other possibility of course is that the “first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat” coincides with — a bourgeois state. Now the state is the instrument of the ruling class to protect its class rule. A fine sort of “dictatorship of the proletariat” which — is the instrument of bourgeois class rule!

But Comrade Jack Barnes gets even more confused. According to Comrade Jack Barnes the Ben Bella government in Algeria was also a ‘workers and farmers government.’ However this government was overturned by Boumedienne’s army which functioned as an army of a bourgeois state. But now we are asked to see Boumedienne’s army as an army of the ‘first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat’ (since according to Comrade Jack Barnes’ latest version the ‘workers and farmers government’ equals the first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat), i.e. an army whose class *character* was identical to that of the Red Army led by Trotsky. Unless they are perhaps both identically — petty-bourgeois.

The dictatorship of the proletariat and the small peasantry

A big part of Comrade Jack Barnes’ report centers on the question of the necessary alliance between wage-earners (proletarian) and small peasants in the course of the socialist revolution and the period following the conquest of power. Starting from the necessity for such an alliance he proposes a “two-class government” as a “transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat” in practically all capitalist countries of the world. According to Comrade Barnes this alliance is necessary (at least in the im-

perialist countries and the most industrialized dependent countries) not so much because of the still high proportion of peasants in the population (i.e. among those involved in revolutionary struggles — a criteria we think is correct for all countries where it is the case) but rather in light of the importance of agricultural production for the rebuilding of the economy. The possible exception of Great Britain to this rule is justified (p. 18) by the fact that this country imports the major part of its foodstuffs (which incidentally is not true anyway).

Such an approach ends in legitimizing corporatist interests based on “privileged” jobs, justifying wages increases made up of “special interest payments.” Instead of representing the interests of the proletariat and the working masses as a whole, the workers and peasants government would become a mosaic of particular interest groups.

But Comrade Barnes retorts, small peasants are a “*specifically exploited class*” (“Workers and Farmers Government,” p. 24). Due to this they deserve a specific place inside the government. This argument only deepens the contradiction.

It is true that small peasants are a specific class distinct from the proletariat; in many cases they form in effect an exploited class, although not to the same degree as the proletariat. But precisely because they constitute a specific class they also have *specific interests* apart from those of the proletariat, not only in the historic sense of the term (attachment to private property and all that goes with it), but also in the immediate meaning of the term (particularly concerning the prices of food products).

If the government becomes a “two-class government” where workers and small peasants “govern together” (Ibid., p. 25) who will arbitrate between these different interests? Will the opinion of 2, 3, 5, or 10% of the working population have the same influence as 55, 60, 75, or even 80% of the people? What happens to mass democracy, soviet democracy or socialist democracy?

Governments are made up of people who — outside of totalitarian dictatorship — are nominated by parties, tendencies, bodies that are supposed to represent social classes or fractions of social classes. Indeed Comrade Jack Barnes says more or less the same thing when he explicitly refers (Ibid., p. 25) to “parties and leaders . . . of the working farmers.” But what parties, which leaders? Is there a single non-bourgeois peasant party or leader of peasant trade union organizations which are not linked to the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries (since we are discussing the imperialist countries and not just the semi-colonial or dependent countries!)? Is it these parties and leaders we want associated with the government or represented inside the “workers and peasants government?”

Certainly it is inevitable that during a strong revolutionary upsurge of mass struggles in the semi-colonial and dependent countries, the poor peasant masses will form their own bodies of self-organization. It is possible the same process will be repeated in similar conditions in certain imperialist countries. *These bodies of self-organization of the non-exploiter working peasantry are the preferred partners of the proletariat* during the revolutionary process and after its victory. They will be its allies if the proletarian leadership does not have a wrong-headed sectarian attitude towards them.

But within this alliance, the emphasis should not be placed on hypothetical government participation of representatives of the peasant ‘soviets’ or ‘trade unions’ — a tactical question depending exclusively on concrete conditions that vary greatly from country to country and in different periods. Rather we emphasize the right of poor, non-exploiter, working farmers to *freely decide their own future*, and on the absence of any constraint by the dictatorship of the proletariat over them:

The alliance proposed by the proletariat — not to the “middle classes”

in general but to the exploited layers of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, against all exploiters, including those of the “middle classes” — can be based not on compulsion but only on free consent, which should be consolidated in a special “contract.” This “contract” is the program of transitional demands voluntarily accepted by both sides. (Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, p. 128.)

In other words, the proletariat and its revolutionary party (or parties) would commit itself to respect the private property of *small farmers* if they demanded this. But it is not prepared to respect the private property of the bourgeoisie in order to “calm” the potential fear of the small landowning farmer (on most occasions such fear is greatly exaggerated by supporters of class collaboration). The proletariat and its revolutionary party (or parties) start from the given consciousness of the working population in the countryside in order to work out the pace of collectivization of the *economy as a whole*. The objective needs of the socialist revolution, the aspirations and level of consciousness of the *proletariat* (wage-earners) are decisive in the resolution of this question. That is the key difference between a “two-class government” and the pact (alliance) the Transitional Program projects between wage-earners and poor peasants.

This question of a “pact” is furthermore not at all limited to a single (and hypothetical) “transitional period” between bourgeois power and the dictatorship of the proletariat (the transition to the transition of the transition). It remains relevant *for decades* — up to the end of socialist construction — in other words up to the establishment of classless society. Such is indeed the classic Marxist position admirably expressed by Frederick Engels in his article, “The Peasant question in France and Germany” (November 1894):

... when we are in possession of state power we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants (regardless of whether with or without compensation), as we shall have to do in the case of the big landowners. Our task relative to the small peasant consists, in the first place, in effecting a transition of his private enterprise and private possession to cooperative ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and the offer of social assistance for this purpose. And then of course we have ample means of showing to the small peasant a perspective with advantages that must be obvious to him even today.

We should note that Engels writes: “when *we* are in possession of state power.” He definitively does not say “when there is a two-class government.” The necessity of a worker-peasant pact which guarantees the small peasantry the right to freely decide its future, remains valid for all this long period. Therefore it does not imply any necessity of some sort of “two-class government” — unless one wants to institutionalize such a government *for decades*.

The distinction we draw between the worker-peasant alliance and a “two-class government” is not the result of some sort of “sectarianism” towards the working peasantry or some sort of primitive “workerism.” It results from an understanding that the political and economic *power of the bourgeoisie* must first of all be broken. It is necessary to break decisively with the logic of profit nationally and internationally in order to resolve the working people’s problems, including peasant concerns which the crisis of declining capitalism forces upon the laboring masses.

To smash the bourgeoisie’s power and to open the way to the socialist reconstruction of society means: *all power to the workers, dictatorship of the proletariat, the power of the workers and peasants councils, planned self-management, socialist democracy in all fields and in all countries on a world scale. The worker-peasant alliance fits into this framework — with inevitable variations according to the social structure of each country. In no case can the victory of the socialist revolution, the rule of workers councils and people’s councils — when it becomes possible*

given the overall relationship of forces in a country — be held back because of the demands of so-called prejudices of the peasantry, unless one wants to deal a mortal blow to the interests of the working peasantry.

What progressively emerges in outline behind Comrade Barnes' revisionist ideas is a growing skepticism towards the majority of the proletariat in the industrialized countries, concerning its capacity to carry out great anticapitalist struggles or even to unleash socialist revolutions. No longer is it the proletarian masses which provide the pressure of the steam and the party which concentrates it on a precise objective — as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg thought.⁶ No, it is now the government that represents the steam and the workers and peasants government "mobilizes" the masses in order to render them "gradually" capable of expropriating capital. It seems more and

(6) "Without a guiding organisation the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam." (Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Sphere edition, preface p. 17.)

more unthinkable for Comrade Barnes that these mobilizations and this aspiration for expropriation could lead to the formation of a workers and peasants government. It's a curious way of presenting oneself as the "proletarian tendency" when one so blatantly underestimates — and even shows contempt — for the proletariat! If this logic is followed through to the end there is a risk of a total overturning of the proletarian Marxist conception of the relationship between the party and the proletariat. At the end of the road, a manipulative, paternalistic even bureaucratic conception replaces the proletarian Marxist approach and the party (party/government) is seen as the sole repository of 'working class class consciousness.' We all know where such ideas have led the Social Democratic, trade union, Stalinist and Eurocommunist bureaucracies.

This is not yet the explicit position of Comrade Jack Barnes. For this reason we continue the debate with him inside the same international organization (taking into account the legal curbs represented by the reactionary Voorhis Act). But there is a *risk* of arriving at such conclusions. One would have to be blind and deaf to deny it.

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