

ON THE QUESTION OF THE BOURGEOIS ARMY

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The document "Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" by the International Executive Committee (IEC) Majority Tendency outlines two obstacles which stand in the way of developing revolutionary parties. On the one hand, they say, there is the development of the strong, bourgeois state with all its institutions, including the army. On the other is the workers movement dominated by the reformists of the Socialist and Communist parties. But instead of developing a *program* to expose these reformists and to win the working class to a revolutionary strategy, the International Majority Tendency tries to find a way around the question through its strategy of "initiatives in action." But the reformists will not be unmasked by this method, nor will these bourgeois institutions vanish.

I would like to take up the development of the IEC Majority Tendency's new, and incorrect, theory on the question of the bourgeois army. This theory confuses rather than clarifies the tasks of the revolutionary parties. Based on abstraction rather than concrete experience, it has served to disorient the work of the French comrades and was used to justify the English comrades' abstention from their central political task—the building of a Troops Out of Ireland movement. This position by the tendency is most clearly outlined in its "Draft Political Resolution," printed in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin No. 20. In the section on the fate of the Vietnamese revolution and the new counterrevolutionary strategy on imperialism they say:

"One must not underestimate the effectiveness of some of these counterrevolutionary instruments. The Brazilian army and the Israeli army, without any doubt, weighed heavily in stopping the development of revolutionary situations in their respective regions. The evolution toward professional armies that take the place of armies based on conscription is a step toward the creation of a more effective counterrevolutionary striking force in Western Europe, and should be vigorously fought by the workers movement. Nevertheless, in its totality, this counter-strategy depends on the fate of the rise of the mass movements now taking place. Without a very serious political and social defeat of the Japanese and European proletariats, one cannot see how imperialism would be able to create a stable and effective military force in these key regions of the world." (p. 5)

France

Despite their acceptance of the theory that the student movement is dead, the Communist League was able to become a leading force in the struggle around the Debre law which erupted in France in the spring of 1973. Since 1789 the French Constitution has provided for a draft army. However, a series of deferments had been granted enabling students to complete their university curricula before being drafted. The Debre law was intended to cut back these deferments. The government tried to justify ending certain deferments by pointing to the fact that workers were not given deferments. The government hoped to pit the working class against the students over the issue of students having "special" privileges which the government was only taking away out of a sense of justice. Instead the students waged a campaign to show how these deferments particularly aided students from the working class.

In addition, many students raised the demand to abolish the French draft entirely. The Communist League took up this slogan and outlined their opposition to it in a polemic against Lutte Ouvriere. Entitled "Volunteer Army or Struggle Against Bourgeois Army?", it was reprinted in *Intercontinental Press*, May 21, 1973. The author, Felix Loursion, admitted that "Down with the army! End military service!" was a general slogan raised by masses of students:

"'Twelve months lost for nothing. Brainwashing, forced labor, humiliation. That's what's waiting for me in the service. I refuse to let myself be drafted.' That's what you hear most often.

"This spontaneous rejection of the army, perfectly understandable, has spread among a huge section of the youth—high-schoolers, students, workers." (p. 597)

However, the League opposed this slogan because: "Under the present conditions, if military service is eliminated, it will only be replaced by a volunteer army composed of military professionals devoted body and soul to the ruling class. With such an army, the bourgeoisie would have a formidable instrument, tailor-made to repress the workers. Already, part of the bourgeoisie, concerned about the 'spiritual state' of the ranks, is prepared to opt for this." (p. 597)

They also pointed to a second reason for opposing an end to military conscription, and that is because revolu-

tionary socialists are for working *inside* the army. However the polemic failed to explain *why* Trotskyists work inside the army, *what* can be accomplished, or even *why* winning over the army is a central task for revolutionaries.

For revolutionary socialists to discuss the question of the army, it is necessary first of all to clarify the function of the army in a capitalist state. The army is a weapon of the state—and this is true whether there is a draft or a "volunteer" army. But, one must ask, how do the masses perceive the army? Do they see it as their institution or not? Since World War II the French army has waged two colonial wars—in Vietnam and Algeria. It has also played the role as a strikebreaking force, and, as a matter of fact, part of the army is under the direct control of the Ministry of the Interior for "police" functions.

The anti-military sentiments which Lourson quoted indicate that at least a large section of the French youth do not perceive the army as worth so much as their humiliation, let alone their death. Now this consciousness, even if it has not reached the stage of articulating anti-imperialist and pro-working class reasons, is a healthy development.

An example

Let's recall the particular problem the Socialist Workers Party faced when we were working out our strategy toward the army on the eve of World War II. The most militant and conscious trade unionists perceived the war as a fight against fascism, and even a fight in defense of the USSR, the only workers state at that time. Under the specific conditions of this imperialist war, which also involved a question of the unconditional defense of the USSR, the SWP, in collaboration with Trotsky, propagandized for an army under *trade-union control*. At that point businessmen were preparing for the war by training workers under their leadership and at government expense. We illustrated how the real fight against fascism could be conducted—not by businessmen nor by the government which represented their interests, but under the leadership and control of the successful and militant trade-union movement of that period. In other words, our propaganda arose out of the concrete situation, and addressed the masses in slogans they could understand.

Today, to raise in a mechanical way those concepts in the U. S. would be a mockery of Marxism. There is no organized and militant trade-union movement that could provide such independent leadership. And, further, the masses of Americans do not equate World War II with the colonial wars the U. S. is waging.

That is why the Socialist Workers Party, in helping to lead the antiwar movement, raised the slogan of abolishing the draft *along* with our defense of GI rights. We regard the end to the draft as a *victory* of the antiwar movement, and would lead a fight against any effort to have the draft reimposed upon the American people. But whether the U. S. army is draft or volunteer, we have seen the continuing breakdown of army "discipline." We have seen stories recounting how GIs in Vietnam wanted to take *votes* on whether they should go into battle or not. We have heard of officers pleading with their troops to go into battle "just this once," and convincing them only by saying that other GIs were depending upon them. We have seen the development of GIs demanding their right to exer-

cise their full civil rights, to wear Black nationalist symbols, to participate in antiwar demonstrations, and to expose the government's secret raids and atrocities. And now that the ruling class in the U. S. has decided to "try" a volunteer army, we do not see that the soldiers and sailors have become "devoted body and soul" to the bourgeois state. The Black sailors on the Kitty Hawk who defended themselves against racist attacks are yet another illustration of the continuing radicalization of GIs.

Ireland

At the Socialist Workers Party convention in the summer of 1973 one of the IEC Majority reporters stated that even if the SWP had not worked to build an antiwar movement, a movement would have developed anyway, on the basis of the objective need. The test of that hypothesis is in England, where there was (and is) an objective need to build a Troops Out of Ireland movement.

As a matter of fact, polls have revealed that about 55 percent of the British population are opposed to sending British troops to Ireland. While the British workers do not yet support the right of the Irish to self-determination, there is a massive anti-intervention sentiment which could be mobilized. For instance, although the development of the antiwar movement began in 1964 with the SDS march on Washington, D. C., it was not until 1969 when public opinion polls and referenda on the war indicated that the majority of Americans opposed the war. How much greater is the potential of the anti-intervention movement if 55 percent already support an end to the British troops in Ireland. And yet no massive anti-intervention movement has arisen in Britain.

To explain this lack, one of the leaders of the Irish Commission wrote, in the document "The Central Orientation of Our Irish Work," that there is a fundamental difference between a professional army (Britain has not issued a draft call since the late 1950s) and a conscripted army, as the U. S. had during the height of the Vietnam War.

Is a Professional Army Immune to The Radicalization?

In a draft army, the author of the document continues, the army has close links with the population (while presumably a volunteer army has no such ties). Although no document has completely outlined the full theory of the IEC Majority on the question of the bourgeois army, it is clear to see that they view a volunteer army as immune to antiwar, pro-working class propaganda. And yet, who makes up the vast numbers of the army in either case? It is certainly not the ruling class who fills the army's ranks.

Those who serve in the army come from the poorest sections of the working class and peasantry. In the U. S., for instance, far more Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans end up in the army than should be the case on a strictly proportional basis. For many, the army is a chance to have a steady income—especially in a tight employment market. While the IEC Majority Tendency offers no evidence to back up its assertions about a volunteer army, there is some experience to indicate precisely the opposite: if the radicalization within the society as a whole continues, it will be reflected within the ranks of the army, whether it is draft or volunteer.

Perhaps it is for that reason that the IEC Majority Tendency offers no examples. Their political resolution *does* refer to the counterrevolutionary armies of Israel and Brazil—but both these nations have a draft army! Of more than a dozen nations of capitalist Europe, only Britain and Iceland do not enforce a compulsory draft system. Iceland is guarded by the presence of U. S. forces, while Britain has a draft but has not utilized it since the late 1950s. The U. S. government has assumed the role of imperialism's chief counterrevolutionary force, and Britain has abandoned many of its "outposts." For instance, it no longer has a force in the Arab-Persian Gulf. As Britain's direct colonies shrunk, and its imperialist responsibilities were shouldered by the U. S., Britain no longer needed such a large standing army, and took the appropriate economic measures.

As a matter of fact, after projecting its opposition to the volunteer army, the IEC Majority Tendency recognizes that a strong, counterrevolutionary striking force depends not so much on the maneuvers the ruling class of the various countries might pull, but on the continued radicalization within the industrialized world. Thus they conclude by backtracking on the very theory they develop. They state: "Without a very serious political and social defeat of the Japanese and European proletariats, one cannot see how imperialism would be able to create a stable and effective military force in these key regions of the world." Then why, one might ask is the question worth discussing? For two reasons: the theory is *foreign* to the Marxist method, and thus serves to hamper the revolutionary parties' ability to analyze, and, secondly, it has had practical consequences in disorienting at least two sections in the recent period.

The question has also come up under Latin America. While Hedda Garza, a leading member of the IEC Majority Tendency, has stated in branch discussion that people cannot "depend" on winning over the army, our movement has traditionally emphasized that the revolution will have need of the knowledge and arms of the army's ranks. Another IEC Majority supporter tried to explain how Latin American armies—and the Chilean army in particular—were fundamentally different than the kind of army existing in Russia during World War I. But for all the discussion about Latin America's professional armies, most countries, including Chile, have a draft army! As a matter of fact, many of the rank-and-file of the Chilean armed forces *were* willing to defend the social gains they had made under the Allende government. But the Valparaiso sailors who defied their officers and refused to rebel against the government found that Allende aided in their prosecution, not in their defense.

In their political resolution, the IEC Majority Tendency calls upon the workers movement to fight against an end to the draft. It is enough for them to know that such discussions are taking place within certain ruling circles—they need not analyze *why* it is being discussed. In contrast to the IEC Majority Tendency's supposition that the ruling class *prefers* a professional army, one could posit that the discussions themselves indicate a split in the ruling class over how to undercut the deepening radicali-

zation. If army discipline is eroding, then perhaps a significant section of the ruling class wants to opt for "upgrading" the army as a relatively cheap and efficient way of dealing with the problem. Loursion attempts to make fun of the ruling class' concern over the soldiers' "spiritual problems" without understanding that it is indeed very concerned that the old moral codes and old sense of army discipline are breaking down. This does represent a major problem for capitalism.

Given imperialism's greater emphasis on regional counterrevolutionary forces to keep a tight reign on the various areas (Iran and Israel in the Arab East, Brazil in Latin America, etc.), and given the general rise of antiwar sentiment, it may no longer be essential for the capitalists to keep up such a large standing national army. Also, one might ask how the detente affects this military strategy.

There is no doubt but that capitalists would like a strong and efficient army. However, given the number of struggles that have already broken out, and given the combativity of significant sections of the masses, it is difficult to see how the ruling class can win their goal by merely transforming the draft army into a volunteer army.

It is true that the capitalist countries of North America have had a different draft history than those of Europe. With the rise of the bourgeois states in Europe conscription was instituted as a bourgeois "right." These nations had need of a standing army to protect their borders and, later, as they became imperialist powers, to guard their interests and put down rebellions abroad. In contrast, neither Canada nor the U. S. have had a draft except in wartime. Then in 1948 the U. S. passed its first "peacetime" conscription act. This was the result of the government's new role as the dominant capitalist power. But these historical differences do not alter the dynamics of the current anti-military sentiment of the masses.

However, it is also important to discuss a point raised by the French comrades, that of the revolutionary parties' approach to winning the soldiers and sailors to the side of the working class. The Loursion article suggests that the army must remain a draft army because how else will revolutionaries be able to work to win over the army? But the fact of the matter is that few revolutionaries are ever *in* the army. Except in the case of a mobilization of the army, most revolutionaries are not inducted. Some are physically unfit, some are too young or too old. But by and large not even many of the "qualified" serve—because the government successfully screens us out! The army does not want revolutionary fighters in its ranks, and they control the apparatus.

But whether we are actually *in* the camps and *on* the bases where the GIs are or not, we have a revolutionary strategy for linking up with the soldiers. We educate the masses about the importance of winning over the GIs, we defend GI rights, we work with GIs as civilians or as fellow soldiers, and we continue to build the mass movements that will reflect themselves within the army—just as the Black nationalist, women's liberation, and antiwar movements have succeeded in doing.

December 7, 1973

Paris, le 4 janvier 1974

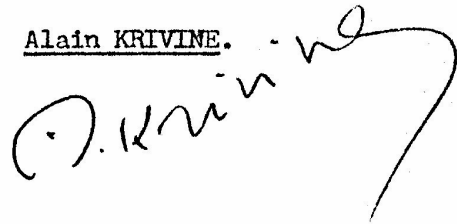
Chers camarades,

Ci-joint une réponse rédigée par la rubrique Armée du journal Rouge au document de la camarade Dianne Feeley.

En espérant que vous pourrez la publier dans votre Bulletin de Discussion, nous vous envoyons nos salutations fraternelles,

Pour le Secrétariat de Rédaction de Rouge

Alain KRIVINE.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Krivine', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Le bulletin de Discussion du SWP daté de décembre 1973 comprend un article intitulé : "Sur la question de l'armée bourgeoise" signé Dianne Feeley. Cet article entame une polémique contre une prétendue "théorie" nouvelle et incorrecte de l'armée bourgeoise qu'avance la majorité internationale. Au cours de cette polémique, les camarades français sont largement pris à partie et accusés d'avoir ^{été} "désorientés" par cette prétendue théorie "étrangère à la méthode marxiste" (sic).

Les membres de la rédaction de la rubrique Armée de Rouge tiennent à élever une protestation vigoureuse contre la forme et le fond de cet article qui présente aux militants du SWP une vision entièrement falsifiée de l'activité anti-militariste des trotskystes français. Ils considèrent qu'une honnêteté politique élémentaire voudrait que les camarades américains publient dans leur bulletin de discussion la présente rectification.

Une remarque "formelle" -si l'on peut dire- d'abord. Dans sa contribution qui inclut un bilan péremptoire du travail anti-militariste des trotskystes français, la camarade Feeley réussit le tour de force de s'appuyer exclusivement sur un article paru dans Rouge et développant la polémique avec Lutte Ouvrière sur un sujet particulier. Nulle part la camarade ne mentionne que depuis plus d'un an les trotskystes français se sont engagés dans la construction d'un mouvement anti-militariste de masse civil au travers de la construction du Comité de Défense des Appelés ; nulle part elle ne mentionne le rôle que peut jouer le Front des Marins, soldats et Aviateurs Révolutionnaires dans l'impulsion de luttes au sein des casernes. ; nulle part elle ne mentionne que Rouge, un des seuls journaux de l'Internationale consacre une page régulière aux luttes anti-militaristes. Les silences qui lui permettent de tirer un bilan définitif de l'activité anti-militariste des trotskystes français à partir de la lecture d'un seul article traduit par Intercontinental Press nous donne à penser qu'animée avant tout par la volonté de "marquer" quelques points dans le débat international, la camarade pêche soit par ignorance, soit par malhonnêteté, -Car un tel bilan est avant tout malhonnête-, sans doute les deux à la fois. Charitablement nous mettons l'accent sur l'ignorance, que viennent d'ailleurs confirmer certaines caractérisations hâtives du mouvement contre la loi Debré qu'on croirait tout droit sorties de Lutte Ouvrière, ou encore des propos péremptores comme le suivant :

"But the fact of the matter is that few revolutionaries are ever in the army. Except in the case of a mobilisation of the army, most revolutionaries are not inducted. Some are physically unfit, some are too young or too old. But by and large not even many of the "qualified" serve -because the government successfully screens us out ! The army does not want revolutionary fighters in its ranks, and they control the apparatus "

Le paragraphe exprime peut-être une vérité élémentaire aux USA ou au Canada, mais élevé au rang de vérité universelle, un tel propos ne peut que soulever une tempête de rires attristés parmi les centaines de lecteurs de Rouge qui se trouvent actuellement "sous les drapeaux" et les milliers de militants d'extrême-gauche français qui effectuent bel et bien leur service militaire et y compris son souvent soumis à un entraînement militaire intensif par une hiérarchie militaire qui les connaît, possède leurs fiches de police, etc... Leçon de prudence et de modestie pour la camarade Feeley et du coup, invitation pour elle à se débarrasser -nous y reviendrons- d'une vision quelque peu "américano-centriste" du monde.

Mais venons-en maintenant au fond du débat. La camarade Feeley cite un paragraphe de la résolution majoritaire sur l'Europe qui note qu'il existe dans certains pays d'Europe occidentale une tendance à la "professionnalisation" des armées de conscription dans une perspective de guerre civile. Elle en tire argument pour affirmer que la majorité développe une nouvelle ~~théorie~~ "théorie" de l'armée bourgeoise en général, généralisation incorrecte et étrangère au marxisme à son gré. Une telle extrapolation sollicite assurément les textes, pour le moins, et à coup sûr ne correspond pas à la conception des camarades majoritaires en France. Que la camarade se reporte à une collection de Rouge, et elle verra que -contrairement aux affirmations bovines d'un certain nombre d'ultra-gauches nous n'avons jamais dit que la bourgeoisie française s'orientait tout uniquement vers la transformation complète de l'armée en une armée de métier avec son corrolaire indispensable, la liquidation partielle ou totale de la conscription. Les choses sont beaucoup plus complexes et nous insisterons sur deux facteurs qui, manifestement, échappent à la camarade.

- En premier lieu, il est absurde, au simple niveau de l'Europe, de parler de l'armée bourgeoise en général sans insister sur les différences considérables intervenant dans

l'attitude respective des bourgeoisies nationales sur ce terrain, en fonction des particularités propres à chaque pays : en Hollande, la bourgeoisie tolère l'existence ~~d'un quasi-syndicat~~ d'un quasi-syndicat des soldats qui regroupe 70% des appelés et dont l'expression est pratiquement libre dans les casernes. En Allemagne, il existe une législation libérale de l'objection de conscience qui permet à de très nombreux jeunes de ne pas faire leur service. En France, le contingent est pour ainsi dire privé de toute liberté élémentaire et les objecteurs puissent réprimés. En Espagne, les conditions de vie des appelés sont pire encore et les objecteurs passibles de 12 ans de prison. Au Portugal l'armée est toute entière façonnée en une armée coloniale... Les différences font donc que la plus extrême prudence s'impose lorsque l'on prétend tirer des leçons générales de l'évolution des armées européennes. Que nous sachions, aucun camarade majoritaire européen ne s'est aventuré à développer de telles généralisations. La polémique de la camarade relève donc de A à Z du provis d'intention.

- Autre chose est de souligner que dans les pays d'Europe où existe un degré élevé de tensions sociales -comme la France- la bourgeoisie accélère la préparation de l'armée à ses tâches de demain, c'est à dire à ses tâches contre-révolutionnaires. C'est ce que fait le texte européen; est c'est entièrement correct.

Généralisant hâtivement certaines leçons de l'action du mouvement anti-guerre aux USA, la camarade Feeley conteste le bien fondé de notre critique de Lutte Ouvrière qui développe des mots d'ordre tels que "à bas le service militaire obligatoire" comme axe central de sa (maigre) propagande anti-militariste. Pour elle, il n'y a pas lieu de se poser en défenseur de l'armée de conscription puisqu'aux USA, la conscription obligatoire a été supprimée, ce qui n'empêche pas la "radicalisation" de continuer à se manifester dans l'armée.

Le problème est que toutes les armées bourgeoisés du monde ne vivent pas à l'heure de Washington et qu'il existe des spécificités nationales qui pèsent diablement lourd dans l'analyse et l'orientation concrète des marxistes-révolutionnaires.

En France, le développement de corps d'élite professionnels spécialisés dans la répression de l'ennemi intérieur, la reprise en main idéologique des cadres et petits cadres de l'armée, la tendance à confiner des secteurs importants du contingent dans des tâches de "maintenance" sont une pièce importante dans la préparation du dispositif militaire de guerre civile. D'ors et déjà, l'armée professionnelle est à peu près pour moitié dans l'armée française, engagés compris. La tâche qui consiste à faire de cette armée professionnelle de 250 000 hommes une force de frappe redoutable, maniable et obéissante dans une période de guerre civile, permettant de tenir le contingent autant que possible à l'écart des tâches les plus "sales" dans une telle période est fondamentale pour la bourgeoisie de notre pays. Elle s'y attèle avec beaucoup d'application.

Dans ces conditions, le développement d'une propagande contre l'armée de métier une armée docile à la solde de nos futurs Pinochet, est une tâche fondamentale pour les anti-militaristes révolutionnaires. C'est une tâche décisive d'éducation de la jeunesse et de la classe ouvrière et qui consiste à expliquer que seule l'existence d'un contingent conscient et combattif, réfractaire à toute tâche de guerre civile, prêt à souder ses luttes à celles de la classe ouvrière, peut faire échouer ces plans. La propagande contre l'armée de métier est le complément indispensable de l'action révolutionnaire au sein du contingent. Ceux qui comme Lutte Ouvrière démissionnent de cette tâche, expliquent qu'armée de métier ou armée de conscription c'est tout un, sont précisément ceux qui sont dépourvus de toute perspective d'action révolutionnaire dans le contingent et ce faisant ont abandonné le terrain du léninisme en la matière, cédé à la pression des fractions les plus retardées de la jeunesse et de la petite-bourgeoisie sur ce terrain. Et nous ne sommes pas peu peinés de voir la camarade Feeley développer une argumentation sur cette question qui décalque précisément celle de L.O. dans un récent numéro de "Luttes de Classe".

En développant cette propagande contre l'armée de métier, nous ne tombons évidemment pas dans le mythe imbécile de la défense de l'armée républicaine de 1789. L'armée française est une des plus archaïques, des plus réactionnaires d'Europe. Nous la dénonçons comme telle insistant inlassablement sur son caractère de classe, développant et les revendications élémentaires démocratiques des soldats, et la propagande socialiste pour la destruction de l'armée bourgeoise.

Notre point de vue central est celui du léninisme, de la nécessaire fusion de l'action révolutionnaire des soldats et de la classe ouvrière dans la crise révolutionnaire. En ce sens, il est évident, en France, que la lutte contre la "professionnalisation" de l'armée est un axe important. Un contingent composé d'ouvriers, de paysans, d'étudiants, embigadés de force et soumis à un régime militaire rétrograde est à l'évidence 1 000 fois plus réceptif à la propagande révolutionnaire (ce que Lénine appelait la "démoralisation

révolutionnaire") qu'une troupe composée d'engagés et de militaires de carrière relativement bien payés et soumis à un endoctrinement idéologique intense. Cela ne signifie évidemment pas que ces corps professionnels ne puissent être en aucun cas réceptifs à la propagande révolutionnaire dans une période de guerre civile. Mais il n'en reste pas moins qu'en France de tels corps seront 1.000 fois plus aptes à être lancés contre la classe ouvrière qu'un contingent viscéralement anti-militariste.

La camarade Feeley ponctue son raisonnement d'un argument qui mérite d'être relevé :

"If the radicalisation within the society as a whole continues, it will be reflected within the ranks of the army, whether it is draft or volunteer".

Pour notre part, nous considérons qu'un tel "fatalisme de la radicalisation" est, pour le coup, "étranger à la méthode marxiste". En France, la croissance des tensions sociales incite de plus en plus la bourgeoisie à mettre en place des dispositifs de guerre civile. Dans ces dispositifs, l'armée joue un rôle central. Cela signifie que l'armée, sans cesse d'avantage traversée par les luttes de classes, devient l'enjeu d'une bataille politique entre le prolétariat et la bourgeoisie, entre les révolutionnaire et le pouvoir. La bourgeoisie n'assiste pas passive au développement de la "radicalisation" en son sein. Elle accroît sa politique répressive vis à vis de tout ce qui bouge dans le contingent. Elle s'efforce de redonner un nouvel idéal et une nouvelle vocation "nationale" à un encadrement quelque peu désarmé, la lutte contre la subversion et "l'ennemi intérieur". Dans ce contexte, la lutte contre la galvanisation de l'armée de métier comme armée de guerre civile est un axe de lutte essentiel pour les révolutionnaires. Celui qui, à l'heure du Chili, ne comprennent pas cela en France, serait un bien piètre politique.

Voici, pour l'essentiel, ce que nous voulions répondre à la camarade Feeley. Pour conclure, nous ne soulignerons jamais assez à quel point sa prétention de parler de "l'armée bourgeoise" en général dans l'ignorance complète des spécificités nationales est absurde et présomptueux. Il n'est que de voir les différences essentielles existant entre les mouvements anti-militaristes de pays comme les USA et la France pour s'en convaincre. Aux USA, la jeunesse s'est radicalisée contre la guerre imparialiste en Indochine. En France, elle se radicalise d'emblée contre l'armée qu'elle perçoit avant tout comme une armée de guerre civile et d'embrigadement. Ces différences objectives déterminent assurément des différences d'optique importantes chez les marxistes-révolutionnaires des différents pays.

Aussi n'excluons nous pas que le débat ici entamé puisse renvoyer à des divergences plus profondes encore. Ainsi lorsque la camarade écrit :

"Given imperialism's greater emphasis on regional counterrevolutionary forces to keep a tight reign on the various areas (Iran and Israël in the Arab East, Brazil in Latin America, etc..) and given the general rise of anti-war sentiment, it may no longer be essential for the capitalists to keep up such a large standing national army. Also one might ask how the détente affects this military strategy".

Nous devons dire qu'un tel propos nous inspire quelque défiance. Mais sans doute les occasions de poursuivre ce débat ne manqueront-elles pas.

à Paris, le 29/12/1973.