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Report on the Present Stage of Building the International (adopted by the United Secretariat, January 26, 1984)

Since the Eleventh World Congress, *the programmatic foundations and role of the Fourth International have been subjected to more and more systematic challenges* in the course of internal discussions.

The stakes in this debate are high. In the first place, whereas most previous polemics and differences appeared as differences over the interpretation or implementation of a common program, the present disagreements explicitly concern the very programmatic questions around which our movement originated. Second, this revision has been initiated by the leadership of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), an organization that constitutes one of the pillars of the International's continuity.

The majority of the United Secretariat, aware of the importance and far-reaching implications of the issues raised, proceeded with the utmost caution. The major questions were dealt with as they arose in a series of meetings of the United Secretariat (USec) and International Executive Committee (IEC):

- resolution on the Cuban revolution and the Castroist leadership (May 1981 IEC);
- reports on the Central American revolution and solidarity work (particularly at the May 1982 IEC and at the January, March, and October, 1983, USec meetings);
- resolutions on Poland at the January 1981 USec and May 1981 and May 1982 IECs;
- resolutions and reports on the Iranian revolution (August 1980 and January 1983 USecs);
- resolutions on the imperialist war drive and the antiwar movement (October 1981 USec and May 1982 IEC);
- reports on the turn to industry (May 1981 and May 1982 IECs);
- finally, a discussion on the permanent revolution was initiated orally, on the basis of the articles of Comrades Doug Jenness and Ernest Mandel (October 1982 USec).

Section leaderships were kept abreast and alerted of new developments in these debates. Section members were informed through the International Internal Discussion Bulletin and, in some cases, through publication of debating articles in our press.¹

At the same time, we tried not to let the necessary discussion interfere with the life and activity of the International. We coordinated solidarity work with the Central American revolution and the Polish workers and our intervention in antiwar mobilizations in line with the means at our disposal. In addition to French *Inprecor*, we began the regular publication of a Polish *Inprecor*, of a Portuguese-language review entitled *Perspectiva Internacional* (in collaboration with the Brazilian comrades), and of *International Viewpoint* in English. We resumed publication of the review *Quatrième Internationale*. We reestablished yearly European-wide educational meetings, and later workshops of the European and Latin American section leaderships (in 1983). We began to coordinate the relaunching of youth organization-building in Europe. Finally, and most importantly, we launched a permanent international school whose fourth session is due to begin in a few weeks.

While avoiding precipitating a crystallization of the accumulating differences, we presented a first report synthesizing the programmatic and organizational issues involved in building the International at the May 1982 IEC.² But on none of these

questions, which had sometimes been placed on the agenda at the request of the SWP leadership comrades (as was the case with Cuba, the antiwar movement, and the building of the International), did we receive written counterresolutions or counterreports which would have made it possible to clarify the substance of the debate. The only exception was the counterreport on Poland presented by comrade John Steele of the Canadian section.³

Comrades of the SWP leadership have reduced their participation in the life of the International to a minimum. As early as late 1980, they withdrew from the day-to-day functioning of the USec Bureau; since then, their attendance at USecs and IECs has become irregular. At the same time, they presented the International with more and more accomplished facts and resorted to strongarm tactics. Although they failed to introduce any alternative document into the discussion on the 1981 IEC resolution on Cuba, they began changing their position to such an extent that they said they could no longer vote for the resolution adopted by the 1979 SWP convention. They did not even try to initiate a discussion on permanent revolution in the regular bodies of the International to check the positions of different comrades and attempt to influence them, but directly took the initiative of opening a public debate by publishing the articles of comrade Doug Jenness.

Instead of using all the necessary means to carry through the internal discussion on this question which they themselves considered decisive (up to and including a world congress discussion and vote), the comrades of the SWP leadership unilaterally took the responsibility of publically announcing *their decision to revise the founding program of the Fourth International on this point* in comrade Jack Barnes's December 1982 Chicago speech and in his article in the August 1983 issue of *New International* (Vol. 1, No. 1, p.13):

Permanent revolution does not contribute today to arming either ourselves or other revolutionists to lead the working class and its allies to take power and use that power to advance the world socialist revolution. As a special or unique frame of reference *it is an obstacle to reknitting our political continuity with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the first four congresses of the Communist International*. It has been an obstacle in our movement to an objective reading of the masters of Marxism, in particular the writings of Lenin.

We will return to the political content of this statement later. For the time being, we merely wish to point out that for a number of months the comrades had been presenting their position as simply an interpretation or updating of our founding program. They waxed indignant at us for supposing this was a revision. Today, comrade Barnes writes straightforwardly:

In some ways, the shift I am proposing is one of the biggest changes in our movement since we first emerged, more than half a century ago, as a distinct political current in world politics. Since that time, permanent revolution in all its meanings has been a guiding concept of our entire world movement, including the SWP. *NI*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 81).

Now here is a revision that at least has the merit of being up front.

Nothing could be more legitimate than the desire to confront the theory of permanent revolution to the concrete revolutionary experience of colonial and semicolonial countries over the last 40 years; nothing could be more legitimate than the desire to make

it more complete, more subtle, or to correct it if necessary. Comrades have an undeniable right to question this programmatic gain if they now think it is erroneous or has been invalidated by history. But before arriving at such a far-reaching conclusion, they should have arranged to conduct the discussion with the utmost seriousness, both in the SWP and in the International, in an organized fashion, through their established leading bodies. This is not a formal objection: on a question of this importance, the experience of sections and sympathizing organizations active on all continents can shed more light than the "innovations" drawn by the SWP leadership from its own limited and partial experience. In fact, this is precisely one of the International's functions and reasons to exist.

We might have decided to make this debate public through the channels and at a pace defined by the leading bodies of the International. Instead, the publication of Jack Barnes's article in August 1983 and at the very moment when the SWP's own regularly scheduled convention was postponed for a year, constituted a sort of coup d'état inside the SWP and the International.

This method of approaching the decisive issues at stake is the root cause of the many organizational conflicts which have developed both with respect to the administrative handling of the SWP minorities opposed to the revision, and with respect to the increasing number of attacks the comrades have launched since 1981 against sections with neither prior consultation nor the acceptance of a written discussion of the issues raised: against the antimilitary work of the French section, against the Mexican PRT and its solidarity work with the Salvadoran revolution, against the Australian SWP and its leadership.⁴

The situation has now come to the point where the debate must be settled by the world congress. Its very nature threatens to lock us into a quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, the dog-

matists and the realists, the orthodox and the innovators. If we confined ourselves to defending the programmatic gains and banner of the Fourth International instead of coming to grips with the real party-building problems faced by the sections, we would confirm our adversaries' depiction of us as a fossilized sect. We would be regressing in relation to the efforts we have already undertaken with the establishment of the international school and the working meetings of the European Political Bureaus. This is why the preparation of the world congress must not be allowed to detract from this work. For the building of the International is first and foremost the building and development of its sections.

But it is equally indispensable to begin with a clarification of the programmatic discussion, a delimitation of its terms and stakes, in order to define the solid ground on which we intend to move forward. Whatever the ways in which this discussion has cropped up in our ranks, it does not correspond to some oddity or diversion, but to concerns that are widely shared, although sometimes in different forms, within the workers and revolutionary movement across the world.

Before defining the stage of the building of the Fourth International that we have reached, and how this stage fits in with the rebuilding of a mass revolutionary International, we must answer the vital and elementary questions that have been raised:

- 1) Should key aspects of the program of the Fourth International be revised in light of the new events of the class struggle?
- 2) Can the turn to the Castroist current and the turn to industry constitute a line for building the International and its sections, as the U.S. comrades have argued?
- 3) What type of International is necessary and possible to build today? How centralized should it be? What type of leadership system and functioning should it have?

I. SHOULD OUR PROGRAM BE REVISED?

1) *What is at stake?*

The SWP leadership comrades claim that their revision was motivated by a desire to be open to reality, which led them to abandon the sections of our program that have proved to be "an obstacle" to revolutionary practice.

Questioning the validity of one or another point of our program in the light of new events is a perfectly acceptable practice. But in this precise case, the SWP comrades have directly linked their proposed revision to an organizational challenge, thereby setting a relentless logic in motion. They no longer explain the isolation of the International and its sections — which they call its "semisectarian existence" — mainly on the basis of objective conditions, but on the basis of a programmatic malformation acquired at birth. They allege that by introducing his own pre-1917 conception of the permanent revolution into the International's programmatic foundations, Trotsky introduced the worm of sectarianism into the apple. This fact would help to explain both the lasting isolation of the International and the mistaken course of certain sections when faced with decisive tests such as the Chinese revolution and the Nicaraguan revolution. But if this were the case, one would have to probe still further and query the very nature and reason for existence of an international organization built from the outset on a sectarian and false line for the entire colonial revolution.

Moreover, *the revisions seldom come singly*. If at the time of the founding of the Fourth International Trotsky was ultraleft and sectarian on the question of the permanent revolution in the dominated countries, why would he not have been on other key questions too, such as that of the political revolution in the Soviet Union?

The fact is that in proposing to junk the theory of permanent revolution, the comrades are not only proposing to get rid of an artificial "trademark" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 11) or an ultimatic conception of the growing over of the democratic

tasks into the socialist tasks in the course of the colonial revolution. As early as 1929, Trotsky considered that the theory of permanent revolution had *three* aspects. It had not only "established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat." (*Permanent Revolution*, p. 132, Pathfinder). Its "second aspect" posited "the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such," which by the mid-1930s was concretized in the necessity for a political revolution to overthrow the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy in the USSR. The "third aspect" emphasized the international character of the revolution and counterposed the extension of the socialist revolution to the Stalinist theses on building socialism in one country. From the 1930s on, this international extension of the socialist revolution *includes the indissociable tasks of defending the gains of the October revolution and struggling for the overthrow of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy*.

By curtailing their heritage to the Trotsky of the first congresses of the Communist International and renouncing his systematization of the theory of permanent revolution, the comrades are at one and the same time sliding towards a line of "reform" of the bureaucratically deformed and degenerated workers states, a line of peaceful and gradual democratization which would empty the necessity of political revolution of any real content.

We had already noted this point in comrade Barnes's written report on the workers and farmers government circulated at the May 1982 IEC: "This is what we think the permanent revolution is," wrote Barnes. "It is the strategic vision of the world socialist revolution that integrates the proletarian revolution in the developed capitalist countries, the anti-imperialist democratic and socialist revolution in the colonial and semicolonial countries, and the fight to defend, extend, and democratize the workers states."⁵ In this quote, the political revolution has disappeared and been replaced by the defense and democratization of the workers states, indistinctively. The phrase was removed from

the final version of the document on the workers and farmers government published in the internal bulletin. Probably not to correct this quote on the workers states, but rather because comrade Barnes seems in the meantime to have radically moved away from the understanding of the permanent revolution which he still supported at the time.

However comrade Steele's written report on Poland is a broad confirmation of the beginning revision on the political revolution.⁶

The comrades of the SWP majority, then, believe that the Fourth International suffered from excessive programmatic definition. By adopting as part of its heritage false or superfluous tenets, it fostered the chronic sectarianism of some of the organizations identified with Trotskyism. The tendency platform submitted by comrades Hoffman and Heredia takes the opposite tack.⁷ They believe the International's problems arise mainly from a lack of definition and programmatic timidity in dealing with the characterization of the bureaucratized workers states.

These challenges to key tenets of the program cannot be simply the result of an accidental combination of circumstances. They reflect doubts about the perspective of building the International in the present situation. The doubts spring from questions about the revolutionary potential of the proletariat of the industrialized capitalist countries. This gives birth to a two-fold temptation.

The first is to replace the international class struggle with a struggle between camps: this approach, in the name of some pseudo-realism, reduces revolutionary strategy to support of revolutions in colonial countries, defense of the workers states against imperialism and workerist propagandism in the imperialist countries themselves. Thus we witnessed the SWP comrades tone down their solidarity work with *Solidarnosc* in the name of the priority of the anti-imperialist struggle. We saw them adopt tail-endist positions towards the bourgeois leaderships involved in the Iranian revolution and the Malvinas war. And we heard them go over to the thesis that the entire skilled proletariat of the imperialist metropolises allegedly constitutes a labor aristocracy and is responsible for the reformist policy of its leaderships (with the exception of the less skilled and more exploited sectors, particularly the immigrant workers).

Conversely, the idea is beginning to arise in a confused way that the Fourth International cannot hope to play a significant role in countries where the industrial proletariat is not sufficiently developed. In this view, the International's role should be to concentrate more and more on defending political revolution and socialist democracy which, allegedly, can only be generated by the large proletarian armies of the imperialist countries and the most industrialized workers states. This alternate version of propagandism is sometimes rounded out in Europe with the perspective of a long march through the majority organizations of the working class which, in the last analysis, reflect the low level of consciousness of the working class itself.

Both these temptations derive in part from differences in the appreciation of the international situation which is dealt with in the draft resolution adopted by the October 1983 USec.⁸

Under normal conditions, the world congress preparations would not require a reaffirmation of programmatic points that are part of the very foundations of the International. A discussion on party-building should confine itself to defining the concrete tasks posed by events, and drawing from that analysis of the situation, political and organizational guidelines for the main countries.

However, in a situation where the programmatic and historical foundations of the International have been explicitly challenged, it would be irresponsible to pretend not to notice, and continue a routine discussion that would avoid a reappraisal of the major questions at issue.

2) *The revolutionary heritage and historic role of the Fourth International*

The Fourth International places itself in the continuity of the Communist International and carries on the revolutionary heritage of its first congresses. From its inception, it has added the programmatic lessons of the major experiences of the class struggle, ranging from the Russian revolution to the defeat of the Spanish revolution, and including the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution, the victory of Nazism in Germany and the Moscow trials. These are the lessons that are brought out in the definitional documents of the Fourth International which are the *Eleven Points of the Left Opposition* of 1933 and the *Transitional Program* of 1938:

- intransigent defense of class independence against all forms class collaboration;
- recognition of the international, "and therefore permanent" character of the proletarian revolution, against the theory of the building of socialism in one country;
- characterization of the USSR as a workers state, despite its bureaucratic degeneration, and of the need to defend it against imperialism;
- the necessity of a political revolution to overthrow the dictatorial rule of the bureaucracy;
- "rejection of the formula of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants as a regime separate from the dictatorship of the proletariat winning over the support of the peasant masses and of the oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of a peaceful growing over of the democratic dictatorship into a socialist dictatorship";
- the importance of transitional slogans for the mobilization of the masses towards the conquest of power, and the particular role of democratic slogans against national oppression and various sorts of dictatorships;
- the necessity for a united front policy counterposed not only to class collaboration in all its forms but also to divisive policies such as that followed by the CI during "the third period";
- the necessity for a democratically centralized revolutionary vanguard party and a genuine mass revolutionary International;
- respect for internal party democracy.

Nothing in these fundamental points of the Fourth International's program can be described as superfluous or as an artificially-nurtured idiosyncrasy that doomed the F.I. to the fate of a sect. They include only *the major programmatic delimitations that come out of the experience of the workers movement and are indispensable from the standpoint of the world revolution, that is from the standpoint of the defense of the historic and international interests of the proletariat.*

In his article, Jack Barnes points out that when Trotsky became convinced that a new International was necessary in 1933, he insisted that "there was no parallel necessity to lay a new theoretical foundation, to develop a new program and strategy" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 55). This is partially true insofar as the Communist International and its first congresses laid the irreplaceable foundations for all revolutionary strategy. But it is false insofar as the Fourth International could not be content to defend the CI's program against Stalinist reaction. It had to face a *new historical phenomenon of major significance for our epoch: the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state and its catastrophic consequences for the entire communist movement.*

From this standpoint, the incorporation of the analysis of bureaucratic degeneration and of the struggle for political revolution and socialist democracy into the revolutionary program did not constitute a mere "enrichment." It laid the foundation for a *new current* of the international workers movement intent on remaining true to the interests of the workers of the whole world, including those living under the boot of the bureaucracy.

From the standpoint of the world proletariat, there is no possible minimum revolutionary program. Returning to the first four

congresses of the Communist International represents an important step forward for organizations and currents that are breaking with the Stalinist tradition or coming over to communism in the present context of the crisis of Stalinism. In some countries, it can open the road to a sincere revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the abolition of capitalism. But, in and of itself, it is not sufficient to lay the necessary programmatic foundations for rebuilding a genuine Communist International and beginning to resolve *the crisis of revolutionary leadership on a world scale*.

Such an International must take into account the needs and demands of the millions of proletarians in Poland, the Soviet Union, and China. It must respond to the arms race and war drive from an internationalist point of view. These are major questions that concern the proletarians of imperialist and dominated countries as well as of the bureaucratized workers states.

This is why we maintain that many intermediate positions and subtle shades of opinion can arise between the Social-Democratic, Stalinist, and revolutionary Marxist currents within the international workers movement, but no new fundamental historic current from the programmatic point of view. In practice such intermediate currents are decisive for building a mass revolutionary party in this or that country, and eventually for the building of a mass International — we will return to this point; but establishing a dialogue and ultimately converging with them does not imply that we should indulge in programmatic self-mutilation.

Our attractiveness for these groups lies precisely in the fact that we are the continuators of a historical tradition that goes back to the big tests and lessons of the Russian revolution, that we really exist on an international scale and that consequently we can help orient them with respect to the various currents of the workers movement. On the other hand if we are talking about immediate strategy for the conquest of power, we have much to learn from them and find ourselves in the position of pupils. We wholeheartedly and modestly accept this role without however throwing overboard the lessons history has taught us.

Just as we cannot afford to slice any fundamental point off the program that defines us historically, we cannot either add any superfluous particularism to it. History did not stop in 1933 or 1938. We have to learn from all the great experiences of the workers since then, from the victory of the Chinese, Yugoslav, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Central American revolutions as well as from the defeats and setbacks in Indonesia, Chile, Iran, Portugal, Czechoslovakia. . . . Each new major event requires that we subject our gains to the test of practice and tasks.

All these lessons have made possible a considerable enrichment of the strategic and tactical experience of the workers movement in its struggle for the conquest of political power. But to this day, no event of the magnitude of the Russian revolution or of the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state has yet to cause a general realignment of forces inside the international workers movement.

3) *The permanent revolution: "an obstacle"?*

One of the reasons some time went by before the current discussion became clear was that the SWP majority comrades hesitated before choosing the best approach to present and argue for their revision. They began by correcting the theory of the permanent revolution by generalizing the need for an intermediate workers and farmers government stage. Eventually they decided on a frontal revision. This has enhanced the clarity of the discussion.

According to J. Barnes, Trotsky allegedly began after 1927 to say that he had been right on some important strategic questions before 1917, "in particular on those associated with his theory of the permanent revolution." This is how he allegedly "began a process of blurring the line of revolutionary continuity growing

out of the Comintern program and strategy" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 50).

But this approach to the question is precisely the best way to blur what is at stake in the discussion. First of all, Trotsky did not begin to claim his pre-1917 positions were correct in 1927: he already defended the continuity of his own position in *New Course* and *Lessons of October*. But something new did happen in the 1920s, not in Trotsky's head, but in reality: the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution and the systematization throughout the Communist International of a stagist line that led to a disastrous subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie in the course of the democratic revolution. Contrary to Stalinist myths, there is no doubt that Lenin and Trotsky would have stood on the same side of the barricade against such a line.

The clarifications Trotsky made in *The Permanent Revolution* in 1928 are therefore not a return to the old ultraleft demons of his youth, as suggested by Barnes, but indispensable clarifications that *correspond to new practical (the Second Chinese revolution) and theoretical developments (the theory of revolution by stages) that arose after the first four congresses of the Communist International*.

In this crucial debate between permanent revolution and revolution by stages, there is no reason why we should sound a retreat or look for some conciliation through an impossible third solution at the very moment when growing sectors of the revolutionary movement, especially in Central America, are more or less explicitly repudiating the Stalinist theory and its Maoist variants in the light of their own experiences.

Already on the basis of the experience of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara categorically condemned the Stalinist policy in Latin America: "Either socialist revolution or caricature of a revolution!" Comrade Barnes himself quotes the Cuban Communist Party program in his article:

"This situation, in which the objectives of national liberation and of a democratic nature had to be implemented by the working class at the head of the State power, conditioned the *close interrelationship between the measures and tasks of the first and the second stages of our Revolution and the uninterrupted character of the transformations leading to the transition from one stage to the other in the context of a single revolutionary process*."

He also quotes the intervention made by Jesus Montané in the name of the Cuban delegation at the 1983 International Conference on the Revolutionary Process in Latin America:

"On this continent, we are witnessing *an inseparable merger of the class and national struggles, a unique combination of the fight for democracy and for socialism, the fight for anti-imperialist liberation together with urban and rural workers' actions against capitalist exploitation*.

These conclusions flow from a half-century of experiences on the continent and were foreshadowed by Mella, Mariategui, Farabundo Martí and confirmed by the Cuban revolution, the Chilean defeat, the imperialist intervention in the Dominican Republic, the series of coups in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, the revolutionary victory in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador. The Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties have drawn similar conclusions from their own experiences on this question.

Today even the general secretary of the Salvadoran Communist Party is forced to take these lessons into account. Indeed, Shafik Handal who is a major source of quotes in comrade Barnes's article wrote:

"One can't go to socialism except by the democratic anti-imperialist path, but neither can the democratic anti-imperialist revolution be consummated without going on to socialism.

"To the extent that between these two there is an essential and indissoluble connection," Handal explains, "*they are facets of one revolution*

and not two revolutions. . . . The democratic anti-imperialist revolution will not appear to us as a separate revolution but rather as the realization of the tasks of *the first phase of the socialist revolution.*"

We are not discussing at this time either Handal's practice or the totality of his ideas. But while he claims not to know where these ideas came from he does admit that the Latin American Communist Parties worked for years "with the idea of two revolutions," and looked upon the Cuban experience as a "particular exception." This allegedly is what led them to subordinate themselves to the national, or allegedly national, bourgeoisie, and renounce taking the leadership of the struggle for power.

The fact is, this was one of the key issues at stake in the fight inside the Communist International during the 1920s. The entire history of revolutions since that time, and unfortunately that of the defeats too, confirmed its conclusions. To decide now to transform the Trotsky-Stalin clash of 1927 into a controversy between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917, that is *before* the practical tests of the Russian revolution and Second Chinese revolution, amounts to nothing less than the creation of a diversion and the "blurring" of those conclusions.

This is why, contrary to comrade Barnes's assertions, there is nothing in the sixth of the Eleven Points of the Left Opposition that can be dispensed with: "Rejection of the formula of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants as a separate regime, distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat with the support of the peasant masses and oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of the peaceful growing over of the democratic dictatorship into a socialist dictatorship." What is at issue here is the irreconcilable and practical opposition between the theory of the permanent revolution and the Stalinist version of the "democratic dictatorship" as a regime separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Revolutionaries who are breaking in practice with Stalinist stagist conceptions do not spontaneously think this through in the framework of the ideas of the Permanent Revolution. More often than not they conceive it as a return to Lenin's formulation of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Workers and Peasants. Many reasons explain why the rupture with Stalinism takes this form. It helps to open up debate among revolutionaries. In fact Lenin's position was ambiguous on the transformation of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, and could lead either to a stagist dynamic or to a dynamic of permanent revolution. The differences that emerged in the Bolshevik party in 1917 illustrate these two possibilities. Our job today is not to set ourselves up as judges of the debate between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917 but rather to clarify it historically in the light of the later lessons of the Russian, Chinese, Cuban, and other revolutions.

The differences between Lenin and Trotsky before 1917 can be discussed as much as one wants. This is a historical and theoretical question about which many viewpoints have already been expressed inside the Fourth International. However, the thesis of the sixth point of the Left Opposition is a dividing line between revolutionaries and reformists in the colonial revolution. It is consistent from its first to its last word since there cannot be "a peaceful growing over" of the Stalinist-style democratic dictatorship (as a regime separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat) into a socialist dictatorship; nor can the building of socialism be undertaken without a revolutionary conquest of power. On the other hand, there can and must be a growing over of the democratic and national tasks of the revolution into socialist tasks, *in the framework of a dictatorship of the proletariat.*

On this essential point the Cuban, Vietnamese and Nicaraguan revolutions, and negatively the Indonesian disaster and the bourgeois normalization currently underway in Iran, confirm the immediate relevance of the theses of the permanent revolution:

"For countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially for the colonial and semicolonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution means that the genuine and complete solution of the democratic and national liberation tasks can only be *the dictatorship of the proletariat standing at the head of the oppressed nation, above all the peasant masses.*" The truth is that just as those who stop making revolutions halfway are digging their own grave, those who in the epoch of the putrefaction of imperialism stop the revolution at its bourgeois democratic "stage" are handing the revolution over to its gravediggers. And now the course of the Nicaraguan revolution since Somoza's overthrow is also verifying this law of the growing over of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, a process which is necessary if the democratic conquests themselves are to be consolidated.

At first, fractions of the bourgeoisie may participate in the struggle against a foreign occupation or a military dictatorship. But as soon as the struggle sinks roots through social measures that harm the interests of landowners and more generally of private property, they abandon the fight and turn against the workers and poor peasants. Sandino correctly predicted that only the workers and peasants would carry the struggle against imperialism through to the end. All the victorious revolutions of dominated countries have confirmed that the land question is at the heart of the alliance between the proletariat and peasantry.

"Not only the land question, but also the national question, assign the peasantry which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries, a primary role in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance between the proletariat and peasantry, the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved; they cannot even be posed seriously. But the alliance of these two classes will only be achieved by a relentless struggle against the influence of the liberal national bourgeoisie." This thesis of the "permanent revolution" puts the alliance of the proletariat and peasantry at the very center of the revolutionary strategy in the dominated countries and categorically gives the lie to the Stalinist slanders concerning an alleged Trotskyist "underestimation" of the peasantry.

Likewise it is also false that the theory of the permanent revolution advocates in ultraleft fashion the immediate socialization of all the means of production or that it predetermines the pace for passing from the democratic tasks to the socialist tasks.

What it emphasizes is the necessity for the conquest of political power and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat which can then serve as the instrument for these later transformations, and make it possible to maneuver, to gain time if necessary, and even to organize temporary retreats, as was the case with the New Economic Policy in the USSR.

By contrast, any attempt to manage the bourgeois state apparatus and progressively transform it from within, will lead to a counterrevolutionary bloodbath. This is the heart of the difference between the victorious Cuban revolution and the crushing of the Chilean revolution. "Whatever the initial and episodic stages of the revolution in different countries, the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and peasantry is only conceivable under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard organized as a Communist Party. This in turn means that the democratic revolution is conceivable only by means of a dictatorship of the proletariat basing itself on an alliance with the peasantry and starting by solving the tasks of the democratic revolution."

On the basis of experience, then, the theory of the permanent revolution establishes the line of march of the revolution, the necessary continuity linking the democratic revolution and socialist revolution, the leading role of the proletariat and the proletarian character of the future revolutionary regime. Contrary to the Stalinists' often repeated accusations, it does not con-

fuse the starting point with the point of arrival. It does not exclude the existence of phases or stages in the framework of an uninterrupted process. Nor does it exclude the possibility of temporary alliances with anti-imperialist or antidictatorial factions of the bourgeoisie.

It is true that some groups identified with Trotskyism have often given the theory of the permanent revolution a caricatural, sectarian and ultimatistic interpretation. These "pure socialists" who were mainly preoccupied with not getting their hands dirty and keeping immaculate theory at a safe distance from practice, waited for a chemically pure proletarian revolution and sometimes were not able to recognize the revolution as it was when it really appeared before them. This is what happened to the Chinese Trotskyists, or at least to one of their factions, in 1949¹⁰. This was also what happened to the Lambertist current when the Nicaraguan revolution happened in 1979. And it also happened to minority currents within our own organization when the Vietnamese revolution happened.

Fortunately, the International as a whole has been able to avoid such a sectarian degeneration. It is a process that must be fiercely fought. It is the product of isolation, of a distorted relation between theory and practice, and of an interpretation of the colonial revolution that reduces it to the schemas of the class struggle in developed capitalist countries. Today, given the magnitude of the social and economic crisis convulsing the dominated countries, any dogmatic failure to understand the importance of national and democratic demands, of the role of the peasantry, of potential tactical alliances against the dictatorship or imperialism, would doom our sections to political impotence in the face of the real course of the class struggle.

The theory of the Permanent Revolution provides us with the necessary historical framework. It does not mean we can dispense with a concrete, case by case analysis of social formations and class relations. Neither does it automatically define a correct strategy and an effective political line towards the conquest of power. Confining ourselves to the reaffirmation of sweeping historical tendencies would lock us into a vicious circle of objectivism (seeing the process of permanent revolution as a sort of natural and inevitable march of history) and sectarianism (towards organisations which have led victorious revolutions in their countries without for all that being revolutionary Marxists). If instead of being interested mainly in general characterizations of parties like the Chinese, Vietnamese or Yugoslav CPs, we had studied more attentively their concrete politics we would have been in a better position to perceive their contradictions and assimilate those aspects of their experience that were more generally applicable. If the theory of Permanent Revolution becomes nothing more than reminders of great principles and warnings from the sidelines, then concrete politics, revolutionary strategy and their agent (the revolutionary party) tend to be dissolved in a vast objective movement of history. Neither is it sufficient to respond in a liberal and tolerant way to the political and strategic dimension of these problems, for example, with respect to alliances — without saying positively what we would have done in Nicaragua or El Salvador and what we have to do in Peru or Uruguay. Thus the debates between the three FSLN components *before* the seizure of power, or those which divide the Salvadoran revolutionary organizations today, cannot be resolved by simply referring to the theory of permanent revolution. In each case this theory must be expressed in concrete policies, and this process of concretization involves a great deal of interpretation — including among revolutionaries.

But blaming the theses of the permanent revolution themselves and Trotsky for the sectarianism of some of his disciples would amount to doing Stalinism a belated and unexpected favor. In his struggle against Stalinist policy, Trotsky traced a

general orientation and posted some warning signs. In this framework we have a lot to learn in terms of strategy in the struggle for power (how to combine mass struggles, guerrilla warfare and insurrection), in terms of peasant struggles and tactical alliances with sectors of the bourgeoisie, in terms of economic and institutional transitional measures after the conquest of political power, in terms of forming new revolutionary parties.

But to assimilate these lessons we need not "blur" and soften the main frontal line. What Lenin and Trotsky both shared before 1917 in opposition to the Mensheviks was the conviction that the liberal bourgeoisie was incapable of waging a sustained struggle against the autocracy. Trotsky never thought this forever after forbade alliances with this or that faction of the bourgeoisie on the terrain of action, and on condition that the banners not be confused, that the political and organizational independence of the proletariat be scrupulously defended (contrary to what happened in China at the time of the alliance with the Kuomintang in 1925-1926) and that the mobilization of the masses not be subordinated to these agreements.

In Nicaragua, with every advance of the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of Somoza, we saw the opposition bourgeoisie which had initially joined the Broad Opposition Front seek to conciliate the dictatorship and imperialism. At that point the initiative and the center of gravity of the struggle definitely passed to the side of the workers and peasants. The United People's Movement and the Sandinist Front asserted their hegemony within the National Patriotic Front (FPN) set up in early 1979, and the Chamorros and Robelos found themselves in a subordinate position as was subsequently verified by history. As soon as Somoza was overthrown, the Sandinista leadership asserted both its willingness to make compromises in the economic field and its determination to keep the instruments of political and military power in its own hands (formation of the Sandinista people's army and militia, conflicts with the bourgeoisie over the composition of the Council of State and the scheduling of elections).

The overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat does not automatically imply the immediate socialization of the means of production and the beginning of a planned economy. In dominated countries, the dictatorship of the proletariat begins on the political terrain with the tasks of the "national democratic revolution." The masses involved in this revolution are not always immediately ready for a conscious struggle for socialism. Seizing imperialist properties, beginning the land reform and a literacy campaign are often the first tasks on the agenda. However, as soon as the revolution resolutely advances on that path, social differentiations among the peasantry begin to deepen and new showdowns with the bourgeoisie loom in the near future.

There is no general formula that dictates in advance the pace and forms of the growing over of democratic tasks into socialist tasks. As long as a revolutionary leadership exists, there is no Chinese wall between the democratic beginning of the revolution and its socialist completion.

Trotsky was quite conscious of the difference between the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat at the political level and its consolidation by means of transformations that bring the economy from continuing production for the market to planned production, and he therefore established a distinction between dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist dictatorship: "A government based directly on the proletariat and through its intermediary on the revolutionary peasantry, does not yet signify a socialist dictatorship; . . .

. . . the *true* democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, that is, the one which actually destroyed the regime of autocracy and

serfdom and snatched the land from the feudalists, was accomplished not *before* October but only *after* October; it was accomplished, to use Marx's words, in the form of the *dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasant war* — and then, a few months later, began growing into a socialist dictatorship. (P. 230-1, *Permanent Revolution*, Pathfinder)

When Trotsky refers here to "socialist dictatorship," his intention is not to suggest some alleged socialist relations of production or some alleged socialist mode of production. He is merely establishing a terminological distinction between the conquest of political power (dictatorship of the proletariat) and its *consolidation* by the institution of the first radical measures expropriating both the urban and rural bourgeoisie. This distinction corresponds to the very nature of proletarian revolution. Unlike the bourgeois revolution, it begins with the conquest of political power which then becomes the instrument for transforming social relations and the material and cultural situation of the proletariat itself. There is therefore no simultaneity between the conquest of power and the social transformations. Quite the contrary, in most cases, there is a time gap between the political establishment of proletarian rule and the social consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is the objective root of the difficulties we have often had in producing an immediate characterization of revolutionary proletarian power at the moment of its birth. In the case of the October revolution mentioned by Trotsky, the insurrection settled the dual power situation at the political level, under the leadership of an internationalist revolutionary party, and established a dictatorship of the proletariat based on a soviet system but without having yet swept away all elements of dual power in society.

In the later cases of the Chinese, Cuban, and Nicaraguan revolutions, such a soviet system did not exist. And while the parties that led the seizure of power acted as revolutionary parties, they were nevertheless qualitatively different from the Bolshevik leadership of 1917.

But it is precisely because the establishment of workers power begins with the conquest of political power, that subjective factors such as the forms of organization of the mass movement and the nature of its leadership are initially decisive. This was the source of the many hesitations that occurred in recognizing the proletarian character of the Chinese revolution as of 1949, and that of the Vietnamese revolution as of 1975.

The very nature of proletarian revolution and the specificity of each revolution make it impossible to construct a general concept or formula of the transition that would be more precise than the distinction indicated by Trotsky.

There have been two symmetrical attempts to discover a universal concept of the transition from the bourgeois state to the workers state that would encompass all the revolutions that have been victorious to this day; both have run into insurmountable theoretical contradictions. Thus, at the time of their honeymoon, Moreno and Lambert came up with the idea that all the revolutions that had led to the establishment of workers states, except the Russian revolution itself, had been merely "February revolutions" because they had not experienced soviet forms of organization of the power. This attempt leads purely and simply to mixing under a single label workers states (even though bureaucratized) and the bourgeois state which the Russian state still was, army and institutions included, after the February 1917 revolution and before the October insurrection!

On the other hand, the comrades of the SWP majority were tempted to generalize the application of the Workers and Farmers Government concept so that it no longer was a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat but an *intermediate historic stage between the bourgeois state and the workers state*, necessary in all revolutions including in the imperialist countries and the United States, and retroactively in the Russian revolution.

The result according to them is that the dictatorship of the proletariat allegedly only emerged in the USSR in June 1918, and not when power was conquered in October 1917.

On this question of the workers and farmers government, comrades Barnes article signals a cautious retreat. The notion of workers and farmers government is no longer central to it. When it does appear, it does so clearly with the meaning of *first step of the dictatorship of the proletariat*:

Such a government, emanating from a victorious popular revolution, opens the road to the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . .

Workers and farmers governments are characterized by a stage in the class struggle where capitalist property relations have not yet been abolished, but where the workers and farmers have conquered political power through a genuine revolution. The main task of proletarian revolutionists in such a government is to organize, mobilize, and raise the class consciousness of the working class and its allies, to lead them through the class struggle to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the consolidation of a workers state. (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 35)

Here, the workers and farmers government is clearly defined as the product of a victorious revolution, opening the way to the consolidation of the workers state or dictatorship of the proletariat, that is as the beginning of this very dictatorship of the proletariat. Comrade Barnes himself confirms this a few lines later: "We see the workers and farmers government as the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 75).

It is true that the transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the socialist dictatorship (to use Trotsky's very formulas) or from the conquest of political power to the transformation of property relations can proceed relatively more slowly in a scarcely industrialized country and in certain international circumstances. Conversely, in industrialized dependent countries, and all the more so in imperialist countries, the democratic and socialist tasks are intimately interconnected and follow each other in close succession.

It is now clear that the nub of the issue is the question of permanent revolution and not that of the workers and farmers government which is merely a partial aspect of the former. But on this question, the dividing line between our revolutionary heritage and the pall of Stalinist reaction is not being "blurred" by Trotsky but by comrade Barnes himself.

4) *Upward or downward revision of the political revolution?*

We have already pointed out that the theory of permanent revolution also concerns the strategic perspective of extending the revolution in contraposition to the Stalinist thesis of building socialism in one country. On an international scale, this extension of the revolution also signifies the overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy in China and the USSR, and several other states.

The apparatus of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states has become an instrument of bureaucratic violence against the working class which remains an exploited class deprived of its political power.

The bureaucratic management of the planned economy inexorably leads to wastefulness and the smothering of productive forces.

These states remain workers states insofar as production is organized on the basis of collective ownership of the means of production, labor power is not a commodity in the full sense of the term, and a monopoly of foreign trade enables the state to control the influence of the world market on the economy. The bourgeoisie has been expropriated, capitalism abolished, and the essential elements of a planned economy exist.

In this sense and this sense only do we uphold the need to defend the gains of the workers states, even though bureaucratized,

against any attempt at capitalist restoration. But the defense of the workers states and the extension of the revolution imply a ruthless struggle against the bureaucracy which is the chief saboteur of the foundations of the workers state.

The antibureaucratic political revolution is not a mere reform or democratization of the bureaucratic apparatus, a sort of revolution without a revolution. It is a genuine revolution whose goal is to overthrow the bureaucracy without restoring capitalism. It implies an uprising of the oppressed masses against the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

The entire experience of mass movements in the bureaucratized workers states, from the East Berlin uprising of 1953, to the workers struggles in Poland, and including the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the "Prague spring," confirms this line of march.

The Polish experience which has unfolded over the last three years constitutes both a resounding confirmation of the general program of political revolution and an enrichment of its strategy and tactics.

Right from the 1980 negotiations in Gdansk, the workers disproved the bureaucracy's claim to be the representative and embodiment of the working class. By setting the elected representatives of the strikers against those of the bureaucratic state apparatus, they tore the mask off the usurpers. The most elementary economic demands very rapidly become charged with a directly political content and pass from challenges to bureaucratic privileges to a questioning of the choices of bureaucratic management and to the conclusion that socialism is not only the statization of the means of production but also their socialization through a system of workers self-management and democratic planning of society's development.

Democratic demands such as freedom of information, of organization, or trade union independence from the state, likewise become charged with a concrete class content and lead to a challenge to the bureaucracy's monopoly on political power. Free elections, the right for several parties to exist are not just political freedoms but the necessary conditions for actual democratic planning and a real mobilization of the masses.

Finally, the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship implies the destruction of the coercive apparatus of the state which the bureaucracy has shaped over the years to suit its own needs.

Just as the bureaucracy cannot be identified with the working class, so the bureaucratized workers state cannot be identified with socialism. We categorically reject the sort of blackmail which asserts that opposition to the bureaucracy's arbitrary rule would endanger the building of socialism itself.

And the fact is, in his very long article on Trotsky's contribution to "our revolutionary heritage," comrade Barnes exclusively emphasizes the defense of the USSR while keeping quiet about the antibureaucratic struggle and its program: "As we learned from Trotsky, the unconditional defense of the conquests of the Russian revolution and of every subsequent workers state has been shown to be vital to the extension of the world socialist revolution and to the regeneration of communism" (*New International*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 86).

When he does quote *In Defense of Marxism*, he is guilty of a flagrant misinterpretation. In the passage referred to, Trotsky writes: "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 the preservation of state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is for us subordinate to the question of the world proletarian revolution" (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 21, Pathfinder, 1973).

This sentence has all the appearance of a vicious circle: the overthrow of the bureaucracy is subordinated to the preservation

of state ownership which is itself subordinated to the world proletarian revolution which requires the overthrow of the bureaucracy that is undermining the foundations of the workers state . . . Yet, in the last analysis, the prime mover is the interests of the world proletariat as a whole. And the bureaucracy opposes them on two counts: because it opposes the extension of the revolution and because it smothers the revolutionary energy of decisive contingents of the proletariat in countries where it rules.

The pages of *In Defense of Marxism* that precede the quote selected by comrade Barnes leave no room for doubt on this topic: "What do we defend in the USSR?"

What do we defend in the USSR? Not that in which it resembles the capitalist countries but precisely that in which it differs from them. . . . *In the USSR the overthrow of the bureaucracy is indispensable for the preservation of state property.* Only in this sense do we stand for the defense of the USSR. . . .

. . . Defense of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle. . . .

As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan centers. . . .

The defense of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter. (*In Defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 15-18)

Such a counterposition would unavoidably tend to subordinate the interests of the world revolution to those of the bureaucratic dictatorships.

The existence of workers states, even bureaucratized ones, can work to the advantage of ongoing revolutions and the bureaucracy can sometimes be a conjunctural ally for them. But the sort of "realism" that would sacrifice the rights and interests of the workers living in bureaucratized states would be shortsighted and illusory. The bureaucracy always drives a hard bargain and asks for a political price before extending conditional support to this or that struggle. This was verified in the course of the Soviet-Yugoslav crisis, of the Sino-Soviet crisis, of the Cuban missiles crisis, of the Vietnam war and more recently of the war in the Middle East.

Such support, subordinated to the bureaucracy's own diplomatic interests, can never be a substitute for the internationalist solidarity and independent mobilization of the masses.

In contradistinction to the American comrades, comrade Hoffman and his tendency find our characterization of the bureaucratized workers states inadequate.¹¹ Hoffman rejects both the "state capitalist" thesis and the thesis that portrays the bureaucracy as a new class destined to universal expansion; he asserts that the bureaucracy is not merely a caste but an actual new class, although a "non-fundamental" and parasitic class.

If that is all there is to it, comrade Hoffman's announcements of a theoretical revolution have given birth to a mere conceptual reform and one that hardly clarifies the problem. A parasitic class, but "parasitic" on whom? On the proletariat? In that case, this "new class" is as like the caste Hoffman just dismissed as two peas in a pod. Moreover, in what way would this change represent an advance for our characterization of the bureaucratized workers states as such? What is their class nature? Hoffman now baptizes them "bureaucratic collectivist states." All right. One could likewise define the Communist Party as a bureaucratic collectivist party but this still would not tell us anything about their class nature.

If power in these "bureaucratic collectivist states" is still exclusively in the hands of the bureaucracy, henceforward defined

as a "non-fundamental class" *parasitic on the proletariat*, then, however paradoxical this may sound, the proletariat although politically expropriated and oppressed, nevertheless, remains the socially dominant class. This takes us back to our starting point: bureaucratically degenerated workers states.

However, Hoffman contends that his theoretical innovation is necessary for a more precise redefinition of the tasks involved in the defense of the USSR and the new problem posed by the conflicts, including the armed conflicts, between bureaucratized workers states.

But his conclusions on the first point are rather close to the classics: "Does the term bureaucratic counterrevolution mean that we place an equal sign between the bureaucratic collectivist states and the imperialist states? No! . . . We are therefore *not neutral in conflicts between imperialist states and bureaucratic collectivist states.*" The problem then becomes that which we have already raised of the relation between the defense of the bureaucratized workers states and the struggle for the antibureaucratic revolution.

Hoffman argues that his approach enables him to understand the possibility of a form of Soviet political expansionism which, unlike imperialist expansionism, is not fundamentally motivated by economic plunder. This bureaucratic expansionism derives from the very fragility of the "non-fundamental class" and its rule. It allegedly compensates this fragility caused by the lack of any autonomous popular mobilization, by a forward flight into bureaucratic militarism and the establishment of a diplomatic alliance system.

Yet Trotsky had no need of the concept of a "non-fundamental class" to explain that the bureaucracy was capable of launching reactionary military adventures: "The Kremlin participates in a new division of Poland; the Kremlin lays hands upon the Baltic states; the Kremlin orients towards the Balkans, Persia, and Afghanistan. In other words, the Kremlin continues the policy of Czarist imperialism" (*In Defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder, 1973, page 26). But this does not mean that we should "identify the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy with the policy of monopoly capitalism on the basis that both the one and the other use military force to achieve expansionist ends." The bureaucracy's policy can have reactionary and disastrous consequences for the workers movement but it corresponds to other mechanisms and other driving forces than those of imperialist expansion.¹²

Finally, Hoffman claims that his thesis of the "new non-fundamental class" can provide a firm anchorage for attempts to deal with the new question of conflicts between workers states (Yugoslavia-USSR in 1948, USSR-China beginning in 1960, and leading up to the Vietnam-Cambodia and China-Vietnam military confrontations). It allegedly makes it possible to locate the qualitative leap from the bureaucratic caste to the new non-fundamental class, and in parallel fashion, from the "bureaucratized proletarian state" to the "bureaucratic collectivist state."

So far, this is nothing very new. Trotsky always analyzed bureaucratization as a process that encompassed gradations and qualitative transformations. The degree of bureaucratic crystallization and of the bureaucracy's autonomy from the proletariat on which it is a parasite was not the same in 1924, when Thermidor began, as in 1938, after the purges, the trials and the victory of the bureaucratic counterrevolution. From the standpoint of tasks, this difference is substantial enough to warrant moving from a line of reform and democratization of the workers state to a line of political revolution.

Likewise, the Yugoslav leadership and the Chinese leadership in the period that immediately followed their seizure of power, were not exact replicas of the consolidated Stalinist bureaucracy, in spite of their bureaucratic deformations. Their link with the

masses was not broken off instantaneously. This is one of the reasons we gave critical support to China and Yugoslavia in their conflicts with the USSR, and later to Vietnam in its conflict with the normalized China of Hua Kuo Feng and Teng Hsiao Ping.

Comrade Hoffman's and his tendency's proposed innovations are therefore of no aid in advancing our theoretical clarity and our clarity on tasks. On the other hand, they concede ground to those who, faced with the anti-Marxist offensive unleashed in the capitalist countries, would like to tone down our defense of the workers states.

So the answer is no, our analysis of the bureaucracy and of the tasks of the political revolution needs no revision, either upwards or downwards.

5) *Immediate relevance and unity of our fundamental program*

None of the major points in our program is superfluous or outdated. The program needs revision neither on the permanent revolution nor on political revolution.

The campist course progressively endorsed by the SWP majority comrades reflects both a lack of confidence in the role of the working class of the imperialist metropolises and a defensive reflex to the indications of a new Cold War. Their loss of confidence is also reflected in the attempt to extend the concept of workers and farmers government and make it into a necessary transitional stage, even in the United States, in the downgrading of the fight for soviet democracy even though it had been central in the first four congresses of the Communist International, and by the attempt to turn the relation between the party and the masses in a revolution upside down so that the party becomes responsible for making the revolution and only later for mobilizing and "educating" the masses.

This course has been confirmed in the evolution of the debate on socialist democracy at the January 1984 USec meeting. The SWP comrades now seem to want to limit the recognition of the right to party pluralism to the bureaucratically degenerated workers states where the political revolution is on the agenda, rather than accepting it as a basic right in any socialist democracy. This logic can lead even to a practical and political questioning of the rights of tendency and faction in revolutionary organisations, for these rights would have no sense if they did not extend to the right to split, in other words to the possibility of founding a new party.

Yet the course of the world class struggle has emphasized the dialectical unity of the three sectors of the world revolution. This unity is the result of the major trends of our epoch, whether economic (growing internationalization of production and capital), social (internationalization of the division of labor), military (pact and alliance systems bolstered by the weight of nuclear weaponry), political (internationalization of local conflicts: Malvinas, Central America, Middle-East, Grenada) or linked to "global responsibilities" claimed by the United States and the Soviet Union in world affairs.

Long before these trends had worked themselves out and as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the workers movement had laid the foundations of a first international organization of its own. However, it is entering the present situation in a state of extreme dispersion while the bourgeoisie, despite its contradictions, is striving to build the political, financial, diplomatic, and military instruments of an international policy.

Not only does the dynamic of the world revolution emphasize the need, and more tragic than ever, lack of a mass revolutionary International. It also emphasizes the living and immediate relevance of the revolutionary Marxist program, which links together the socialist dynamic of the revolution in dominated countries, the socialist tasks of the proletariat in the imperialist countries, and the tasks of the political revolution against the bureauc-

racy ruling in the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe. It is the only program that can help to break the ossifying logic of the division of the world into camps and avert the dangers of nuclear world war.

Of course, not all elements of this program have the same practical bearing, at the same time, in the different sectors of the world revolution. Nevertheless, it cannot be dismembered or confined to the tasks of the permanent revolution in the dominated countries or those of the political revolution in the bureaucratized states. The growing interdependence of the three sectors and the international impact of local conflicts mean that the fate

of the revolution in Central America is not unrelated to that of the Polish workers, and that any revolution attempting to consolidate will be faced with the necessity of diplomatic alliances with their inevitable price and constraints.

Anyone who seriously sets out now to build the Fourth International in the perspective of rebuilding a mass revolutionary International cannot do so with any solidity on the basis of a truncated or discounted programmatic platform, but only by standing on a program that corresponds in its main lines to the objective needs of the proletariat in all three sectors of the world revolution.

II. TURNING TOWARDS THE CASTROIST LEADERSHIP OR POSITIONING OURSELVES IN THE OVERALL RECOMPOSITION PROCESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MOVEMENT AND VANGUARD?

Since the Eleventh World Congress, but without ever submitting a clear resolution on this topic to the vote, the comrades of the United States SWP leadership have asserted in many articles and documents that their perspective for building the international boiled down to two key ideas: the turn to industry and the turn to the Castroist leadership.

1) "Turning towards the Castroist current"?

The different conceptions of the turn to industry can be discussed. At least it is a concrete problem; we know what we are talking about.

On the other hand we were driven to ask several times, but all in vain, what the "turn" toward the Castroist current or leadership means concretely. Does it mean intensifying our solidarity activities with the Central American and Cuban revolutions and establishing a dialogue with their leaderships as far as possible? Does it mean "turning" programmatically towards these currents and then, what are the implications? Or does it mean "turning" organizationally towards these currents and then, what concrete perspectives and practical initiatives should be adopted to reach out to them?

Since the American comrades will not provide us with any precise answers, we have to base ourselves on their approach. In the successive texts they have written, they characterized the Cuban leadership as revolutionary, then as revolutionary Marxist and ended up comparing it to the Bolshevik leadership under Lenin and Trotsky.

The 1981 IEC resolution considered the Cuban leadership to be revolutionary insofar as it had thrown imperialism out of its country and overthrown capitalism. And that it remained revolutionary since that time insofar as it never stopped helping to extend the revolution in some countries. This is a capital fact.

We have found little problems in grasping it, especially because the emergence of this leadership was part of the broader historical process of crisis of Stalinism. Unlike the hopeless sectarians, we do not believe that there is nothing in the international workers movement between the reformists and Stalinists, and us. When the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Vietnamese CP leaderships led the seizure of power in their respective countries, they were acting as revolutionary leaderships, despite the bureaucratic deformations of their theory and practice — "revolutionary centrist" if you will, but revolutionary.

At this very moment, the international development of the class struggle, the advances of the revolution, the establishment of new workers states, are fostering a general trend towards a recomposition of the workers movement and its vanguard. In this context, currents can emerge that no longer vacillate between reformism and revolution, but between revolutionary internationalism and the Soviet bureaucracy; or in yet more complex

fashion, between revolution, reformism, the Soviet bureaucracy and the Chinese bureaucracy.

These vacillations have powerful material roots linked to the weight of the bureaucratized workers states. But this does not mean that, outside of the Fourth International, no organizations exist that are struggling resolutely and honestly for the victory of the proletarian revolution in their country. The Sandinistas did not suddenly become revolutionary the day after their victory. They already were before then, and there certainly exist future Sandinistas in several countries today, whether we know of them or not.

Compared to other leaderships that have overthrown capitalism in their country, or to revolutionary organizations that are struggling for power, the Cuban leadership displays several highly significant particularities. It has taken power. It has kept it for 25 years. Moreover, unlike the Chinese and Vietnamese leaderships, it was not of Stalinist origin. This is one of the reasons this leadership on the basis of an original experience of mass mobilization went further in explicitly challenging the Stalinist strategic framework and putting the permanent revolution on the agenda in Latin America. Not only did it never adopt the theory of building socialism in one country but it explicitly opposed the stagist strategies officially advocated by Moscow, and it sought in practice to extend the revolution.

But does that warrant calling it a revolutionary Marxist leadership and comparing it to the leadership of the Bolshevik party? The point is not to devise some moral or psychological standards of good will and good intentions. Nor is it to downgrade the role of this leadership and its merits. Rather the point is to define the scope and limits of this role on the basis of political criteria.

As soon as Lenin had taken note of the failure of the Second International, he put the creation of a Third International on the agenda and began to lay the groundwork for it. This was not the course followed by the Cuban leadership. It can be argued that the obstacles in the path of a new mass revolutionary international are far greater now than in 1914. If the Cuban leadership were to pose this problem, it would immediately face a conflict with the Soviet bureaucracy at a time when it needs its economic and military support. So the motivations of the Cuban leadership are understandable, but the fact that the problem has not been posed corresponds to an actual political decision that goes beyond a mere tactical concession on an organization question.

The Cuban leadership combines internationalist positions like helping the extension of the revolution in the Caribbean and Central America, with a type of anti-imperialism that reduces the international class struggle to a struggle between camps or blocs, to the point of supporting the bureaucracy against the Czechoslovak and Polish workers all in the name of not "weakening the socialist camp." Similarly this leadership is ready to support rev-

olutionaries in countries where it can perceive success in the short- or medium-term, but in countries where it does not expect rapid advances the needs of state diplomacy tend to override internationalist solidarity.

This policy cannot be reduced to tactical errors. It directly affects an entire and decisive sector of the world revolution. Nor can it be reduced to tactical maneuvers or to the mere juxtaposition of a revolutionary line for dominated countries, a reactionary line for the bureaucratized workers states and a skeptical line on the potential of the proletariat of the imperialist countries. Quite the opposite, it is a global line, with its own consistency, that inserts a regional revolutionary commitment into an alliance system dominated by the weight of the Soviet bureaucracy.

For all these reasons, a fusion with the Castroist current is not on the agenda on the international level if it is meant as a concrete perspective and not as a metaphor designed to cover unconditional adaptation to its positions.

Nor is fusion with the Castroist current a concrete perspective for the building of sections, country by country, in Latin America. Cuba constitutes a central political factor in the continent and the Cuban leadership plays an active role there. The organizations under its influence share a common respect for its history and the will to be inspired by its experience. They have learned a lot from the Cuban revolution but they have also had to overcome the initial weaknesses of focoism and resolve new problems on their own. Each one of them is shaped by its own experience. This is true of the Sandinista Front and of the Salvadoran revolutionaries.

Beyond their common definition in relation to the example of the Cuban revolution, these organizations often develop differences, sometimes unfortunately even leading to violence, on the response to new tactical or strategic questions. This was shown by the FSLN split before 1978, by the crisis in the FPL leadership in El Salvador, and the split in the NJM in Grenada. Conversely, the unfolding revolutionary experience in Central America, the political contributions and identity of the different political organizations operating in its framework can provide the Cuban leadership with new material for reflexion and face it with new political questions.

Finally, this leadership has derived strength from its rich experience in dealing with its own revolution and collaborating with other revolutionary organizations. But its experience in mobilizing and organizing the workers movement in highly industrialized dominated countries where the conquest of class political independence is the central task, such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, remains limited. When confronted with tasks of this sort, the Castroist leadership intervenes as a significant, but not central, political factor; this is demonstrated by the formation and trajectory of the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil¹³.

This is why we cannot say that a homogeneous "Castroist current" exists. We can develop a practical convergence with revolutionary organizations influenced by the Cuban leadership, look for ways to collaborate with them in action, and establish relations and discussions based on different programs and positions which should not be hidden. Starting with these differences we can learn from each other and enrich each other, but this will certainly not happen if we keep quiet about the problems which these organizations themselves are raising.

2) *An overall recomposition process of the workers movement*

The emergence and future evolution of the Castroist current are in fact part and parcel of a broader process of reorganization of the workers movement and its vanguard on an international scale.

Since the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, what had been the international Communist

movement has been experiencing a steadily worsening crisis of dislocation. Beginning in 1969, the Soviet bureaucracy had to give up holding world conferences that only revealed the increasing contradictions and tensions dividing its fraternal parties. Since the 1976 East Berlin conference, it has even avoided calling new conferences limited to European parties. The tendency towards dispersal is winning out, even though the evolution is neither homogeneous nor linear.

A broad spectrum of positions exists ranging from traditionally pro-Soviet parties like the Argentine CP or the Portuguese CP, to parties like the Mexican, Italian, or Spanish CP. At the same time as some Communist Parties are emphasizing the gap between them and Moscow, currents that are reasserting their identification with the Kremlin are appearing in their midst; this is the case with the CP of Gallego in the Spanish state for instance. Moreover, various revolutionary nationalist or revolutionary organizations have lined up with the international policy of the USSR, through the medium of Cuban or Vietnamese influence. This was the case with the Chilean MIR beginning in 1978.

In countries where they have managed to retain significant forces, the parties of Maoist origin have often withdrawn into a purely national existence and adopted policies ranging from rightist neo-Stalinism (often underlaid by an identification with Albania) to a quest for revolutionary paths that would imply a radical critical reexamination of the stagist schemas, alliance policy and history of the international workers movement. More generally, in Asia, the trauma of the conflicts between Vietnam and Cambodia, and then between China and Vietnam, has forced Communist Parties, whether of pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese origin, to rethink their historical and strategic references.

A new debate on the terrible 1965 defeat and Sino-Soviet policy has broken out among the Indonesian exile community linked to the Indonesian Communist party. In Thailand the failure of the line defended by the Thai Communist Party explains to a large extent the downturn in the mass movement, the disorientation of different generations of militants and the deepgoing crisis of the communist movement. But it has also stimulated an unprecedented amount of political and theoretical rethinking among militants who have lived through the 1973-1980 experiences. In the Philippines on the other hand there is a combined rise of socio-economic and democratic struggles and a dynamic communist movement. Also in that country the evaluation of the regional context and the experience of the ongoing struggles is causing a positive re-orientation and is encouraging fundamental strategic discussions.

In South Africa the growth of the industrial working class has given birth to independent non-racial mass trade unions. Some of the leaderships of these unions have begun a strategic rethinking about a class-based alternative to the apartheid regime that runs counter, for the moment, to the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist party line.

In Western Europe, the decline of the mass Communist Parties is general. "Eurocommunism" was a belated attempt to manage this insoluble contradiction: either the Communist Parties tighten their priority links with the USSR and therefore have to pay a share of the cost of each major crisis of the bureaucracy, the price of Prague and the price of Gdansk; or they widen their distance from Moscow to burrow deeper into their own national state apparatus and their living space is consequently reduced because there really is no room for a second social democracy. They know they will lose in either case and therefore try to hedge their bets and avoid a final decision, while striving to keep control of the key sectors of the workers and trade union movement because this is what makes them a worthwhile partner for both their own bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy. The massive losses and splits of the Spanish Communist Party, along with the ero-

sion of the French Communist Party, are the symptoms of the historical changes at work in the European workers movement.

Neo-Stalinist currents that identify fidelity to the USSR with a more militant past and with a firmer line against austerity policies and the imperialist war drive, can reemerge out of this crisis.

Until now, Social-Democracy has been the beneficiary of the decline of the West European Communist Parties. It experienced particularly spectacular electoral successes in France in 1981, in Greece and Spain in 1982, in Portugal in 1983. It won the post of head of government in Italy. It came back to power in Sweden. By contrast, in the northern European countries where social-democracy directly managed the first consequences of the crisis, it is showing some signs of erosion: this is especially true in Great-Britain, but also in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. Its electoral success in southern Europe is the expression of a first political protest of the working class and popular layers against the social effects of the economic crisis, as well as of their attachment to parliamentary institutions, particularly in the three countries that lived under dictatorships until the mid-1970s.

Even in those countries where it has emerged as a hegemonic force on the electoral level, this has been reflected neither in an organic and activist strengthening of the social-democratic parties nor in an increase of their organized influence in the trade union movement. The French and Spanish Socialist Parties in power remain giants with feet of clay: there is an enormous gap between the millions of Socialist voters and the ridiculous number of members (100,000 to 200,000).

Their fragility has deep causes. In several countries, having for a long time participated in the government and managed the bourgeois state, social-democracy no longer appears as an instrument for struggle and mobilization to the masses of workers. In opposition, it can channel the protests against the effects of the economic crisis as well as the rejection of militarization and American hegemony and the repudiation of the Eastern bureaucratic dictatorships. But as soon as it comes to power, social democracy resumes its role as the loyal manager of capital, and the faithful ally of European imperialism, as illustrated by the interventions of Schmidt, Gonzales, Mitterrand, and Soares. They have all followed a bourgeois policy of avowed austerity.

Underlying the electoral recovery of certain socialist parties and the maintained influence of certain communist parties (particularly the Italian Communist Party but also the Greek and Portuguese Communist Parties), a general trend towards the weakening of the reformist apparatus's control over the bulk of the working class can be detected. The majority reformist parties are experiencing a shrinking of their activist base and trade union roots. In countries like France and Spain, the deunionization trend has reached considerable proportions. These phenomena can reflect the demoralization of certain sectors of workers but there is no mechanical connection between the evolution of trade union membership and the state of workers' militancy. Important layers of the working class often remain outside, or on the sidelines of trade union organizations (women, youth, immigrants). These are the contradictory forms the process of recomposition of the workers movement is taking before the decisive tests and the emergence of a credible revolutionary pole of attraction.

In Latin America, the Socialist International is actively defending the interests of the European imperialisms by trying to play the role of a mediator between American imperialism and the popular forces. These efforts will not easily lead to the implantation of genuine social-democratic parties on the continent. For a local social democratic bureaucracy to emerge and consolidate, it would have to enjoy a long period of the parliamentary and trade union freedoms that have nurtured its growth. Moreover, the distinctive anti-imperialist image which social democracy is trying to acquire is constantly undermined by its practical

activity, whether it be its lukewarm solidarity with Nicaragua or even, in the case of Mario Soares, its open support of the American invasion of Grenada in spite of the fact that the NJM was an official member of the Socialist International. This is why the Socialist International's policy in Latin America has more often taken the form of alliances with liberal (Colombia) or populist (Brazil, Mexico) factions of the local bourgeoisies.

Populist nationalism too, after a period of expansion begun in the late 1930s in several Latin American countries, and in the 1950s in the Arab countries affected by the impact of Nasserism and the Algerian revolution, has now entered a period of decay. The dominated bourgeoisies were confronted with a new challenge when the economic crisis began to worsen. Nothing leads one to believe that they might be capable of a new anti-imperialist renaissance in either the economic or the political arena. The first results of the crisis in Latin America have been a dizzying increase of their external debt and a growing dependence on imperialism while poverty, economic crisis, and urban crisis are shaking up the traditional populist formations like the APRA in Peru, the Argentine Peronist movement, the MNR in Bolivia, Laborism in Brazil, and to a lesser extent the PRI in Mexico.

This decline of the large populist organizations is still slowed down by the absence of clear class struggle and revolutionary alternatives, but they have, nevertheless, lost their initial impetus long ago and undergone deep transformations. Thus, in Argentina, the failure of the armed organizations in the early 1970s and the role of the Communist Party under the dictatorship made it possible for Peronism to survive even though its advanced state of decomposition and discredit initially benefited bourgeois radicalism on the electoral plane.

Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that the intensification and severity of the economic crisis along with the outrageous social cost of the imperialist dictates, will provoke populist revivals, even with the participation of limited sectors of the bourgeoisie.

In the Arab countries, the populist hopes born of Nasserism have been disappointed both by the social achievements of the nationalist regimes and their powerlessness in the face of Zionism and imperialism, and their attitude towards the Palestinian national movement. Their military defeats in the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel led them to pursue a new course characterized by the "infitah" and the return of Egypt into the imperialist orbit under Sadat, and the attempts of the Chadli regime to follow the same path in Algeria even though this is more difficult there because of the weakness of the national bourgeoisie.

Due to the lack of a credible revolutionary alternative on the international level, and given the role of the USSR and China in the region, this decline of Arab populism has so far not been reflected in the emergence of strong class struggle currents. Rather, it has aided the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in some countries; this current can be the initial vessel for national and popular aspirations and at the same time be used by the reactionary interests of the most traditional sectors of society.

Failing worldshaking events powerful enough to upset the relationship of forces between the classes and cause a general realignment of political forces, the recomposition of the international workers movement will therefore remain slow, uneven and extremely differentiated.

3) *Building the Fourth International, preparing the conditions for a mass revolutionary International*

The present stage of building the Fourth International should therefore be situated within this overall process characterized by the emergence of a broad spectrum of forces breaking to varying degrees with reformism, Stalinism, and nationalist populism. These currents are capable of rediscovering a revolutionary practice on the basis of their own experience, but they do not immediately pose the question of the program of world revolution

and the rebuilding of a revolutionary International.

On the other hand, the Fourth International has been marked by the particular conditions in which it was formed, following accumulated defeats of the workers movement, and of its many-years existence as a minority. It will not be transformed on its own into a mass International, unless major events bring about a qualitative change of the relationship of forces established after World War Two.

The time now is neither to abstractly proclaim a mass International nor to search out shortcuts towards that end. We stand now merely *at the beginning of profound and lasting transformations* in the workers movement. We should approach them by a combination of building the Fourth International as it is and collaborating with the vanguard forces evolving in the different countries and continents. This is the best way to prepare the formation of a genuine mass revolutionary International.

The fact is, it is possible under the present conditions to win new activist forces over to revolutionary Marxism, to enrich our own experience, and to transform the practice of our own sections. At the same time, possible areas of convergence with other revolutionary organizations of diverse origins are beginning to emerge. They signify that common work and even fusions on the national level are possible and should be put on the agenda even though these regroupments do not yet have any international equivalent.

At the national level, a rapprochement with other forces can take various forms, ranging from systematic united action to the establishment of stable liaison committees and unifications. In cases of fusions with revolutionary organizations or mass leftward-moving centrist currents, the united organization's affiliation to the Fourth International should not constitute a principled precondition. On the other hand, it is indispensable that the united organization be governed by a democratic centralism that allows the discussion on the political issues not resolved at the time of the fusion to continue in the light of subsequent common practice.

At the regional level, we seek to collaborate with other revolutionary currents in the framework of solidarity campaigns, mass initiatives and election campaigns where relevant. On the basis of a relationship of trust verified in practice, we can consider holding regional conferences open to these currents around precisely defined agendas and clearly determined goals.

One of the key conditions making such collaboration possible both at the national and international level is that it provide a better instrument to turn the broad unorganized masses and the masses influenced by the reformist majority organizations, and not become an additional obstacle to this work.

Our policy towards organizations identified with Trotskyism is part of the same overall approach. In a certain number of countries, these organizations represent activist forces that cannot be underestimated. They too are profiting from the radicalization of the vanguard and channeling new generations of militants turning towards revolutionary Marxism. They argue for programmatic positions that lead them to converge with our positions on some key problems for the world revolution, especially the defense of the workers states, support for the political revolution and the need for an International.

In countries where such organizations exist, we must follow the possibilities for rapprochement through the practical tests of the class struggle, on the basis of a common understanding of the events and tasks, and keep up a sustained public exchange with these organizations.

The Eleventh World Congress went further in this direction and outlined the perspective of "unification of the Trotskyist movement." At the same time the factions led by N. Moreno and P. Lambert jointly took the initiative of a splitting operation against the Fourth International on the basis of a position of hostility to

the Nicaraguan revolution. In December 1980, they jointly constituted the International Committee, which flew apart no later than October 1981, thereby ridiculing the pretensions of its promoters who had claimed the foundation of the I.C. was nothing less than the most important event since the foundation of the Third International!

The lessons of this experience are clear. The existence of common historical and programmatic references, however important, cannot be the main criterion for a unification process. On the national level, such a process can take as its starting point a practical convergence in day to day action that is then deepened and consolidated by a serious programmatic discussion. It can also take as its starting point a key programmatic convergence and use it as an instrument to bring closer together the current activity of the two organizations. In all cases, programmatic and practical convergences are both necessary to verify whether "a common understanding of events and tasks" exists, and serve as the foundation for a viable united organization.

The differences that emerged as the Nicaraguan revolution developed have demonstrated that the disagreements between organizations identified as Trotskyists that arose at the time of the Cuban revolution had not been overcome. Moreover in none of the countries where the organizations affiliated to the International Committee, the International Trotskyist League, *The Militant*, or any other regroupment, as well as the sections of the Fourth International have substantial forces, have real convergences developed in practice: neither in France, nor Peru, nor Brazil, nor Britain.

A tendency has surfaced inside the French section whose platform consists mainly of "asking the Twelfth World Congress to resume the battle for the unification of the Trotskyist movement adopted at the previous congress." But since then, four years have gone by, full of events that cannot be overlooked.¹⁴

The Eleventh World Congress's statement on the split characterized the split orchestrated by Moreno and Lambert as an unprincipled split. The reason was that a difference can be corrected in a few months, in the light of experience and with the help of a discussion, even if it is as severe as the one which erupted over the Nicaraguan revolution. An organization can make a mistake without thereby ceasing to be revolutionary. This is even truer for small organizations whose limited size and connections only make possible incomplete and belated information. Only the major tests of the class struggle can reveal or verify qualitative transformations. This was Lenin's method in dealing with the degeneration of the Second International, and Trotsky's with that of the Third. We should take great care to stick to such a method given that the implantation of our sections is too limited for us to have rapid and reliable information and an extensive verification of our judgments.

But the 1979 split confirmed something even more serious, more deeply ingrained and more lasting than the differences over Nicaragua, namely Moreno's and Lambert's very conception of an International in which every political, local or circumstantial difference can become a new programmatic frontier between revisionism and orthodoxy, a new pretext for splits and excommunications. The only possible product of such a conception is a monolithic and sectarian international faction, incapable of maintaining any real democracy on either the international or the national planes. It systematically destroys all previous gains and turns the building of the International into the ceaseless labors of Sisyphus. It fosters organizational methods that often have nothing to envy in those of the Stalinists.

The conditions for the unification of the forces identified with Trotskyism are still far from being met on the international level. They could only be on the basis of a common approach to party building in the different key countries and a common project of building a mass revolutionary International.

III. WHAT SORT OF INTERNATIONAL

At the present time the Fourth International is the only organically organized international regroupment of revolutionary organizations. Its battle is part and parcel of the struggle for the rebuilding of a mass revolutionary International which cannot be reduced to the simple extension of its own forces. This objective can only be achieved after deepgoing transformations inside the international workers movement under the impact of major events.

To prepare for these changes we try to build right now an international organization united by the same program and with a political line based on the interests and needs of the world proletariat as a whole and not the particular or conjunctural interests of one or another of its components.

As opposed to the first three internationals the Fourth was founded in a context of reaction, when the workers movement was on the retreat after defeats at the hands of Nazism and the bureaucratic counterrevolution. The Fourth International's struggle in defence of the internationalist heritage of the Third International was for a long time isolated and always that of a minority. This struggle was prolonged a lot longer than its founders had envisaged.

This existence as a minority current is due, first of all, to objective factors. These objective reasons are the consequences of the world war, of the temporary consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR and of the low level of activity of the proletariat in the two decisive countries, the United States and the Soviet Union.

1) *What overall perspectives?*

Such a long existence as a minority international revolutionary organisation in the workers movement is unprecedented. The consequence has been a big distortion between theory and practice, between analytical activity and effective intervention and between discussion and party building. It has favored political and organizational deformations both in the International and in its sections. This type of existence has produced vacillations between, on the one hand, dogmatic and sectarian crystallization, the reproduction of artificial particularities, a monolithic internal regime and, on the other hand, the search for political and organizational shortcuts, political impressionism and liberal organizational practices.

While the objective situation sets limits to the possible development of the International, these deformations have caused us to miss a number of opportunities on a national level, in the various continents, to the extent that the present strength of the International and its sections is far from having reached what it could and should have been.

The shortfall is not, strictly speaking, just numerical. Often winning a few hundred new members allows us to cross the threshold beyond which a revolutionary organization begins to be able to act politically, take initiatives, bring about political agreements that modify, even slightly, the political situation. In turn, this advance can improve the type of organization we are building, its functioning, its concerns, its style of work and reflexes, the quality of its leadership.

The International accumulated forces and extended itself geographically at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. But the effects of the crisis on the European workers movement, the stagnation and regression of certain important sections and the absence of the International in the development of the revolution in Central America and the negative role other forces claiming to be Trotskyists played there — all this contributed to the perspectives of building the International being frankly questioned.

Each major period in the life of the International has been

dominated by a perspective of an overall breakthrough in the short or medium term.

At the time of its foundation this project was built around the idea that the Second World War would result in the rise of the European revolution and in particular of the German revolution and in the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy by the masses led by a powerful section in the Soviet Union. The war was expected to shake up the international workers movement in a comparable way to what happened at the end of the First World War. The end of the Second World War was indeed followed by major events such as the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, and the formation of bureaucratically deformed workers states in Eastern Europe, but without the hoped-for effects on the workers movement.

At the end of the 1940s a change of perspective was therefore necessary. The majority of the International tried to come to terms with the situation by conceiving the period as an intermediary one prior to the break up of reformism and Stalinism (at first through the march towards a third world war) with the emergence of mass centrist currents inside the traditional workers organisations.

Finally, under the effects of the open crisis of Stalinism and of the Cuban revolution, the 1963 reunification congress drew up again a party building model based on the dialectic of the world revolution and the balanced interaction of its three sectors. In 1968 with the combination of the French general strike, the Prague spring and the Tet offensive in Vietnam, this model led to hopes for rapid success and imminent changes of the relationship of forces inside the workers movement in our favor as well as for the perspective of winning new developing vanguards escaping from the control of the reformist and Stalinist apparatuses.

Between the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses (1969-1974), the International certainly went through a period of growth. But while it was true that May 1968 opened up a rise in struggles in the European capitalist countries, these struggles converted a social relationship of forces into new rights and gains rather than taking the form of a showdown for the conquest of power. The subjective conditions which were lacking for a crisis like that of 1968 to place the question of power concretely on the agenda cannot be limited to the absence of a revolutionary party. More generally there was the absence of a working class vanguard organized in the trade union movement, the loss of certain traditions of struggle and organization during the previous period. While 1968 revealed the force and objectively revolutionary potential of the proletariat accumulated during the long post-war economic boom, the mid-1970s were marked by a profound change in the situation.

Attempts to deny this change in the name of simple 'continuity' of the period opened in 1968 would be puerile or blind. But to better measure its real significance and limits, it is necessary to have a better appreciation of the 1968 to 1975 situation. Overestimating those years and what was then on the agenda fosters a tendency to define, in contrast, the turn of 1974-76 as a sweeping generalized downturn, whereas it is something quite different.

It is not very useful to seek out what different people said after 1968. It is sufficient to recognize that many documents of the International and sections' leaderships saw 1968 as evidence of an immediately revolutionary situation and envisaged the possibility of synchronized revolutionary crises ending up in the short term in dual power situations in several European countries. True, the 1968 general strike temporarily took the initiative away from the bourgeoisie (who only re-established its authority with the open collaboration of the reformist bureaucracies) and raised the question of power in conditions where the means to resolve

such a key question did not yet exist.

From the point of view of building the party the oft-repeated statement that "the question of power is posed" involved a gaping contradiction in relation to the state of development and organisation of the working class vanguard. Left wing splits in the traditional parties are still a marginal phenomenon in the working class and opposition currents in the trade union are only embryonic at best. Consequently there are two possible temptations for resolving the contradiction. Either bring the subjective factor in line with the objective tasks of the hours with a voluntarist and ultra-leftist mad dash forward. Or bank on the spontaneous development of the situation to resolve the crisis of the subjective factor.

The situation opened by 1968 expressed a longlasting change in the social relationship of forces between the classes, as well as in the relations between the masses and the apparatuses. It inaugurated a new wave of workers struggles favoring an initial accumulation of forces and experiences for the revolutionary nucleus. This initial implantation and assimilation of the key lessons of revolutionary Marxism helped us face up to, and come to grips with, the 1974-76 change in the situation. But the illusions inherited from previous years, the already visible gap between hopes and reality, meant that most European sections suffered a crisis of adaptation and reorientation and needed to programmatically re-arm themselves.

The tide of the Portuguese revolution had turned at the end of 1975 due to the responsibility of the reformist and Stalinist leaderships. The transition from Francoism in Spain despite a wave of struggles in Spring 1974 did not produce a revolutionary crisis. The effects of the recession began to weigh on the working class, structural unemployment developed and social-economic struggles were increasingly linked to an overall political perspective. This meant that minority revolutionary organizations found themselves marginalized and unbalanced, especially when they did not have a clear united front approach. A series of centrist organisations formed during the 1960s did not survive this turn of events. Finally the impact of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution was quickly counterbalanced by the crimes of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and the effects of the conflict between Cambodia, Vietnam, and China.

Consequently the model of a simultaneous convergence of the three sectors of the world revolution which had served since 1963 as the perspective for building the International has been subjected to questioning. Revolutionary processes in the three sectors of the world revolution have turned out to be more uneven and their convergence more difficult than had been envisaged at the end of the '60s. Quite recent events confirm this point:

- The antibureaucratic revolution in Poland is the most advanced process of political revolution we have seen up to now. It generally confirms the program of the political revolution but at the same time it raises new problems. It proves that, given the existence of state ownership of the means of productions, proletarian mobilization can very rapidly take on a mass character and acquire a political significance in the confrontation with the bureaucracy. But the rise of the political revolution does not in itself resolve the problem of the formation of a vanguard, the only thing permitting the Polish movement to go beyond the results obtained. The limits of the Polish revolution and the fact that the question of power has not been resolved has had specific consequences on the workers movement of the imperialist countries. It has led many advanced workers to lose sight of the extremely positive effects of the Polish mass movement. While being repelled by the unmasked face of 'really existing socialism' they have taken from this experience only those elements of ideological confusion.

- Up to now the colonial revolution has not developed in the most industrialized dominated countries. It may take off in the coming years due to the depth of the crisis, but the revolutionary processes in Indochina, Central America, or Grenada will not be able to exert a direct influence or attraction over the proletariat of the more industrialized countries, whatever the sympathy they might evoke.

- Finally, exposed to the consequences of the economic crisis and disoriented by the class collaborationist policies of its traditional organizations, the working class in the imperialist countries is looking for new directions and for new forms of struggle. These will be found and forged only through large-scale experiences and struggles, and a serious reorganization of the forces of the workers movement will take time. *This intermediary situation*, where the working class is struggling in most cases on the defensive for the safeguard of its gains, feeds doubts about its revolutionary capabilities, particularly among the vanguard militants of the dominated countries that are affected much more severely by the crisis, and facilitates an acceptance of the bureaucracy as an inevitable and permanent phenomenon in the workers movement.

While there are explosive situations in the three sectors of the world revolution particularly in the dominated countries (and there will be in coming years), the dialectic between them, *their combination is not automatic*. That is why it is important to define as lucidly as possible where we are and to critically appropriate our heritage. It is the condition for working out our real possibilities and defining accessible objectives for the future.

The social force accumulated by the proletariat throughout the long period of the postwar boom has not been fundamentally affected. The world relationship of forces established by the victories of the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions has not been reversed by the beginning of the imperialist counteroffensive. The economic crisis and political events since the middle of the '70s however, opens up a new situation for the reorganization of the social and political forces in the three sectors of the world revolution.

The crisis of the political leadership of imperialism and the bureaucracy is shown up more starkly and broadly. But the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat internationally also makes itself felt just as sharply.

Even if it continues to have decisive weight compared to the other imperialist countries (particularly politically and militarily) American imperialism, after its defeat in Vietnam, has lost the capacity to impose overall political solutions for the big world problems. This is shown in the crisis of the international monetary system as well as in the accentuation of interimperialist competition and contradictions. This crisis also highlights the weakness of bourgeois political leadership on a national level: collapse of the majority bourgeois coalitions in Spain and Portugal (going as far as the dissolution of the UCD in the first case), election defeats of governments (whether right or left wing) responsible for administering the crisis, and shake up or fall of military dictatorships in Latin America or the Philippines.

At the same time, unlike in the 1930s, the contradiction and limits of bureaucratic management of the planned economies are stripped bare by the crises of underproduction in the Eastern European countries.

None of the attempts to define a new international share out of zones of interest (between three to five powers) have got anywhere. Both in the imperialist centres and the bureaucratized workers states centrifugal tendencies have the upper hand.

The function and future of the Fourth International does not lie in any short-term miracle solution, nor in the fusion with the Castroist current, nor the unification of the Trotskyist movement and nor in a return to generalized entrism. It does not depend on

staking everything on a general breakthrough around one country nor the fusion with whole sections of the reformist parties nor on the sudden emergence of a new vanguard directly created in a dual power situation. The real perspective is a much longer and more complex process of reconstitution of a vanguard on an international level. Nothing in the situation today leads us to predict a sudden, great leap forward between the Fourth International as it is and a mass International. It is rather more probable that we have a prolonged battle ahead of us, with a multitude of particular national and regional cases which will tend to put into question the united framework of an International. This is the battle we have to prepare for.

Once we do not bank on a brusque and imminent metamorphosis the intermediary forms and mediations along the road to a mass International will be decisive. For example the experience of the Central American revolution and to an even greater extent the future experiences of the revolutionary crises in other Latin American countries, disparages the theory of the single party. Pluralism, including among revolutionary forces will become increasingly accepted. It stimulates currents and organisations which agree with such pluralism to look for new forms of coordination and collaboration which can take the form of conferences or fronts without necessarily tending to come to a common organisational framework. We must be ready, not only to take our place in such initiatives but to launch them ourselves. If such approaches prove to be possible or necessary in different countries there is all the more reason for a similar approach to be developed for building the International.

Trotsky took this approach as early as 1933 with the initiative of a Bloc of Four. At that time he did not envisage an International limited to revolutionary Marxists but a broader international of which they could be a decisive component. In reasserting such an approach today we come up against: a dispersal of the vanguard that cannot be compared to the earlier period; references to the heritage of the Third International are very much more diffuse; the very necessity of an International is no longer a widely supported theoretical/political gain; and finally the broad outline of the program condensed in the 'Eleven points of the Left Opposition,' relates in an uneven and fragmented way, to present reality because of the specific experience in each sector of the world revolution. Thus currents in the dominated countries which assimilate through their own history a perspective of permanent revolution do not at the same time automatically adopt a position in support of the political revolution in the bureaucratized states.

Less than ever can we see the passage from today's Fourth International to the mass revolutionary International as a nice straight road, as the linear growth of an International that already exists in miniaturized version. Movement in that direction will mean all sorts of intermediary initiatives and stages. In order to intervene in this recomposition and to orientate it we have to be able to count on our own forces — which are modest but real enough. Whatever the tactical mediations we envisage — fusions and regroupments, entrust operations or interventions in trade union opposition currents — their effectiveness will be determined by the political and organizational solidity of our sections. Accumulating members, forming teams and networks of cadres, implanting ourselves in the key sectors of the working class and modifying our social composition, are in all circumstances the conditions for the success of bold organizational initiatives.

The Fourth International certainly has a lot to do with a program but just as much as this program it has to do with the reality, activity and social implantation of its sections.

Today it is grappling with a new stage and new possibilities of building itself with resources, experience, cadres and an implantation which is substantially greater than at the end of the sixties.

This political and human capital can produce good results provided we can lead and come to grips with a real process of change of the International, particularly by the transformation of the social composition of the sections and by a re-definition of its mechanisms of functioning and centralization.

A whole series of problems that have come up concerning the building of sections in the present period — including in the form of self-critical balance sheets — will continue to be discussed after the world congress in the national and international leadership structures, particularly in the PB's meetings which have proved to be very useful over the last years. The appendices to this report give an overview of the problems that have been discussed in these meetings — the August PB's meeting in Europe and the September one in Latin America.

2) *The Turn to Industry and proletarianization*

The general resolution of the Eleventh World Congress made the implantation of the sections in the industrial working class an organizational priority for the sections:

"The immediate objective of the Fourth International is therefore to recruit and form proletarian cadres through a deeper and deeper involvement in the class struggle. That must be focused on the need to carry out a decisive turn to industry, to follow a proletarian orientation."

This turn to industry, as a decisive link in an overall proletarianization policy, is not in itself and on its own a line for building the sections but an organizational measure necessary for correcting deformations linked to the specific conditions of development of the sections, particularly in the imperialist countries, since the end of the sixties. In this sense it is a bridge to the next stage of party building.

The necessity for this turn flows from the acknowledged social composition of the big majority of sections and on the possibilities opened up by the process of reorganization of the workers movement, whatever might be the tactical choices of party building, (fusions, entrust operations, fraction intervention in the traditional parties).

Although the social composition of the sections has shifted in the course of the last 10 years from youth to wage earners (factory and office workers) the proportion of industrial workers in the key sectors of public and private industry, transport and telecommunications remains low. In general there are few stable numerical concentrated groups of militants in the same production unit. The spontaneous development of the class composition of the sections tends to reproduce the initial disequilibriums — indeed to accentuate the imbalance between the white-collar and industrial workers. Finally the weight of women in the sections is too weak, both from the point of view of their proportion as well as in terms of the presence of working women, capable of playing a role in the development of a women's movement linked to the working class.

Over and beyond the unevenness in development between the sections, these facts are the sign of an abnormal situation. The emphasis placed on the need for a turn towards implantation in the industrial proletariat therefore is a response to several problems. It aims to correct this imbalance in our implantation which tends to reproduce itself or even to get worse with the spontaneous growth of the sections.

It aims to bring more adequately into alignment the proletarian programmatic definition of the section and their real social base. In particular conditions a minority organization can remain proletarian essentially from the point of view of its programmatic references. But in the long term the weakness of social roots in the key sectors of the proletariat would certainly produce both political and organizational deformations.

Finally, an implantation in the main sectors of industrial pro-

duction improves the possibilities of party building whatever the tactical conjunctural choices that may be made. There would be nothing more incorrect than to counterpose an entrust tactic to the proletarianization efforts and vice versa or again to counterpose the turn to the building of trade union oppositions. In all cases the ability to influence the trajectory of radicalizing currents in the workers movement and to recruit the best militants out of them will depend on the presence, activity, and authority in action of revolutionary Marxist militants.

Within the framework of an overall effort at proletarianizing our sections we emphasize the turn to the industrial proletariat and particularly *getting comrades hired in the big factories*, in order to correct a flagrant weakness. That does not in any way imply a theoretical revision — in a restrictive sense — of the definition of the proletariat. Most office workers in commerce, the services, the health sector, banks and administration in the developed capitalist countries are part of the proletariat. But the industrial proletariat concentrated in the main production centers play a decisive strategic role inside the ranks of the proletariat, which like all classes is itself differentiated.

Certain leaderships of the sections, after an initial effort, are tempted to relax their efforts or even to abandon the turn. We must on the contrary reaffirm the proletarianization drive. In a number of sections it is still insufficient in relation to the needs and possibilities, despite the effects of the economic crisis. To make further progress it is useful to distinguish the objective difficulties from the mistaken conception we have had since the Eleventh World Congress decision. This is what the report by the USec Bureau to the May 1982 IEC began to do:

Looking back with hindsight we can say that the majority defending the industrial turn at the World Congress presented a series of fundamental arguments for the turn and formed an enthusiastic united front for this decision. But at the same time we have to admit that it didn't succeed in raising the profound discussion of how to carry it through under different circumstances and with the given tradition and characteristics in different parts of our movement. The discussion and argumentation stayed on a quite general level. It succeeded in giving a real impulse to our movement, but had a lack of precision in itself rather understandable at that early stage. This helped to give the decisions taken and the perspectives outlined a voluntarist twist when later translated into national plans in some of the sections underestimating the amount of education and preparation necessary and overestimating the speed with which the industrial turn could be carried through, thus giving unrealistic goals for some sections that had to be corrected over time.¹⁵

In light of the experiences we have already had it is possible to place the turn to industry in an overall, clearer perspective. It is a *long term party building axis requiring prolonged effort* and is consistent with a strategic perspective in which the industrial proletariat plays a central role and not a short-term gamble about the conjuncture.

It is a *political/organizational project* and not a moral imperative. Rooting ourselves in industry is not an objective in itself but *the means to strengthen an intervention in the struggles and organizations of the working class*. We want to accumulate forces, making our sections active, working class political vanguard organizations, distinct from both propagandist groups which say what should be done without having the means themselves to act and from simply militant trade union fractions. Collective implantation inside the workplaces breaks with a de facto conception of party building limited to a spontaneous growth and good propaganda for the united front.

The role of political leadership at all levels is decisive for the proletarianization and the turn — to politically lead these moves to situate them within a political line which militants can use to intervene effectively and also to transform the leadership teams themselves. The leading nuclei of the sections, given their origins and experience, often must go through a process of social

transformation, parallel to the whole of the sections. Mastering their involvement in the turn should mean we can ensure both a transition and a continuity, the integration of leaders in the turn and the integration into the leaderships of comrades who have made the turn or have been recruited as a result of the turn.

This process is very important for helping us to improve our leadership methods, the follow through of a particular orientation, and the necessary permanent interaction between the definition of the line, its practical results and the necessary corrections to it. Building up a solid network of intermediary leaderships, town and sector leaderships is a fundamental condition for this control and correction of central orientations being carried out systematically.

Progress in the proletarianization project must be shown with concrete facts and figures. But the quantitative criteria adopted in the report given to the Eleventh World Congress (that is, the absolute majority of membership in industry) does not best express the solidity of new implantation or the quality of the intervention. Such a quantitative objective can be attained by a determined effort at getting comrades hired but also by an absolute loss of membership in the non-industrial sectors. It is applied in a blanket way to sections which are at different stages of party building and tends to cover over the specific problems they are facing. It can in certain cases, introduce an endless race for the percentage, if the initial results of the turn are not sufficient for producing a higher regular rate of recruitment in industry than in other layers. Consequently it can encourage workerist criteria tending to reduce party building just to its industrial component. The other social sectors then become simple reservoirs for the turn and not fully-fledged areas of work for building a revolutionary party.

To measure the progress of the turn it would thus be better to combine statistical data with other criteria more significant from the point of view of the quality and stability of the implantation such as for example, *the creation and consolidation of active cells in the big industrial centres, the development of trade union fractions for each branch of industry, the development of the party in the key industrial regions*, etc.

Just continually reaffirming the need for the turn can become an abstract and routinist moralist battle. It can even become transformed into a theme of activity as such, making the organization seem weird in the eyes of the workers we want to recruit. Within the framework of an ongoing effort of the proletarianization project the turn as such must be paced out in waves, the re-launching of new waves being based on political success in campaigns and struggles, permitting new layers of the membership to be convinced of the effectiveness of the turn.

More generally, while the turn to industry represents the corner stone of the proletarianization efforts for the sections the latter cannot be limited to getting comrades hired in industry. It involves a coherent series of measures: recruitment policies, a system of education, a redefinition of internal functioning, the conscious development of a long-term network of leaderships, adapting the system of press and the structures of intervention, a particular attention given to the immigrant workers in the countries where they represent a significant part of the working class.

Initially envisaged for the imperialist countries, the turn to industry was progressively generalized onto a world scale without enough attention being paid to the specific problems that can be posed in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

In these countries social differences between the proletarian or semiproletarian masses and the petty bourgeois layers or between skilled industrial proletariat and the exploited plebian masses of the big towns, are more striking than in the imperialist countries. Situations can vary a great deal from country to country.

But for organizations that originally came out of the student movement or the intelligentsia, the first problem they face is that of a 'turn to the people' — within which the turn to industry is only one element.

In fact the changes in the international division of labor over the last 25 years and the effects of uneven and combined development have in some cases thoroughly shaken up the societies of these countries. For example in the semi-industrialized countries the growth and concentration of a new working class has been accompanied by a rapid growth of both 'unregistered' sectors — peripheral to industry and services — employing millions of temporary workers without legal status or trade union membership and plebian layers subject to permanent unemployment or underemployment. These sectors of the masses can be decisive for building a revolutionary party whose role is to be the 'caudillo of the nation' (Trotsky), in other words, the force which leads and brings together all the oppressed and exploited of the country.

These economic and social transformations have other consequences. There is thus a structural, and not just conjunctural, relationship between, on the one hand recent industrial development, the urban explosion and on the other, the agrarian crisis and the ruin of the peasant's world. So that in many cases the potential for mass struggles in the cities is closely connected to whether there is mobilization and resistance in the countryside. Thus the Mexican PRT comrades directly link demands for radical urban reform to proposals for a radical land reform.

That is why building a revolutionary party with real implantation in these countries implies not only rooting ourselves in the industrial proletariat but also intervening and building up experience in the poor neighbourhoods and the shantytowns as well as in the countryside.

While the industrial working class is itself very heterogeneous and does not form a social pole of attraction as powerful as the working class in the imperialist countries nevertheless it constitutes the indispensable backbone for the building of an independent workers movement able to attract and organise other oppressed layers. The relative weakness of the traditional reformist or populist apparati means it is possible to directly win workers to a vanguard organization. The obstacle to such recruitment is often more sociological (ability of the organization to integrate and aid these militants) than political.

But it is still true that, even for small-sized groups in the process of formation, selected projects of getting concentrated groups of comrades hired can be an indispensable lever for speeding up the transformation of the sections, their recruitment and the concerns of the leaderships.

Finally, we also have had cases in these countries of organizations having an initial proletarian and trade union implantation but whose problem was to extend their intervention, particularly among the peasantry, in order to acquire the status of genuine revolutionary political parties. No simple recipe can resolve in advance the tactical choices to be made case by case in function of the strength and solidity of the sections.

However, it is important that they are attentive to these problems and are ready to set up specific organizational forms or political movements having a mass character: for unemployed, peasants, shantytown dwellers, etc., which the trade union movement occasionally has neither the possibility nor the will to organize.

At the Eleventh World Congress we adopted a resolution that outlined our basic programmatic positions and strategic line of march for the struggle for women's liberation. It also explained the particular difficulties faced by women comrades in our own organizations, and the steps necessary to begin to overcome them.

This text was prepared on the basis of a number of years' experience by the sections, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, of work and recruitment in the women's liberation movement.

The women's movement as it was then constituted — primarily women-only groups based mainly among white collar women workers and students — has declined and fragmented in most of the advanced capitalist countries. At the same time there has been an increased ideological offensive by the bourgeoisie aimed at reasserting in the context of the crisis, that women's place is in the home and not of right to be in the work force.

Our lack of implantation in those sectors hardest hit by this offensive — working class women, immigrant women — made it more difficult for us to participate in the initial struggles women have led against these attacks.

This situation makes it more vital than ever that the fight against women's oppression is integrated into all aspects of our work, and particularly into our intervention in workers struggles and the consistent work of building trade-union oppositions. The weakness of our implantation in these sectors of women is part and parcel of our overall weakness of implantation. Thus the measures we take to overcome the general problem must be accompanied by a particular effort to implant ourselves among these sectors of women.

At the same time as the objective situation changed the insufficiency of the internal measures outlined in the resolution at the Eleventh World Congress was put to the test. The inadequate attention given to political education and the integration of women comrades in the leaderships, although obviously not inseparable from the decline of the women's movement, does have a certain autonomy from it.

The sections must today take the measures outlined in the last World Congress resolution, to ensure that the potential and capacity of women comrades are used to the full in leading the organizations and areas of work, and in making special efforts to recruit women.

3) *The Youth Organizations*

The turn to industry requires complementary and increased attention being paid to intervention among youth and in building youth organizations. The resolution adopted by the May 1982 IEC¹⁶ emphasized the specific role of the youth radicalization and the vital necessity for the future of the sections *to win new generations of revolutionaries* bringing their own experience to the building of the party. The resolution consequently insists on the perspective of building real youth organizations, organizationally independent of the sections once the sections themselves are stabilized and have established their center of gravity in the working class.

In the present period these organizations are inevitably vanguard organizations and not mass organizations. Their political basis is not a complete political program or a summary of the Fourth International's program. It consists rather in a platform for action responding to the burning problems facing youth today: the struggle against racism and the effects of austerity policy, the struggle against imperialism and militarism, campaigns against repression and in solidarity with the liberation struggles of oppressed peoples, solidarity with the antibureaucratic struggles in Eastern Europe, the struggle for women's liberation, etc.

These youth organizations should be really organizationally independent from the sections, turned to militant action and education and not small youth parties, a miniaturized version of the section. It is traditional to say in the workers movement that youth organizations allow new generations, who do not have the weight of past defeats around their necks, to go through their own experiences, to commit and correct their errors. But we

should add that this also means that they are sometimes right when the "adult" sections are wrong and can shake the latter out of their routines.

We need to build organizations that are above all geared to action and function around central campaigns. But they should not just be campaign fractions. Stabilizing membership and recruitment implies diversifying beyond campaigns and having real areas of work and a sustained educational effort.

The line of proletarianization adopted by the sections must be expressed *in a specific way* in the youth organizations. It is not a question of mechanically copying the measures taken in the sections. Getting jobs in industry presupposes a level of consciousness and long term commitment to building the party which is not automatically the case for young people freshly recruited out of campaigns. To turn towards working class youth the youth organizations must first of all define their priorities of intervention among working class youth at work or in technical training and make a methodical effort to orient the professional careers of their own militants, bringing about a movement to making the turn especially among youth who are already members of the party.

Forming youth organizations is a choice which implies heavy responsibilities for the sections. It does not just mean relieving the party of its youth sector or formally granting autonomy to a youth sector which remains under the more or less attentive tutelage of the section. The aim is to create real youth organizations which have close relations of dialogue and cooperation with the section on an organization-to-organization basis. This obliges the youth organization to deal itself with the fundamental problems of youth and to work out its political line.

Fraternal links between youth organizations and the Fourth International and its sections only have any practical (and not administrative) sense if they correspond to a real experience of trust and collaboration. Without that such a definition would at best correspond to a formal programmatic agreement unrelated to the consciousness and real activity of the youth organization and at worst a pure and simple manipulation.

There is a specific problem regarding the explosive situation for young people who are particularly affected by the consequences of the crisis in the dominated countries. Up to now none of the sections in these countries have yet responded by forming a youth organization. But initial experiences of intervention in the youth movements have been made. These should be the subject of a specific discussion in order to draw the preliminary lessons and work out perspectives for future work.

4) *What sort of centralization and functioning for the International?*

The necessity for a democratic centralist-based International flows from the internationalization of the productive forces and of the class struggle. This internationalization is qualitatively superior in the imperialist epoch, the epoch of wars and revolutions, than a century ago.

However, workers economic and political struggles basically still develop within the framework of national states. There is no automatic or spontaneous convergence of struggles to common positions on an international scale. In these conditions the absence of a conscious internationalist preparation, education and orientation will inevitably lead to deep divisions between the workers of different countries when faced with the actions of a class enemy who is more and more centralized.

Building the Fourth International at the present stage fulfills the irreplaceable function of preparing and educating militants and sectors of the vanguard who we influence of the priority of international solidarity and unity of action over any "national" considerations once the interests of the proletariat of several

countries are concretely at stake. Any lack of such internationalist principles opens the way to "national communist" deformations and to possible conflicts between the workers of different countries.

The forms of functioning and centralization of the International are not, however, based on timeless principles. They must be defined in terms of the present stage of party building and the tasks which flow from them. This International is not a miniature version of a future mass International equipped with all its structures and functions but should be an instrument necessary for its construction.

Undertaking to build the Fourth International as it is, without waiting, means categorically rejecting the idea according to which an International will be the natural product of developments in the class struggle and of the spontaneous convergence of revolutionary forces on a national or regional level. The latter approach would in practice result in abandoning an international point of view for diplomatic relations between national organizations. This has been generally verified in the collapse of the best-intentioned centrist organizations, both in the 1930s with the London Bureau and at the beginning of the 1970s in Europe. But already today building an International and not a simple coordination of national groups does not mechanically imply adopting illusory and formal forms of centralization which in practice mitigate against the indispensable dialectic between strategic elaboration and practical experience in each country.

Democratic centralization of the International above all consists in working out a *common general line on the big questions and the main events of the international class struggle through world congresses and normally elected bodies*. The mechanism of internal discussion should aim at an *effective synthesis of the experience of the International through the mediation of its sections*. Consequently it decides its political positions through congresses and does not merely organize conferences in which the sections exchange pre-established positions on the big international questions. This is also why there can be no imperative mandating of delegates by sections for the world congresses or for members elected to the leading bodies of the International.

Our own experience and the history of the Third International has taught us the centralism which regulates an International — particularly a small one like ours — cannot be a mechanical reproduction of the democratic centralism of a national section involved in a struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois state in its country. Democratic centralism on an international level includes respect for *the sovereignty of the sections over the definition of their national political line, over tactics, over the choice of their leaderships and over the organization of their internal debates* — all this within the framework of the statutes which regulate the life of the International as a whole.

In this sense the International is not an organization of directly affiliated *individual members*. It is based on the *political and organizational reality of its sections*.

Once these broad points are outlined there remains an area of practical difficulties and of interpretation. Thus the SWP leadership comrades are now pulling explicitly in a direction which would gut the very notion of an International of any meaning. Inversely, comrade Hoffman and his tendency denounce the laxism and polycentrism of the International without bringing any concrete answers regarding its forms of functioning.

Indeed in his report to the February 1982 SWP Plenum comrade Barnes gives a very particular interpretation of the resolution at the last world congress:

Our view of international democratic centralism is summed up in two paragraphs in the resolution adopted at the 1979 World Congress. These are important paragraphs. Without them, we would not have been able

to agree to the political resolution for the last World Congress that dissolved the old factional lines. These two paragraphs meant that we had agreed on the dissolution of factions in the International.

Here's what they say:

"To advance party building, the *Fourth International abides by the norms of democratic centralism both nationally and internationally*, with the right to form tendencies or factions guaranteed as was the tradition in the Bolshevik Party in Lenin's time.

"On this point the statutes of the Fourth International include two general provisions on the mode of operation of democratic centralism.

"(1) *Decisions taken by a majority of delegates at a democratically organized world congress*, the highest body of the Fourth International, are binding on all sections. Decisions taken by the International Executive Committee, which is elected by the delegates to serve as the highest body until the next congress, can be appealed but remain in effect until the appeal is heard and decided on;

"(2) The members of national sections have the right to elect their own leaderships. Democratically organized congresses and plenary meetings of elected national committees constitute the highest bodies of national sections. *They have the right to determine political line on all questions nationally, and to interpret and determine for all members of the section the national application of decisions made by the Fourth International.*"

Notice the word "nationally" in the last sentence. *It's an adverb, not an adjective.* It doesn't say that the sections have the right to determine political line on all national questions. It says they have the right to determine political line on all questions nationally.¹⁷ (our emphasis)

Comrade Barnes' interpretation is to say the least unilateral and mistaken. It is a radical contradiction of point 1) of the resolution he refers to. Even if his grammatical interpretation of the difference between an adverb and an adjective is correct the last sentence nevertheless is still contradictory since it affirms at one and the same time the sovereignty of the sections over all questions (including international ones) and the duty of sections to interpret for their countries the decisions taken by the leading bodies of the International. Now the word "interpret" does not mean "contradict" and no grammatical sophistication can change that. The contradiction is even more blatant since the *statutes of the International — unanimously adopted —* explicitly state that Congress decisions must be carried out by all sections. Up to now, cde Barnes has not asked for the statutes to be revised. In fact behind this quarrel is a deeper, more substantial contradiction which is not evident in the documents but exists in reality.

The International exists as a world organization with its congresses, its statutes, its elected leaderships. If comrade Barnes were consistent, all that would be in his eyes no more than a useless ceremony. What is the good of elected congresses and leaderships if the sections determine their line in any case on all questions independently of the positions adopted by the International?

At the same time the International endeavors to respect the sovereignty of the sections in the working out of their intervention in their countries and in the organization of their internal life. As the sections develop and become more active so too there are more and more ways in which national and international questions combine in their intervention. Just to take one example, at the last world congress the line of unifying the Trotskyist movement was an international position, but in France or Brazil it became a tactical question of national party building (which in the case of France was opposed by the majority of the section).

This type of contradiction, linked to our present stage of party building cannot be resolved by any formal device. On the contrary we have to look for the framework and norms of functioning allowing us to overcome it through common agreement. Once they have accepted the statutes, participate in world congresses and elect the leadership bodies the *International's legitimacy and authority, which cannot be limited to the sum of its sections* and a confrontation between positions pre-established at a national level, must be recognized by the sections and leader-

ships. The latter can make their positions public when they are not in agreement with the International when it is a case of International events directly involving the working people of several countries.

The limits we have in political centralization come up even more strongly in our organizational centralization. It would be absurd to think the International can be more centralized and "directive" on organizational matters than on its general political line. For example that it could tolerate on the one hand a great diversity of positions in its ranks on questions as important as Cuba, Poland, and Indochina and then define on the other hand universally obligatory party building tactics like the turn to industry or the unification of the Trotskyist movement.

Recognizing the sovereignty of sections in the election of their own leaderships and in the organization of their internal life implies the corollary that sections refrain from public attacks against the line and activity of other sections.

Finally, the international application of tendency and faction rights, recognized by the statutes raises a particular problem, to the extent where it tends to come into contradiction with the principle of the sovereignty of sections in the organization of their internal debates. This contradiction, which increasingly sharpens in proportion to the growth and proletarianization of the sections, can be partially resolved by a rigorous definition of the international discussion periods and of their form (access to internal bulletins, distribution of documents, trips for representatives of tendencies). On the other hand the contradiction would be worsened by a form of debate that is the heritage (which has not been overcome) of another period of party building when the International was essentially limited to a network of propaganda groups.

The growth and transformation of the International should logically lead to more frequent, regular World Congresses with more limited agendas (focused on the big questions of the day and not a periodic debate of general programmatic refoundation every five years.) Thus a dialectic of effective centralization — in line with our present resources — could be set up based on the activity and experience of the sections.

An adjustment of the International's functioning along these lines would impose other corrections, particularly concerning the criteria for recognizing new sections. Up to now programmatic agreement in practice was the exclusive criterion, independent of any political and organizational criteria.

This overestimation of general ideological and programmatic criteria has occasionally led to the recognition of groups without the minimum guarantees of stability and activity. Such procedure can in certain cases discredit the project of the International by identifying it with purely propagandistic circles. In the worst of cases it can even lead to creating supplementary obstacles for the building of sections rooted in the masses by conferring on groups, which have not proved themselves, a power of veto over the International's relations with other revolutionary organizations of the country concerned.

This conclusion does not imply any contempt or underestimation of small organizations. Furthermore the problem is not principally a numerical one. In certain difficult circumstances (i.e., illegality) small organizations have shown greater proof of their solidity, the stability of their leaderships and the effectiveness of their intervention than numerically bigger organizations in easier conditions.

But it is an illusion to think that recognition as a section is the first or best aid the International can give to a group in formation. Within the limits of our present resources political and material aid can be more concrete and effective, without automatically implying or presupposing granting the status of a section. Recognition of new sections by the World Congress should take into account a whole series of political and organizational considera-

tions, such as the real activity, the existence of a regular press, criteria of functioning and minimal implantation. A common acceptance of such criteria would be a proof of maturity on the part of the International as well as the organizations turning towards it. This is more important than the geographical multiplication of groups, which, in some limited cases, have in part a formal existence.

This particular question, tied up with the *progressive uneven and combined transformation of the International and its sections*, was masked by the factional situation of the early seventies. Then it was confused with the circumstantial problems raised by the division of certain sections, obscuring in this way the political significance a real transitional status of sympathizing group could have.

5) *What system of leaderships in the International?*

The credibility of the International is based on its capacity to come to grips with its own growth and to invest its general programmatic references into the concrete experience of building its own sections. If its leading bodies restrict themselves to a role of defense and illustration of the programmatic heritage without being capable of intervening in the problems the sections come up against in their development, the centrifugal tensions inherent in the uneven development of the sections will accentuate. Intervening does not mean laying down a line or giving recipes, *but first of all dialogue and collaboration*. Indeed the International and its leaders are above all the product of its sections and of their experience. They also reflect the limits of this experience.

Consequently we have to conceive of the *International leadership as a genuine network of structures and cadres, based on the reality of the sections* and not as the central repository of the programmatic identity of the International. Forming cadres of the International is a conscious, long term task. There is no model of identikit picture of the "political cadre." Cadres are the product of specific stages of party building. Building up a network of leadership teams must aim at integrating the most advanced experiences of the sections, which are themselves in constant evolution, and the experiences and respective qualities of different generations of militants.

With this objective in mind we must set up a *leadership system which internationalizes the practice of the sections' leaderships*, by associating them closely in the responsibilities of the whole of the International and by ensuring a controlled rotation of certain central tasks.

As concerns the organization of the leading bodies the system of leadership should be based on the existence of an *International Executive Committee*, both representative of the reality and the diversity of the International and *sufficiently small* to be able to really meet once or twice a year to discuss the key events of the world situation. *The Secretariat must be a real political executive body* made up of comrades directly involved, to varying degrees, full or part-time, in the work of building the International. For the latter to be able to meet frequently and rapidly if necessary, its size should be around 20 members.

We also need a *Bureau* formed by the USec to ensure a full time presence of the executive and to *direct the production of our press, prepare IEC and USec meetings*, coordinate the tasks of members of these bodies, *maintain correspondence with the sections and centralize education*.

Since the last world congress the International's press has been consolidated and extended. Its great weakness remains the irregularity and distribution of *Spanish Inprecor*.

Regarding education setting up an *international cadre school* has been the most important initiative. This school must be the pivot of a system of formation for section leaderships which in the long term aims at the education and homogenization of an in-

ternational nucleus of cadres and the creation of a collective memory of our experience. It should also produce education and research material which must result in a publishing project linked to the school. Such an overall project can only be brought to fruition if it is relayed in the sections by a planned policy of using this school for the formation of their own leadership nuclei.

Once the regular leading bodies of the International are consolidated it is possible and necessary to steadily create a tradition of educational and working meetings, leadership meetings on a regional or continental basis (or meetings dealing with a particular theme). This has got under way on a European and Latin American scale and we can begin this with the Arab countries. In addition a limited effort has to be made on another level to coordinate the work of the youth organizations and, as far as possible, the campaigns.

Experience shows that it is possible to make progress in the centralization of coordination of central political campaigns (Central America, Poland, antiwar) and to strengthen our still insufficient traditions of defence campaigns against repression. These campaigns can draw in either the whole of the International or more limited geographical regions. On the other hand our implantation is still quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient for an ongoing centralization of our intervention by sector or industrial branch (this does not rule out conjunctural meetings.)

Fixing the priorities for the coming years in these terms means deliberately deciding to change a whole way of working — where the big questions discussed in the leading bodies of the International and the problems of political line and party building faced by the sections remain on different levels and hardly ever come together. This situation perpetuates and increases the juxtaposition between the International's disproportionate analytical function (as "deposit-holder" of the principles) and the often empirical practice of the sections. The lessons of this practice are often not drawn nor used.

It is not just a case of homogenizing the experience of the leaderships of the sections but also of collectivizing it, so that it can be assimilated by the International itself. In this way the International can become useful not only as the guardian of the tradition but also increasingly as a relevant political instrument capable of effectively helping the sections.

Footnotes

1. See the review *Quatrieme Internationale* No. 10, Inprecor, 120; IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 3 June 82; *International Viewpoint* Special Supplement No. 32 1983
2. IIDB, Vol. XVIII, No. 6
3. IIDB, Vol. XX, No. 2
4. These criticisms of the antimilitarist policy of the LCR were made by Cindy Jaquith in her greetings for the SWP at the December 1981 LCR congress. She did not discuss them previously with the leadership of the French section. The French section proposed a written discussion on this point and sent a dossier to the SWP comrades. (See IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 1) There has been no answer to that proposal. The January 1982 USec dealt with the public attacks of the SWP (US) leadership against the Mexican PRT. Finally, the October 1983 USec heard a report from cde Dunder concerning a report given by Larry Seigle to the August SWP plenum about the Australian SWP was a full-scale attack on the work of the Australian section. Once again there had been no previous contact or discussion with the leadership of the section.
5. quoted in the Segur report, IIDB Vol XVIII No. 6
6. IIDB, Vol. XX, No. 2
7. Tendency platform of Hoffman and others, IIDB Vol. XIX,

- No. 1
 8. IIDB, Vol. XIX, No. 4
 9. Cf. Eleven points of the Left Opposition, Trotsky
 10. See Wang's document, IIDB, Vol. XIX, No. 3
 11. Quotations from the contribution submitted for publication in the IIDB in the name of this International tendency
 12. Cannon incidentally certainly understood the different significance of border conflicts and large-scale wars: "... in our opinion Stalin could take the path of Napoleonic conquest, not merely against small border states, but against the greatest imperialist powers, on one condition: that the Soviet bureaucracy in reality represents a new triumphant class which is in harmony with its economic system and secure in its position at home, etc. That if such is really the case, we certainly must revise every-
- thing said on the subject of the bureaucracy up to now, and admit at the same time that the regenerating revolution in the Soviet Union, along with the proletarian revolution in the West, must be crossed off for a long time to come." *Struggle for a proletarian party*, Pathfinder p. 104
 13. See appendix on Latin America
 14. See Matti et al. tendency platform (not published yet in English), in BIDI 7
 15. See Frej's report to the 1982 IEC in IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 7
 16. Published in *International Viewpoint* No. 10, May 7, 1982
 17. Report adopted by the SWP (US) National Committee March 1982 published in Internal Information Bulletin (SWP) No. 1 in 1982: "Defending the Organizational Principles of a Proletarian Party."

Appendix one: Notes on the building of sections in Europe

The European document of the Tenth World Congress defined the stage of building the sections opened by 1968. It listed three possible models for party building:

- organic growth when the primitive accumulation of our forces has reached a certain threshold;
- entryism when the ongoing differentiations and radicalization are passing mainly or almost exclusively through the traditional organizations;
- winning hegemony over a broad, albeit still minority, vanguard when the radicalization is passing mainly outside the traditional parties.

These hypothetical models are too general and abstract to define a precise party-building policy. A radicalization is always reflected both inside and outside the traditional parties in varying proportions. The decisive question is that of the relationship between a particular radicalization and the actual state of the sections, for it is the only means to determine what mediations should be used on the road to building the party, and particularly what concrete step should be taken next.

We have taken on an unprecedented task; rebuilding a revolutionary vanguard *before* great new historical dividing lines (such as the Paris Commune or the Russian revolution) have caused a general redistribution of forces in the workers movement.

Even in this preparatory phase though, it is possible to begin to alter the relationship of forces inside the workers movement by patient efforts to sink roots in the class as well as by taking our own political and trade union initiatives. We *can* lead struggles, force reformist parties to accept, at least partially or temporarily, a united front framework, and play an active role in broader currents (such as trade union oppositions).

In other words, the sections — even though still a minority — *can* act politically, and not just during election campaigns, focus their forces on carefully chosen targets that can act as levers, and position themselves in such a way as to be able to gain from the immediate stages of the recomposition of the workers movement — the broad struggles like the 1969 Italian movements, the general strikes and political crises — a potential for intervention that is qualitatively superior to what they achieved in the late sixties and early seventies.

1. Reorienting in the mid-seventies

Following 1968, the existence and usefulness of minority revolutionary organizations seemed almost obvious, for both practical and strategic reasons.

- Practical insofar as it was possible to challenge the authority of the reformist leaderships on the field of the anti-imperialist struggles, radical democratic struggles (in Spain) and militant economic struggles without necessarily having to be a credible electoral pole or offering an overall political alternative.

- Strategic insofar as the French general strike of 1968 and

the Italian hot autumn of 1969 seemed to foreshadow the possibility of a sudden process of massive self-organization of the proletariat and of an outflanking of the reformist leaderships by a minority alternative revolutionary leadership.

In the second half of the 1970s, the groping for an alternative general political solution was sharpened by the first impact of the economic crisis and was reflected in the electoral arena at first. The reformist parties were then able to channel this sentiment towards themselves. This caused a questioning of the perspectives around which some of the revolutionary organizations had oriented. The Chilean experience and the balance sheet of the MIR's strategy in a situation where the Popular Unity coalition was in power gave additional weight to this mood. Beginning in 1976, several-thousand-member-strong centrist organizations in Italy, Germany, France, the Spanish state and Portugal, began to collapse or completely vanished in the space of a few months. After their dynamic growth from 1968 to 1976, the European sections of the Fourth International entered a phase of stagnation that has still not been overcome.

Redefining the place and role of independent revolutionary organizations outside the major reformist parties in these new circumstances therefore implied a strategic and tactical readjustment. The experiences of Chile and Portugal had demonstrated that one could not expect a revolutionary crisis with a chance of revolutionary victory to develop without *a prior change in the relationship of forces within* the workers movement, and without at least an embryo of revolutionary leadership solidly rooted in the working class having been built.

There are no possible shortcuts on the road to building the party.

On the plane of day-to-day tactics, this rectification of our perspective implied a deeper political and practical assimilation of the tactic of the workers united front and of its implementation at all levels, in the trade unions, in actions and in our approach to the traditional parties.

Putting this tactic, which had been defined by the Third International for mass Communist parties, into practice with minority revolutionary organizations faced with powerful reformist apparatuses that in some countries had crystallized over several decades of parliamentary democracy, raised unforeseen practical problems.

Given the prevailing relationship of forces, we had to tread a thin line between the pitfall of an ultraleft approach designed "to carve out a radical left" by turning away from the traditional parties — which did not preclude opportunist positions on central political questions such as the question of electoral coalitions and the governmental question — and the pitfall of an approach to the united front investing it with "proxy powers" (to use a formula invented by Trotsky), that is an approach that boils down to powerless calls on the reformist leaderships to do what they will

not do — which did not either preclude a form of sectarian propagandism.

The necessary readjustment on the question of the united front which these day-to-day tactical problems made more complicated, was often a painful and confused process.

2. A priority

The new phase of recomposition of the workers movement that we entered at the end of the seventies is characterized by *a further weakening of the bureaucratic apparatuses' control over the working class*, not the reverse. Under these circumstances, even a small independent revolutionary organization can find a thousand opportunities "to take its place" in the united front. This is a key difference with certain situations that arose in the 1930s, such as the situation of France in 1934, in which Trotsky believed that, faced with the unity of the SP and CP, the only way for the section of that time to take its place in the united front, was to enter the Socialist party.

Today it is obviously impossible for us to impose a permanent, or even lasting, party-to-party unity on the reformist parties and we would be paralyzed if we subordinated our sections' ability to organize actions to the achievement of this goal. However, it is possible for us "to take our place in the united front" in the framework of partial united action, in the trade unions, and during specific campaigns or initiatives, without therefore having to join one of the mass reformist parties.

Even a small force can take concrete initiatives that set significant sectors of the workers movement into motion, as demonstrated by the campaigns in defense of the sliding scale and for a referendum against the missiles in Italy, the experience of "Union dans les luttes" (Union in struggles) in France in 1981, the referendum initiatives in Switzerland, those for the 35-hour week in Italy, the anti-Nato campaign in Spain, etc.

The point of these experiences is to provide sections with opportunities to act politically, to make the sort of proposals that they can act on. For instance, the context of the economic crisis has invested apparently innocuous and limited issues (like the school question, the social security question or racism) with a potential for tripping up the large reformist organizations. This option to build independent organizations will be paid for with many tactical difficulties as long as the majority parties retain their ability to exclude us from the field of party-to-party agreements and the field of institutional electoral politics. But there is a precious and ultimately decisive payoff: the accumulation by the vanguard nucleus of its own political and organizational experience, the establishment of a revolutionary political and organizational continuity and leadership tradition which were so often lacking at times of great historical upheavals in the mass reformist parties.

In the respect, we should emphasize that our own political and organizational tradition is far from corresponding to the half-century long programmatic continuity which we claim — because of organizational splits and generation gaps.

The general option of building independent organizations does not preclude operations by fractions, working towards specific goals, inside the reformist parties nor the possibility of entryist operations. But one should establish a clear-cut distinction between entryism that has a clear target and specific timetable, and entryism without a specific goal that inevitably leads to self-perpetuating justifications and ends up changing the sort of recruits the revolutionary nucleus attracts and transforming its own nature.

Although it does not exclude flexible tactical choices, the building of independent organizations therefore constitutes a general line of march in the present context.

In the counterreport he delivered at the January 26, 1984, United Secretariat on the basis of his document published in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin Volume XX, Number

2, Comrade Jones puts a great deal of emphasis on the continent-wide rise of social-democracy. He believes that it represents a reshaping of the workers movement by the "Euroleft," which has lined up with the interests of "European imperialism," at the expense of the old postwar pro-American ("Atlanticist") social democracies and Communist Parties. Nevertheless, at the same time he asserts that European imperialism has no chance of winning this contest with American imperialism and that a major crisis will ensue in the Socialist parties.

Several points in this analysis are debatable. For instance, it is slightly precipitous to refer to the interests of "European imperialism," as if it were one, when the unification of the interests of the *various* European imperialisms has not advanced much over the last few years, and when the concentration and centralization of capital is tending to occur rather in the framework of transcontinental multinationals than in that of really European ones. Likewise, it would be actually more risky to consider that Mitterrand and Gonzalez are the agents of European imperialism inside the workers movement and have broken with the Atlanticist tradition. These questions have already been touched upon in the draft international resolution.

But even if one were to agree with Jones' premises, nothing concrete can be drawn from them. And Jones himself draws no such conclusion. The perspective of a short- or medium-term crisis in the social democratic parties could justify either the generalization of an entryist tactic (which Jones does not put forward), or an emphasis on the building of independent organizations to intervene in this crisis from the best possible position (especially if, as claimed by Jones, the Communist Parties will be totally unable to cash in on the crisis of social democracy).

While he does not draw any explicit conclusion from his argument, Jones does suggest that the most likely social explosions will occur in the dominated countries. The fact is, one merely has to peruse the daily press to realize the explosiveness of the situation caused by the economic crisis in these countries. Jones concludes that it is in these countries, and these countries alone, that we can hope to increase our sections twofold or threefold in the coming years. But no demonstration has proved that it is impossible to win over a few hundred or a few thousand militants, depending on the country, in Europe over the next four or five years.

By precluding this development beforehand, Jones is logically led not just to a correction of the turn to industry, but to a fundamental challenge to it; he is led to conceive of our youth organizations as mainly instruments for the education of young cadres; and he is led to give inordinate emphasis to the propaganda tasks of the International and its sections towards the traditional parties.

In the present phase, the building of independent organizations will make it possible for us to act as a link between still scattered and uneven radicalization processes, (inside and outside the unions, inside and outside the traditional parties), to take political initiatives, to stimulate the regroupment of some forces, and to give impetus to militant trade union currents. But this does not mean that the building of the revolutionary party should be reduced to proclaiming the need for independent organizations and to learning campaigning and recruitment organizational techniques. On the contrary, it implies increased attention to all the political and organizational mediations that make it possible for us to link up with the various phenomena of radicalization in their present form.

3. Differentiations in the reformist parties

The differentiations inside the reformist parties are still limited. They have not yet produced significant crystallizations or splits (except for the left reformist current in the British Labour Party and the creation of the PCE [Ignacio Gallego] in the Spanish state). In order for substantial leftwing splits to occur,

there will have to be not only a practical experience of reformist policy in important tests and events, but also the attraction of a mass revolutionary practice.

The fact is, there are historical reasons for the slowness of the differentiations in the reformist parties. On the one hand, the large reformist parties of the workers movement have been more involved in municipal and parliamentary activity than day-to-day struggle activity for many years now. The majority of their members and activists were recruited during the sixties and seventies in a relatively peaceful period of the class struggle and educated directly to a reformist program, unlike the 1930s or the World War. As a result, the activists who are leading the fightback lack a corresponding political framework and continue, at first, to suffer the effects of their long period of miseducation. This problem is made worse by social phenomena connected with the increased atomization of the working class, the privatization of daily life and the changed composition of certain working class parties (especially the social democratic parties) that have become very bourgeois — “bourgeois workers parties” as compared to the social democratic parties of the 1930s.

Assiduous work towards these parties' activists is no less necessary for all that, quite the contrary. But just as one cannot deal with the rise of the Left to power in France through analogies with the 1930s, one cannot mechanically foresee the forms of the recomposition of the workers movement through analogies with the great vertical rifts that occurred after World War One, most typically with the emergence of the USPD inside German social-democracy, or with the type of left reformist currents that emerged after World War Two, such as that of Renard in Belgium.

Building fractions inside these parties can in some cases be a useful complement to the building of militant currents in the trade unions and help to get trade union cadres to take a political step. But we should examine case by case whether our best worker comrades will be more useful in this work or as part of the independent public presence of the revolutionary organization.

By contrast, long-term strategic entryism as a general line for party-building corresponds neither to a necessity (because of the weakening of the reformist apparatuses' control), nor to the real radicalization processes, given the present features of most of the reformist parties.

One should also draw attention to the case of the small CPs, such as the Dutch, that are in the midst of a process of decomposition; this process means that it is now possible in some countries to put together partial united front operations with some of these parties or their components in order to turn to the bulk of the workers movement.

4. *The far-left organizations*

Most of these organizations that emerged or expanded in the early 1960s, have undergone serious crises that sometimes advanced to the point of self-dissolution. This also happened to some significant older centrist organizations like the PSU in France.

Now that austerity and warmongering policies are being implemented on a large scale, clear and immediate applicable criteria can be established by which the actions and real policy of the various groups can be judged and choices of rapprochements and regroupments that can be useful levers for action, decided.

In this framework, we must distinguish between, on the one hand, the possibility of arriving at preferential united action agreements or simple common initiatives to the left of the traditional parties, with centrist currents, small Communist Parties, sections of the “Greens” moving closer to the workers movement, and on the other hand, more fundamental practical or programmatic rapprochements with other revolutionary organizations (such as LO in France and possibly the MC in the Spanish

state).

In all cases, the possibility of setting up regular means of collaboration (liaison committees, systematic common meetings, etc.) must take as its starting point a distinction between the following two questions:

- This sort of collaborative relationship cannot serve as a substitute for the fight for the united front. It can create a more effective instrument with which we can act, mobilize and impose the united front on the reformist organizations. The problem often arises from the fact that the organizations with whom this sort of unity is possible in the fight against austerity and the missiles, in mobilizations and in election campaigns (such as LO and the MCE) reject the united front approach. But unity of the revolutionaries is only fruitful if it makes it possible to influence more effectively the basic differentiations that are emerging or will emerge in the trade unions and large reformist parties.

- More systematic united action between revolutionaries raises the perspective of a common revolutionary party. But a minimum revolutionary program making possible solid and lasting unity is no more possible on the national level than on the international. Partial programmatic and political convergences constitute so many points on the basis of which a loyal discussion on key questions of program and strategy can be advanced. Common experiences and democratic discussion may bring out sufficient areas of agreement to make it possible to consider explicit compromises on clearly defined questions. They are then clearly compromises in the eyes of all militants, compromises which can be the subject of further discussion on the basis of common experiences, on the condition that we agree on the kind of democratic centralism that will serve as the framework for such a discussion.

But even when organic unification is not possible on the short run, it is useful to establish a framework in which we can compare notes on a regular basis and to create relations of mutual confidence and respect with organizations that act as honest revolutionary organizations who have differences which only new experiences of the class struggle will allow to settle and overcome.

5. *In the trade unions*

At the present stage, the differentiations inside the traditional organizations are occurring particularly in the trade unions because they are more directly exposed to the impact of austerity policies and have often been able to sustain more of an activist life than the parties reduced to the role of parliamentary machines, and in some countries because their organization has directly penetrated inside the workplace (councils of delegates in Italy, workplace union sections in France).

Militant trade union currents opposed to the bureaucratic leaderships' policies, are reflected in action by the rejection of layoffs and attacks on wage indexation and social security systems. We are witnessing a transformation and often a renewal of the trade union opposition currents that arose in the early 1970s around radical economic demands and forms of struggle in a context still characterized by economic expansion and full employment.

The economic crisis has changed the circumstances in which resistance must be carried on, and very rapidly faces these oppositions with the problem of relating their fierce defense of existing gains to a more comprehensive strategic perspective. This thirst for politicization, if it is pursued at the expense of concrete mass activity, can lead to the danger of a politicized trade union vanguard becoming an isolated minority.

The fact is the place where currents opposed to the trade union bureaucracies can establish their credentials and broaden their following is in the struggles. They should be mainly instruments for action. But the more the economic crisis bears down, the more simply “daring to struggle” becomes an inadequate ap-

proach. "Knowing how to struggle" becomes more necessary to win even the smallest victories that can serve to bolster the workers' confidence and determination.

The more experienced trade union activists feel particularly keenly the need for a comprehensive economic and political perspective if they are to take on this difficult fight. They have less and less faith in the possibility of a left-wing way of managing austerity and the willingness to struggle becomes a criterion for division. The magazines and newsletters of trade union oppositions can be the place for discussion and reflexion on a new orientation for the trade union movement, indispensable extensions of action and mobilizations.

These militant opposition currents can take the form of groupings of activists around specific initiatives, or preferably, of actual trade union bodies on the basis of providing answers to the burning questions of the day. Building and broadening these currents is a full-fledged task of revolutionary militants in their fight to wrest the leadership of the day-to-day struggles of the working class from the bureaucracies. They can provide a lever for the centralization and extension of struggles, for launching solidarity work and popularizing positive experiences, and a framework in which militant union activists can become critical of the majority workers parties' policies without necessarily having to break organizationally with these parties.

However, in some countries, the low rate of unionization, the distrust of trade union leaderships that seemed too closely allied to the reformist parties developed by some sectors of the working class, and the entry of new less organized sectors that have been hit by the austerity measures into struggle, are all giving renewed relevance to united and democratic forms of self-organization in struggle (strike committees, assemblies, shop stewards or delegates) and to intermediate and transitional forms (action or struggle committees). Militant trade union currents do not imply any fetishistic respect for trade union legality and are not counterposed to the formation of the sort of self-organization bodies just described; rather they can serve as preparation for experiences of workers democracy, and help to initiate and propagate them while avoiding that they end up creating new divisions as a result of being counterposed to the unions.

Building the trade unions and promoting class-struggle militant currents in their midst means recognizing that, in spite of their bureaucratic misleaderships, unions are not instruments for the manipulation of the working class by the ruling class, but instruments for the day-to-day defense of the working class. Moreover, one can expect that, as the economic crisis continues, the ruling class will launch more and more attacks on trade union rights and the trade unions themselves in a number of countries (as is currently the case in Great Britain).

If the trade unions were mere instruments for the bureaucratic regimentation of the workers on behalf of the bourgeoisie, we would have to refuse to take any positions of responsibility in the unions. Party building would be reduced to linear growth and individual recruitment in the expectation of a sudden massive process of self-organization that will submerge both political and trade union traditional organizations. Such an approach would lead to a practice of abstentionism from the mass struggles and sectarian propagandism in our day-to-day activity.

With such a perspective, proletarianization and the turn to industry, instead of a means of enriching and developing better ap-

plications of an orientation to the masses, would be an end in itself, a moralizing undertaking, or even a Zinoviev-style means of internal "bolshevization" that would smother internal democracy in the name of "the class struggle inside the party."

Conversely, we cannot make the building of militant currents in the unions into the main road to building the party: trade union militants who oppose the class collaborationist policies of their bureaucratic leaderships in practice, do not automatically move from trade union opposition to the building of a political alternative. The obstacles separating the former from the latter are many. They range from distrust of parliamentary and politicians' politics (combining confused antibureaucratic feelings and non-party or anti-party ["apartidaires"] prejudices) to the perverse effects of trade union institutionalization. . . . Just as the center of gravity of the large traditional workers parties has shifted towards their municipal and parliamentary apparatus, so the trade unions have been dragged by the multiplicity of bargaining mechanisms towards tasks of social management and wage negotiations at the top.

This trend towards increased delegation of powers within the union itself and towards increased institutionalization of the unions has been fostered by deep social changes in the workplace, by transformations in the division of labor and organization of work, in industrial production structures and in the trade union apparatus itself (dispersal of the production sites and establishment of union structures based on corporate groups).

Finally, in the Southern European countries (except Italy), the trade unions only organize a minority of the working class and the rate of unionization varies considerably depending on the workplace, the generation and the job classification involved.

The need to confront the economic crisis unavoidably will set less organized or unorganized sectors into motion and cause the emergence of specific forms of struggle and organization, of contradictions between the trade union cadres who are experienced but cautious because of their concern for a political perspective, and the new, less conscious but militant and determined elements.

The building of militant currents in the unions is therefore a key element for building the revolutionary party. But the revolutionary organization can also recruit directly through its own intervention and campaigns new less experienced generations of activists whose audacity in turn can inspire more tempered workers.

These limited notes on a vast subject are not intended to be a detailed discussion of the building of our sections in Europe but merely to provide some answers to the questions about perspectives which have emerged in the various European Political Bureaus' meetings. At a time when doubts are being expressed and a temptation exists to look for new shortcuts, it is important to emphasize that we stand merely at the threshold of major changes in the workers movement and that we want to use the time we have been given to temper our organizations, develop roots in the class, educate our cadre and accumulate political and organizational experience. If we patiently set about this work now, without speculating on the future form of processes that have barely begun to take shape, we will gain the best possible preparation to intervene actively and effectively in these processes whatever form they might take.

Appendix two: Notes on the building of sections in Latin America

Since 1979 the situation in Latin America has been characterized by:

- The development of the Nicaraguan revolution, the deepening of the civil war in El Salvador and their consequences throughout the continent;
- The increasingly open American intervention in Central

America and the invasion of Grenada;

- The impact of the economic crisis and the end of the oil miracle in countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, or Mexico. This crisis severely affects the various countries of the region. In 1982 the continent went through its deepest crisis since the 1930s. Gross National Product (GNP) declined for the first time in *all*

countries simultaneously. Argentina, Bolivia, and Uruguay have been the worst-hit countries along with Chile whose GNP went down by 13 percent in one year. Taking all Latin American countries the foreign debt has increased sevenfold in less than 10 years. Just the interest payments on this debt absorbs 60 percent of the export income of a country like Argentina and the wages levels in Mexico are the lowest since the revolution.

● On the political level this shockwave has resulted in the crumbling or fall of the dictatorships in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile and more generally in the decreasing impact of the populist or traditional reformist currents. The burden of the foreign debt is reviving anti-imperialist feelings among the masses without the local bourgeoisies, closely dependent on the industrialization carried out under the yoke of the multinationals, appearing capable of a resolute nationalist resurgence.

In these conditions of intensive attacks on the masses' living standards and the gains of the workers and peoples movements, the central task in most countries is still the *winning of trade union and political class independence*.

This was already the thrust of the general orientation outlined in the Latin American resolution at the 11th World Congress. The resolution emphasized the struggle for a *mass workers party based on the trade unions*.

However this slogan was general and relatively abstract. There was a need for an accumulation of experiences and a concrete reflection on the directions and mediations the struggle for such a party could take. In the light of the past four years it is possible for us today to make some progress on developing this orientation.

On the other hand the International at the time of the 11th World Congress was extremely weakened in Latin America through the split of the Morenista current — involving in particular the Argentine PST, the Uruguayan PST, Colombian PST, Socialist Convergence in Brazil. The last four years have by and large been years of reconstruction, with the successful development of the Mexican PRT (particularly through its 1982 election campaign) and the Brazilian comrades; with the consolidation and strengthening of the POR and the unification congress in Bolivia; with the return of the Uruguayan PST to the International; and with the beginning of the implantation of the sympathising organization in Ecuador.

These successes should not cover up what are still great weaknesses: our external relationship to the Central American revolutionary process (except of course through our solidarity work); the price we are still paying in Argentina for past errors has meant we have entered a new political situation in the country without a section of the International; finally a self-critical balance-sheet drawn by the Peruvian section, one of lost and wasted opportunities, in relation to the possibilities which existed in 1979 after FOCEP's electoral success.

This was the basis on which the first Latin American section leaderships meeting was able to draw still partial and incomplete lessons of the last four years' experiences. Other questions will have to be taken up again and dealt with in depth in the near future: the anti-imperialist united front; armed struggle and self-defence; intervening in the urban and peasant popular movements. Priority has been given for the moment to the problems arising from the reorganization of the workers movement.

a) *The crisis: democratic, anti-imperialist and social demands*

The social effects of the present crisis are so deepgoing and violent that they set up an *unbreakable link between elementary democratic demands and social-economic demands*. Indeed democratic demands become extended to fundamental political rights (freedom of organization, free elections, trade union rights) and to social rights, right to eat (or eat decently), right to housing, right to health and to education. In the same way, the diktats of the IMF and the plans to privatize nationalized indus-

tries (in Mexico, Argentina and Peru), *bring out a direct relationship between anti-imperialist demands* (non-payment of the debt, opposition to privatization) *and the social needs of the exploited classes*. All these democratic and social demands, the need for a radical land and urban reform, can be brought together in *emergency plans or plans of national salvation*, highlighting the role of the proletariat, called on, as "*caudillo de la nacion*" (leader of the nation) to take responsibility for the interests of all the oppressed layers.

In recent years and especially in 1983 this need has been expressed by many mass popular mobilizations; '*paros civicos*' (the national days of protest/combined with work stoppages) '*protestas nacionales*' (national days of protest) or general strikes. In Chile or in Uruguay the national protest days have marked out the rise of the mass movement against the dictatorships. Argentina has three general strikes between December 1982 and October 1983. The September 1983 general strike in Peru was the eighth in less than six years. In June 1983 Brazil had its first regional general strike since the process of 'controlled opening.' In Mexico after June 9, 1983, when there was 5,000 local strikes, the 'paro civico' of October 19 was a success. Similar days of action have been held in Colombia and Ecuador.

The scope of these mobilizations, the fact they bring into the struggle over and above the strictly defined workers movement, sectors of the peasantry or the urban peoples movements means they involve the formation of coordinating instruments of struggle bringing together trade unions, parties and social movement (women, youth, neighborhood groupings). These instruments can take the form of mobilizing committees or collectives which can even lead, as in Peru, to the setting up of *peoples assemblies* on a local level. The assemblies can be a useful framework for the discussion and adoption of a programme of "national salvation," *against hunger, unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy, and imperialist pillage*. In Bolivia the COB, as such, already partially plays the role of such a united assembly. This is why it has been able to counterpose to the coalition government's proposals the alternative of a co-government in which it would have the majority with the peasant confederation to carry out a series of concrete measures.

Through the mobilization and formation of such bodies *the question of alliances between the proletariat, the peasantry and the impoverished urban masses can be resolved in practice*. Given this mobilization it cannot be ruled out that sectors of the bourgeoisie, themselves victims of imperialist policy or the dictatorships, participate in the struggle during an initial period. In this case we cannot in principle exclude tactical and conjunctural agreements with these sectors if these agreements have precise objectives, are rooted in action and do not imply any subordination of the mass movement. If the struggle develops it will be the bourgeoisie itself who retreats and takes responsibility for the split. We have seen this with the successive defection of different bourgeois sectors in Nicaragua between 1978 and 1980. It has been confirmed with the trajectory of the bourgeois opposition in Brazil (PMDB), the UDP government policy in Bolivia, or the politics of the democratic alliance in Chile. The latter has sought a compromise with the dictatorship as soon as it saw a popular, independent mass movement come to the fore. Similarly after the huge November 27, 1983, demonstration in Uruguay the traditional parties held back and retreated when faced with the trade unions' January 18, 1984, general strike.

These examples show the narrow limits of any tactical agreements with significant sectors of the bourgeoisie particularly in the semi-industrialized countries.

We do not have, a priori, to keep ourselves outside of coalitions which include marginal or not very significant bourgeois forces like the Izquierda Unida in Peru. The danger that these fronts might later be opened up to more important bourgeois

forces (for example, the APRA in Peru) is not any more a reason for keeping ourselves apart and denouncing future capitulations. A more effective political fight is to counterpose unity on a class basis to agreements dominated by the bourgeoisie, setting objectives for struggles and making action proposals. This is what the platform around which the PRT in Peru is proposing its integration into the IU does.¹

In countries ruled by a military dictatorship breaking with the bourgeoisie in practice tends to take the form of an *intransigent struggle for radical democratic demands, against any policy of 'mutual amnesty' between the people and the army, between the victim and the butcher, or in more general terms of 'national reconciliation'*, which in fact aims at safeguarding the continuity of the repressive apparatuses. So democratic struggles like that of the Mothers of the Plazo de Mayo or the movements taking up the cases of the 'disappeared' or fighting for a total amnesty (Uruguay), are of decisive importance in relaunching mobilizations. At a more advanced stage of the struggle, while maintaining the amnesty demand and for the reappearance of the disappeared, radical democratic demands can take the form of demanding punishment for the guilty, unrestricted free elections, the return of the exiles and the purge of the repressive apparatuses. All these slogans concretized in action proposals have a dynamic of a genuine "democratic rupture" as opposed to formulations about 'controlled openings' negotiated between the bourgeoisie and the military or military-civilian pacts.

In the absence of independent mass workers organizations it is often difficult to cap this list of economic and democratic demands with a government formulation. In that case raising the slogan of the *Constituent Assembly* can best contribute to *centralizing and politicizing these struggles*, even if it does not have the same strategic function as in the period of the formation of independent states where it fitted in with the elementary tasks of the bourgeois revolution. Thus in Peru in 1979 the battle was around the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly. In the same way today in Chile or Brazil the call for a *free and sovereign Constituent Assembly* is opposed to attempts to organize transition within the same continuity.

In Brazil for example, it was important to raise such a slogan throughout the process of democratic opening, both against the democratic opening under the surveillance of the military and the CP's perspective of the Constituent Assembly 'with Figueredo'. During the November 1982 elections such a slogan would have permitted politicization of the Workers Party (PT) campaign — counterposing an immediate political perspective to the dictatorship at a time when the bourgeois opposition was accepting the institutional framework that was being imposed and at the same time preparing for the later battles. Even today such a slogan can help place the tactical struggle of the bourgeois opposition for direct elections for the presidency into an overall perspective which the bourgeoisie is not ready to adopt.

In the course of the mobilizations, the struggle for the Constituent Assembly can take on a social content that goes beyond radical parliamentary democracy should there happen to be the emergence of bodies of mass peoples self-organization (Peoples Assemblies, etc.).

b) *The emergence of independent "class-struggle currents"*

Winning trade union and political class independence is still a task to be achieved in most countries where working class organizations are still a limited political force (Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, Venezuela). Even in countries where there is a relatively strong working class trade union tradition (Peru and especially Bolivia), there is still a big gap between the trade union strength of the workers movement and its expression on a political level. The emergence of independent working 'class' currents can only be the *result of a practical mass experience of the working class*. They cannot be a priori de-

finied with stable political criteria such as support for a specific platform. We are talking of currents which *tend in action* to affirm and consolidate their class independence from the state apparatuses or from the bourgeois parties.

In the context of the present crisis, *the struggle for class independence on the social level closely combines with the struggle for political class independence*: consistently defending the living standards of the exploited masses is inseparable from democratic and anti-imperialist demands that the bourgeoisie is incapable of taking up. The case of a working class leader like Lula is significant in this respect. He went from a radical strike experience to the idea that an independent workers party was necessary through coming up against the limits imposed on trade union activity by trade union laws handed down from the populist period, which kept the trade unions under the control of the ministry of labor.

Making the break and taking the path of class independence is done initially (and above all carried out) in practice. It is the fruit of concrete mass experiences, which can be crystallized at a given moment in new political-organisational gains. Thus the big strikes of 1978 and 1979 in Brazil led to the formation of the Workers Party (PT). After the November 1982 elections, the combined effects of the election results and the economic crisis have given a new spur to its activity. The partial general strike of the 21st July 1983 thus served as a springboard for the foundation of the CUT (United Workers Confederation) as a cross-branch trade union confederation independent of the state, challenging current trade union legislation.

Within this process of radicalization and growing consciousness the platforms and programs are the result of synthesis of an initial experience rather than constituting a real starting point. They are often adopted at the initiative of the most advanced sectors of the movement, expressing the most radical ideas and running ahead of the real level of consciousness of the mass movement. Once adopted however they can become a gain and a reference in the collective memory and a precious fulcrum for later battles.

Thus the Pulacayo Theses have become a reference point in the history of the COB and of the Bolivian workers movement. In a similar way the Charter of Principles adopted at the founding congress of the Brazilian PT in 1979 has become a legitimate reference against any attempt to compromise over class independence. Finally the fact that the 1981 Congress of the Working Class (Conclat) adopted calls for the Constituent Assembly and the general strike meant they became something which could not be bypassed during the foundation of the CUT.

No general formulation can predetermine the path and forms of emergence of independent class-struggle currents. In Brazil, for example, they began to express themselves in particular with the formation of the metalworkers trade union opposition in Sao Paulo, which grouped together militant activists. Then they took the form of groupings of official trade union structures won by militant (dubbed 'authentic') trade unionists. To want to counterpose one stage of the process — that of the metalworkers' opposition — to another, that of the 'authentic' trade unionists would have only blocked or marginalized the possible development of a mass independent working class current. In the same way the temptation of certain far-left groups to try to counterpose 'free trade unions' existing only on the paper of their program, to the combined process of affirming class independence in struggle (creation of strike funds, general meetings) and winning legally recognized trade unions only results in sectarian isolation.

These independent working class currents are furthermore constantly evolving. There is a continual redrawing of the lineup of the political forces involved as each new problem comes up. In July and August 1983 such or such a current defined itself in practice in Brazil in relation to questions like the general strike and the proclamation of the CUT. With the CUT established new

internal differentiations can develop — on the position to adopt on the austerity policy and the bourgeois opposition, on the question of unity or again on forms of struggle. Therefore revolutionaries should not just bank on the natural evolution of these currents, trying at any one time to influence their leaders. Rather what needs to be done is to *consolidate within its ranks an independent class-struggle backbone* through the building of, and winning of, trade union structures solidly rooted among the masses. Thus, despite its particular characteristics, intervening in the Bolivian COB as an external political group whose members only act in the union as individual trade union activists, who respect the delicate internal balance of the COB, is insufficient. It is also necessary to win basic structures of the trade unions to such a political project and to such concrete proposals while respecting the COB's unity.

c) *The mass workers party*

The fact that Brazil is the only country where an independent workers party has been actually formed over the last few years does not invalidate the overall perspective outlined by the 11th World Congress. *The struggle for class political independence is still the decisive line* to follow in most countries. But the conditions of this struggle and the mediations the formation of such a party goes through can vary considerably.

Thus the perspective of a mass workers party should not be locked mechanically into the over-rigid formulation of the 'workers party based on the trade unions' even if there is necessarily a close relation between the radicalization of independent class-struggle currents in the trade union and the possibility of creating a party. The Brazilian experience is eloquent in this respect.

Despite being launched by militant, prestigious leaders, the Workers Party (PT) is not a party organically based on the trade unions. On the other hand the weight and authority of these 'authentic' trade unionists have been decisive in ensuring the Party took on a real mass character and in preventing it becoming transformed into a fragile electoral mosaic of already organized political groups. Again its trade union roots permit it to conserve and affirm its class character at the time of big political events: standing its own candidates in elections, refusal to go into coalition governments with the bourgeois opposition at the state level (in Rio and Sao Paulo), support for the formation of the CUT.

Emphasizing the relationship between the radicalization of a mass current, particularly in the trade unions, and the formation of a real mass workers party, means at the same time rejecting ready-made formulas which occasionally end up by counterposing working class independence to the real mass movement. It is significant that the Lambertist and Morenist currents which always propagandized a great deal for the mass workers party based on the trade unions, have remained blind to the real possibilities of concretizing this in Brazil and probably in Peru. In Brazil the Socialist Convergence (CS) group thought it could channel the independent working class current through its own ranks and transform itself into the PT. Such illusions only resulted in it counterposing the CS to the PT — in other words to the concrete experience of the mass movement — and it denounced the (real) PT from the beginning as a reformist party, considering its leadership as an already crystallized reformist bureaucracy. Consequently CS participation inside the PT is nothing more than a classic entrust operation. In the same way the formalist idea of a workers party based on the trade unions had led the Brazilian Lambertists of the OSI to initially denounce the PT as a 'crutch for the dictatorship' put together by a yellow trade union bureaucracy.

It is even clearer in Argentina. *Politica Obrera* purely and simply renamed itself *Partido Obrero* as if the struggle for the formation of a real independent workers party could be limited to merely self-proclaiming it — the net effect is to discredit the very

idea of a workers party.

Once we do not see the workers party based on the trade unions as a stage that has to be passed through we can envisage many other mediations for the emergence of an independent working class party. In Peru, at the end of the dictatorship the FOCEP organised not only working class political organisations but also prestigious leaders of the trade unions and popular mass movements. It could have been able to become much more than a conjunctural electoral front. Beyond the elections, it could have set up local action committees and defined proposals for intervening in the trade union movement and the other mass organizations. It could thus serve as a springboard for a project of an independent working class party. This opportunity came up again at the time when ARI was formed. Instead of seizing it the Morenists and Lambertists torpedoed its chances, trying to impose — on a united election campaign — central demands more precise than those in the programmatic charter and document of the Brazilian PT (which do not include the demand for a constituent assembly nor a workers government).

On the other hand it is important to see the distinction between the expression of a real radicalization of the mass movement and political maneuvers by different apparatuses. In Colombia, after the abortive project of standing independent working class election candidates from the trade unions Gerardo Molina's proposal to form a Socialist Party did not at all correspond to a process of mass radicalization among trade union activists. It was to a large extent a diversion from persevering in efforts to form an independent workers party.

d) *Independent working class currents, united fronts and trade union unity*

The appearance of independent working class currents, on the political or the trade union level, *does not mean there is no further need for continuing the struggle for class unity and the united front*. The Brazilian PT is a key gain from the point of view of class independence. But, as its November 1983 election results show, it cannot claim to represent on its own the working class and poor peasants. Adopting a united front approach for a workers and peoples front, constitutes the best alternative to any attraction of an unprincipled bloc of 'opposition' outside of class differences.

In the same way the establishment of the CUT is a decisive step forward for militant trade unions independent of the state apparatus. But at the same time it crystallizes trade union *disunity*. Furthermore, keeping present trade union legislation on the statute book gives the state the possibility of breaking up elected trade union leaderships as it sees fit, of using trade union dues and of financially aiding yellow class collaborationist trade unions. It can contribute to modifying the relationship of forces inside the trade union movement outside of periods of direct struggle. *The necessity of continuing the battle for united action and trade union unity is posed even more sharply*.

There is a tendency for there to be an irreconcilable opposition between class struggle currents and the class collaborationist reformist currents. However this opposition is not expressed immediately in a vertical, stable and definitive rupture between these two main tendencies. Sectors of the class struggle currents when confronted with new tests, can regress just as new elements can be won from the forces subordinated to the bourgeois apparatuses. These developments are determined by struggle and experiences. The united front is the basic lever for achieving this.

The depth of the crisis leads to attacks against trade union gains and the bureaucracy itself which can result in factions of the bureaucracy being pushed into action in Brazil, Argentina or Mexico. Thus in Mexico the PRT comrades have correctly fought for the militant wing of trade union structures and of political organizations — the *National Front in Defense of Wages*

and *Against Austerity and the High Cost of Living (FNDESCAC)* — to take a line of unity of action and to make openings to other forces.

Alliances at the level of the mass movements, conjunctural political agreements on democratic and anti-imperialist demands can also contribute on the political level to the evolution or the internal differentiation of petty bourgeois or formerly populist organizations.

e) *Importance of the agrarian question and the peasant mass movement*

In countries like Mexico, Bolivia, or Peru where there have been large-scale land reforms, the axis of present struggle has shifted from the struggle against large landowners to the struggle for economic demands. The struggle for land has become more complex and diversified. Traditional struggles against the big landowners combine with struggles against the damage caused by tourist companies and large cattle ranches, etc.

The peasantry is more closely tied than ever to the overall economy in two ways. On the one hand as producer of the major part of the foodstuffs consumed in these countries. On the other hand as consumers who buy a growing part of what they need on the market.

In several countries the process of reorganization of the peasantry has made considerable progress.

- In Guatemala and El Salvador it is a decisive base of support for the armed movements, which have defined in each case precise lines of intervention linking peasant and ethnic demands to alternative solutions for production.

- In Peru, since the land reform, peasant organizations have grown, going in certain cases as far as to break with the corporatist framework (CNA) and in other cases to reanimate old organizations of struggle (CCP). During the last two years various national actions have taken place — “agrarian national day of action,” (paro nacional agrario), blockading roads, and other forms of mobilization.

- In Bolivia peasant action has *broken up the old military-peasant pact* by forming, under the auspices of the COB a united peasant union. In 1979 — almost as soon as it was founded — the CUTCB organized a road blockade in support of economic demands concerning price increases, for lower transport costs and less taxes on production. In April 1983 it organized a new road blockade in support of similar grievances, adding a demand for the establishment of credit institutions and agricultural insurance.

- In Mexico the CNPA was formed in 1979. It organizes a broad range of categories, farmers and producers, Indians and activists concerned with the land question. The CNPA has organized national marches, hunger strikes, land occupations, etc.

- In Chile, Pinochet has carried out a violent “counter-land reform” that has eliminated a number of the gains won under the Christian Democratic and Popular Unity governments. The agrarian problem will consequently again become a key question within the framework of the crisis of the dictatorship.

- In general in the Andean Pact countries *so-called natural catastrophes*, floods, and droughts have hit the peasantry hard, causing famines, migration of hungry people to the towns, greater mobilizations (as in the Brazilian North East).

Generally there has been a *big rise in peasant struggles* in Latin America since 1979. In several key countries peasant organizations have been formed or reconstituted and have acquired the capacity of organizing and leading real mass mobilizations. These peasant organizations are more closely tied to the workers and peoples movement than in the past.

f) *United front and unity of the revolutionaries*

We have often insisted on the need to distinguish when dealing with ongoing united agreements between united action (united

front) and fundamental programmatic agreements (in the perspective of building a revolutionary party). This distinction does not mean we can classify or eliminate all the intermediary cases that can come up (particularly with election agreements) but it outlines a basic approach.

Indeed, when there is a lack of clarity on the exact character and function of an agreement there can be a temptation to unnecessarily overload its political basis. The risk is then to end up with an over-detailed platform from the point of view of the needs of the united front, which can become a sectarian obstacle to unity and at the same time still be insufficient from the standpoint of a programmatic agreement permitting advance towards organic unity in building the party. That is partly what happened in Peru with the case of FOCEP and ARI, where the question of the governmental formulation took on exaggerated importance. While it was important after several years of military dictatorship to clearly put forward the political independence of the working class through working class candidatures, the electoral agreement itself could have been limited to a few democratic and social demands, leaving the participating organizations the widest freedom of propaganda and agitation on the whole of their program.

Similarly the definition of the workers party as a working class party, as a party without bosses is sufficient at the beginning as a basis for getting out and energetically building it. The adoption of central slogans which we judge correct or necessary is not a pre-condition for our participation. We continue to democratically defend them, within the united framework of the party, basing ourselves on the concrete experiences of the class struggle.

Just as a “minimum program” can at the same time be *maximalist from the standpoint of the united front, and opportunist from a strategic point of view*, stabilizing an intermediary political front can result in creating an *obstacle both for getting a united front and for building the party*.

The problem of the party of the revolutionaries implicitly lies behind this question of united agreements and their dynamic. It is raised because of the weakness and dispersal of revolutionary forces in a number of countries. Moreover, the very notion of “revolutionary” is rather imprecise, especially when it is applied to small and unstable organizations whose declarations can only be verified in practice to a limited degree. Such a title indicates a resolute commitment to destroy the bourgeois state and overthrow capitalism but it is far from sufficient to define a revolutionary strategy.

With regards to such currents it is better to begin from real processes of convergence in action, defining concrete initiatives and proposals facilitating an evolution in the situation (coordinating mass work, liaison committee, meetings and debates at all levels) than to a priori raise the necessity of a party of the revolutionaries without precise programmatic content.

Through such an approach we educate our own members on the validity and importance of their own positions while exploring the practical significance and eventual limits of any possible political rapprochements. At the end of such a process, we can judge the agreement reached sufficiently solid to make a united organization viable, even if this is at the cost of certain explicit and frankly admitted compromises.

The regroupments brought about in Brazil around the newspaper *Em Tempo* strikingly illustrate this. They took place on the basis of three criteria, a programmatic agreement on the big fundamental questions (permanent revolution, necessity of a vanguard party and an International, antibureaucratic revolution in the Eastern Bloc); practical agreement on building the PT; common ideas about democratic centralism. This basis was solid enough to leave secondary tactical differences on one side, or even to reserve fundamental questions for later, such as international affiliations, which could be the subject of differences, on

condition of course that different positions could continue to be defended on these points.

A clear conclusion concerning relations with the Castroist leadership can be drawn from all the experiences of fusions and regroupments aimed at building the revolutionary party. While this leadership plays an active role on the continent and has undoubted prestige, the current it influences is not homogenous, but differentiated in function of the particular national and historical experiences of its components. Occasionally it is divided in the same country on basic questions of orientation, as was the case up to 1979 with the three components of the FSLN, or as is the case today with the Salvadoran organizations. Also, "*fusion with the Castroist current*" is not in itself an answer or a coherent party-building project, aiding the sections to politically orientate themselves in the present situation.

g) *Overcome a decisive weakness*

In the final analysis the only guarantees for taking on bold party-building operations are: the collective elaboration and assimilation of clear perspectives for the whole organization and the solidity of its collective leadership; the education of its members; and the quality of its implantation in the big proletarian centers. Without that an organization always runs the risk of being immobilized by conservatism or of being divided over any new initiative.

However, one of our key weaknesses in Latin America, despite the long history of organizations *belonging to the revolutionary Marxist tradition is our lack of political continuity, of organizational traditions, of accumulation of a collective experience, or a memory of our successes and our errors.* This lack of continuity has been once again shown in the last 10 years with

the crisis of the Argentine PRT, the loss of certain nuclei articulated on the 9th World Congress line, then the split with the Morenist current. To a certain extent it was only quite recently that the International as such began to exist as a current really organized on a continental scale.

Great weaknesses flow from this situation. Each section is practically obliged to re-appropriate by itself what should be elementary established practices (for example the conception and organization of election campaigns), or more fundamental ones, such as how to come out of a period of illegality in order to take advantage of a period of democratic opening, while preparing for the eventuality of a new repressive turn in the situation.

At the same time we suffer from a lack of continuity in our membership generations. Most of the cadres of our sections have formed themselves over the last 10 years. The sections have hardly any tradition in building the apparatus. *Even having regular, well produced newspapers — the press of the Brazilian or Mexican comrades — is something new and an exception. It can play a decisive role in the education and information of the sections, the circulation of experiences throughout the continent.*

In the next years our efforts must focus on all these areas. The aim of the continental or regional meetings, the reciprocal aid between the sections, and the collective appropriation of their experience, with the aid of the International, is to form the continental-wide network of cadres we so badly need.

Footnote:

1. See PRT self-criticism in *International Viewpoint*, No. 44, January 16, 1984.