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# Draft Resolution on the Central American Revolution

Adopted by majority vote of the United Secretariat on September 9, 1984

## I. The Context and the Imperialist Escalation

1. A quarter of a century ago, the victory of the socialist revolution in Cuba heralded a new stage of the world revolution. A first breach was opened in the American empire. The seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement and the establishment of a revolutionary government (March 1979) in *Grenada* opened up a new breach. Grenada set up a revolutionary link between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean basin region.<sup>1</sup> The revolutionary seizure of power by the FSLN in *Nicaragua* inaugurated a further stage of the prolonged revolutionary process developing in this strategically decisive region for the United States. The overthrow of Somoza represented a defeat for the American presence that had hidden behind the National Guard and Somoza dictatorship for so long. Today the revolution in *El Salvador* is the sharpest expression of the class confrontations in the region. The other revolutionary and mass struggles underway in Central America (mainly in Guatemala) and the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica) are also unfolding within this dynamic of radical challenge to the U.S. system of rule and of extension of the socialist revolution.

The *geo-political framework* profoundly influences all aspects of the Central American revolution. The revolution developed in countries strictly subordinated to imperialism where the political regimes were 'created' by the United States. The states that have emerged from victorious socialist revolutions — like Cuba and Nicaragua — are the first authentically national and independent states crystallizing the historical aspirations for self-determination of these oppressed nations and the demands of the exploited masses. These revolutions come up against the imperialist counter-revolution in this United States *security zone*. This explains the present central role of the Central American revolution in the class struggles on an international scale.

2. There are few regions which have been so much *the object* of the foreign policy of an imperialist power as Central America and the Caribbean. It has been the theatre for permanent United States intervention for 85 years. The United States has always claimed the *right* to dictate its law there.

This whole region is considered to be an integral part of its 'defense system'. The United States has 40 to 50 *military bases* there. It is building new ones — among others in the Honduran part of the Gulf of Fonseca between Nicaragua and El Salvador. In 1982-83 20 percent of the entire U.S. military budget was earmarked for this region.

This zone is a major communications and trade route, as well as a transshipment and refining site for oil shipped from Alaska and the Middle East to the United States. It is a very important trading lane for both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts (Panama Canal). It bristles with top-ranked, off-shore financial havens (Panama, Cayman Islands, Bahamas).

It contains oil, gas, and other raw material reserves.

The Reagan plan for the 'Caribbean Basin' — in which the United States is included! — aims to use it as a location for implanting industries avid for cheap labor. Washington and Wall Street would like to impose on an even greater scale a Puerto Rico-style model of development! A hundred important firms are coordinated in the 'Caribbean Central American Action' — a body led by D. Rockefeller which gives total support to Reagan's policy. However *direct* imperialist economic interests (investment) are relatively limited compared to its *military-strategic* interests.

American imperialism demands 'absolute hegemony' in this part of the world with the accord of the imperialist bourgeoisies. Keeping this intact and allowing no sharing of its supremacy is a test of its *international credibility*. The present revolutionary upsurge threatens the American empire in its 'own' backyard. Also, the problems of the 'backyard' are in the process of becoming domestic problems — if only because 10 percent of the region's population live in the United States.

The *power of attraction* of the Nicaraguan revolution, coming after the Cuban, is based among other factors on the fact that it shows it is possible to defeat American supremacy head-on in one of the regions closest to the imperial metropolis. Better still, despite all the difficulties caused by the Pentagon, these revolutions, sustained by popular mobilization have been able to rapidly begin to respond to the basic needs of the majority of the people. An economic disaster is hitting the *Southern Cone* countries hard — the impoverishment of very broad layers of the population is accelerating. All this contributes to closer links between the class struggles in South America and the Central American revolution, which increases the stakes involved in the ongoing confrontations.

3. The new rise of the revolution in the Caribbean Basin is taking place — as opposed to the period of the Cuban revolution — when American imperialism is undergoing a *prolonged economic crisis* and its hegemony is in decline. A decline sharply revealed by the defeat suffered in Vietnam and the overthrow of one of its strategic allies, the Shah of Iran. So the Central American revolution became the target of a large-scale imperialist *counter-offensive*. The counter-attack underway since the July 1979 victory of the FSLN is one facet of a *global policy*: brutal attacks on workers' living standards in the United States: breathtaking re-militarisation and stepped-up pressure against the Soviet Union; strengthening of military intervention capacity aimed at hitting back hard against attempted revolutionary breakthroughs in the dominated countries and finally the economies of the latter are placed under tight IMF surveillance.

In fact Carter had begun this policy of *crisis and war*. The Democratic Party administration had a series of failures when it attempted to set up a regime without Somoza but based on his National Guard. It attempted to get the Organisation of American States (OAS) to back a direct counterrevolutionary intervention,

in order to get broader support in the United States and internationally. The OAS refused this, for the first time.

Imperialism quickly drew the lessons of this experience. It gave increased importance to *regional military sub-alliances*.

As early as autumn 1979, Carter orchestrated Romero's coup d'état in El Salvador, stepped up military aid to Honduras and El Salvador and prepared the conditions which were to turn Honduras and Costa Rica into future bases of intervention against the Nicaraguan revolution, ensured the survival and training of Somoza's National Guard, reinforced the presence of *marines* in the area and directed the overthrow of Manley in Jamaica although masking the operation through the elections.

Since 1980-81 the Pentagon's war drive has been continually stepped up. It has the following features:

a) A reorganisation of the Salvadoran police and army (the latter being placed under the tutelage of the American military high command). The involvement of 'U.S. advisors' is getting greater and greater — in terms of information gathering, air-surveillance, maintenance of sophisticated military equipment and also in commanding military operations in the field. Without the aid, training and structuring provided by the United States, the Salvadoran army would have certainly suffered a collapse under the effects of the FMLN military offensives.

b) The increase in the number of joint military exercises between the United States, Honduras and El Salvador — these maneuvers are organized in the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras (on the Nicaraguan-El Salvador frontier) and also some certainly take place in Salvadoran territory. These military exercises serve to forge *regional military alliances* — a necessary condition for the direct use of American forces in greater number. Their importance is due to the failure of the imperialist plan to 'Latin Americanise' the war in Central America. This project was to be based on armies like that of Argentina. But it broke up due to two factors — the Malvinas war and the crisis of the Southern Cone dictatorships. During the intervention in Grenada the United States inaugurated the use of these regional military sub-alliances.

c) Honduras has been transformed into a real American 'aircraft carrier'. More than 2,000 soldiers are permanently stationed there excluding the CIA personnel who organize the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary forces. The *Palmerola* base — equipped for all types of military aircraft, is the strategic center of the United States war operation. Ten military airports complete Honduras' "defense system." A training center for Salvadoran and Honduran troops, with a capacity for 1,500 soldiers have been functioning since 1983. Finally a system of radar surveillance, necessary for carrying out both aerial offensives against Nicaragua and permanent air reconnaissance has been set up. The heavy American influence has provoked the first popular reactions. Conflicts have emerged inside a military hierarchy which is keen on negotiating American aid as far as possible to its own advantage and concerned with maintaining a position of force against other armies in the region (such as the Salvadoran one).

d) A *fully-fledged counterrevolutionary army* based in Costa Rica and Honduras is financed, trained and staffed by the CIA. It is 15,000 strong with a solid component of ex-Somozista National Guards. These mercenaries have launched an *all-out war against Nicaragua* causing great human and financial costs.

e) In the Caribbean sea the American fleet is on constant patrol and organizes bigger military exercises (Ocean Venture). A reorganization of the police and military in the Caribbean states is underway. A multinational military force has been established (Dominica, Antigua, St. Lucia, and Barbados) to prevent any 'new Grenadas.'

f) Washington relies on *Israel* to expand its war effort in the region. The Zionist state plays a frontline role in the arming and

training of repressive forces in Guatemala. It is a prime supplier of modern arms to the dictators of the region. Its advisors operate in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and among the 'contras.' Taiwan also participates in these counterrevolutionary operations by financing the anti-Sandinistas and by arming and training the armed forces in Guatemala.

g) The occupation of Grenada by American troops was to show the revolutionary movements of the region — as well as U.S. allies — what Washington's real objectives are. It also demonstrated that, faced with a deployment of U.S. air/naval forces, revolutionary fighters should not expect aid of an equivalent kind. Castro correctly stressed that to deter such aggression and — if need be — to resist it, unfolding revolutions have to draw strength from the level of mobilisation, the preparation of the masses and the revolutionary forces, and the quality of their leadership. This can raise to the maximum the price imperialism would have to pay for such action and could facilitate a certain aid from the revolutionary forces of the region. The course of the Grenadian revolution made that impossible.

h) Since 1981, the Reagan administration has worked out a doctrine based on hackneyed formulas designed to legitimize direct large-scale intervention domestically and internationally. It alleges in the first place that the United States must stand up to the USSR in Central America; next, that the FMLN only exists because it is propped up by the Cuban-Soviet alliance via Nicaragua, thereby casting El Salvador as the victim of a foreign aggression; and finally, that the fall of El Salvador would pave the way for "Russian penetration" in Guatemala and then Mexico. Faced with this danger, the United States has a duty to fight "Russian expansionism." It portrays American policy in this part of the world as just one element of the "East-West" conflict.

Reagan's and the Pentagon's diplomatic maneuvers fit in with this schema. Their objectives are domestic and international, as well as having a direct effect on ongoing battles in Central America. As is the tradition, American imperialism '*put together*' elections and tries to brush up democratic appearances in El Salvador and Guatemala for instance. Such moves are designed to legitimize stepped up military aid or direct intervention for the 'safeguarding of democracy.' They also represent a last-gasp attempt to hold off the crises of bourgeois leadership. Finally they are also used to introduce breaches in an anti-imperialist and antidictatorial front and to cause a certain disorientation among layers of the population.

4. But we should not lose sight of the essential thing. For American imperialism, as the bipartisan Kissinger report bluntly put it, the Cuban workers state and Nicaragua are *anomalies* in this 'internal periphery.' They must in the short term be contained and if possible eliminated. This basic objective is accepted by all the bourgeois forces in the United States. They can have differences, based on their specific judgement on the internal situation in the United States, over the balance to be struck between the means to be employed, between all sorts of pressure and direct aggression. But they are united about the necessity of preventing at all costs the victory of the Salvadoran revolution, the consolidation of the revolution and state in Nicaragua and of inflicting a major defeat on the Guatemalan guerrillas.

*A full-scale escalation is planned.* At different levels it aims to put an ever-tightening noose around Nicaragua, to politically and militarily consolidate the present regime in El Salvador and to use this tremendous pressure to try and militarily and politically weaken the revolutionary forces. European countries (the EEC) and Latin American countries (like Venezuela and even Mexico) are now using economic weapons to try and force Nicaragua into line. Their support to the Duarte regime in El Salvador goes along the same lines. Furthermore the involvement of sectors of

the European bourgeoisies, of the Social Democracy and in a certain respect of the Latin American bourgeoisies in these diplomatic and political maneuvers has a dual aim: to diversify the very strong pressure on the revolutionary forces and those willing to aid them to one extent or another and lessen the political cost for Washington of a qualitative escalation with the direct presence of imperialist troops.

*The first phase of a counterrevolutionary war in Central America has already begun. The Pentagon's whole strategy is to recuperate complete hegemony over the Caribbean basin, as an*

integral part of *American imperialism's overall counter-offensive*. This explains the specificity of the struggle led by the FMLN compared with both the July 26 Movement in Cuba or the FSLN in Nicaragua which had to confront imperialist aggression *after* the seizure of power. Thus, what is at stake in Nicaragua and El Salvador is of exceptional importance. Consequently for workers and revolutionaries throughout the world, for those who are fighting against imperialist remilitarisation it is of primordial importance to aid the victory of the revolutionary movements in Central America and the Caribbean and to ensure the unconditional defense of Cuba and Nicaragua.

## II. Characteristics and Nature of the Revolution

1. In the Central American isthmus those who have always suffered oppression and exploitation no longer accept to be kept down. One of the roots of their revolt — from the beginning of the 70s, lies in the *considerable deterioration of their living standards*. That became linked up with continually frustrated political aspirations, permanently violated democratic rights and with unresolved social problems built up over a long period.

Over some 30 years the Central American population has more than tripled. More than 45 percent of the population are less than 14 years old. This *youth* is considered to be a danger in itself by the dictatorial regimes, in Somozista Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.

*Underemployment and unemployment* are growing. Unemployment levels have exploded since the end of the 70s. Economic development in the 60s and the beginning of the 70s further accentuated the extreme *differentiation* in income distribution. According to UN figures, nearly 65 percent of the population lives in a 'state of poverty' and 40 percent in 'extreme poverty' (57 percent in El Salvador). Malnutrition, undernutrition, very high infant mortality rates, illiteracy, generalized lack of access to basic services (water, electricity etc.), and endemic illness is the daily reality for the great majority of the people, who are today fighting against imperialism and its client dictatorships.

Under the effects of the agrarian crisis and industrialization the *urban population* has rapidly increased, with proletarian and semiproletarian agglomerations in the lower-class neighborhoods of the main towns, especially the capital cities. Over the last fifteen years the number of students has skyrocketed. However the *rural population* is still big, is still the majority: more than 55 percent on average (El Salvador, Honduras with particular weight in Guatemala). The rural labor force continues to grow with a consequent increase in underemployment. Under the impact of agricultural transformations regional geographical centers have grown up. All this urban and rural 'massification' underlies popular struggles.

The consequences of the international crisis of capitalism on these fragile, deformed and dependent economies resulted in their going into the *most serious economic slump in their history*. The urban masses' living standards have worsened, impoverishment of small peasants, the rural proletariat and semiproletariat has accelerated and the petty and medium bourgeoisie have not been spared. The whole social structure has been shaken up.

2. *The disruption of the oligarchical system of rule* turned out to be an element favoring the revolutionary process. The ruling oligarchies — fully party to the economic modernization and thereby undergoing a differentiation that occasionally results in internal tensions — are incapable of responding to the social and political effects produced by economic growth (extension of capitalist relations of production, destruction of precapitalist social structures, increase in size of the urban middle class, implantation of the multinationals, etc).

This growth/modernization exists but is very partial, superficial, and distorted. To take agriculture for example, only the export sector is involved in this process which goes hand in hand with a concentration of land ownership. The situation for agriculture linked to the domestic market (basic subsistence foodstuffs)

is getting worse. Industrialization is taking off — its weight in GDP has doubled in 15 years. However, it is still very fragile and does not modify the predominant importance of the agro-export sector. Nevertheless the social effects of these transformations go beyond the specific economic dimension.

The oligarchies cannot simply perpetuate the old system of rule (Costa Rica is an exception to this general framework). *Interbourgeois infighting* is more and more frequent and is expressed *even inside the bourgeois state* (putsches in Guatemala, conflicts in El Salvador over the agrarian reform of General Molina, the clashes were stronger and more continuous in Nicaragua after 1975). But these oligarchies, who monopolize power inside the bourgeoisie, are incapable of establishing a new system of alliances and an institutional reorganization able to consolidate their hegemony.

In turn all *reformist projects* based often on sectors of the "middle classes" and liberal professions are systematically destroyed by military coups or the situation is autocratically taken in hand (in Guatemala in 1963 with Jose Arevalo; in 1972 in El Salvador when the Christian Democrats and Duarte were 'deprived' of their election victory, and again in 1977; in 1967 then in 1972-73 with the liberal/conservative pact in Nicaragua). The 'forces for renewal' fear the masses like the plague and usually put an end to their protest in exchange for transactions with the oligarchy, the army and imperialism. The latter always maintains the oligarchic sectors as *allies*.

The present regimes are structurally unable to control the rise of movements of popular protest. They cannot set up channels that can at least partially hold back such movements. Thus political-social instability intensifies. These oligarchical regimes completely devalue all components of bourgeois democracy (parliament, elections/fraud, independent legal system, freedom of the press...).

It is typical for these oligarchies and their allies to have recourse — to defend their interests — more to bosses/professional organizations than to political parties whose usefulness is temporary since their role is limited to electoral farces. Their ideology of "sacrifice progress in favor of order" is cemented uniquely around anticommunism which reveals their historical weakness and vacuity — though they are extremely well armed.

The recourse to *state terrorism* and *military dictatorship* — which receive the blessing of the top Catholic hierarchy up to the time when the regimes go into their deepest crises — appears as the only response both to the difficulties of reorganizing class domination and to the emergence of popular struggles. It is possible therefore to evaluate the *differences* between the conditions of revolutionary struggle in Central America (once again with the exception of Costa Rica) and conditions in the other Latin American countries where the ruling classes have other resources at their disposal and can play the card of a 'controlled, albeit shaky, democratic opening.'

3. The permanent intervention of imperialism in this region has been an obstacle to the *formation of national bourgeoisies with a solid base*. It has turned these states into rump states. The Central American bourgeoisies do not exist as forces having their own national, historical, political project. Their 'monopolistic' character (control of most of the resources, particularly the land, by a few families and freshly promoted military chiefs) and their

subordination to American imperialism means they cling to state terrorism as a sort of desperate double or quits. Their real capital city is much more Miami — where they immediately flee when their people revolt — than Managua, San Salvador, Guatemala City, or Tegucigalpa. Their economic policy, apart from superexploitation of the masses can often be summed up as the flight of capital. They thus 'sacrifice' their future class interests to the demands of the moment. They are out and out sell outs of their nation (*vendepatria*) and caricatural in their Americanization. Basically their center of gravity is situated more externally — in the shadow of the United States than in the countries of which they claim to be the ruling classes and to incarnate the destiny.

Consequently it is up to the people, the oppressed masses to bring about the formation of the nation and a really independent national state. Furthermore, it is within this broad social/national dynamic that the popular majority necessary for a victorious outcome for the revolution can be built and will be further broadened afterwards as a result of the victory itself. This is one of the major lessons of the Sandinistas' struggle against Somozaism.

4. The strength of popular forces in Central America comes from a history of struggle which in the 30s produced the great figures of anti-imperialist struggle, of national and social liberation: Sandino and Farabundo Martí. But the character of the popular forces is defined by *today's reality* and the objectives set by these organizations.

Since the beginning of the 70s the mass struggles went through a series of stages leading to open military confrontation — with differences according to the countries.

From 1972-73 on inflation began to cut into incomes. Sectors like the teachers, university teachers, bank employees, social security and health workers became radicalized. Trade unions extended their influence and workers strikes grew in number. The urban shantytown dwellers "pobladores" started to mobilize and organize. Peasants, demanding land, organized occupations which is an act of civil disobedience par excellence and broke with submissive, fatalist ideology. The peasants' entry onto the political scene produced a fracture which would no longer be repaired. Revolutionary organizations accumulated their forces. Protest and socio-economic movements organized openly and occasionally still legally, up to 1977-78.

*New actors* have joined the march of popular revolt: Christians, lay people and priests opposed to the hierarchy (base communities); Indians in Guatemala where they are the majority of the poor peasantry; women's organizations, and associations of families of political prisoners and the 'disappeared.'

During this time, the miserable failure of bourgeois reformism undermined the credibility of possible struggles within a legal framework.

Since 1978, open and underground struggle, legal and illegal activity now became more combined (factory and land occupations, urban squats with self-defense and armed actions). Repression increased greatly, thousands of militants, trade union leaders, students, peasants, and workers were kidnapped, assassinated. Terror is so omnipresent that a new social category has been created: internal and external *political refugees*. They show the terribly precarious living conditions of the underprivileged population of the whole region.

On the basis of their experience the toiling masses increasingly understood the most down-to-earth struggles for their democratic, social and economic rights *were turned into political confrontations with the regimes in power*. The *overthrow of the dictatorships* appears to be the condition for introducing any sort of substantial reform. The struggles of various social sectors *converged*

and the political-military organizations, establishing themselves as the leading forces of the struggle of the exploited and oppressed masses came closer together. *Mass insurrections, armed peoples movements and peoples wars — which took on the significance of a class war — necessarily became the expression of social confrontations*. The popular insurrections in Nicaragua leading to the destruction of the Somozista state apparatus (1979) and the vast mass mobilisations in El Salvador (1980) marked a turn.

A new framework for revolutionary developments in the region was now defined by the *consolidation of: the Sandinista revolution*, of its state, its army, the beginning of a *civil war* in El Salvador and the *direct military and political intervention of the United States*.

5. The dynamic of this revolution is not the product of sociological determinism even if in a country like El Salvador the class structure sharpens the anticapitalist significance of popular struggle. It cannot be understood without recognizing the existence of *political-military revolutionary organizations* — which built themselves during the 60s and the beginning of the 70s — with the *explicit objective of the seizure of power*.

These organizations took up the best of the *Marxist and communist heritage* in Central America and the tradition of the *national, anti-imperialist liberation struggle*. They are the product of a long history. They showed they were able to root themselves deeply in a national reality. This, plus the unbreakable links with the Cuban revolution is enough to show their *qualitative difference* with the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships.

Over and above these organizations political and organizational differences — which are still significant — we can define some major common features:

a) These organizations have assimilated the *experience of the Cuban revolution*. They above all drew a strategic lesson which became the guiding line of all their thinking and practice for 20 years now: revolution is possible in the United States' backyard. A revolution starting with antidictatorial, democratic, and anti-imperialist objectives can be transformed into a socialist revolution through vetoing any imperialist mediation, by seizing power and clearly refusing any share of military power with any bourgeois sectors — that is, the refusal to reconstruct a bourgeois state after the fall of the dictatorship — and by the organization and mobilization of the masses to ensure their definitive hegemony.

b) The Cuban revolution and OLAS placed the *armed struggle on the agenda*, the necessity of *armed struggle* for overthrowing the dictatorships in power and, therefore, there was a break with the idea of the 'peaceful road to socialism.' This constituted another break with the policy of the communist parties. The communist parties either assigned a leading role to the bourgeoisie in the national-democratic revolutions and tailed it or envisaged the constitution of a political bloc with the bourgeoisie that would not even be directly led by the latter but which would imply the maintenance of the bourgeois state apparatus. The CPs also confined themselves to legalist, syndicalist and workerist activity and were incapable of bringing the impoverished urban and rural masses into the struggle.

The adoption of the 'armed struggle strategy' did not exclude a series of deformations synthesized in the 'focoist' theory which was to lead to impasse and resounding failures. In particular political action, properly speaking was neglected and often assimilated to reformism. This left an open terrain that the CPs and other reformist or nationalist forces were to occupy.

One of the big merits of the *Central American* revolutionary organizations, including in El Salvador, where this type of guerrilla experience did not at all develop, was to carry out a systema-

tic rethink on the basis of the defeats of 'focoism.' But this rethinking took place within a *continuity* of experience — in terms of cadres or organizations (FSLN) having gained moral and political authority — which is a key element in the maturing of these organizations. The very existence of Cuba as a 'rearguard' is a component of this political-organizational continuity, despite momentary differences between these organizations and the Castroist leadership.

c) The Vietnamese revolution had in the same way encouraged the reflection of many of these revolutionary cadres. It has favored a reassertion of *political work*, of the *role of the party* and of the idea of *incorporating the masses into the armed struggle*. The military question is consequently seen first of all as a political question. The Vietnamese experience will be a very important element — in addition to the critical balance sheet drawn of the urban guerrillas organized by the Uruguayan Tupamaros and the Argentinian PRT — which stimulated an advance of these organizations on the terrain of forming armies and mass fronts. This reference to Vietnam is occasionally directly linked to a judgement about the inevitability of American intervention — *before the seizure of power* — which would give the class struggle the character of a war of liberation.

Therefore the Indochinese revolution occasionally prompted some schematic and dangerous generalizations. The fact that it had the character of a war of national liberation against an *occupying army* brought with it by analogy the development of a strategy (for example in the case of the GPP tendency of the FSLN in Nicaragua) which very much subordinated immediate political and military action to the preparation of a war against the coming imperialist intervention. Consequently this approach marginalizes political and military initiatives aiming to attack the dictatorship and seize power before any imperialist intervention. In this sense it tends to prepare the struggle against tomorrow's enemy more than today's. It neglects political demands and the work of organizing the masses. The 'mountain' becomes the privileged place for action which is likely to be isolated nationally and one just organizes the popular sectors of a 'liberated zone.'

d) So in the mid-70s organizations were formed which in concrete activity were able to combine — each time in an original way — political, economic and military struggle. To this end they established an *organic liason* between the work involved in leading the trade unions, the mass rural organizations and urban shanty-town dwellers and the armed struggle. They rejected spontaneous insurrectionalism, seen as an automatic product of self-defense. The perspective of an insurrection was re-integrated with the armed struggle and mass action at its highest level (mass general strike, insurrectional general strike). All organizations were concerned at all times to organize the mass movement and to accumulate forces. Experiences of struggle, self-defense initiatives and armed detachments were combined in this process. Armed struggle was conceived as having to develop, at a certain stage, both in the towns, the mountains and the countryside.

They put forward a national political project and became the direct protagonists of political conflicts. They took away control of the mass movement from reformist forces — including by forming mass organizations.

e) These organizations have rejected the alliances' policy as recommended by the CPs which was part and parcel of their idea of 'two revolutions.' The CPs, while being utterly sectarian against the revolutionary forces, tailended the bourgeois formations — at most trying to improve the relationship of forces through paper organizations included in electoral fronts.

The revolutionary organizations opposed this political line and

right away were seen as the number one enemy of the dictatorships and the champions of self-determination. They contended with opposition sectors of the bourgeoisie over who was the best standard-bearers of national and anti-imperialist interests. Within this framework they were clear about who were the *motor-forces* of these revolutions: the alliance of the workers, semi-proletarian and peasant masses. All the specific elements were built (class organizations, military forces, etc.) to ensure their independence and hegemony *within the framework of these alliances*. For, in these revolutions which begin around national, democratic tasks, they grasped the importance of the *utility* of alliances in antidictatorial and anti-imperialist struggle. But the substance of this alliance policy was summed up very well by FSLN leader, J. Wheelock: "The axis of our alliances policy was not the bourgeoisie, but the people. That isn't a demagogic declaration. It is the basic truth. Our program and our schema of the forces (involved) were based on a concrete reality. We had the *arms and the people with us*. It was an *anti-dictatorial, popular, and revolutionary alliance*." (*El Gran Desafio*, p. 26).

Armed with this approach the revolutionary organizations were able to bring together different forms and levels of radical consciousness into the melting pot of the antidictatorial and anti-imperialist struggle: from the Marxist and communist current, the 'liberation theology' supporters, the radical democratic forces to the revolt of the Indian masses determined to conquer their dignity.

f) Finally they developed an internationalist policy. They demonstrated a good understanding of the revolutionary process on the regional and continental scale. They have built up an *authentically revolutionary international diplomacy*, which functions not only in the battle against imperialist intervention but in extending mass solidarity worldwide. Their solidarity with the struggles of their brothers and sisters in Central America and the Caribbean has been consistently demonstrated.

These revolutionary organizations — like the FSLN or the FMLN — are in the front line of a far-reaching process of recomposition of the workers' movement and its vanguard internationally.<sup>2</sup> The development of such currents helps to increase the impact of our programme and perspectives internationally. To this effect the Fourth International and its sections must strive, in addition to solidarity work, to learn from the experiences of these comrades' struggle, to get into a dialogue with them and to let our positions be known on the various questions that are the subject of their discussions. The organized members of the Fourth International in these countries will be able to fully participate in the struggle led by these organizations and to explain the overall positions of our movement.

6. The Central American revolution therefore draws on and deepens the lessons of the Cuban revolution. There is an uninterrupted, permanent revolution, that advances from democratic and anti-imperialist tasks towards socialist ones. The destruction of the state apparatus and its repressive backbone (army, police, special units) and the establishment of a *revolutionary regime independent of the bourgeoisie* and imperialism appears as an obligatory condition for ensuring the implementation of democratic and anti-imperialist measures and to transform the national democratic revolution onto the path of the socialist revolution. The reactions of imperialism, its links with a bourgeoisie carrying out an increasing amount of economic sabotage and military and political attacks mean that the workers and peasants power, the dictatorship of the proletariat — based on the army, the militia, and the mass organizations — has to make more and more frequent inroads into capitalist property. The transition to socialist measures is the guarantee of a consolidation and extension of social gains and national independence.

### III. The Nicaraguan Revolution<sup>3</sup>

1. The dual power situation opened up in April/May 1979 was qualitatively changed on July 19. After the revolutionary overthrow of Somoza and the destruction of the National Guard (which overlapped practically completely with the Somozista state) the *effective center of decision-making and the centralization of popular power was in the hands of the FSLN*.

The essential part of the bourgeois state apparatus was destroyed and a *revolutionary army was formed*. In Nicaragua, as in all revolutions, the state apparatus was not totally liquidated in one blow (administration, Central Bank, parts of legal system). However its principal prop had been broken and another of a *different class character* took its place. The Sandinista army expressing the aspirations of the toiling masses held *the real power* in the country.

The bourgeoisie held — and continues to hold — substantial economic strongholds. Nevertheless, its traditional political weakness; its inability in the final period to get hold of, however small, a part of the leadership of the anti-Somoza struggle; the fact that it was obliged to exist in the shadow of Sandinism during the crucial phase of the revolution, all made it even less able to transpose the weight of its economic pressure onto the political level. It has organizations — above all the COSEP, some channels of expression (*La Prensa*, private radios), influential allies in the Catholic hierarchy and fragile political parties. It has support in a part of the state apparatus (administration, banks, justice), but this personnel is deprived of *strategic decision-making power*.

This intermixing of elements not only reproduces aspects already seen in other revolutionary processes (Cuba) but also is related to the relative brevity of the dual power situation properly speaking and to the political line followed by the FSLN (creation of the Government Junta of National Reconstruction — JGRN — in June 1979. Thus after July 19 there were still *some elements* of this situation of dual power. But such elements existed in the framework of a centralized power *in the hands of the FSLN representing the interests of the workers and peasants*. There isn't any sort of more or less equal-handed share-out of the antagonistic elements of power. *The beam of the balance was tipped decisively on one side*.

The conquest of political power and control over the essential mechanisms of state power is the *beginning* of any proletarian revolution and gave the FSLN the *instruments* to defend the revolution, to deepen it, to broaden and consolidate its social base, to launch inroads into bourgeois property and to transform the direction of the economy in the interests of the class which had made the revolution. The pace of these transformations — particularly in a country where the productive forces are very weakly developed, which is in extreme dependence and also facing tremendous imperialist pressure — depends on a whole series of *national and international* political, social and economic factors.

July 19, 1979 marked the *first steps of the dictatorship of the proletariat* based on an *alliance with the peasantry, of the construction of a workers state*, which has to be consolidated like any emerging workers state. There is a contradiction — but it is compressed within the straightjacket of the new regime — between the socio-economic class content (weight of the private sector) of property relations and the class content of this emerging dictatorship of the proletariat. This contradiction expresses

the difference that exists between the *appropriation* of political power by the FSLN — i.e. the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat — and the *consolidation* of this dictatorship through the expropriation of bourgeois and imperialist property and the introduction of collectivized property relations. The dictatorship of the proletariat — where the proletariat disposes of an instrument, the state — opens up a transitional period in which there can be an opposition between the class character of political power and the class character of economic relations. Certainly, in the *last instance* the economic foundations will be decisive in the consolidation of the workers state. In such a crossroads situation which constitutes a necessary moment in any revolution it is the orientation of all the measures taken which brings into harmony the *class* which made the revolution with its *social content*.

An examination of the measures and gains of the revolution over the five last years only confirms the strengthening of the new workers state, the “second free territory of the Americas.”<sup>4</sup>

2. After July 19 three problems have to be taken into account to evaluate the major choices made by the Sandinista leadership. In the first place the radical challenge to the status quo in Central America was bound to trigger off — in a more or less short lapse of time — imperialist aggression. To gain time, to look for (even fragile) support from various countries and to make use of inter-imperialist contradictions served to politically consolidate the revolution and to strengthen its military defense. Then under the impact of the Sandinista revolution the revolutionary upsurge in the Central American isthmus speeded up. The course of the Nicaraguan revolution was from that time linked to the advance of these revolutions and in turn to the counterrevolutionary actions of imperialism and its allies. Finally the FSLN has to deal with a large-scale economic disaster.

In this context it rapidly consolidated the main instruments of its power, the power of the hegemonic bloc of workers and peasants, of semi and sub-proletarian layers.

a) The cornerstone of the new state is the *revolutionary army*. To build and professionalize the EPS (the Sandinista Peoples Army) — the name speaks for itself — was logically a priority task. Its hard nucleus is formed of some 5,000 fighters, ex-members of the FSLN ‘regular forces.’ A literacy and politicalization campaign among the ranks was then organized. The entire command structure is in the hands of the Front. The Sandinista police was set up at the same time. A great part of its membership is made up of anti-Somoza working class fighters, thrown into unemployment because of war damage.

While the priority at the very beginning was given to the EPS, the FSLN leadership prepared for the creation of the militia. The Sandinista People's Militia (MPS) were formed in February 1980. Organized on a volunteer basis, dozens of thousands of workers and young people quickly enrolled.

Decisions concerning the Interior and Defense ministries were made within the combined national leadership of the FSLN made up of the ‘9 commandantes of the revolution.’

b) Political conflicts arising in the first phase of the revolution showed where real *decision-making power* lay. Already in *December 1979*, the FSLN decided to reorganize the government — assigning itself the three decisive ministries: Defense (H. Ortega), Agriculture and Land Reform (J. Wheelock) and the plan (H. Ruiz).



From this time the COSEP (High Council of Private Enterprise) publicly concentrated its fire on one target: 'The FSLN must reduce its hold over the army, police and CDS (Sandinista Defence Committees)'.

In *March/April 1980* the JGRN (Government Junta of National Reconstruction) broke up on the question of the composition of the Council of State. A solid *majority* of seats were assigned to the mass organizations and parties thus expressing the majority opinion of the population. The departure of the two bourgeois representatives from the JGRN (V. Chamorro-Barrios and A. Robelo) was revealing in several respects. The Council of State was established without encountering opposition on May 4 — marking the anniversary of the pursuit of Sandino's anti-imperialist struggle despite bourgeois betrayal (1927). Those who resigned were not at all immediately replaced. The bourgeois opposition dealt directly with the nine 'commandantes,' as they knew who decided in the last analysis. And it was the latter who named the new junta — without concern for excessive formality. Two new bourgeois personalities (A. Cruz and R. Cordoba Rivas) were included in the Junta. The COSEP was disarmed and publicly ratified the presence of the new Junta members. Then the COSEP demanded a constituent assembly, the separation of the FSLN from the State, Junta members with a right to veto, control of the legal system and finances and formal guarantees concerning the maintenance of private property.

Conflicts around the formation of the Council of State, a consultative body, confirmed in two ways who was master of the situation. On the one hand the FSLN leadership showed it held the tiller of state and was not making any, even slightly substantial, concessions to the bourgeoisie. On the other hand the replacement of two bourgeois representatives by two others demonstrated — in a way — that nothing had changed. Bourgeois representation was completely subordinated and did not have any more commanding levers in the center of the new state apparatus with Cruz than it had with Robelo.

In *July 1980*, H. Ortega, answering COSEP's demand for elections announced that they would be held in 1985. Once again who decided? Better still, the Ministry of Defense declared that genuine democracy meant the reduction of social inequality and not just elections which 'would be organized to bring peoples power to perfection.'

At the end of 1980 the bourgeoisie launched a new offensive on the now familiar theme: the FSLN has a monopoly of power. But this time it was combined with the first *armed attacks* on the revolution. The bourgeois opposition momentarily withdrew a part of its members from the Council of State, which was to be restructured a few months later by a JGRN now reduced to three members with Daniel Ortega as the coordinator!

The bourgeoisie and imperialism increasingly centered their opposition both on the economic terrain which led the JGRN to proclaim a *state of economic and social emergency* (September 1981) and on the military terrain which obliged the JGRN to impose a *state of emergency* (March 1982). The bourgeoisie's political maneuvers were not dropped but these became simple complements to economic sabotage and to more or less open support for counterrevolutionary military actions organized from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica.

c) The basis of the new regime, in addition to the EPS and the militias, is founded on the development of the mass organizations. Certain of these were a direct product of the revolutionary struggle (ATC, CDS).

They are represented by:

- The Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) which are very important for the effort to unify *differentiated* layers of the population.

- The Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST) which for the

first time organized a majority of the workers on a national scale and set off (after a few disappointments) a prolonged effort of unifying the independent working class trade union movement (formation in February 1980 of the national intertrade union commission).

- The Association of Rural Workers (ATC), catalyst of the land reform, of the defense of the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat and of keeping the *latifundistas* (landowners) under surveillance; an organic link exists between the CST and the ATC, materializing the workers and peasants alliance.

- The National Union of Farmers and Ranchers/Stockrearsers (UNAG) which aimed to organize this fraction of the small and middle peasantry, decisive for food production, for the development of the cooperatives and whose support is key to defeat the counterrevolution.

- The Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMLAE) which set a task of winning many rights that women had always been denied. Women played a considerable role in the revolution.

- The July 19 Sandinista Youth (JS 19), as a result of the impulse given by the *literacy campaign* and the formation of student production brigades (BEP) now organizes a sector of the youth. The literacy campaign was a vast effort of political consciousness raising of the urban and especially rural masses.

Organizations with a trade union character are independent of the FSLN. Even though it exerts preponderant political influence, the Front does not impose its monopoly. They are open to anybody and everybody. Their growth is a feature of these years. These organizations have initiated a deepgoing transformation of mass consciousness and the organization of power in society.

Their functions and objectives, which are not always achieved, can be summarized as follows:

- Encourage the people's active participation in all aspects of social life.

- To facilitate various sectors of the population coming together to defend their interests, to express their needs, raise their class consciousness and get involved in a dialogue (occasionally conflictual) with the FSLN or the ministries.

- To participate in the institutions of political power — shown by the weight of their representation in the Council of State, or their role in the formation of the municipal Juntas.

- To support economic reconstruction, cooperate in or take charge of educational campaigns, of public health, of the maintenance of local facilities and in this way help to increase the living standards of the most impoverished layers of the population; they also educate people in management and administration through the planning and organization of their activities and tasks and train their leaderships at all levels.

- To defend the revolution against misinformation campaigns and sabotage.

- To struggle against 'the abuses of authority,' arrogance, bureaucratization — an inherent danger in such an underdeveloped situation — and for moral, civic attitudes in a society so deeply marked in the past by corruption of all sorts.

- They combine changing the social and economic situation by revolutionary practice with the 'self-transformation of man' (Marx).

From the first months the FSLN used political power to *organize and broaden* the popular majority carrying forward the revolution and to initiate the transition to socialism.

d) The FSLN is the center of gravity of real power, it has consolidated its hegemony and legitimacy by refusing to *a priori* introduce ruptures with bourgeois sectors included in the June 1979 coalition. It has brought about these breaks in connection with concrete tasks and choices flowing from the necessary advance of the revolution and favoring the advance of mass con-

sciousness. Each time the bourgeoisie is caught off balance it is exposed as having broken with the 'Sandinista project,' and it appears in the eyes of the people as opposed to 'anti-imperialist' national unity and to 'national reconstruction.'

The FSLN approach reveals an aptitude to grasp the articulation between the maturing of national anti-imperialist and socialist consciousness. A process of clarification operated (and is operating) in which the FSLN imposed itself with increasing force, no longer just as the current which had overthrown the dictatorship but as the force which was leading the people to a 'new society.' The *concessions* made on one or another point to the bourgeoisie — which still has resources, especially due to its links with imperialism — must be resituated in this overall dynamic and in the framework of strengthening the position of working people — in order to be correctly evaluated.

2. The 'mixed economy,' the way the FSLN characterize the *economic structure* in Nicaragua cannot be considered without taking into account the challenging of imperialist domination and the nature of the present regime. The evolution of such a situation must be looked at.

The fact is, the control of the state that was built after July 1979 has imparted its own imprint on the "mixed character" of the economy as a result of its having the means and the social base needed to increase its inroads into private property and to expand the areas already under its control (foreign exchange, distribution, credit, etc.). It acts as a lever for economic change, as a permanent instrument of coercion. Obviously, this has not eliminated the *sharp contradictions* between the various sectors of the economy, between the social and economic goals of the revolution and the pressure of the world market as well as the reproduction mechanisms of a private sector that is still prevalent in the strategic agro-export sector. But the present regime can resolve these contradictions on the basis of the priorities dictated by the defense of the revolution. The "extra-economic" character of the state becomes an economic force.

a) During all this phase the economic policy choices made by the FSLN cannot be isolated either from the state of the economy in 1979, or from international factors, or from the critical balance sheet it had drawn from the first steps of the transition made by the Castroist leadership in Cuba.

Some of the features of the economic situation should be recalled:

- The heritage left by the Somozista regime and the civil war: 50,000 dead and about 100,000 wounded, considerable destruction of industry and disorganization of two agricultural cycles with repercussions on foods supplies and exports; GDP per capita had declined to levels of 17 years before; a massive foreign debt, a near-total lack of foreign currencies and a high inflation; a total budget imbalance accompanied with a massive 'social deficit' (illiteracy, health and housing).

- A poorly developed capitalist economy (much less developed than Cuba in 1959), therefore with a small, recently formed, urban and rural proletariat, a very thin layer of technical cadres (400 all told for agriculture!).

- Dependence on agro-exports for earning foreign income, while the latter is extremely sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations and demand on a crisis-ridden world market; development of the agro-export sector distorts the 'balance' of imports (fertilizer, chemical products, machinery and spare parts) in addition to the traditional foodstuff deficit.

- There was the ever-present threat of economic sanctions and even of a blockade.

b) The new regime, confronted with such a difficult situation, swiftly moved to take control of four important sectors of the economy: the property of Somoza and his allies — which pro-

vided the backbone of the Public Property Sector (APP); the financial system and insurance; foreign trade (gradually nationalized up to 70 percent of exports); all natural resources.

The FSLN say there are a series of considerations that argue in favor of not immediately taking over the agro-export sector:

- The fragility, the lack of cohesion of the bourgeoisie allowed a certain margin of maneuver and facilitated a 'productive alliance' — in exchange for which there is nothing other than the implicit hope — and possibility — for bourgeois sectors to profit from their economic strongholds in the new 'trench warfare.'

- The subsidiary benefits this alliance aimed for was the immediate granting of vital credits and a postponement of the imperialist economic stranglehold. About 1.5 billion dollars were rapidly allocated under favorable conditions. For three years there was no evident enthusiasm from the 'socialist camp' — with the decisive exception of Cuba — to provide massive aid. Besides, this aid only relatively corresponds with immediate needs and diversifying aid and trade is a positive political element in the battle against Washington's warmongering.

- The APP requires a lot of complicated organization both nationally and locally to avoid an explosion of extra costs that are inevitable in such a transition. There is an extreme tension between this priority and all the other priorities flowing more strictly from the reconstruction process. For the APP to generate a significant surplus a relatively efficient administrative ability must develop and facilitate the later takeover of new agricultural or manufacturing companies. But the FSLN has only won a small number of cadres to its perspectives and the level of preparation of the workers in this field is very low.

- Weak socialization of the productive forces (weight of small commodity production, of artisan production, of small and middle peasantry) makes central planning a problem; its field of application is due to extend rapidly. Also there is a limited correspondence between the structure of demand resulting from the change in the distribution of income and what the APP can offer. Planning also requires its transition.

The FSLN therefore opted for a combination between direct control over a minority APP and indirect control (foreign trade, credit, production contracts, fixing prices and wages, etc.) over the private sector (AP), with all the *limits* inherent in the use of these types of mechanisms in a context of class confrontation. *Planning* th APP with regionalization in a second phase was introduced with great difficulties. Annual plans concerning major objectives and tasks were decided on.

The FSLN has clearly emphasized its medium-term objective is to have the state and cooperative-owned sectors become the majority and preponderant sector of the economy.

3. In response to the demands of the masses and the bourgeoisie's sabotage the Sandinistas were to modify the rules of the game to the disadvantage of the former ruling classes.

a) In the second quarter of 1980 the legislation against decapitalization (capital flight, destruction of the means of production and raw materials, hoarding) made it possible to sanction these *illegal acts* by the total or partial confiscation of land or plants. The ATC and the CST played a significant role in the implementation of this legislation. The capitalists were split up on the basis of a division between those "who respond to the needs of reconstruction" and "those who sabotage" — without a political bonus being given to the former. The control of currency exchange steadily increased and the overall system was established in May 1983.

b) The *Land Reform*, a key element in the economic upheavals, after its anti-Somozista stage, was extended first of all by expropriating the land occupied by poor peasants during the first months of the revolution and by lowering the rent for land. A

new stage began with the transfer of land left fallow, or badly cultivated by the big landowners, to the landless peasants, the small poor peasantry and occasionally to the state farms. It was a direct attack on *latifundist* property.

The emphasis was placed on the voluntary formation of production and services (CSS and CAS) cooperatives. They are more apt to respond to the burning problem of unemployment than the APP in the short and medium term. They made it possible to associate with the revolution this high proportion of small and semiproletarian peasants who are of strategic importance for the production of foodstuffs. For its part, the state guarantees with difficulty, the provision of a certain number of consumer goods and services. It buys a part of their production at fixed guaranteed prices. In this way it has control of about 40 percent of the distribution of basic foodstuffs (by volume), (ENABAS). A series of important agricultural and agro-industrial projects have got underway.

Agriculture has undergone both a real economic reactivation and a partial transformation of social relations, the difficult two-fold challenge every radical land reform must face.

The weight of the big landowners compared to the state and cooperative sector has *diminished*. In July 1979 the big landowners (more than 500 manzanas) controlled 36.1 percent of cultivable land; in July 1984 they controlled 11 percent. In the private sector (AP) the increase in associative forms of production (cooperatives) has led to a deepgoing *differentiation*, undermining the base of the reactionary UPANIC (Professional Union of Nicaraguan Farmers). In 1984, 44,000 families benefited from the Land Reform, 25,000 of whom now produce in cooperatives. The CAS control 8.2 percent of cultivable land; the CSS 10.7 percent and the APP 18.3 percent.

The Land Reform is an instrument in the hands of the motor forces of the revolution. Brutal super-exploitation has been ended not only in the State sector but also in the private sector where the ATC can make its force felt. A real cataclysm is sweeping the Nicaraguan countryside — apart from anything else with the progress of the cooperatives — an intensive transformation of the political and cultural level of the peasant masses is taking place.

c) Alongside all these gains are the large scale steps forward made in the fields of education, health, housing, social services which are all solid bases for future development.

4. A series of difficulties and tensions, produced by a great number of external constraints, by the structure of a dependent agro-exporting economy and specific to the transition, were to forcefully emerge.

The slow pace of industrial recovery — in the nationalized and private sector — was worse than government forecasts (lack of spare parts, pernicious effects of long term decapitalization, management difficulties, restriction of outlets on the Central American market).

The inflationist pressure was initially held back by the means of a certain adjustment between a very limited supply and increased demand (the reduction in unemployment increases the volume of salaries even when wages are frozen). It is impossible to carry out a policy of increasing wages in Nicaraguan economic conditions. But the social and political need to increase the living standards ('social wage') of the underprivileged layers weighs on the budget and is another expense on top of the costs of re-capitalization and reconstruction.

Banking on the agro-export private sector to earn *net* export revenue has proved questionable in relation to the social objectives of the transition. Restructuring production — both agro-export and basic foodstuffs — and responding to the most urgent needs of the masses led to the necessity of external finances. It

was therefore indispensable to control export income and especially its allocation between the agricultural export and non-export sector otherwise the effort of accumulation would be placed on the backs of the small peasantry or paid for by further debt. But, the state only has ownership of a limited part of this sector.

The most precarious equilibrium was aimed at so that the incentives offered to the agro-export sector did not come into too open a conflict with a social redistribution of income.

A growing number of capitalists, among others those of average importance, invested little. There is a diversion of capital to the commercial sector where investment is easily recuperated. The flight of capital continues.

The bulk of state funds (approximately 40 percent) allocated to agriculture goes to the big private sector producers. Most come under the heading 'short term loans' which reflects a limited capitalist effort of modernization. The accumulation effort rests on the shoulders of the state with a big proportion connected with construction (development projects and defense). Taking this into account along with the other points opens wide the trap of the foreign debt and of financing the budget deficit (8 percent of GDP in 1980, 23.3 percent in 1983) by printing money with the consequent inflationist pressure.

Eliminating the rule of the old ruling class initially caused a decline in agricultural productivity. The land redistribution, the lowering of rents and defense needs considerably reduced the supply of labor for seasonal crops. Volunteer work partially remedied this but with negative effects on productivity. Migration to the towns continues and increases the contradiction between urban underemployment (non-registered/undeclared sector in Managua) and the lack of agricultural labor.

Direct access to the market by a large number of foodstuff producers opens up a wide field for market forces both in production and distribution (reduction of area seeded, sales on the black market) and work organization.

The credit policy for small and medium-sized peasants is not a solution for those who are too poor to get into debt or who do not have land, which explained the *speeding up of land distribution from 1982/3*. There was then the risk that the debt would become a barrier between the state and a sector of the peasantry — which explains why the peasant debt was restructured in 1983. Production cooperatives receive priority aid. The service cooperatives — more widespread — cannot avoid a certain social differentiation but this cannot result in acquisition of land.

The growth of the APP and the cooperative sector is stronger than that of the AP. But the coordination between the APP and the cooperative sector is still just a question of projects for the moment while effective planning of the APP is difficult to achieve. There is a very loose articulation between the annual plan, external resources and the budget. The private sector takes advantage of the breach left open in the control over foreign trade to carry out speculative operations. The shrinking of private investment has effects on employment which is partly counterbalanced by the land distribution and defense mobilization. The tension between accumulation and consumption is worsening. Spending power has declined even for popular layers of the population. Nevertheless there has been an improvement in living standards for the most underprivileged sectors and a general improvement in social services.

Since the beginning of 1983 the economy has been put on a *state of war basis*. The counterrevolution drains an important part of resources (25 percent of the budget in 1984) to defense needs. In 1983 material damage was equal to 20 percent of overall investment. Whole agricultural zones are threatened and the cooperatives are the prime targets of the counterrevolution.

The *financial boycott* has been tightened up although loans were still steadily flowing in in 1983. The contribution of the

'socialist countries' or countries like Algeria, Libya, or Iran has increased. However that has not compensated for the drying up of multilateral and bilateral loans and aid is far from meeting Nicaragua's needs. Development projects have been disrupted. The *value* of export revenue has stagnated, the trade balance is very negative and interest payments on the debts are a heavy burden.

The food deficit, despite massive efforts, grew. Shortage of certain basic products appeared. That is explained by the lack of foreign exchange (imports), the increase in popular consumption of basic products and the difficulties the state has to control a greater part of food production and distribution.

FSLN economic policy hangs on a knife edge. The heritage of the past, imperialist aggression and social polarization totally disrupted the accumulation process. The state has become the only *dynamic* center for distribution. This explains, along with the active participation of the people and despite all the obstacles, the 1983 economic results. But this investment effort was accomplished at the cost of a considerable budget deficit and was supported by foreign aid which is now declining. The law of value and the market, given the minority role of the state and cooperative sector comes into even sharper contradiction with the first attempts at planning.

The limitations of this initial economic strategy became greater and greater. A *war economy* was installed. Defense and self-sufficiency in food were prioritized. Rationing was introduced for various products. Subsidies for basic goods — except for milk and sugar — were cut by half. The state took over *distribution* for six essential products (June 1984). Measures were adopted *confiscating* the speculators' property and goods. A strict law in defense of consumers was adopted at the same time to back up the central fixing of the prices of basic goods and to "share out shortages on an equal basis."

In such a situation the main strength of the FSLN resides in its capacity to mobilize the masses, to consolidate their organizations and their collaboration in managing the APP; their participation in extending the cooperative sector; their control over distribution; their trade union presence in the private sector (control/management). The FSLN's legitimacy on both the domestic and international planes will be even further bolstered by the scheduled elections. Thus conditions are created for new steps towards increased control over the share out of surplus (planning), over the allocation of revenue from a growing part of the agro-export sector and towards measures required by Nicaraguan defense. In the framework of *consolidating* the workers state, important class confrontations are taking shape, which could combine military action against the sharper and more numerous attacks and the expropriation of new capitalist sectors.

5. The goal of imperialism is still the overthrow of the Sandinista regime. At the moment its attacks aim to precipitate Nicaragua into a crisis which would be without solution and turn a vacillating sector of the population against the revolutionary government.

a) The *contras* infiltrate in small groups in many regions of the country. However, they have been unable to take over any town even of minor importance and install permanent control over an area paving the way for the declaration of a provisional government which would then call for the aid of the U.S. army and its regional allies. The revolutionary forces have hit them extremely hard. The attempt to use the frictions between the FSLN and the Miskito population in a strategic region (the Atlantic coast, Zelaya) had not brought imperialism the expected results. However, the price paid by the FSLN has been high. Time was needed to lessen the effects of errors in dealing with such an ethnic, socio-cultural and historic problem.

Imperialist and reactionary efforts to unleash a *civil war* in Nicaragua as a pretext for intervention have floundered up to now.

b) The *bourgeois opposition* has presented itself as the champion of pluralism and elections — in fact it was banking on them being annulled. The announcement of elections for November 4, 1984, caught the bourgeois opposition off guard. It has vacillated between a boycott, recommended by the COSEP from the start, and participation. Then it developed a tactic of conditional participation. The Nicaraguan Democratic Coordination (CDN) — made up of the Social Christian party, the Social Democratic party, and the Constitutional Liberal party — raised a series of demands which clearly exposed their positions since they added up to a desire to simply rub out July 1979: de facto liquidation of the EPS, elimination of obligatory military service, reorganization of relations between the state and the FSLN, abrogation of the law concerning decapitalization, supervision of the elections by the OAS, and also a call for imperialist mediation.

The bourgeoisie's candidate, Arturo Cruz, blatantly supported by Washington, is playing the card of 'a national dialogue with the armed opposition.' This 'dialogue' is presented as the precondition for the holding of 'really free elections.' It is a scantily camouflaged military ultimatum. The Social Democracy, ready to take up the banner of the 'totalitarian danger in Nicaragua,' is open to these maneuvers.

The FSLN firmly refuses this sort of 'dialogue' which aims to get recognition for the idea that there are two 'belligerent forces' in Nicaragua and to deny the legitimacy it had won through the revolution. The FSLN has obliged A. Cruz to expose himself completely as the spokesperson of the armed counterrevolution. At the same time it leaves half-open the possibility for negotiation which brings out the hesitations and contradictions of the bourgeois opposition and causes divisions in its ranks. It defuses a part of the right-wing attacks against the elections, particularly since the *registration* on the electoral rolls has been massive. The bourgeois opposition is politically trapped: either it frontally opposes the elections, trying to obtain the abstention of the small bourgeois parties (PLI and PCD) while the overwhelming majority of the population has shown its support for the electoral process; *or* it takes the risk of participating and thereby giving increased international credibility to the elections and legitimacy to the FSLN victory.

The whole policy of the bourgeoisie shows its social weakening after five years of revolution. The former ruling classes cannot fight the revolution without *directly* joining the imperialist camp and its mercenaries.

The *official Church* is the most organized opposition force. It has a presence among the people and has a strong national and international propaganda apparatus. It seeks confrontation with the Sandinistas. It was the Bishops' Conference, which, in April 1984, first proposed 'a dialogue with all sectors, including Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the government.' But this Church is *divided on class lines*. The FSLN recognizes Christianity as a constituent element of the revolution and was able to link up with the 'Christian communities at the base' rooted among the most underprivileged. "God's ministers are ministers of the Revolution." The FSLN takes on the reactionary hierarchy on its own terrain.

6. The November 1984 *elections* are the first free elections in Nicaraguan history where politics amounted to a regulated and limited struggle between two bourgeois factions.

a) *The law on the political parties* adopted in August 1983 in the framework of a thoroughgoing reworking of the legal system, allows the existence of all political parties, both bourgeois and working class, "constituted to contend for political power with

the aim of carrying out a political program responding to the needs of the country's national and social development." The very democratic March 1984 electoral law lays down that the exercise of universal suffrage, for all persons over 16, is an "inalienable right (of all the people) to build a new society and its own future without external interference of any kind." It provides for the election of an executive with a six year term of office (president and vice-president elected by relative majority) and a parliament (an assembly elected by proportional representation) having in an initial period the function of a constituent assembly. This law correctly decrees the removal of the right to vote and to stand for election for ex-National Guard officers and from all those involved in military and sabotage actions against the revolution.

These elections demonstrate that the FSLN is ready to test the *majority character* of the revolution on a terrain — secret and universal suffrage — which is not necessarily the most favorable. This is a challenge to imperialism. But it is also an advance in the political organization of the transition to socialism. Despite the enormous counterrevolutionary military pressures — which in the future could absolutely justify severe measures being taken against those seeking to overthrow the new power of the workers and peasants — the FSLN is not only keeping open a very broad arena for political debate but is guaranteeing legal rights and representation for all political parties including formations claiming to represent the toiling masses. In addition it has lifted the ban on the right to strike.

The FSLN sees these elections as a means of political struggle and of increased *political intervention* of the popular organizations. As Article 1. of the electoral law states: "The Sandinista popular revolution institutionalizes the Nicaraguan people's right to elect its supreme authorities." In this way the FSLN wants to demonstrate the irreversible character of the gains of July 1979. These elections should also make possible the establishment of a new constitution that will lay down the legal and political principles for a new phase in the consolidation of the workers state and in the transition to socialism.

These elections also form part of the tremendous effort put in by the FSLN to politically educate the masses. This effort draws positively on unfolding revolutionary experiences. For example, taking up Grenada, the FSLN has insisted on three lessons to be drawn from the failure of this revolution: the necessity of maintaining a democratic debate in the eyes of the masses, the need to ensure their direct participation in the process and the imperative of arming the people.

Both the political orientation of the FSLN and the role of the mass organizations in the Council of State leaves open the possibility that a new element will be added to the institutionalization of the revolutionary process: the *direct representation* of these organizations, their real participation, at the local, regional and national level, in the working out of and the application of the major social economic decisions. The question of the *respective competences* of such a body of direct representation and of the legislature is therefore likely to be posed in the future.

In these conditions the question of building the *Sandinista revolutionary party* is posed. Rather broad political education has been carried out. Cadres develop through the activities of the JS 19, the ATC, the CST, etc. But building the party as such still has to be done. The leadership of the revolutionary process rests a lot on the authority of the collective leadership of the FSLN, the 9 'commandantes.' The delay in building the party is certainly explained by the lack of cadres, their being absorbed in the defense and reconstruction effort and by the lack of functioning as a party. But this delay does involve some risks: in terms of ensuring internal democracy of the FSLN (beyond the Sandinista Assembly — a consultative body of 72 members), of counter-

balancing the deformations arising from a superimposition of the state apparatus and the FSLN or finally of leading mass political struggle in the framework of party pluralism.

b) The major advantage of the FSLN, in this period of extreme tension, remains the maximum popular participation in the revolutionary process. The strengthening of the mass organizations has been a feature of the last five years.

The FSLN has had important subjective and objective difficulties at the level of the organization and participation of workers in management — both in industry and in agriculture. In the agrarian sector the 'reactivation assemblies' rather rapidly resulted in a dead end. Since 1981 they have been replaced, in the land reform farms, by 'consultative councils.' The latter have only partially met the need for an increased integration of producers in management. In the industrial public sector, after an experience of 'reactivation assemblies,' various structures have been set up (Production Committees etc) to try and more precisely define the forms of participation of producers in the leadership of workplaces and economic sectors. In the AP the CST has given an impetus to actions of control against economic sabotage and in favor of more effective management.

Shortages and speculation also reveal the limits and at the same time the potential of the CDS. Two crucial questions come out of the balance sheets drawn of the CDS: the first, the need to ensure a more effective and democratic functioning of the CDS (elections and right of recall) so as to fight head on the inertia and bureaucratic tendencies inherent in such a situation of crisis and shortages; the second, to use the social economic problems in order to stimulate a 'control from below' of the functioning of the state apparatus. The most immediate needs of defense could reinforce rigid administrative tendencies and restrict the autonomy of certain mass organizations. The FSLN shows it is really conscious of these problems.

*Defense is the priority.* The mass organizations directly participate in the defense effort. In the war zones, *intensive political work* is directed towards the peasantry so as to avoid reducing the battle against the mercenary forces to just a military one.

Initially the Patriotic military service brought out into the open those upholders of 'national independence' who refused to serve the cause of anti-imperialist combat. It gives military training to broad layers of young people. Thanks to the MPS and military service the EPS is not obliged to disperse itself which would facilitate a brutal offensive from imperialism in a strategic zone. The FSLN made great efforts to attenuate the consequences of this defense effort (pensions to the families of the victims, guaranteeing the maintenance of a person's job after service, compensation to peasants whose crops or land are damaged...)

c) The FSLN is vigorously stepping up its *diplomatic* initiatives. The axis of all the FSLN's diplomacy is based on the right to self-determination of the peoples of the region and the refusal of all interference in the internal affairs of Central America and on the liquidation of the foreign military bases. This can profit only the revolutionary forces and is fundamentally against the plans of Washington.

The JGRN has proposed bilateral treaties with the United States, Honduras, and El Salvador. Such proposals aim to unmask imperialist plots and the subordination of the present regimes to United States' objectives. The JGRN's diplomatic initiatives are a response to the maneuvers of Washington which occasionally plays the negotiations card for domestic consumption in the United States, to shore up the counterrevolutionaries' political operations and to avoid over-centrifugal tendencies inside the Latin American states since their seal of approval is useful for its policy of aggression.

In 1982-83, the FSLN correctly gave its support to Contadora

initiatives and to its declared aims of finding a "peaceful solution for the region." Nevertheless, it has not failed to express its disagreement with a series of points proposed by the Contadora and its frontal opposition to all proposals implying any type of infringement of Nicaraguan sovereignty or weakening of the revolution (military defense).

It has always expressed doubts on the effectiveness of Contadora given imperialist pressure on client-states deep in financial debt — not to speak of the specific interests of the Latin American bourgeoisie. Present developments reveal the open crisis of the initial Contadora project, the inability of its members to come

to a position independent of imperialism and even their step-by-step alignment with the United States.

The FSLN has striven to maintain links with social democracy and take advantage of all the contradictions in the imperialist camp. Its relations with an important sector of social democracy are getting more tense to the extent that the latter is adapting more openly to imperialist policy.

In the context of the worsening confrontation in the region Nicaragua maintains privileged links with Cuba. It also is in favor of strategic relations with the USSR, in the framework of a declared policy of 'non-alignment.'

#### IV. The Salvadoran Revolution

1. In El Salvador a revolutionary upsurge has developed since 1979 which has involved workers, peasants, popular and student struggles, general strikes, semi-insurrections, local insurrections, a guerrilla war, and a civil war. This uprising has been on a scale unprecedented in the history of the region, despite the growing intervention of the United States.

The brutal extension of capitalist relations of production, the extreme concentration of landed property, combined with a high demographic density gave birth to a significant rural semi-proletariat and proletariat in El Salvador. Alongside a still very small working class and impoverished artisans it was the motor force of the 1932 *proletarian insurrection*, which was drowned in blood. The struggles that have developed from the end of the 70s have inherited this mass hatred of the oligarchy's brutality.

Industry developed especially from the 60s under the impact of the Central American Common Market. Fertile land became more and more concentrated in the hands of a few families. Then the oligarchy began to differentiate its investments on the basis of money earned from its land. It went into agro-industry, import-export trade, finance, and even industry. Imperialist capital was part of this development which thus gave birth to a few new bourgeois sectors.

The working class emerged strengthened from these transformations. The rural semiproletariat and proletariat underwent a terrible *process of impoverishment*. More and more peasants had *no land and no work* (in 1975, 41 percent of peasant families had no land) or became peddlers, subproletarians in the towns.

In 1969 the 'Football War' between El Salvador and Honduras — which aimed to protect its domestic market — stimulated the crisis of the MCCA (the Central American Common Market). It had repercussions for the Salvadoran oligarchical system. Tens of thousands of Salvadoran peasants emigrants were brutally evicted from Honduras. The Salvadoran ruling class was consequently not just denied an outlet onto a bigger market but also had this 'demographic safety valve' blocked.

These new refugees, who occasionally had gone through an experience of trade union struggles in the Honduran plantations, organized demonstrations in support of their demands. This was the first time, since 1932, that peasants had *invaded* the towns.

The 'Football War' also provoked a political crisis in the ranks of the left, particularly in the Salvadoran Communist party (PCS) which had politically supported the government in the military conflict. A *turn in the situation* began to emerge at the very beginning of the 70s.

2. From 1970 to 1979 a series of ruptures took place which shaped political parameters for the whole decade: the formation of the politico-military organizations, the creation of the mass peoples organizations, a radicalization in the Christian community, and the dead end of the electoral 'road' was confirmed.

a) In April 1970, a sector of the PCS leadership, linked to the trade union movement, broke with the party to set up a politico-military organization: the *Farabundo Marti Peoples Liberation Forces (FPL)*. Coming out of the radicalized Christian layers, the *Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP)* was also formed in 1970. The first armed actions of these two organizations were carried out in 1972.

So compared to Nicaragua or Guatemala the organizations in-

involved in the armed struggle were formed rather late. Certainly they had to respond to the very particular conditions of the country's social structure and geography (small size, population density, the great number of roads and communications, nonexistence of 'protective mountains') and the 1932 'trauma.' In this period the political military thinking of the FPL was the most significant. Its leadership came out of a rich trade union tradition. It understood the need to equip the violence of the fiercely repressed masses with new instruments of struggle. One formulation summed up its ideas: "our mountain is the people." The urban guerrilla experience also stimulated its reflection. Its conception of the armed struggle in the strict sense of the term was the culmination of this whole development of its thinking. It was to link together: the *militia* (mass instruments of self-defense in the neighborhoods, workplaces and in preparation for the insurrection), the *guerrilla forces* (a limited force fighting in a fixed zone) and on a higher level, the *revolutionary army*.

In its early years the ERP was strongly marked by militarist and adventurist positions based on a characterization of the situation as being revolutionary since 1972. This line cut it off from sectors of the masses and was to be an important element of the 1974 split which resulted in the formation of the *Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN-RN)*. From 1975-76 on the ERP began to adjust its line.

In 1979, despite a series of differences which were left in the background or covered over by analogous formulations, a convergence began to develop between the revolutionary organizations around such questions as: self-defense, the guerrilla struggle, the army and the need to link together peoples revolutionary war and perspectives of a mass insurrection with the aim of smashing the army and the repressive apparatus. All the organizations emphasized the necessity of having a perspective of taking political power.

b) The *mass revolutionary peoples organizations* appeared in the middle of the 70s. This showed the need for the masses, affected by a brutal fall in living standards, to find new instruments, new means to stand up to the repression, to overcome a whole battery of legal constraints on the right to strike. Finally these peoples organizations sanctioned the failure of the PCS methods in relation to the militancy of the proletariat in the recently formed industries.

The *Peoples United Action Front (FAPU)* was formed in 1974; the *Revolutionary Peoples Bloc (BPR)* in 1975 as a result of a split in FAPU and the *February 28th Peoples Leagues (LP 28)* in 1977. These organizations were composed of social sectoral groupings (workers, peasants, shantytown dwellers, teachers, students, and school students, peddlers) that existed prior to their formation or which were later built through the revolutionary mass organization. Each revolutionary people's organization was linked to a political-military organization: the BPR to the FPL, the FAPU to the FARN and the LP 28 to the ERP.

Women play an historically unprecedented role in the politico-military organizations and in the mass organizations, including at a leadership level. This reflects the big changes that took place in the university and teaching sectors but also the role of women in the organization of the struggle against repression in the countryside and the neighborhoods.

From 1977 to 1979 workers and peasants struggles grew in

number. The form these mobilizations took was a break with the past: strikes with occupation and self-defense, occupations of the big farms, solidarity strikes, demonstrations in support of struggles, occupations of churches and embassies, mass demonstrations with self-defense and armed actions. These struggles *won a certain number of their demands* despite the attempts to stifle them and the legalization of a brutal repression.

The revolutionary people's organizations definitively took away the control of the trade union movement from the PCS — except in the building trade union — and brought about a radical reorientation, above all in the United Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (CUTS). State-tied trade unionism declined dramatically and there was impressive progress of the people's organizations in the peasant movement where the PCS was practically absent. By 1978 the politico-military organizations and the mass peoples organizations had won hegemony over most of the mass movement. A revolutionary situation was maturing.

c) A 'conversion' had taken place in the Church which had repercussions particularly in the university and in the countryside. The Christian 'base communities' raised the consciousness of a terribly oppressed and exploited peasantry, facilitated the work of revolutionary militants, often from a Christian background, and legitimized their actions in the eyes of the masses.

d) The 1972 elections (presidential), the 1974 elections (local and legislative) and the 1977 elections (presidential) degenerated into open farce. Politics was seen to equal repression.

Reformist political projects, based on the electoral road and concretized in the *Nationalist Opposition Union* (UNO) composed of the Christian Democrats, the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR) claiming Social Democratic affiliations and the National Democratic Union (UDN) linked to the PCS, were seriously floundering. The oligarchy and the key sectors of the army were not ready to make the least concessions to demands for political reform and even less for land reform. This was the sort of explosive situation in which the Nicaraguan revolution erupted in 1979.

3. There was a *rapid speeding up* of the revolutionary upsurge from *October 1979 to the middle of 1980*.

a) On *October 15, 1979*, encouraged by imperialism, a sector of the army made a preventive coup d'état. It wanted to hold off the rise of the mass movement and cut the ground from under the feet of the revolutionary organizations. While *real power* remained in the hands of the military, the Junta doled out an apparent power to 'honest technicians' or to the PDC or MNR. The PCS-UDN joined this government. The Junta made efforts to open a dialogue with the Foro Popular (people's forum — made up of the PDC, the MNR, the UDN and trade unions) in order to try and occupy the political terrain and to marginalize the popular and revolutionary organizations. A reform program, rather sweeping on paper, was announced.

October 1979 was a test for the revolutionary organizations. By upsetting this reformist political trap they kept alive revolutionary perspectives. The FPL denounced the coup d'état as "aiming to divert the masses into an electoral process." The LP 28 immediately left the Foro Popular and the ERP characterized the coup as a "new maneuver from imperialism and the oligarchy." The FARN-FAPU hesitated a little and emphasized the internal contradictions of the junta. Then it attacked the reformist patching up operation. If the revolutionary organizations had supported or participated in the Junta they would have disoriented the masses and facilitated things for imperialist policy. Revolutionaries in El Salvador, not only denounced the reformist dead end, but launched semi-insurreccional military actions and organized demonstrations in support of the masses' demands. The real substance of the Junta's program was exposed by the

combination of these initiatives and the social-economic struggle — instead of the promised reforms the masses were given massacres.

The first Junta from October to December 1979, which was supported by the Socialist International and the Christian Democratic World Union, and then the second junta from January to March 1980, rapidly came apart at the seams. The independent 'technocrats,' the MNR, the PCS and then DC representatives left the ship. From March 1980 Duarte's PDC was left alone in the junta with the armed forces but there was no doubt who took the decisions in this junta.

b) A *revolutionary crisis* was opened in the *first quarter of 1980* and the constituent elements for a situation of dual power began to come together. *On one side* the crisis of bourgeois leadership deepened. The radical opposition of oligarchic corporatist organizations to the reform policy of the junta and against the Christian Democrats' role, eroded the government's power. Conflicts in the army, relaying the oligarchy's maneuvers, led to aborted coup d'états. The PDC fractured. The decreed reforms did not progress at all and resulted in sharpening the inter-bourgeois conflicts. The Junta's action was not much more than generalized repression: state of emergency (March), military occupation of the university and militarization of the public services (August), state intervention in the trade unions and massacres. The paramilitary organizations carried out daily terrorist actions against even Christian Democrats. All this contributed to the international political isolation of the Junta.

*On the other side*, the revolutionary organizations knew how to exploit even the limited space opened up immediately after October 1979. They asserted their political presence. The People's Organizations recruited and built up their implantation. They held the center of the political scene, relegating the democratic, reformist opposition forces to a secondary role. Mass struggles, despite the massacres, became extremely powerful and reached a high point during the second quarter of 1980. On March 17 a general strike called by the Revolutionary People's Organizations paralyzed 70 percent of the country's economic activity. After the assassination of the Archbishop of San Salvador, Mgr. Romero (on March 24), an eight-day strike was called. On June 24 a *political general strike* paralyzed nearly the whole country. It posed de facto the question of *power*. The August 13-14 general strike was seen as a *turning point*. It combined aspects of a general strike with military actions and an insurreccional dynamic in the outer neighborhoods of the capital. However, participation in the strike was more limited than in June. Mass terrorism, militarization of society, and the counter-offensive of the army, where the most extreme right wing was cracking the whip, did have an influence on the population. In *November 1980*, the assassination of the official representatives of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) by the paramilitary forces symbolized the end of this phase of the revolution.

c) From February 1980, the revolutionary camp began to organize united political structures which increased its authority and influenced the mass upsurge.

The BPR, FAPU, LP 28, and UDN set up the Mass Revolutionary Coordination (CRM) in February. Its program set down that the struggle for power was on the agenda. There was no doubt about its objectives.

*"The decisive task of the revolution, on which achieving all its tasks and aims depends, is the conquest of power and the establishment of a revolutionary government which will begin leading the people to build a new society. The democratic revolutionary government will include representatives of the revolutionary and people's movement and democratic parties, organizations, sectors and personalities willing to participate in the realization of this program.*



"This government will base itself on a broad social and political basis formed in the first place by the working class, peasants, and progressive middle layers; closely linked to the latter there are all the social layers open to the application of this program: small- and medium-sized industrial entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, artisans, and agricultural producers (small and medium..)"

In addition to social, economic and democratic tasks (nationalization of monopolistic sectors, radical land reform), it emphasized immediate political tasks, the creation of a "popular army built up in the course of the revolutionary process," . . . in which can be incorporated elements of the soldiers, under-officers, officers and chiefs of the present army who correctly conduct themselves and reject foreign intervention against the revolutionary process and support the liberation struggle of our people."

In April 1980 the FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front) was set up — made up of the MNR, the Social Christian People's Movement (MPSC), a split from the PDC and the previously regrouped forces — on the basis of the CRM program, expressing the political hegemony won by the revolutionary organizations. These structures were completed at the end of May by the formation of the Unified Revolutionary Leadership (DRU), which represented the first step in the difficult unification of the command structures of the politico-military organizations.

d) The present leadership of the FMLN considers it missed a 'favorable opportunity' to struggle for power throughout these months of 1980. The following weaknesses characterized the way the revolutionary forces carried out this struggle: Examining this period makes it possible to draw out some of the key aspects of this lost opportunity.

A lack of synchronization existed between the powerful upsurge and demands of the popular struggles and the construction of the united front of the revolutionary organizations.

This united front was only achieved with some delay and with a limited political content in terms of strategy and tactics. This belated unity nevertheless had to be achieved in a short period of time, with all the consequent complications in terms of responding to crucial questions in such a conjuncture: leading general strikes, working to divide the army, tactical alliances, the planned coordination and concentration of still relatively limited military resources, a common revolutionary diplomacy to aid the struggle, etc.

An instrument that had been essential for the revolutionaries in their winning the hegemony over the toiling masses, the mass fronts, became transformed into an obstacle for the building up of united front bodies at the base. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand the sectarianism which still reigned between the organizations; on the other hand the conception they had of their relations with the mass movement which neglected struggle for unity at the base in favor of the tight control of each of their organizations over sectors of the mass movement. In El Salvador during this phase of preparation for the insurrection there was to be no CDCs or a MPU as in Nicaragua! The top-level unity as well as the strength of the organizations had been sufficient for calling and organizing extraordinarily widescale general strikes. But differences of tactical and strategic orientation and the inexistence of united bodies at the base undermined the preparation of the insurrection. Furthermore, the absence of united front committees meant the differences between the organizations was felt more strongly among the masses and there was no pressure for unity from the base to the leadership.

In this framework the case of the PCS is interesting. True it has carried out a drastic turn — it had to survive — by joining the CRM and by beginning to carry out the armed struggle and in giving up a strategy that assigned a leading role to the

bourgeoisie in a 'first phase of the revolution.' It declared the necessity of "taking the power away from the bourgeoisie by destroying its bureaucratic-military apparatus" and the present-day relevance of the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, it still justifies its 1979 government participation, saying that it was necessary "to go along with the democratic forces up to the moment when the project failed so as to avoid dispersal after the rout." It also continues to give an important place in its strategy to 'democratic sectors of the army' and did not rule out a strategic agreement with them.

4. The last months of 1980 were characterized by an increased militarization and the FMLN's preparation for the January 1981 offensive.

After September 1980, the traditional reactionary sectors had regained complete control of the army. Military collaboration with the Guatemalan and Honduran armies was resumed under the aegis of the United States. The latter prevented the economic collapse of El Salvador and put Duarte in the presidency of the Republic (December 1980) — the first civilian president for 49 years — in order to make the regime more presentable diplomatically.

On their side the revolutionary forces consolidated their military potential. They moved out many cadres from mass work (increasingly difficult given the repression) to military activity, in the perspective of a direct assault. They carried out military occupations of towns to prepare the incorporation of the population in a future insurrection. The DRU forces had drawn the lessons of the past and wanted to profit from the political situation in the United States (1980 elections). They made progress on unity, encouraged on this path by the Castroist leadership, and in October 1980 they set up the *Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN)*. It replaced the DRU and broadened to include the *Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC)*. A general high command was set up with a representative from each of the five organizations. A consensus emerged on the preparation of a general military offensive, initially defined as the 'final' offensive.

The offensive was launched on January 10, 1981. The most violent battles lasted eight days. However, as early as January 14 the FMLN organized the retreat. The 'final' offensive had failed but the FMLN did not come out of it defeated or militarily crushed. Two factors explain the significance and results of this offensive.

- It was late in relation to the highest point reached by the mass movement in the middle of 1980. From that moment on the military's hold over the capital and the main towns was considerably strengthened. Terror and the displacement of revolutionary cadres had weakened mass work.

- The insurrectional pushes in the *barrios* of the capital were not backed up and relayed by a large-scale general strike. It was more difficult for the mass movement to display its militancy since revolutionary military protection was insufficient. A chain reaction of partial local insurrections did not take place.

Furthermore, concentrating military attacks on the barracks, in order to strike very hard blows against the enemy, took up big forces and left a greater freedom of movement to the counterrevolutionary army. Finally, the FMLN military forces were little coordinated and the hoped-for uprisings and mutinies in the barracks did not happen. After January 1981 a *real civil war* developed.

5. During the phase from January 1981 to March-June 1982 both the revolutionary and the counterrevolutionary forces reorganized their structures and plans of action.

a) Militarily speaking the scope of the January 1981 offensive

made possible an advance in the accumulation of military forces and experience. Up to the middle of 1981 the FMLN nevertheless was constrained to *defend its positions*. It neutralized the 'sweep' operations of an army seeking a quick knockout. Through this battle, the different forces of the FMLN were able to conquer *zones of control* — and not liberated zones — allowing them to improve the training of their troops, to deal with supply problems, to set up bases to plan future offensives, transmit radio broadcasts (Radio Venceremos) and to begin to build a real *peoples army*. The peasant masses of these 'controlled zones' were gradually organized, both to defend themselves and to orient their economic activity to war needs. This is what the FPL called *local peoples' power* (PPL).

From the end of the second quarter of 1981, the FMLN was able to go back onto the offensive. It attacked garrisons, took over certain towns (Perquin), damaged strategic infrastructure (el Puente de Oro) and attacked the Ilopango airbase (January 1982). The military pressure on the towns was stepped up at the beginning of 1982 and paved the way for the March 1982 military campaign, the FMLN response to the elections.

b) These *March 1982 legislative elections*, made in the USA, did not represent a victory for the latter. The USA had banked on the PCD/armed forces pact. However the PDC was relegated to a secondary role through an alliance inside parliament between the Party of National Conciliation (PCN), historic party of the oligarchy and the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). The oligarchy and its allies had backed this latter political formation (recently formed and fascistic) in order to oppose any reforms and to react against the Junta's inability to smash the FMLN. Indeed the ARENA organizes a 'popular base' and has an armed wing (the death squads). The crisis of bourgeois leadership therefore got sharper.

Massive, open fraud, the electoral advance of the ARENA and the military capacity of the FMLN to a large extent neutralized the usefulness of these elections for the United States. Nevertheless they were held. A part of the population had voted (about 50 percent) even if many people were intimidated. The elections brought out into the open the depth of the developing crisis in the bourgeois camp and the malaise of certain sectors of the population. Outside of its military offensive the FMLN offered a rather lame response.

On the one hand the thinking behind this new offensive continued in many respects the conception of the January 1981 offensive. The idea of a more or less short-term victory, in an insurrectional perspective, combined with decisive military actions hastening the decomposition of the army was still the strategic tradition of the main FMLN forces — outside of the differences they had on the combination of these various elements and on the more precise pace of their practical realization. The Nicaraguan revolution had very much influenced the 'strategic schema' of the FMLN. The inadequacies of this hypothetical schema for El Salvador were increasingly apparent.

On the other hand the FMLN as a whole judged correctly that the 1982 elections did not provide imperialism with a solution. But its various components were not agreed on the *tactical action proposals* to be adopted (military boycott or political denunciation). The result of this was clear: the FMLN *did not have a political position as the FMLN on the question of the elections*.

Three themes came out strongly from the discussions inside the FMLN following the March 1982 experience.

- How to aid sectors of the people condemned to silence by 'state terrorism' to express, in one form or another, their support for the FMLN? The weakness of the FMLN in this conjuncture did not lie only in military inadequacies.

- How to introduce splits and divisions among political forces permitting the broadening of the camp of opposition to the re-

gime/imperialism coalition, given the increased intervention of the United States, the role of ARENA, the economic crisis and bourgeois leadership crisis? This meant raising the problem of alliances, of an opening of the FDR towards forces like those grouped in the *Democratic Peoples Union* (UPD), formed in 1980. The UPD is made up of the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS), the Building trade union (Fesincontrans), associations of small industrialists and shopkeepers etc. It supports the PDC but also expresses the support of these sectors for reforms, their opposition to blind oppression and an openness to 'dialogue.'

- Agreement was reached inside the FMLN on the need to *consolidate its military force* in order to give new confidence to the masses who were *disconcerted* in some cases by the results of the two previous offensives (January 1981 and March 1982) and to strike new blows against the army. Indeed the United States had opted to *rebuild the Salvadoran army*: special battalions trained in the United States, reorganization of the command structures and involvement of American officers in the direct conduct of the war.

c) On the *diplomatic level* the Reagan administration tried, on the one hand, to revive regional agreements between the bourgeoisies (Democratic Central American Community) and, on the other hand, to justify its intervention by presenting the Salvadoran revolution as the fruit of "Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan interference."

This project was conjuncturely counterbalanced by the Franco-Mexican declaration (August 1981) and Lopez Portillo's (Mexican president) peace proposals. The FMLN thus won diplomatic status internationally, even if the Franco-Mexican declaration was to be vigorously attacked by the Southern Cone dictatorships and Venezuela and Colombia — under pressure from the United States (Caracas Manifesto, September 1981).

From the end of 1981 the FMLN turned *negotiations into a weapon of struggle*. It showed that war and negotiation are not antagonistic, but can be complementary. Internationally they hammered away correctly at one idea: there is "no solution to the conflict without the FMLN-FDR." In October 1981, Nicaragua offered it a platform at the UN to present its 'peace proposal' demanding the opening of negotiations without conditions between the FMLN-FDR and the Junta in the presence of governments as witnesses.

6. From the *end of the first quarter of 1982* to just before the March 1984 presidential elections, the course of the Salvadoran revolution was characterized by: a growing FMLN offensive military capacity; continually stepped up American imperialist aid to shore up the regime and its army; a serious crisis in the FPL; a redefinition of the FMLN-FDR political platform and finally, by the recovery of still modest movement around socio-economic demands in the towns.

a) Since June 1982 the FMLN increasingly determines the reactions of the counter-revolutionary army by *surprise offensives* concentrated on specific objectives. Thus, it can: inflict defeats on whole companies of soldiers; increase its recuperation of arms; make the movements of the army more difficult; develop a policy towards government soldiers who have been captured or have surrendered; temporarily occupying relatively important towns; better coordinating operations on the various fronts each of which remains linked to one of the FMLN organizations.

From the middle of 1983, imperialism got its "military/civilian operations" (the CONARA plan — National Commission for the restoration of the zones) underway. They aimed to eliminate the social base of support for the revolutionary forces (bombings, moving the population, civilian patrols and small, mobile military units).

Nevertheless, in September 1983, the FMLN succeeded in up-

setting imperialist plans once again. It took over the third biggest town (San Miguel) of the country, an important barracks (El Paraiso) and three departments were now almost completely under its control.

These military actions *no longer are placed in a short term insurrectional perspective*, a 'final battle.' Their function is to keep the initiative in the revolutionaries' hands. They prove to the population that the dictatorship is losing control over an increased part of its territory. They also: weaken the army and counterbalance the effects of U.S. aid given to recompose it, boost recruitment to the FMLN and aim to modify the relationship of forces and make a shift in the situation. It was on the basis of the *priority* given to these military efforts that the FMLN general command placed its political and diplomatic initiatives in January 1984.

Two key questions are posed by the very logic of the way this war is unfolding:

- The increased intervention of the United States, which corresponds to the inability of the Salvadoran army to fulfil its counterrevolutionary function without being taken in hand by imperialism, means that the *civil war increasingly takes on a dimension of a war of national liberation*.

- How to establish a relationship between the progress made on a military level, the action of the masses outside the FMLN zones of control and a response on the political level.

The discussion opened up in the FMLN after March 1982 was bound to spring to life again.

b) The government of 'national unity' set up by Alvaro Magana after the March 1982 elections went through crisis after crisis. The presidential elections planned for 1983 by the United States had to be postponed to 1984. The second phase of the so-called land reform was put in the bottom drawer.

In this context, the UPD contained the socio-economic protests of the small- and medium-sized peasants (September 1983). It also filled a vacuum left by the diminishing presence of the FMLN in the towns. The fall of purchasing power of wage earners and the fierce superexploitation meant that strikes broke out in the public administration and the workplaces. A limited trade union reorganization took place with the birth of the Unitary trade union and Profession Movement of El Salvador (MUSYGES) in May 1983.

The FMLN forces were far from being able to broadly influence this protest movement. In the towns the loss of cadres from the mass movement and the effects of the civil war has modified the relationship of forces. The channels of expression the workers were forced to use were often linked to bourgeois parties or petty-bourgeois organizations. Wage demands, democratic demands and the 'desire for peace' now have an important role to play. This is not incidentally in contradiction with having sympathy for the FMLN activity in the civil war.

c) The FMLN kept up its *politico-diplomatic pressure*. It unmasked the U.S. and government maneuver of the *Peace Commission* set up by the Junta to get a 'dialogue without direct negotiations' going and to put out a line to try and get one sector of the FMLN-FDR to participate in future elections. The FMLN raised three questions with this commission: the withdrawal of the United States from El Salvador, the opening of a dialogue on Salvadoran territory, the conditions for a ceasefire and participation in elections. The Peace Commission was mandated only to discuss participation in elections. But, for the FMLN, any such participation is only to be envisaged *after* the setting up of a "government of broad participation" (September 1983 Declaration in Colombia).

This government proposal became an axis of the political and diplomatic response of the FMLN-FDR. At the end of January 1984, with the elections of March 1984 coming up, it presented

the proposal of forming a "*Provisional Government of broad participation*" (GAP) and a platform of tasks. The most 'immediate tasks of this provisional government' are:

- *destroy the repressive apparatus;*
- *dissolve the security police, the death squads and their political organization, the ARENA party;*
- *send home the North American advisors, stop the military intervention and aid as well as all arms supplies in the country;*
- *purge the armed forces and introduce later their representatives in the provisional government;*
- *after a full inquiry bring the civilians and military personnel responsible for genocide, political crimes, torture, kidnappings, violations of individual rights, to justice;*
- *restore all democratic rights;*
- *(a series) of fundamental social and economic reforms in order to transform existing structures."*

As an end result of this process conditions will be created for "preparing and organizing general elections."

Agreement on the tasks of this government which is "*not due to last long*" and on the time scale and means for their implementation will determine the creation of the government structures. "*This process must end up in the organization of a single national army, formed by the FMLN forces and the armed forces of the present government after they have been purged. The FMLN and government forces will keep their arms until the end of the negotiations.*" Finally, "*representatives of the workers movement, of the peasants, teachers, professional associations, white-collar workers, university organizations, political parties, private property-owners, the FMLN, and the reconstructed armed forces must be in this government.*" "*The oligarchy, sectors and personalities and sectors opposed to the objectives of this government or proposing the maintenance of the dictatorship will be excluded from this government.*" "*No single force will dominate this government, all the social and political forces in favor of the overthrow of the oligarchy's regime, of the reestablishment of national sovereignty and independence and of private property and foreign investment not contradicting society's interests, will be represented in it.*"

The FMLN-FDR's offer of negotiations is not a substitute for military action, it *goes hand in hand* with it. It specifically precludes the FMLN laying down its arms before "*successful negotiations*" which must be held in two phases: "*a direct and unconditional dialogue must precede the negotiations.*" This initiative is part of an anti-imperialist framework of "*defense of independence, national sovereignty and right to self-determination.*" This is based on a judgement concerning the dynamic of massive United States intervention, the possible regionalization of the conflict and the transformation of El Salvador into a sort of American protectorate. This platform marks a change — which has been seen to be coming for some time — compared to the 1980 program for the seizure of power in the short term, a change that has to be integrated into the national and international framework.

d) In April 1983, a dramatic crisis broke out inside the FPL leadership with the assassination of Ana Maria and the suicide of Marcial.

Thus once again methods were used to sort out internal differences which have already caused great harm to the Salvadoran revolution. The extreme difficulties of the military struggle, the militarization of the organizations and the maneuvers of the enemy forces provides the framework for these tragic events. But no objective condition or 'necessity of the struggle against the class enemy,' can justify the use of such methods in the ranks of the workers movement. The various FPL and FMLN communiques 'explaining' the events not only changed several times their version of what happened but brought in serious accusations

without providing proof nor (above all) political explanations worthy of the stakes involved in this revolution. In this sense they are unacceptable.

Since 1982, the debate in the FPL has been focused on the following questions:

- The articulation between the workers and peasants alliance and alliances with other social sectors and the problem of proletarian hegemony in these alliances.

- The composition of the government that has been proposed for a political solution and the interrelation between the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle.

- The development and forms of mass urban work; the conception of work aimed at weakening the enemy army and how to take advantage of internal contradictions which could emerge in it; the role of diplomatic struggle in the revolution and its relations with the armed struggle and political struggle.

In fact all these differences took on a particular sharpness once they became immediately related to the problems of building a unified organization and consequently with the place each of the present FMLN currents, among others, the PCS forces, would have in it.

In September 1983, the plenary council of the FPL announced the election of a new leadership. It pointed out the two key tasks it had set: "intensifying the revolutionary peoples struggle in all its political, military, and diplomatic aspects in the perspective of establishing a government of broad popular participation" and "to dedicate all efforts to the struggle against intervention, for the legitimate defence of national sovereignty and the peoples' right to self-determination faced with the growing interventionist policy of the Reagan administration."

The debate inside the FPL resulted in a significant division giving birth to two groupings, the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MOR) and the Clara Elizabeth Front, which are outside of the FPL. The MOR and the Frente make a connection between the turn made by the FPL, "the excessive verticalist functioning of the Political Commission," and various international organizational pressures which, according to them, are being put on the FPL and FMLN. The MOR, like the Clara Elizabeth Front, identify with what they consider the original orientation of the FPL — the 'prolonged peoples war' line. They also claim continuity with the initial project of making the FPL the only revolutionary proletarian party of the FMLN and consequently these two groupings carry out a series of sectarian and maximalist criticisms that avoid giving a response in terms of a concrete political orientation to the present problems of the Salvadoran revolution.

7. For American imperialism, the *Salvadoran Presidential elections of March/May 1984* had three functions:

- Provide a legal and democratic cover behind which to organize a new military escalation against the revolutionary forces;

- End the relative isolation of the Salvadoran government internationally and combine more closely the war and diplomatic pressure;

- Try to modify the relationship of forces between ARENA and the PDC and to thus increase the effectiveness of Duarte and the army's counterrevolutionary policy.

The FMLN-FDR denounced this electoral force, but it did not turn the election into a target for military actions — apart from the ERP which took some initiatives of this sort. But the FMLN refused to declare a military truce during this period. The growth of the territory under its control in comparison with March 1982 is shown by the fact that the government found it impossible to organize the ballot in 89 municipal areas (34 percent of all municipal areas).

a) Throughout the first three months of 1984 the Pentagon and the Salvadoran military command tried to bring together elec-

toral victories and military ones. They concentrated on 'air surveillance' in order to prevent the concentration of FMLN troops and to facilitate the pursuit of its units. *Bombing the civilian population in the FMLN zones of control* was sharply stepped up.

Despite the lack of technical resources, the revolutionary forces were able to defend themselves and even to fight back. Economic sabotage (energy, transport, agro-exports) held an important place in their activity. They even took over the heavily-defended Cerro Grande dam (June 1984) and developed actions in new regions.

One conclusion emerges clearly: the Salvadoran army, which has doubled in size since 1981, *cannot defeat the peoples army*. On the one side the counterrevolutionary army is weakened by the incompetence of its commanders, corruption, the permanent turnover of its troops, desertions and a low fighting spirit. On the other side the logistical support and the structured U.S. aid at all levels does make it possible for it to carry out a counterinsurgency war, with a very high cost for the rural population, and to maintain a more consistent military pressure aiming to take away the tactical initiative from the FMLN. Consequently for imperialism there is a shrinking of the margin that exists between the option of inflicting a qualitative weakening on the FMLN by basing itself on a Pentagon-led Salvadoran army and that of a direct, massive intervention.

b) American imperialism is mounting an intensive campaign to get international diplomatic support for the new Duarte government. The World Christian Democratic Union ensures it the support of many European bourgeoisies. International Social Democracy has looked on benevolently and has legitimized its election, just as Mexico has. These operations are supposed to facilitate its task of taking the banner of the "peaceful solution" out of the FMLN-FDR's hands.

But a series of contradictions are undermining Duarte's regime:

- It is difficult for it to satisfy the demands of both the national association of private entrepreneurs (ANEP) and the social economic movements of protest which are becoming more extensive (strikes in the public sector, the post office, teachers, water workers, etc.) The same potential conflict exists on the land reform question. All this will have repercussions inside the UPD and make relations with the PDC more tense.

- The institutional and political crisis will continue and there will be more and more conflicts between the Duarte government and the parliamentary majority which is still held by the ultra-rightwing bloc.

- The democratic facade that Duarte wants to put on the army won't deceive people for very long.

- The ruin of the economy, combined with structural obstacles, removes any credibility from the reformist populist measures and an economic recovery.

For the United States, the Duarte government appears as the last card to play before having to opt for invasion. Tactically Duarte and his American advisors are seeking to divide the ranks of the FMLN-FDR by putting in the window a possible participation of the 'political wing' in some vague elections. The Socialist International and the Latin American bourgeoisies are relaying this maneuver with the following argument: a truce, understood as a stage towards laying down arms would create the ideal conditions for dialogue. In fact, for American imperialism, only the *qualitative weakening of the FMLN-FDR, its total defeat is what counts*; that is the precondition for any negotiations.

The FMLN-FDR firmly rejects Duarte's proposals and declares the need "to go forward with the war" and the "economic, social and political struggles" as long as imperialism and the government maintain their present positions. The five FMLN

commanders have publicly insisted on the minimum conditions which would create "the favorable and necessary climate for dialogue": the end of direct North American participation in the war, an immediate halt to bombings of the civilian population, the freeing of political prisoners and the elimination of torture, assassinations and 'disappearances.'

8. Discussions since 1982 inside the FMLN and more particularly in the FPL relate on the one hand to changes in the development of the revolution since January 1981 and on the other hand to the transitional situation between a civil war and a war of national liberation given the decisive intervention of imperialism in El Salvador and the Central American isthmus.

a) The FMLN is confronted with a series of important problems for the future of the revolution:

- The social and human costs of the war, the inevitable wearing down of layers of the population and their desire for a "just peace."

- The direct political and diplomatic efforts of imperialism, which, as opposed to the Nicaraguan situation of 1978-9 is in the front line in the management of the conflict.

- The possible emergence of contradictions between a social sector linked, among others, to the UPD, but outside of it too, and the present government; the recovery of the urban mass movement which is a long way from having the dynamism or the means of expression that existed in 1980.

In this context for the FMLN, to lead forward the revolutionary war, it has to offer a political solution and to take the initiative in the field of negotiations. A series of urgent tasks flow from this:

- Ensure the intervention of the FMLN-FDR on the political terrain so as to put into question the results imperialism has been looking for with the elections and the establishment of the Duarte government.

- To broaden the front struggling against the policy of the U.S., the armed forces and the oligarchy, by gathering social sectors coming into opposition to the Duarte government's policy around the FDR. To gain political space in order to get back more solidly into the urban mass movement.

- Keep the task of dividing the counterrevolutionary army.

- Develop diplomatic activity in order to increase the *political difficulties* for American imperialism's regional escalation.

The January 1984 program cannot thus be looked at apart from the questions facing the FMLN and the masses in a framework different from that of 1980. It aims to respond to these problems. Any judgment we make on the real dynamic of an orientation of negotiations for the formation of the GAP must take into account the obstinate refusal of the United States for a dialogue with the FMLN-FDR as a belligerent party, the similar attitude taken by all the dominant forces of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie, the social, political and moral polarisation and the existence of a people's army and controlled zones. Any judgement on the function of such a program must be linked to the present practice of the FMLN. Obviously the evolution of the relationship of forces inside the FMLN-FDR itself — a relationship which is not independent of the state of the class struggle and the military situation and the enormous international pressure focused on El Salvador — is an element of the way in which the line developed since 1983 has been concretised.

b) The FMLN has made negotiations proposals while *maintaining a sustained military effort*.

It seeks to unify in the eyes of the masses, on the one hand a political proposal for "overturning the old oligarchical society and its client state" and on the other hand, given imperialist and Duarte's rejection of this, to continue the people's war. It is calling on all those who "voted for peace in voting for Duarte" and

whose anti-imperialist reflexes can sharpen under the effects of a war which seems to have no solution due to the blockage of the United States and their man Duarte.

The importance given to democratic and anti-imperialist demands — compared to the 1980 program — corresponds to a requirement of the revolutionary struggle in the present phase. The whole pyramid of the power of the bourgeois forces rests on the keystone of imperialist aid. "Send back the North American advisors, stop the intervention and the military aid" is just as decisive as the battle against any imperialist interference in the Cuban or Nicaraguan revolutionary process.

"Dissolving the repressive bodies" and "ARENA", the political stronghold of the oligarchy, amounts to breaking up one of its vital bases of support. This is laid down as an initial point for any real process of negotiation. It is a case of responding to a deep-held sentiment among broad popular layers who look around for a safe corner both in the oligarchical system and in the political plan outlined by Duarte.

Consolidating popular action cannot be done just through immediate demands. The objective is to give this movement, starting from its reality, a *dynamic* of political confrontation with the practical policies of the present government. To do this it has to be offered an overall perspective which links democratic, anti-imperialist and immediate economic demands. That is the way to throw off balance the leaderships of the popular organizations who want to subordinate the activity of the masses to the needs of the regime. The GAP platform can have this sort of effect, although it gives no response at all — but this is not its function — to the thorny problem of mass work in the towns.

The nationalization of the "monopolistic" enterprises has disappeared from the 1984 platform. But on this terrain the real question is whether there is a commitment to satisfying the needs of the enormous mass of landless and impoverished peasants who are the fundamental basis of support for the revolutionary process. The GAP program calls for the establishment of a complete land reform "guaranteeing the free participation of the rural workers in its implementation." It is the real substance of this land reform which is important.

Reducing the scope of the expropriation demands in the GAP platform corresponds to an attempt to broaden the alliance(s). Two questions are superimposed here and must not be confused.

The first is that of the very *conception of alliances*. The reality of the class struggle reduces to the extreme any substantial sectors of the bourgeoisie willing to play the same game as a Robelo. *In practice*, the alliance policy is oriented more towards layers of the petty and medium bourgeoisie, or very small layers of the bourgeoisie opposed to the oligarchy, towards sectors like the UPD. The formulation concerning the composition of the GAP, at the level of the social forces, further responds to this reality. The policy of alliances cannot be conditioned, as the MOR appears to say, by *a priori* conquest of a new hegemony over the popular movement. On the contrary, it is a lever to broaden once again the FMLN-FDR influence among these layers and to combine it with their own politico-military forces. In the same way it cannot be separated from an overall political proposal.

The second is that of the essential problem of the army. The GAP formulations on this point are very ambiguous and mark the most substantial change from the 1980 platform. Such formulations might just be a question of tactics — in this sense entirely similar formulations were used in October 1981 in the negotiations proposals made at the UN.

But these formulations can also find an echo in the more consistent line of some sectors of the FMLN on the alliance with the "healthy sectors of the army" not in the sense of speeding up its decomposition but to try and get an institutional agreement with these sectors. Such a position could fit into an actual project of a

transitional stage at the level of power — as opposed to what concretely took place in Nicaragua — before the establishment of the power of the workers, peasants and their allies.

In the concrete world of the civil war in El Salvador, this proposal is a matter, at the best, of tactics in relation to possible conflicts in the army, at the worst, it can produce confusion. The *practical rejection* of a real prolonged truce and of dumping arms — that is, the refusal to subordinate the struggle to negotiations and to conceive them as an auxiliary instrument for the struggle — the emphasis put on the dissolution of the repressive bodies, the unconditional rejection of the American presence, the very forms proposed by the negotiation process, all that relativises the significances of this proposal of integrating a 'purged army' and the FMLN troops.

The danger of such a proposal would make itself felt if it were the case that it began to alter the practice of the FMLN and led to significant splits in the present FMLN leadership.

The Soviet bureaucracy deals with the Salvadoran revolution in the framework of its own interests in relation to imperialism. It seeks to increase its control over the Central American revolution by placing its aid where it can draw the best advantage. In function of international developments it can try and use a relay like the PCS leadership to exert pressure, in a direction convenient to its interests.

c) *The question of unity* has been — and still is — at the center of the discussion inside the FMLN. The traditions of sec-

tarianism have had devastating effects in the revolutionary camp in El Salvador. Division has had negative repercussions on the mass movement, on the process of self-organization and the carrying out of military operations. Sectarian methods of discussion — as the confrontation between the FPL and the MOR/Frente Clara Elizabeth continues to show us — are a factor weakening the revolutionary movement.

Revolutionary war requires a *united military command*. At the same time the needs of the mass movement makes urgent a centralized effort for setting up unified rank and file structures, able to draw on and lead the potential for militancy that exists.

Developing a united process at the level of the mass movement and at the level of military command and operations is an indispensable means for achieving the objective of creating a *unified revolutionary party*. The simple existence of a front has been shown to be inadequate to the present needs of the revolution.

The historical trajectory of the organizations and the 'compartmentalizing' of their politico-military influence makes a unification which respects the contribution of each organization and makes it possible to go beyond that is a difficult and delicate question. Unification cannot be imposed. Even less can it be a monolithic party — except at the cost of splits and the elimination of democratic internal functioning (within the limits imposed by war conditions). Rejection of such a monolithic party is a necessary factor for a real fusion and for defeating divisive maneuvers. Today the FMLN declares it is advancing in a 'long process of synthesis' which should lead to a higher level of unity.

## V. Building a Solidarity Movement

The escalation of imperialist intervention in Central America has already taken on the dimension of an out and out war of aggression against Nicaragua. More than ever solidarity with the Central American revolution is a central task for the whole of the Fourth International. This means:

- giving political and material aid to the liberation struggles in the region;
- developing a systematic information campaign about the reality of the imperialist intervention and against the media-orchestrated 'misinformation';
- to try and bring about a situation where the imperialist intervention is confronted outside of the Central American theatre itself with a powerful network of solidarity, the living expression of the significance of the test of strength taking place in the region.

There already exists, even before any direct mass intervention of American imperialism, an active solidarity movement internationally. Furthermore, in addition to the united front committees which make up the motorforce of the solidarity movement there is a powerful antiwar movement in many countries which opens up the possibility of qualitatively broadening this solidarity, faced with new stages in the escalation. Finally, the challenge made to imperialism in its direct zone of influence and the very character of the Sandinista revolution has sparked off an internationalist remobilization among significant layers of young people and has produced, for the first time since the Vietnamese revolution, a profound identification with an unfolding revolution.

These conditions mean that it is both possible and necessary to bring the solidarity work onto a superior level in the next period.

Already, with the intensification of the counterrevolutionary operations and thanks to the efforts of the FSLN in favour of united non-exclusive solidarity, there has been a new boost in the defence of the Nicaraguan revolution — even if criminal operations like the mining of the ports did not receive the adequate solidarity response.

On the other hand solidarity with the Salvadoran people's struggle — which had more attention up to the middle of 1982, has run a little out of steam and experiences difficulties. First of all because this work was initiated with the perspective of a short term victory and had to redefine its tasks in the framework of a war of resistance in which imperialism was now a full participant. It also suffered the effects of the FPL crisis inside the solidarity movement.

Today it is indispensable *to broaden solidarity*, to closely link the defense of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions in a united campaign against imperialist intervention and for the right of the peoples of Central America to freely determine their own future.

Popularizing the proposals and positions of the FMLN and the FSLN is a full part of such a campaign, while maintaining the political autonomy of the movement of solidarity with their liberation struggle until final victory.

From the point of view of the International as a whole it is a

question of a prolonged campaign, regularly punctuated by initiatives to be worked out concretely with the appropriate means in all sectors of intervention of the sections.

The united committees and collectives, which have maintained for several years regular solidarity activity, is the motor and the most consistent pole of the bigger movement. To bring this campaign into line with the stakes involved, it is necessary on the basis of the gains represented by the committees to broaden the front of those forces committed to work against imperialist intervention. Broadening the front can be done in several ways:

- firstly and above all towards the workers' movement, through 'twinning' workplaces, tours of information related to specific sectors (health for example), and initiatives to raise funds involving trade unions at a local or workplace level. Initiatives like the trade union meeting for peace, held in Managua in April 1984, should, if concrete proposals come out of them, help work in this direction;
- then towards the antiwar movement, to the extent that one can raise opposition to the war of aggression already going on in Central America more and more in the mobilizations against the missiles;

- finally with religious and humanitarian bodies, through financial campaigns and international information conferences.

The main activities around which the solidarity campaigns are organized are:

- the ongoing campaign of information on the reality of American aggression in Nicaragua, on the crimes of the counter-revolution and the bombing of civilians in El Salvador, on the positions of the FSLN and the FMLN in relation to the big national and international problems linked to their struggle;

- organizing tours of information, meetings, conferences and demonstrations, strengthening international coordination at the level of the committees thereby contributing to a greater effectiveness of their initiatives;

- continuing and extending material and financial solidarity, more than ever indispensable given the economic situation created by the war; twinning cities, directly linking workplaces, or organizations can provide the framework for this;

- continuing and building up the work brigades for Nicaragua, which fulfill the function of both material solidarity and information. Their existence is a precious gain: it is the first time that so many militants with such varied political, trade union or ideological affiliations have had the opportunity of forging direct links with the experience of an unfolding revolution and to get from it a conviction and a force which keeps the solidarity movement so alive.

For the International itself, stepping up the campaign means:

- strengthening the responsibility of the leaderships of the sections for this campaign, to actively follow this work;
- giving a particular importance to the youth organizations in solidarity with the Fourth International taking up this work and getting involved in the campaign;
- improving information and analysis about the Central American situation and the solidarity movement in our press;
- strengthening links with the Central American revolutionary organizations.

Footnotes:

(1) On the trajectory of the revolution in Grenada and the imperialist intervention, see the resolution adopted by the United Secretariat (May 13, 1984) published in *International Viewpoint* No. 54, June 4 1984, and *Intercontinental Press*, July 9, 1984.

(2) See: *Report on the Present stage of Building the International*, Chap. 2, points 1 and 2 (*IIDB*, XX, No. 3, July 1984)

(3) For an analysis of the general political and socioeconomic conditions of the revolution one can consult the resolution adopted by the 11th World Congress in November 1979. (See special *Intercontinental Press*, Feb. 1980)

(4) A critical balance sheet has to be drawn of the positions adopted by the Fourth International at its 11th World Congress (November 1979). The criticism bears on *three interrelated aspects*. The first is the delay in the understanding of the character and trajectory of the FSLN (June 1979 USec resolution). We can certainly invoke the fact that this current had declined numerically and was heterogeneous during the 70s.

Secondly the FSLN alliance policy, its actions were incorrectly grasped (problem of hegemony) and were not situated in the context of a battle for "national unity against Somoza" in the sense understood by the FSLN. Thirdly, characterizing the state as capitalist after July 1979, with a situation of *sui-generis* dual power, was an attempt to grasp the

specificity of the situation, but was wrong. Consequently the judgement made concerning the installation of a workers and peasants government following a series of changes that took place between March and September 1980 (USec resolution, September 1980) confused the process of consolidation of the workers state with the establishment of a workers and peasants government. The largest minority at the 11th World Congress stated that: "The workers and peasants government in Nicaragua...is similar to the regimes described by the Fourth International which emerged and exercised power in Cuba and in Algeria from the end of 1963 to the middle of 1965." And further on: "Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois personalities hold government posts. Capitalist property and control of the main sectors of industry and agriculture has not been destroyed. This signifies that the *class character of the state remains bourgeois*." The minority announced: "the approaching test of strength (in the sense of expropriation of the capitalists) in the months to come." A mere examination of the different tasks confronting revolutionaries (in particular concerning the army) between Algeria from 1963 to 1965 and Nicaragua since 1979 indicates the lack of validity of this characterization which combines workers and peasants government and capitalist state.

These errors have not however led to our current going wrong on general political tasks, on the attitude to take to the FSLN, recognized as a revolutionary leadership, or on solidarity work.



## Our Differences

By César Toro, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Colombia

The International is on the verge of a new split. Leading to this is the programmatic revision launched by the U.S. SWP and the statement that "80 percent of the Trotskyists are irreformable sectarians. Dragging along a part of our section in England, and, it seems, a small sector of the Australian SWP and the Revolutionary Workers League of Canada, they have already published two issues of the magazine *New International*, in which they have been codifying their revisionist positions. The title in itself is suggestive: With whom do they intend to build that new international? Obviously not with the "irreformable sectarians," since these are precisely that — irreformable! On what programmatic basis? It cannot be with our old and always current Transitional Program, since its strategic axis is the permanent revolution, which "is an obstacle"; therefore, "our movement must discard permanent revolution." (Barnes, "Their Trotsky and Ours." [*New International*, Fall 1983, p. 13])

It is important to clarify what the theoretical and practical im-

plications of the orientation proposed by the SWP are. In our opinion, the positions of the U.S. comrades flow from the fact that they have a presence in the working class, in the oppressed sectors. For this reason, the counteroffensive of U.S. imperialism against the international and U.S. working class, and especially against the Salvadoran, Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadian working class, is felt more intensely by them. Their positions stem also from the weakness of the Fourth International, from the fact that it is a minority in the workers movement. And it is precisely for this reason that the line of building a new international around the Fidelista team and the Central American vanguards must be rejected. What is at stake is the defense of the political, historical, and programmatic traditions of Bolshevism codified in the first four congresses of the Third International, in the platform of the Left Opposition, and in the Transitional Program.

What is at stake, in sum, is the building of the Fourth International.

### PART ONE: WHY WE MUST REJECT THE REVISIONIST LINE OF THE SWP

#### I. The Campist Orientation

The international situation is characterized today by a rise of the toiling masses in a context of an exacerbation of the crisis of capitalism and of the Stalinist bureaucracies, combined with a counteroffensive by U.S. imperialism on a world scale. What the Reagan administration seeks is to block new revolutionary victories, particularly in Central America to step up political and military blackmail against the bureaucracy of the USSR; and to spur further measures of austerity, military spending, and open struggle against the working class in the imperialist countries.

Such is the dialectic of the world revolution. Revolutionary Marxists determine their orientation according to the struggle of the masses in the three sectors of the world revolution. Any analysis that downplays the importance of the struggle in one sector entails deep political and strategic deviations. The U.S. comrades have underestimated the importance of the struggle of the Polish workers against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, refusing to accept the fact that the revolution there is one of the deepest in this century and that the problems of revolutionary strategy have taken on a scope similar to those of Central America.

For Barnes, "The center of the class struggle today is the showdown with imperialism over the extension of the socialist revolution in the Caribbean and Central America." Further, "Central America and the Caribbean are also where the most important thinking about revolutionary working-class strategy is going on today." ("Their Trotsky and Ours.")

It is evident that the level reached by the imperialist counterof-

fensive strikes most heavily against the Central American region, but it cannot be ignored that in Lebanon the U.S., Italian, and French soldiers had to leave in defeat, or also, that the struggle of the Polish resistance is advancing in clandestinity and is putting forward "the most important thinking about revolutionary working-class strategy."

That counteroffensive is precisely what presses the analyses of revolutionaries to focus on only two camps in the international confrontations. What would be involved would be two opposed social systems — the socialist one and the capitalist one. This "campism" leads to transforming the real danger of world war into a short-term danger, equating local and regional counterrevolutionary wars with world war.

Such an adaptation to the campist orientation has been thoroughly crystallized in the leaderships of various sections, in particular in the U.S. SWP.

#### II. Adaptation to the Cuban CP

Our movement is not unaware of the role played by the Cuban leadership in extending the socialist revolution in Central America and the Caribbean, nor of the fact that its political practice is guided by Marxism, nor that, as a result, it is a proletarian leadership and, to the extent that it is for destroying the bourgeois capitalist state, it is revolutionary. But at the same time it is necessary to recognize that its policy is *contradictory*. This is expressed in its support to supposedly nationalist and democratic bourgeois sectors (Velasco Alvarado, Torrijos); to

the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy, and to the Polish *counterrevolution*.

Nonetheless, the U.S. comrades do not see this. For them, what is involved is nothing more nor less than the notion that "the Cuban CP applies the conquests of Bolshevism." This leads them to call for the "perspective . . . for a fusion of the forces struggling to build communist parties," a perspective "opened up by the revolutionary leaderships in Central America and the Caribbean." This in turn "points the way forward *politically* toward a new international working-class movement." ("Their Trotsky..." *NI*, p. 26.) In this perspective, what method is to be utilized toward the Cuban leadership? Raise no differences and make no criticisms of its policy! We think that it is *at least* necessary to criticize the positions of the Cubans on two basic questions — workers democracy and their international policy.

a. workers democracy:

Does a regime of workers democracy exist in Cuba today? It is hardly possible to minimize the historic and current significance of the organs of People's Power and the impact they will have on the struggles of the toilers in the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe. The experience of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), of the municipal assemblies, and of the Territorial Militias are showing the workers of the world how it is possible to continue making progress in decision-making and in the exercise of state power. But this is *not* workers democracy!

How does People's Power function? Three levels exist — Municipal Assemblies, Provincial Assemblies and the National Assembly. The first are elected by secret vote and in a *direct* way; from this standpoint, they are the most democratic of the three — those elected can be recalled at any moment and members of the armed forces may take part as candidates. The Provincial Assembly is elected by the delegates of the Municipal Assembly, and the National Assembly is elected by the Municipal Assemblies. Candidates for the National Assembly are proposed by the Communist Party and by the mass fronts, something that does not happen with the other bodies. In practice, what is involved is an *imposition*.

As for the CDRs, they involve democratic participation by the workers. All those elected can be recalled only by the ranks, and the party cannot impose removals. Today the CDRs not only carry out tasks of vigilance but also take on various functions such as health, education, and so on.

The trade unions still do not exercise real power in the enterprises. Workers' participation takes place through the Production Assembly, where the plan is discussed. Still, the management of the enterprise is carried out by an administrator, who is advised by a Council in which the union participates. This body can put forward suggestions but has no decision-making power.

Nonetheless, the comrades of the SWP idealize these structures and hold them up as an example to follow. At its 1981 convention, the SWP stated:

"Over the past decade, progress has been made toward institutionalizing democratic decision-making and participation by the working class: the unions, peasant organizations, women's federation, and neighborhood Committees for Defense of the Revolution have been strengthened; elected organs of People's Power have been established and are evolving and gaining experience on the local, provincial, and national levels; a mass-based Territorial Troops Militia has been launched to counter imperialist threats in reaction to revolutionary gains in the region . . . and more workers, women, and veterans of internationalist missions are being brought into the party and elected to the Cuban CP Central Committee. This sets an example for workers' organizations throughout the world."

If more workers join the party, more mass organizations are

set up, the CDRs are reinforced further, and People's Power advances, so much the better. A process of bureaucratic degeneration is thereby being avoided. But that is not the question. The existing forms of workers democracy in Cuba assure the *implementation* of governmental *decisions*, or, in the case of the unions, facilitate discussions on the Plan or propose suggestions. And this, clearly, is one of the aspects of democracy. But workers democracy means *real sovereignty, decision-making power* for the toiling masses. It is precisely the absence of this that implies a danger for the Cuban Revolution.

There is a second aspect of the regime of workers democracy that is fundamental: the party system. It is universally known that tendencies and factions are *prohibited* in the Cuban CP and that only the Communist Party is allowed to function in Cuba. Is the Cuban working class homogeneous? Is this the case anywhere in the world? Doesn't it have and defend diverse interests of its own? Are *all* Cubans in agreement with the international policy? With the domestic policy? Are they all in agreement with the single-party system? Don't they want to organize themselves independently in order to struggle for their points of view?

The position of revolutionary Marxists is that a single-party regime curtails democracy and weakens the exercise of power by the toiling masses. We defend *multipartyism*, the right of the workers to organize themselves independently in political parties, to form tendencies and factions within those parties, and of course within the communist party. We cannot, of course, allow the existence of parties that are against the workers state or that undermine the conquests of the revolution. "Revolutionary Marxists reject the substitutionist . . . paternalist, elitist, and bureaucratic deviation from Marxism that sees . . . the conquest . . . and the wielding of state power under the dictatorship of the proletariat as a task of the revolutionary party acting 'in the name' of the class, or, in the best of cases, 'with the support of' the class." "In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of workers power." ("Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.")

Nonetheless, the comrades of the SWP do not clearly differentiate themselves from the notion of the single party. In the entire article by Barnes there is not *one single* criticism of this deviation on the part of the Cuban leadership. Quite the contrary: "The leadership of the Cuban Communist Party has based its policies on a study of the political conquests of the Bolsheviks, working to apply these lessons and to impart them to other revolutionists" ("Their Trotsky . . ."). It's understandable that the Fidelista leadership errs in applying "the political conquests of the Bolsheviks," but it's unpardonable for Jack Barnes to so abuse the Marxist theory of the state.

b. International policy

The disagreement with the Cuban leadership in this respect is not about whether there exist two camps in struggle but about the *definition* of these camps. In characterizing the degenerated workers states as socialist, the Fidelista leadership is led to support the USSR unconditionally, although when it comes to Poland this leadership shows itself willing to question the errors of the PUWP. Such a position is an obstacle on the road to rebuilding a mass revolutionary international and to the defense and extension of the socialist revolution on a world scale. It is fundamental to underscore this since it has to do with the building of the International.

We think that what is necessary for the International is an orientation that seeks to build a common organization with the revolutionary vanguards of Central America and the Caribbean. But to do this, it is necessary for us to win those leaderships to *our* point of view and to *our* perspectives. We have to recognize

the programmatic limitations of the Fidelista and Nicaraguan teams and the fact that they do not currently favor building a world organization. So long as that is the case, we have every right to criticize their positions. We cannot adapt ourselves to Castro's policy in order to move "toward a new international working-class movement." The comrades of the SWP state, on the other hand, that "our axis is not to pinpoint our differences with the Cuban revolutionists, and then build our approach around these. That's a static and sterile approach. That's never how we approach revolutionary currents in the mass movement.

"Our axis is the same fundamental one as that of the Castro leadership — leading forward Cuba's revolutionary course, both on the international arena and at home." (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, April 1982, p. 17.)

### III. The Abandonment of the Theory of the Permanent Revolution

Repeating the crudest Stalinist slanders, Doug Jenness and Jack Barnes throw overboard more than a half century of confirmation of the permanent revolution in revolutionary processes. Both Jenness and Barnes have had to *falsify* the history of the Russian Revolution in order to arrive at the conclusion that "our movement must discard permanent revolution." There are grave practical and political implications in such a programmatic revision.

In the first place, because this means abandoning the revolutionary strategy of the antibureaucratic political revolution. Of course, we still do not find in the documents of the U.S. leadership an explicit rejection of that strategy. Nonetheless, in Barnes's document "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," he speaks of "the struggle to defend, extend, and democratize the workers states" (IDB, Vol. XVII, No. 5.)

But there are indeed comrades who already reject such a strategy. In a report presented to the May 1982 meeting of the International Executive Committee, Comrade John Steele, a member of the leadership of the Revolutionary Workers League, pan-Canadian section of the Fourth International, said:

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

"The [United Secretariat] Bureau's 'smash-the-state' rhetoric results in an irresponsible and politically ultraleft approach to the Polish army which class conscious workers in Poland *should reject*." (IIDB, Vol. XX, No. 2; emphasis added.)

If we look closely, the argument is the following: since the Polish army "stands as one of the main weapons against the imperialist armies," destruction of the state machinery is an "irresponsible and ultraleft orientation" that the Polish workers will have to reject. Confusion thus arises between the unconditional defense of the workers state in face of imperialist aggressions — and in the event of imperialist military intervention against the Polish state we must fight with our class along side the army — and the need to "destroy" the bureaucratic machinery of the workers state in order to defend the interests of the workers. It is an indefensible argument.

Programmatic revision of the permanent revolution is thereby codified in a revision of the Marxist theory of the state. For our part, we defend the Leninist theory of the state and declare our agreement with the resolution on Poland for the World Congress (IIDB, Vol. 20, No. 1).

Secondly, Barnes has pointed to the possibility of a *self-regeneration* of the Communist parties — for the time being in Central America — in his mendacious document "Their Trotsky and

Ours." The positions of Shafik Jorge Handal — leader of the Salvadoran Communist Party — are held up as an example of the process in which "revolutionists are evaluating, reevaluating, altering positions, and evolving." We do not deny that the Salvadoran Communist Party has found itself pressed to adopt positions that converge with the current course of the revolution. But we do not idealize this! We can utilize this "turn" in our polemic against Stalinism, but not to the point of hiding the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism from the workers. From the first day of the victory of the revolution, Handal's party will put brakes on the mobilization and *self-organization* of the working class and will betray its interests. Nothing different from this has been done by the Chinese and Vietnamese parties, which *also* found themselves obliged to "go further than they were willing to go." Comrade Barnes has preferred to take up the cudgels against the permanent revolution without making clear our differences with the Stalinist Salvadoran Communist Party

### IV. Revolutionary Strategy in Russia

Were Trotsky's positions on the strategy and class alliances in the course of the Russian Revolution correct? Was Lenin's strategic orientation on the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" confirmed in October 1917? No small thing is at stake when one answers yes to these questions!

For the SWP comrades the answer to the second question has been settled by the history . . . of the SWP. According to Doug Jenness, "The October revolution testifies that Lenin's view of the dynamics of the Russian revolution and the kind of vanguard party it required effectively armed the Bolsheviks to carry through their historic task." ("How Lenin Saw the Russian Revolution," IIDB, Vol. XVIII, No. 3.) And for Barnes, "Lenin's opposite perspective [to that of Trotsky] on this question, based on organizing the proletariat to take the leadership of a worker-peasant alliance to overthrow tsarism and landlordism, met the test of history as the [October] revolution began to unfold. . . ." ("Their Trotsky . . .")

Given the backward capitalist character of Russia, the subsistence of numerous precapitalist vestiges, and the existence of the Tsarist autocracy, the Russian Social Democrats, organized in the RSDLP, stated in the program adopted at their Second Congress in 1903 that this reason, the RSDLP takes as its most immediate political task the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and its replacement by a democratic republic. . . . They thereby clearly distinguished two stages of the revolution — an immediate one, the democratic revolution, leading to the unfettered development of capitalism and of the proletarian class struggle; and a later, socialist stage, for the overthrow of capitalism and the installation of workers power.

Despite the fact that the great majority of Russian Marxists accepted this distinction, the responses given as to what strategy and tactics to adopt varied. The framework in which these differences *crystallized* was the 1905 revolution. *Three* conceptions of the revolution arose.

On this basis, we can state there were *at least* two disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky: the capacity of the peasantry to constitute itself as an *independent* political force, even forming its own party, something Lenin considered possible; and, secondly, the capacity of the proletariat to begin to resolve the socialist tasks of the revolution, something Trotsky considered evident. The weakness in Lenin's formula of the "democratic dictatorship" lay in its failure to make clear which force would command the process, which would have hegemony in power; it was, therefore, algebraic. The year 1905 did not enable Lenin to make a decisive verification. For Trotsky, on the other hand, "The October Days [of 1905] showed that hegemony in the revolution belonged to the cities, and in the cities, to the proletariat"

(1905). Only with the 1917 revolution does Lenin set aside his illusions about the independence of the peasantry and abandon his formula of the "democratic dictatorship." The "April Theses" meant a break with the past: "Here it is necessary to remember that up to the outbreak of the February revolution and for a time after, Trotskyism did not mean the idea that it was impossible to build a socialist society within the national boundaries of Russia . . . but rather the idea that the Russian proletariat might win the power in advance of the Western proletariat, and that in that case it could not confine itself within the limits of a democratic dictatorship, but would be compelled to undertake the initial socialist measures. *It is not surprising, then, that the April theses of Lenin were condemned as Trotskyist.*" (Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 319 [New York: Monad Press, 1980]; emphasis added)

It was not a question of underestimating the peasantry nor of deprecating it. That was a slanderous invention of Stalinism. Nonetheless, Doug Jenness repeats those fallacies: "Trotsky, however, concentrated primarily on the backwardness of the peasants, downplaying the prospective role they would play in the revolution and emphasizing the limits and problems involved in political organization in the countryside. Unlike the Bolsheviks, he did not propose an active policy for the working class and its vanguard party aimed at attempting to surmount these obstacles in order to forge an alliance with the peasants." ("Our Political Continuity With Bolshevism," IIDB, Vol. XVIII, No. 3.)

As we have noted, the debate with the Bolsheviks had to do with whether the peasantry could play an *independent* role. We could cite an infinite number of quotations where Trotsky points to the importance of "the revolutionary potential inherent in the peasant organizations born in 1905" or where he proposes a "line of action" for carrying out common actions with the peasant organizations and fighting "for breaking them from the influence of the liberal capitalist parties."

The Bolsheviks were able to take power owing to the fact that Lenin changed his strategic orientation in the April Theses; this change was totally in accord with the development of the revolution. The support offered to the provisional government by Stalin and Kamenev flowed from the entire contradictory theoretical training that had prevailed for years in the RSDLP and found expression in the formula, "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants."

Neither Jenness nor Barnes agrees with this. What's more, they carry their analyses to the logical conclusion: "What if Trotsky had joined the Bolshevik Party and won major parts of it away from Lenin's strategy to his own political perspectives? That would have greatly increased the likelihood that the party would have failed to take power in October 1917, and that the Russian workers and peasants would have gone down to defeat." ("Our Political Continuity . . .")

We are not only faced with a programmatic break but with a historical and political break with Bolshevism! The evolution of the U.S. comrades from here on out is foreseeable and has already been pointed to by other comrades in the International. We want to ask ourselves and the entire International: What would happen if the Barnes-Jenness leadership should win a majority to their positions against those of Trotsky-Lenin? Trotsky, in a polemic on the Chinese revolution, stated: "If we enter the new upsurge, which will develop at an incomparably more rapid tempo than the last one, with a blueprint of 'democratic dictatorship' that has already outlived its usefulness, there can be no doubt that the third Chinese revolution, like the second, will be led to its doom." (*Third International After Lenin*, p. 196 [New York: Pathfinder, 1970].)

## V. The Workers and Peasants Government

It is decisive for the International to adopt a definite position

on this question. What is involved is not theory but the revolutions that are under way. Have "workers and peasants governments" ever existed? Is this only a propagandistic slogan? Is the workers and peasants government identical to the dictatorship of the proletariat?

The revolutionary experience of the Bolsheviks led them to carry on a thoroughgoing discussion at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International and to devote an entire section (No. 1) in the Theses on Tactics to the Workers Government. Why? In the first place, because it was a matter of the tactical orientation to be followed by the communist parties in each country when such a government arose. And in the second place, because it was necessary to concretize the way in which the alliance between the working class and peasantry was to be established. While the resolution on the Agrarian Question was adopted at the Second Congress, clearly establishing the differentiations among the peasantry, this was developed and completed at the Fourth Congress. Moreover, at the enlarged meeting of the Executive Committee of the Third International in June 1923, the following was approved:

"The Fourth World Congress of the Communist International developed and supplemented the [agrarian] resolution of the Second Congress, giving the outline of the agrarian 'program of action' (minimum programme) of the Communist International on the agrarian question.

"The Second Congress of the Comintern drew up the fundamental postulates for a program on the relations between the working class and the peasantry. The Fourth Congress gave concrete form to these postulates. The present Enlarged Executive meeting of the Communist International must now produce a concentrated *political* formula, which will enable us with the greatest chances of success to carry into practice the decisions of the Second and Third Congresses.

"*This political formula is — 'The Workers and Peasants' Government.'*" (*Resolution on Workers and Peasants Government Adopted at the June 1923 ECCI Plenum, included by Jack Barnes as an appendix to his document, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 5.*)

The workers and peasants government, as a transitional slogan, crowns the transitional demands raised in the Transitional Program and flows completely from the application of the tactic of the united front. In this sense *it is totally contrary* to the formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants." The novel theory of Jenness-Barnes that the "democratic dictatorship" and the workers and peasants government represent the continuity of Bolshevism must be rejected as ahistorical and revisionist. Revolution by stages and permanent revolution are as contrary as fire and water!

Nonetheless, the slogan of the workers and peasants government must not supplant agitation in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In our movement these two slogans have been used interchangeably, and this, we think, is an error. Placing an equals sign between the workers and peasants government and the dictatorship of the proletariat omits the *transition* from the bourgeois state to the workers state, and, on the other hand, fails to establish the difference between the class character of the new government and that of the state, which remains bourgeois. Of course, we do find Lenin and Trotsky using these terms synonymously in their works. Polemics with opponents or the political moment they were living through led them to emphasize one term or the other. In Trotsky's case we think he resorted to speaking constantly of the dictatorship of the proletariat owing to his need to combat the epigones' use of the "democratic dictatorship" formula.

Despite this, we find a clear-cut differentiation in the resolutions of the Third International and in the Transitional Program

itself: Trotsky said in the Transitional Program that the workers and peasants government is "a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat." The ECCI Plenum, in the resolution quoted above, states: "The motto of the 'Workers' and Peasants' Government,' like that of the Workers' Government in its time, does not in any way replace or put in the background the agitation for the dictatorship of the proletariat — the foundation of foundations of Communist tactics. On the contrary, the motto of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, by extending the basis of the tactic of the united front — the only correct tactic for the present epoch — is the path to the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Comrade Mandel therefore commits a flagrant error by denying the existence of workers and peasants governments. For him, these never have existed — neither in Russia nor in China nor in Cuba nor in Nicaragua. "For revolutionary Marxism, between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat there is a phase of dual power. . . ." ("In Defense of the Permanent Revolution," *Intercontinental Press*, Aug. 8, 1983, p. 454.) Comrade Mandel thereby confuses the phase prior to taking power with the phase that comes afterward. Trotsky speaks of the duality of powers in the Russian Revolution as "a situation in which the class which is called to realize the new social system, although not yet master of the country, has actually concentrated in its hands a significant share of the state power, while the official apparatus of the government is still in the hands of the old lords. That is the initial dual power in every revolution." (*HRR*, Vol. 1, p. 207.)

The U.S. comrades also fall into an error. For them, a workers and peasants government is "the first form of government that can be expected to appear as the result of a successful anti-capitalist revolution. . . ." (Jack Barnes, "For a Workers and Farmers Government . . .") Further, "We think of a workers' and farmers' government as the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Barnes, "Their Trotsky . . .") If the "first form of government that can be expected to appear as a result of a successful anticapitalist revolution" is "the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat," then what do the U.S. comrades say about the coalition governments with bourgeois sectors that were formed following the victories in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Algeria, not to mention China and Yugoslavia? Enchanting "dictatorships of the proletariat"! On the other hand, with those bourgeois sectors in the government, did a workers state already exist? The Marxist theory of the state does not tolerate such lightmindedness! Joe Hansen himself refutes Barnes-Jenness. Let's see: "I think that we have to regard a 'workers and farmers government' in the sense we have been using it as a highly transitional phenomenon. The establishment of such a government *by no means leads inevitably to the establishment of a workers state as we have seen in the case of Algeria.*" (Letter from Joe Hansen to Bob Chester, included by Barnes as an appendix in "For a Workers and Farmers Government, emphasis added.)

With the January 1959 victory in Cuba, a coalition government was formed with bourgeois sectors; this was the Castro-Urrutia government, with Felipe Pazos as president of the Central Bank. The pressures of U.S. imperialism and the mounting demands of the toiling masses obliged the left wing of the July 26 Movement to go beyond what they had proposed at the outset. In this way, the land reform was set in motion along with other complementary measures that ran counter to the interests of the Cuban bourgeoisie. A crisis arose in the government, ending with the expulsion of Urrutia and the naming of Castro as prime

minister. There followed the naming of Che Guevara to replace Pazos at the Central Bank in November 1959. A change occurred at the governmental level, bringing about the formation of a workers and peasants government. It was this workers government that, by taking radical measures between August and October 1960, led to the formation of a workers state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In Nicaragua, the first government formed was a coalition with bourgeois sectors. The Government Junta included Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo, who were not exactly decorative figures for the bourgeoisie. Once again the demands raised by the masses and the pressures of U.S. imperialism led the Sandinista Front to proceed along the road they had already been following — mobilization and arming of the masses, confrontation with the bourgeoisie. This led Chamorro and Robelo to resign, and later 11 representatives of the bourgeoisie in the Council of State did likewise. This break with the bourgeoisie marked the birth of a workers and peasants government. And the *deeds* of the Sandinistas indicate to us that we are witnessing step by step the formation of a workers state, the second in Latin America.

The case of Algeria is demonstrative in the contrary sense. The struggle for national liberation was carried forward by the FLN. With the 1962 victory, the FLN faced a choice: go forward or put the brakes on the revolution. The adoption of the Tripoli Program put the two wings of the FLN in confrontation, with the result that Ben Bella came out strengthened. The resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in 1964 affirmed:

"A crisis in the leadership of the FLN came to a head July 1, 1962, ending after a few days in the establishment of a *de facto* coalition government in which Ferhat Abbas and Ben Bella represented the two opposing wings of neocolonialism and popular revolution. The struggle between these two tendencies within the coalition ended in the reinforcement of the Ben Bella wing, the promulgation of the decrees of March 1963 and the ouster successively of Khider, Ferhat Abbas and other bourgeois leaders although some rightist elements still remain in the government. These changes marked the end of the coalition and the establishment of a Workers and Peasants government." ("On the Character of the Algerian Government," 1964 resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International; included by Jack Barnes as an appendix to his document, "For a Workers and Farmers Government . . .")

Nonetheless, Ben Bella did not follow the road of Castro and his team — mobilize the masses in defense of the revolution! This caused his government to weaken, strengthening the wing around Boumediene, who overthrew Ben Bella on June 19, 1965. What had been achieved up to then was lost — the democratic and workers organizations were banned, and the nationalized enterprises were returned to their old owners. The workers and peasants government *did not lead* to the formation of a workers state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat?

So then, permanent revolution and the workers government as an unstable or transitional phase or stage to "on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat" and the formation of a workers state form part of the most profound traditions of the Third International and of our movement. Permanent revolution and the workers and peasants government are opposed to the "democratic dictatorship" and the revisionist formula of a "two-class government" of Barnes and Jenness. Permanent revolution and the workers and peasants government represent the continuity of Bolshevism!

## PART TWO: BUILDING THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The U.S. comrades have proposed to our entire international an axis around which to build the Fourth International: the turn to the Castroist current and the turn to industry. We do not share this orientation.

We are not going to deny the experiences the SWP has brought to the International with regard to the turn to industry. In fact, based on the information we are familiar with — and here it must be noted that such data are quite limited — they are the ones who have advanced the furthest in that sense. But in our opinion their progress has given rise to a *workerist* deviation. This can be noted in the greetings Comrade Jake of the SWP brought to the congress of the French LCR in January 1982. (See IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 1.)

Those greetings did not reflect the line adopted by the 11th World Congress in 1979. It is one thing to build the party in the working class as a whole, emphasizing the industrial sector, and something different to do this *only* in the industrial proletariat. Moreover, where does this leave the other exploited sectors — teachers, public employees, construction workers, shantytown dwellers, women, youth? Are they included among the figures for “fulltime staff”?

Supporting the turn to industry — wholeheartedly! — we declare ourselves in agreement with Frej’s report to the IEC meeting of May 1982. (IIDB Vol. XVIII, No. 7.)

The other side of the “axis” proposed is the turn to the Castroist current. From the document by Jack Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” we know that this is a programmatic turn; that is, renouncing the essence of the Transitional Program — the permanent revolution — in order to adapt to that current. As we stated earlier, such an orientation must be rejected. In order to build a common organization with this current — which, by the way, is not homogeneous — and pose the problem of resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership *on a world scale*, we need to *start from the Fourth International as it exists today*. What is involved is winning this current to *our* point of view.

Does the Cuban leadership today call for building an International? Is it really internationalist at the level of the *three sectors* of the world revolution? With respect to at least one of these sectors, No! That is, the sector of the bureaucratically degenerated workers states: In Poland the Cuban CP supported Jaruzelski and his army against the working class. With regard to the bureaucracy of the USSR, the Cuban CP considers it the Bolshevik continuator of the October Revolution. Hence calling for the building of an international would bring it into big conflicts with the Moscow leadership, even leading to the suspension of — absolutely necessary — material and economic aid.

As Segur stated in his report to the May 1982 IEC:

“Finally other comrades are sometimes satisfied with a description of the Cuban leadership’s international policy as an eclectic policy: revolutionary in the colonial countries, reactionary in relation to the political revolution, and confused in the developed capitalist countries.

“This amounts to underestimating the Castroist leadership and its policy; we are not dealing here with a mere patchwork quilt that would randomly string side by side some good and bad material. There is a logic to it. One could summarize by saying that it is a policy of regional extension of the revolution (or regional internationalism) in the framework of a campist world policy relying on blocs between states (which is a misguided form of anti-imperialism). This is why we were justified in referring to the os-

cillations or vacillations of this leadership. They weren’t oscillations between reform and revolution; in countries where it believes revolution is possible, the Cuban leadership has shown that it is willing to take considerable risks to help extend the revolution; but rather oscillations between this locally revolutionary policy and international alignment on the Soviet bureaucracy’s diplomacy.

“A contradiction does exist in this behavior.

“And we take it into account when we reject the call for political revolution in Cuba. . . .

“But again, not calling for political revolution does not mean that we give up the democratic tasks that need to be implemented in Cuba, as they would in any workers state with bureaucratic deformations (including the USSR in 1922–23!).” (IIDB, Vol. XVIII, No. 6.)

Nonetheless, precisely because “not calling for political revolution does not mean that we give up the democratic tasks that need to be implemented in Cuba” and because “changes in the world relationship of class forces or . . . breaches of the Cuban revolution’s isolation, especially revolutionary developments in the advanced capitalist countries or the bureaucratized workers states, can cause all or part of the Castroist leadership to evolve, possibly at the cost of some internal differentiations,” we think that the Fourth International has the duty to intervene in Cuba. If we are in agreement that there are bureaucratic deformations in the workers state, that it is necessary to struggle for workers democracy — which means *direct* participation by the toiling masses in the making of *decisions* and the right to form other parties different from the CP as well as to form tendencies and factions within that party; and that it is necessary to contribute to the evolution of “all or part of the Castroist leadership,” it is not possible to do this only from Paris, Belgium, or Colombia. The tactical forms to be followed should be the topic of discussion in the leading bodies of our International. Such an intervention should extend as well to the small but decisive *contribution* of the Fourth International can be of great weight in the extension of the world socialist revolution.

On the other hand, the unification of the Trotskyist movement “in all countries,” as a tendency in the French LCR calls for, is pure fantasy. The 1979 split and the subsequent foundation in December 1980 of an International Committee for the “reconstruction” of the Fourth International (which broke up in October 1981) has *confirmed* that both the Morenoists and Lambertists conceive of the International as a faction in which every disagreement, however conjunctural, becomes a difference over principles (orthodox vs. revisionist), leading them to monolithism and sectarianism. Reference to our common program alone cannot serve as the basis for such a unification. In order for this to make progress, what would be required is a common approach to party-building in the different countries and a common perspective in building the International. The conditions for this are not present today.

If we have joined in this debate in this way, it is because we think that the perspective of rebuilding a mass revolutionary international calls for rescuing the comrades of the SWP from the bottom of the abyss into which they have fallen, because the traditions of the SWP are the traditions of the Fourth International, and because the examples set by James Cannon and Joe Hansen in the struggle against all deviations will forever remain part of the world Trotskyist movement.

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