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The Peasants' Revolt

The United Front and the Revolutionary Party

Against State Capitalism

Chile — Peaceful Road to Counter Revolution

BUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

E D I T O R I A L

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL HAS YET TO BE BUILT. Never have the conditions for building it been more favourable than they are today.

Trotsky's attempt to build the new International took place under the most adverse conceivable conditions. With his assassination in 1940 and the subsequent decimation of the leading cadre of the Fourth International during the war, the organization he had tried to found was left rudderless. An expression of the post-war "stabilization" of capitalism and the relative passivity of the working class—a situation whose preconditions had been the betrayals of reformism and stalinism and the strengthening of the latter on a global scale—was the thorough degeneration of the claimants to the banner of the Fourth International.

The core of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme is the formulation of the lessons of the 1917 October Revolution. The degeneration of the adherents to the "Fourth International" expressed itself essentially in the virtual erasure from memory of these lessons.

It is no accident that the first signs of a re-discovery of the "Lessons of October" should co-incide with the awakening of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries of the West. The origins of our organization date from the "May Events" in France in May 1968. It was this experience which demonstrated not only the bankeruptcy of stalinism, but also—and no less important—the complete inability of the so-called "Trotskyists" to combat the stalinists' betrayal. The "Revolutionary Communist League" was formally established in the spring of 1970, and it was from this organization that the SOCIALIST CHARTER in its present form emerged in September 1972.

The central planks on which our organization was founded were these: 1. The independence of the revolutionary party; 2. The tactic of the united front; 3. The demand, "Break with the bourgeoisie, Take the Power!" as the culminating slogan of the Transitional Programme, addressed to the <u>leaderships</u> of the existing mass organizations of the working class. These planks are only the most outstanding features of a concrete wealth of organizational methods, tactics, strategical conceptions and political demands comprising the heritage of October and the Transitional Programme formulated by Trotsky in 1938.

Only a firm grasp of the dialectical materialist method can permit an adequate understanding and correct application of the Transitional Programme—the priceless surviving heritage of the International founded by Trotsky. It is only on this basis that the Fourth International—as a <u>mass</u> organization of the world working class—can be built today.

This is the first issue of a quarterly journal which will be devoted to the theoretical tasks involved in constructing the Fourth International.

The present uncontrollable world inflation, chaos on the money markets, collapse of the Bretton Woods global trading system, soaring fuel and oil prices, the rising colonial revolution and the re-emergence of mass working class militancy in the imperialist heartlands—all indicate incontestably the collapse of the post-war "boom" and the opening of a new period of savage class war.

As the spectre of recession becomes reality on a global scale,

the historic responsibility of the working class is becoming clear as never before. Today this class is displaying an unsurpassed strength, confidence and combativity which has matured over the "boom" years of "full employment". And it is no exaggeration to say that upon the harnessing of this working-class strength, the future of mankind depends. It is in this context that the words of Trotsky's "Transitional Programme" must be seen: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership."

History has shown how again and again, the working masses rise up, only to be betrayed by the parties of reformism and stalinism. But why is it that workers continue to pay allegiance to and look for leadership in these same organizations? More to the point, how is Trotskyism to break out of its historical isolation and win the masses from their bankrupt leaderships? By what methods—what strategy and tactics—can this be achieved?

We publish in this issue a founding document of our organization, "The United Front In the Building of the Revolutionary Party", which formulates the most important strategical and tactical achievements of the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky's full thesis can be found ("On the United Front") in Volume Two of "The First Five Years of the Communist International." Without an understanding of this thesis, the problem of how to break the masses from their reformist leaders cannot be solved.

The most recent experience of the difficulty of this problem has been in Chile. We publish also in this issue extracts from an article, "The Fall of Allende and the Triumph of the Chilean Counterrevolution", written by comrades of the "Communist Internationalist Group" (US). This article in our view deals excellently with the problem of applying the United Front tactic in the specific circumstances of a Popular Front Government.

In Chris Knight's article—"Notes on the Theory of State Capitalism"—the importance of returning to the Trotskyist analysis of the class nature of the Soviet State is underlined. The article concentrates on the relationship between the social revolution in the West and the political revolution in the Soviet Union. By their failure to apply the marxist scientific method in analysing the Soviet state, the adherents of the "theory" of "State capitalism", in our view, render themselves completely incapable of correctly appreciating the balance of class forces today on a global scale.

We also print here the first of a series of articles on Revolutionary Traditions In Britain. In this first article, Graeme Atkinson examines the first major indigenous revolutionary movement in Britain—the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

In future issues, we hope to examine more closely the problems of building the Fourth International, continuing many of the themes outlined here.

Mike Davis,

(for the Editorial Board).

Notes on the Theory of State Capitalism.

1. The theory of "state capitalism" runs briefly as follows: The Soviet Union is no longer a workers' state. The Stalinist counter-revolution went so far that it resulted in the formation of a new "state capitalist" exploiting class. The members of this class are the bureaucrats who manage the Soviet state and economy. Like any other ruling class, their political power derives, in the last resort, from their place in the productive process—in this case, from their exclusive monopoly of economic management and control. The breaking of their power must, therefore, start from the bottom: in a workers' revolution which is not merely 'political' but social and economic, too. Politics derives from economics in the Soviet Union as in any other class society in the world.

2. What are the political conclusions which stem from such an anlysis? Again briefly, they are as follows. In the global balance of class-forces between imperialism on the one side and the revolutionary proletariat and its allies on the other, the existence of the Soviet state no longer represents a weight on the side of the proletariat. Consequently, the parties of the revolutionary proletariat and the Fourth International can have no necessary commitment to the defence of the Soviet state against Western imperialism. The Soviet rulers act on the world arena on a purely empirical basis, shifting their alliances with other states (or with political movements within states) simply in accordance with their own shifting economic, military and other national interests as a ruling class. The revolutionary communists must therefore act equally "empirically" towards them, defending the Soviet state not unconditionally but only under certain conditions, judging each case or conflict according to its merits.

3. Some other conclusions are less frequently stated but would logically follow. Perhaps the most important—from the standpoint of the struggle for power in the advanced industrialised countries of the West—is this. There is or will be no direct, immediate or necessary connection between the coming anti-capitalist revolution in the West and the anti-Stalinist revolution in the Soviet Union and the East. That is to say, a workers' seizure of power in, say Britain—even if it tipped the balance of class forces against Western imperialism decisively on the world arena—would not necessarily coincide with or lead to a workers' seizure of power in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, etc. For "Stalinist imperialism" is also capitalist, with the power of the "new capitalist class" rooted not simply or essentially in political factors on a world scale, but in the capitalist relations of production within the Soviet Union itself. Being a ruling class rather than a mere caste, the Soviet bureaucrats are sustained in power by the economic system of state capitalism (as a component of global capitalist economy), rather than by factors which are merely political. Consequently, even the most successful British revolution could not directly remove from the bureaucrats the underlying sources of their rule.

4. Following this logic through, we reach the conclusion that a workers' Britain, immediately after the success of its revolution, could expect no necessary political revolution of the Soviet state, and therefore no aid (military, economic, etc.) from this state as a result of the extension of the October revolution into the industrialised West.

5. What is the orthodox attitude of the Trotskyist movement to this position? It is as follows. The dominance of the Stalinist bureaucracy does not derive from the economic system prevailing in the Soviet Union. Rather, it is imposed upon it. The bourgeois features of the Soviet Economy which are imagined to 'prove' "state capitalism" are really distortions of that economy resulting from the political fact of the isolation of the Soviet working class and the complementary global dominance of imperialism. In that limited sense, in the Soviet Union, "economics" derives from "politics" and not the other way around. We may put this another way. There is nothing in the Soviet relations of production which could in themselves guarantee the dominance of the bureaucracy over the working class for a single day. The economic monopoly, the privileges, the exploitative relation to the working class and so on—these features of the bureaucracy's economic position are not the basis of its political dominance but rather stem from it. They will collapse of necessity once the political precondition of the bureaucracy's rule is smashed. And this precondition which must be smashed is today what it was in the beginning: the absence of a revolutionary dictatorship of the working class in at least one of the advanced, industrialised countries of the West.

6. To state a position, however, is easier than to prove it. No full "proof" can even be attempted in the space available here but in the remainder of these notes we will seek to argue the position just put forward. It is, we repeat, the classic position of Trotskyism: no originality whatsoever is claimed.

7. Leon Trotsky provided the key to an understanding of the Soviet bureaucracy when he called it "the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state."(1) At every stage in its development, the counter-revolutionary dominance of the bureaucracy reflected and expressed within the Soviet Union the political triumph of world imperialism externally. Trotsky describes the process graphically from its beginning:

> "The Soviet bureaucracy became more self-confident, the heavier the blows dealt to the world working class. Between these two facts there was not only a chronological, but a causal connection, and one which worked in two directions. The leaders of the bureaucracy promoted the proletarian defeats; the defeats promoted the rise of the bureaucracy. The crushing of the Bulgarian insurrection and the inglorious retreat of the German workers' party in 1923, the collapse of the Estonian attempt at insurrection in 1924, the treacherous liquidation of the General strike in England and the unworthy conduct of the Polish workers' party at the installation of Pilsudski in 1926, the terrible massacre of the Chinese revolution in 1927, and finally, the still more ominous recent defeats in Germany and Austria—these are the historic catastrophes which killed the faith of the Soviet masses in world revolution, and permitted the bureaucracy to rise higher and higher as the sole light of salvation."(2)

To the question: What gives the Soviet bureaucracy its power? the answer is clear. In the final analysis, according to Trotsky, it is the political fact of the defeat of the world working class.

8. The distinguishing feature of a ruling class is not that it is able to use a state machine—"armed bodies of men"—to exploit the producers of wealth. The distinguishing feature of a ruling class is that it derives the power to do this from the prevailing economic system and its own position within it. The British bourgeoisie, over the past few centuries, has not maintained itself in power merely or even primarily by sheer "force". It has been sustained in power by the operation of the capitalist system of production. It is this system which has produced in the British masses the form of consciousness necessary to enable the ruling class to monopolize the instruments of state violence without, as a rule, having to rely directly or primarily on their use. British "democracy" has been the result.

The contrast with the Soviet bureaucracy should be apparent at once. True, it is a social group whose monopoly of state violence enables it to extract an economic surplus from the working class. But this does not make it a social class. For it is self-evident that it does not derive its power from the operation of the Soviet economic system. Otherwise why the constant struggle, the censorship, the labour-camps and so on? It is self-evident that the operation of the Soviet economic system does not produce in the Soviet masses the form of consciousness necessary to enable the bureaucrats to rule in any way other than by the endless use and threatened use of violence against the masses. The dominance of the Soviet bureaucracy does not derive from the operation of the Soviet economic system. It is politically-imposed on that system, in opposition to it. This prevents us from describing the Soviet bureaucracy as a social class.

9. Trotsky wrote that the central fact to grasp is the:

> "contradiction between the foundation laid down by the October Revolution and the tendencies of the state superstructure."(3)

The "capitalist" features of Soviet economic life which figure so prominently in the treatises on "state capitalism" are undeniable. But these features—the privileges of the bureaucrats, their tyranny over the labour-force, etc. etc.—do not derive from the economic system but are imposed upon it in a violent, contradictory way as "distortions" or "deformations" of it. It is their failure to grasp this fact which is the central failure of the theorists of "state capitalism". For them, there is no contradiction between the rule of the Soviet bureaucrats and the economic foundation of the Soviet state. The one flows simply from the other. In their eyes, it is not world imperialism which props up the rule of the bureaucrats. What propsup the rule of the bureaucrats, in their eyes, are the nationalised property-relations within the Soviet Union itself.

10. What has been the mainspring of industrial development in the Soviet Union? Even the most cursory glance at the indices of industrial production since the First Five-Year Plan gives the undeniable answer: the need for military defence. Once the programme of internationalism had been abandoned, military might became the only hope of national survival.

We stated earlier that the Soviet bureaucracy derived its power from the dominance of world imperialism. We must now examine the mechanism of this derivation of power.

The dominance of imperialism globally is a factor of class-rule. It always has and still does impinge upon the Soviet state fundamentally as a factor of armed force. That is why, in the Soviet Union's relations with the West, economic exchange has always played a subordinate role in relation to military competition.

But what does it mean to say that the dominance of imperialism touches the Soviet state first and foremost as a matter of armed force? It means this: that what we have here is a conflict of power—i.e. a political conflict.

Of course, to the theoretician of "State Capitalism", it is a political conflict only between rival imperialisms—on the model of, say, Britain and Germany in the First World War. And we must concede: in itself the fact of military antagonism between the Soviet Union and Western imperialism is no evidence of the non-capitalist nature of the Soviet state. But here we are interested in another point. The defeat of the German working class and the rise of Hitler, by increasing the military danger to the Soviet Union immeasurably strengthened the Stalinist bureaucracy in its historical goal of industrialising and arming militarily the Soviet state through the super-exploitation of the Soviet working class. The Soviet bureaucracy has always needed the military antagonism of imperialism, and has not been averse to betraying revolutions to boost the intensity of this antagonism, as a necessary political means of assuring its continued rule in the Soviet Union itself. Using the fear of imperialism—whilst at the same time bolstering this imperialism behind the scenes—it has been able to work wonders in extracting sacrifices from the Soviet working class.

11. This, essentially, has always been the mechanism through which the Soviet bureaucracy has derived its power from the world bourgeoisie. The terror through which the bureaucrats rule was never conjured from thin air: it was derived from the terrible real situation of the Soviet working class, including the threat of imperialist attack—artificially intensified and played upon for the bureaucrats' own ends. It can be seen that the bureaucrats have been compelled to act in a contradictory way. On the one hand they have been compelled to maintain, even from the days of Lenin and Trotsky, an ultimately antagonistic relationship between the Soviet state and the Western world. On the other hand, they have been determined to prevent this antagonism from extending to the point of actually permitting a revolution abroad which would undermine the very dominance of imperialism—i.e. destroy the political source of their own special privileges and power.

12. What importance, then, should be given to the manifestly economic roots of the dominance of the Soviet bureaucracy? We have no need to be taught that the rise of Stalinism was based on the economic backwardness of the Soviet Union, the small size and weakness of the Soviet working class, the sea of peasants and petit-bourgeois production, the chronic shortage of manufactured goods, the conflicts between town and country, etc.. etc. But the important task is not to allow oneself to be empirically overwhelmed—not to forget that underpinning the entire Soviet economic reality in the post-revolutionary years was a political fact: the isolation of the revolution. We have to ask ourselves: why was the Soviet working class weak? Why could it not industrialise and mechanise Soviet agriculture? Why was it incapable of overcoming shortages? Why was it not in a position to rule its own state? Why, instead, was it drowned politically under the weight of Russia's backwardness? If we ask the correct questions, we come up with the correct answers: because the Russian working class was prevented from amalgamating with its German and European comrades, whose strength would have enabled it to solve these problems. To describe this as irrelevant to the situation in Russia itself, would be to show a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the revolution. The isolation of October was—as it remains—a continual political violence done to the Soviet state. Working-class rule is inherently rule on an international scale. To confine it within a single state—particularly one as backward as post-revolutionary Russia—cannot be done without the constant use of violence against it by imperialism and its agents. This violence must always be kept in mind as the political reality underpinning the economic backwardness which nourished Stalinism's rise.

13. Throughout the history of the Soviet state, "politics" in the sense described have always dominated "economics". If we look at the situation on a world scale, of course, economic factors are seen to have determined even the "politics" of the Soviet Union: in as much as the rule of the world bourgeoisie itself—given the betrayals of the reformists and Stalinists at the historically-crucial moments—has been able to root itself firmly in the prevailing capitalist relations of production on a world scale. Economic factors are of course decisive in the final analysis. But the dependence of the coming anti-Stalinist revolution on "economic factors" will be indirect—i.e. refracted through a political prism. The anti-Stalinist revolution in the Soviet Union and similar states will depend for its development and success on the political correlation of forces on a world scale, i.e. on the development of the proletarian revolution in the West. This latter will of course have ultimately economic preconditions and roots. But what we are saying is this: the Soviet bureaucracy's rule is immediately derived not from economic factors at all. Its dominance is immediately derived from the political fact of the continued dominance of world imperialism, the continued global subordination of the international working class. Destroy this balance of forces—this factor of state power on the global arena—and THERE WILL BE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THE SOVIET ECONOMIC SYSTEM TO UPHOLD THE BUREAUCRACY'S POWER.

14. It is not just that a workers' seizure of power in, say, Britain would 'precipitate' the political revolution in the Soviet Union. It would constitute in itself a "revolution" in the political situation of that bureaucracy. The new situation would be one in which to an increasing extent as the revolution against Western imperialism spread, the bureaucrats could no longer wield their former power. Very rapidly a point of explosion would be reached and the workers' states—one after another—would be revealed as despite everything our states, armed fortresses of the world movement of the class we represent.

15. We have explained the economic privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy fundamentally in political terms. Trotsky writes in his "Stalin": "The bureaucracy took for itself that part of the national income which it could secure either by the exercise of force or of its authority or by direct intervention in economic relations." This "force" or "authority" to "intervene" in the economy derived from the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy, as Trotsky puts it, was "the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state."The world bourgeoisie has propped up Stalinist tyranny by creating the conditions of fear on which any totalitarian tyranny thrives. This is a fundamentally political factor, which has bolstered Stalinism in a contradictory way. To this day the workers have always feared, as Trotsky puts it, "that they will clear the field for the class enemy if they overthrow the bureaucracy."(3) That is why the proletarian revolution in the West is a necessary precondition for the political revolution in the East. Trotsky writes:

> "The workers are realists. Without deceiving themselves with regard to the ruling case—at least with regard to its lower tiers which stand near to them—they see in it the watchman for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests. They will inevitably drive out the dishonest, impudent and unreliable watchman as soon as they see another possibility. For this it is necessary that in the West or in the East another revolutionary dawn arise."(4)

No matter how encouraging current revolutionary development within the workers' states may be, they cannot in themselves guarantee victory. Writing of the many Bolshevik-Leninists active in the USSR, Trotsky himself continues:

> "But illusions would be out of place here: the party of revolutionary internationalism will be able to free the workers from the decomposing influence of the national bureaucracy only in the event that the international proletarian vanguard will once again appear as a fighting force on the world arena."(5)

In other words,

> "The first victory of a revolution in Europe would pass like an electric shock through the Soviet masses, straighten them up, raise their spirit of independence, awaken the traditions of 1905 and 1917, undermine the position of the Bonapartist bureaucracy, and acquire for the Fourth International no less significance than the October revolution possessed for the Third." (6)

The theory of "State Capitalism", which opposes all this by preaching that the Soviet bureaucracy is a class with independent sources of power—is counter-revolutionary through and through. Chartists are pledged to the political destruction of this ideological trend in our movement as a precondition for the seizure of state power by our class.

References.

1. Leon Trotsky, The Turn in the Communist International, September 26, 1930. In: Leon Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, Pathfinder Press, Inc., N Y 1971., p 47.

2. Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, New Park Publications, London 1967, p 90.

3. Leon Trotsky, From a Scratch—To the Danger of a Gangrene, January 24 1940. In: In Defence of Marxism, New Park Publications, London 1966, p 148.

3 a (in the text there are two references numbered three).
(i) ("The bureaucracy took for itself ...) Leon Trotsky, Stalin London 1947, p 408.
(ii) ("that they will clear...") Leon Trotsky, The Class Nature of the Soviet State. New Park, London 1968 p 8.

4. Leon Trotsky, Revolution Betrayed, op cit, p 286.

5. Leon Trotsky, The Class Nature etc., op cit, p 31.

6. Leon Trotsky, Revolution Betrayed, op cit p 290. Owing to a typing error, the first part of this quotation was unfortunately omitted. It should read: "More than ever the fate of the October revolution is bound up now with the fate of Europe and the whole world.... The first victory " and etc. Extremely important also are the following words of Trotsky:

"On that day when the new International will demonstrate to the Russian workers not in words but in action that it, and it alone, stands for the defence of the workers' state, the position of the Bolshevik-Leninists inside the Soviet Union will change within 24 hours. The new International will offer the Stalinist bureaucracy a united front against the common foe. And if our International represents a force, the bureaucracy will be unable to evade the united front in the moment of danger."

(The Class Nature etc. op cit p 34).

In considering the effect which a British revolution would have within Russia, we should also note Trotsky's view as to what would happen in the event of a majority of the Russian working class supporting the New International: "In the course of such a radical change in the relation of forces, the bureaucracy would become more and more isolated, more and more split. As we know, the social roots of the bureaucracy lie in the proletariat, if not in its active support, then, at any rate, in its 'toleration'. When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in mid-air". (Ibid. p 28).

REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS IN BRITAIN

PART 1 THE PEASANTS REVOLT 1381

INTRODUCTION

Britain has always been pictured by the bourgeoisie and its ideologists as the hallowed home of class peace: the land where problems never produce violent solutions, where political opponents, however much they shout at and threaten each other over the top of the table, always shake hands beneath it.

When awkward minded critics have questioned this, the bourgeois ideologist has always replied with the assertion that this is because the British - over a period of centuries - have acquired certain basic national characteristics. Of these, the predominant one is an alleged will to compromise - after all, is it not better to talk over problems than fight over them? Clement Attlee, the right-wing Labour leader, summed it up when he said, "It has always been our practice, in accord with the natural /sic/ genius of the British people to work empirically. We were not afraid of compromises and partial solutions. We knew that mistakes would be made and that advances would often be by trial and error."

A more recent example of this reactionary concept of compromise is to be found in the remarks of Sir John Donaldson of the N.I.R.C. last year: "Great Britain is one of the oldest and most politically mature of the parliamentary democracies. The hallmark of such a way of life is compliance with and respect for the rule of law." Amplifying his remarks, he went on to say"...the rule of law exacts its price. That price includes a willingness to comply with the laws whether or not we agree with them, whilst reserving our fundamental right to campaign by every constitutional means for the repeal of the amendment."

The mode of thinking exemplified here serves a quite definite purpose. That purpose is to lull the potentially conscious opponent of capitalism, the worker who wishes to destroy the system that exploits and oppresses him, into acceptance of precisely that system. It seeks to befog his mind and blunt even the understanding he derives from his day to day economic struggle with such rubbish as the suggestion that capitalism is the 'natural order of things'; it always was and will be evermore.

In short, these ideas are vital weapons which the ruling class concentrates in its hands in its struggle against the working class and are used constantly to affirm and re-affirm the existing dominant class relations. Not that these ideas emanate solely from the paid ideologists and official spokesmen of capitalism, who inhabit the various departments of the State: the universities, civil service, armed forces, press, television and law courts etc. Far from it. The so-called leaders of the British Labour and Trades Union movements also consciously work out their policies on the basis of these reactionary ideas of compromise (and the equally reactionary philosophy of empiricism which lies behind them). This is because the bureacracy and the aristocracy of labour on which it rests have a vested interest in the maintenance of capitalism, whence their privileges derive. As Trotsky once remarked, "From past political history of Britain the Fabians borrowed only the mental dependance of the proletariat on the bourgeoisie."

They were incapable, by virtue of their social base, of grasping the opposite side of these 'sacred', 'British', traditions of 'compromise' and 'gradualness', They did not for example, see how the bourgeoisie was able to arrive, as dominant partner, at its compromise with the monarchy and landed aristocracy in 1688 and afterwards (up to the final assertion of political dominance with the Reform Bill struggle of 1832) because it had had recourse to cutting off Charles 1st's head in 1649. It can hardly be said that the bourgeoisie, which speaks of "British Gradualness" took power in anything resembling a gradual manner. However, like the reformist idiots at the head of the masses, the bourgeoisie wants to avoid such unpleasant details. This side, the revolutionary traditions of 1649 and Chartism takes its form and content through the work of assembling a Marxist leadership in the coming struggle for power .

The purpose of this series of articles is to make a contribution to this struggle by investigating the wealth of revolutionary traditions in Britain and the historical lessons to be drawn from them. We must emphasize however that the dialectical process of history, whereby classes which are revolutionary at one stage of historical development are not necessarily so at another are similiar to advanced content and aims in conflict with backward ways of expressing them. The revolutionary and rising capitalist class of the 17th Century which assumed power- as we have said- in a revolutionary way through the application of class violence is now athoroughly obsolescent and historically doomed class due for surgical removal from the "stage of history". It has turned into its very opposite !

In 1649, the bourgeoisie was a progressive class, whose assumption of power liberated the productive forces from their fuedal yoke. Today it, and its system, are the opposite - brakes on the development of the productive forces, offering nothing to mankind save the imperialist barbarities of fascism and world war. To maintain itself here in Britain it must resort to the Law Courts, the very institutions it defied to take power.

That is why today- on the eve of the most momentous and decisive class battles- the bourgeoisie seeks systematically to bury the revolutionary basis of its own origins as a ruling class and why it denies the prolertariat knowledge of its own history. Today however, when the whole question of power is at stake it is more vital than ever to uncover the lessons of the past which provide in many ways the key to our future.

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THE PEASANT UPRISING OF 1381 is of no small importance to Marxists as it falls first in a long line of revolutionary struggles in this country.

The immediate cause of the revolt of 1381 was the imposition of a poll-tax in 1380. But there were much deeper causes, to be found in the break-up of feudalism. What was feudalism ? Engels in "Socialism : Utopian and Scientific" paints a brilliant thumb-nail sketch of maedieval society : '....Individual production on a small scale.Means of production adapted for individual use; hence production is primitive, ungainly, petty, dwarfed in action. Production for immediate consumption , either by the producer himself or the feudal Lord.Only where an excess of production occurs is such excess offered for sale and enters into exchange.Production of commodities, therefore, was only in its infancy. But already it xxx contains within itself, in embryo, anarchy <u>in the production of society at large.....</u>".

Feudalism was based on the social division between a class of landowners enjoying a military monopoly and a mass of peasants who were bound to provide compulsory labour service to their feudal overlords, while working their own small family holdings. By 1381, this system had entered its first stages of decline. The feudal system of servile labour had begun to disintigrate, being replaced by the form known as 'commutation', whereby labour services and rent-in-kind were changed or 'commuted' into money rents. The basis of this process was the growth of the market. The forms which commutation was displacing were only of limited usefulness. Production was primarily for the purpose of helping the farmer to sustain himself and his family from the limited strips of land at his disposal. Production, essentially, therefore was for personal consumption.

The whole of the peasant's life was one of legal and social obligation to his feudal lord of the manor. In relation to him, the peasant was but a serf, with few rights and legally designated as "bound to the soil". Moreover, he lived under a sort of permanent house arrest and was - under the orders of his feudal lord - confined to his holding. Nor was land alienable as far as the peasant was concerned.

Very few peasants did attempt to break these restrictions, unless they absconded, thus defying not only feudal law but also established tradition.

There were other ties, too. For example, peasants had to grind their corn at the lord's mill. They were not allowed to betroth their children without his expressed permission. But, most important of all was the bond of labour according to which they "owed" their lord labour services on set days in the year, working in his fields.

This elaborate system of social relations was introduced by the Normans after the invasion of 1066. They moulded the village as a society in microcosm, with the lord of the manor at its hand and the peasant serf at its foot. It represented a clear advance on the old Saxon semi-tribal system, unifying the country into a single administrative unit and constituting a more rational form a social organisation. However, it contained within its own opposite by creating a yoke for the peasant who resented his bondage to the alndowner and, above all, begrudged him his labour.

Early in the 12th Century, feudal lords began to recognize some of the weaknesses of this system and began to cultivate their land all year round by means of hired labour. This embryonic form of wage labour did not free the serf who was still tied to his master and still obliged to donate 'voluntary' labour to him.

By the beginning of the 13th Century a reaction slowly set in. The Stalinist historian A L Morton, gives a useful account of the reasons for this: " . . . The increased use of money and the steady rise in prices made it more prifitable to extend the direct cultivation of the demesne (lord's land) with serf labour and to sell the wool, meat, hides or corn so produced, than to accept a fixed money payment whose real value constantly tended to decline". The feudal lords had got the scent of riches in their mostrils and began to re-assert feudal rights which over the past years had gradually been eroded by 'commutation'.

By the start of the 14th Century a new change developed. Massive increases in agricultural production - far in excess of the increase in production of manufactured good - led to a considerable fall in prices. Commutation was once more the trend and the use of wage labour steadily advanced.

The growth of the market led to a strengthening of the of the towns which began to win a measure of self-rule, bringing into existence a distint burgher class, bringing with it the appearance of a new class of journey-men organised in Craft Guilds in opposition to their masters' Merchants' Guilds. Clear class demarcations were emerging in the towns. The same was no less true of the countryside. There was a increasingly sharp differentation between the greater and lesser landlords - and an even sharper one growing between these and the peasants.

Parallel with these developments was the large scale production of wool for the markets of Europe, the beginning of international trade and the emergence of merchant capital.

The fall in prices of land produce created a major problem for the landlord. The overall trend was for the market to grow - but this did not mean that there would not be momentary declines and crisis. The lords saw their sources of income threatened while the overhead expenses on their estates grew heavier. Gradually, the feudal role of the manor became less pronounced as the dependence of the peasants became less direct. The relation between peasants and lords more and more became one of struggle. 'Commutation' had been the villain of the piece, here. It had created a rent paying peasantry and given birth to a whole layer of 'free' agricultural wage labourers. Lords were finding that they had to pay for cultivation of their own land where hitherto labour service had been obligatory.

The end of the "boom period" was in sight, for two reasons. Firstly, the war with France lasting almost a hundred years had produced a general shortage of wage labour. Secondly, the arrival in England of bubonic plague - The Black Death - accentuated this problem. Indeed it quickened the pace of development. It has been estimated - despite the unreliability of medieval 'statistics' - that as much as one third of the population died from the plague. What is certain and established beyond all doubt is the fact that it played havoc with agriculture, completely disrupting it. Fields were left untended, crops left to rot, food was scarce and prices rose 'at a stroke'. In 1349, at the height of the Black Death, England was in the grip of famine. Starvation and malnutrition were rife - and there was and acute shortage of labour. The Lords difficulty was the peasant's opportunity - one which the latter grasped with both hands, driving his master to his wits end. Higher wages were demanded in order to offset the ever rising prices. Labour was scarce and peasants were often in a position of being able to dictate their own terms so as to obtain a pay rise.

Thus, the Black Death has speeded up the creeping crisis of feudalism, sharpening it to an unorecedented extent. The feudal lords went beserk in their efforts to restor the provision of labour services. If this was not directly possible, they went to vicious lengths to check the rise in wages. In 1350, the feudal State was obliged to enter the growing affray. It did so by enacting the notorious Statute ofLabourers, aimed at halting the increases in wages and preventing the labourers from using their strength to acquire such increases, by reducing them to the status of villeins (bondsmen).

The Statute left no doubts whatsoever as to the attitude of the feudal lords:

* "The old wages and no more shall be given to Servants".
* "Every young person under the age of 60 years not having (wherewith) to live, being required shall be bound to serve him that doth require him, or else committeed to Gaol...".
* "If any take more wages than were wont to be paid he shall be committed to Gaol".
* "If a workman or servant depart from service before the time agreed he shall be imprisoned".
* (quoted from A.L. Morton: 'A Peoples History of England').

The intervention of the State in economic matters marked the degree to which the transition to a money economy had developed. Equally, it created the conditions for national class struggle; itself being the focal point of peasant anger and hostility against previous eruptions of discontent which had mainly been of a purely local character.

The conflict continued right from the plague to its high point in the Rising of 1381. A. Trevelyan explains "Strikes, riots and the formation of local unions were met by prosecution and imprisonment. But on the whole the victory was with the earner, because of the shortage of labour....Prices rose, but wages rose still faster."

Faced with this, the feudal lords became even more desperate. Law after law was enacted to prevent the peasants from asserting what they believed to be their rights. A statute of 1377 stated that "the villeins do menace the ministers of their lords in life and member, and which is more, gather themselves in great routs and agree by such confederacy that one should aid the other to resist their lords with strong hand: and much other harm they do in sundry manner to the great damage to their lords and evil example to other". A 1379 statute was enacted against "devisers of false news and reports of horrible and false lies concerning prelates, dukes, earls, barons and other nobles and great men of the realm.. hereof great peril and mischief might come to all the realm if due remedy be not provided" (Quoted in "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381" by P. Lindsay and R. Groves. P.68).

The reference in the latter law "to devisers of false news and reporters of horrible and false lies" serves to indicate not only the widespread, almost ubiquitous, character of peasant resistance but also the fact that this resistance was spread by 'agitators' who, often having fled from serfdom, would move from village to village, spreading details of antagonism to the attack of the landowners and encouraging others to follow such examples. The will of the peasants to assert their rights filled the authorities with fright. Isolated grumblings were giving place to primitive forms of national organisation. As Groves and Lindsay explain: "They had organisation in 1379, the authorities complained of gatherings...and combinations of peasants and workmen".

Without a doubt, such organisations(eg the 'Great Society') brought their own leaders to the fore. Often, these were preachers who saw the massive contradiction between the immense wealth of the Church and the grinding poverty of the peasants, who were not detached from the peasants and who resented the efforts of the landlords to increase their exploitation of the peasants

by attempting to end commutation and restore labour services. The best known of these was John Ball. Morton describes him thus "...a North Country-man, he worked mainly in London and the surrounding counties, deducing the equality of men from their common descent from Adam and declaring..."that things cannot go well in England nor ever will until everything shall be in common ...."

Ball was fearless and intransigeant in his criticism of Church and State alike. The feudal nobility, likewise, felt the whiplash and his tongue. This made him very popular with the peasants. "The Chronicle of England", a contemporary document quotes the butt of Ball's argument: "At the beginning we were all created equal, it is the tyranny of perverse men which has caused servitude to arise, in spite of God's law, if God had willed there should be serfs He would have said at the beginning of the world who should be serf and who should be lord". Such sermons gained a rousing reception from the peasants and caused him to be excommunicated from the Catholic Church and later to be imprisoned in Maidstone prison.

Ball had enormous prestige amongst the peasants, for whom his fearless ness provided a shining example. Also,much of his support dervied from the fact that Ball, and many like him, were able to articulate, in a form comprehensible to them, their demands. This shows that <u>at this stage, religion not only tied people to god, but also represented the vehicle through which they could vent their revolutionary aspirations.</u>

Such was Ball's popularity that one of the first acts of the insurgent peasants was to release him from Maidstone Gaol, where he had been confined by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The growing difficulties of the ruling-class amidst the sharpening contractions of the feudal system provided the overall causes of the revolt. However, it was the imposition of the poll-tax in 1380 which bought matters to a head. Parliament had declared that "The wealth of the Nation is in the hands of the workmen and the labourers." The object of the tax was to get some of this wealth back. The tax demanded one shilling from each adult. It was to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

The revolt itself was by no means spontaneous: indeed it showed signs of having been prepared in minute detail. The poll-tax was the signal for the outbreak. Cryptic messages were sent from village to village: "John Ball hath rungen your bell" and "Jack Trueman doth you to understand that falseness and guyle have reigned too long" for example.

By June 10th, 1381, 28 counties were engulfed in the flames of the revolt. Dartford, Rochester and Canterbury had already been taken and the rebel forces were marching from both the north and south of the Thames to invade London.

As they made their way, they laid waste the manor rolls which recorded their serfdom. This put fear into the hearts of the nobility and lesser-landowners who fled from their homes as the march neared them, gathering support as it went.

London was at the mercy of the peasants. Inside the city, the rebels had allies amongst the journeymen (and even the aldermen!). The mass of slum dwellers too lent their support. These allies opened the City gates and on June 13th, the villeins powered their way into London and captured it unopposed. The Ruling class panicked and fled, so that even the bastion of feudal brutality, the Tower of London, fell to the peasants.

On that day, John Ball preached to the assembled crowds. For his basic text, he used the couplet:

"When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman." He then stated that God had created all men equal in rights seeking "by the word of the proverb which he took for his theme, to introduce and prove that from the beginning all men were made alike by God and nature, and that bondage, and servitude was brought in by oppression of naughty men against the will of God." Once again, in this sermon, Ball alludes to a freedom that existed prior to the Normans. This was not accidental. For almost three centuries, men had believed that they had certain rights, their own, inalienable — rights which had been taken away by the Normans, who had imposed the 'Norman yoke'. Many even thought that before the arrival of William the Conqueror there had been a "Golden Age" where freedom had reigned supreme and where bondage was unknown.

This demand for the restoration of 'ancient rights' found expression in the way in which the Domesday Book - almost unheard of for two centuries - suddenly became the centre of the peasant's attention. One writer describes this process: "The peasants had somehow heard of the Great Survey 'Domesday Book', drawn up by William the Conqueror, and they kept appealing to it for proof that their particular locality had had freemen and not serfs at that time." (J.Lindsay: "Wat Tyler: Nine Days Hero").

Similar developments to these characterised peasant insurrections throughout Europe over the next two centuries, (see. Engels: "Peasant War in Germany" pp. 42-46).

These demands threatened the very existence of the feudal nobility and the foundations of their power. This is why the movement gained such impetus. His last stronghold, the Tower, having been taken, the King, Richard II, agreed to meet the rebels at Mile End and promised to grant their demands. The ruling class was in the grip of a massive crisis. To lend some persuasion, the peasants seized and executed Archbishop Sudbury who had hailed Ball. The Lord Treasurer, Hales, responsible for the poll-tax, was also executed.

The King met the rebels at Mile End where they presented their main demands:

1. The abolition of all serfdom.
2. Commutation of <u>all</u> services at the rate of 4d per acre.
3. A general amnesty and free pardon for all the rebels.
4. The right to buy and sell land.
5. Abolition of the Statute of Labourers.

These, the King granted verbally, plus a free pardon for all who had marched. This effectively split the marchers, the majority returning home satisfied that their cause was won. A recalcitrant minority, however, were more sceptical and stayed behind to see that the concessions were carried out.

Saturday, June 15th 1381, was the day when their scepticism was put to the test, when the King met the rebels once more, this time at Smithfield. Here, Wat Tyler, the most capable peasant leader and orator, put further demands to the King. These even more challenged the foundations of feudal monarchy. The demands expressed the peasants' desire for their ancient rights, consisting of a call for the restoration of Edward the Confessors' Law of Winchester, whereby the people were to be respondible for the maintenance of law and order (cutting the ground from beneath the growing army of state judiciary and officials). Also, they

called for the redistribution of Church lands. Tyler said "the property and goods of the holy Church shall be taken and divided according to the needs of the people in each parish..." (Quoted in J.Lindsay "Wat Tyler: Nine Days Hero" p. 173).

This was just too much. Tyler had to be dealt with. He was....treacherously. He was stabbed to death after being tricked and lured close to the King's mem-at-arms who surrounded him. A bloody conflict was only just avoided when the King declared that the promises made at Mile End would be carried out. Accepting this and the assurance that Tyler had been knighted, the crowd dispersed.

The King had lived up to the peasants expectations,or so it seemed. Their hope of "King and True Commons" against those who wanted to destroy their freedom had been realised. That is how it looked. But essence was in conflict with appearance.

The craven murder of Tyler had enabled the King and the ruling class to regain its composure and act swiftly to suppress the rising and crush the peasants who were confused by the murder of Tyler. Not that this signalled the end of the struggle. Bitter armed resistance flared in answer to the butchery of the Royal Army. At St.Albans the Abbey was sacked, whilst at Bury St Edmunds both the Prior and the Lord Chief Justice were put on display after being decapitated.

However this was little compensation for the barbarity with which the Royal forces went about their grisly task. John Ball, arrested in Coventry, was sadistically murdered, his entrails cut out while still alive, as were Jack Straw and other peasant leaders

Mass murders were legally sanctioned by the King, who repudiated the Mile End pledges. When the men of Essex appealed to him, he answered by saying that they were "unworthy even to live" and that "serfs you have been and are; you shall remain in bondage, not such as you have hitherto been subjected to, but infinitely viler. For as long as we rule over this Kingdom we shall use our strength and property to treat you such that your slavery may be an example to posterity, and that those who live now and hereafter, who may be like you, may also have before their eyes..... your misery..... and the fear of doing things like those which you have done."

All appeals were in vain; The Revolt was smashed.

However, its importance did not end there. On the contrary- as in France and Germany- the peasants continued to fight against their oppression and the misery of feudalism.

It would be true to say that although the Peasants Revolt was broken, it was not defeated. The feudal nobility was no longer able to impose labour services. Serfdom gradually disappeared, the great landlords increasingly rented-out land and money rent payments displaced labour services. Thus 1381 marked, in an historical sense, the prelude to 1649- when the revolutionary bourgeoisie overthrew the last vestiges of feudalism.

After 1381, in proportion to the growth and enlarged influence of the towns, the importance of the manors declined. The Revolt aided the development of capitalist forms of production and intensified the whole crisis of feudalism.

Hence, The Revolt had been by no means futile. As Jack Lindsay says "Cromwell thus completed what Wat Tyler had begun. But the national situation had greatly changed in the intervening 260 years and so the aims of the rebels had changed considerably. However, there was an element of continuity as well as of difference and among the poorer classes the ideas of what was needed had not very much changed from those of John Ball and Wat Tyler in their broader aspects. 1381,1450,1549 had all shown a rising challenge from the common folk to the feudal order, which came to a decisive head in the 1640's."

1381 was characterized by another great similiarity to the struggles of the revolutionary bourgeoisie in the 1640's in that in both struggles, the revolutionaries sought to express their demands for their rights in Biblical terms, illustrating the relationship of ideological development to the development of the productive forces. Yes, the Peasants Revolt sought to hold things in common, but this aspiration could only be visionary because the material basis to realize these desires did not exist. There could be no peasant state. Yet in 1649 the bourgeoisie, with different aims, could find ample Biblical justification for its interests--religion took on a revolutionary role because the material foundations weree there for it to do so. Thus, the differences as well as the similarities take on a decisive importance. These problems we shall examine in our next article on the English Revolution of 1649.

Recommended Reading

J.LINDSAY: "NINE DAY HERO; WAT TYLER"
P.LINDSAY & R.GROVES: "THE PEASANTS REVOLT OF 1381"
A.L.MORTON: "A PEOPLES HISTORY OF ENGLAND"
F.ENGELS: "SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC"
H.FAGAN & R.HILTON: "THE ENGLISH RISING OF 1381"

* * *

THE UNITED FRONT IN THE BUILDING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

EDITORS NOTE: The following document was prepared more than two years ago as part of a discussion with fraternal organizations abroad. We are reproducing it here (with minor amendments and corrections) because it sets out clearly the fundamental theoretical basis of our programme and activity over the last few years. We hope to develop some of the points made here at greater length in the future.

> Collins: "Is it even possible to consider at this stag an independent existence outside of the mass organisations?"
> Trotsky: "The fact that Lenin was not afraid to split from Plekanov in 1905 and to remain as a small, isolated group, bears no weight, because the same Lenin remained inside the Social-Democracy until 1912 and in 1920 urged the affiliation of the British Communist Party to the Labour Party. While it is necessary for the Revolutionary Party to maintain its independence at all times, a revolutionary group of a few hundred comrades is not a revolutionary party, and can work most effectively at present by opposition to the social patriots within the mass parties. In view of the increasing acuteness of the international situation, it is absolutely essential to be within the mass organisations whilst there is the possibility of doing revolutionary work within them. Any such sectarian, sterile and formalistic interpretation of Marxism in the present situation would disgrace an intelligent child of ten."
>
> (Trotsky/Collins Interview, October 1936.)

One of the consequences of the destruction of the Fourth International in an organisational sense has been the smashing of the political programme of Marxism into disparate pieces, arbitrarily scattered amongst the various Trotskyist grouplets. By concentration upon particular parts of the programme (e.g. the appeal to women or youth), many organisations have succumbed to the pressure of "single issue" politics, sectarian in-fighting, and over-emphasis upon the various pieces of the Trotskyist tradition that can be particularized into the distinguishing marks of a sect. An essential step therefore is to assert the unity of the Marxist programme. This article is an attempt to do this with regard to the objective unity between the theory of the United Front, the building of the Revolutionary Party, the question of Soviets, and the class theory of the state. In dealing with these questions we will criticize also what in our view in the positions of our comrades of the I.K.D. (W.Germany) and Spartacist League (U.S.A.) is defective in this regard.

Firstly, and from this flow all other considerations, the application of the United Front and the building of the Revolutionary Party are part of the same process. The posing of demands upon the majority leadership of the working class movement is the way in which this is historically done. Trotsky, summarizing the experience of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution for the guidance of the Fourth International, had this to say:

> "The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organizations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand systematically addressed to the old leadership: 'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!' is

an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organizations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals.... Of all parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we offer them full support against capitalist reaction".

(Transitional Programme)

The technique as indicated is thus not to counterpose mechanically the revolutionary tendency to the mass working class movement as the only solution to the workers' difficulties, but to demand that the reformists break their coalition with the bourgeoisie (whether expressed in the Popular Fronts or elected governments) and take power on behalf of the working class. The 'support' of revolutionaries for these reformists is precisely the 'support' they do not want - that of a rope for a hanging man, as Lenin says. The reformists, refusing this support, then have to explain to their working class followers why they fail to break with the bourgeoisie and realise the united strength and power of the working class movement at their disposal. The demand: "All power to the Soviets", advanced when the majority ofthe Soviets consisted of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, was of this nature. When the Menshevik workers saw their leaders attacking those who raised this slogan, they realised that the Bolsheviks were fighting for the united power of the Russian working class,and the Mensheviks for the power of the bourgeoisie over this class, which they thereby divided. The nature of the class struggle imbues the working class with a strong sense of solidarity and of hatred for splits and disunity. The technique and strategy of revolutionary propaganda is to place the responsibility for these on the reformists and Stalinists. To ignore this is to leave the workers under the control of the bourgeoisie and the reformists, disunited and powerless within class society. Every worker who sees and understands why the reformists attack the revolutionaries for calling for power to be transferred to their organizations is a potential recruit to the revolutionary organization. This is how the Bolsheviks built up their party and smashed the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries -- by 'supporting' them against the bourgeoisie! They did not build up their party by counterposing themselves to the working class movement, nor did they create it by recruiting in ones and twos to a sect. At one and the same time the Bolshevik Party and the Russian Revolution were made by the conscious application of the United Front strategy.

The Bolsheviks were not stupid enough to think that you can approach the working class independantly of its organizations, its parties and trade unions..."as if the masses could somehow live outside of the actual class struggle" (Transitional Programme). This assumption lies at the root of the Trotskyist critique of the so-called"United Front from below", a typical Third Period Stalinist invention.

When self-styled Trotskyists attempt to ignore the mass organizations, enjoining the rank-and-file to self-activity, and proposing local councils of action, then they are in fact proposing syndicalist-type politics. As Trotsky explained in his "Theses on the United Front",

"Were we able simply to unite the working masses around our banner...by eliminating the reformist party, or trade union organizations - that of course, would be the best way. But in

that case the very question of the United Front, in its present form, would be non-existent".

Hence our disagreements with the Spartacist League's position on the slogan for an American Labour Party. By refusing to place the demand for its formation on the A.F.L./C.I.O. bureacracies, the 'Alliance for Labour', etc., they are surely demanding that the rank and file perform the task spontaneously (i.e. the classic 'United Front from below'). Moreover, it is nonsense to say that a Labour Party created by the trade unions would necessarily be reformist in the U.S.A., where social democracy is even weaker than the revolutionary tendancies. The creation of a mass Labour Party on the basis of the organized workers would be the practical realization of the 'United Front'; its politics would depend upon how much the Marxists were able to gain influence in it (the completely reformist nature of the British Labour Party, even in the 1900's, was partly due to the sectarianism of the early British Marxists).

In the application of the 'United Front' to the situation in which we find ourselves, we would differ again with the comrades of the I.K.D. They gard the German Social Democratic Party(S.P.D.) as no longer being a reformist, Social-Democratic workers party. We would maintain that this shows a lack of understanding of the full nature of reformism. The function of the reformist bureacracy is to divert the potential revolutionary energies of the working class into legal and reformist channels, and to gain a privileged position for itself based on the pressure of the masses. Its task of controlling the proletariat on behalf of the capitalist system may often involve not only a failure to win reforms, but positive attacks upon the rights and living-standards of the working class (e.g. the conduct of the German S.P.D. in the inter-war years). The actual granting of reforms depends upon whether the Imperialist system can afford them: they are often passed by ordinary bourgeois governments.

As for the particular question of the S.P.D., it is not entirely correct to say that its continuity was completely broken by the Nazi regime. Indeed, not only was the anti-Hitler resistance mainly working class, but at least until after1941 it was mainly the work of the S.P.D. and centrist elements. The I.K.D. admits that even East German workers have illusions in the S.P.D. (P.B. in Viete Internationale, no.1 pp.55-8): how else did these develop other than as a result of the activity of the S.P.D. in the pre- and immediate post - War periods? As far as the current position goes in such countries, we would say that as long as social-democracy is popularly seen as 'representing' organized labour in some way, maintains electoral support from the class-conscious sector of the proletariat, and has personnel (West Germany) and even in many countries official link-ups with the trade union bureaucracies, then it has a dialectical nature. At once it imposes ruling class interests and ideology on the working class, but it also expresses the latter's low-level of consciousness, and acts as a mild 'pressure group' for it. It is both an obstruction to an awakening of the class and at the same time a result of the past conquests of that class. On this basis the I.K.D. err in making a rigid distinction between political and trade union/economist consciousness. The latter is only the counterpart of Social-Democratic politics: trade unions are nothing but reformist organizations with the intention of gaining concessions from capitalism, and their bureacracies fulfill the same role as those of the Social- Democracy, often being linked to them.

Furthermore, it is important to showthat the Trotskyist concept of 'critical support' to Stalinists, reformists or syndicalists

is not an afterthought arbitrarily added to the idea of the need for the building of a Trotskyist party. Any 'support' our movement gives to other apparatuses is based upon the need to expose their leaderships in concrete terms before the rank-and-file and win them over to our position and organization.

We do not want to devote too much space to entrism, which we see as a tactic subordinate to the question of our orientation as discussed above. All it amounts to is the application of the 'united Front' tactic FROM WITHIN, both to the 'left' and 'right' reformists, as a way of building up our own position within the movement. It also derives from our views on the nature of reformism and 'critical support', as we define them in the above. It should never be confused with the liquidation or submersion often practised in the past by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, or with the short-term 'smash and grab' raid (in reality a sort of faction work) as with the Socialist Labour League in the Labour Party Young Socialists in 1960-64. Moreover, it should nver be applied in situations (for example many Communist Parties) where the exposition of an open revolutionary programme is not possible. We consider that one of the most essential tasks of revolutionaries is to pose the class theory of the state, especially in the reformist organizations. This we do by calling upon the Labour Party leaders to take power, transferring control of economic resources into the hands of the labour movement, and by demanding that the T.U.C. prepare for a General Strike. The difference afterall between revolutionaries and all others (as Lenin explains in '<u>State and Revolution</u>') is precisely this understanding and application of the class theory of the state. Even reformists and centrists will appear to make revolutionary propaganda in a revolutionary situation: our task is to do it all the time. Revolutionists who are unable to seize power have an obligation to demand that those who are in such a position, by virtue of their leadership of the labour movement, do so on its behalf.

Finally, the above demand to 'break with the bourgeoisie, take the power', is <u>the</u> supremely transitional demand. It poses the question of dual power and the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist class, yet does this concretely because it speaks to the working class in terms of institutions already in existence. It thus brings together the '<u>end</u>' and the '<u>means</u>' to accomplish it. Without it revolutionaries are forced to copy the methodology of the old S.P.D.'s '<u>Erfurt Programme</u>', which was rigidly divided into minimum and maximum statements. Many revolutionary organizations are forced to make a division between their ultimate programme, the seizure of state power, based upon simple numerical recruitment to their group, and the immediate agitational programme , usually one of reformist and trade union demands. In this context it is important to recall the strictures of Trotsky and Rosa Luxemborg upon two-stage programmes. We feel that this dilemma - the need to make broad propaganda on the one hand, and to build up the revolutionary organization on the other - lies behind the Spartacist League's definition of itself as a 'fighting propaganda group' rather than an activist organization as such. The same mistake lies behind the different varieties of the 'primitive accumulation of cadres' and other 'stages' ideas about the building of the revolutionary party. The only way to solve the objective difficulty posed by the magnitude of the tasks ahead on one hand, and the extreme weakness of the revolutionary vanguard on the other, is by slogans of the charecter we advocate.

The value of this outlook can be briefly summerized. We do not see, as most Marxists appear to do, the 'United Front' as a temporary non-aggression pact between sectarians, having no organic contact with the body of Trotskyist theory as a whole.

We do not see the question of the United Front as being separate from that of building the revolutionary party. We do not see it as being separate from the necessity of exposing the mystification of the bourgeois state, or the need to destroy reformism in the working class movement. Finally, we consider that it restores its "transitional" character to Marxism, and breaks down the un-Trotskyist division between propaganda and activity.

By stating this, we are merely trying to assert our main contention: that the precondition for the reconstruction of the Fourth International is the re-assertion of the fundamental unity of Marxist theory.

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Chilean troops round-up supporters of Allende's Popular Unity Government after the coup.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION: The following article constitutes selections from a larger document written by the United States based "Communist Internationalist Group". Though concerned with the lessons of Chile, it takes the form of a polemic against the "Spartacist League"— an American group with whom the Chartists have been in discussion since 1970, and from whom the authors of the article split in the Summer/Autumn 1972. In our view the article represents an excellent contribution to an understanding of how Trotskyists should go about the task of building a revolutionary party to seize power in circumstances where a "Popular Front"-type government is in office.

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THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY AND THE TRANSITIONAL METHOD

Late last year, attacking the Popular Front, the Castroites of the MIR etc., the Spartacist League wrote:

> The road to victory will be arduous. The absence of a revolutionary vanguard party is today the fundamental problem facing the Chilean workers. This vanguard must be forged in sharp struggle for a class programme, against the popular front and the UP reformists who are doing their best to strangle the revolution. As Trotsky wrote of Spain: "FOR A SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION OF ALL THESE TASKS, THREE CONDITIONS ARE REQUIRED: A PARTY; ONCE MORE A PARTY; AND AGAIN A PARTY."
>
> —Workers Vanguard, December, 1972

An excellent Trotsky quote. The SL must have thought so, for the sentence is copied into their paper in capital letters. And what does it mean? It means that, without a revolutionary party, there will be no revolution. In fact, it is what everyone — WL, CSL, SWP...says; it is one of the elementary conceptions of Marxism. The SL tells anyone who might be listening in Chile that to fight the popular front government, a Leninist party is required. That is what they said last year. But now, after the Popular Unity government has been smashed, and not by a working-class offensive but a rightist military thrust; now, after the working class is in retreat; now, they call for the proletarian revolution, but make no mention even of the party. There is not even a formal nod in that direction.

Maybe the vanguard party is there, willing and able to take power? Maybe this vanguard party, non-existent in December, 1972, somehow created itself during the nine months between the December article and the September coup? If so, on what programme? Under what leadership?

This party we never heard of. Neither did the SL. By their own criteria, by their own chosen Trotsky quote, not only the lack of mention (or more importantly, lack of conception) of this party in their September pronouncement, a direct appeal from New York to the Chilean working class for revolution now in the absence of the party is fantastic, unreal, surrealistic, nightmarish. What did their quote from Trotsky say? Without a party, no revolution. What else but utter cynicism, and the opportunity to parade around as some kind of super-revolutionaries (who else called for proletarian revolution to fight the generals?) can account for this 180-degree about-face and the discarding of the complete teachings of Lenin and Trotsky?

The abandonment of the struggle to construct the revolutionary international and the Leninist party reduces the WV Supplement to the level of all the SL's other "theoretical" material, ie., to a passive commentary on events at best projecting an "objective" unfolding of the workers' revolution.

On top of this, when they finally did attempt to provide the Chilean working class with a strategical and tactical line prior to the September 11 coup, the SL committed every conceivable ultra left error on the question of defending the popular front government against the military counter-revolution. As a result, they made a mockery of the transitional programme, the Leninist united front tactic and Trotsky's analysis of bourgeois state forms in the epoch of capitalist decay. All this led them to liquidate in practice the political struggle to break the working class from its reformist and Stalinist leaderships.

At the end of the December '72 WV article the SL laid out a series of 'transitional' demands they envisioned as the programme for the Chilean revolution. Undoubtedly the SL thought, in the manner of all the 'orthodox' Trotskyist scribes, that these demands — lifted bodily out of the 1938 Programme adopted by the Founding Conference of the Fourth International — would prove quite sufficient for the revolutionary programme for the Chilean proletariat. No need, of course, to analyze the active role of various 'Trotskyist' tendencies in Chile, or to industriously seek out Marxist revolutionaries there in order to lay the groundwork of a revolutionary party ... no need! All that is necessary for the satisfaction of the world-view is to graft mechanically the demands in the '38 Programme to each and every situation that come along and there you have it ... the uniquely correct, the perfect programme! The rosary-like recitation of the Transitional Programme, to the proper saints in the proper order — of this, and only this, consists the SL's "exemplary" propaganda work.

But this sterile orthodoxy is apparently reserved for more peaceful periods, because in the rapidly-changing situation a week prior to the coup the SL dropped all their former lip service to transitional demands, veered sharply to the left and hysterically directed the following "call" toward the Chilean workers:

> Rather than presuring Allende...we must indeed call on the workers to break sharply with the bourgeois popular front and the government parties /among which were the Socialist and Communist Parties!!/ to fight for a workers and peasants government based on a revolutionary programme of expropriation of the agrarian and industrial bourgeoisie. /leaflet quoted in WV Supplement/

Posed in such a fashion this "call" was guaranteed to fall on deaf ears. It is clear that the Chilean working class, although before the coup steadily moving left to the point where its militancy collided more and more with its leadership, still retained profound illusions in the social democratic and Stalinist parties and for this reason was incapable at that time of breaking out of the political framework imposed upon it by the popular front and moving into independent opposition against it. For this reason the approach of revolutionary communists in Chile should have pointed toward the resolution of this fundamental question: with what tactics must the vanguard intervene in order to expose the bankruptcy of the reformists and Stalinists,

destroy the proletariats' illusions in this false leadership and in the process construct a revolutionary leadership?

This could have been achieved only by demonstating that in a revolutionary situation, when the issue of popular defence against the counter-revolution was posed point-blank, that the workers' parties participating in the popular front government — the social democrats and Stalinists — play a counter-revolutionary role in that they prevent the self-defensive arming of the working class. In this situation it was necessary to go beyond propaganda and find the means to demonstate this fact to the working class in such a way that they would thereby learn through their own experiences that only the communists provided a solution to the desperate crisis. Consequently it was necessary for the communists to raise to the reformist leadership those demands for self-defence which when implemented would organize the working class against the rightist counter-revolution and at the same time propel it toward the seizure of power — ie., to pose transitional demands as they arise out of the concrete struggle. Were the pressures of the class struggle and the instinct of self-preservation to force the reformists to implement some or all of these demands it would benefit the communists, since even these partial victories could not help but strengthen communist influence within the working class. And when the reformists refuse to carry out these demands to their necessary conclusion, precisely because of the inherent contradictions in their social and political roles, the working class would see that its old leadership was completely unwilling and unable to pursue the class struggle and would turn toward the communists as the fighting alternative. It was precisely this method of approach to the proletarian revolution by which the Bolsheviks came to power, as we shall demonstrate in a later section — a method Trotsky quite aptly summed up in the Transitional Programme:

> From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the /Social Revolutionaries/ and Mensheviks break with their liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. Under this provision the Bolshevik Party promised the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s as the petty-bourgeois representatives of the workers and peasants, its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie; categorically refusing, however, either to enter into the government of the Mensheviks and S.R.s or to carry political responsibility for it. If the Mensheviks and the S.R.s had actually broken with the Cadets (liberals) and with foreign imperialism, then the "workers' and peasants' government" created by them could only have hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was exactly because of this that the leadership of the petty-bougeois democracy resisted with all possible strength the establishment of its own government. The experience of Russia demonstrated, and the experience of Spain and France once more confirms, that even under favourable conditions the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy (S.R.s, Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists) are incapable of creating a government of workers and peasants that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie.
>
> Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and S.R.s: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!" had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days, definitely doomed them before

mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks.

The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruption of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organizations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wich to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!" is an extenely important weapon for exposing the treaherous character of the parties and organizations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals...

.....

Of all parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reation..

— "The Transitional Programme", Documents of the Fourth International, pp. 201-3

Thus in the period after the attempted coup in June, when the right was testing its strength and the liklihood of a future coup was clearly on the agenda, it was incumbent on Marxists in Chile to direct the following central demand towards Allende, who was at the time simultaneously the head of state and the embodiment of the SP/CP governmental coalition: disarm all the counter-revolutionary forces, the army, the police and the fascist bands! Within this mass agitational demand is concretized the general transitional demand for the break-up of the Popular Front (To the SP/CP — Break with the bourgeoisie parties and the generals!), for any motion in this direction on Allende's part would have meant, ipso facto its dissolution and the further resolution of the class forces into two clearly dilineated, armed camps. At the same time, the Marxists would have had to direct the following demands toward Allende, the social democratic and Stalinist parties: Prepare the defense against armed reaction! Arm the workers! Organize a peoples' militia! Organize cities-wide defense committees open to all organizations who speak in the name of the working class! Prepare for a general strike agianst the reaction! The question of which class has the capacity and the will to lead society will then be posed concretely and in front of the working class and its allies, not totally abstractly in the SL manner.

However, it is far from adequate just to maintain a correct programme, strategy and orientation such as the above; it is likewisenecessary to know how to find a road to the masses. No programme can be confined to paper and abstracted from the struggle to implement it; if this happens it ceases to be a programme. In a situation such as Chile it was imperative Marxists properly assess the conditions necessary to determine where the greatest potential for the building of a revolutionary party lay.

By the time of the September coup a revolutionary crisis had been maturing in Chile over a period of three years. While in this period the workers, the peasants and the poor were the recipients of a number of deep-going social reforms, this otherwise

beneficient situation was fundamentally marred by two central features: the working class was consistently held back from struggle against an increasingly enraged ruling class and its imperialist allies by the anti-revolutionary, reformist politics of its leading parties; this situation was further reinforced by the complete absence of any organized communist nucleus. It is self-evident, then, that at least from the time the Popular Front came to power in 1970 communists could play a revolutionary role in the class struggle only by fighting to construct Trotskyist factions inside one or another of the major working-class parties, the CP and the SP. Since an open struggle for a revolutionary programme would have been impossible inside the Stalinist CP, and moreover since Allende's social democratic party stood to the left of the Stalinists, a general orientation of revolutionary work inside the SP was absolutely necessary. It was this practical orientation to the social democracy that Trotsky advised his followers in Spain to take in 1936. It was this orientation which proved so vitally necessary in Chile.

By exposing the treacherous policy of the top leadership of the CP/SP bloc to the fighting cadre of these parties communists would have prepared these cadres for the impending military assault of the bourgeoisie and from that vantage could have become the central pivot for the crystallization of a revolutionary wing. Such a development would then establish the basis for the founding of a Leninist-Trotskyist party. (Let us note here that the period of revolutionary work for Trotskyists inside the Chilean SP is by no means at an end; the experiences of the military junta will not destroy illusions in the Allende heritage or in the SP, and on the contrary, increase its appeal in the coming period. In fact, it is precisely now that the most fruitful work in the creation of a left wing can be done there.)

Only with this overall approach would it have been possible then to win the working class away from its class collaborationist leadership, create a revolutionary party and open up the road to socialist revolution.

The SL, however, instead of utilizing the method of the transitional programme, simply stood outside the struggle and ultimatistically called on the working class to break from both the popular front government and its major political parties and "fight for a workers' and peasants' government based on a revolutionary programme." Stripped of its pseudo-revolutionary verbiage this call meant: Workers! Abandon your leadership and fight for state power! How such a "fight" could have taken place is beyond human comprehension. In a situation where there was no revolutionary leadership, no Marxist tendency (let alone a party) with any significant influence among the proletariat, when the majority of workers supported the popular front and when the tendency within the class to construct soviets existed in embryo and not in concrete fact...Such a "call", aside and apart from abandoning the political struggle against the reformists, was simply criminal adventurism; or would be if anyone were so rash as to attempt to implement it.

The wise SL "theoretician" who authored this line should have at least taken the time to study the approach Trotsky thought revolutionaries should take in fighting the illusions of the proletariat in popular fronts and other such cross-class blocs of labour bureaucrats and capitalists. (We doubt though

that any conceivable amount of study would help this genius.) We apologize to the reader for the length of this quotation; nevertheless we think that here Trotsky makes all the essential points on what constitutes revolutionary tactics. In response to the question: "What should our attitude be toward Peace Councils?" put to him by the British Trotskyist, Collins, Trotsky answered:

> The question of the Peace Council bears a certain resemblance to that of the People's Front. For example, in France, we tell the workers that we know that the People's Front is all wrong. While the workers support it, we say to them that we are perfectly willing to collaborate loyally with the working class organizations, the C.P. and the S.P., but we refuse under any circumstances to have anything to do with the bourgeois participants in the People's Front. We do not shout: 'Down with the People's Front!' at the present because we have nothing to replace it as yet. In the same manner, we cannot turn our backs on the Peace Councils and say 'Down with the Peace Councils!' because as yet there is no revolutionary party to give a clear lead on the question of war and peace. In the analogy, however, there is this fundamental difference. One is a question of state power in a revolutionary situation. The other is a question of utilizing existing committees as long as they are supported by mass workers' organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to get representatives wherever possible on the Peace Councils and to direct our attacks in the beginning against certain of the bourgeois participants (who these will be depends on the reaction of the workers to our propaganda). It is understood, of course, that the very first task of revolutionaries in any mass organization is to demand that it be democratically controlled by the workers. That agitation will give us our first opportunity of attacking the private invitations given out by the S.P. bureaucrats to so-called progressive bourgeois figures. By attacking the leading bourgeois pacifists and subsequently the participation of all bourgeois elements, we will inevitably run counter to the class-collaborationist policies of the L.P.-C.P. bureaucrats. We can then sya to the workers: "We have our differences with Comrades Morrison, Pollitt, and Lansbury, but we are perfectly willing to work loyally with them. They, however, wish to expel us because we refuse to work with open class enemies." This will have the effect of making the L.P.-C.P. bureaucrats bear the responsibility of open class collaboration before the workers. This situation correctly used will discredit not only the bureaucrats but also the entire idea of Peace Councils. But it is first necessary to get on to them.
>
> - Trotsky, "Interview by Collins", Writings 1935-36; pp. 77-8. (Emphasis added)

One would think this statement leaves no possible room for ambiguity on the Marxist approach to fighting reformist and bourgeois liberal illusions within the working class. Moreover, for the enlightenment of those who substitute stuffing the real world into little pigeon holes called "principles" for Marxism it is worth pointing out the context: The above tactic, enunciated by Trotsky, as to how revolutionists should approach the working class parties in the French popular front government was expressed in the summer of 1936. The date is significant. It

did not represent an outlook for a period during which the proletariat only slowly accumulated forces for its future revolutionary leap; on the contrary, many other writings of the time beyond the Collins interview indicate he put forth this perspective at exactly the time he considered signalled the beginning of the French proletarian revolution!

But if the previous SL nonsense weren't enough to demonstrate the complete bankruptcy of their claim to represent a Trotskyist political tendency, just wait! There is even more idiocy. The same ultra-left 'logic' the SL applied concerning the question of a workers government was carried over directly when they called for a united proletarian front. And this was their approach: speaking as clearly as one can through a mouthful of water, they called for:

> ...a united front of all workerkers organizations to smash the rightist-militarist offensive in Chile, while continuing to struggle for the overthrow of the popular front government of "socialists" and generals by proletarian revolution. (Emphasis in original)

A united front of all workers organizations! Which ones?? — if we may ask this rather non-trivial question? Certainly there was no room in this SL united front for the CP and the SP — certainly not! — for how could the CP and SP possibly be in a united front which continued to struggle "for the overthrow of the popular front government of 'socialists' and generals"? Then, what workers' organizations did the SL mean? This, not accidentally, they did not say. We are forced to guess now in order to penetrate this rhetorical blizzard, but maybe they mean the MIR plus some "Trotskyist" sect affiliated to the United Secretariat? Plus?...plus the trade union rank and file (which in the main are under the leadership of the CP and SP bureaucrats)? Logically, this had to be the concrete meaning of their call.

Thus the SL's conception of what consitutes a "united front", taken together with their mad call to the Chilean working class to abandon its leading parties (in which the workers still, today, maintain illusions!) and make a direct fight for power (!) all logically reduce themselves to classic examples of the 'Third Period' Stalinists' line of the "united front from below", an approach which in practice liquidates the Leninist united front tactic. This approach was exposed for all time in Germany: in completely circumvenving the leadership of the reformist working-class organizations, and instead appealing directly and exclusively to the membership of the social democracy to break with its leadership and join the increasingly spastic struggle against fascism under the banner of the Communist Party, the Stalinists had absolutely no effect whatsoever on the socialist workers, precluded any possible joint KPD/SPD defensive actions against Hitler and...facilitated the Nazi victory. But even the Stalinists during their 'Third Period' were still one up on the Robertsonites; they at least had something the workers could join. The SL has absolutely nothing.

II

HOW THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE TRANSFORMS LENIN INTO AN OPPORTUNIST AND TROTSKY INTO AN ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY PEDANT

> Now, insurrection is an art quite as much as war or any other, and subject to certain rules of proceeding, which, when neglected, will produce the ruin of the party neglecting them. Those rules, logical deductions from the nature of the parties and the circumstances one has to deal with in such a case, are so plain and simple that the short experience of 1848 has made the Germans pretty well acquainted with them. Firstly, never play with insurrection unless you are fully prepared to face the consequences of your play. /!/ Insurrection is a calculus with very definite magnitudes, the value of which may change every day; the forces opposed to you have all the advantage of organization, discipline and habitual authority; unless you bring strong odds against them, you are defeated and ruined. Secondly, the insurrectionary career once entered upon, act with the greatest determination, and on the offensive. The defensive is the death of every armed rising; it is lost before it measures itself with its enemies.... /emphasis added/
>
> — F. Engels, Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany

As we have shown, the SL supplement renders the entire politics of the Chilean workers' struggles incomprehensible. The SL claims, "Today /September 14/ Marxists must struggle to smash the junta by a workers' uprising." How this uprising is to be led, organized, coordinated, they don't say; nor do they indicate just who these "Marxists" are, but they appear to be as unsubstantial, as ethereal, as the party that isn't there. Moreover, they add, "To call for support to the /Popular Unity government/ is to reaffirm a policy whose suicidal nature is being demonstated at this very minute!" This is the "political" equivalent of saying a corpse is dead because it isn't alive. This masterful nonsense is wrapped up with a quote from Lenin which says that under certain conditions Marxists offer military support to bourgeois governments against fascist or rightist military uprisings, while refusing political support to or confidence in this government. Perfectly true. Then they mangle the Lenin quote to "prove" this, then say "of course /of course!!/ in the Chilean situation it would be manifestly absurd to call for even military support to the U.P. government, which has already been smashed." To stuff so much baloney into one overheated paragraph is indeed a feat, and serves mostly to confirm our belief that the Stalinization ("transformation") of the SL is continuing apace.

One might have thought the SL would have quit while they were ahead, or at least before they were so hopelessly far behind. Take, for example, the quote they cite in which Lenin makes a distinction between military and political support to a bourgeois, "Kerensky"-like government. At first glance this point would seem to be irrelevant: Why bother to make such a distinction, quoting "authority" and all, to deal with the corpse of the UP? Lenin's distinction between military and political support in any case refers to the Marxist attitude towards living, functioning governments, not dead and dispersed

ones. Did the writer just have an unused Lenin quote lying around from a much more important polemic against the IS, and decide to throw it in here to make undigestible stew a little more palatable? Is it, perhaps, part of a concealed polemic against internal critics who dimly recall an SL critique two years ago against Wohlforth's "Third Period" adventure-mongering at the time of the Bolivian betrayal in 1971, and who remember the SL opposed this same kind of loud-mouthed "propaganda" ranting, then? Or is our initial guess right, that this is simply "educated", quotemongering flimflam, designed to impress ("regroup") some other ignorant naifs?

Perhaps, all of them. No matter. All this gobbledegook comes in handy to conceal the fact that three separate situations existed in a short period of time -- reflecting a rapidly changing balance of forces -- and that different tactics were called for in each case to meet the situation and clarify the political necessities. For this situation it is necessary to think out the problems beyond the vague platitudes and truisms common to the movement and saturating the SL pages, isolate the stages and the process, and determine the possibilities and the capacities of the contending social forces in each stage.

In the period before the coup was organized it was the duty of the left-wing of the labour movement to call for the military support to the Allende government, simultaneously organizing such support among the working masses while at the same time taking care to destroy illusions in the government, pointing out its vacillations and hesitations, demonstating wherever possible the utter confusion and incapacity of the government (unable even to determine who its enemies were!) and thus unable to carry out the basic necessity of even defending itself. We have gone into the arguments and slogans which would have facilitated organizing this defense above, and we will not repeat them here. The point of the whole Lenin passage -- not the truncated version that appears in WV -- is to indicate both the nature of the support to the government and the kind of transitional demands that need to be raised simultaneously to that government in order to expose it and educate the class to its real, anti-popular nature.

At this point in our critique we want to subject the entire "Russian" analogy, and especially the letter of Lenin to the Bolshevik Central Committee to a closer scrutiny, for in this letter is contained not only the strategy that welded together the revolutionary defense of the Kerensky regime; it proved in also the central strategy by which the cadres of the revolutionary forces were initially armed and from which position the Bolsheviks regained the support and confidence of the working masses in sufficient numbers to facilitate the swift transfer of power to the Bolshevik-led soviets possible and inescapable. The relevance of the contents of this letter, to the situation in Chile just before the fall of Allende, ought to be obvious to the reader:

> Even now we must not support Kerensky's government... We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference but it is highly essential and it must not be forgotten.
>
> (emphasis in original)

The "subtle difference" referred to in the passage from Lenin is the difference between military support for a popular front government while refusing it any political confidence and, political support. The revolutionary forces defended the government from the arms of tje counterrevolution, while simultaneously planning its revolutionary replacement. This central Leninist strategy for the proper orientation to Popular Front governments was the historical basis for the similar strategies and orientation of the Trotskyksts in Spain and Germany in the 1930's.

At this point the SL cuts short the quote and drops the issue, saying in passing that, of course, this is no longer relevant (then, why quote any of it in the first place?) since Allende's Popular Unity government has already been smashed.

Of course, the letter from Lenin to the Central committee is not irrelevant to anyone interested in comprehending the methods by which revolutionaries orient themselves in the fight against the counterrevolution, and consequently, of course, there is a vital reason why this passage is so severely truncated in the pages of Workers Vanguard. The central section of the letter which the SL chooses to disappear specifically and clearly locates the context in which it is written and the political content of the"change of tactics" for the coming struggle. So far as the context is concerned, the polemic is double-edged: Lenin is arguing against both that tendency in the Bolshevik Party and the class which might utilize the proper military defense of the Kerensky government in order to slide over into political support (this tendency is the ostensible target of the letter) and also those sections of the revolutionary forces who might either incline to premature insurrection or refuse outright any kind of defense of the Kerensky regime.

So far as the political content of the "change of tactics" presented in the letter to the Central Committee is concerned, Lenin not only takes the call for revolution of the docket and out of the party's propaganda for the time being — a fairly substantial tactical change; he clearly and precisely enumerates a series of partial, specific demands fitted to the new situation, which not only stop far short of revolution ("We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now"), but also, however radical and far-reaching, do not even mention the call, or anything like it, in the form of the slogan of the workers' government! What this means, of course, is that the tactics by which the Bolsheviks prepared the ground for the October revolution run exactly counter to each and every "principle" in which every SLer is inundated, up to the ears and over: that any tactic, any programmatic statement that does not contain the magic words "proletarian revolution" or "workers' government" is exemplary of the rankest ... opportunism!

Put another way, we might say what motivates the Robertson leadership to conceal these terribly embarrassing paragraphs is the charitable act of "protecting" the rightist, the grossly opportunist Lenin from the rock-hard, "high-Trotskykst" educated revolutionists of the SL ranks, who would undoubtedly be outraged if only they were to find out the horrible truth about their mentor, Lenin!

Sarcasm aside, there is even a greater reason why the SL does not want to attract undue attention to this passage.

We reprint the critical section of this letter here, as it deserves close consideration:

> What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?
>
> We are changing the form of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must take into account the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting against him in a different way, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's weakness and vacillation. That has been done in the past as well. Now, however, it has become the all-important thing and this constitutes the change.
>
> The change, further, is that the all-important thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of "partial demands" to be presented to Kerensky: arrest Milyukov, arm the Petrograd workers, summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, dissolve the Duma, arrest Rodzyanko, legalise the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over grain and factories, etc., etc. We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by the course of the struggle against Kornilov. We must keep up their enthusiasm, encourage them to deal with the generals and officers who have declared for Kornilov, urge them to demand the immediate transfer of land to the peasants, suggest to them that it is necessary to arrest Rodzyanko and Milyukov, dissolve the Duma, close down Rech and other bourgeois papers, and institute investigations against them. The "Left" S,R.'s must be especially urged on in this direction.
>
> It would be wrong to think that we have moved farther away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No. We have come very close to it, not directly, but from the side. At the moment we must campaign not so much directly against Kerensky, as indirectly against him, namely, by demanding a more and more active, truly revolutionary war against Kornilov. The development of this war alone can lead us to power, but we must speak of this as little as possible in our propaganda (remembering very well that even tomorrow events may put power into our hands, and then we shall not relinquish it)....
>
> — Lenin, "To the Central Committee of the RSDLP" (Aug. 30, 1917) Collected Works, Vol. 25, pp. 285-89

It is important to note here the manner in which, as Lenin argues at length, these partial demands and slogans should be raised. They are not "characteristic", Bolshevik slogans alone; Lenin argues these slogans should correspond to and become the elemental demands of the masses themselves. Thus, they are intended as "action guides" to educate the "fighting people." In order to further this aim, the task of the Bolsheviks is to motivate these demands in such a manner as to encourage the struggling masses, and especially members of other working-class and peasant-based political organizations, to make these

demands their own. For the record, nobody, and certainly Lenin, would deny that Kerensky's was a bourgeois government; it is therefore clear that Lenin rejected (if indeed he ever heard of such a far-fetched thing) arguments such as those raised by the SL that,

> ...to call on the bourgeois state (even with a popular front government such as Allende's) to outlaw and disarm the fascists is to awaken illusions in the masses.
> — WV, August 31, 1973

Lenin did not call on Kerensky to outlaw fascists in the classic sense of that term, primarily because there weren't any; the SL objects in an all-encompassing manner, however, asserting hither and yon that they never call on a bourgeois government to suppress another wing of the bourgeoisie. For ourselves, we will deal with the implications of this argument in the context of Allende's Chile presently; more important here is that Lenin's arguments for the course he chose were based upon the undeniable and historically verified observation that the negative, hostile response of the Kerensky regime to these reasonable and necessary demands would demonstrate before the masses the extent of its collaboration with and dependence upon Kornilov-types and expose the limited , anti-popular character of the coalition government. This is the only way in such a situation that Marxists can possibly break the consciousness of the masses from their long-established, conservative, anti-revolutionary blinders and 'parliamentary' illusions. In a polemic in a similar situation, fighting 'Third Period' idiocies on the part of the Germen Stalinists some fifteen years later, Trotsky referred to the above incident, several times, and always in the same manner: at that time, he characterized the 'changed tactic' of Lenin as one of "simultaneously carrying on a flank attack" on Kerensky.

There is a very good reason why the series of partial demands Lenin raises in the above letter are not opportunist errors (of a kind to be hidden away from the fiercer SL revolutionists who might otherwise reject the master along with his political methods). The SL is opposed to calling on the popular front government to arrest its fascist, counter-revolutionary enemies on the grounds they are both bourgeois, and we will take up this nonsense later. Lenin, of course, never heard of any such absurd principles; in calling upon the Kerensky government to arrest the presumed collaborators of General Kornilov, the Cadet Miliukov and the Octobrist Rodzyanko (!) who were not only not fascists (!) but respectively a liberal imperialist and a reactionary bourgeois, he in fact was calling, in a concrete manner, for the dissolution of the coalition government, in the same manner as the earlier Bolshevik demand, "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" With that slogan, along with the later demand to arrest the representatives of the bourgeois parties, the Bolsheviks in effect were calling for a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary government. This tactic, this incident, represents in concrete, demonstrable form the actual application and use of the transitional method, which, the SL to the contrary notwithstanding, is not a rosary of never-changing slogans but the road to power. We had kidded ourselves, heretofore, that the SL knew this, as we thought every self-styled "Trotskyist" did; in fact we thought it was among the most important of the lessons of October.

What we said above about hiding the contradiction between their own line and Lenin's under analogous circumstances — i.e. considerations of purely bureaucratic self-protection — represents some of the impetus behind the SL decision to bury the critical section of the Letter of Lenin to the Bolshevik Central Committee. But there is even more, and what follows raises not only the question of sacred bureaucratic prestige but also the SL's hopeless theoretical/political floundering in a situation where the international class struggle reaches its most intense heat. As we noted above, in the August 3rd WV the SL responded to the attempted coup with a pseudo-manifesto to the workers and peasants of Chile (the formal title is "Rightist Coup Fails in Chile") which, incidentally and among a lot of phrase-mongering, called for "the outlawing and disarming of all fascist organizations". Obviously, we agree with such a call; as we have demonstrated, such a slogan, together with the clarifying fight to implement it, embodies the central Marxist strategic axis of tearing apart the popular front along class lines, the military defense of the Allende government against the bourgeois counter-revolution and the military preparation for working-class power, and was in fact historically the Bolshevik strategy against both Kornilov and Kerensky.

But it turns out other "forces", namely the Robertson clique in the SL, knew better. Not realizing or not caring (who can tell?) that the unchallenged maintenance of arms in the hands of the rightist spearhead were knives pressed to the throat of the working class, in the very next issue of WV (August 31) they published a correction of their former line ("Do We Call on the Bourgeoisie to Outlaw Fascism?"); this exercise in ultimatistic tomfoolery categorically and in no uncertain terms reversed their former course and line and answered NO! to their own hypothetical question. It is entirely fitting that they never asked themselves what this would mean in Chile; it is further typical that they did not attempt to explain how and why they made such a 'rudimentary' error in the first place, what its political source was...although such an evaluation would be instinctual to any revolutionist! Instead, the SL substituted rhetoric about how treacherous the bourgeoisie is and came up with a new theory, which we characterize with restraint as the political foundations for the resurrection in 'Trotskyist' clothes, of 'third period' conceptions of 'social fascism'. The principle of this theory, stated as 'we never call on the popular front to outlaw fascism' is based on a simplistic reading of the line "only the working class can smash fascism...". This is of course the PL /Progressive Labour - US Maoist group EDITOR/, line. Apart from clashing with basic common sense, and writing out of the history books the Allied Coalition of democratic imperialism and Stalinism which in fact did root out fascism during World War II (!), the SL retreats to general/historical truisms. It is true that in the final historical analysis only the triumph of the working class can forever destroy the threat of fascism, but this is the same as saying that the future for the working class and all humanity lies in either socialism or barbarism. As history has shown , this truth nowhere refers to or applies in particular historical incidents or even world wars. Instead, it represents a classic example in which abstractly true prescriptions in the general become concrete lies in the particular, and the basic truths of scientific Marxism are transformed into dangerous sand to be thrown in the eyes of the working class.

We are not particularly interested in polemicizing with such nonsense as the SL promotes here on its "merits" because it hasn't any, as a few minutes reflection on the state of the world since 1936 would clearly demonstrate; the SL's theorizing is simply a blowhard exercise in shabby political idiocy and a total aloofness from reality. As 'proof' of their new theory they make great play, of course, with a couple of quotations from Trotsky. The difficulty is that the politics the SL claims are those of Trotsky, if taken in the context of the ripening revolutionary situation of Chile in the weeks before the fall of Allende, would have played a wholly passive, abstentionist, anti-revolutionary role! A closer look at the context of this fraudulent, ostensibly Trotsky-derived, 'theoretical grounding' of the SL line will clearly demonstrate how the SL deforms and disembowels the Trotskyist analysis of bonapartism, popular fronts and fascism.

To give some credence to their otherwise wholly absurd and meaningless line, the SL quotes two passages from Trotsky's 1934 writings. One is the incidental side comment from the pamphlet "War and the Fourth International" whose major focus is on imperialist war not popular fronts; the burden of the SL-quoted section is that for revolutionaries to call on the capitalist state (any capitalist state?) to suppress the fascists sows illusions about bourgeois democracy, lulls the vigilance of the workers and demoralizes them. The other quotation is more substantive and gives the SL game away, and we quote it here:

> Certainly, the Radicals declared themselves for the disarmament of everyone -- workers' organizations included. Certainly, in the hands of a Bonapartist state /!/, such a measure would be directed especially against the workers. Certainly, the 'disarmed' Fascists would receive on the morrow double their arms, not without the aid of the police.
>
> -- Trotsky, "Wither France?", November 1934.

Does anyone seriously think that this description fits the state of affairs in Allende's Chile, which everyone not running about holding an enormous rug in front of their faces knows has been the most 'left wing' of any popular front government in history, and the most dedicated to carrying out its own, reformist programme? The SL's implied comparison between the two situations is simply incredible! What really gives this ideological fast shuffle away is that particular phrase "in the hands of a Bonapartist state"; in "Whither France?" Trotsky was discussing the situation in France in 1934, a France governed not by a popular front regime but a right-wing, semi-Fascist bonapartist government! To use a more accurate analogy, to call on the Republican government of Largo Caballero in Spain in 1936 to implement the measures necessary to break Franco's mobilization of the counter-revolution is not absurd, and constitutes in fact but one of the means by which the anti-fascist/anti-capitalist fight is waged. Undoubtedly, the SL can't tell the difference between Caballero/Kerensky/Allende and a rightist Bonapartism; undoubtedly the rational rest of the world can. So far as 'sowing illusions', lulling the workers to sleep and all the rest of the points made in the paragraph from "War and the Fourth International" are concerned, Trotsky clearly was not, as the SL would have it, setting down some eternal metaphysical "principle", but as the context of the '34 writings indicate was instead directing a polemic against the Stalinists and social democrats who were preaching exclusive reliance on the bonapartist state

apparatus to disarm the fascists, and counterposed this reliance to the independent arming of the working class. Were Trotsky really attempting to go beyond that context, we would have to ask ourselves what this "principle" means in the context of Lenin's call to bloc with Kerensky, for Kerensky to carry out a revolutionary war against Kornilov (!) and to arrest the collaborators and bourgeois ministers in his government. Is Trotsky carrying out a not so subtle polemic against Lenin's conception of the road to power here? Is that what the SL thinks when it conceals the operative section of the Lenin letter? Isn't it clear that the context of the reformist popular front government on the one hand and the context of a rightist bonapartist regime on the other, are wholly dissimilar, and that consequently the tactics by which the working class is mobilized in the one case are radically different from the other?

To push the absurdity further, another passage in the SL article from which we are quoting, "Do we call on the Bourgeoisie to Outlaw Fascism?", attacks the SWP/Ligue Communiste for the slogan "jail the fascists, not the Ligue." Very good. But... the context of the article and the correction regarding the line on Chile implicitly identifies the regime of the imperialist Gaullist Pompidou with that of the social democrat Allende! That this passes for Trotskyism in some circles does not mean it has anything in common with Marxism. The whole point of the SL discussion is postulated on the question, whether or not to call on Allende's government to suppress the spearhead of the anti-working class forces, a popular front regime virtually identical with Kerensky's.

If we were to attempt to draw any conclusions from the SL's performance to date on their theorizing about the Allende government and their refusal to place the demand on this particular government to disarm the counter-revolution at a time when this was the pressing need of the working class, we would have to conclude that for the SL a capitalist government is a capitalist government. Period. From the way the SL poses the question, "Do We Call on the Bourgeoisie to Outlaw Fascism?" and not "Do we call on popular front governments to outlaw fascism, and if not, why?" — that is, the lumping together of all forms of bourgeois rule into "one reactionary mass" — they obliterate all the precise, critical distinctions Trotsky made in his fight against fascism between bourgeois totalitarianism, military-rightist bonapartism, "normal" democratic capitalism, popular front governments and the like; the SL clearly implies in what they have said regarding Chile that all these distinctions are irrelevant and that therefore the same strategies, the same tactics, the same "principles" apply in each and every case. What a travesty of Marxism! Are the governments of the Greek colonels or Cuba under Batista, on the one hand, and Kerensky/Allende, on the other — that is, the owners of police states and the outermost limits of democratic capitalism — the same thing? Yes? No? Who can tell?

But if the Robertsonites do hold these are the same thing, fundamentally similar, then how do they account for Lenin's contrary strategy in August, 1917? Clearly, Lenin never heard of this fundamental principle of Leninism. Isn't this why the Central Committee letter from Lenin was disemboweled in the SL press?

If, on the other hand, we are accusing the SL falsely, and it turns out they do not think all bourgeois governments are one

reactionary mass and that different strategies do apply to Kerensky/Allende type governments in the same manner as Lenin, then what on earth is the point of basing their approach to Allende on a quote from Trotsky in 1934 in Whither France? in which the question of strategy under an Allende-type government was not, could not be posed for the good and sufficient reason that the government under discussion was specifically described by Trotsky only a few paragraphs beyond the SL-selected section as a rightwing Bonapartist-capitalist regime resting on and "inconceivable without the existence of the fascist gangs." Trotsky said, a hundred times, that the truth is always concrete. Where is the analogy between France in 1934 and Chile in August, 1973? Does the SL think the Allende government rested on the fascist gangs, and for that reason wouldn't disarm and arrest them? If not, what's the point of the quote? Was Trotsky preaching an 'eternal truth' here? For that matter, if Trotsky thought anything like the SL holds he did, what would have been the point to make distinctions like 'popular front' governments anyway?

The truth of the matter regarding the disappearing passages from Lenin and the appearance on the scene of 'replacement' passages from Trotsky which appear on the surface to be completely counterposed to the Bolshevik strategy in 1917, is that the author of the SL's August 3 manifesto attempted to base himself, however ineptly, on Lenin's strategy and tactics during the period of preparation for the October Revolution. This attempt was superceded by the top clique, which has finally discarded the little rags and patches of "Trotskyism" to which it formerly clung in favour of some ultra-left, abstentionist appeal to PL, or Venceremos, or whoever they think they can impress; towards this end, they found some Trotsky quotations which, cut up right and not looked at too closely, appeared to have some superficial resemblance to Chile. The SL was strangled by the contradictions between their permanent tailending of PL-type adventurism in the name of regroupment and the concrete needs of the Chilean workers; for revolutionary situations, whatever their aftermath, have a terrible habit of throwing a political searchlight on opportunists and abstentionists of all stripes.

The trouble with the Trotsky quotations the SL digs up to preach abstentionism in Chile is that they do not deal with a period of swift transfer of power typical of a revolutionary situation. Since the situation during the last days of Allende was so inexorably similar to the Kerensky/Bolshevik model of 1917, and wholly irrelevant to the situation in France in 1934, and since this contradiction was blowing up in their face in their own words, it was necessary for the SL to conceal their counter-position of Lenin to Trotsky (!), which is what all this fast-shuffling of quotations would otherwise mean. Therefore, the SL chose the path of hinting it was following Lenin (the part of the quotation they actually printed) while in reality disembowelling the central Bolshevik strategy by which the revolution was made. Specifically, what the SL had managed to do was counterpose the line of Lenin and the line of Trotsky on the central question of the road to power and socialist revolution! What to do? Easy. Not throw out Robertson, dissolve the SL and learn something about Marxism, as political seriousness would dictate, of course. No, they just...cut the Lenin quote, did everything possible to draw attention away from the Bolshevik programme in the period of defense of Kerensky in the period of

the Kornilov uprising, threw dust in the eyes of the readers by soem adventuristic ranting about proletarian revolution now, when such a call was both hopeless and suicidal, and hoped their political opponents would prove as uninformed about basic Marxism as the clods they have trained their membership to admire and to become.

If it were only a question of exposing the SL farce in the way they cut and paste quotations from Lenin and Trotsky in order to make them ossified sectarians and abstentionists, we would not have wasted our time on the issue. What is important in the whole morass above is the political method by which they transform Trotsky into a formalist pedant and a political opponent of the revolutionary needs of the Chilean working class, to whom the issue of disarming the counter-revolution was not a matter of flimflamming quotations but physical survival. This method, which is characteristic in one form or another of all the pseudo-Trotskyist groups who trace their lineage to the SWP after the death of Trotsky — that is, to the Fourth International of Cannon-Healy-Pablo — must be cut out of the 'Trotskyist' movement if a revolutionary Marxist international party is to come into existence.

The SL, like all its ilk, deals with formal categories rather than concrete reality. Had they approached the issue in the manner of Marxists and not a petty-bourgeois hoax, that is, had they asked themselves what political form of the bourgeois state in France Trotsky was analyzing, and under what specific historical conditions, they might not have fallen into such a formalist approach to the Chilean popular front government. What Trotsky analyzed in Whither France?, from which he drew the conslusion that it was pointless and fatally dangerous to demand of this government the outlawing and suppression of the fascist organizations, was not a bourgeois state as such, but a particular bourgeois state in a particular historical period. Those, like the SL and the other 'continuators' of pseudo-Trotskyism, who reduce Marxist thought to the scholastic level of the manipulation of formal categories are forever lost when it comes to comprehending and acting upon the concrete questions of revolution and counter-revolution.

This incapacity on the part of the SL to make the proper distinction between the various forms of bourgeois rule precludes them from formulating a policy which could move the masses around the question of defense of the Popular Unity government. By identifying, as they do, a bourgeois Bonapartist dictatorship based directly upon the very summits of the bourgeoisie, the military and police apparatus, and the organized fascist gangs (this is the form of state Trotsky said existed in France in 1934!) with Allende's Popular Unity government, the SL says in effect there is no essential difference between a close friend of fascism and a mortal enemy. Hiding behind the generic category "bourgeoisie" the SL is in the position of identifying a regime which would voluntarily cede power to fascism (Hindenburg in Germeny) with a bourgeois regime fascism had to physically eliminate in order to come to power (e.g., the Spanish Popular Front). The blood line drawn between fascism and the Popular Front is totally insignificant for these pseudo-Trotskyists. By refusing 'in principle' to call upon the popular front Popular Unity government to disband fascists on the grounds that it represents nothing but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; that fascism is a necessary weapon of the bourgeois regime; and that

therefore, to call on the bourgeois state to liquidate its own weapons serves only to sow illusions within the working class — the SL has succumbed wholly to the Third Period Stalinists' theory that the reformists are objectively in alliance with fascism! Together with the conception and practice of the 'united front from below', the SL has embraced fully the theory of social fascism.

The fact is that everyone in the world, not only in Chile, knew that some sort of military action was not only inevitable but imminent. During the period of the coup itself, which appears to have lasted well over 24 hours, the situation demanded that the Marxists, were any there, building on the authority and influence they had attracted by the application of their military defensist tactics beforehand, call on the working class organizations, trade unions, parties, etc., to escalate their military defense of the Allende government to the level of a nation-wide general strike against the military counter-revolution and the entire bourgeois offensive. In this situation the tactic would become that of defending all institutions of the working class with armed militias. Such an overall strategy would not only confront the military plotters with a denial of their social base and capacity to rule; implicitly, it would create a total political vacuum, a period of armed dual power, strip the population of any illusions of the strenght and capacity of either the Allende government or the junta, demoralize the military ranks and pose directly the question of what class could thereafter rule. Through this process, the organization of such general action of the class would, in the field, create those organizational structures, strike committees and the like, which would hold state power immediately upon the crushing of the generals' insurrection.

But this did not happen, at least on a sufficiently wide basis: the opposition was local and easily isolated once the government fell, finally petering out into individual, local military confrontations with bands of the junta's troops. After Allende was crushed, with no effective opposition, the working class had become demoralized and dispersed, and the revolutionary upsurge was dissipated and rolled back, the SL "intervened" with a call for workers insurrection. Under such conditions a call for 'proletarian revolution'(!) is in the best case a call for putschism, a mad advendture — a deliberate, criminally reckless irresponsibility. Unfortunately, the people who make such mad proposals are rarely the ones who suffer the consequences as justice would demand. The present SL 'policy' is a shabby, cynical playing with the lives of the Chilean workers, political vultures trying to pick some meat off the bones of the past and future victims of the counter-revolutionary tradegy. The real revolutionary needs of the Chilean working class stand in stark contrast to the infantile Robertsonite phrase-mongering and pseudo-left posturing; the power of the junta must be broken, and a regrouping of the class together with the restoration of its institutions must be undertaken. We can best formulate these tasks by asking the question: under what slogans, what political understanding, now, can the working class recoup its losses and find the road to power?

A series of democratic and transitional demands to be addressed to the working class primarily and which apply to the present situation would include the following: restore the con-

stitution; legalize all political parties; for a constituent assembly; remove and disperse the troops; immediate release of all prisoners and hostages. The struggle to carry out these demands would set the vast majority of the populace against the junta; the successful accomlishment of these demands would break the junta and destroy its capacity to maintain itself by challenging the new order on which it rests. By what practical means can the workers struggle for their demands against the power of the junta? The present conditions require the formation of underground, illegal committees of action, composed of workers and peasants and speaking in the name of a untited front of all working class organizations. These action committees would have the task of preparing for an extended political general strike to secure its demands and to tear the productive base from the new balance of social forces. The successful maintenance of such a strike would continuously pose directly the question of a transition to power. Idiot sneers about "democrats" and SL-type indifference to the suppression of 'bourgeois' and any other civil liberties by the junta are entirely out of the question.

The situation in Chile is similar in many respects to the state of the German working class following the fascist victory in January, 1933, although with this not at all insignificant difference: in Germany in the 30's, fascism completely destroyed not only the political parties of the proletariat but all their organizations including the trade unions and replaced these unions with fascist labour fronts. These "organized" the German workers into one colossal company union. By this means fascism accomplished virtually the complete political and organizational atomization of the proletariat. In Chile today the Bonapartist military dictatorship has not at all demonstrated the strength, nor yet, for that matter, the desire to carry through such a transformation. If, however, the junta is unable to stabalize the situation and restore order, if it is unable to effectively police the working class, then it will undoubtedly attempt to cede power to a native fascism; under these conditions, the Chilean revolution will be rendered virtually impossible for an entire period, unless this time by impetus from abroad (either directly, say by an Argentinian workers' revolution, or indirectly — and this applies of course to the entire South American continent — from the spread of victorious proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries.) Thus, so long as fascism in Chile has not taken power in its own name the victory of the proletariat is still possible! There is still time and opportunity for the class to regroup and this time under the banner of a Trotskyist party. But for this one must have a correct strategy and programme.

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III

OPPORTUNISM AND ADVENTURISM: NOT ANTIPODES BUT TWINS

> ...And the Zentrale? It met in Berlin and "accelerated the action" [after the uprising was already lost]. During a session of the Zentrale, convened days before the termination of the action, of the members present five voted against three for the termination of the action. But here as elsewhere they became victims as well of their own snares of "slackness," "opportunism" [!] and "inactivity" laid for others. In the face of the three votes, pressing for sticking it out, the other five did not dare to force through their own position for fear of being suspected of insufficient revolutionary drive [!]. Three vague "reports" from three districts indicating "some action", that the farmhands of East Prussia were "on the move" were sufficient. Accordingly, new messengers were dispatched in order to"accelerate the action." And what were the reasons given by those three diehards? We do not know whether all three shared it, but one of them offered as a reason that the action had to be driven on, now that it had been lost, to forestall possible attacks from the "left", necessitating a defense only against the "right" [i.e., the Levi "right" in the KPD!].
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> What could one possibly answer to that? Even the behaviour of Ludendorff pales by comparison. He, at least, conscious of certain defeat, had enemies of his own class meet their death. The others, however, had their own flesh and blood perish in a cause which they themselves had already recognized as lost, simply to save the position of the Zentrale. We do not wish a penance on the comrades who did this, and with whom we ourselves lived through many good and bad times. But may they burden themselves, for their own sake and for that of the party in whose interest they may have believed to have acted, with just one castigation: To never again show their faces to the German workers.... (emphasis added)
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> — Paul Levi, Our Course Against Putschism

The really frantic fear of the SL that someone, somewhere, might call them "opportunist" has proven in this case and several others recently to have pushed them into the somewhat odd stance of adventuristic passivity, demanding that California farmworkers or Chilean workers, or someone else, carry out one or another lunatic adventure. Yet the history of Marxism has demonstrated convincingly that putschism and adventurism, like sectarianism of all kinds, are only the product of opportunism, opportunism standing in fear of itself. That is the significance of the passages from Levi's polemic against the "March Action," Our Course Against Putschism, printed above. When the SL says "proletarian revolution!", you have to swallow your disbelief that anyone speaking in the name of "Trotskyism" could utter such rubbish and realize that the point of all this rhetoric is designed to impress the hell out of PL and whomever else the SL is 'regrouping' toward these days. It ought to be obvious that if the Chilean workers were still unable, due to their illusions and lack of informed Marxist leadership to push beyond the popular front toward revolution before the coup, then it stands

to reason, if that word doesn't offend the pseudo-Trotskyists overmuch, then in a period of sharp downturn and bloody repression they are even less able at the present time to make an assault toward state power. It is not only a question of organizational structure but also of the decay of the subjective factor, consciousness. The military smashing of the class under fascism or rightist reaction does not destroy the illusions of the class in their reformist or Stalinist leadership (as seems to be the opinion of the author of the SL prescription) but, on the contrary, preserves and strengthens these illusions, demoralizes the class, makes the workers more responsive to half-hearted and "compromise" solutions, undercuts their faith in their capacity to rule, etc., etc. This in turn changes the actual relationship of class forces. What is the point of studying the history of Trotsky's struggles against fascism and his massive analysis of the subject and its ramifications if one has not learned even that much? The truth is that the revolution is objectively impossible in Chile at the present time, until the balance of forces is radically altered (and the construction of a Leninist party is the most decisive factor in the rearmament of the proletariat), and one ought to say that much outright. For ourselves, we think it important to remind the reader of Lenin and Trotsky's frequent and savage remarks about the "revolutionists of the phrase" and their advice to drive such poseurs out of the movement, and we characterize the SL's clowning with a paper knife clenched in its teeth as just that. For, if Robertson's Chilean policy has not proven a totally criminal one in actual fact, it is not due to him or his policy but solely due to the fact no one in Chile could take it with sufficient seriousness to try to implement it — if indeed, any Chilean ever hears of it, since it is written not as advice of any kind to the Chilean workers, but to appeal to the unfortunates in the U.S. idiot left.

It is part of the historical record in which the movement claiming Lenin's revolutionary mantle was transformed into its opposite, that such plans were actually put into practice about which the Robertsonites only fantasize. We have already quoted at long length twice from the denunciation the earlier head of the German Communist Party, Paul Levi, wrote against his party immediately upon the demise of the infamous "March Action" in 1921; he called it "the greatest Bakuninist putsch in history". At the time it was so; afterwards, several other 'actions', bureaucratically devised and implemented, overtook and surpassed the "March Action". There had been the threat of one in Russia in 1917, several months before the time became ripe for the actual seizure of power by the soviets; these incidents were dealt with by both Lenin and Trotsky in some of their most important writings, and we are left with the choice of determining whether the leading figures of the SL are ignorant of these basic works, or whether they cynically "forgot" about them.

Here is Lenin, writing after the above-mentioned Kornilovite counter-revolutionary revolt on the very eve of power:

> "...if the Bolsheviks did not even set out to start an insurrection on July 3 or 4, if not a single Bolshevik body /as opposed to individual members and supporters/ even raised such a question, the reason for it lies beyond the scope of our controversy with Novaya Zhizn.

For we are arguing about the lessons of 'civil war', i.e., of insurrection, and not about the point that obvious lack of a majority to support it restrains the revolutionary party from thinking of insurrection.

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"If the revolutionary party has no majority in the advanced contingents of the revolutionary classes and in the country, insurrection is out of the question /!/. Moreover, insurrection requires: (1) growth of the revolution on a country-wide scale; (2) the complete moral and political bankruptcy of the old government, for example, the 'coalition' government; extreme vacillation in the camp of all middle groups, i.e., those who do not fully support the government, although they did fully support it yesterday.

— Lenin, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" (October 1, 1917) Collected Works, Vol. XXVI.

In Our Course Against Putschism Levi quoted part of this passage to demonstrate the absurdity of attempting a revolutionary "galvanizing" of the working class through the mad "theory of the offensive" when none of these prerequisite conditions noted by Lenin existed in Germany in March 1921. Our task is even easier. Insofar as the SL strategy of calling for insurrection in Chile is concerned, not only did the revolutionary party not have the required authority, influence and majorities in the "advanced contingents of the revolutionary classes and in the country", not only did the working class still maintain its illusions in the coalition government of Allende and the reformist and Stalinist parties, but as we and everyone else have pointed out, there was no revolutionary party at all! Again: the fundamental question in Chile is constructing such a party, not idiot proposals to do those very things which without the prior existence of a revolutionary, Leninist party are impossible!

Trotsky also attacked manifestations of ultra-leftism in the period predeeding the conditions for the October revolution. He referred constantly to the 1917 events and political struggles within the Bolshevik party throughout his struggles years later against the ultra-leftism of the Canton soviet and the 'Third Period' Stalinist line in Germany. In one of his major works on the dynamics of proletarian revolution he fought against this pseudo-putschist Robertsonian line as it was pushed by the appointed leadership of the KPD at that time:

"The party came to the October uprising, however, through a series of stages. At the time of the April 1917 demonstration, a section of the Bolsheviks brought out the slogan: "Doen with the provisional government!" The Central Committee immediately straightened out the ultra-leftists. Of course, we should popularize the necessity of overthrowing the provisional government; but to call the workers into the streets under that slogan — this we cannot do, for we ourselves are a minority in the working class. If we overthrow the provisional government under these conditions, we will not be able to take its place, and consequently we will help the counterrevolution. We must patiently explainto the masses the anti-popular character of this government, before the hour for its over-

The end of this passage outlines precisely the type of partial, transitional demands by which the party can reform itself and rebuild its influence and ties within the working class and the peasantry, while the earlier passage castigating the resolution and bombast of the Comintern as "criminal lightmindedness" are fitting commentaries on the similar proposals of the SL today. The dynamics of the two situations, the crushing of the revolutionary sentiments and movement in China in the late '20's and Chile today, are entirely similar even though the magnitude is qualitatively different. But the need to regroup the class and build a party is the main task of Marxists in Chile now, and Trotsky's suggested tactics enumerated above are based on a similar prognosis and strategy. One central difference between the two situations needs mention here; the lack of even the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard, and the continued adherence of the working class to the mass reformist and Stalinist parties. The regrouping of the working class would posit the burning necessity in Chile at this time for a defensive united front to maintain the organizations of the working class. And while a proletarian revoltuion there is now off the docket for the forseeable future, and the concrete features of the future offensive of the Chilean working class are presently unforseeable, the prospect for the necessary future regroupment of the class under the hegemony of a Leninist party is not nearly so dark as was the situation in China when Trotsky wrote his work.

We can summarize our views on the general subject of putschism, including the above distinction of premature and postmorten adventures, and the SL's policy for Chile, precisely in this way: "premature" putschism represents in itself a tremendous setback for the working class and is itself capable of destroying great mass parties, as was the case with German communism, but a policy of a putsch carried behind the back of the working class <u>after</u> a great defeat of the class, betrayed by social democratic and Stalinist treachery ... that represents the liquidation of <u>the revolutionary perspective itself</u>.

— November, 1973

/Copies of the complete document entitled "The Fall of Allende and The Triumph of the Chilean Counter-Revolution" can be obtained from:
N. Benjamin
Box 156 - Village station
New York, N.Y. 10014 /

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A REAL FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE SOCIALIST CHARTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED SECRETARIAT

THE FRAUD OF THE 'FOURTH INTERNATIONAL'.

The task of building a mass revolutionary democratic centralist International, begun by Trotsky in 1938, is made doubly urgent today by the renewed inability of international capitalism to resolve its contradictions without resort to naked fascism and eventual world war. However, comrades, this task is one which can only be impeded by the pretence that the construction of such an International has already occured to any extent. The facts must be faced. The fragile embryo of the Fourth International, with the catastrophic decimation of its leading cadre and utter political disorientation that ensued from its inability to come to grips with the events of the 1940's, effectively failed to survive World War 2. The story of world 'Trotskyism' since then has been a sorry saga of organizational fragmentation plus political degeneration. The 'United Secretariat' of the F.I. exemplifies this process.

Like the late (and unlamented) 'International Committee' of Healy-Lambert, the 'U.Sec.' is a federated rotten bloc of politically counterposed elements. On the one hand, the 'European' majority of Mandel/Maitan/Frank; on the other, the various supporters of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The two groupings reunited as the USFI in 1963 on the basis of empirically tail-ending the Cuban Revolution. But the two factions continued to plough their own furrows. For instance, the 9th (1969) U.Sec. Congress decided that 'Victory to the NLF' should be the slogan except in countries with troops fighting in Vietnam — thus conveniently permitting the SWP and its followers to renege on revolutionary defeatism in favour of 'Bring the Boys Home'-style politics.

In Latin America (particularly Argentina) the U.Sec. majority's enthusiasm for a petty-bourgeois urban (and rural) guerrilla warfare strategy has been countered by a brazenly reformist left-social democratic approach on the part of the SWP's sympathizers. Both formations are capable of making formally correct criticisms of each others bankruptcy. For instance, the SWP, currently on an 'orthodoxy' kick, inveighs against the ex-Ligue Communiste's support for Popular Frontism in France and its elevation of the Vietnamese Stalinists to the status of unconscious Trotskyists. Yet Hansen and Novack have zealously practised the worst kinds of Popular Frontism in their reformist poly-vanguardist 'mass movements' (e.g. Democrat Party senators on NPAC Anti-War rally platforms), and their own uncritical enthusing over Castroite and Stalinist guerillas in the past is nothing to write home about! At the moment, the contending forces in the U.Sec. appear to be gearing up for an open split.

Apart from anything else, Mandel and the other leaders of the USFI (previously ISFI), have consistently resorted to bureaucratic manoeuverings rather than face up to the ruthless political clarification and debate necessary if the lessons of previous mistakes and zig-zags were to be drawn and applied.

One method is for the international leadership to build up loyalist factions within recalcitrant national sections, break them off and then recognize them as official sections.

Side by side with such antics has gone a refusal to discuss the past record of the U.Sec. and its leaders. Perhaps the worst example has been Ceylon. When the LSSP finally joined a capitalist government in 1964, Comrade Mandel suddenly announced the discovery that he had been nursing a social-democratic organization in the 'F.I.' for some 20 years. Right up to the end he, Pablo, Frank et al, had refused to combat the reformist line of the LSSP leaders or to assist the small revolutionary opposition in its ranks. And no serious attempt was made to draw a balance-sheet of this experience or to avoud a possible repeat. In fact, the LSSP was succeeded as Ceylon section of the U.Sec. by the LSSP(R), whose leader Tampoe subordinates his political activity to his bureaucratic position as leader of a white-collar union (CMU). For instance, on more than one occasion he refused to solidarize with strikes called by competing unions against the right-wing UNP government. The 1969 USFI Congress established a commission which investigated Tampoe's persistently opportunist behaviour, and recommended he relinguish his leadership of either the LSSP(R) or CMU (this hasn't been done). When the report of this Commission was publicly reprinted by the Spartacist League (US), the IMG had the barefaced audacity to calmly deny the very existence of the Commission in the first place in the pamphlet by Vithena.

The organizational methods outlined above are themselves sufficient to cast doubt on the USFI's claims as the inheritor of the continuity of Trotskyism, the nucleus of the world party of socialist revolution, capable of leading the proletariat to power internationally. But they are merely an expression of this organization's fundamental inability to grapple with its inner political contradictions and deep-seated revisionism.

THE METHOD OF PABLOISM

Pabloism essentially represents the pressure of alien class forces on a weak and disorientated Trotskyist movement. It means an impressionist adaptation to the apparent stability of capitalism, to the dominance of Stalinism and reformism in the working class. In the 'new world reality' ('times have changed, comrades'), the constant search for short cuts to political influence in unfavourable circumstances meant abandonment of the task of building independent revolutionary parties based on the proletariat and the Transitional Programme in resolute hostility to the treacherous existing leaderships of the class.

Thus, rather than raising transitional demands linked at every step to the perspective of workers' power, 'anti-capitalist structural reforms', 'workers control' and similar rostrums were substituted. It was hoped that mass centrist split-offs from social democracy and Stalinism would excuse the vanguard from the task of fighting for leadership in its own right. If capitalism had been overthrown by 'blunted instuments' in Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba, could not such a process be extrapolated indefinitely? For Mandel and his co-thinkers, guerilla warfare became the key strategy for revolution in the 'Third World'—in flat contradiction of the theory of Permanent Revolution. For a

brief spell, the 'student vanguard' also came to field as substitute for the proletarian vanguard party ('Red Bases' & all that), as the U.Sec. temporarily abandoned even a centrist orientation to the mass workers' organizations.

Now, the 'New Mass Vanguard' is with us, meaning the radicalized petty-bourgeois and worker-militiants who have lost their illusions in reformism. The United Secretariat now appears to see its task as penetrating and winning hegemeny in this layer. But there can only be one genuine 'vanguard'—i.e. the CONSCIOUS vanguard party. The prime task of this party is to educate and organize the WORKING CLASS as a whole for the conquest of power. Subjectively radicalized elements must be won to Bolshevism on this basis, not by adapting to the various prejudices of 'mindless militancy' and of the student milieu.

In Britain at this time, application of the U.Sec's theses by the IMG appears to have led it into utter confusion. On the one hand, it argues that the question of state power cannot be raised until the class has been taken through the struggle for 'Dual Power' ("Workers Control") at the point of production. Yet simultaneously it raises the demand for a General Strike—i.e. the classic form of revolutionary situation in Britain—light-mindedly, with no clear perspective. Apparently we won't know if it's a reformist General Strike or a revolutionary one till we're actually having it! This utterly fails to prepare the workers for the liklihood of crushing (possibly permanent) defeats for the Labour Movement in the aftermath of a General Strike not consummated by insurrection.

Again, the IMG completely fails to understand the material basis for the Labour Party's support (i.e. the organized strength of the class), and hence its position as the major obstacle to the socialist revolution here. But it allows a leading comrade (Blackburn) to write a grovellingly opportunist approach to the Labour left (non-aggression pact on immediate issues) without publicly disociating itself. The revolutionary vanguard can only win over decisive sectors of advanced workers and construct the Party in the process of a concrete struggle against the reformist leaders and the Stalinists. This means organizing around a clear alternative strategy, neither counterposing oneself mechanically to the established organs of the class, nor capitulating to their narrow outlook. Marxists must show that the workers' leaders would only be able to attain their own miserable reformist goals (which we must support however) by adopting our bold strategy for the conquest of power, in a situation where substantial long-term concessions by the bourgeoisie are definitely ruled out.

Thus the revolutionary party, the united front tactic, and the question of power must be inextricably linked and concretely applied to the specific conditions of each country. Only on this basis will it be possible to set about the construction of a real Fourth International standing at the head of millions in the colossal battles ahead in Europe and elsewhere.

— The above letter is being distributed to members of the United Secretariat by the Socialist Charter.