

# International VIEWPOINT

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT to ISSUE No 93

24 February 1986



Special supplement

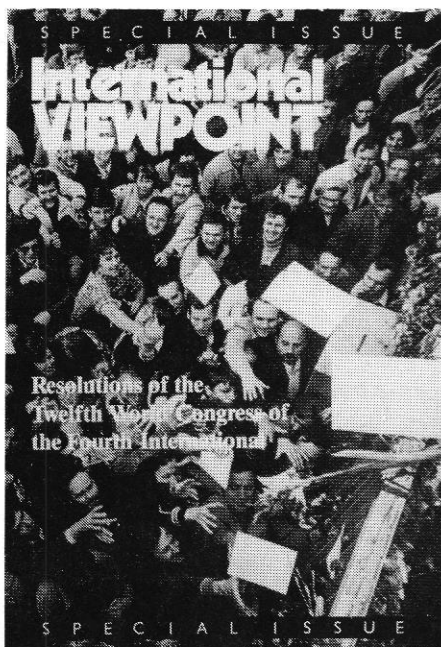
**In defence of the Fourth  
International — against the split of  
the Australian Socialist Workers Party**



**INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT**

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

ISSN: 0294-2925



This special issue of *International Viewpoint* contains the resolutions adopted by the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International in January/February 1985.

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## Special supplement: Introduction

On AUGUST 17, 1985, the leaders of the Australian Socialist Workers Party (SWP) decided to break with the Fourth International. This decision came after several years of debate in which political and organizational differences continued to deepen. In response to this challenge to the programmatic gains and perspectives of our movement, in the following special edition of *International Viewpoint* Ernest Mandel restates the political foundations of the Fourth International, as well as its views on the orientation and tasks of revolutionists today.

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# Anatomy of a split

## Why the Australian SWP left the Fourth International

ERNEST MANDEL

The decision of the Australian SWP to break with the Fourth International will not surprise the majority of the cadres of our movement. They had the opportunity of studying the writings and speeches of the delegates from this organisation during the international's 12th World Congress. They were able to see the extent to which the thinking and sensibility of these delegates were far removed from those of revolutionary Marxist activists and up to what point their loyalty to the Fourth International had faded.

The actual break had been carefully prepared for a long time — including through the holding of an 'education school' where Trotsky's writings were subjected to systematic and malicious criticism. The formal break declared by the SWP National Committee on August 17, 1985, is only the public recognition of this.

Besides, one just has to examine the reasons for the rift given in the report of Doug Lorimer to that National Committee (1) to see that it is a question of pure formality. Since if these reasons were valid — in particular the argument that the existence of the Fourth International is supposedly an obstacle to 'linking up with the new revolutionary leaderships' of Cuba, Nicaragua and the Philippines — then they should have been just as valid in 1982 as in 1985. The decision to break *now* with the Fourth International has nothing principled or programmatic about it. It is for purely tactical and organisational reasons.

In fact, as no 'link up' with the Cuban leadership is in sight whether the Australian SWP is inside or outside the Fourth International, the expression used in reality adds up to the much more modest hope of deepening collaboration with that leadership. Furthermore, in this respect the SWP's membership of the Fourth International, far from being an obstacle, has been a source for understanding and getting practically involved in the vast movement of international solidarity with revolutions unfolding throughout the world. It is the Fourth

International — more than any other current of the international workers' movement — which has animated huge, successive solidarity movements with the Algerian, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions. Its role in international solidarity with the Central American revolution and the struggle of the Kanak people is just as active. We act — and will continue to act — in the same way in relation to the solidarity movement with the South African masses' freedom struggle — a solidarity movement that now needs to be developed.

The real causes of the Australian SWP's break with the Fourth International are not those claimed by the leadership of that organisation. They are essentially political. They flow from substituting, step-by-step, opportunist pragmatism for revolutionary Marxist politics. It is useful to take apart the ideological mechanism of this shift and its political consequences — to the extent that this reveals the dangers threatening any revolutionary organisation being built in an unfavourable context and in a still very complicated if not downright difficult international context. This must give pause for reflection to any other group or faction tempted by the same demons that have inspired the Australian SWP's revisionism. Such groups will see in the appalling evolution of this organisation the mirror image of their own fate if they do not stop in time.

### A key which opens no doors

Doug Lorimer's report to the SWP National Committee situates the main difference with the Fourth International around the refusal of the majority to recognise the centrality of the 'Third World countries' in the world revolutionary process, to accept what Lorimer calls the 'anti-imperialist

axis' of the *world class struggle*. This definition in itself confirms what we had predicted when a certain number of groups began to question the theory of the permanent revolution. Such questioning cannot stop at that phase. It has an immanent logic which challenges the Marxist programme in a series of its main tenets if not as a whole.

To justify what he calls the 'central anti-imperialist axis' of the world class struggle (the 'class struggle' and not even the world revolution!), Lorimer tries hard to base himself on the theory of the labour aristocracy which, due to colonial superprofits, is said to have become the main factor 'holding back and postponing the socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries'. Straightaway he commits an initial error in substituting the term 'labour bureaucracy' for that of 'labour aristocracy' used by Lenin. This identification of the two terms leads into a dead end. 'Colonial superprofits' by definition can only corrupt some working-class layers of the imperialist countries. The labour bureaucracy is a universal phenomenon. The bureaucracies of the Argentinian or Mexican trade unions are much more powerful than those of Australia or Canada. But neither Argentina nor Mexico are imperialist countries benefiting from colonial superprofits. As for the two richest and most powerful labour bureaucracies in the world, those of the USSR and the People's Republic of China — they monopolise the exercise of power in these workers' states, appropriating for themselves enormous material privileges on this basis. But no linguistic trickery can explain these material advantages, and the social and political conservatism based on them, out of any sort of 'colonial superprofits'.

The confusion between 'labour aristocracy' (2) and 'labour bureaucracy' is not accidental. The Australian SWP leadership is beginning to aban-

1. Doug Lorimer's report to the SWP National Committee is published under the title: 'The 12th World Congress of the Fourth International and the future of the SWP's international relations' in a pamphlet 'The Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International', Pathfinder Press (Australia), September 1985.

2. The term 'labour aristocracy' in the scientific sense, applies to any minority fraction of the proletariat which seeks to protect its wage differentials and advantageous working conditions using actions and measures directed against the majority of the working class: refusing access to the profession; xenophobic demagoguery and racism; refusing access to the trade unions; opposition to trade union centralisation and solidarity strikes etc.

It was especially strong in the nineteenth-century craft unions as well as in blatant cases like the white miners' unions today in South Africa. Sometimes it can be linked to the existence of colonial superprofits. But this is certainly not always the case.



May 1, 1974, Lisbon (DR)

don any analysis of the labour bureaucracy as a specific social layer having its own material interests — an analysis which really does not help when you want to 'insert yourself' into the post-Stalinist current.

The resort to 'colonial superprofits' and the consequent 'labour aristocracy' thesis is a false key for interpreting the real course of the world revolution since the First World War. In no way does it help us explain either the defeats or the victories. First of all it dodges a fact of capital importance: Tsarist Russia, where after all, the first victory of the socialist revolution took place, was not a 'Third World country' (if we take up Lorimer's terminology) at all. It would be difficult to contend that the Russian bourgeoisie in 1917 was weaker than the Chinese, Indian, Mexican or Turkish bourgeoisie. However, the Russian bourgeoisie was overthrown first. The fundamental objective cause clearly lies in the more favourable correlation of social forces in Russia, that is, the relative strength of the proletariat in relation to the relative weakness of the bourgeoisie.

Second, we have to note that some of the most serious defeats of the world revolution have taken place in semi-colonial countries with much weaker ruling classes than in Russia or for that matter in China. Just to give two recent examples: the defeat of the Indonesian revolution in 1965, which resulted in the massacre of nearly a million communists, workers, peasants, and young people, and the defeat of Chile in 1973, at these two countries, Indonesia and Chile, had among the strongest communist parties of the capitalist world. Nobody can argue that these defeats are the result of the corruption of the Indonesian and Chilean 'labour

aristocracies' by 'colonial superprofits'. When one turns to look at the decisive defeats of the world revolution in the imperialist countries, explaining them by concepts of the 'labour aristocracy' and 'colonial superprofits' becomes just as untenable in the light of even the most minimal concrete analysis.

The greatest chance of revolutionary victory — the longest, most relentless revolutionary struggle which involved the greatest number of proletarians — in an advanced capitalist country was the 1931-1937 Spanish revolution. Was defeat in the Spanish Civil War caused by 'colonial superprofits'? Which part of the Spanish working class had been 'corrupted' by these famous 'superprofits'?

of 1974-75. Was it defeated because of the 'colonial superprofits' that 'corrupted' the Portuguese working class? But the latter had miserable living standards, lower than those of an initially semi-colonial then semi-industrialised dependent country like Greece, to give just one example.

And the failure of the 1920 revolutionary upsurge in Italy, which could have changed the course of history, was this due to 'colonial superprofits'? Which ones? The defeat of the revolutionary crisis in Germany in 1923 took place at a time when the average wage in Germany was no longer enough for a worker to buy one suit a year. Did the revolution fail because of 'colonial superprofits'? Where from, in a Germany without colonies?

One might reply that the 'colonial superprofits' explain these defeats not directly but at least indirectly. So following this line of argument these superprofits led internationally (for Germany in the past) to the emergence of the reformist current inside the socialist movement. This current

then maintained its paralysing political influence even when its material roots had been cut off. This was extended politically (by influence and imitation) to countries where these roots were hardly present or non-existent. But even this more subtle line of reasoning does not address the real question.

Clearly the appearance of reformism inside the international workers' movement is explained in the last analysis by a complex interplay of objective, subjective, economic, social, institutional, ideological and historical causes. But when it comes to the real life unfolding of the class struggle and the development of a revolutionary perspective, we have to know what is the decisive link in this chain. We have to know that *despite* the existence of the imperialist system, *despite* the colonial superprofits it generates, *despite* the existence of labour bureaucracies and aristocracies, millions of wage-earners (in fact the majority of wage-earners) have periodically taken part in extra-parliamentary mass action in a whole series of imperialist countries. We should be aware that among these mass actions there were some of such scope as to create revolutionary crises that considerably paralysed the bourgeoisie's power and made the conquest of power by the proletariat objectively possible.

On these precise occasions what saved capitalism was certainly not its still great economic power or the presence of the labour aristocracy inside the proletariat, but the policy of the working class leaderships, that is the reformists' political refusal to overthrow the state apparatus, and the relative political and organisational weakness of revolutionary forces. The point is whether even in the given objective economic context the question *could* be resolved on the political level. In any case this was Lenin's and the Communist International's opinion with regard to the revolutionary crises of the 1918-1923 period. This was the opinion of Trotsky and the Fourth International concerning the revolutionary crises that have broken out since then. The 'labour aristocracy' argument basically states the contrary — the cause was economic and not political. Defeat was inevitable.

### A relapse into economic fatalism

This response constitutes a relapse into the economist fatalism of which Kautsky was the most eminent representative. The outcome of all



great class struggles are supposedly predetermined by objective 'relationships of forces', considered above all as economic. The subjective factor is removed from the analysis. Every defeat is written in the stars. The actions of the political leaderships of social classes, of parties and their leaders do not count at all. Alternatively — and this boils down to the same thing — their conduct is said to flow more or less automatically from economic conditions, in this case 'colonial superprofits'.

The fatalist character of this approach and the way it excuses the traditional leaderships stick out a mile. What underpins this vulgar economic determinism is a blind admiration for the accomplished fact: 'Everything that happened was inevitable and had to happen. Everything that did not happen could not happen'.

In the pre-congress debate of the last American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) conference, comrade May S explicitly reproached us for not being materialist because we were hoping for a repetition of victorious revolutions along the lines of the 'soviet model', which had been reproduced nowhere in the last half-century (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 40, No 1, June 1985). Following the same logic one might condemn as 'non-materialist' and 'utopian' the struggle for the formation of a mass labour party in the USA, which has been unsuccessful for fifty years; the struggle for the mass of the American workers to break politically with the two bourgeois parties, still unsuccessful after the efforts of three-quarters of a century; or the struggle to remove the hegemony of a bourgeois workers' party over the Australian working class, which has been going on for eighty years 'without success.'

The non-dialectical character of this line of reasoning is disturbing. It counterposes in an absolute way 'what is' to 'what is not' as two mechanically separated poles. The materialist dialectic on the other hand starts from what becomes, what is changing, what is growing. It analyses reality not as fixed ('there have been no revolutionary victories in the imperialist countries') but as subject to processes of transformation, tendencies of development. It registers the tendency for the periodic breaking out of deep pre-revolutionary and revolutionary crises in a whole series of imperialist countries since 1905: Russia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and on the borderline, even Great Britain in 1926. These crises are generally characterised by mass movements of colossal scope, mass strikes, political

general strikes and strikes with factory occupations, which shake bourgeois society to its very foundations. The bourgeois state is temporarily paralysed. Independently of their starting point and the proletariat's level of class consciousness these actions express the instinctive tendency of the proletariat to reorganise society on a socialist basis (to take a formulation used by Trotsky). To deny these tendencies one has to rewrite the whole history of the class struggle internationally in the last seventy years, from the Russian and German revolutions of 1917-18 to the tumultuous workers struggles in Italy between 1969 and 1976 and the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75.

It is true that the proletariat's political differentiation and the insufficient level of its class consciousness do have historic origins, among which figure economic factors, including 'colonial superprofits' where they really exist. The craft/skill privileges, which are often independent of 'colonial superprofits' cannot be ignored either. But this political differentiation is neither absolute nor permanent. It is open to the possibility (we would say inevitability) of re-composition, precisely during unbridled mass movements characteristic of revolutionary crises or explosions.

In the course of the 1918-23 revolutionary upsurge the majority of the organised German proletariat switched their allegiance in the space of less than two years first from the right-wing social democrats to the 'independents' (left social democracy) and then from left social democracy to the Communists. As a result of the June 1936 general strike the French Communist Party replaced the SFIO (social democracy) as the majority French working-class party in the space of less than a year. Spanish social democracy lost its hegemony over the organised workers' movement (that it had shared in Catalonia and in Aragon with the anarcho-syndicalists) in the 1934-37 period. We could give other examples. The dialectic of the subjective and the objective factors is a true dialectic and not a variant of vulgar and fatalistic economic determinism.

Does this mean to say that the still enormous forces and reserves of the imperialist bourgeoisie have no influence at all on the real development of the objectively revolutionary processes in these countries compared to those of the colonial, semi-colonial or semi-industrialised countries? It would be obviously absurd to support such an extreme thesis adopting mechanically the exact opposite of the 'determinism by colonial superprofits' argument. The problem is not to 'recognise' this 'influence' (that is the

ABC of Marxism), but to situate it correctly.

The strength and reserves of the imperialist bourgeoisie do not make it capable of avoiding the periodic breaking out of extremely serious revolutionary crises or of explosive mass struggles of such a scope that they objectively put on the agenda the possibility of a socialist revolution. To believe the contrary is to seriously underestimate the crisis affecting imperialism and capitalism in general since 1914. The strength and reserves of the imperialist bourgeoisie mean they are able to manoeuvre in a more subtle and determined way in relation to the masses than the weaker bourgeoisies facing analogous situations. It allows the imperialist bourgeoisie to 'recuperate', to 're-establish order' much more rapidly, if the movement reaches its peak without having conquered power.

Revolutionary crises have therefore been more short-lived in the imperialist countries than in the less developed world. In the imperialist and the dependent semi-industrialised countries a more experienced revolutionary leadership is needed to confront the manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie, to neutralise them and to politically paralyse its power and then to take advantage of this paralysis to seize power itself. Such a leadership must have an adequate long-term strategy, be ready to make extremely sharp turns and be able to unify immense proletarian masses. In other words it has to have gone beyond the stage of revolutionary pragmatism which can suffice in certain under-developed countries to seize victory, given precisely the weakness and extreme decomposition of the ruling classes, as well as the long period of the crisis.

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## The strategy of the transitional programme

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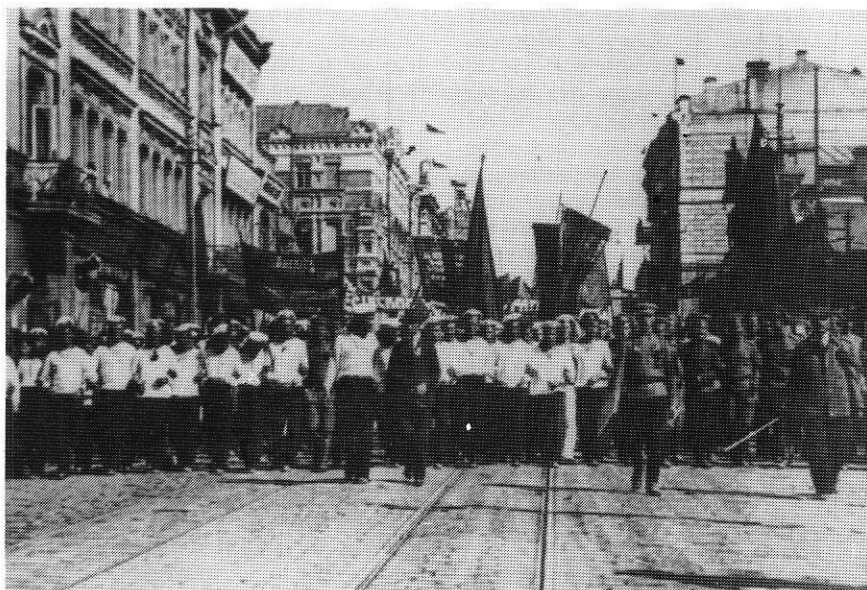
In a roundabout way our analysis of the strength and reserves of the imperialist bourgeoisie has brought us back to the heart of the debate: the key role of the 'subjective factor', of the revolutionary leadership and of political class consciousness for revolutionary victory; and the key responsibility of the traditional leaderships (of the labour bureaucracy) for the defeats of revolutionary upsurges. 'The crisis of humanity is the crisis of revolutionary leadership'.

Doug Lorimer asks the question: 'Where are the best objective conditions for revolution found, in the

Third World countries or the imperialist countries?' Apart from the fact that in the course of the last ten years there has only been one victorious socialist revolution in a Third World country, Nicaragua (if one leaves aside the tragic Grenadan episode) it is the sort of question you would expect to hear from an observer, a commentator, not from a revolutionary Marxist who understands the seriousness of the overall crisis of capitalism. It replaces the task of working out and progressively applying an adequate revolutionary strategy with the speculation of someone who gambles in a lottery: what will be the next winning number? In 1962 it might have seemed that the 'best objective conditions' for the revolution existed in Algeria and not in France. However in May 1968 France was closer to a socialist revolution than Algeria had ever been.

What is so serious about such an approach is that it disorientates the practice of revolutionary Marxists in the imperialist and dependent semi-industrialised countries, indeed also in the bureaucratised workers' states. It makes their tasks depend on speculation about 'probability' or 'improbability' of explosions or even short-term revolutionary victories, instead of making them dependent on the imperatives of intervention in the mass struggles actually underway, determined by real social contradictions.

Those who start from the hypothesis that explosive mass struggles with revolutionary potential are impossible in the imperialist countries, at least in the foreseeable future, will limit their interventions in the present struggles to supporting immediate demands and traditional forms of organisation, rounded out at the most with general propaganda for socialism and agitation for solidarity with revolutions in other parts of the world. But when the mass movement itself periodically goes beyond the level of 'economic strikes plus elections' — which is inevitable, given the structural crisis sweeping the societies of the imperialist countries — this purely routinist practice will have prepared neither the masses, nor the broad workers' vanguard nor even the members and cadres of the revolutionary organisation itself, for the new tasks arising out of the sharp turns in the class struggle. So people with such routinist practice become themselves a supplementary factor preventing the victory of the socialist revolution, for the same fundamental reason as the one underlying reformism from the beginning: because they believe that this revolution is not possible (at least not in the foreseeable future). On most occasions



Demonstration in Vladivostok, 1917 (DR)

they will convince themselves in any case that ten million workers on strike and occupying the factories as in May 1968 in France only 'really' wanted wage increases and decent elections and it was therefore necessary to limit the dynamic of the movement to these 'realistic' objectives. The proof of their argument? 'There was no revolutionary victory'! It is obvious that with this line of reasoning any political basis for criticising the Communist Party or Socialist Party brand of reformism evaporates, and at the same time any political foundation for building a broader-based revolutionary party at these times disappears.

On the other hand all those who start from an understanding of the seriousness of the historical crisis of capitalism and of bourgeois society, and who understand, with Trotsky, that the revolutionary nature of the period does not lie in the imminence of revolution everywhere and at all times, but in the inevitability of sharp and radical turns in the 'objective conditions', (3) will apply the strategy of the transitional programme. They will intervene in all mass struggles, starting from supporting the immediate demands of these struggles — on economic, democratic questions, however limited — but without limiting themselves to this support. They try to combine this support with the defence of transitional demands and propaganda in favour of forms of mass self-organisation (and if possible the initial carrying out of such self-organisation). The latter will provide the masses with a practical apprenticeship preparing them for new tasks that will arise when bigger explosions take place. This combination of immediate and transitional objectives for the mass struggles is crowned by the defence of an overall political line and a political project

for a government capable of satisfying the basic concerns of working people.

But in order to be able to defend such an approach with conviction and coherence in ideological debate, one obviously has to be convinced that explosions of mass struggle putting the question of power on the agenda are sooner or later inevitable:

'The strategic task of the next period — a pre-revolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organisation — consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the

3. 'The revolutionary character of the epoch does not lie in that it permits of the accomplishment of the revolution, that is, the seizure of power at every given moment. Its revolutionary character consists in profound and sharp fluctuations and abrupt and frequent transitions from an immediately revolutionary situation, in other words, such as enables the communist party to strive for power, to a victory of the Fascist or semi-Fascist counter-revolution, and from the latter to a provisional regime of the golden mean (the 'Left bloc'), the inclusion of the social democracy into the coalition, the passage of power to the party of MacDonald, and so forth), immediately thereafter to force the antagonisms to a head again and acutely raise the question of power.' (Trotsky in "The Third International after Lenin," p 62 New Park)



proletariat'. (*Transitional Programme*, pp 14-15, New Park edition.)

Our revisionists abandon all that in the name of *realpolitik*. In other words they return to the old social-democratic combination of the minimum programme and abstract propaganda for socialism (or, minimum programme plus solidarity with the 'socialist camp'). The very idea of revolutionary strategy is abandoned, at least for the imperialist countries and for the bureaucratised workers' states (in reality not only for those either). For as Trotsky made clear:

'The conception of revolutionary strategy took root only in the post-war years, and in the beginning undoubtedly under the influence of military terminology. But it did not by any means take root accidentally. Prior to the war we spoke only of the tactics of the proletarian party; this conception conformed adequately enough to the then prevailing trade-union, parliamentary methods which did not transcend the limits of the day-to-day demands and tasks. By the conception of tactics is understood the system of measures that serves a single current task or a single branch of the class struggle. Revolutionary strategy on the contrary embraces a combined system of actions which by their association, consistency, and growth must lead the proletariat to the conquest of power.' (*The 3rd International After Lenin*, p 57, New Park, London, 1974).

## The unity and dialectic of the three sectors of the world revolution

The line of the 'central anti-imperialist axis' of the world revolution so dear to Lorimer is squarely opposed to the line of the unity and dialectical interaction of the three sectors of the world revolution, which was the basis of the documents adopted by the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International in 1963.

On first sight, this does not seem evident. In the resolution for its 1984 congress the Australian SWP still based itself on a quote from Lenin that explicitly included the struggle of the proletariat of the imperialist countries against its own bourgeoisie as an integral part of the anti-imperialist struggle; it was even put in the front line of that struggle.

But it is clear that Jim Percy [a central leader of the Australian SWP] and Lorimer are no longer using the formulation of the 'anti-imperialist axis of the world revolution' in this traditional Leninist sense. Otherwise

Lorimer would not be able to reproach the Fourth International for 'downplaying' the 'central character of the revolution for national liberation' within the world revolution. 'The anti-imperialist axis of the world revolution' becomes in practice the 'axis of the Third World struggles'. This concept is wrong. Far from being more radically 'anti-imperialist' than the Fourth International it results politically in the acceptance of coexistence (albeit conflictual and non-peaceful) with imperialism.

The basis of imperialism, in the Leninist conception of the term, is not the exploitation of the Third World. That is an important element, but only one element. The basis of imperialism is the capitalism of the monopolies, the trusts and monopoly finance capital of the imperialist countries and the enormous economic and military power it produces. This is the power which permits the export of capital, the control of the world market and the subjection of the semi-colonial and dependent countries. Nobody can challenge the fact that the latter reinforce in turn the riches and power of the imperialist bourgeoisies. But that does not change the fact that the basis of imperialist power, the big monopoly trusts, finance capital and their armies is located in the imperialist centres and not in the semi-colonial countries.

It follows that imperialism can only be definitively overthrown in these centres and by the proletariat of these centres. The masses of the Third World can weaken it but not overthrow it. This merging of the struggles of the proletariat of the imperialist centres with those of the Third World masses is indispensable for the final defeat of imperialism. What lies behind the idea of the 'Third World axis' of the world revolution, indeed of the international class struggle, is the belief that imperialism cannot be overthrown for a long period. Only its weakening would be on the agenda.

Percy and Lorimer worsen their case when they base their claimed 'primacy' of national liberation struggles over struggles by workers in the imperialist countries on the fact that the former are supposedly, at least potentially, offensive struggles for power, whereas workers' struggles in the imperialist countries are said to be for the moment purely defensive. (4) Let us not waste too much time on the schematic character of this distinction. How many times has the class struggle gone in the space of a few months, sometimes a few weeks, from the offensive to the defensive and from the defensive to the offensive. The main weakness

of this conception of 'primacy' and 'priorities' is that it takes up the different sectors of the world revolution, the various continents, distinct countries like pieces neatly separated in a jigsaw puzzle, each having its form and shape established once and for all (or at least for a long period).

Reality is quite different. The capitalist world forms an organic whole whose components are constantly modified by internal contradictions and the main economic, political and military global repercussions of the periodic explosions caused by these internal contradictions. Thus a purely defensive struggle like the one against the rise of fascism in Germany between 1930 and 1933 was more important for the fate of the world revolution than the offensive struggle going on at the same time in Indo-China, Indonesia and Outer Mongolia (crowned, incidentally, by success in the latter country). Trotsky was 100 per cent right to say that the 'key to the world situation was in Germany' in that period, despite the defensive character of the class struggle in that country. A victory of the German counter-revolution would change the relationship of forces on a world scale much more significantly than the victory of the revolution in several semi-colonial and colonial countries.

The July 1984 Australian SWP resolution correctly stated that the longer the capitalist crisis lasts, the more rearmament and war (and not just war against the unfolding revolutions in the Third World) would become increasingly the 'solution' emerging from the very nature of imperialism. But in the path of this march towards a third world war (war-suicide of human civilisation, if not of humanity itself) stands a formidable obstacle: the power of the international working class and of all its allies in the so-called Third World countries. The anti-war movement is also such an ally.

The imperialist bourgeoisie would have to carry out radical changes in the political climate, in the form of government and the political personnel of its main imperialist centres in order to overcome that resistance against the utter madness of a world war. This would above all require a radical change in the relationship of forces between the classes in these countries, a change not so different from the change in the relationship of forces

4. In 1927 the only important country in the world where there was the immediate possibility of a revolutionary seizure of power was China — the most populous country in the world. However the communists who were most passionately in favour of such a move, the International Left Opposition led by Trotsky, never mentioned a 'Chinese axis' of the world revolution, let alone an 'anti-imperialist axis'.

signified by Hitler's arrival in power in Germany in 1933 (even if the form of this change can be different from the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in the classical sense of the term).

But for anyone who knows and understands the links that exist between the strength of the workers' movement, the fighting potential of the working class and the relative solidity of democratic rights in bourgeois society, it is clear that a lasting and serious defeat of the defensive struggles presently underway in the imperialist countries would strike a mortal blow against the potential of the anti-war struggle. The *principal* obstacle to a third world war and to the crushing of the struggle in many semi-colonial countries would be eliminated.

The gravest illusion would be to believe that an increasingly broad and bold anti-war movement, with a more and more effective impact and political success could develop alongside a qualitative weakening of the working class in the main imperialist countries. Just as during the 1930s, each decisive defeat in the defensive struggles of the Western proletariat would mark a decisive step toward war. Each important workers' victory (even of a 'purely defensive' kind) in the West would paralyse at least temporarily imperialism's march to war, including 'partial wars' against the revolution in one or several countries of the so-called Third World.

All this scholastic argument over what is 'more important' or 'less important' must in any case be rejected out of hand. The Marxist approach to the problem is presented in Lenin's quote used in the SWP July 1984 congress resolution on *the community of interests of the Western proletariat, the proletariat and semi-proletarian masses of the Third World and, we can add today, the proletariat of the bureaucratised workers' states*. The unity of the world revolution only has its materialist basis in this community of interests.

The most consistent opponents of the Marxist idea of the world socialist revolution as an indissociable unity between the three sectors of the revolution, explicitly reject this community of interests. They claim the Western proletariat has a 'corrupted' character. Our revisionists still do not go so far although the extensive and excessive way in which they use the concept of 'labour aristocracy' leads them dangerously close to this position.

But if we accept the fundamental identity of workers' interests throughout the world then we must apply the method of the transitional programme in the three sectors of the world revolution: this means in all

countries, starting from the immediate concerns of the workers and their real demands as long as these are capable of setting in motion broad mobilisations and mass struggles — independently of any scholastic distinction between 'politics' and 'economics' or 'the offensive' and 'the defensive'. In each case we assess absolutely objectively the real repercussions of these struggles on the international class struggle.

Furthermore we must reject as quite outrageous any idea of *subordinating* the actual demands and struggles of the proletariat in any country to the allegedly 'higher requirements' of the 'anti-imperialist struggle', interpreted to mean the struggle against imperialist domination solely over the Third World countries. In fact the Australian SWP leaders already openly propose this subordination for the workers of the bureaucratised workers' states. If we call on the latter to accept the 'anti-imperialist axis' of the world revolution it means refusing them the right to go into their present struggles on the basis of their immediate demands and concerns. Anyway such an approach is totally utopian. The Polish, Hungarian, Czech (and in the future the Soviet and Chinese) workers will not ask Percy or Lorimer for advice about the immediate objectives of their struggles — whether these struggles should be focused against the bureaucratic dictatorship or centre on 'anti-imperialist solidarity'. Nobody has the right to tell them that, any more than Lech Walesa or Charter 77 have the right to demand that the Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Palestinian or South African workers subordinate their immediate struggle against imperialism and its local allies to some sort of 'priority' for the anti-bureaucratic struggle in Eastern Europe.

At the same time of course it is a profoundly reactionary utopia. *For it implies that the political revolution must be delayed until after the fall of, or at least the decisive weakening of, imperialism in the rest of the world.* This idea is just as reactionary as the notion that the oppressed peoples of the Third World should wait for the overthrow of imperialism before their struggle for national liberation can be really started with any chance of success.

Our concept of the unity of the three sectors of the world revolution is founded on the possibility and the right of workers of *all* countries to struggle not only for their immediate demands (reforms) but also for the winning and exercise of power (revolution), independently of the 'world situation as a whole', which may be assessed as 'unfavourable' for a struggle in such and such a sector.

When the working masses are ready to go into a generalised confrontation with the government and state, then they have the perfect right to do so. By acting in this way they modify in turn the world situation in favour of revolution and against counter-revolution. Indeed this is the only way of basically changing the relationship of forces in that direction.

We do not see any contradiction, in the present world situation, between supporting and encouraging the workers of the bureaucratised workers' states to overthrow, through mass revolutionary action, the bureaucracy's dictatorship and the necessities of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle in the rest of the world. We are deeply convinced that independently of the ideological confusion that may exist among these workers — which is the product of Stalinism and can only be overcome through the practical experience gained from mass actions — they will not in action move to support the re-establishment of capitalism on a world scale. We are even more convinced that any practical progress of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution in East Europe or the USSR, any initial establishment of workers' self-management regimes in the economy and society and of workers' self-administration in the state, will spur on tremendously the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle in all the capitalist countries where the proletariat already constitutes a majority of the fighters. The concrete experience of the 'Prague Spring' in 1968 and Solidarnosc in 1980-81 confirms this analysis.

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### Reasons for and the dynamic of solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World

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Our 'worldwide' and non-'third worldist' concept of the revolution is not at all counterposed to solidarity work with the masses of the semi-colonial and dependent countries that are today in the front line of the struggle against imperialism. It is a key task for revolutionaries throughout the world, particularly in the imperialist strongholds. Furthermore experience proves that the Fourth International needs no lessons from anyone on this.

The difference between our idea of solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles in the semi-colonial and dependent countries and the thinking of those caught up in the logic of 'third worldism' is the following. Revisionists have a tendency to justify the import-





VI Lenin (DR)

ance of the solidarity movement for basically moral reasons: Third World revolutionaries are the only ones who fight in practice in a revolutionary way against imperialism. Therefore it is a duty of revolutionaries throughout the whole world to give them their support as a priority over any other concern. In addition these revolutionaries are the only ones able to take power in a foreseeable future. So this justifies even more the priority given to supporting their struggle — irrespective of the country where you are politically active.

The first of the motives outlined above is honourable and we share this position to a large extent. But it is insufficient for inspiring effective and long-term solidarity action. If this is combined with the second justification given above, within the framework of a false, 'immediatist' and impressionist vision of the real process of world revolution, one is likely to run into a dead end. It is ineffective even from the point of view of carrying out practical solidarity work.

Solidarity with the victims of imperialist super-exploitation and oppression, who are beginning to resist this barbarism, is a duty for revolutionaries of all countries irrespective of knowing whether this resistance has a chance of leading to a revolutionary victory in the short or medium term.

Today the South African and Palestinian masses are the most oppressed and persecuted peoples in the world — oppression carried out by imperialism and its regional 'relaying stations', the apartheid regime and the Zionist state.

Given the military might of these two states, it is not at all certain that these masses have a prospect of revolutionary victory in the short or medium term. But far from devaluing their heroic struggle, such an analysis only increases our duty to build solidarity with them. Even if we were to consider their struggle as 'purely defensive' (a formulation as meaningless as similar formulations with respect to other sections of the world proletariat and its allies) this duty would remain as imperative as ever. We can even say it would become even more necessary — just as was solidarity with the Chilean masses in 1973 or with the victims of the Argentinian dictatorship in 1976.

The motives inspiring our solidarity are fundamentally political, that is, internationalist in the social sense of the term. To paraphrase Marx: we are convinced that any people that tolerates the oppression of another will never accomplish its own liberation. This applies to all countries of the world without exception. We are convinced that without an ongoing, unrelenting struggle against nationalist, chauvinist, racist and xenophobic poison (and crowning that struggle with growing political success), the proletarian revolution will be a thousand times more difficult in any country of the world. We are also convinced that the practice of class collaboration, of 'solidarity with one's own bourgeoisie', is one of the main subjective obstacles blocking the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries (and also to a growing extent in the semi-industrialised dependent countries). Such

collaboration will only be successfully eliminated if it is replaced by *the solidarity of all workers against the bosses*, irrespective of their nationality, race, ethnic origins etc.

As we know, the class consciousness of the masses comes from experience of action more than from propaganda, reading, meetings, education etc. The most effective way of fostering internationalist consciousness is to get involved in internationalist actions. International solidarity action, because of its continuity, is obviously especially important. For the same reason we try our best to encourage the involvement of the organised workers' movement, particularly the trade unions, in these solidarity movements.

So for us internationalist duty is not a task separate and apart from world revolutionary strategy, including in the imperialist countries, although it can take on particular forms and conjunctural importance at such and such a time in the national and international class struggle. It is an integral part of the overall strategy. To give it up or even to underestimate it is not just morally objectionable. It deals a mortal blow to the long-term preparation of consistent *revolutionary* class struggle *in each country*, beginning with the imperialist countries themselves.

But such an essentially political notion of proletarian internationalism, of the necessary solidarity of the workers and oppressed on a world scale, only has a coherent basis if it is based in a materialist way on *the community of interests of the workers of all countries*. We can see immediately how any rigid idea of 'labour aristocracy fostered by colonial super-profits' becomes erected into a serious obstacle for permanent solidarity work with the struggle of the masses in the semi-colonial and dependent countries.

You cannot have it both ways. *Either* the famous 'labour aristocracy' only represents a small minority which can be effectively neutralised by political action: struggle for the united front, fight for trade-union democracy, increasingly advanced forms of mass strikes and more and more advanced forms of mass self-organisation. In this case it does not form an obstacle to an extension of anti-imperialist solidarity inside the working class, providing the revolutionary vanguard carries out its tasks and does not commit sectarian errors. But in this case, this 'aristocracy' can in no way explain the reformists' persistent influence over the broad masses.

Or the 'labour aristocracy' represents the basis of the mass influence of reformism in the imperialist countries. But this 'labour aristocracy' has material interests opposed to the less well-paid workers — beginning

with those in the Third World. So those able to become involved in long-lasting solidarity action with these workers and oppressed masses of the Third World will be limited to a small minority motivated essentially by moral considerations in opposition to its own material interests. Through the false notion of 'colonial superprofits as explanation of reformism, class collaboration and mass nationalism in the imperialist countries', the third worldists put themselves union bureaucrats and the Stalinist and social-democratic politicians, even if they do so with quite different political conclusions and with the best intentions in the world (but as everybody knows, the way to hell is often paved with the best intentions).

Both assert that the 'overpaid' workers of the imperialist countries have no interest in solidarity with the freedom struggles of Third World peoples. They would also have an interest in recommending the expulsion of immigrant workers in times of crisis. They would have an interest in opposing the industrialisation of the Third World and forming a 'protectionist bloc' with their own bosses. Percy and Lorimer obviously do not go so far in their line of reasoning. But the third-worldist logic is likely to drag them in that direction. On the other hand our logic contends that the working masses of the imperialist countries do not have those interests at all. Thus they can be won over to the broadest and most systematic internationalist solidarity.

## The strategy of Permanent Revolution

The Australian SWP, following the example of the SWP of the United States, had begun to revise the revolutionary Marxist programme by attacking the strategy of the permanent revolution. Developed forms of this revision can be found in the July 1984 congress resolution of the Australian organisation. We find this again in Lorimer's report to the August 1985 National Committee.

The July 1984 congress resolution is greatly confused on this. On the one hand it takes up again the proto-Stalinist (Zinovievist, Bukarinist), Stalinist and post-Stalinist formulations of 'revolution by stages': first a 'national-democratic revolution' and then 'a socialist revolution characterised by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie'. The authors of the resolution think they are polemicising with Trotsky. But in reality they are polemicising only with Trotsky's positions as



*Boumedienne and Castro meet in El Hadjar, 1972 (DR)*

caricatured by the first leaders of the Soviet bureaucracy (unfortunately such caricatures were occasionally taken up and used by dogmatic and sectarian representatives of 'Trotskyism' — like the Australian SWP used to be years ago!).

Trotsky or the Fourth International have never put forward the idea that the permanent revolution means that in the underdeveloped countries or even in the imperialist countries the task of eliminating all private ownership of the big means of production is posed from the first day of the seizure of power as the immediate or even the main task. The very term 'permanent revolution' would have no sense at all if this were the case. You would be talking about instantaneous and identical proletarian revolution in the imperialist and Third World countries. (5)

The specificity of the permanent revolution strategy is above all the fact that the solution of the classical tasks of the national-democratic revolution — solution of the agrarian question, solution of the national question, solution of the question of modernisation as a whole — requires the *conquest of power by the proletariat* supported by the poor peasantry. In other words it requires the dictatorship of the proletariat, the establishment of a workers' state. If we reject the idea of 'revolution by stages' it is not because we deny in any way the primacy of national-democratic tasks at the beginning of the process of permanent revolution. Rather it is because we deny categorically the possibility of accomplishing these national-democratic tasks under other forms of government and state power

than those of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no 'national-democratic stage' of the revolution during which the national-democratic tasks can be resolved without the proletariat holding state power. But due to the relentless logic of the class struggle itself, the proletariat cannot exercise state power without the beginnings of a growing over of the revolution towards the solution of socialist tasks. That is the second particularity of this strategy. It is in this sense that the revolution is 'permanent': there is no interruption of continuity (in other words there is no possibility of an interlude of a state other than a workers' state) in moving from the solution of national-democratic tasks to the solution of the socialist tasks of the revolution. Obviously the first comes before the second but not in an absolute and total sense and without postponing to a 'second stage' even the beginnings of socialist measures. The concrete course of the class struggle and the real social and political relationship of forces determine the pace, the forms and the limits of this growing-over process.

The Australian SWP July 1984 congress resolution introduces a confusion by avoiding being precise

5. The second thesis of "What is the Permanent Revolution" (Trotsky, 1929) makes it crystal clear:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses" ("Permanent Revolution", p. 152, New Park edition.)



about the nature of the state that has to carry out the national-democratic tasks in the imperialist epoch in the underdeveloped countries. It avoids making clear whether the destruction of the bourgeois state, of the bourgeois army, of the ruling classes' political governing apparatus and the arming of the workers and poor peasants, the creation of a new state, are preconditions for the accomplishment of these national-democratic tasks.

An historical and empirical rather than a scholastic approach to the question enables us to come to a rapid conclusion. In Russia, Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua it was necessary to destroy the bourgeoisie's state and army, and the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat had to be created in order to carry out the national-democratic tasks of the revolution. The strategy of permanent revolution was confirmed 100 per cent in all these revolutions. In all those cases where opportunist leaders of the revolutionary process had wanted to insert a 'national-democratic stage' (from the point of view of the government and state power) it resulted in any often bloody defeat and the victory of the counter-revolution.

The 'workers and peasants' government' concept does not provide a solution to this question. True, it can be used as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it can also be used as a synonym for a government that still functions within the framework of a bourgeois state.

In the first case we find no difference with Trotsky's traditional position on the permanent revolution. In the second case there is a fundamental difference with this theory, a relapse into Menshevik-type positions insofar as one puts forward the idea that all tasks of the national-democratic revolution can be resolved without the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus.

The formulation used by the Australian SWP, according to which the alliance with the 'national' bourgeoisie is said to be a tactical problem while the alliance with the peasantry is 'strategic' and long-lasting, once again dodges the real problem. The strategic question is always the question of power. The real question is therefore what is the strategic implication — the implications in the domain of the state and government of the various alliance tactics.

The whole history of the twentieth century confirms that tactical alliances that confine the proletariat and its party(ies) within the limits of the bourgeois state lead to the victory of the counter-revolution. The worker-peasant alliance, which is absolutely

indispensable in countries where the peasantry still forms the majority or a significant minority of the toiling masses, can only lead to the victory of the revolution if it is achieved under the leadership of the proletariat and in the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *whatever the stage of the revolution* in terms of the tasks to be accomplished as a priority.

The task of national liberation was only accomplished by the Vietnamese revolution through the creation of a workers' state. Since the Algerian revolution did not result in the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat the problem of national independence is not totally resolved.

Lorimer asks the question: 'Do you think a qualitative change in the class nature of the Algerian state under Ben Bella was necessary for it to become a full and complete dictatorship of the proletariat?' (*SWP Discussion Bulletin No. 9*, December 1984). The rhetorical question ends with an analogy with Nicaragua.

But that is precisely the point! Boumedienne's army carried out the counter-revolutionary coup against Ben Bella. As far as we know, the Sandinista army is not and will not be an instrument for any sort of counter-revolution in Nicaragua. At the end of the road, if one replaces the theory of permanent revolution with the theory of 'revolution by stages', one confuses a potentially counter-revolutionary army with a revolutionary army, or one thinks that the same army can indifferently play these two historical roles successively!

The unfortunate Aidit [president of Indonesian Communist Party shot by counter-revolutionaries in 1965] thought the same thing about the Indonesian army (the formulation incidentally comes from Mao Tse-Tung who however was very careful not to apply it in practice with respect to Chiang Kai-Chek's army).

Lorimer has still not understood twenty years after the event that there was no destruction of the bourgeois army in Algeria and therefore no initial dictatorship of the proletariat — whereas in Nicaragua there was clearly destruction of this army. This shows quite clearly how much he has become a victim of theoretical regression.

The formulation of the 'workers and peasants' government' or even more so of 'government of two classes' exercising power with equal rights, resolves nothing because as Lenin made clear in 1921 (Trotsky had stated this historical truth as early as 1905-6):

'We know from our own experience — and revolutions all over the world confirm this if we take the modern

epoch of, say, 150 years — that the result has always been the same everywhere: the petty bourgeoisie in general and peasants in particular, have failed in all their attempts to realise their strength and to direct economics and politics in their own way. They have had to follow the leadership either of the proletariat or the capitalists — there is no middle way open to them.' (VI Lenin, Speech to Congress of Transport Workers, March 27 1921, pp 277-78, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32).

Brushing aside Lenin's teachings, our 'visionaries' of today continue to hold sway more than sixty years later, adding wild imaginings about the 'peasant components' of 'workers and peasants' governments' that are supposed to have been clearly present in the victorious revolutions of the twentieth century. But they are incapable of responding to the simple question we put to them: so where were these famous 'peasant ministers' or 'peasant components' in the government that came to power after the Russian October revolution, in the post-December 1945 Yugoslav government, in the post-November 1949 Chinese government, in the Hanoi government after the Geneva agreements, in the Castro government in Cuba, in the Vietnamese government after the fusion between North and South or in the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua? It is quite clear we are dealing with a pure and simple mystification of reality.

This theoretical regression contrasts with the good sense of Fidel Castro who, despite his pragmatism, does not hesitate to affirm a few general theoretical truths that are precisely the ones the Australian SWP now rejects:

'But the peasantry is a class which, because of the uncultured state in which it is kept and the isolation in which it lives, needs the revolutionary and political leadership of the working class and the revolutionary intellectuals, for without them it would not by itself be able to plunge into the struggle and achieve victory' (*The Second Declaration of Havana*, p 20 Pathfinder Press, New York, 1979).

'In Chile ... a socialist revolution will be necessary, and I have explained why. As an under-developed country, crushed by debt, where broad masses of the population live in the worst conditions, blows must be struck against the interests of the imperialists, the oligarchy, *big industry*, the import-export trade and of the *banks*, if one wants to get somewhere, if one wants to give something to the peasant and worker masses of the country.

'To be able to carry out the struggle against the oligarchy and against

imperialism, the support of the peasant and worker masses must be won against imperialism ... *And the worker and peasant masses do not give support to any sort of bourgeois revolution*, because the workers and peasants will not be prepared to collaborate in the interests of an exploiting class.' (*Granma*, March 20, 1966, our translation and emphasis).

Is it not a little sad that these formulations of Fidel, which reflect the real experience of *all* the revolutions of the twentieth century, are practically identical to those of 'orthodox Trotskyism' ... while the ex-Trotskyists of the Australian SWP, on the pretext of 'getting closer to Fidel', are proclaiming these fundamental theses of the permanent revolution to be false?

Lorimer's report to the Australian SWP's August 1985 National Committee pushes the confusion even further. On the one hand, in the footsteps of proto-Stalinist, Stalinist and post-Stalinist falsifiers, he now explicitly attributes to Trotsky and the Fourth International the idea of a *simultaneous* accomplishment of all the national-democratic and all the socialist tasks of the revolution — in other words the absurd idea according to which it is necessary to totally expropriate the bourgeoisie the day after the seizure of power. Needless to say, you will not find a word in the basic writings of Trotsky (*Results and Prospects, The Permanent Revolution, Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution*) or in the programmatic documents of the International Left Opposition and the Fourth International to prop up such a thesis. The only thing that Trotsky and revolutionary Marxists have always asserted is that while having taken power to carry out in the immediate period the national-democratic tasks of the revolution and some political tasks like the peace in 1917, the proletariat could not rebuild a capitalist economy, could not sacrifice its own class interests and could not hold off the taking of *certain* socialist measures to a later stage. (6) Measures of workers' control were taken by the Bolshevik government as early as November 1917. Are these 'national-democratic' or 'socialist tasks'? Not to see the difference between this position and a call for the immediate and simultaneous expropriation of the whole bourgeoisie is only possible for people who are being dishonest.

But apart from this obvious falsification there is a deepening revision of the programme. For Lorimer is now openly talking about the difference between the 'character of the regime' in the two 'stages'. The content of his 'stagism' is revealed when he refers to the tactical problem of the

*Frente Amplio* in Uruguay [see *International Viewpoint*, No 68, January 28, 1985]. While temporary tactical agreements of the *Frente Amplio* type are certainly possible an *inter-class government* is a trap into which only unrepentant opportunists, after so many defeats, can still lead the proletariat and the poor peasants. An inter-class state is obvious nonsense. It has never existed and never will exist.

The question the Australian SWP leaders must answer is whether a *Frente Amplio* government or a government of the same type, is able to accomplish tasks of the 'national-democratic stage' of the revolution, if 'class alliances' must result in governments of this type. For us, historical experience has answered once and for all 'no' to this question.

Some people are ironical about our assertion that the correctness of the theory of permanent revolution has been confirmed by the victory of the Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions as well as by the defeats of the Bolivian, Chilean, Algerian, Egyptian, or Iranian revolutions. 'How can you say your ideas are triumphing when it is others who take power?' they say.

The irony is totally misplaced. It reflects a misunderstanding of the stakes involved in the dilemma. The stakes are in the first place strategic and not organisational. The mass movement in the underdeveloped countries has been, is, and will remain confronted with a clear alternative: either carry the revolution forward to the dictatorship of the proletariat or stop at an intermediate stage. Our movement has proclaimed for sixty years that in the first case you are talking about victory and in the second, inevitable defeat. Events have confirmed the correctness of this forecast. Is it a mistake to emphasise it?

Marx and the Marxists declared as early as 1848, that the proletarians of all countries had a very clear choice — either form class-struggle trade unions and independent political parties, or be constantly duped by the big capitalists. History has proved them right. Should we keep silent on this on the pretext that the class-struggle trade unions and independent political parties in many countries were formed by non-Marxists?

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### The opposing social forces on a world scale

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The wrong strategic ideas of the Australian SWP are based on a false

vision of world reality. This is summarised in the following formulation taken from the 1984 SWP congress resolution:

'In the present period, the colonial revolution remains the most dynamic sector of the world revolution. The underdeveloped countries, which include the overwhelming majority of humanity, are the area in which the contradictions of the imperialist system are sharpest and capitalism's exploitation is most intense and unbearable' (*The Struggle for Socialism in the Imperialist Epoch*, p 43, 1984).

It is certainly true that capitalist exploitation is most intense and unbearable in the *capitalist* underdeveloped countries. But it is not true that it is most intense and unbearable in the countries defined as underdeveloped. Otherwise, what is the significance of the victorious socialist revolution in countries like China, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua?

If we subtract these countries, and above all China, from countries where the objective remains the colonial revolution, as you obviously have to, then the underdeveloped *capitalist* countries do not represent the 'overwhelming majority of humanity'. They do not even represent the majority.

But even this type of estimation does not have a lot of significance in concrete social and political terms. What the Australian SWP leadership wants to really get over when they use the term 'colonial revolution' in the same way as it is used by third-worldist ideologues is that the revolution is *dominated by social forces other than the proletariat*, and characterised by forms of organisation and struggle different from those of the Russian revolution.

This vision of the coming revolution in a certain number of underdeveloped countries is thoroughly false. It does not take into account a key fact: the semi-industrialisation these countries have gone through during the last decades, with the consequence that the proletariat today has a much greater weight in society as a whole than it had in China, Indochina, Cuba, Nicaragua or even in Yugoslavia at the time when these countries went through the decisive phase of their revolutions.

True we are talking about a small number of countries. The big majority of underdeveloped countries remain predominantly agricultural with a preponderantly peasant and 'marginal'

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6. Percy and Lorimer have now discovered that the number of wage workers in the private sector had increased from 1 to 1.5 million in China from 1950 to 1953, (*'SWP Discussion Bulletin'*, No. 7, November 1984). That was less than 1% of the population.





*Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. (DR)*

population. But this majority *in terms of countries* involves a minority (which furthermore is shrinking) of the world population. This minority is declining particularly in terms of *impact in world economy and politics*. The countries going through a process of semi-industrialisation are among the biggest underdeveloped countries: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, South Korea, South Africa, partially India and some others.

In all these countries, the proportion of the proletariat in the population — that is the urban and rural wage earners (and this is the only correct Marxist definition of the proletariat) — is today greater than in Russia during the 1917 revolution. (Even in China, 35 per cent of the active population are today wage earners, a higher percentage than that of Russia in 1917. The same thing applies to India).

In most of these countries, notably the three main Latin American countries, South Korea, South Africa, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, the proletariat already constitutes the absolute majority of the active population. And that has a key consequence for the world revolution. It is only today that Marx's prediction has been fulfilled — that the proletariat would represent the absolute majority of producers on a world scale, which was far from the reality of 1871, 1917 or even 1950. Today there are about one thousand million wage earners in the world with roughly the following distribution internationally: 140 million in capitalist Europe, 120 million in North America, 130 million in the USSR, 130 million in China, 120 million in India, 180 million in the other dependent semi-industrialised countries, 50 million in Eastern Europe, 50 million in Japan and the rest in other countries. (7)

A strategy for world revolution must include this overall analysis of the opposing social forces and their social-political dynamic. This has

nothing to do with a 'Eurocentric' or 'workerist' (in the narrow sense of the term) outlook. Lorimer's report incidentally contains a significant slip on this point. He criticises the resolution adopted at the Eleventh World Congress for having mentioned a growing preponderance of the working class of the *imperialist countries* in the worldwide class struggle. Such a formulation cannot be found in the resolution he is criticising. The latter refers to a growing preponderance of the *world proletariat*, which we in no way identify with the proletariat of solely the imperialist countries. The same formulation is also used in the Tenth World Congress resolution.

If we make an objective, unblinkered and unprejudiced balance sheet of what has actually happened in the last ten years, then the analysis of the Eleventh and Twelfth World Congress resolutions has proved them to be closer to reality than the schemas of the third worldists — not just Iran, Nicaragua and Central America, but also the Portuguese revolution, the explosive workers' struggles in Italy, the fall of the dictatorship and the rise of the PT [Partido Trabalhadores — Workers Party] in Brazil, the political revolution in Poland with the rise of Solidarnosc and the eruption of mass struggles in South Africa.

When we look at the reality of the social forces in today's world we in no way underestimate the importance of the anti-imperialist and democratic motives that continue (and will continue) to inspire those involved in mass struggles in the underdeveloped countries (and even in certain imperialist countries). These motives are still very important. They can even be decisive at certain points in the struggle. The worker-peasant alliance, the explosive nature of the land question and the problem of the marginalised urban masses remain key problems for developing a correct revolutionary strategy, even in coun-

tries like Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and South Africa where the proletariat is already the absolute majority of the working population.

But the relative weight of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist motives behind the mass struggles inevitably changes if the proletariat goes from 15-20 per cent to 50-60 per cent of the active population, not to mention its preponderant influence among those involved in clearly revolutionary struggles. If the role of its own demands is blurred or held back systematically within these struggles, then these struggles themselves are continually checked and fragmented. Any strategy in which the mobilisation of the urban masses, and therefore their self-organisation and self-defence, does not hold the preponderant place in the struggle, is condemned to failure in those countries. What is going on in South Africa is a striking confirmation of this analysis and prognosis. The third-worldist vision underlying the 'anti-imperialist axis of the world revolution' notion is a schema which, for above all, objective reasons, corresponds less and less to reality, to the actual unfolding of the class struggle on a world scale.

### Reform or Revolution in the bureaucratised workers' states

As we have seen above, the 'anti-imperialist axis of the world revolution' implies a subordination of the real concerns and struggles of the workers in the bureaucratised workers' states to alleged 'priorities' on a world scale. This false view of the world revolution includes a wrong perception of social and political reality in these states, parallel to the incorrect conception of reality in the underdeveloped countries:

'The majority thus puts the task in relation to the state machine, particularly its repressive apparatus — army, police — in a post-capitalist country like Poland on the same plane as the task confronting the workers of an imperialist country like Australia. This is an erroneous and extremely dangerous position.

'In a bureaucratised socialist state, the repressive apparatus has a dual role and character. It is used to defend the social conquests of the proletariat, the new socialist forms of prop-

7. These figures include the unemployed in the imperialist countries, the landless agricultural wage labourers in India and the other capitalist countries of the Third World as well as the wage labourers of the state farms (sovkhozes) in the USSR and China. This conforms to the Marxist definition of the proletariat.



The platform at the twenty-fifth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, March 1976 (DR)

erty against imperialism, and it is used by the bureaucratic oligarchy to protect its material privileges and monopoly of political power against the working class. The Soviet army for example has not only been used to suppress working-class struggles for socialist democracy as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but also to stop capitalist restoration, as in World War II.

'This dual nature of the repressive apparatus of the bureaucratized socialist states means that one cannot, in advance, say that this apparatus as a whole will have to be destroyed in order for a genuine and radical democratisation to occur. As the experience of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 showed, some sections of the repressive apparatus will most probably have to be destroyed — those, such as the secret police that are highly privileged and identify most closely with the bureaucracy against the workers. But this cannot be said of the whole repressive apparatus. This was shown by the Hungarian experience where whole units of the army, including the officers, went over to the workers' side against the bureaucratic oligarchy. Whether sections of the state apparatus will have to be destroyed will be decided by struggle, by whether they stand in the way of the working class carrying through a radical democratisation.' ('The future of the SWP's interna-

tional relations", *The SWP and the Fourth International*, Pathfinder, Australia, 1985, p 45).

The term 'socialist' state is a theoretical monstrosity that breaks with all Marxist tradition from Marx to Lenin and Trotsky. Like the formulation 'actually existing socialism', dear to Stalinists and post-Stalinists, it is the best propaganda and ideological weapon one can today hand over to capitalism and imperialism. It is the main anti-socialist foil for the immense majority of workers in the imperialist countries, the bureaucratized workers' states and in most of the semi-industrialised dependent countries. Their reaction can be summed up in a few words: 'If that's socialism, then they can have it!'

The formulation, 'dual role of the repressive apparatus', is abstract and confused. It leaves out a decisive aspect of the problem: *the dual function of the repressive apparatus never operates in practice at any given moment in an evenhanded, 50-50 way*. When there is direct military aggression against the USSR — more generally in a war situation — the function of the Soviet army to defend the collective ownership of the means of production is evidently predominant. But no honest person can argue that since the imperialists still exist, since the imperialist armies live on and since we are in a period of intensive rearmament, then it follows that

during the 1956 Hungarian revolution, the 1968 'Prague Spring' or the Polish political revolution in 1980-81, the Soviet armed forces (and the Polish army) had as a dominant function 'the defence of the USSR' against an attempt by imperialism to restore capitalism in the USSR (i.e. against an invasion that did not take place and was not on the agenda in the short or medium term). This 'threat' was just a mystification, a crude justification of anti-working class repression by the bureaucracy and its apologists.

It is therefore much more correct to say that in an open conflict with imperialism the USSR's repressive apparatus defends above all what remains of the conquests of October, while in an open conflict with the masses it defends above all the bureaucracy's privileges and monopoly of power.

Another confusion cluttering up the Australian SWP's argument is that between the necessity of having a state apparatus under the dictatorship of the proletariat — that is the impossibility of achieving the withering away of the state with a single blow, even today in the USSR following a victorious political revolution — and the corrupt, degenerated, bureaucratized existing state apparatuses, which are hated by the masses. A trade-union apparatus (of a smaller size) will certainly still be necessary



after the anti-bureaucratic political revolution. But after the Hungarian, Czech and Polish experiences we can predict with certainty that such an apparatus will be born out of the complete destruction of the trade-union apparatus tied to the bureaucracy and its replacement by an apparatus elected by working people.

The same remark can be made concerning the apparatus that plans and manages the economy. To think that, depending on the individual attitudes of directors, engineers, economists etc., the existing apparatus will be maintained at 80, 50 or 30 per cent is to understand nothing about the nature of the bureaucratic apparatus as such or about workers' management of the economy, which the massive majority of workers wish to substitute for bureaucratic management.

The latter has been demonstrated in the concrete experiences of all the beginnings of political revolutions that we have witnessed. What about the legal apparatus? Do Lorimer/Percy want to leave intact the apparatus of the Gulag and the repressive psychiatric asylums, including the judges who sent prisoners there, 'as long as' all this fine company 'go over to the side of the workers' on the day after the political revolution? We promise them an agreeable time. If they find even 1 per cent of workers in the Eastern European countries supporting this 'strategic line' it would be a lot.

How about the 'cultural apparatus', especially the censors? Do Lorimer/Percy want to 'redeem' the 'good' censors, the 'good' manipulators of the press, theatre, cinema, television, school textbooks or of scientific research, provided they choose the right side during the uprising of the masses. Would it not be better to demand in advance the total ending of all these abominations, as demanded by the huge majority of manual and intellectual workers and as required in the interest of the real effective building of socialism — is not this the ABC of Marxism?

What we have said here about these apparatuses also applies to the military apparatus. It is a crude sophism to assert that 'since' entire units of the Hungarian army did in fact go over to the side of the people in 1956, then we must not say in advance that the Stalinist army apparatus should be destroyed. The Stalinist army in Hungary was destroyed from top to bottom during the revolution. Another army, another apparatus were built in its place. The Kremlin understood this so well that it had the leaders of this military revolution, Pal Maleter, Imre Nagy and Geza Lozonszci, condemned to death in a secret trial and assassinated (their main 'crime'

concerned their military responsibilities). Failure to understand this irreparable necessity with respect to the Polish army was one of Solidarnosc's most serious ideological and political weaknesses, if not the most serious, leading directly to its December 1981 defeat.

Let us repeat once again: eliminating the present repressive apparatuses in the USSR and the other bureaucratized workers' states does not at all 'disarm' these states against imperialism. It means removing the principal obstacle to the victory of the political revolution. (8) These apparatuses can and must be replaced by new armed apparatuses (or structures). A militia army electing its own commanders would replace today's permanent army that anyway is headed by an unpopular officer caste increasingly cut off from the soldiers and likely to trigger off serious internal conflicts. This militia would be linked to highly technical units that are necessary for operating sophisticated weapons, but under the control and protection of the people. We are convinced that such a new army, a true workers' and peasant army, would be ten times as effective in protecting the USSR against imperialism than the present army of the bureaucracy. (9)

Underlying the Australian SWP's wrong analysis of the bureaucratic apparatuses in the USSR is a systematic and serious underestimation of the contradictions, tensions and crises in this country (and the other bureaucratized workers' states) caused by the bureaucracy itself. It is not an exaggeration to say that the threats hanging over the collective property relations and the planning of the economy due to wastage, corruption and more general dysfunctioning of bureaucratic management, are far greater, at least in the short and medium term, than the threats from the capitalists and their armies (although the two are obviously linked on the historical scale).

The leaders and journalists of the SWP, *Direct Action* and various other publications of the Australian SWP, have to systematically prettify the economic, social, political and cultural reality of the USSR in order to deny this evident state of affairs. They have to present an image with

less and less relationship to any reality. Like the unfortunate 'friends of the Soviet Union' of the 1933-1963 period they thereby condemn themselves to fall short of the much more sober image of Soviet reality that the bureaucratic leaders themselves have to depict from time to time when such and such slightly more sober image of Soviet reality that the bureaucratic leaders themselves condemn themselves to be caught with their trousers down each time such criticisms do not come from 'sectarian Trotskyists' but directly from Moscow. Andropov stated that *one-third* of the annual work-hours in Soviet industry (or the economy) are paid at a total economic loss — that is, do not correspond to any sort of production. Top Kremlin dignitaries recognise that average Soviet economic growth rates have been declining in a nearly constant way for more than thirty years. Gorbachov has declared that a *radical* reform of the whole system of economic management is an *urgent and vital necessity* for the USSR and is demanded by the whole people. Khrushchev proclaimed that Stalin had killed at least 12 million people — including a million communists. But we find no trace of those facts in the Australian SWP literature. We do find puerile, apologetic outpourings of the following type:

'It should be stressed that Soviet citizens' diets have long been adequate (!) nutritionally. The aim of the food program is to improve the variety of foods available and boost supplies of such highly regarded commodities as meat, fish, eggs and dairy products.

'Even if measured in terms of these "prestige" (!) foods, the current Soviet diet is far from inferior. Already in 1975-77 Soviet citizens consumed an average of 51.1 grams of animal protein daily — approaching the European average of 52.8 grams, and well above the figure for countries such as Italy.

'Current per capita meat consumption in the Soviet Union (about 61 kilograms yearly) is approximately the same as in Britain. If there is abundance of meat in British shops while Soviet shops are often sold out, it is largely because meat is

8. 'Of course, no one will deny the need of an intelligence service against the intrigues of imperialism. But the crux of the question is in the position occupied by the organs of this intelligence service in relation to the Soviet citizens themselves.

... As a matter of fact, it is well known that the GPU destroys not spies and imperialist agents but the political opponents of the ruling clique.

... The Bonapartist apparatus of the state is thus an organ for defending bureaucratic thieves and plunderers of national wealth. This theoretical formula comes much closer to the truth.

... To believe that this state is capable of peacefully "withering away" is to live in a world of theoretical delirium. The Bonapartist caste must be smashed, the Soviet state must be regenerated. Only then will the prospects of the withering away of the state open up'.

(L. Trotsky, 'The Bonapartist Philosophy of the State', in "Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-39," pp. 321, 322, 324, 325).

9. In many writings, particularly "Revolution Betrayed", Trotsky explained the superiority (including military-military/political) of the militia army over the standing army.

too expensive for many British working-class families to buy regularly.<sup>10</sup> In the Soviet Union, meat prices are heavily subsidized, and supplies are snapped up soon after they hit the shelves.' (11) (Geoff Streeton in *Direct Action*, May 29, 1985)

'Western "Kremlinologists" continually push the idea that the Soviet economy is in deep crisis ... This however is simply wishful thinking. There is no economic crisis in the USSR.' (David Holmes in *Direct Action*, July 31, 1985)

'... The recent (!) decline in the rate of growth of the Soviet economy (12) is in part due to a shift of investment to consumer industries that has brought about a significant rise in the standard of living of workers and peasants ...' (*The Struggle for Socialism in the Imperialist Epoch*, p 67).

This whole fairy-tale fantasy of Soviet reality culminates in the report filed by the delegation of SWP youth who were at the summer 1985 Youth Festival in Moscow (*Direct Action*, August 28, 1985):

'From the buses on our way in from the airport, Moscow looked surprisingly like any other big city, except for one thing. The entire route was lined with banners in the festival colors, carrying the main slogan: "For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship" ...

'Formal meetings aside, the opportunities to meet and discuss with others was limited only by the number of hours in the day ... And it seemed that the whole of Moscow wanted to be part of it. No matter where you were or what time it was, if you looked like a festival delegate, you were constantly stopped by local citizens wanting to know where you were from, offering assistance, or wanting to exchange gifts.'

This prose is not only ridiculous. It is repugnant from a proletarian point of view. For our innocents abroad apparently did not notice that Soviet workers work 20 per cent more hours in a year than their counterparts in imperialist countries, for a wage 35 to 50 per cent lower. They failed to notice that the number of industrial accidents is a good sight higher whilst the health care — not to mention life expectancy — of the Soviet worker is considerably worse than for workers in those imperialist countries — except the USA — where the workers' movement has managed to wrest a high level of social insurance, security from capital. Our visitors have not noticed that if Soviet workers put out a leaflet to denounce abuses by their factory director, they would be dragged in front of the courts if they are not interned as 'mad'. They did not notice that in Moscow,

thousands of sick and invalid poor people lack modern medicines and prostheses (i.e. artificial limbs) which the bureaucrats easily acquire for themselves. They did not happen to see that in the USSR 40 million retired persons, disabled and widows have to survive with a miserable monthly income of fifty roubles — equivalent to what a highly placed bureaucrat occasionally spends on a single luxury banquet! They did not even notice that not a single book critical of the leadership or of the bureaucracy's ideology is on sale in the bookshops.

This lack of perceptiveness says more on the education currently received by Australian SWP members and sympathisers than a hundred articles still 'critical' of Stalinism. In reality Percy/Lorimer's underestimation of the structural crisis unsettling Soviet society and the dead weight of the bureaucracy leads them logically to drop the political revolution from their perspectives and programme. It is replaced by a vague hope of 'radical democratisation' of society under the combined effect of the bureaucracy's self-reform and pressure from below, or even as an 'organic' product of economic growth and rising cultural level of the population. But the whole experience of the last thirty years in the USSR, Eastern Europe and in China, illustrates the fallacy of such a hope.

What the Australian SWP leadership no longer understands, given its 'reformist' position on the bureaucracy, is that the perspective of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution is not just one of Trotsky's 'fads' or a sectarian point of honour for the 'Trotskyists of the Fourth International', but the inevitable result of the growing tension between the masses and the bureaucracy, once the masses emerge from their passivity.

Everything that happened in the GDR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and China — successive examples of very broad mass mobilisations and actions against the bureaucracy — confirms this analysis. *The necessity of destroying the bureaucratic apparatuses corresponds to the workers' aspirations, to the internal logic of their mass mobilisations as much as to*

10. Here each sentence contradicts the previous one, as is generally the case with apologist writings. If food 'has long been adequate nutritionally' why is it necessary to sharply increase the variety? If the effort centres on more varied foods, i.e. on real nutritional needs, then why call them 'prestige foods'? If housewives 'snap up' meat from the shops is it because meat prices are subsidized or because meat is rare (that is, because real needs are not satisfied)? Bread prices are also subsidized, however there are no queues in front of the bakery shops and bread is not 'snapped up as soon as it hits the shelves', etc. etc.



*The Sandinistas take Managua (I R)*

*the objective needs of a new advance to socialism* — that is the verdict of history. This is why it is part of our programme, and not due to some dogmatic prejudice.

Now we understand better what is the fundamental difference between the line of the Australian SWP and the Fourth International. The starting point for our intervention in all three sectors of the world revolution is the real aspirations of the masses, particularly the proletarian masses. We make every effort to spur on and lead these concrete mobilisations to victory. We put forward the need for independent self-organisation. The SWP's line is to subordinate — certainly it is still in its first stages, a tendency, but it is likely to get stronger in the future — these actual aspira-

11. These figures are false. In reality the annual meat consumption per capita in the USSR reached a ceiling of sixty kilos some years ago. On average it is 50% higher in capitalist Europe. It is 80 kilos in Italy and Great Britain.

12. Here are the average annual growth rates in national income, by 5 year plan, provided by the official Soviet statistics:

1951-1955: 11.2%  
1956-1960: 9.2%  
1961-1965: 6.6%  
1966-1970: 7.75%  
1971-1975: 5.75%  
1976-1980: 4.75%  
1981-1985: 3.50%





tions and mobilisations to dogmatically pre-established 'axes', 'priorities', 'stages' and 'impossibilities', which give the would-be vanguard party the right to dictate to the workers not only what they must demand but also what they cannot demand for the time being.

### The functional character of socialist democracy

The Australian SWP's growing hesitations and retreats with respect to the anti-bureaucratic political revolution have been marked by an increasing opposition to our programme of socialist democracy, such as it is laid down in the theses 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialist Democracy', approved by the Eleventh World Congress and definitively adopted by the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International.

The Lorimer report reproaches us for identifying socialist democracy with the existence of party pluralism and insisting on the fact that only when this pluralism really exists can you have real socialist democracy.

'But, as we've pointed out in our Cuba resolution, the ideal situation, the goal we strive for, is not a multi-party system, but a system of peoples power in which the masses have the right to form different parties, but in which revolutionary Marxists seek to win, by persuasion, the masses to support only one party — the revolutionary Marxist party.' (*The Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International*, p 44).

And for Percy/Lorimer to accuse us of being 'normative'! (13) True, in an ideal world, where the proletariat is totally homogeneous, where no hostile social pressure is exerted against it, where it is non-stratified economically, where it is continually and totally politically active, where the revolutionary Marxist party is perfect, never makes mistakes and is 100 per cent democratic — in such an imaginary world there would obviously be only place for one party during the dictatorship of the proletariat, since by definition it would represent the whole of the proletariat.

Unfortunately, this world of perfect universal harmony inside the proletariat has not existed in the past. It exists nowhere today. Our modest opinion is that it will never exist in the future either. So what is the point of pursuing an 'ideal' and 'normative' aim which we know in advance is unobtainable?

In the real, bad world in which we live and where we must nevertheless accomplish the world socialist revolution, the proletariat is economically stratified, socially heterogeneous, and politically differentiated (in particular as a function of its traditions, historical past, indeed the origins of its different layers and currents). In this same real, bad world, social pressure is constantly exerted on the proletariat to which different layers and currents react in quite different ways. Consequently even the best of revolutionary parties will never be but one fraction of the proletariat (certainly it will try to be the majority party but that is scarcely guaranteed in advance once and for all). This same party, far from being infallible, will make a lot of errors. It will never be perfectly democratic but will experience the beginnings of bureaucratisation and will regularly be tempted to manipulate the masses in a paternalist way.

In these real conditions of the establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the initial phase of building socialism, the real objective must therefore be authentic political representation of the proletariat as a whole, which is impossible without the flourishing of political, ideological and cultural pluralism for the masses. This is the

precondition for an adequate functioning of the workers' councils, bodies of people's power or soviets. Without this sort of pluralism workers will not be able to really wield power. They will not be able to decide on the big problems of economic, social, cultural and international policy, because all these questions cannot be resolved in the workplace or on a local level. All these questions imply a choice between coherent alternatives on a national level (and even increasingly internationally). When you talk of such coherent alternatives you are dealing with different political platforms, precisely in other words about political pluralism.

So, pluralist socialist democracy, far from being normative, is functional. Far from being some sort of concession to the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, or to Social Democracy, it corresponds to the interests of the proletariat. It facilitates a better knowledge of the real aspirations and opinions of different layers of workers. The authentic needs of the masses and their different fractions can be determined. It enables the better planning of production, bringing closer together working people's genuine preferences in the field of productive effort and consumption. It helps as much as possible to avoid political errors and, once these errors have been made (which is inevitable), they can be corrected as quickly as possible.

In the real world in which we live, and not the world of universal harmony imagined by the Australian SWP leaders, political pluralism is a necessary and indispensable guarantee against the bureaucratisation of the revolutionary party, of the workers' state and of transitional society, an indispensable condition for the most effective struggle for socialism.

This was the conclusion Trotsky drew after twenty years experience of the history of the Russian revolution:

'The prohibition of oppositional parties brought after it the prohibition of factions. The prohibition of factions ended in a prohibition to think otherwise than the infallible leaders. The police-manufactured monolithism of the party resulted in a bureaucratic impunity which has become the source of all kinds of wantonness and corruption.' (*Revolution Betrayed*, p 104-5, New Park Edition).

And Trotsky is just as clear concerning freedom of the press:

13. This is not the only case of involuntary irony in Lorimer's report. He reproaches us for not giving enough time to concrete problems of partybuilding of our sections, for going on endlessly in ideological quarrels. But 95% of his report is devoted to precisely such quarrels.

'Nonetheless, in this instance, too, if the special measures [taken in a situation of civil war — E.M.] are extended until they become an enduring pattern, they in themselves carry the danger of getting out of hand and of the workers' bureaucracy gaining a political monopoly that would be one of the sources of its degeneration.

'We have a living example of such a dynamic before us in the detestable suppression of freedom of speech and of the press that is now the rule in the Soviet Union. This has nothing to do with the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, it is designed to protect the interests of the new governing caste from the worker and peasant opposition ... all currents of public opinion that have not taken up arms against the dictatorship of the proletariat must be given the opportunity to express themselves freely. It is the duty of the workers' state to make available to them, in proportion to their numbers, all the technical means they may require, such as presses, paper, and transport.' ('The Freedom of the Press and the Working Class', *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38*, Pathfinder Press, New York).

It has to be recognised that Rosa Luxemburg predicted in an impressive way as early as 1918 the danger of a worsening bureaucratisation consequent on the ending of political pluralism:

'Lenin and Trotsky presented the soviets in the place of representative assemblies elected in general elections as the only real representation of the working masses. But with the elimination of political life in the whole country, life in the soviets also must become more and more paralysed. Without general elections, without freedom of the press and unbridled expression and without the battle of free opinion, life is snuffed out of each public institution. Political life becomes non-existent, *only the bureaucracy remains an active element in each institution*. Public life steadily goes dead, several dozen party leaders ... lead and govern, and an elite from the working class is convened to assemblies from time to time to applaud the leaders' speeches and unanimously to endorse the proposed resolutions ...' (Translated from the original German *Zur Russischen Revolution*, p 362, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 4, Berlin, 1974. Our emphasis).

Rosa Luxemburg was doubtlessly mistaken in not sufficiently taking into account inevitable restrictions on democratic rights due to the civil war conditions. She was clearly mistaken in criticising Lenin and

Trotsky for taking measures definitively eliminating political parties — which had not been taken at all in 1918. Political pluralism survived in Russia until at least 1921. She was also in error in presupposing that political life in the Bolshevik party and the trade unions would remain limited to a few dozen leaders. In fact this activity still involved tens of thousands of workers and activists for a decade — to an extent that was unfortunately too limited to stop effectively the process of bureaucratisation. But having said all that, Luxemburg correctly defined the fundamental risk and traced out the general historical tendency. History has confirmed it: without political pluralism there is no genuine soviet power, no authentic exercise of power by the working class, no true control and verification of government decisions by the masses. Consequently there is accumulation and deepening of errors, economic dysfunctioning, the growing inefficiency of government policy, increasing obstacles to the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the building of socialism, an accentuation of inequality and the danger of bureaucratisation of the party, the state and the whole society.

Lorimer attacks us for finding support in the experience of Nicaragua, which for us confirms the correctness of our positions on political pluralism. He sets us the following question:

'What happens when the Sandinistas, as they may have to as the war deepens, ban the other parties, all of which to one degree or another are opposed to their revolutionary government and aid the contras in one way or another? Will the comrades ... drop their enthusiasm for the Sandinistas and adopt the same lukewarm attitude toward them that they have toward the Cubans?' (*The SWP and the Fourth International*, p 44).

We have no difficulty in replying to this question. If in the course of the civil war the Sandinistas ban parties which are participating in armed struggle against the workers' state or clearly supporting it, we would be in favour of this ban. Our theses on socialist democracy clearly lay down this elementary principle, in line with elementary common sense. (14)

But if, after the end of the civil war and the consolidation of workers' power, the ban targets opposition parties involved in no military or terrorist action against the dictatorship of the proletariat, which are banned only because — to take up Lorimer's elegant formulation — 'they oppose the government in one way

or another', in other words, because they *are* opposition parties, proposing another political position, then we would criticise this measure as contrary to the interests of the workers and poor peasants of Nicaragua. The criticism would be fraternal since we have enormous respect for the revolutionary qualities and merits of the Sandinista comrades. But it will be a frank and open criticism, based on our deeply held conviction that is founded on at least seventy years of contemporary revolutionary experience, if not on more than a century's experience of the international workers' movement. We would say to the Sandinista comrades that such a decision was a *step backwards* compared to the excellent and exemplary principles on the matter they defended in 1984.

We adopt exactly the same attitude to the Cuban leadership. When, at the time of the struggle against the Anibal Escalante micro-fraction, Fidel Castro proclaimed that the revolution must be a school of unfettered thought, we enthusiastically applauded this correct principled position, promulgated for the first time by a recognized leader of a workers' state. But when they began in practice, above all under the pressure from the Soviet bureaucracy, to severely limit the public theoretical and political debates, when the books of Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, the main Bolshevik leaders, contemporary socialist and Marxist theoreticians who are considered 'non-conformist' in Moscow's eyes, even Yugoslav and Chinese leaders, began to disappear from the public bookshops in Cuba, we said this was a regression and not progress. This retrograde step damages the interests of the Cuban and international revolution. Do the Australian SWP leaders have a different opinion? Do they think it is so good, maybe a step forward, that their own writings are no longer freely sold in Cuba?

Without freedom of thought, discussion and confrontation between different opinions, it is much more difficult to work out the correct way forward on any sort of political or theoretical problem. This is not just the verdict of history. It was also Marx and Engels' starting point. Engels wrote to Bebel: 'The party needs socialist science and the latter can only develop in liberty'. This declaration found a delayed and melancholy echo in the USSR. The father-figure of Soviet nuclear physics, the great

14. In August 1936, we know of no social democrat or libertarian who recommended freedom for the falangists and other fascist groups, involved in an armed struggle to the finish against the proletariat, to publish their newspapers in Madrid or Barcelona.



scientist Kapitsa, stated in 1967: 'Our youth no longer know how to discuss; it must relearn this art from its grandparents who made the October revolution.' Yes indeed.

## 'Campism' and the present world situation

Fired by a growing scepticism about the revolutionary potential of the working class and in practice discounting revolutionary perspectives in the imperialist countries and the bureaucratised workers' states, at least in the foreseeable future, the Australian SWP leadership is led to look for substitutes for the more than 65 per cent of the world proletariat who thus disappear in practice as the subject of the unfolding world revolution. This substitute is the 'socialist camp', all the 'socialist states' as the SWP leaders now put it.

Thus the resolution adopted by the 1984 SWP congress uses the formulation 'three sectors of the world revolution', but to the conflict between the proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie on the one hand and that between the oppressed nations and imperialism on the other, the resolution adds 'the struggle between the Socialist States and imperialism' (*The Struggle for Socialism in the Imperialist Epoch*, p 15). Support is found for this formulation in the quotation from Lenin dating from 1920 that we have already mentioned above — but they forget a small detail: the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state since then. Ramming home the same vision of the role of the workers' states in the world today, the resolution condemns as a 'serious error' the national liberation struggles' refusal 'to establish links with the socialist states'. (p 16)

Once again a slight detail is overlooked. If the Soviet bureaucracy demands as the price of these 'links' political capitulation, alignment on the diplomatic needs and economic requirements of the Kremlin, destruction of the political independence of these 'movements' and their leaders, including those that consider themselves communist, or indeed eliminating the autonomous organisation of the masses, should concessions be made in order to 'establish' or 'maintain' these links? Were Tito and the Yugoslav CP wrong not to follow Stalin's diktats? Were Mao and the Chinese CP wrong to refuse to follow similar diktats from Khrushchev and Brezhnev? Is it necessary to 'establish' and 'maintain' 'links' at any price? Would not the Czech CP have had to have

done the same thing in 1968?

Comrade Doug Jenness, replying to the Australian SWP in *Intercontinental Press*, unfortunately follows suit by attributing to the whole of the Fourth International the following opinion, supposedly expressed just after the Cuban revolution, that is, at the 1963 Reunification Congress.

The gains of the Cuban workers and peasants are alleged to have helped the Fourth International to understand

'The decisive weight in world politics of the workers' state in the Soviet Union. Without that revolutionary conquest the Cuban revolution would not have been able to survive. This has richly reconfirmed the historic view of the Fourth International that the progressive character of the workers' states in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China is a far more weighty factor for the world revolution than the obstacles represented by the Stalinist bureaucracies.' [our emphasis] (*Intercontinental Press*, September 23, 1985, p 561).

No such position can be found in any document from the Reunification Congress, in any document from a previous or later congress of the Fourth International or in any United States SWP official political document in the period of the 1960s and 1970s. In fact the exact opposite opinion is often put forward.

We considered at the time, and we continue to think so today, that the counter-revolutionary role of the Soviet bureaucracy weighs more heavily on world history than the objective positive effects (undeniable, as we have always accepted) of the survival of the workers' state. It is difficult to challenge this judgement in the light of an overall view of what has happened in the last sixty years.

Stalin, his successors and the Stalinist bureaucracy, have an overwhelming responsibility for such catastrophes as the following:

- the defeat of the 1927 Chinese revolution;
- Hitler's coming to power in 1933;
- the defeat of the 1936-37 Spanish revolution;
- the blocking of the revolutionary upsurge in France;
- the stifling of the historic possibility of setting up a mass labour party in the United States in the 1936-39 period;
- the outbreak of the World War in 1939;
- the heavy defeats of the Red Army in 1941;
- the restoring of the capitalist state and economy in France and Italy in 1945-48;
- the defeat of the Greek revolution;

— the stabilisation of the regime of the bourgeois Congress party in India;

— the absence of a credible socialist perspective for the United States masses;

— the bloody defeat of the Indonesian and Chilean revolutions;

— the failure of the May 1968 French general strike;

— the failure of the 1974-75 Portuguese revolution;

— not to mention their responsibility for crushing proletarian mass movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Can this negative balance sheet be counterbalanced by the protection accorded to the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions?

Does it have to be repeated once again that *all* victories of popular revolutions since the Second World War have been possible because the leaderships of these revolutions — whether originating or not from the Stalinist current — decided to cut loose from the instructions, orders and especially the strategies emanating from Moscow. The July 26 movement was only able to take power because it followed a line diametrically opposed to that of the Cuban PSP. The Kremlin — through the intermediary of the Cuban PSP — wanted to prevent this seizure of power. Even in Cuba Stalinism's counter-revolutionary influence did for a long time outstrip the positive effects of the existence of the Soviet state on the world arena.

We continue to share the opinion formulated by Trotsky on this balance-sheet at the beginning of the Second World War:

'In order to gain the possibility of occupying Poland through a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the USSR and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganisation of the ranks of its own Communist International. The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.' (*In Defence of Marxism*, p 19, Pathfinder edition.)

The 'campist' approach to the world situation, which minimises the counter-revolutionary role of the

Soviet bureaucracy, disarms the Australian SWP leadership — and all those who adopt a similar analysis — when faced with the ups and downs of the international class struggle. A useful illustration of this is provided by the post-1979 imperialist counter-offensive and especially the development of the revolution and counter-revolution in Central America.

After the defeat it suffered in Vietnam in 1975, American imperialism was temporarily paralysed as a result of domestic political factors (the famous 'Vietnam syndrome') but in no way by military, financial or economic weakness. During this period anti-imperialist mass movements like those of Iran, socialist revolutions like those in Nicaragua and Grenada and the Kremlin's military-bureaucratic operations like the invasion of Afghanistan — more or less independently of each other — were able to make gains without a serious reaction from Washington.

But as a result of these defeats the American imperialist bourgeoisie tightened its ranks. It overcame the 'Vietnam syndrome'. It took up again a dynamic, organised ideological offensive. The Stalinist crimes in Cambodia and Afghanistan and the political counter-revolution in Poland were a great boost to this campaign. It launched an intense rearmament drive aiming to oppose by force, as before 1975, any new advance of the revolution in the world. But there is no question of its launching a military attack against the USSR. At the most it is a case of stepping up the pressure on the Soviet bureaucracy.

The idealised 'campist' view of the world on the other hand predicted a 'global confrontation' in Central America, between, on the one hand, the 'socialist camp' as a whole and, on the other, American imperialism supporting the central American bourgeoisies and the contras in Nicaragua.

This global confrontation did not happen. It will not happen. The Grenadan revolution has been crushed in isolation by a rapid imperialist intervention, facilitated by the Stalinist crimes of the Coard faction. The stepped-up imperialist military intervention against the Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutions is producing a growing isolation of these revolutions and no perspective of a rapid victory in these countries, although no counter-revolutionary stabilisation is in sight. The Nicaraguan workers' state is in turn pushed onto the defensive, encircled and very much isolated. It is fighting for survival against the Central American counter-revolution as a whole — an enemy armed, financed and more and more directly militarily aided by Washington. Enormous combined economic,

military and political pressure is being exerted against Cuba to get it to stop any action encouraging the revolution in Central America.

True, the Soviet bureaucracy continues to subsidise and arm the Cuban workers' state. It also arms — to a much more limited degree — the Nicaraguan workers' state. We obviously approve of this aid. But this aid stays within very strict bounds. It is limited by the bureaucracy's overall approach: to contribute to the survival of these states without compromising its basic strategy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. The objective is a new global agreement with Washington. The revolutions it helps are used as bargaining chips in negotiations for this agreement.

This does not imply any criticism of the prudent attitude of the Fidelista and Sandinista comrades who are literally fighting for the survival of their states in increasingly difficult conditions. This only confirms that the world-wide struggle against imperialism cannot be victorious on the fronts open at this time, which are much too narrow. It also means we need to have a realistic judgement on the real role of the Kremlin, which never for one moment — along with its allies from the other 'socialist states' — represents some sort of 'third sector of the world revolution'.

### The balance sheet of Stalinism and the historical justification for the Fourth International

The remorseless logic of their increasingly 'campist' positions drags the Australian SWP leaders towards an overall revision of the past counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. In part they still deny having done so. They still publish denunciations of the Moscow trials. They still emphasise the 'reformist' role of the big Stalinist (and post-Stalinist) mass CPs in the imperialist countries. But this revision is already sharply expressed by the SWP's secretary, Jim Percy. Speaking at the August 16-18 National Committee, Percy stated the following: (15)

'I think it was wrong to form the Fourth International in the first place, although we're not voting on that. In the end the organisational form cut off Trotsky and the Trotskyists from any other possibility of development of the Communist movement. And some parties, as we know now, for instance the Vietnamese Communist Party, did develop in a revolutionary direction, made revolutions ... If we hadn't had these blinkers about Stalin-

ism, that massive struggle (which the Fourth International did a great deal of work to defend), should have been enough to make us understand that a Communist party doesn't go through that unless there's something good about it.' (*Direct Action*, August 28, 1985).

One can hardly believe one's eyes. So, because the Vietnamese CP carried out a revolution, which proves there is something good about it (something which we not only never denied but recognised more than ten years ago when Percy and his political allies still had an ultra-sectarian approach to this CP (16)), then we must change our attitude to all the other CPs which, for 95 per cent of them, have not only not made a revolution but have on most occasions contributed actively, if not decisively, to there not being a revolution in their respective countries. Sixty years' history of the international communist movement, sixty years of gigantic class struggles, are thus rubbed out with a stroke and reduced to the single case of Vietnam.

This crude reasoning furthermore confirms the sectarian subjectivism of Percy/Lorimer. Why make an exception for the Vietnamese CP? Did not the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs lead victorious revolutions? Were they able to overthrow capitalism in their respective countries without there being 'something good' about these parties too?

Trotsky; the International Left Opposition; communist leaders as eminent and renowned as Chen Dou-Siou, founder and general secretary of the Chinese CP; Maring/Sneevliet, founder of the Indonesian CP; Pouliopoulos, general secretary of the Greek CP; Van Overstraeten, founder and secretary of the Belgian CP; James P. Cannon, member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International for the United States; three out of six members of the Political Bureau of the Italian CP — they did not split from the Comintern out of sectarian blindness, or because they were 'blinkered' about

15. Lorimer himself kicked off this process when he stated in his report:

'Moreover, because the Fourth International majority has a false conception of the framework of the world revolutionary process, because they fail to see that the anti-bureaucratic struggle is secondary to the overall struggle against world imperialism, they make the question of their particular view [!] of 'Stalinism' a shibboleth — a point of honour to distinguish themselves from the mass revolutionary movement that does not exist, a justification for their separate existence from that movement.'

16. See in particular their comments on the Paris Accords, which presented the latter as practically a capitulation of the Vietnamese CP, whereas we had seen them correctly as the precursor of a rapid victory of the revolution.



the nature of Stalinism. They were forced to leave it, because the Stalinist faction demanded, as the price of their staying in the 'communist movement', that they silence any criticism of the monumental errors first, later the crimes, of the USSR and Comintern leaders. More than just this silence was demanded: political capitulation, in other words the public 'confession' that previously formulated criticism was wrong and that Stalin had been right all along.

The consequence of such political abdication and capitulation would not at all have brought Trotsky and the other left oppositionists closer to the Vietnamese or Cuban revolutions — thirty years later. It would have meant their political if not physical destruction, as the case of those who capitulated like Zinoviev and Radek tragically confirmed.

The result of this destruction would then have been an enormous political vacuum, an ideological and political monopoly by the Stalinist faction and a qualitatively more serious demoralisation of the whole communist and proletarian vanguard on a world scale for decades. It follows that the recovery of revolutionary consciousness and initiative in the world would have been infinitely more difficult than it actually was.

If there had been no voices raised to justifiably criticise crimes like the forced collectivisation and great purges in the USSR, the policy of social fascism in Germany, the stifling of the Spanish revolution, the Hitler-Stalin pact and the totalitarian regime in the USSR, the Thorez/Togliatti policy of the 'Production first' and 'a single state, single army and single police' (bourgeois!) in 1944-48, it is more than probable that the breakthrough of critical thinking would have been infinitely later inside the CPs and outside of them.

Thanks to the example of Trotsky and the Left Opposition, the idea that there could be revolutionary communist criticism and practice outside of the CI and against the line and instructions of Moscow — an idea that practically all responsible communists rejected at the end of the twenties — slowly gained ground. Without this example phenomena like Mao Tse-Tung, Tito, Ho Chi-Minh and Fidel Castro would only have emerged several decades after their emergence in the real historical process — on which the writings and actions of Trotsky and the Trotskyists definitely had an influence. The Khrushchev report at the Twentieth CPSU congress — with all its international repercussions, to start with in Hungary and Poland, not to mention on CPs in many other countries — would have been difficult



Provisional Government soldiers arriving in Da Nang, April 1975. (DR)

to produce without the anti-Stalinist struggle embodied by Trotsky, the Soviet Left Opposition and the Fourth International.

If we take just the three main 'Trotskyist' political campaigns that led to their expulsion from the CPSU and the IC: the denunciation of the danger of the Kulaks' strike of grain deliveries and the incessant campaign for a stepped-up industrialisation of the USSR; the agitation against the suppression of the state monopoly of foreign trade; its agitation in favour of the military and political independence of the Chinese CP from the Kuomintang, we can see that they were decisive contributions for saving the Soviet state and safeguarding the chances of victory in the Chinese revolution. That is already amply sufficient to justify, in these given historical conditions, the separate organisational existence of the Trotskyist current.

What Percy waters down into a simple game of 'abstract' ideas or even a word game was in reality a bloody, merciless civil war carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy against international and Soviet communists. Nearly all the cadres of Lenin's party in the USSR, all the Polish CP leadership, the whole leadership of the Korean CP and a good part of the Yugoslav and German leadership, in all a million communists, were assassinated during this civil war.

Percy the Marxist owes us a materialist explanation of this bloody conflict. Was it a simple conflict between different 'communist currents', all guilty of 'sectarian excesses'? Or was it a social conflict between a privileged bureaucratic caste and the proletariat, as the 1984 Australian

SWP congress resolution still acknowledged? But if we are dealing with such a social conflict, then what right does a communist have to demand that the current that represents the historical interests of the proletariat against the bureaucracy's political counter-revolution, against the Soviet Thermidor, should not organise itself into a separate party?

In fact the ex-Trotskyists of the Australian SWP are increasingly condemning themselves to drink the poisoned Stalinist chalice to the very dregs. Thus, in a pamphlet written by Alan Meyers, *The Vietnamese Revolution and its Leadership*, based on a report approved by the October 1984 National Committee of the Australian SWP, the bloody repression against the Vietnamese Trotskyists by the Saigon CP leaders in 1945 is justified, although he regrets its 'excesses'. Do you think we are exaggerating? Here is the actual extract:

'During this extremely perilous period for the revolution, the Saigon Trotskyists appear to have outdone themselves in pursuing a sectarian, ultraleft line that would have prevented any real struggle against the imperialist enemy. During the mass demonstration on August 21, for example, the Trotskyists "unfurled a huge banner of the Fourth International." According to an observer sympathetic to the International Communist League, they carried banners and placards reading: "Down with imperialism! Long live the world revolution! Long live the workers and peasants front! People's committees everywhere! For the people's assembly! Arm the people! Land to the peasants! Nationalise the factories under workers' control! For a workers and peasants' government!"

'This grab bag of demands (which incidentally, jumbled together bourgeois-democratic and socialist tasks!) represented nothing but dangerous and self-contradictory ultraleft posturing. (p 46)

'And it is not difficult to understand that events like the following, described with evident approbation by a "Vietnamese Trotskyist eyewitness" would have driven other layers into the arms of the imperialists: "The peasants of the province of Sadec pillaged a dozen of the magnificent villas of their masters on August 19. They also set fire to a large number of granaries overflowing with rice. Many notables and functionaries were arrested by the peasants and a number of them were immediately shot..."

' "The former servants of the French and Japanese governments, labeled en bloc as enemies of the people, saw all their property go up in flames."

'The hatred of the peasants for the wealthy landowners and the colonial apparatus is understandable. But a revolutionary party is required precisely because revolutions are defeated when the masses' hatred strikes out blindly instead of being focused against the main enemy ... (p 47)

'The severe setbacks resulting from the Committee of the South's adventurism greatly weakened the Hanoi government's hand in its negotiations with the French.

'But the Trotskyist provocations did not stop there. Feldman and Johnson report that the Trotskyists "responded to the imminent landing of British troops by holding meetings that demanded arms for the people. Under Trotskyist influence, the People's Committees issued a manifesto denouncing the treason of the Stalinists in allowing the British to land. The Stalinists responded with a repressive campaign against the Trotskyists in their press and on September 14 sent troops to disarm the Trotskyists." (pp 47-48)

'As a result of the ultraleftism and excesses that the Communist Party tried but was unable to prevent, the returning French forces and their British allies made extremely serious inroads in the South. On September 24, there were riots in which Vietnamese broke into the European quarter of Saigon and massacred 150 people. General Gracey used this as a pretext for suppressing the nationalist movement in Saigon and driving Viet Minh units out of the suburbs. (17) French and British troops then struck outside the city, occupying a number of delta towns and provincial capitals. The 20,000 poorly armed and hastily recruited Viet Minh forces proved unable to

do more than slow the imperialist advance and were forced to retreat into inaccessible rural areas. It was at this time that leaders of the Trotskyists and of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists were executed. According to most sources, the executions were ordered by Tran Van Giau.

'*The Trotskyists and their nationalist allies had made a major contribution to the near-destruction of the revolution in the South. Preventing further damage, if necessary by physical repression, was imperative.* It appears, however, that the Communist Party felt that Giau had used excessive violence in coping with the situation.' (p 48. Our emphasis).

The political positions expressed by Alan Meyers, one of the Australian SWP leaders, reveals in the clearest possible way all the disastrous consequences of this party's rejection of the strategy of the permanent revolution. The 'mix' of democratic and socialist demands the Vietnamese Trotskyists are reproached for is practically identical to Bolshevik agitation between May and October 1917. Just go and read Lenin's pamphlet *The Threatening Catastrophe and How to Fight It* and try and show that it only contains bourgeois democratic demands! In any case 90 per cent of Saigon's factories were imperialist property; the call for nationalisation was therefore essentially anti-imperialist.

Meyers proposes that the peasant-worker alliance must be achieved without mobilising the peasants *against the big landowners and the repressive agents of imperialism. We would like him to show us how that works in practice!* The alliance with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists against imperialism is to be achieved without giving free rein to national demands, beginning with the independence of Vietnam. If need be, shoot the nationalists for their nationalist 'excesses', all in the name of the 'national democratic stage' of the revolution!

This line of reasoning is topped off with the classical argument of all reformists: the intervention of the counter-revolution is 'caused' by the

'excesses' and 'provocations' of the revolutionaries. Without revolution, no counter revolution — it is so obvious; why hasn't anybody thought about it before? It is also obviously stupid. The fall of Saigon was caused by the landing of British and French imperialist troops. This landing was in response to the Vietminh's declaration of independence, not to the 'extremists' excesses'. The imperialists also landed troops in Hanoi, where 'excesses' were certainly not committed. These troops cleared out the Vietminh despite all their efforts at negotiation. They landed in Indonesia and Malaysia, where there were no 'Trotskyist provocateurs' whatsoever. (18)

This whole line of argument repeats word for word that of the Mensheviks in the Russian revolution, the Chinese Stalinists in 1927 and the Chilean Stalinists in 1972-73. Can one imagine Lenin 'denouncing' peasants who burned the landowners' houses 'prematurely'? Look through all the thousands of pages written by Lenin, in 1905-6 and in 1917 and try to find a trace of any such 'logic'!

We do not know all the details of the policies at the time of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, who were divided into several groups. It is certainly possible they made some mistakes. It is possible that the Vietnamese CP committed other mistakes. That should be the subject of a serious historical study — still unwritten. The fact that the Vietnamese CP won the revolutionary war six years later in the North and thirty years later in the South is in no way an argument against the hypothesis that it may have committed serious opportunist errors in 1945. (19) In the same way, having the Trotskyist 'label' is not a guarantee that no sectarian or ultra-left errors were committed in Saigon while attempting to implement correctly the strategy of permanent revolution.

But two things are certain. Assassinating Trotskyist and nationalist leaders was a crime, an indefensible means of resolving political differences. It caused immense damage to the anti-imperialist and communist struggle in South Vietnam. Comrade Ta-Tu-Tau, the main Trotskyist figure in Saigon

17. This commentary is particularly scandalous since it does not mention that the explosion of popular anger on September 24, 1945, described by Meyers, was in reality a fightback against a prior coup d'etat by General Gracey and the French colonel Cedile, which banned all the Vietnamese press, disarmed the Vietminh security forces and killed hundreds if not thousands of Vietnamese, including a good part of the CP cadres. Thus in the name of 'the national democratic stage' it is not only forbidden to conduct the autonomous class struggle of the workers and poor peasants. It is even ruled out to fight back against counter-revolutionary imperialist violence.

18. In a later letter — replying to the polemics raised by the Meyers' pamphlet at the 12th World Congress — Lorimer states that the Australian SWP leaders justify only the disarming of the Vietnamese Trotskyists and nothing more. But the Meyers' text says what it says. It has never been publicly retracted.

19. One of the main leaders of the Vietnamese CP, Vo Nguyen Giap, has lately made a rather sharp criticism of the line followed by his party from the end of the 1930s until the end of the 1940s. There is therefore clearly room for critical analysis, which the SWP leaders seem to rule out for the sole reason that the Vietnamese CP finally took power.



who was elected to parliament in a united front with the CP in 1937, was anything but a sectarian. He was assassinated when the defeat of Saigon was already complete and whilst going north to again offer a united front to the CP. He was one of the main, well-known spokespersons of the Saigon proletarian masses. The debate on socialist democracy takes on a very concrete content in the context of Alan Meyers' positions.

## Backsliding to national communism

The Australian SWP's split from the Fourth International condemns this party to operate from now on outside any organised international framework, since clearly there is no 'Fidelista' international organisation which Percy and Lorimer can join. So organisationally we find ourselves faced with a characteristic withdrawal into a national framework. Lorimer finds this a little awkward, and so he tries to calm down the worries felt by SWP members and sympathisers on this:

'Does this mean we are turning away from internationalism? Such a view could only be made by those who confuse a particular form of international organisation with internationalism. Our conception of internationalism involves developing international collaboration. It involves the fraternal exchange of views and experiences among revolutionaries based on a willingness to learn from others, while thinking for ourselves. The forms through which this occurs are totally secondary.

'Far from turning away from internationalism by leaving the Fourth International, we are turning toward a more real internationalism, toward international collaboration with those revolutionary forces that are really extending the world socialist revolution.' (*The SWP and the Fourth International*, p 54).

This 'more real internationalism' is just a vain attempt to impress. Australian SWP leaders know this perfectly. 'Fraternal exchanges of views and experiences' with some organisations is limited in practice to an exchange of ideas without any commitments. It is difficult to envisage the Sandinistas, not to mention the Cuban CP leaders, getting enthusiastic about the Australian SWP's experience or even being interested in it. This 'exchange' will not go forward an inch because the SWP has broken with the Fourth International.

On the other hand, the Australian

SWP loses the real democratic exchange it had — on equal footing — with revolutionary Marxist organisations in a large number of countries, members of the Fourth International. It loses the chance to dialogue with and influence thousands of activists with its ideas, an opportunity that remained open even after it set out on its revisionist course. At the Twelfth World Congress the Australian SWP representatives had speaking time, including as counter-reporters, well in excess of their numerical influence in the Congress or in the International. Our organisation scrupulously respects tendency rights. The SWP will learn to its cost that this is not the case with any of the organisations to whom it wants vainly to get closer at the present time. (20)

'Revolutionary forces that are really extending the world socialist revolution' referred to by Lorimer — this means specifically the Cuban CP, Nicaraguan FSLN, the Vietnamese CP and the Philippine CP — are only present in a few countries of the world — and in no imperialist country. Therefore the real exchange of experiences with revolutionary forces that are certainly smaller but are really present in countries similar to Australia and whose daily activity in the workplaces, in the trade-union movement, in the anti-war movement and in the anti-imperialist solidarity movement, has been a source for learning and real strengthening of the Australian SWP, will be replaced by nothing.

Furthermore, the organisations to whom the Australian SWP is trying to get closer are limited by severe constraints in their willingness and their ability to extend their international relations. The military and economic dependence of most of them on the Soviet bureaucracy does not enable them to play an independent political role in the international arena, beyond a strictly limited geographical area. The fragility of their situation obliges them to become part of manoeuvres in which the interests of the workers' movement of a lot of countries — if one thinks of some of the big Latin American countries, Spain or France, not to mention Poland! — have to be traded on the altar of 'state diplomacy'. In addition their particular brand of pragmatism seriously limits their understanding of many social, economic and political processes in which they are not directly and massively involved. But listen to Lorimer waxing indignant:

'"It is not for us to retreat at a time like that!" Bensaïd exclaims. "It is not for us to hang our heads or eat humble pie when history proves you right."

'Just think what he's saying: Other

people have made revolutions, but history has proved the Fourth International right. That such an attitude can be expressed by someone who considers himself a Marxist, a Leninist, is what really should cause us to "hang our heads."

'It apparently doesn't even enter his head to ask: If the Fourth International is and has always been right, why hasn't it led any revolutions?' (*The SWP and the Fourth International*, p 50)

Percy and Lorimer do not seem to understand that this type of apparently impressive argument is a formidable boomerang that is likely to come back and break their backs. Let us extrapolate from the same line of reasoning and apply it to the Australian SWP. An Australian Maoist might indignantly insist:

'Just think what you are saying with your criticisms of the Maoists. Mao led a victorious revolution in the most populated country of the world. And you lot who have not led a revolution, you have not conquered power in your own country, and yet you have the gall to say he was wrong and you were right on a whole series of problems?'

A pro-Moscow CP supporter may in turn echo this hard Maoist criticism:

'Just think what you are saying with your criticisms against comrades Gorbachev, Andropov, Brezhnev, Khrushchev and Stalin. These comrades triumphed over Nazi imperialism. They have maintained the socialist state (to use your own term) in the USSR. They have extended this to 150 million people in Eastern Europe. They are in the process of extending it in Afghanistan. But you, who have never conquered power anywhere, starting with Australia, you dare to criticise these comrades who have proved themselves in the international class struggle since they have won and consolidated power.'

An Australian Labour Party (ALP) supporter might cynically follow suit (when it is a case of combatting revolutionaries in their own country, reformist bureaucrats do not worry that much about political logic):

'Just think what you are saying with your criticisms against citizen Hawke. The ALP leaders have built up a powerful mass party. They have

20. We might add that the policy of the SWP leaders already goes hand in hand with a restriction of members' democratic rights. The question of membership of the Fourth International was neither discussed previously by the members or submitted to a congress. It is simply decided by the Central Committee. The request of the Fourth International to be able to defend its views in front of the SWP members in the same way as the SWP was able to defend its opinions at our World Congress, received no response.

succeeded in taking the government away from the direct representatives of Big Capital and the Rich. But you, who have never built a mass party, who have never even won a single seat in Parliament, who have never caused any real damage to the big bourgeoisie, you are so bold as to drag such successful leaders through the mud?"

For a current like the SWP it is pure suicide to toady to the 'reality of power' and to deny any validity to the ideas of those who have never conquered power anywhere. It means literally sawing off the branch on which they are sitting. Whether the SWP likes it or not this branch is its *political and programmatic specificity* and not some sort of material power that it does not possess. It does not have this any more than the Fourth International has, and it will not acquire this by trying to bask indirectly (and to small effect) in the reflected powers of others, such as the Sandinistas, Stalinists and post-Stalinist bureaucrats, not to mention ALP bureaucrats. The Sandinistas and Fidelistas certainly have revolutionary credentials lacking completely to the post-Stalinists and trade-union bureaucrats. But to impart these revolutionary credentials you have to talk precisely about politics and not power for its own sake. And once you start talking politics all of Lorimer's homily against the 'Fourth International which does not have the right to put forward its politics since it has nowhere taken power' melts away like a snowball in the sun.

This line of reasoning is in any case pure demagoguery. It expresses a blind adoration of 'power for power's sake' to the point of becoming naive. It rationalises a blind pragmatism that is unable to grasp the main historical tendencies on the pretext that they are not yet fully developed. Following the same logic we could say: what right did Marx and Engels have to give lessons to everybody in the *Communist Manifesto*, when they only represented a few hundred people? What right did Lenin have to go on about building the party in *What Is To Be Done* at a time when he did not have more than 500 supporters? What right did Rosa Luxemburg have to condemn a party of one million members for voting for the 1914 military budgets, when she was not even able to bring out a weekly?

The Marxist approach, that is, the approach of scientific socialism and not vulgar pragmatism, is of course quite different. We begin by asking whether their analyses of the key tendencies of social, economic and political evolution were correct or false, whether the proposals they made



Tamils campaign for the release of political prisoners (DR)

for the proletarian class struggle were in line or not with class interests, whether the tendencies they criticised were erecting serious obstacles against the emancipation of the proletariat, whether they had a practice that would sooner or later enable them to fuse with the real mass movement of mobilisation and self-emancipation of the proletariat.

If the answer to this question is positive then their ideas were correct, and they were a thousand times right to formulate them, irrespective of whether their 'breakthrough' is achieved thirty or forty or fifty years later. If the answer to these questions is negative then they were wrong, not because they had not conquered power at hour  $x$  on day  $y$ , but because their theory and practice did not correspond to the interests of the working class and therefore to those of the world revolution.

The capability or incapability of the Fourth International to take power can only be tested when the three following conditions exist:

- the outbreak of a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crisis in a country where our current has already been present for a sufficient time;
- This current, having gone beyond the threshold of primitive accumulation of cadres rooted in the working class, grouped in an organisation recognised as such through its national political intervention, *before* the breakout of the crisis;
- the ability to intervene on a sufficient scale within the revolutionary crisis itself.

The first two conditions are very much independent of our will and of the role of the Fourth International as such. They reflect the uneven

process of emergence of cadres and proletarian class consciousness on a world level, which it is not possible to artificially produce in such and such a country. Our current, in the broadest sense of the world, is already present in sixty or so countries. That is a lot for a current that can only rely on the correctness of its ideas. But that amounts to still not half of all countries in the world. No voluntarist effort can fundamentally change this situation. No serious person can criticise us for not having taken power in countries where we did not even exist at the beginning of revolutionary processes; it is like severely criticising the Sandinistas because they did not seize power in Portugal! And no sensible person can reproach us for not having taken power in a revolutionary crisis in which we start out with twenty members.

The three above-mentioned conditions have existed up to now in only a single country — in Sri Lanka in the 1953-1964 period with the experience of the LSSP. This party undeniably failed and betrayed. The consequences have been disastrous for the Sri Lankan working class. We have made a detailed critical analysis of the origins of this bankruptcy, which incidentally have nothing to do with the 'specificities' of Trotskyism — quite the contrary.

But this experience is clearly too limited for us to conclude that there is some sort of 'congenital inability' of Trotskyism to 'seize power'.

In a certain number of countries the pre-conditions for reaching the second and third set of circumstances mentioned above are gradually developing — although we are still a long way away from reaching the critical



threshold referred to. We are working for the achievement of these conditions by building parties solidly rooted in the working class. The rest will depend on events, the relationships of forces, the deepening of the combined crisis of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships and of their cumulative repercussions on the proletariat's class consciousness. We are more than ever optimistic on this subject.

More generally, we can only qualitatively grow historically and (this is even more the case) take power in correlation with the qualitative leap forward in the activity, class consciousness and self-organisation of the proletariat. Any other view of our 'capability' or 'incapability' of seizing power — or more correctly, of *leading the seizure of power by the proletariat* — would be basically idealistic and substitutionist.

The above obviously applies only to the emergence of mass revolutionary parties. The growth of smaller revolutionary parties and groups is to a great extent a result of our own efforts, successes and failures. This in turn creates one of the key preconditions for the later transformation into mass parties, which only the powerful upsurge of proletarian struggles makes possible.

This is why it is relevant at the present stage of the development of the Fourth International to focus the attention of its cadres and activists on the immediate possibilities for partybuilding and growth — which really exist in a number of countries. Metaphysical speculation about our 'ability' or 'inability' to take power, or on one or another of the alleged 'congenital deformities' of 'traditional Trotskyism', is sterile. In any case it is a practical question. It will be resolved by history — notably in terms of our current failures or successes in partybuilding. These successes do not depend on some sort of guarantee of our ability to resolve the question of power *in the future*. Rather it depends on our capability of showing *today* how our organisations can be useful for workers and oppressed layers in helping them resolve the problem of defending their interests and for ensuring the success of their current struggles and mobilisations. That will prove impossible without putting forward our political identity, based on our programme.

But it is precisely the rejection of their own political and programmatic identity that is the basis of the Australian SWP's split from the Fourth International. This break is a gigantic *political* step backwards, not in relation to some sort of 'Trotskyism' considered as some bizarre distinct current, whose existence as an international organisation is its particular

sectarian 'point of honour', but in relation to revolutionary Marxism, in relation to Leninism as such. Since the beginning of the imperialist epoch — if not even before then — for more than a century, Marxists have known and have proclaimed and demonstrated dozens of times, that the existence of an international organisation with a binding discipline with respect to action on the big international questions is the indispensable complement to proletarian internationalist politics, the indispensable precondition for a consistent internationalist practice in the class struggle. (21)

Rejecting this organisation and its binding framework, in our epoch of wars, international revolutions and counter-revolutions, can only mean: 'Workers of the World, unite in times of peace but cut your mutual throats in times of war' — to repeat the cruel but highly realistic phrase of Rosa Luxembourg.

It is utopian to assume that the toiling masses worldwide are spontaneously internationalist. On the contrary both the influence of sectoral and corporatist interests and the pressure of everyday life pulls them spontaneously to a nationalism that is contrary to their long term interests. It is utopian to presuppose that even communist activists are spontaneously internationalist on all the key questions of the revolutionary class struggle. The national limitations of their daily activity and thus their experience, if not the ideological confusion of the 'campist' variety, will impose narrow limits on their understanding of what is happening elsewhere in the world (the lack of understanding by the Cuban communists, not to mention the Vietnamese communists, of the Czech and Polish events is only yet another example of this for the nth time in history). It is especially utopian to assume that the communists (even more so, bureaucrats of communist origin) who already hold state power will be spontaneously internationalist. Subject to the constraints of defending their status, they run the terrible risk of justifying military or diplomatic manoeuvres of self-defence with nationalist and chauvinist arguments. Lenin understood that better than anyone. Look again at the last part of his testament concerning the dangers of Great Russian chauvinism inside the CPSU — a warning that was unfortunately more than confirmed by history. (22)

Any basic application of Marxism to our own practice must therefore teach us that an indispensable condition for avoiding a relapse into 'national-communism' is real internationalist practice and experience, unachiev-

able without involvement in a genuine international organisation. *The simultaneous building of a national revolutionary organisation and an international one, expresses on the organisational level the inevitable interconnection of the national and international class struggle in the imperialist epoch.*

If today we refuse to build an international organisation with binding duties and rights (although with a discipline and degree of centralisation which is certainly different from discipline and centralisation on a national level, precisely because the national class struggle is not *completely* integrated into the international class struggle, because the law of uneven development also operates on this level) we will pay a terrible price tomorrow. This price will be a new August 4, 1914, a new theory and practice of 'socialism in one country', a new 'national messianism', a new cynical trampling on the interests of key sectors of the world proletariat in the name of the priority defence of some sort of 'socialist stronghold', if not of a new war between 'socialist states'.

This is a suicidal course to take, not only from the political or programmatic point of view. It even risks being a suicidal course from the physical point of view. Because in the long term it is impossible to avoid nuclear world war without the total elimination and *ban* on manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. A world socialist federation must impose such a ban on *all* workers' states, overriding their national sovereignty. Is it realistic to assume that revolutionaries, not to speak of hundreds of millions of workers, will spontaneously accept such restrictions on their sovereignty, without previously having gone through a practical experience of common internationalist actions — actions showing them that international solidarity is not a vain word, that discipline applies to everyone, big and small, 'advanced' as well as 'underdeveloped', without any sort of discrimination or inequality? How will communists and proletarians gain such experience if not by the gradual building of

21. In his opening speech to the Second Congress of the Communist International Zinoviev stated:

'We have introduced into the statutes of the Communist International a phrase from the statutes of the First International, whose leaders were Marx and Engels: if the struggle of the working class has not been crowned with success until now, this is notably also due to the fact that the workers have lacked international agreement (coming together), a rigorous international organisation, mutual support at the international level.' (our own translation)

22. See this codicil in Vol. 33 of the "Collected Works."

genuine international organisations, if not by a practice that convinces them that the International is their only father/motherland?

Breaking with the Fourth International is a real step backwards for national communism both in practice and in theory. Formulations like 'exchanges of views and experiences' are the classic formulations of reformists and centrists who substitute 'everyone master in their own country' for the necessary struggle for political action common to the workers of all countries, at least on the big international questions. This is the sort of argument used by Stalin to justify the dissolution of the Third International. Lenin and Trotsky denounced on countless occasions the reactionary nature of such a retreat from principled internationalism to the diplomacy of mutual abasement.

In practice the Australian SWP is now operating all alone, isolated from organised collaboration with other revolutionary forces throughout the world. The only real excuse it offers for this retreat is that the forces with whom it had been trying up to then to build an international organisation are still very weak. That is true. But it is better to build something necessary with weak forces than to purely and simply abandon the task of building such an organisation. That is what the Australian SWP does on a national level where, although it is not any stronger than the Fourth International is on the international level, it continues obstinately to build its own organisation. This it has stopped doing now on an international level. A national political activity without a corresponding international activity when the constraints are the same is certainly the expression of a 'national-communist' retreat.

## The historical stakes involved

Percy and Lorimer try historically to justify this step backwards to 'national communism' by presenting the following schema for the emergence of mass revolutionary parties and of a mass revolutionary International throughout the world including in the imperialist countries:

'Real Marxist parties are not developed through debates around abstract programmatic questions nor by agreement on a "precise program, strategy and tactics." It is the big, living revolutionary developments that act as a beacon for important sections of the working-class political van-

guard, and that enables this vanguard to be crystallised into genuine Marxist parties by enabling abstract programmatic differences to be settled by living experience, by learning from those who have made revolutions.

'The recomposition of the revolutionary vanguard in the imperialist countries, as was the case in the early 1920s, will come about through an identification with, and orientation to, the big revolutionary events in the world, to the living revolutions, and their revolutionary vanguards. Those who fail or refuse to follow this course, even if they carry out revolutionary work in their own countries, and even if they have some international organisation, will become irrelevant to the process, just as the IWW in the US and Australia became irrelevant in the early 1920s because of their failure to orient to the Russian Revolution.' (*The SWP and the Fourth International*, p 53).

This conception is a good expression of one of the reasons for their split, even if all its dimensions are not revealed. It is profoundly voluntarist and idealist. Besides this, it contradicts to quite an extent the rest of the Australian SWP's arguments, as well as its starting point. Just ask this question: with which revolutionary development did the Russian Bolsheviks or the Cuban revolutionaries have to identify *in advance* in order to be able to build an adequate revolutionary leadership and lead the revolution in their countries to victory? And it is even the same in the case of Nicaragua; the identification with the Cuban revolution — which existed — was certainly not the principal cause of the Sandinista success. Their revolutionary strategy took on its own specificities, which had little in common with the way in which the July 26 Movement conquered power in Cuba.

'Genuine Marxist parties' are parties that succeed in leading significant fractions of their class — which in the imperialist, semi-industrialised dependent countries and the bureaucratised workers' states are the majority, indeed the big majority of the working population — to the revolutionary seizure of power. To do this they have to have already grouped behind them important sectors (albeit a minority) of the working class. In other words revolutionaries have to have acquired a real political authority on the basis of their practice in the current class struggle, on the basis of their ability to root themselves deeply in the working class, to respond correctly to workers' aspirations, to provide adequate answers to such goals and to propose forms and objectives of struggle producing success. That is

how genuine revolutionary Marxist parties were built, are being built and will be built in the future.

The recomposition of the organised workers' movement is an indispensable precondition for the building of genuine Marxist parties in all places where Marxists are only a small minority and where powerful mass reformist organisations exist alongside them. It has and will only take place under the combined effect of two factors:

— the differentiation, radicalisation inside the existing political and trade union mass organisations, following on from the experience of explosive mass struggles;

— correct intervention and sufficient organisational strengthening of the initial nucleus of the revolutionary party or parties in that country.

The recomposition Lorimer is talking about is not this recomposition of the organised workers' movement. His schema does not involve the mass movement. It only concerns little vanguard groups. Paradoxically, after having elevated the 'seizure of power', that is, the emergence of mass parties as the absolute good elsewhere, he downgrades it to an absolutely secondary goal.

This is certainly proof that what underlines the whole evolution of the Australian SWP is scepticism towards the possibility of revolution in the big majority of countries in the world and therefore scepticism about the revolutionary potential of the proletariat.

If we examine the actual development of revolutionary organisations in the 1920s, we see how far the Percy/Lorimer analysis is partial and thereby false, and how ours corresponds better to the real historical experience.

The Russian Revolution unquestionably triggered off enthusiasm among revolutionaries the world over. Everywhere it advanced the emergence of the first communist nuclei based on reactions against the imperialist war. But in most cases these remained at the level of small groups despite the attractive force of the Russian Revolution and the Communist International, which was incidentally far superior to that of the Cuban or Nicaraguan revolution. A lot of these groups for years, if not for decades, were stuck at the size of the present principal sections of the Fourth International. Authentic mass communist parties appeared in the 1920s in less than ten countries. And without exception, in each country these parties only emerged under the impact of pre-revolutionary or revolutionary events produced by the aftermath of war and the crisis of capitalism and, as such, lived



through by large masses of workers there.

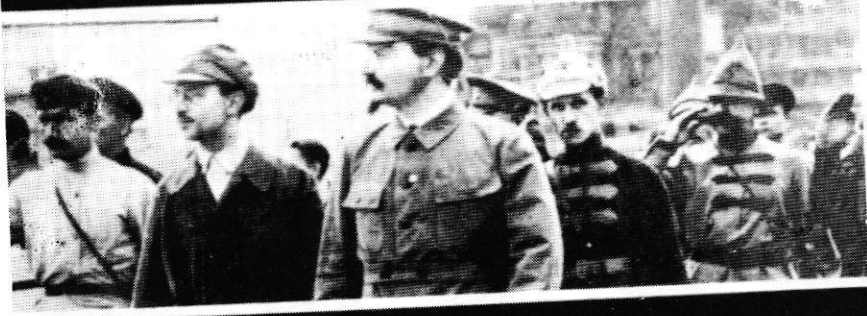
The Russian Revolution did not play this galvanising role simply because it was a 'beacon' that more or less automatically attracted the vanguard workers. Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades were able to play a catalysing role for the communist movement above all *through the establishment of the Communist International*. All the theoretical regression initiated by the proto-Stalinists and completed by the Stalinists and post-Stalinists is needed to bring one to forget that the Communist International's main task was precisely *not* to 'teach everybody the experiences of the Russian revolution' — although those lessons were very precious — but rather to work out a correct strategy and tactics for the *class struggle taking place in the main countries of the world*. You cannot read the theses, resolutions, manifestos of the first four congresses of the Communist International without immediately grasping this basic point.

However much 'debates around programmatic questions' and debates around 'precise strategies and tactics' may displease our detractors, the first four congresses of the Communist International were over-saturated with this type of discussion, in the same way, if not even more than at congresses of the Fourth International. For, as opposed to small groups like the SWP and most sections of the Fourth International, 'genuine Marxist parties' cannot grow just as a result of enthusiasm for revolutions taking place elsewhere or for the world revolution. They can only grow as a function of the results they obtain in the class struggle in their own country. Far from being 'abstract', programmatic, strategic and tactical debates worthy of the name (we are talking here of real debates and not sterile semantic or scholastic quarrels) involve precisely the problems of the mass class struggle: organisation, provision of mass perspectives, the risk of defeats and the chances of victory.

Everywhere where the impact of the Russian Revolution, the advice of the Communist International and the intervention of its representatives inside the young communist parties, favoured, *due to a correct strategy and tactics*, the recomposition of the organised workers' movement in the precise sense made clear above, they contributed to the emergence of powerful Marxist parties. Everywhere where they had an opposite effect, even in the period of Lenin and Trotsky (we are not saying by the fault of Lenin and Trotsky, who were not responsible at all) they

# THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION

## & RESULTS AND PROSPECTS



# LEON TROTSKY

had a disastrous effect, despite all the influence and prestige of the Russian Revolution. Just to take up three examples: In Germany the Communist International's intervention encouraging the German Communist Party's (KDP) adventurist '1921 March Action' resulted in the latter's loss of half its membership — 200,000 members, including the absolute majority of its workers' cadre, — in the space of a few months, notwithstanding the prestige of the Russian Revolution. In Spain all the prestige of the Russian Revolution did not prevent the CP remaining an insignificant little group and the immense majority of the working-class vanguard being active between 1919 and 1936 in the National Federation of Labor (CNT) and the Social Democratic left. It was the same in Great Britain where the mass political radicalisation was harnessed by syndicalism and the labour left throughout the 1920s. If we add the United States and Japan to the

list, that already makes up five of the principal imperialist countries where the Russian Revolution did not have the decisive effect believed in by Percy and Lorimer. Even in France and Italy where it had been decisive in 1919-1920, the CPs stayed or became quickly a minority inside the proletariat due to errors committed in the class struggle.

It is true that the German CP was able to recover thanks to a correct intervention in the 1922-23 class struggles, but in no way due to a greater identification with the Russian Revolution than it had displayed in 1921.

Identifying with the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Vietnamese revolutions is therefore absolutely insufficient for inciting the formation of 'genuine Marxist parties' in the big majority of the important countries of the world. It is useful and indispensable for recruiting young and enthusiastic revolutionaries, for building up the initial revolutionary nucleus. We are

going through a similar experience, and we are drawing all the practical conclusions concerning the role of solidarity work in building our parties and our youth organisations in the present phase of our partybuilding. But this is insufficient for transforming these initial nuclei into revolutionary proletarian parties. Only successful intervention in the class struggle can lead to this result.

Regarding this, the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutionaries provide us with an experience of their national revolutionary struggle which is certainly valuable but which developed in conditions very different from those that have to be confronted by most of our sections in the industrialised and semi-industrialised countries, and therefore is even more insufficient than that of the Russian Revolution alone. In addition, the difference with Trotsky's and Lenin's time strikes you straight away. Lenin and Trotsky did not consider themselves in the first place as leaders of a workers' state, of a revolution that had triumphed in one country. They considered themselves most of all as leaders and educators of the world proletariat. That is why they set up the Communist International. This is why they gave so much energy to these notorious debates on 'programme and strategy and tactics' so thoughtlessly denigrated by the Australian SWP leaders. What was vital to Lenin and Trotsky was to first of all help the communists and workers of other countries to struggle for power. And for this objective the lessons solely of the Russian Revolution were absolutely insufficient.

The Fidelista and Sandinista leaders are more modest, mostly because their countries are smaller, the threats to their survival are greater and their dependence on external non-revolutionary forces, beginning with the Soviet bureaucracy, forms a supplementary handicap. It is necessary to add the negative results of their pragmatism. For all these reasons Fidel Castro and the Sandinista leaders have not, are not going to and cannot establish a new international communist organisation. They do not propose an orientation for revolutionaries in the majority of countries that can be tested in the light of the class struggle. *That is why they will not play a major role in the emergence of new Marxist parties in most countries.*

Here is where all the points in the debate come together and combine into a real alternative.

Either, as we firmly believe and as the whole experience of this century confirms, the big battalions of the world working class will start to act sooner or later and will be involved

in the decisive battles for the world revolution. These battles will take on the general forms of mass strikes, general strikes, the emergence of self-organisation bodies of a soviet type, leading to dual-power situations and urban insurrections.

The type of mass revolutionary parties capable of leading the working class to victory flows out of this essentially proletarian form of the decisive battles of the world revolution. The Fourth International is infinitely better equipped than any other current of the international workers' movement for intervening in this type of struggle and bringing them to triumph — certainly better so than the Fidelista or Sandinista current. It has patiently educated its cadres in this perspective, for these types of struggles. It will continue to do this despite everything and every-one.

Its programmatic steadfastness on the strategy of transitional demands and on the self-organisation of the proletariat is not in itself sufficient guarantee for finally achieving this gigantic task — to bring about the taking and holding of power by a thousand million workers throughout the world. We must learn a lot, correct a lot of faults, change a lot of our habits and learn to fuse with other revolutionary forces that will be moreover partially a product of our own growth. But this growth is still a necessary precondition for the victory of the world revolution. It creates the initial preconditions for future growth of 'genuine Marxist parties'.

Or, if these big battalions do not go into motion in the coming years and decades, then the alternative is not a triumph of the world revolution via some detour proposed by the third worldists, or by an extension of the Cuban and Vietnamese experience to more and more countries. Such an idea underestimates in an irresponsible way the immense destructive potential harboured by decadent imperialism. No force in the world other than the big proletarian battalions is capable of disarming imperialism. It can only be effectively disarmed inside its fortresses. If the international proletarian revolution does not progress and does not triumph, then the alternative is the destruction of civilisation if not of human life, by the starvation of hundreds of millions of human beings, by the relegation of a good part of the world proletariat to the status of sub-'proletarians' demoralised and idle as a result of the 'two-tier' society, by the poisoning of the biosphere and by nuclear war. The struggle for the victory of the world revolution, for the building of the

mass revolutionary International, the struggle for the Fourth International and its programme is literally a question of life and death for the human race.

On several occasions Lorimer tries to paint the Fourth International as a sect that counterposes its particular points of honour — its shibboleths, to borrow Marx's phrase — to the real revolutionary process. But if one draws up the list of these 'particularities' they represent a lot more than one or two 'points of honour'! They cover the following theses:

1. Since 1914, the capitalist mode of production — not only the international imperialist system, but bourgeois society as a whole and the mode of production that underlies it — has entered its historic phase of decline. This is expressed in the periodic outbreak of explosive economic, military, political and social crises, including revolutionary crises in the imperialist countries.

2. The main reason why the capitalist system has survived since then on an international scale is subjective and not objective. It does not lie in the fact that the bourgeoisie is still too strong to be overthrown. It is because the objective conditions for its overthrow — an appropriate level of proletarian class consciousness and a revolutionary leadership adequate to this task have not been brought together in the most important countries of the world. This is above all the result of the role played by reformism, Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism in the organised workers' movement, which, in turn, are the ideological and political expressions of the specific interests of the labour bureaucracies as social forces in these countries. Stalinism and post-Stalinism are the political expression of the Soviet bureaucracy's defence of its particular material interests. It follows that the struggle for the political independence of the working class is indissolubly linked to the fight for its autonomy from the labour bureaucracies. These are the two indispensable preconditions for the possibility of the international overthrow of capitalism. They make it necessary to build at the same time new national revolutionary parties and a new revolutionary International.

3. The imperialist countries will not overcome the structural crisis of capitalism outside of a socialist revolution — the setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which requires the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the collective appropriation of the large-scale means of production and exchange, planned and managed by the workers. It will result in a rapid changeover from commodity production to a system of production for needs.

4. The semi-colonial and semi-





*Solidarnosc demonstration on May Day (DR)*

industrialised dependent countries will only be able to accomplish all the tasks of the national democratic revolution through the conquest of power by the proletariat allied to the poor peasantry, that is, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship, as a logical consequence of the class struggle itself, will begin to deal severe blows to capitalist private property.

5. The USSR and the other countries where the first victories of the socialist revolution took place remained isolated in a backward economic, social, cultural and political environment, which did not facilitate the carrying through to completion of a process of building a socialist society. Consequently, and to varying degrees, they went through processes of bureaucratisation which are a supplementary factor holding back the march towards a classless society. These countries remain societies in transition between capitalism and socialism, whose final destiny will be resolved by the outcome of the class struggle on a world scale. Any re-establishment of private ownership of the means of production would mean an unmistakable historical regression. This is the reason why we must defend the USSR and similar

countries against periodic imperialist attempts to achieve such a restoration.

6. For decades Soviet society has been suffering a structural crisis that is the product of the bureaucracy's hold over the economy and state. This has been more or less reproduced in East Europe and in China. The bureaucracy's control prevents any new and qualitative advance to socialism. We are not simply dealing, in all these cases, with transitional societies between capitalism and socialism, but with *bureaucratised* workers' states, blocked in their progress to socialism. This blockage can be ended only by an anti-bureaucratic political revolution. The latter will maintain and consolidate the collective ownership and the planned economy but will bring to an end the bureaucracy's monopoly of political power and its control over the social surplus product and its consequent hold over the main spheres of social life. The bureaucracy's privileges will be eliminated and social inequality will be radically reduced.

7. The crisis of humanity as a whole will only be resolved with the victory of the world socialist revolution, that is, the creation of a world socialist federation. Stocks of nuclear, biologic-chemical and 'conventional'

weapons of mass destruction can only be eliminated and arms production halted at that level. Humanity's material resources likewise can only be redistributed to eradicate poverty, famine and misery in the Third World on a world scale. Only internationally will it be possible to ensure the safeguarding of the natural conditions for the fullest development of the human race.

8. The proletariat is the main revolutionary protagonist in the three sectors of the world revolution. The self-organisation of the proletariat, state power based on democratically elected workers' councils, is the only form of state power suitable for building a classless society.

9. In all the present struggles of the workers, exploited peasants and the support for the immediate demands of those struggling, with propaganda for, and putting into practice of demands and forms of action that allow fighters to come, through their own experience, to an understanding of the necessity to struggle for the takeover of the workplaces and the conquest of state power.

10. Any qualitative advance to socialism, both in the countries where capitalism has already been

overtaken and those still to have a socialist revolution, requires, once the civil war is over and workers' power consolidated, state and government institutions based on socialist democracy: real exercise of state power by democratically elected workers' and people's councils; pluralism of political tendencies and parties; full democratic rights for all working people, including those who are opponents of the government and of the political majority represented inside the councils. These rights must particularly include the right to defend their political positions and to struggle for them by legal political means.

Far from comprising a 'sect's points of honour', these specific positions of the Fourth International form a programmatic whole, a coherent explanation of what has happened in our century, a coherent proposal for the solution of the world crisis. It is the only one conforming to Marxism. They represent at the same time a coherent line of action for all the world proletariat, for the whole of the exploited and oppressed on an international scale — the only line of action corresponding to the class interests of the proletariat. Far from reflecting some sort of dogmatic rigid position, they are only the synthesis of the experience of the actual class struggle, of the real movement for emancipation of the working people for more than a hundred years. Hundreds of millions of human beings have gone through the real-life experience of points 1,2 and 5. Tens of millions of human beings have begun to put into practice points 3,4,6,8,9 and 10. Only the Fourth International for the moment defends the entirety, or even the majority of these positions. There is nothing sectarian about noting this fact. On the contrary, what is sectarian is wanting to counterpose to this real movement of the proletariat on a world scale the *shibboleth* of the priority of immediate alignment with just the 'new revolutionary leaderships' which have emerged in two, three or four countries — an alignment which, incidentally, more mature leaderships do not generally request themselves.

**A ship without a rudder or a compass will never get to port.**

Building the Fourth International, building revolutionary parties throughout the world still has to be done under exceptionally difficult conditions (with a small number of exceptions). The weaker the inherent material force of an organisation, the

more it is exposed to the centrifugal and disintegrating pressure of external social forces. This is a self-evident truth for anyone applying the theorems of historical materialism to the political-organisational life of our epoch and also to revolutionary organisations themselves.

If the Fourth International has survived in conditions and subject to pressures and persecutions which cannot be compared to those suffered by the First, Second or Third Internationals (to grasp this you have to compare Hitler to Thiers, Stalin to Noske and Senator McCarthy to Palmer (23) whose name nobody remembers even!), if it has not only survived but considerably developed, especially over the last twenty years, it is fundamentally for two reasons.

Objectively its construction corresponds to a *necessity of the world class struggle* and is perceived as such by vanguards in a growing number of countries on the basis of their own experience, that is, of the lessons they themselves draw from the big class struggles in which they have participated. This facilitates our growing roots inside the proletariat, our increasing activity not as observers or commentators but as participants, and in a certain number of cases as leaders (at least functionally and at certain times) of the real mass struggles and organisations of our class.

Our programme has successfully resisted the test of tumultuous, often unexpected events. More than ever it is the only compass for pointing the world proletariat and its vanguard a way forward to avoid the catastrophes toward which the crisis is dragging us.

If militants are deeply convinced that this is the case, that the choice is not between a few reforms more and a few struggles less, between parties that have already passed the test and 'groups which have never taken power anywhere', but the victory or defeat of the world revolution, the life and death of humanity, then they will be sufficiently motivated to resist external pressure, 'fashionable' ideas, inclinations to discouragement, resignation or a retreat into 'private life'. Such pressure is particularly strong because for the moment we are in a phase of defensive downturn of workers' struggles in most countries of the world, due to the initial effects of the capitalist economic crisis and the capitulation of the labour bureaucracies, which implies the absence of a credible alternative to crisis for the broad masses (the crisis will produce many other effects in the long term).

But when this commitment, which is not based on a naive religious-type

faith but on numerous scientific analyses and verifications, is undermined or disappears; when it is replaced by growing political scepticism and relativism; when *Realpolitik* takes over from principles, then the moorings come adrift. Then the ship is taken off course without rudder or compass by a stormy sea. It can run aground on many a rock and beach. Above all it can sink beneath the waves.

Is it not obvious that it appears senseless to commit one's life to building organisations that are still weak and whose impact on the real course of history is still limited for the moment, (even if it is much greater than it was formerly) — if one does not believe to the marrow of one's bones in the inevitable historic necessity of this task, from the point of view of the interests of the proletariat, of all the exploited and oppressed, of all humanity? If the difference between revolutionary Marxists and much stronger organisations is only quantitative and not programmatic — if we are not the only organisation that embodies the overall interests of the world proletariat and acts accordingly — then all these efforts at partybuilding seem an utter waste of energy.

The separate existence of our organisation is not based on any material force, apparatus or state. Some people will say that is the cause of our persistent weakness. Let us leave the cynics to stew in their own cynicism. On the contrary, for us it is a striking proof of our strength — of which there have been few examples in the history of the exploited classes and revolutionary organisations. The fact that we have been able to survive so many tests, to develop, to grow in these conditions is the proof of the correctness of our ideas and the quality of our cadres. *But this also means that the very existence of the organisation is linked to its programmatic and political identity.* Any putting into question of this identity undermines the organisational justification, contrary to what happens in mass organisations, which can survive ten programmatic revisions and a hundred political adaptations, precisely because their existence has other material foundations.

In this sense those who are involved in the systematic liquidation of the political and programmatic heritage of revolutionary Marxism as are the Australian SWP, are digging their own graves as an independent current.

23. Palmer was the Justice Department official in the Wilson Administration, who launched a sweeping crackdown against the communists in 1919, which led to the arrest and deportation of many militants.





Nicaraguan militias (DR)

There is no way of surviving as such without one's own programmatic and political base, outside of the major currents of the international workers' movement. Having left the Fourth International they will be rapidly faced with the choice of either disappearing as an organisation or linking up to one of the major currents. The Sandinista and Fidelista sub-current is too weak on a world scale and provides too few references for intervention in an imperialist country like Australia to be able to really constitute an alternative. This alternative will only be on offer from much larger forces.

The course of the Australian SWP leaders has clear origins: growing scepticism with respect to the proletarian revolution and the revolutionary potential of the working class in the main countries of the world. From this flows the seeking after substitutes and short cuts instead of the slow and relentless preparation of future working class explosions, of a day-to-day intervention in struggles historically justified by this perspective. The SWP leaders looked for these substitutes first of all among revolutionaries elsewhere in Nicaragua and Cuba. That was honourable but insufficient. Experience has confirmed that building real revolutionary parties cannot be based on such imported models. This is one of the essential causes of the successive failure of the Stalinists (and Stalinist/Khrushchevists), Maoists and 'Albanians'. Without frankly admitting it — even declaring the contrary — the Australian SWP leaders are demonstrating in practice that they are looking to vary their diet. The 'ratatouille' dish they now want to tuck into is com-

posed of the most diverse, bizarre and unappetising ingredients. It would be quite unfair to identify the original Sandinista or Fidelista ingredient in this mish-mash. You can find in it very hot pro-Moscow spices, equally spicy Croat nationalists (24), ecologist/pacifist fruit that is still a bit green and bureaucratic trade-union candidates a little rotten round the edges.

In itself there is nothing wrong in wanting to look for openings to build the revolutionary party out of all forms of the mass movement. But there are openings and openings. If one is armed with a great confidence in one's political ideas and programme, then intervening in the mass movement is carried out with the aim of winning forces and more influence *for these ideas*. If this confidence disappears in a growing scepticism, then activism and 'partybuilding' become ends in themselves, detached from any basis in principle. Then adapting to forces one wants to influence becomes the rule. Apparatus manoeuvres replace more and more the struggle for political influence, anchored in the defence of working class interests. This adaptation is already shown in the concessions made to the pro-Moscow current (the Australian SP) contained in the dreadful 'report' on the Moscow festival. The rudderless, compassless boat is already being carried along by the currents. Nobody, beginning with Percy/Lorimer themselves, knows where it will end up.

We are not supporters of the politics of the 'worse-it-gets-the-better-it-is-for-us.' The Australian SWP organises a number of valuable revolutionary militants. It would be regrettable if they become lost to revolu-

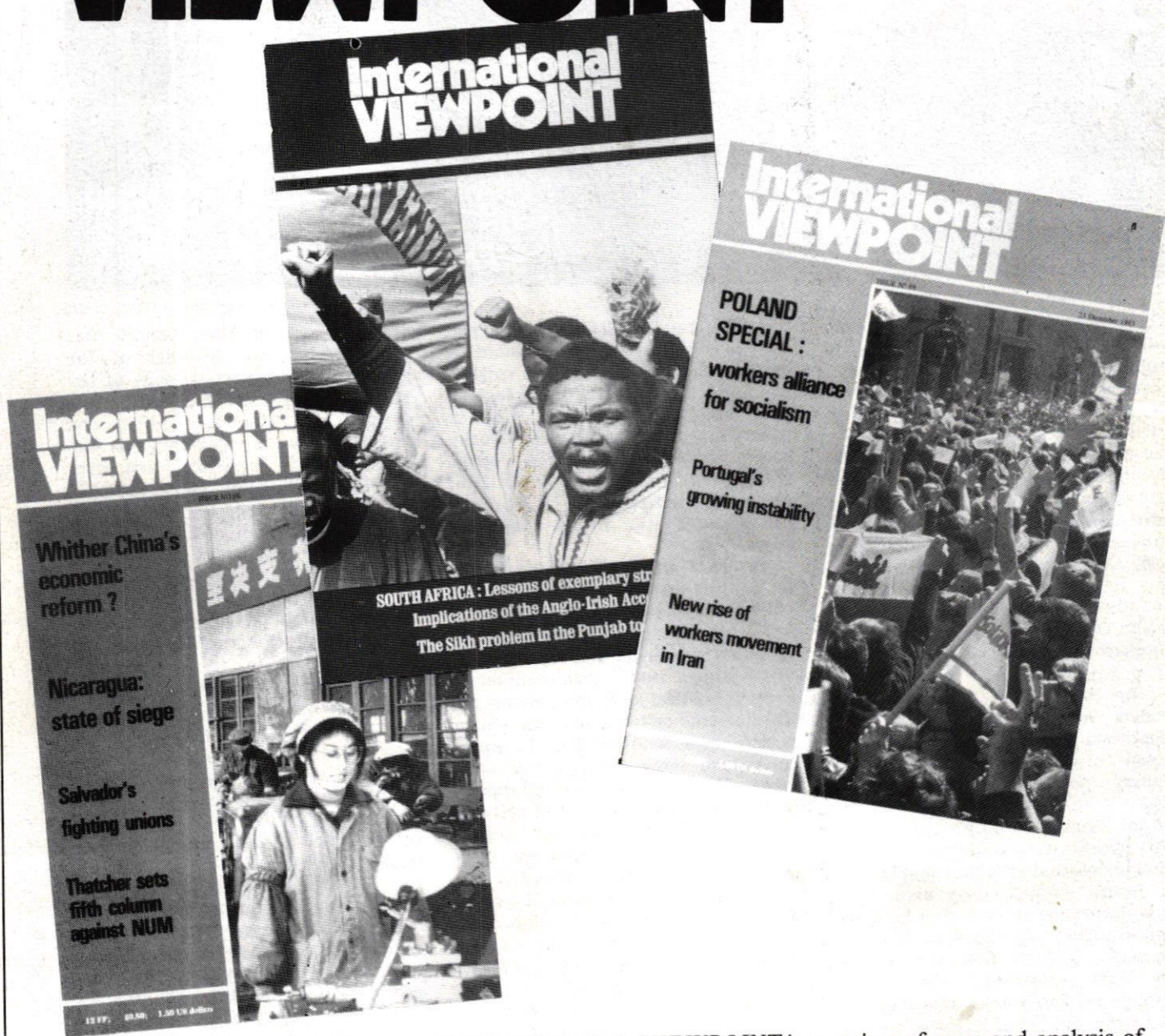
tionary Marxism. Their practice has often been close to that of the militants of the best sections of the Fourth International. But now there is a significant difference. On the one side militants are intervening on the basis of solid principles that have stood the test of time and in collaboration with thousands of revolutionaries who are helping them to recognise and overcome the inevitable difficulties facing the strengthening of their organisations. On the other side these militants in growing international isolation, must intervene without reference to a solid and coherent basis of political and programmatic principles.

We must therefore warn them frankly that their present course is suicidal. The Australian section of the Fourth International will be reborn in any eventuality, with or without these militants (we obviously prefer that it be with them), for the struggles of the Australian proletariat will inevitably produce experiences that confirm the correctness of our ideas, and cadres will become conscious of this. But proto-Stalinism or post-Stalinism in a country like Australia represents a dead past without a future. It is up to the members and leaders of the Australian SWP to reflect on this historical dilemma and to change course before it is too late and programmatic revisionism leads to pure and simple liquidation. □

24. On this see the article from "Direct Action" supporting not only the demand for Croat separatism but also implicitly supporting the establishment of a 'Great Croatia', of which 40% of the inhabitants would be non-Croats.



# International VIEWPOINT



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## ERRATA

*page 4*

Last paragraph, 1st column should read —

...and the defeat of Chile in 1973, at the cost of 25,000 dead. Furthermore these two countries, Indonesia and Chile, had among the strongest ...

3rd paragraph, 2nd column should begin —

The last revolutionary explosion we have experienced in capitalist Europe was the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75. Was it defeated ...

*page 10*

12th line, 1st column should read —

... the third worldists put themselves in the same position as the trade-union bureaucrats and the Stalinist and ...