

NAHUEL MORENO
THE PARTY
AND THE
REVOLUTION

Theory, program and policy - A polemic with Ernest Mandel

A scandalous document (in reply to Ernest Germain's [Mandel's]
'In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International')

By Nahuel Moreno

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Foreword to the First English Edition

Mercedes Petit*

The Argentinian Nahuel Moreno (1924-1987) was one of the most important Latin American Trotskyist revolutionaries. His work has been widely disseminated and reprinted in Spanish, but very little in English. Now *nahuelmoreno.org* and *Ediciones El Socialista* have begun disseminating translations of his works in English, so that their contributions can be known by the new socialist militants around the world.

The Party and the Revolution is one of his most important documents. In it is expressed the polemics with another Trotskyist leader, the Belgian Ernest Mandel (1924-1995). Mandel led since the early 1950s the current revisionist of Trotskyism (which identified itself for years as the “United Secretariat”). His written work is well known in the English language, first for his important papers on Marxist economics.

In the early 1970s, when he wrote this book, Nahuel Moreno led the PST (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores) of Argentina, one of the largest Trotskyist parties in the world. In his long journey he devoted much of his militant effort to the building of revolutionary socialist parties in his country and Latin America.

For the first time the entire *The Party and the Revolution* is presented in English. Throughout its pages we believe one may find all kinds of political, strategic and tactical contributions, giving light to the main debates that took place in the ranks of Trotskyism from the post-war period, both in Europe and in Latin America... And in addition, as we say in the presentation of the second Spanish, “the reader will find that today are still fully in force most of the controversial axes Moreno has addressed in his criticisms of revisionist positions then”.

Let the reader judge if so.

* **Mercedes Petit** is a Trotskyist militant, journalist and researcher. In the 1960s she became active in the current led by Nahuel Moreno (www.nahuelmoreno.org), with whom she collaborated for years in the work of propaganda and theoretical elaboration. After the military coup of 1976 they shared exile in Colombia. Petit has published *Elementary political concepts* (in 1986, with Nahuel Moreno), *Notes for a history of Trotskyism* in 2005 and *Working women and Marxism* in 2009 (with Carmen Carrasco). She writes in *El Socialista* (www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar) and *International Correspondence* magazine (www.uit-ci.org).

Foreword to the Second Spanish Edition

Polemics of the XXI century

Mercedes Petit

Why to republish this book?

In 1973, for the discussions leading up to the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International (United Secretariat), Ernest Mandel presented a document, signed with his pseudonym Germain, entitled “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”. Nahuel Moreno polemicized against it, with his extensive document “A scandalous document”. Amongst the militancy of the PST it was nicknamed “The Morenazo”. In 1989 it was published under the title *The Party and the Revolution (theory, program and policy: polemics with Mandel)*.

There are two reasons that justify its republishing. In the first place, the reader will find throughout this book a huge variety of analytical and methodological issues, contributions and theoretical, strategic and tactical debates which enrich even today the political elaboration of revolutionary Marxism. Its pages provide us with powerful tools of education and political training for fighters and workers, students, peasants and popular militants who in the XXI century are seeking alternative paths to reconstruct a consistent revolutionary leadership. Except for a minimum placement of both currents in the broader context of the Trotskyist movement, we do not intend to give an overview of those controversies of the late 1960s and 1970s, or to give you a frame of reference of the time in which they were developed. Nothing will be more useful than to plunge directly into them.

Secondly, in different contexts and with greater or lesser importance, the reader will find that today are still fully in force most of the controversial axes Moreno has addressed in his criticisms of revisionist positions then. The current followers of Mandel¹, as well as many sectors of the left -wing and anti-capitalist vanguard, fall into capitulation to the new (and the remnants of the old) non-worker and non-revolutionary leaderships that have emerged in the heat of the vigorous revolutionary processes that shook the late twentieth century and the beginnings of this new century. “Mandelism”, both as practiced by the groups organized in that current, or as a general influence on the left and the fighters, remains a major drag. They are a stumbling block for the construction of a Fourth International earning mass influence and based on solid revolutionary parties which may carry in different countries the fight to take power, to establish real workers and peasants governments and to advance in the construction of international socialism with workers democracy. The influence of Chavism in Venezuela on the present vanguard and the capitulation Mandelism to it are just a sample. In this introduction we want to refer to some of these hot topics for political and theoretical discussion.

Moreno vs. Mandel

In the 1970s the two main currents of the Trotskyist movement, organized in the Fourth International, were headed by the Belgian Ernest Mandel (1923-1995) and the Argentinian Nahuel Moreno (1924-1987). Mandel oriented most sections and had his main force in Europe, mainly in

¹ Although they call themselves “Fourth International”, the world organization of the Mandelists is heterogeneous, with organizations with different conceptions and political alignments. They can be known from the page www.internationalviewpoint.org, among others.

France with, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), founded in 1969. Since 1967–68 he had promoted a guerrilla orientation to his followers in Latin America. In Argentina he supported Mario Roberto Santucho, who after the division of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party), the Argentine section, formed the PRT–*El Combatiente* [The Fighter], recognized as official section in 1969 at the Ninth World Congress. The PRT–*La Verdad* [The Truth], which was headed by Nahuel Moreno, remained as a sympathizer section. In 1970 the ERP (People’s Revolutionary Army) guerrillas was founded. In 1972, the PRT–ERP publicly broke with the Fourth International, calling to form an international with Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party, Mao, the Vietnamese and Enver Oxa, of the Albanian CP.

Moreno’s current had particular strength in Latin America. In Argentina, since the 1940s, it had been the only Trotskyist group that turned to be active and to party building in the working class, among workers who were being massively won by Peronism. In 1965 it merged with Roberto Santucho and formed the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). It polemised against the guerrilla warfare orientation, and promoted the PRT–*La Verdad* since 1968. In 1972 the PST (Socialist Workers Party) was founded.

The events that culminated with the PRT’s split in 1967–68 had a previous history. Nahuel Moreno, since his participation in the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948, polemised against the positions of Mandel and who was at that time the main leader, the Greek resident in France Michel Pablo. The “orthodox” Trotskyism claimed by Moreno since 1950–51 began to be delineated with clear political positions seeking to respond to the main revolutionary processes. The “red thread” of those criticisms and polemics was denouncing that Pablo and Mandel had fallen into opportunism, revising Trotsky’s legacy. Pablo and Mandel had begun to define that the communist parties (dominated by the Stalinist bureaucracy), the social democracy and the various bourgeois nationalist movements had ceased being counter-revolutionary. Since the birth of this capitulation that plunged the Fourth International into a crisis that it has not yet overcome, Moreno (in a first period together with the majority of the International) argued that this completely revised one of the main points of the program of Trotskyism. This essential point said, and says, that “the main obstacle to the progress of mankind towards socialism is that the masses are led by leaderships who are against the revolution, like Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism. And our task is to build a new revolutionary international leadership to overcome this historical impasse.”²

Mandel and his mentor Pablo, instead, trusted that the bureaucratic and bourgeois nationalist leaderships (like Tito in Yugoslavia, Mao in China, the MNR and Lechin in Bolivia or Peronism in Argentina, Fidel Castro, Ben Bella in Algeria) would spearhead triumphant processes towards world socialism. Later they would go on adding the Vietnamese CP, the European “Euro communism”, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Lula in Brazil, and a long etcetera. The consequence was that they put forth the Trotskyists as counsellors or advisers of these treacherous leaders and parties, instead of disputing the leadership of the masses to all reformist and opportunist currents. In fact, they were renouncing the *raison d’être* of the Fourth International since Trotsky founded it in 1938: to build new revolutionary socialist parties to defeat in the mass movement these traditional leaderships.

Fortunately, in 1985, preparing a first public edition of this text, Moreno himself wrote a brief foreword—reproduced on pages 12–21 of this edition— which gives a quick overview of this trajectory, which began in the early 1950s, against opportunistic revisionism in Trotskyism. It is a great help in placing the reader in the controversy of the early 1970s that we are presenting. Although in passing, since it was not the subject of this book, we want to remind the reader that this opportunism begat the opposite deviation, ultra-leftism. Sectors of Trotskyism rejected Pabloism-Mandelism from sectarian positions, with which he crisis deepened.

² See p. 15 of this edition.

The capitulation of Mandelism to “socialism of the XXI century”

In 2005 the president of Venezuela, Commander Hugo Chavez, announced that he was starting to build “socialism of the XXI century”. Already in the previous years, Chavism was gaining political influence on the vanguard of several countries. His heyday was given first by the great support he had gained amongst Venezuelan workers and popular sectors, from his anti-Yankee, anti-oligarchic discourse and several measures (taking advantage of the oil wealth) than in the early years improved the standard of living of the people. To this he added his confluence with Fidel and Raul Castro. Chavez, with his “socialist” proclamation, helped the Cuban CP to hide the process of capitalist restoration that had been developing in Cuba, at the same time Chavez helped their sagging economy with oil shipments at very low prices. Fidel anointed Chavez as revolutionary. The communist parties and other sectors of the Latin American and global left enthusiastically supported the bourgeois government headed by Chavez. Of course, Mandelists joined, although they virtually have no supporters in Venezuela, except a group that broke away from Morenism some years ago and which was losing identity.

Let’s give a recent token sample, where they reiterate their support for Chavism led by Nicolas Maduro, Chavez’s successor after his death in March 2013. In the thesis submitted to the internal debate in July 2013, the Mandelist group acting within the Brazilian PSOL says: “With struggles, rebellions and victories against neoliberal policies at the beginning of XXI century, the peoples of Latin America were protagonists in the confrontation with imperialism, kicked off at least one revolutionary process that openly proposes the construction of socialism (Venezuela).”³ This definition is shared, words more or words less, by all organizations that converge in the Mandelist “International” including the French New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and other affiliated or nearby parties.

Nahuel Moreno’s followers in Venezuela, with the support of all their current, have a completely different policy. They have vindicated the gains the workers have achieved with their struggles. Without any sectarianism, they participated in the first row in the mobilization against the pro-Yankee coup that tried to overthrow Chavez in April 2002. But they have always maintained a total political independence and a critical stance towards Chavism, which they define as a nationalist movement resting in the army and important sectors of the bourgeoisie, which has friction with other bourgeois sectors and Yankee imperialism.

Morenists have systematically been demonstrating and denouncing that Venezuela is not going towards any socialism. Venezuela is experiencing a capitalist mixed economy, which increasingly discharges its crisis on the backs of the workers who see how inflation eats their wages. There can be no socialism, nor a serious anti-imperialism, when Venezuelan oil gives huge profits to major multinationals, including for example the American Chevron, repudiated in Ecuador and other countries. When the banks and large companies, such as Movistar, General Motors and Coca Cola, have record profits. Contrary to the assertions of the “socialism of the XXI Century” discourse, the workers’ share of national wealth is falling, while capitalists increasingly earn more.

Since 2011, Chavez first, and Nicolas Maduro later, as well as the Castro brothers and the Cuban Communist Party, have been supporting dictators either defeated or questioned by revolutionary mobilizations in Arab countries, particularly Gaddafi in Libya and al-Assad in Syria. Has Mandelism repudiated these policies? Many simply remain silent. Others delimit their support of Chavez and Castro to those dictators, but keeping intact their vindication of them and of “socialism of the XXI century”. These are not new attitudes. For example, Mandel never criticized Fidel Castro for advising the Sandinistas “to not make of Nicaragua another Cuba”; he simply ignored it and continued to proclaim his support for an alleged “building of socialism” in Nicaragua under the Sandinista government.

One of the earlier and more severe precedents of supporting a bourgeois government happened in Brazil, since 1 January 2003, when Lula first assumed the presidency. The Mandelists organized within the PT as the Socialist Democracy (DS) current, were coming from many years of capitulation to the reformist leadership of Lula and the growing integration of most of the PT to the bourgeois democratic

³ “Real democracy now, on the streets and in PSOL”, internal current of Enlace-CSOL, which has just adopted the name Insurgence.

regime and the state apparatus. The Mandelists gained significant weight, and occupied at the time the governorship of Rio Grande do Sul and the mayoralty of Fortaleza as well as numerous mayors and legislative seats. After the victory of Lula, they won the governorship of Pará.

This historic capitulation gave a qualitative leap in 2003, when they took a key ministry for the mobilizations in the countryside, of Agricultural Development in the bourgeois government of Lula. In the DS and at “Unified Secretariat” level there were sectors critical of such participation, but both positions coexisted seamlessly into their traditional “largeness”.

As the confrontation of the mass movement with the anti-workers measures of Lula’s Government was growing, there were DS / United Secretariat militants who were entering a crisis with such participation. Finally, in May 2003, when the government of Lula launched its reactionary retirement reform and public employees went on strike to face it, a group broke away. Its senator was expelled from the PT along with three other MPs, including a federal parliamentarian of the Morenist organization, when they voted against the retirement reform and supported the strike. The DS continued to occupy the ministry, and moved away unnoticed from the “Unified Secretariat” until it disengaged completely. Given those facts, what was made public at least, no one proposed to expel the DS from the “Fourth International” of Mandelism for integrating a bourgeois and anti-workers government as that of the PT.

The building of revolutionary parties

This debate was one of the most important and permanent between Moreno and Mandel. Moreno said: “We believe that the origin of the differences we have with the majority [Mandelists] in all areas— theoretical, programmatic, strategic and tactical— are born of the one a fundamental one: that we have regarding the method of construction of our sections.”⁴ The essence of this controversy is in the title of Chapter VI, “Mandelist party or Leninist party” which was reissued several times as unitary Unit leaflet.

In addition to referring to Mandel’s documents on the subject, Nahuel Moreno polemised in particular with the characteristics and the activity of the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the vigorous French Trotskyist organization founded in 1969 by the Krivine brothers, Daniel Bensaid, Pierre Rousset and other youth who emerged as leaders from the revolutionary days of the French May.

Today, the debate on the need for and the nature of the revolutionary party take place in the framework of the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships of the communist parties, since 1989, which impacted Mandel. In his later years he was increasingly connecting with the tendencies in fashion booming since then: anti-Party, autonomists, anarchists and horizontalists. These gave encouragement to his previous, traditional, anti-Leninist conception, contrary to the party centralized and for action, but he kept always calling himself “Leninist”. In a 1989 article he said: “We remain unrepentant Leninist, provided that Leninism does not turn into substitutionism”.⁵ What was he referring to? In his latest, 1994, book, *Trotsky as alternative*, he criticized the Bolshevik line (i.e. Lenin and Trotsky) for “substitutionism”.⁶ And he explained it thus: “The main obstacle to the development of the strategy and tactics appropriate for the working class and the mass movements in this century [the XX] is the theory and practice (the practice came before theory) of substitutionism; in other words, the change of the independent working class as an agent of change and social transformation, by some other agent: party, State, government, parliament, and so we could go on. These are all useful tools, and sometimes essential, for the emancipation of the working class. However, they must be kept subordinate to the true movement of self-emancipation.”⁷

⁴ See p. 140 of this edition.

⁵ “Status and Future of socialism”, August 1989. Magazine *El Socialismo del Futuro* [Socialism of the Future], N 1, vol. 1, Madrid, 1990. Its steering and editorial committee included Alfonso Guerra, Mikhail Gorbachev, Willy Brandy, Fernando Claudin, among others.

⁶ Xama Editora, Sao Pablo, 1995, p. 118.

⁷ Idem, p. 27.

In 1992, with Mandel still alive, they officially set aside the “Leninist” conception— kept only in name—and adopted the orientation of “broad anti-capitalist parties.” At the same time, for the international organization they explicitly renounced Trotskyism. A resolution of the United Secretariat that year said that it was not a question of being “the party of the world revolution,” but to be “a common framework of reflection and political and militant coordination of national organisations, of lax operation, democratic and pluralistic”, which had to relativize the pre-existing fight with reformists.⁸

The Morenist current considers the processes of fall of the one-party dictatorships in the former USSR and Eastern Europe started in 1989–90 have been installing a dynamic repudiation of all political and trade union totalitarian apparatuses (which we call political and anti-bureaucratic revolution). If on one hand this opens the way to development of new mobilizations and new vanguards and organizations, it has also meant, as mentioned above, a rise of anti-party, horizontalist and anarchist currents, all declared enemies of democratic centralism and the Leninist policy. These trends in vogue with the vanguard of the XXI century (whose ultimate expression was once Sub-commander Marcos and the Zapatista movement emerged in January 1994) have encouraged the misguided conceptions of Mandelism. Not only have they capitulated to anti-party bias fuelled by Sub-commander Marcos and the EZLN, they have also capitulated to his wrong decision of not encouraging the unity of peasant struggles with those of the workers, students and youth, and his proclamations about “making the revolution without taking power” (broadcast to the world by the British teacher living in Mexico, John Holloway).

Actually Mandel, always visionary, was paving the way to the reformism and anti-partisanship of Sub-commander Marcos and anticipating his slogans. In a visit to Buenos Aires in July 1992, he said: “The left has two challenges. The first is to have the ability to formulate immediate fighting objectives [...]. This must be done without power objectives. We’ll see then how the balance of power changes. The second challenge is honesty”.⁹ More prescient yet was the controversial question which 20 years before Moreno was already asking to Mandel: “Can socialism be built without taking power?”¹⁰

Let us say in passing that it has been long ago that Marcos virtually disappeared from the Mexican political life, and unfortunately something similar also happened with the Mandelist organization with long trajectory in the country.

The inexorable crisis of the “broad anti-capitalist parties”

One of the chronic issues on the agendas of meetings of the “international committee” of the “Fourth International” of the Mandelists is the crises of their “broad” parties. They are the current consequences of over half a century of Marxist revisionism.

Take the most important case, its organization in France, the LCR, the oldest and largest of its currents. In 2002 and 2007 it had significant electoral success, and the figure of the young Olivier Besancenot, former postman of 28 years, was growing. In the first round of the presidential elections of 2002, the LCR scored eighth place, with 1,200,000 votes, or 4.25 percent. It was close to the candidate of *Lutte Ouvrière*, Arlette Laguiller, which came fifth with 1,600,000 votes. But with those under the age 25, Besancenot was second with 14 percent surpassing the social democrat Jospin and the right-winger Le Pen.

In the first round of 2007, the young postman improved his results. He was fifth, with a million and a half votes (4.08 percent), leaving for the first time far behind *Lutte Ouvrière*, which barely scratched the half a million votes, with 1.33 percent. As way of example, let us remember the profile presented by Besancenot days before the vote: “I am neither Trotskyist nor Guevarist nor Luxemburgist, I am a revolutionary. And the revolution needs to be reinvented, because no revolutionary experiment has been successful. Many of them ended up as bloody cartoons.”¹¹

⁸ Quoted in the supplement of *International Correspondence* No. 3, July 1993, on the visit of Mandel to Buenos Aires.

⁹ Interview in *Página 12* of Buenos Aires, 2 August 1992.

¹⁰ See p. 129 of the present edition.

¹¹ Interview in *Le Monde*, 6 April 2007.

With the passage the years, the LCR was deepening the Mandelist conception of the 1960s and 1970s which Nahuel Moreno already criticized in this book: the existence of permanent internal tendencies or factions, the lax membership without any militant discipline, the absence of democratic centralism, an activity of general propaganda on the vanguard, the absence of a clear political program against the government and of alternative power, the absence of concrete slogans to intervene in the struggles of the working class, and the loss of solid criteria of class independence. In 2008 a leap occurred when they oriented themselves to the self-dissolution of the LCR, to found the NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party), launched in February 2009.

Obviously, the new project was born deepening the strategy of “broad and anti-capitalist parties”. It further diluted the importance of accompanying and promoting the struggles of the working class, to place it as one more of the “new social subjects”, emphasizing as fundamental women and environmentalists movements, and placing in centre stage electoral participation at the expense of participation in the struggles of the workers and the most dispossessed sectors. The revolutionary program and a clear policy were set aside as “dogmatism”. Everything was diluted in “open” generalities, “everything is new” and the slogan fashionable among anti-Party and horizontalists: “We have more questions than answers.” In French political life, although they kept their moniker of “radical left” or “far left”, the Mandelists placed the NPA bound to a centre-left electoral alternative.

The NPA was born imbued with optimism by previous electoral successes and as a project “superseding” the former LCR, to “reach more people”. Anyway, there was tension from the start. Important sectors questioned that construction of the revolutionary party was abandoned to make way for a large organization that could accommodate or ally itself to reformist sectors. These tensions were reflected in the debate over the name. The proposal called New Revolutionary Party received 43 percent. NPA won with 53 percent, as washed out as its program and policy. However, the figure of 9,000 members who participated was auspicious, because the LCR had 3,000 members when dissolved itself.

The presidential elections of 2012 faced them to complete failure. For one, they squandered the accumulation achieved by the popular figure of Besancenot. The former postman resigned to run for the third time, with the wrong argument that one should “rotate the positions”. They had to improvise the feeble candidacy of an unknown metal worker, Philippe Poutou, who was supported by only 51 percent of the delegates at the Congress of the NPA that proclaimed it. But the fundamental political tension was the pressure installed in their ranks to merge with the newly formed Left Front (FI) that postulated Jean-Luc Mélenchon. This leader of the SP (who had been a minister in the cohabitation government of Jospin) had broken away in 2008, forming the Left Party, with other smaller groupings. His candidacy won the support of the Communist Party and the FI was formed. Many of the supporters of the NPA, headed even by former leaders of the old LCR, publicly called for a vote for Mélenchon, or directly went to the FI. The sector which kept the vote to Poutou, anyway raised unity with them, but with the requirement not to support a social democratic government of Hollande, who won the second round with the support of FI. Poutou took less than a third of 2007 votes, barely 411,000, 1.15 percent.

In a few years, the “broad anti-capitalist” orientation was making water, leading Mandelism to an electoral regression and, more importantly, in the struggles and organization of French and immigrant workers. The NPA, with its few years of life, is in political and organizational stagnation, as its own leaders say. In the 2012 Congress they declared some 4,500 members and there were 3,000 participants, i.e., half or two-thirds less than the founders.

Let us just add that in Italy, one of the countries where the opportunist Trotskyism had a small but historic presence (driven by Livio Maitan who in 1969 founded the Italian LCR), its group, in the summer of 2013, announced its dissolution. For years they had participated in the centre-left Communist Refoundation Party (PCR), and in 2007 they began a failed attempt of “broad” organization with Critical Left.

The debate about imperialist capitalism and the productive forces

Mandel was one of the most prominent Marxist economists of the post-war period. Unfortunately, in his conception it was central the idea—contrary to the facts and the basic premises of Marx and Trotsky—that in the second half of the XX century capitalism achieved a significant development of the productive forces. To this he added not giving any or almost any importance to the existence of imperialism. Within these two colossal mistakes, he had the great merit of being one of the pioneers to define from the outset the great importance of the so-called “technological revolution”, with the leap in the development of electronics, telecommunications, cybernetics, biotechnology, and so on. Moreno when debating these issues noted that although Mandel defended a socialist perspective, it made him play the game of the apologists of capitalism.

In the early 1990s, like many other intellectuals, Mandel fuelled from Marxist positions the fire of that famous “globalization” taken fully by the defeated communist parties. With these definitions they presented as a novelty the fact—almost as old as capitalism, global economic system par excellence—that local economies integrate into the world economy, and this would lead to an alleged development of productive forces. As a sample only, let us remember that in 1989 Mandel spoke of “the fundamental trend in the development of capitalism in the late XX century: the internalization of the productive forces, which inevitably brings, despite all state and ideological resistance, the internalization of capital and the class struggle”.¹²

In his last book, of 1994, *Trotsky as alternative* already quoted, he forcefully reaffirmed these views, directly criticizing Trotsky. He said: “If we look at the practical and / or theoretical results obtained by Trotsky, in light of the course of events of this century, today we should point out significant errors of assessment, theoretical and practical. The most important of these was his repeated acceptance of the theory [...] by which the growth of the productive forces was impossible under imperialism”.¹³ In short, Mandel died totally convinced, beyond the overwhelming facts against, that under imperialism the productive forces develop.

Currently, the Mandelists maintain and deepen those misconceptions, wrapping them in the definitions which became fashionable at the end of the last century, such as “globalized” capitalism, “neoliberal” or “social liberal”, or conceptions about the absence or disappearance of imperialism, speaking of “emerging countries” or other similar expressions characteristic of the capitalist media journalists and their economists.

In relation to the debate on the productive forces our current always distanced itself from the positions of certain academic left, which Mandelism echoed; those who conceived the concept in a strictly “technical” sense. Following the tradition of the founders of scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, we define the human being as the most important and dynamic part of the productive forces and we use this concept to account for the development achieved by humanity at any given time. This is why we fight economic theories proposing that the productive forces are developed relying on undeniable technological advances and abstracting social conditions of misery and degradation to which imperialist capitalism subjects most people, based on the defence of private ownership of the means of production.

Pitifully, reality confirms our diagnosis. Consider a few exemplary data.¹⁴ Although significant progress was made in the field of medicine, diseases that had been eradicated long ago are back. Tuberculosis now affects 8.8 million people worldwide. While the five richest people in the world accumulate a whopping 293 billion (figure approximately equivalent to the amount of Argentina’s foreign debt, one of the bulkiest in the world), according to the World Bank itself about 1.1 billion

¹² “Status and Future of socialism”, already quoted.

¹³ *Trotsky as Alternative*, p.11.

¹⁴ Data in:

http://historico.medicosypacientes.com/noticias/2011/10/11_10_13_tuberculosis

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/luisakroll/2013/03/04/inside-the-2013-billionaires-list-facts-and-figures/>

<http://www.bancomundial.org/temas/globalizacion/cuestiones2.htm>

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2012/fast_facts/en/index.html

<http://twenergy.com/energia-electrica/un-cuarto-de-la-poblacion-mundial-vive-sin-electricidad-193>

people (almost 20 percent of the total) live on less than \$ 1 a day. Although the development of science and technology reach unsuspected levels, millions of people throughout the world live outside the most basic progress. There are 783 million people (approximately 13 percent) in the world who lack access to safe drinking water; 1.6 billion people (25 percent) have no access to electricity, about 3 billion people (nearly half of the population) cook inside their home with wood and coal, a situation that kills two million people annually, according to the WHO being the worldwide leading cause of death of environmental origin.

To poverty and hunger, we can add other scourges, such as global warming, spending on armaments, drug trafficking and drug addiction, human trafficking, falling education and public health for workers and the dispossessed, which increasingly degrade most of mankind.

Ultimately, these facts reinforce that assertion of Marx and Engels (corroborated by Trotsky) which holds that at certain times in history the development of the productive forces comes in contradiction with the social relations of production and the legal form that these take (under capitalism it is the private ownership of the means of production), thus beginning an era of crises, wars and revolutions, in which we have been living for roughly a century.

It is for the validity of this historical era that the chronic crisis and permanent economic counter-revolution of imperialist capitalism began in the 1960s and 1970s, have been deepening, with increasingly recurrent acute crises. And this has not been modified by the capitalist restoration in the countries where the bourgeoisie had been expropriated and imperialism expelled. We only add that the global economic crisis started in the United States in 2007 made it once again untenable to maintain that “globalization” was a new stage of progress of capitalism.¹⁵

These facts lead to the conclusion that imperialist capitalism cannot provide lasting and widespread improvements for the peoples of the world through partial reforms or gradual “transitions”. The positive outcome for the “socialism or barbarism” option passes by the triumphs of new genuinely socialist revolutions, the only way to replace this system, worldwide, for true socialism, avoiding barbarism. This means the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the big multinationals, economic planning, the conquest of workers, peasant and popular governments to carry out these measures, supported by the mobilization and with workers’ democracy. And for all this the guiding of Leninist revolutionary parties is irreplaceable. Mandelists dilute this clear revolutionary Marxist perspective in supporting the farce of “socialism of the XXI Century” of Chavez and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, and schemes without class content, with generalities like “a Europe at the service of the people and workers” or “anti-austerity fronts”, their “broad anti-capitalist parties”, and the proposals of “eco-socialism”.

A revolutionary program or “eco-socialism”?

Since the end of last century Mandel himself was placing as a central concept ecosocialism.¹⁶ In 2003 his followers adopted a programmatic resolution that, after noting that “the prevailing currents in the workers’ movement, which have tended to ignore or downplay environmental issues”, said in the preface “In self-critical manner, we must say that also the revolutionary currents of the workers movement, including ours, have had to challenge old positions before realizing the full implications of

¹⁵ This is the focus of International Workers Unity–Fourth International (www.uit-ci.org). In its “Global Political Theses” published in *International Correspondence*, Special Edition, April 2013, it said: “We continue in the imperialist era of decadence, where not only the productive forces do not develop, but where we are witnessing their destruction. The so-called “third industrial revolution”, focused on advances in telecommunications and electronic processing of information are unquestionable technological progress, but they are embedded in the framework of a capitalist-imperialist system which causes further degradation of the human beings (poverty and hunger grow) and nature, the other two elements that Marx defined as members of the productive forces. [...] Not only productive forces stagnate but the destructive ones, as the arms race, grow.

¹⁶ See “Socialisme ou barbarie au seuil du XXIème siècle”, supplement to *Inprecor*, July 1993.

ecological problems in late capitalism.”¹⁷ In this text it is not clear what “old positions” they had to question. The last chapter is the “action program” which would be achieved only by “broad mobilisations and mass protests”. After listing a number of denunciations, they proposed “alternatives” which would be agricultural exploitation with ecological criteria, rational and planned use of energy, and alternative sources, public transport and railways, waste prevention and recycling, among others. This would be done with a profound agricultural reform in Third World countries, the abolition of the debt of developing countries, alternative energy plans drawn up by the workers movement, the ecology movement and progressive scientists, lifting of business secrets, establishing an “ecological counter-power” through social control of production, a production with environmental criteria and to satisfy needs, and finally, “a socialist, free, democratic, pluralistic and self-management-based society, which respects the environment”. Noting the “convergences between ecology and social questions”, the document states that there are “common remedies”: “It is essential to break the stranglehold of ‘economic liberalism’ and put human needs and ecological imperatives at the forefront. This is why there is community of ecological and social struggle and common terrain for convergence”. At the end, it adds that political ecology should not “fail to integrate / bring in a critique of capitalism”. As we will read a little later according to its leader François Sabado, the Mandelists are reflecting “on the need for a new eco-socialist program”. With this background of 2003 which we quoted, it is clear that it would have nothing to do with the Transitional Program, the revolutionary program with which Trotskyism was developed.

Without doubt, we share with eco-socialists denouncing that the capitalist system cannot regulate or overcome the increasing environmental degradation and the whole planetary ecosystem. We are for promoting and unifying all the struggles of any social sector to combat the degradation of the planet from the imperialist capitalist system and defend the living conditions. But the proposals of eco-socialism for “humanity”, for a “socialist society “ or “eco-socialist” and against capitalism in a general and abstract way are not a programmatic progress. They make the grave mistake of diluting the focus of attention from the main contradiction the capitalist society is going through, causing the class struggle, which is the clash between the exploited workers and all the oppressed with bosses and the imperialist capitalist governments worldwide. It is not an anonymous “capitalism”, but big business, the multinationals and their governments, who are destroying the planet, endangering the future of humankind and causing a fierce class struggle. Perhaps their measures to implement a “society of free producers” might be useful in an eventual communist future of mankind (if achieved), in the sense that Marx and Engels gave to “Communism” since *The German Ideology*. For the current reality, they have the serious deficit, unacceptable among Marxists, of ignoring the key issue of political power— who governs, who leads the workers and the masses, and the struggle to replace the power of the exploiters with the power of the exploited and oppressed.

Overcoming the crisis of revolutionary leadership is the raison d’être of Trotskyism

After the defeat, from 1989, of the totalitarian dictatorships imposed by Stalinism in the bureaucratic workers’ states, the Mandelists are part of the voices asserting the expiration of the Trotskyism versus Stalinism antinomy.

In 2012, one of his principal leaders, François Sabado, said: “We had already discussed the historical need of leaving a situation where we considered ourselves ‘the Left Opposition to Stalinism’. Stalinism has sunk. But beware; there are still post-Stalinist parties even if they are considerably weaker. But we cannot leave these conceptions marked by our situation as left opposition. It is difficult for us to confront the whole dimension that involves a reorganization of the whole workers and social movement. We have difficulties in defining an independent project which at the same time allows us to make politics. It is difficult for us to formulate an long-term independent project. This also leads to a rethink of the program for the XXI century: the Fourth International has begun to reflect on the need

¹⁷ “Ecology and Socialism.” Resolution of the World Congress of the Fourth International, 2003. See it here: <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article178>. See also “International eco-socialist Manifesto”, September 2001, signed by several leaders of Mandelism.

for a new eco-socialist program. We are at the beginning and we already see the consequences of the exit of nuclear energy, for example.

“What are the implications of reformulating the transitional program? A return to the discussion on democracy, the relationship between direct democracy and representative democracy, between democracy in factories and communities? And about the strategic axes of a seizure of power by the workers, that is, the outlines of a project of emancipation, with the centre in the self-activity of the workers? The programmatic cohesion that we had in the last century, or maybe the one we thought we had, which was the strength of the Trotskyists, although each current in its own way, can no longer meet the challenges of the XXI century. We are facing a certain loss of programmatic, political, strategic substance. A series of key elements to build a political formation which the acceleration of history today puts us revolutionaries in difficulties. More questions than answers.”¹⁸

In other words, Sabado is saying that they have been left without a program and without strategic project. The synthesis of the Transitional Program of 1938, with which the Fourth International was founded, was the struggle for workers, peasants and popular government and the seizure of power with a revolutionary party at the head. Sabado and the Mandelists, although sporadic and ritually speak of “conquest of power by the workers”, deny this perspective. They diluted it in “the outlines of a project of emancipation, with the centre in the self-activity of the workers”, capitulating to old anarchist conceptions, to the centre-left, and to the new currents that postulate not to take power which are the enemies of Leninist parties. For all this they “lose substance”.

They cannot get out of this situation of “left opposition”, because Mandel and his followers have revised Trotskyism. They transformed it into an advisor, more or less “critical” of reformist and bureaucratic leaderships that dominated the mass movement and its revolutionary triumphs in the XX century (the communist parties, Tito, Mao, Ben Bella, Fidel Castro, the Sandinistas, Lula and the PT, Gorbachev ... up to Chavez and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela). From 1989, when the precipitous decline of the traditional treacherous leaderships began, Mandel and his followers have regretted their defeat. They are running out of new “revolutionaries” to advice, and have continued to deny the need to hold, at national and international level, a program, an organizational concept, and a policy consequently revolutionary and for action, to accompany and lead the struggles and fight for the victory of the socialist revolution. That is the *raison d’être* of the Fourth International.

Since they began the struggle against Stalin as “left opposition”, the aim of the Trotskyists was to put themselves forward as a political and power alternative to defeat the bureaucracy and the bourgeois leaders in the USSR and throughout the world. They sought to dispute them their influence over the masses, to replace them with truly revolutionary parties and with workers’ democracy which they sought to build. They gave continuity to the fight of revolutionary Leninists against reformists.

We Morenists continue to maintain that it is impossible— not merely “difficult”— to develop a correct revolutionary Marxist policy if one continues on the path of opportunistic conceptions, of capitulation to the reformists of all stripes and anti-party that Ernest Mandel installed. It is undeniably that the building of vigorous revolutionary parties with mass influence, to spearhead new victorious socialist revolutions, has proved to be very difficult, even much more difficult than expected. But this fact cannot be explained by alleged “important errors” by Trotsky or because he and Lenin had fallen into “substitutionism”. This highlights how many pitfalls must be avoided to overcome the crisis of revolutionary leadership of humanity installed since the 1920s.

One of the biggest pitfalls is revisionism within Trotskyism. The capitulations and shortcuts the opportunist current which Mandel headed led to successive failures. Nahuel Moreno and his current have fought them and remained faithful to the legacy of Lenin and Trotsky. This is, to develop a policy of class independence and revolutionary, to build socialist revolutionary parties in all countries of the world, to lead the working class and other oppressed sectors in the fight for socialist revolution until victory, finally liquidating all the treacherous leaders and capitalist and imperialist domination worldwide. This task remains posed as essential. To develop it, the polemics between Mandel and Moreno are still a huge contribution.

¹⁸ “Cuarta Internacional: notas para la preparación de la discusión del CI”, [“Fourth International: notes for the preparation of the discussion of the IC”], 27 January 2012, found in: <http://www.anticapitalistas.org/spip.php?article26339>.

Preface

Nahuel Moreno

May 1985

This will be the first complete edition available to the public of my work “A scandalous document”. This extensive polemic against Mandel and international Trotskyist current which he heads was developed in 1973 as an internal document for discussion at the Tenth World Congress of the United Secretariat (United Secretariat) of the Fourth International, which at the time both were members of. Twelve years have passed since that date and meanwhile new great facts of class struggle have happened and new and deeper differences emerged that led to our break with the United Secretariat in 1979. This makes necessary this somewhat lengthy preface, to locate this work historically and politically in the development of a political and ideological battle that has been unfolding for 35 years between what today is still known as United Secretariat and our current

Our origins

Our current exists as international tendency, under different names, approximately from the year 1953. It is therefore one of the oldest tendencies in the world Trotskyist movement. We believe we are not exaggerating if we say the United Secretariat and ours are the two most important currents of Trotskyism, global movement in which you also have to count another current, though very weak, which is Lambertism.

It is necessary to clarify we were not born as an international tendency. We appeared in 1944 as a tiny group, essentially workers in the panorama of Argentine Trotskyism. What initially characterized our group, both from a programmatic point of view, and in terms of practice, was a rabid unionism, call it that. For many years the intake of students was not accepted, nor was it allowed to be active in the student movement. Students who by chance happened to become members had to go to the workers movement. They had to go to the factory and make union work and in the rank and file of the workers organizations. This workerist, sectarian, ultra trend, was facing and trying to overcome the bohemian and intellectual character, *déclassé*, of Argentine Trotskyist movement as a whole. Character that only some comrades were exempted of, five or six union leaders, on the other hand very intelligent and capable, who came individually to break with Stalinism.

Our Argentine organization was born then focusing its entire strategy in working on the workers movement, as the only way out which had Argentine Trotskyism to stop being a Bohemian swamp.

This organization not only had the virtue–defect of workerism, but also a great deficiency in the international arena, as during our first years of life, between 1944 and 1948, we declared ourselves Trotskyists, but did not live dependent on the struggle and on the life of the International.

We had a national-Trotskyist deviation: to believe that there could be a solution to the problems of the Trotskyist movement in the country, with a national vision. We did not understand that only with an internationalist vision could we begin to solve the problems of Argentine Trotskyism.

It was not until 1948 that we started to intervene in the lives of the Fourth International, participating in its second congress. We consider this the most important theoretical–political step taken by the Argentine organization.

The Fourth International in the post-war period

Another issue is how the International was back then.

Sectarianism was its dominant trait. At the Second Congress of the International, the misunderstanding of the new reality of the world revolutionary process led us to give no importance to the profound changes taking place in Eastern Europe.

While the congress was held, the phenomena Czechoslovakia were in full swing, where the bourgeois ministers had been separated from government and began the path of total expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Also the burning question of Yugoslavia where, from about 1947, there was also a process of nationalization and expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The process was sweeping across Eastern Europe, while simultaneously the Chinese revolution was in full swing. That is, it encompassed countries whose combined populations accounted for one third of humanity.

The second congress did not touch the subject; it sailed over such a revolutionary process. There the great centre of the discussion was the debate that had been given in 1939 and 1940 in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States, when Trotsky was still alive, about whether the USSR was still a workers' state and whether we had to defend it, even we opposed the bureaucracy. The controversy in the SWP was over in 1940, with the breakup of the "anti-defencists" leaders Shachtman and Burnham, but the International continued the discussion still in 1948.

The discussion on the new worker States

It was not until a year after the second congress, in 1949, the first discussion was opened; new and important in the ranks of our international. Then there arose a clear difference with respect to the analysis of the problems arising from the expropriation of the bourgeoisie or the trend to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in countries of Eastern Europe and China.

Around this controversy, which was carried in a fraternal tone, giving a high example of democratic centralism, actually originated two tendencies. Or two nuances, so to speak, because of the fraternal and non-factional relationship that existed between these two currents.

A tendency, whose most important spokesperson was comrade Mandel and had the support of the American Cannon, argued that Eastern European countries remained capitalist countries. The other tendency led by comrade Pablo and supported— but- with different reasoning by Hansen in the US and the author of this book, had argued that new workers states were born.

To some extent we were the initiators of this controversy. We were the first to raise a written document that in Eastern Europe there had been historical events of paramount importance, as it was the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the emergence of deformed or bureaucratic workers states.

I would like to emphasize that we disagree with the method Pablo used to come to the same conclusion as us. We define the method of Paul as empirical – a priori. For us, Pablo worked with a premise, an *a priori*, that any country where most of the bourgeoisie was expropriated was a workers' state. And then, supported by statistics he studied if most companies had passed to the state. The conclusion was that when most of the companies in a country were nationalized, it is a workers' state. Thus, with empirical evidence based on statistics Pablo arrived at his conclusions.

For us it was necessary a genetic explanation, of historical type. In other words, to define what social forces and through what means and to organizations were they faced to give a deformed social revolution.

Admittedly, from a methodological point of view comrade Mandel was right. He required Pablo to prove through what process the countries of Eastern Europe had become workers' states. If I remember correctly— I do not have my library and my archives at hand since I recently moved countries— Mandel refuted Pablo with the example of the Fascist Republic of Mussolini who, shortly

before his end, expropriated the Italian bourgeoisie because it had gone to the allies side. And not just because Mussolini had done that, we would call the fascist state a workers state.

This controversy was resolved in a relatively short time since Cannon and Mandel acknowledged that there had been a true revolutionary process in Eastern Europe and new deformed workers states had emerged.

This political success greatly enhanced the Pablo's prestige within the ranks of our International, despite its methodological errors, and thus we reached the third congress.

Mandel's impressionism

Let's take a brief pause here to say already back then Mandel would display an extraordinary impressionism, which led him to produce completely wrong analyses and forecasts.

For example, after the end of World War II, between 1946 and 1948, Mandel wrote two key characterizations of the European economy in general and in particular Germany. In a resolution adopted by an International Conference of April 1946, Mandel said that "the revival of economic activity in capitalist countries affected by war, particularly the countries of Continental Europe, will be characterized by a particularly slow pace, which will keep them for a long time at levels close to **stagnation and the doldrums**" (quoted in *Quatrième Internationale*, April- May 1946, p. 14-15 underlined by NM). Two years later, in his work *The Ruin of the German Economy*, Mandel stated that the policy of US imperialism and its allies was "the transformation of the German people in a "people of shepherds" and the eventual elimination of its industrial potential" (*Quatrième Internationale*, January 1948, p. 31). Later in the same paper he said that "the German economy will not revive significantly, despite the injection of oxygen US imperialism gives it" (*ibid.*, p. 39).

Then came twenty years of European economic boom and the so-called "German miracle"...

Fast forward a bit in the story, let us say here that 20 years later, based on the same impressionist method, Mandel made an error of analysis and characterization of the same dimensions, though curiously with a deviation directly opposed to the one of the post-war period.

In 1969, in his book *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*, Mandel claimed "neo-capitalism seeks to win a new lease on life by raising the working class's level of consumption..." (First published in English in *International Socialist Review*, December 1970, highlighted by NM). And in his work *The Debate on Workers' Control* he held that "... capitalism is not definitively characterized by low salaries nor even by a large number of unemployed workers" (*International Socialist Review*, May 1969, p. 5).

Two or three years earlier had begun a chronic crisis that lasts until today, and with prospects to worsen; process "definitely characterized" for 30 million unemployed around in the imperialist countries alone, accompanied by a sharp drop in wages...

As we shall see, this impressionist method of Mandel has led him to make mistakes of the same calibre throughout nearly four decades and with dire consequences.

Pabloism

In 1951, when the third world congress was called, it was during the Cold War and all major international journalism commentators argued that it was inevitable the armed conflict between the United States and the USSR. At that time the Korean War began which seemed to be the Sarajevo of a third world war.

Pablo and Mandel, following bourgeois journalism, drew a conclusion that was fatal to the history of the Fourth International: in the third world war, which was inevitable and would soon begin, communist parties and leftist currents of nationalist bourgeois movements or social democratic parties were to launch guerrillas, revolutionary struggles that would lead them to take power. Mainly this was

to happen with the communist parties that, in their eagerness to defend Russia, would come to guerrilla warfare or violent, physical, revolutionary methods to oppose imperialism.

Based on this analysis, they proposed an orientation that was named entryism *sui generis*. It was not the tactic advocated by Trotsky in the 1930s, which was to enter the Socialist parties for a short period to win the left of these organizations and then break. The entryism *sui generis* proposed by Pablo and Mandel, consisted of entering Stalinist, social democratic or nationalist petty-bourgeois organizations and remain there for all the time it would take them to seize power and consolidate it. Entryism was to be done mainly in the communist parties. And only after we had accompanied them to make the revolution, we should begin to differentiate ourselves from them.

This position took Pablo and Mandel to a confrontation with the majority of international Trotskyism— starting with the majority of the French-section— that categorically rejected the prognosis that Stalinism, the left currents of bourgeois nationalist movements and social democratic parties were to make the revolution. Neither did we think our role was that of entering these parties and movements and remain there until they took power and consolidate, for only then begin to differentiate ourselves.

According to the analysis by Pablo and Mandel, the Stalinist, social democratic and bourgeois nationalist currents stopped being counter-revolutionary. We, like most of the international, thought this was revising one of the essential points of the Trotskyist program, which starts from the definition that humanity is in crisis because of the crisis of leadership of the mass movement. Or, put another way that the main obstacle to the progress of mankind towards socialism is that the masses are led by leaderships who are against the revolution, like Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism. And our task is to build a new revolutionary international leadership to overcome this historical impasse.

Pablo and Mandel, with this methodological feature so typical of them, impressionism, echoed albeit a little late, the fact that the bureaucracy had expropriated the bourgeoisie in countries of Eastern Europe forced by circumstances. And they moved this phenomenon, without criticism, without any revolutionary perspective, due to the supposed inevitability of world war, to the whole world. They saw an irreversible revolutionary process headed by the bureaucratic and petty bourgeois leaderships of the mass movement and did not raise the building of new leaderships to defeat the traditional conduction in the mass movement, which is the real reason of being for the Fourth International.

This entryism *sui generis* lasted almost 18 years and turned European Trotskyism in small grouplets increasingly weak. Only some organizations out of the International Secretariat developed, i.e. some parties who were not under the direction of Pablo and Mandel.

The betrayal of the Bolivian revolution of 1952

The most pernicious consequence of this surrender to the counter-revolutionary leaderships took place in Bolivia. In 1949 there were elections in which triumphed Víctor Paz Estenssoro, of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Paz Estenssoro rules currently in Bolivia as a direct agent of the United States, but back then appeared to the masses as an anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist leader. So the military refused to hand over power. The response of the masses happened in 1952: it was a popular insurrection led by the working class in the city of La Paz. The insurrection completely destroyed the army, all existing weapons went over to the worker and peasant militias and although Paz Estenssoro assumed the presidency, the masses had his government in check. It was time to fight with all possible strength to take the power in the hands of the worker and peasant militias led by the Central Obrera Boliviana. Bolivian Trotskyism, which had become a mass movement could decisively influence in this regard. Pablo and Mandel instead drew the conclusion that we had to critically support the government of Paz Estenssoro.

They did the opposite of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Against the popular front government that deceived the masses, Lenin and Trotsky raised the slogan of power to the soviets and noted the need for the working class to make a revolution against the bourgeois government disguised as “popular”.

In Bolivia absolutely every weapon was in the hands of the workers and peasants and the International Secretariat and its Bolivian section never told the masses to turn these weapons against the bourgeois government and seize power.

The International Committee

Repudiating the line of entryism “sui generis” and betrayal of the Bolivian revolution, most of the English and French Trotskyists, the Socialist Workers Party and the South American Trotskyists, broke with the International Secretariat and in 1953 created what was called the International Committee (IC).

South American Trotskyism began to make a class analysis of the split of the Fourth International. We argued that in the International was happening something similar to what had happened in the Argentine Trotskyist movement. This is to say, that it was in the hands of a non-proletarian leadership. It was a current similar to that of Shachtman and Burnham, with its social base in the European intelligentsia, and all the vices of petty-bourgeois currents. Hence Pablo and his successor Mandel had an impressionist method and did not keep a consistent line of construction of the International in the bosom of the working class, of defence of the political independence of the workers movement against the bureaucratic apparatus and intervention from this perspective in all progressive mobilization of the masses, to promote the struggle and build the party.

We also concluded it was necessary that the International Committee postulate itself as an organization, not of federal and declaratory kind, but centralized and active. That was the only way to defeat Pablo and Mandel.

The other sectors of the International Committee did not agree to emphasize the problem of class of the leadership of Pablo and Mandel or to run centrally. These and other problems resulted in controversies with our tendency, which from 1957 was organized in the Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism (SLATO), but always within the framework of the International Committee.

The split of the International had occurred in the midst of a serious setback of the workers movement in Western Europe. Instead there was a large rise in Eastern Europe, where the Berlin workers' uprising occurred in 1953.

When this movement broke out, Pablo and Mandel supported the bureaucracy against the masses. Their argument was that the mobilization of East Berlin attacked a leadership that would soon play a very progressive role directing the war and world revolution against imperialism.

The reunification of 1963

Then it would come the 1956 Hungarian movement and the revolutionary action of the Polish masses at the same time. The strength the Hungarian uprising took shocked important sectors of world Stalinism and forced the International Secretariat to make a major shift, approaching our positions.

In the late 1950s there was a major new agreement with Mandel, which was the recognition and support for the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro.

This was the basis for a reunification in 1963. So the United Secretariat was born, to which all organizations and currents of Trotskyism which had recognized a new workers' state had emerged in Cuba, led by Mandel and the SWP, were incorporated. British, French Trotskyists and of other countries who did not recognize that fact remained outside.

We were late to enter the United Secretariat because, despite the agreement in relation to Cuba, we held our political and methodological differences with the leadership that had betrayed the Bolivian revolution. Anyway we entered a year later convinced that, beyond differences, a reunification centred on the support for a workers revolution was positive.

At the time of reunification, the International Secretariat was headed by Mandel. By then Pablo had been separated for moral and organizational reasons. Mandel, however, followed a methodology

very similar to Pablo's. Not for nothing they had been together for so long— more than a decade— and written documents in common.

Unlike Pablo, Mandel had always been of great honesty, and morality in the organizational field he was always an extraordinary comrade. But from the point of view of policy and methodology he continued with the same mistakes of always, of capitulating to the Stalinist or petty bourgeois leaderships who led revolutionary processes or mass mobilizations. And while support for the Cuban revolution was a very positive development, Mandel quickly took such support to a negative extreme.

The guerrilla deviation Mandel

Just as he had capitulated to Stalinism from 1951, to Titoism and Maoism at different stages, following this impressionist tradition that led him to support the MNR in Bolivia, Mandel in this case began to surrender to Castro and mainly Guevarism, to accept guerrillism whole conception. This culminated in the Ninth Congress of the International in 1969, leading to a sharp division around the problem of Guevarism and the guerrillas in Latin America. Mandel, with a large majority of the reunited International, argued that in Latin America we had to do guerrilla warfare with the Guevarists. And if it was necessary, alone. The line was to make guerrilla focus, i.e., the same approach of Che Guevara.

This position was so capitulating to Guevarism that it went so far as to write a theoretical work holding that rural guerrilla warfare or a similar variation was also raised in France. This was written by one of the great leaders of the Mandelist current, comrade Jebrac.

The American SWP, the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST)— predecessor of the current Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)— and some South American comrades led a tendency that opposed this analysis and orientation of guerrilla focus. We note that in principle we are not against the guerrillas, provided they are supported by the mass movement, but that the focus theory was just the opposite. It was an elitist line. We insist that the guerrilla focus was the line of the student movement and not the orientation of the Latin American mass movement, which at the time was entering a great urban rise. We said that being an orientation divorced of the mass movement, it would lead all Guevarists guerrillas to failure and the International would lose many valuable comrades.

The facts showed, unfortunately, that we were right. An entire wing of the Argentine Trotskyism, which had developed Mandel's line the most, disappeared. This line also meant a tragedy for other parties. By contrast, today Mexican Mandelism is strong because, despite having supported the focus

The capitulation to the ultra-left youth vanguard

There were three decisive factors that forced the United Secretariat to finally leave the orientation of the Ninth Congress of adaptation to Guevarism: the first and foremost was the great Latin American urban rise, the second was the defeat of the guerrilla focus across Latin America and in particular the destruction of parties led by the United Secretariat or which followed its guidance, as the PRT (El Combatiente)–ERP in Argentina, third, the growth of the Argentine PST, which became the biggest party of the International— what was recognized by all world Trotskyism— based on its insertion into the workers and popular movements and the use of electoral processes and democratic freedoms, i.e., following a path opposed to that specified by Mandel.

Then a new controversy began, always around the impressionism of the Mandelist current and its adaptation and claudication to the tendencies of the vanguard or the cyclical leaderships of the mass movement.

A European rise triggered by the French May and the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia had begun in 1968. It then appeared a very large vanguard over which Maoism and ultra-left currents had strong influence. Mandelism then stated that “The central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967–1968 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build stronger revolutionary organizations than in the preceding stage” (“The Building of Revolutionary Parties in

Capitalist Europe”, E. Mandel, *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* SWP Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972, p. 13.). The United Secretariat majority asserted the priority goal aim was to achieve “the transformation of Trotskyist organisations from propaganda groups into organisations already capable of those political initiatives of a mass vanguard level which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself” (Ernest Germain, “In Defence of Leninism: in defence of the Fourth International”, *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol.10 No.4, April 1973).

This meant abandoning a fundamental position of revolutionary Marxism: the party program is developed based on the historical needs of the masses, particularly the working class, hence the resulting slogans, appropriate to the level of consciousness of the masses and that lead them to mobilize, approaching those historical objectives defining the program.

This polemic against Mandel essentially revolves around his guerrilla deviation and subsequent vanguardist surrender to Maoism and ultra-left in general, since it was the results of these lines which were to be evaluated in the Tenth World Congress. After the congress, in which Mandel’s position was again consecrated, problems continued aggravating.

Mandel’s abrogation to European youth vanguard had serious consequences for the Portuguese revolution of 1974–75. Activism and ultra-leftist and Maoist tendencies supported the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), a pro-imperialist petty- bourgeois current, composed of officers who had overthrown the dictatorship of Salazar and called themselves left. The MFA was actually the pillar supporting the bourgeois state against the revolution.

The official section of the United Secretariat, the Internationalist Communist League, to win the “hegemony” in the “vanguard” on the advice of Mandel, endorsed the positions and the ultra-left and Maoists, including support for the principal enemy of the revolution in those moments, the Movement of the Armed Forces, who ruled or co-ruled the Portuguese empire.

Our break with the American SWP

In 1973, the American SWP, the Argentine PST and other parties had formed the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (FLT), to address the Mandelist deviations. The FLT exploded between 1975 and 1976, dividing into two currents, one led by the SWP and one by the PST. The rupture was caused by differences over the Portuguese revolution and the war in Angola.

We thought that in Portugal we had to raise the line of developing worker and peasant committees, developing factory and land occupations and encouraging tenant committees. We had to develop soldier committees to turn the army in favour of an insurrection. In other words, we had to focus on the seizure of power by the mass movement.

The Socialist Workers Party was against it and proposed that we only had to raise democratic slogans. Nothing that would lead to the seizure of power by the proletariat, because conditions were not ripe. And besides, as there were no conditions for our party to intervene with slogans that impelled the action of the masses, its great work was to be... editing the works of Trotsky.

The split was finalized by the still more serious differences over Angola.

The Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), a guerrilla movement, had just taken power after the defeat and withdrawal of the Portuguese imperialist army troops. Angola thus transformed from colony into an independent country. Imperialism is then supported by the South African army and a guerrilla paid by the CIA: the UNITA. The army of South Africa and UNITA invaded jointly the Angolan territory.

The SWP argued that UNITA and the MPLA were two progressive guerrillas, fighting for issues internal to the anticolonial movement and, therefore, we did not have to support one against the other. This was a capitulation to imperialist policy in Africa. We held, however, that we had to give military support to the MPLA against the pro-imperialist invasion of UNITA and the South African army.

A majority of organizations and militants then withdrew from the FLT. Important parties in Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Italy and Spain, among others, in addition to the Argentine organization formed then a tendency that in a few years would break with the United Secretariat and

adding the contribution of leaders and organizations from other currents would become what is now our international organization.

For its part, the leadership of the American party and their followers dissolved the faction in 1976 and merged again with Mandelism, stating that the differences had disappeared.

Our current denounced that the merger of the SWP with Mandelism without resolving or clarifying the differences meant a block without principles. That would unfortunately be confirmed soon when the differences between the SWP and Mandel widened again.

Mandel capitulates to euro-communism

In the late 1970s, some European communist parties, mainly Italian and Spanish—captained by Santiago Carrillo—began to move away from Moscow. This phenomenon, which was called “euro-communism”, also impressed Mandel, who attributed a progressive or a possible progressive character.

We argued, instead, that the dynamics the euro-communist parties were taking would make them look more and more like the social democratic parties. And this due to profound economic and social reasons. As the communist parties grew, they became increasingly integrated in the institutions of bourgeois democracy, at parliamentary and municipal levels. Thus they came to have a dependency of all kinds, including economic, on the bourgeoisie of their own country, which weakened their traditional absolute dependence on Moscow.

For us this was positive only in the sense that further deepened the putrefaction of Stalinism as a global apparatus. But the decisive factor was that it transformed these parties, as stated in the “Statement of the Bolshevik Faction”, “from servants of the Kremlin in servants of its imperialist bourgeoisie”. And for that reason, they could not cause any progressive trend, much less revolutionary.

We were not arguing that we had to support the classical Stalinism, of submission to Moscow against euro-communism. For us, they were both reactionary expressions of a very progressive process: the global crisis of Stalinism.

In the process of adaptation to bourgeois democracy, euro-communism disavowed the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” (as policy they no longer fought for dictatorship of the proletariat for decades). Mandel came to the defence of the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” in a document entitled “The dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy”, which was later approved by the United Secretariat and later by the World Congress of the United Secretariat. In that work his capitulation to euro-communism led Mandel to adapt to the worst bourgeois democratic pressures of euro-communism and social democracy.

Therefore, he argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be governed by the “programmatic and principled position” to give “unfettered political freedom” to all the political currents, including the counter-revolutionary (“The dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy”, 12th World Congress of the USFI, 1985.). And, if these currents rise up in arms against the workers government, the policy proposed by Mandel was to individually subject to trial those responsible with all the formalities and guarantees of an ultra-liberal penal code.

We fought this conception of Mandel, since it ignored the fact that the European and world revolution would inevitably go through a very violent process of civil and foreign wars against imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. And this would prevent the enforcement of these legal rules and the almost absolute democracy for everyone that Mandel advocated.

Today, one of the many examples reality gives us is Haiti, where the angered masses kill “Ton-ton Macoutes”, i.e. the murderers and torturers hired by Duvalier, as soon as they are caught. According to Mandel’s logic, Trotskyists should fight against these summary executions and demand that the masses wait for when trials with all the procedural formalities can be made. We, however, defend the revolutionary justice of the Haitian people, because we are ardent supporters of the principle that the masses mobilized for a revolution take all the initiatives that they themselves democratically decide to take, before or after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We held, in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, the proletariat in power should immediately grant democratic freedoms much broader than any bourgeois regime. But this policy is objectively subordinated to the supreme law, which is the class struggle. Hence we said that Mandel's policy of the purest of all freedom was for the stage when the proletariat had already virtually achieved the defeat of imperialism on a global scale, and not for applying it the day after the workers took power in a country since the coming years and decades will be marked by a fierce struggle between the socialist revolution and imperialist bourgeois counter-revolution, which will try by all means to destroy any proletarian dictatorship that is imposed on any country in the world.

The Nicaraguan revolution splits the United Secretariat

The differences with the United Secretariat acquired a political – moral character of enormous gravity in the Nicaraguan revolution. We had called to form an international brigade to go and fight in Nicaragua next to Sandinista National Liberation Front. Something similar to what was done in Spain when the civil war in the 1930s.

The Simon Bolivar Brigade covered itself in glory in July 1979, releasing Bluefields, Nicaragua's most important port on the Atlantic. It was recognized by the Sandinista leadership itself and the majority of the brigade remained to live in Nicaragua. Already with the FSLN in power the brigade encouraged and participated in the founding of dozens of unions. But this process threatened to create a mobilization of the working class beyond the control of the Sandinista movement. Because of this the FSLN leadership arrested the brigade and expelled them from the country. Our comrades were handed over to the Panamanian police who tortured them before letting them go.

We then asked the International to campaign in defence of the brigade. Not only did the United Secretariat refuse to campaign, but the expulsion was supported by important leaders of the Mandelist current and the SWP.

That led us to break away from the United Secretariat, considering that issues of principle and morality were at stake, as was the refusal to repudiate bourgeois torture and the policy of a government that expelled revolutionaries from their country.

The capitulation of the United Secretariat to the Sandinistas has recently acquired outrageous characteristics. In a tour of Brazil, Mandel has said that the Sandinistas are our brothers and we have to learn from them.

We encountered a serious problem to follow this advice in Argentina: the FSLN has supported the government of Alfonsín. In 1984 there was a referendum on a border agreement with Chile. The Sandinistas sent a representative to the main political event of the governing party, the Radical Civic Union, which is very similar to the party of Thatcher or Reagan. The event, held to defend the government's policy of a pact compromise with Pinochet, legitimizing it, took place in a football stadium. And on the stage, occupying a place of honour, was Ernesto Cardenal, Minister of Culture of the Sandinista government. If we followed the advice of Mandel, we would have to be with the FSLN in the box of the Radical Party, supporting the politics of hunger of the Argentine government.

In closing, I would note that the document of Mandel and United Secretariat on "socialist democracy" failed in less than a year in the acid test of the Nicaraguan revolution. There we found that we defended the right of the comrades of the Simon Bolivar Brigade to stay in Nicaragua, we were against their arrest and deportation without trial and, even more, that they were tortured. Instead, the United Secretariat, these champions of democracy who had voted a document ensuring the best guarantees of liberty and justice for the counter-revolutionaries, facing the burning reality of having to speak out against torture and imprisonment suffered by fellow Trotskyists at the hands bourgeois governments, ended up supporting the perpetrators of such outrages.

In very brief period of a few months after writing and approving their document, the very own United Secretariat tossed away shamefully any progressive aspect that their thesis may have had. A record of Mandelism: two contradictory capitulations together. One to euro-communism giving absolute freedom to the counter-revolutionaries; another to the Sandinistas, denying the minimum rights to Trotskyists in Nicaragua. And all this to capitulate, once again, to a non-proletarian leadership (in this case petty-bourgeois) of the mass movement, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas.

Introduction

Although the publication of the long work by comrade Germain — *“In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”*—has expanded the scope of the discussion between the two tendencies that currently exist within the International, at the same time it has brought confusion to intolerable limits.

Comrades Frank and Germain have said this polemic seems to be a dialogue of the deaf. After carefully reading comrade Germain, we have to add that this is because there are comrades who do not want to hear.

An objective criterion to polemise

In any discussion, a responsible leader must begin by understanding how to separate the main points from the secondary. This distinction cannot be made in a subjective or capricious manner, according to the will, feelings or good understanding of each of the debaters. On the contrary, we must use an objective criterion to set the main and secondary points of a polemic.

What is this objective criterion? Trotskyist militants are not historians but revolutionary politicians. Therefore we debate the burning issues posed by the class struggle, its prospects as well as the development of our sections in the current stage. This means that the polemic surrounding the past must be limited to the four years between the previous world congress and this one, and it should serve to illuminate the discussion of what policy to adopt for the current reality. Only in this way this discussion will politically arm each militant of our international, so the day after the congress, they will emerge strengthened to perform their tasks in their areas of activity.

Defined in this way the points of discussion, a responsible leader must concern himself about how to present it. To do so, he must also have first an objective criterion: the peculiarities of the audience he is addressing. Most of our current cadres are new: they have joined after the last world congress. The obligation of leaders to be specific in their political discussions is increased hundredfold by this feature of our International’s membership. Knowing how to conduct a polemic is also part of the science and art of leading and educating responsibly our cadres.

Comrade Germain argues as a lawyer

What, then, are the issues that our comrades should discuss? Perhaps, whether Yankee imperialism— or a sector of it— was neutral or supported Fidel Castro in 1959 (14 years ago)? Whether or not Moreno advised guerrilla warfare for Bolivia under President Barrientos (2 years before the last World Congress)? Whether Trotsky put forward the fundamental line of building a revolutionary army for China between 1925 and 1927 (47 years ago)? Whether the line of the majority or the minority is confirmed in light of Hugo Blanco’s experience of in Peru (11 years ago)? Whether Camejo defined well or poorly the characteristics of the Bolshevik party? Whether we interpret correctly what is a demand or a program? Whether we should take into account the immediate consciousness of the masses as the main factor in the development of our demands and programs? Whether we are for national self-determination and against all nationalism?

There is a concrete problem to which the comrade gives enormous importance: our Canadian section’s policies. This is also a diversionary manoeuvre since, between the previous and this world congress, that policy has not been at the centre of the debate or of the class struggle. Can we perhaps compare the importance of Bolivia or Argentina to Canada? For Germain, if we are guided by his document, Canada has much greater importance.

Are these the key issues we need to discuss?

Categorically not!! These issues relate, only indirectly, to the main events that occurred in the class struggle since the last world congress, and to the policy that we adopted to confront them. In contrast, our document— “Argentina and Bolivia: a balance sheet”— does respond to this way of approaching the polemic. We start from specific facts of class struggle and examine the policy of our International and its sections in relation to them. We do not fly off on a tangent.

By raising myriad problems far away from the current process of class struggle, comrade Germain argues as a lawyer and not as a serious Trotskyist Bolshevik. Here’s an example.

Attacking Camejo for his reference to the relationship between a sector of Yankee imperialism and Fidel Castro, comrade Germain tries to strike a dramatic blow. Seeking to impress the majority of current cadres who have entered the international since the Cuban revolution (and admiring it). A serious study of the documents of that period shows that Camejo is right. What is important is to note the way the comrade Germain seeks to gain a double advantage: first, to play on the feelings of the International’s youth, second— and most important— to divert the discussion to issues that do not make the current polemic, to circumvent the main points which, as we shall see, are not particularly pleasing to him.

Trotsky pointed out something very important during the polemic with the anti-defensists, which we should all bear in mind in the current debate. He warned that workers, because they have little time, are only interested in discussing the fundamental problems of the class struggle, in carrying this discussion thorough its conclusion, without any bureaucratic or disciplinary limitation. Instead, the petty bourgeois (teacher or student, we would add), always wants to discuss all things human and divine, because they have time to spare.

To this comment by Trotsky we must add that, when faced with a polemic, there is the same difference among leaders and writers of our movement. There are those who argue about everything, especially about things that have little to do with the main events of the class struggle at this stage, and there are those who centre their discussion on these critical issues.

What should we discuss?

What then should be the axes of our discussion? Nothing is more important to the class struggle than its two poles: the triumph of the proletarian revolution or of the fascist counterrevolution. According to all documents of the POR (Combate), there were in Bolivia three “fascist” coups, and one of them—Banzer’s— victorious. We do not agree with this definition of “fascist”, but we agree that there have been three ultra-reactionary coups. These coups were the decisive events of the class struggle in Bolivia during this period. They provide majority comrades— especially comrade Germain— a good opportunity to demonstrate the correctness of their policy. Why not take advantage of it?

For example, why doesn’t *Cahiers Rouge* publishes a book with all articles where the POR (C) — and its most staunch supporters in the majority—denounced and warned against the “fascist” coup as the greatest danger to the Bolivian workers movement? Why is comrade Germain’s document so sparing of quotes about the policies of the POR (C) against the coups? Why does he only refer in passing to the issue of *Combate* (new series, No. 5) dated the first fortnight of May 1971, just months before the third coup? Why does he devote only a few lines to the coups in contrast to the dozens and dozens that he used for Camejo’s interpretation of the Cuban revolution, for Moreno’s advice to the POR (C) under Barrientos or to attack the Canadian section? Doesn’t comrade Germain think that if he were to prove that the POR (C) had a correct line against the coups he would have an almost categorical proof that the Ninth Congress resolutions were useful and had prepared us to respond to the reality of the class struggle in Bolivia and Latin America?

The obligation (that the majority does not fulfil) to focus more attention on the line of the majority and the Bolivian section against the “fascist” coups is compounded by another fact. Precisely Germain and the majority of the IEC are those who believe that the policy of POR (C) is an example of the correctness of the Ninth Congress resolutions and the entire orientation of the majority. We could almost say that the majority— or least comrade Germain— considers the Bolivian section a true model, which only admits organizational criticisms. Isn’t true that large amounts of money were collected, after the Ninth Congress, for the Bolivian section? Don’t the Europeans militants, who collected it with

so much sacrifice, deserve to receive comprehensive balance sheet on the results of this “revolutionary investment”?

The youth of our movement, if they really have a critical mind and the revolutionary passion that should characterize them, are obligated to demand from comrade Germain, and his defended, the sister section of Bolivia, a comprehensive demonstration that they not have fallen short of circumstances. That is, the evidence that they had foreseen and fought— with correct policies— the “fascists” coups. And before the attempts of all the “Germaines” to divert the discussion to save face as leaders our youth must categorically state: We will not have confusion or diversions: we are discussing the political line we had from the last world congress until now. Therefore, *the first items on the agenda must be the major events of the class struggle that occurred in that period of time. We will include all the topics you want* (Camejo interpretation of the Cuban revolution, Moreno advisor of the Bolivian Hugo González Moscoso, Trotsky and China in 1925, etc.) in the last points on the agenda of the next world congress! Among the major issues, the Bolivian “fascists” coups, the class struggle in Argentina and in Europe (particularly in France) are of particular importance. These must be, and in that order, the first points of the congress. These are the topics of our document.

Chapter I

Bolivia, key to the current discussion

The majority's predictions

When Trotsky said “to lead is to foresee”, he was saying that without correct predictions about the immediate future of the class struggle, it is impossible to develop a revolutionary political line. To achieve this, the Marxist makes an objective analysis of the situation of the class struggle, basing it on the theoretical arsenal accumulated by the workers movement in more than 100 years of struggles, which is Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism.

When one departs from this theoretical and practical tradition, one falls, inevitably, on incorrect analysis, predictions and political lines. This is what has happened, to the majority comrades in Bolivia. All of them, and especially Germain, have jettisoned previous knowledge to almost unconditionally adhere to a Guevarist theory. What does this theory say? Simply that in Latin America there is a monolithic unity of imperialism with the national bourgeoisie and their armies. Imperialism decides regime changes by opting for the “fascists” or “democratic” as it suits them, but with a general trend towards fascist regimes, which, by eliminating any possibility of legal struggle or movement, inevitably leads to all protests having to be made arms in hand. The opposite occurs when bourgeois democracy regimes are established: in such cases, the perspective of armed struggle recedes until disappears.

Later on we will see this reasoning has nothing to do with Trotskyism. What we will see here is how the majority comrades embraced these conceptions, and how this led them to make completely wrong predictions and formulate absolutely wrong policies in Bolivia, in the years since the Ninth World Congress to date.

“Che” Maitan

Even before the Ninth Congress, comrade Maitan began applying to Bolivia the Guevarist analysis:

“Given the economic and social situation of the country, the capitalist regime— whether it is led by Barrientos or any of his potential successors— will only be able to survive through violence of the most systematic sort. This implies that the more or less legal preparatory and organizational work will be impossible for the workers and peasants movement. And, in the present context, this also excludes any perspective of the struggle taking the form of an urban insurrection the outset. The explosive contradictions remain in the country and of dramatic conflicts are still possible.”¹

To leave no doubt, Maitan, elsewhere in the same article, clarified:

¹ Maitan, Livio; “Experiences and perspectives of the armed struggle in Bolivia”, in *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 6, Nº 28, 2 September 1968, p. 706.

“This means, more concretely, that the method of the guerrilla warfare beginning in rural areas is still the correct method.”²

To the surprise of the majority comrades, along came the Ovando government first and then Torres, a bourgeois government that allowed broad democratic margins to the mass movement and left parties. The bewilderment that this unexpected event caused among the majority comrades was evident in two apparently opposite predictions, by comrades Frank and Germain.

The Frank-Germain Laboratory

Comrade Frank, faithful to one aspect of the Guevarist reasoning (democratic governments = no perspective of armed struggle), predicted the following:

“For the time being, but for how long no one can say, the armed struggle is not today on the agenda in Chile or Bolivia.”³

Comrade Germain was also true to an aspect— different from the one taken by comrade Frank— of Guevara’s reasoning (monolithic unity between imperialism and the national bourgeoisie and their armies = tendency to totalitarian regimes). Hence he concluded that:

“Those who think that because he came to power ‘with the support of the left’ General Torres will prove more “tolerant” have a few disagreeable surprises in store for them, as soon as he has restored the unity of the army, which is his primary aim.”⁴

As we see, there was between Frank and Germain a real division of workers and a passionate contest to best possible apply the Guevarist conception. For one of them, as the government of Torres (and of Allende) allowed democratic freedoms the perspectives for armed struggle in Bolivia (and Chile) disappeared. For the other, the “primary aim” of Torres was to “restore the unity of the army” and later to repress the masses and the left, i.e. that Torres represented only a variant of the monolithic unity of the military and bourgeois nationalists with imperialism. Apparently contradictory, both forecasts were combined in a superior whole: the Guevarist scheme of the class struggle in Latin America.

The “contributions” of the United Secretariat

After Torres came Banzer. Surely majority comrades breathed easier. Finally Bolivia returned to Guevarist “normality”! Again we were facing a regime of monolithic unity with imperialism. Again repression returned to befall the Bolivian workers and the left, so that again armed struggle was in the agenda.

“The triumph of the pro-imperialist coup d’état— initiated by remote-control and coordinated by direct representatives of American imperialism, and lead by its principal local agents— represents a tactical defeat of the working masses in Bolivia. But this is not the end of the civil war; rather it is only the open beginning. Out of a nascent and intermittent civil war, Bolivia now passes over to open and permanent civil war.”⁵

While the majority was making these predictions, the minority drew completely opposite conclusions, which we will see the end of this chapter. The time has come to take stock by looking at what actually happened in the Bolivian class struggle.

² Ibid, p. 706.

³ Frank, Pierre; “Letter to the 1971 SWP Convention”, in *Internal Information Bulletin*, No.6, November 1971, p.16.

⁴ Germain, Ernest & Knoeller, Martine; “The Strategic Orientation of the Revolutionists in Latin America” in *International Information Bulletin*, No.2, January 1971, p. 98.

⁵ “Declaration of the Fourth International “On the reactionary coup d’état in Bolivia”, in *Intercontinental Press*, 20 September 1971, p. 798.

A coherent development team: none was right

All the facts took care of disprove the majority's predictions. Instead of "surviving by means of systematic violence" as Maitan said during the Barrientos period, the regime survived through concessions to the masses from Ovando and Torres. Legal activity, which according to Maitan would be "impossible for the workers and peasants movement" became increasingly possible under Ovando and completely open under Torres. The armed struggle did not take place in the countryside, as Maitan predicted, but in the city (a perspective specifically "excluded" by him), and it did not take the form of rural guerrillas, but rather of urban insurrection. Nor did it take place under the reactionary regime (Barrientos), but under the most democratic (Torres).

Comrades Germain and Frank did not fare better than Maitan with their predictions. The first examples of armed struggle since Santo Domingo did not appear in any country with dictatorial regime, but took place in Bolivia and Chile, countries where, according to comrade Frank "was not in the agenda". Torres's government had no possibility of "restoring the unity of the army" as envisaged by Germain, nor did it give any repressive "surprise" to the masses and the left. On the contrary, the Bolivian army was never more divided since the 1952 revolution until the present than under the Torres government, and a military coup was necessary to eliminate Torres to "restore the unity of the army" and launch the repression.

Finally, we have not yet seen the famous "open beginning" of an "open and permanent civil war" which according to the comrades in the majority was to come as a direct result of the Banzer coup.

We have seen, though, that the Bolivian workers movement took relatively little time to recover from the defeat that the fall of Torres meant, and that it is developing important defensive struggles. We have also seen how in one of those battles there were large street clashes in La Paz. And finally, we can foresee that, if the rise of the workers movement and the Bolivian masses continues to grow these defensive struggles, it will result in a new "democratic" regime, which will grant again freedoms and concessions to the mass movement and will put armed struggle back in the agenda.

The predictions of the majority comrades help only if we turn them upside down, i.e., if we base our policy on what will happen to be exactly the opposite of what they predict. With such advisers it would be a big mistake to place the the responsibility for all— or even most— of the mistakes committed on the shoulders of the Bolivian section.

Ultra leftism and Trotskyism in the face of the fascist danger

Ultra-leftism is not a new phenomenon in the world revolutionary movement. Alongside opportunism it has been a permanent danger to building the revolutionary party, and the axis of some of the most violent political battles waged by Lenin and Trotsky. Two of these battles have left a rich theoretical and practical experience: Lenin's fight in the Communist International (when he wrote *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*) and Trotsky's fight against Stalinism of the "third period."

Currently, a new version of ultra-leftism has emerged: Guevarism. These three types of ultra-leftism have different historical origins and social content.

The first, opposed by Lenin in the Communist International, was an ultra-leftism reflecting radicalised sectors impacted by the Russian Revolution who were eager to repeat the same experience in all countries. It was the ultra-leftism of the younger generation.

The second type of ultra-leftism, opposed by Trotsky, was diametrically opposite. It was nothing more than a moment, a turn to the far left by Stalinist centrism. It expressed the circumstantial policy of the counter-revolutionary caste, which would lead the world workers movement to the worst defeat in its history: the triumph of Nazism.

The third type of ultra-leftism, the Guevarist, it closely resembles the first for its historical origin and social content. It is ultra-leftism of the radicalised youth repelled by Stalinism. For its historical origins and its contents it has nothing to do with the Stalinist ultra-leftism of the "third period", but it does resemble it in its theoretical postulates and in the mechanics of its political reasoning.

We have accused the majority comrades a thousand and one times of having a Guevarist conception and following a Guevarist — and therefore ultra-leftist — policy. We still maintain this characterisation, and in order to demonstrate it we will begin by spelling out clearly the Guevarist concept and political line.

We will begin by describing the Stalinist policy of the “third period” that Trotsky fought and the position he took. Then we will see how the Guevarist conception resembles that of the third period and that this was really what the majority comrades applied to formulate their political line for Bolivia.

Stalinist “third period” ultra-leftism

Before Hitler took power, Stalinism developed an ultra-left policy, called the “third period”. By their unwillingness to fight for the anti-fascist workers front in Germany, they allowed Hitler’s rise to power. This policy covered the years between 1928 and 1933.

In the fight to the death against third period ultra-leftism of the Trotskyism was born as a well-organized international tendency. The break with the Third International and the plan that a new revolutionary international organization was needed were a consequence of this catastrophic Stalinist policy.

The five key areas in which Trotsky attacked them are as follows:

a) *Not knowing how to distinguish between the fascist government— or the danger of a fascist or ultra-reactionary government— from other bourgeois forms of government.*

Trotsky never tired of pointing out that all bourgeois governments are not the same. We need to know how to distinguish carefully the various types that exist and to establish whether struggles exist between factions sectors of the bourgeoisie. He insisted that, when there are symptoms of a fascist threat we must point out to the workers that the most urgent task is to fight it to death, by all means. For this it is necessary to consciously determine whether there are sufficient forces to overthrow the bourgeois government and seize power, or, instead, we must unite the workers in defensive struggles against fascism.

Stalinism, by contrast, defined both bourgeois camps (the reactionary and the “democratic”) as equally dangerous. They characterized as fascist all governments and political parties, especially the other workers’ parties (which were called “social fascists”, etc.). Finally, when the water came up to their chins, the Stalinists were forced to fight for bourgeois democracy and ended up capitulating to it through “popular fronts”.

b) *Failure to apply a workers’ united front policy against the danger of fascist or ultra-reactionary governments.*

In Lenin’s times, the Communist International, especially at its third congress, had formulated the policy of the workers united front, mainly for defensive needs. Trotsky said that in Germany we had to call the leadership and the ranks of all organizations claiming to be proletarian to face united the task most urgent and felt by the workers: self-defence against fascism.

Stalinism, instead, applied its own ultra-left version of the united front: calling to unity for revolutionary action, and not for anti-fascist defensive action. And this call was only made to the ranks of reformist worker organizations, ignoring their leaderships. They called this “united front from below”. In practice, it meant that the German Communist Party was not in a united front with anyone or at most it was a parody of a united front with their periphery of sympathisers and the scarce reformist workers who had almost broken with their leaders and organizations.

Trotsky insisted until he was blue in the face that the workers united front policy is based on proposing tasks understood by all workers, mainly by the reformist workers. He also insisted that the proposal of united front should be made to the reformist organizations, starting with their leaderships.

The reasons Trotsky gave were conclusive: “If there are still broad sectors workers within the reformist organizations, is because they believe in them and their leaders.”

Therefore, the mere fact of trying to ignore the reformist leaders ruins any possibility of joint action with the workers in these organizations. The same happens if, instead of calling the reformist workers to common defensive actions against fascism, we call them to revolutionary action, to overthrow bourgeois democratic governments. Specifically: a social democratic worker who hated Hitler might accept the unity of his party with the Communist Party to defend himself from Hitler. This worker was a social democrat precisely because he didn't want to overthrow the bourgeois democratic government. Any call to common action for this last task would fell in deaf ears amongst the Social Democratic workers, because it went far beyond what they felt and understood they had to do.

Finally, by raising the united front in this sectarian and ultra-leftist way, the Communist Party had no chance to expose the reformist leaderships and win its rank-and-file worker followers to a revolutionary policy.

c) *Creating artificial mass organizations, parallel to traditional ones (which were led by the reformists).*

These organizational inventions (“red” unions, soviets on demand), dreamed up by Stalinism to advance the revolutionary process, were the consequence of rejecting the policy of the united workers front. Any mass organization is, in fact, a united workers front, since workers of all stripes are grouped there.

Against this line of creating artificial organisms, Trotsky reiterated the Leninist position to stay and work in traditional workers movement organizations (trade unions, factory committees, soviets of the mass movement, etc.) whatever their leadership. Being there was doubly imperative: first of all, to confront the danger of the far right in unity, secondly, to contest the leadership of the mass movement to the reformists.

d) *Proposing the arming of the proletariat as a task in itself.*

Stalinism saw this activity as something independent from the overall political situation. To take just an example, let's look to Spain in 1931, which Trotsky analysed superbly. The central political issue, and what most interested the masses at that time, were the elections to the *Cortes* (parliament). Stalinism, while maintaining silence on the election, agitated the slogan “arm the proletariat”. Trotsky rightly pointed out that “to counter pose the slogan of arming the workers to the reality of political processes that grip the masses at their vitals means to isolate oneself from the masses— and the masses from arms”.⁶ He proposed, instead, that the slogan of armament be part of a structured political program, i.e., a program that took into account the situation of the class struggle, and in particular the intervention in the elections to the *Cortes*.

e) *Maintaining that the triumph of Nazism opened new and better perspectives for revolutionary struggles and development of the party than those under the bourgeois-democratic regime.*

For Trotsky this was no longer a “mistake”. It was suicide and an unspeakable betrayal, because the reactionary triumph would set back, to incalculable levels, the revolutionary process.

The Guevarist ultra-leftism

As a conception, Guevarist guerrillaism is a repetition and extension of these tragic ultra-leftist errors just summarized. Consider the similarities.

⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening It”, 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 124-149.

a) Stalinism failed to differentiate between fascism and reformist social democracy. Guevarism does not differentiate between the various regimes existing in Latin America. For them, a bourgeois nationalist and an ultra-reactionary pro-imperialist regime are merely different forms of government that takes the monolithic agreement between national bourgeoisies and imperialism, whose trend is towards full fascist or semi-fascist monolithic government.

b) Stalinism actually refused to call for the united workers front against fascism (raising the “united front from below”). Guevarism does not call for a united front in any way at all and, moreover, abandons any attempt to work in the mass movement. It commits a similar, but more serious mistake.

c) Guevarism tried to create artificial organisms for the seizure of power, scorning those which the masses gave themselves. But Guevarism also deepens this error because Stalinism at least tried to copy the organizations of the mass movement (soviets and unions), while Guevarism holds up as organ of power the “guerrilla army”.

d) Guevarism always raises the “armament in itself” but it deepens the error because it doesn’t even pose it to the masses, as the Stalinists did, but to a vanguard.

e) Finally, just as Stalinism, Guevarism argues that the fascist regimes are the best objective basis for the development of the armed struggle.

Our majority comrades are worthy disciples of Guevarist ultra-leftism, and, as we will see later, these criteria were, and are, the axis of the majority’s policy for Bolivia.

Are all Governments the same?

We have seen that one of the mistakes of ultra-leftism Trotsky criticized was putting an equal sign between all bourgeois governments. For ultra-leftists, all governments are “fascists” for the sole reason of being bourgeois.

The POR (C) comrades didn’t consider the possibility of different regimes, caused by the general contradictions with imperialism and the mass movement on the rise. Thus they fell into a dangerous confusion.

One thing is not to trust any bourgeois government or support it, even if it is “leftist” or “nationalist”; another thing is not to distinguish them from the ultra-reactionary governments, and not to have an appropriate policy for each of them. Not supporting Torres or the first Peron government is correct. Not differentiating them from the regimes of Banzer or Onganía is suicidal.

Barrientos - Ovando - Torres

That the Barrientos regime was reactionary and an agent of imperialism there can be no doubt. But after Barrientos came Ovando, and the regime changed. However, for the POR (C), the Ovando government was the government “of moribund imperialist capitalism, which has assumed a ‘revolutionary’ mask to save itself”.⁷

POR (C) comrades, were the differences between Barrientos and Ovando just a “mask”?

Reality kept changing: the Ovando regime was superseded by the Torres regime. But the characterizations remained the same. For the POR (C):

⁷ Leaflet of the POR (C) to the Miners’ Congress, in *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 8, No. 18, 15 November 1970, p. 434.

“The same ‘revolutionary nationalist’ tendency that surfaced with Ovando is being continued by the Torres regime”. [Torres’ concepts place him] “within the context of ‘desarrollismo’ [‘developmentalism’] which imperialism is advancing for semi-colonial countries...” “The opportunists confuse this new role of the military chiefs, which falls in the sphere of modern imperialist tactics, with the revolutionary process, which is a very different thing”. “As a result, the Military High Command advised by the Yankrr embassy, reached the conclusion that it had to replace the Ovando government”.⁸

To close with a flourish the characterization of the Torres regime, *Combate*, official organ of the POR (C) said:

“In the military and political crisis of October the masses didn’t t win. The victory of General Torres is rather a defeat of the revolutionary masses and a triumph of the army as bourgeois party.”⁹

As we see, from Barrientos through Ovando, to Torres, nothing changed in Bolivia, according to the POR (C) comrades. All were defeats for the masses. Everything was reduced to different tactical combinations, lucubrated by imperialism and the Bolivian military chiefs in the aseptic laboratory of the Yankee embassy, completely isolated from the effects of the class struggle.

Trotsky vs. the POR (C)

However, Trotsky had already pointed out, at the time—the “third period”, that: “The misfortune of the Stalinist bureaucracy is that neither in Spain nor in Germany does it see the real contradictions that exist in the enemy camp...”. “In theory (if this word can be used here), it protects itself against opportunist deviations by a general refusal to make any political and class distinctions: Hoover, von Papen, Vandervelde, Gandhi, Rakovsky, all are ‘counter-revolutionaries’, ‘Fascists’, ‘agents of imperialism’.”¹⁰

This course, that Trotsky explains, suggests a parallel with our Bolivian section: didn’t the POR (C) begin by characterizing Torres as the agent “of the modern imperialist tactics” to later be forced to fight by his side, and still later finish on “bended knees” before him in the FRA [Frente Revolucionario Anti-imperialista — Revolutionary Anti-imperialist Front, TN]?

Giving no importance to the teachings of Trotsky, the POR (C) comrades kept saying, under the government of Torres that “the workers and their revolutionary vanguard need not choose between two warring military factions”.¹¹

While Trotsky in a similar situation said exactly the opposite: “The Bolsheviks did not remain neutral between the camp of Kerensky and that of Kornilov. [They fought in the first against the second]. They accepted the official command as long as they were not sufficiently strong enough to overthrow it.”¹²

To demonstrate that this political blindness was not a momentary bedazzlement, two months before the second Miranda coup, the POR (C) comrades launched their famous prediction:

“The army, armed party of the bourgeoisie, still controls the state. Discrepancies and friction between the military leaders, although it is true they have not disappeared, are still not deep enough to confront some sectors with others and break the command structure.”¹³

From the point of view of the POR (C) comrades, it could not be otherwise, how could there be a “conflict between the different sectors”, or a break of the high command, if they all obeyed like puppets

⁸ “Declaración del Comité Ejecutivo del POR (C)” [“Declaration of the Executive Committee of the POR (C)”], 11 October 1970, in *Combate* No.3, first fortnight November 1970.

⁹ *Combate*, No. 3.

¹⁰ Trotsky, Leon: “The Spanish Kornilovs and the Spanish Stalinists”, 20 September 1932, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931–39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971, pp.183 and 185.

¹¹ “Declaration of the Executive Committee of the POR (C)”, op. cit.

¹² Trotsky, Leon: “Ultra-lefts in general and incurable ultra-lefts in particular”, 28 September 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931–39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 296.

¹³ “Declaration of the Executive Committee of the POR (C)”, op. cit.

the mandates of imperialism, and if the military formed a monolithic eternal unity with the Yankee State Department?

A few months later— finally!— after a year of open coup preparations, with the high command broken into a thousand pieces, and after two “fascist” coups, comrade González discovered with amazement that “the fissures in the army are too wide”.¹⁴

Regrettably, this healthy change did not lead comrade Gonzalez to distinguish between Kerensky and Kornilov, between Torres and Miranda–Banzer; he continued to fight both at the same level, as if they were his immediate enemies. The quote Germain himself gives (to prove otherwise) proves us correct:

“For that reason we declare that the revolutionary process in Bolivia is confronted with two dangers. On the one hand there is the threat of a fascist *coup*, nourished by the Yankee embassy and by the Argentine and Brazilian dictatorships, a *coup* which is being prepared by the divisions of the Bolivian army. On the other hand there is military and civilian reformism, which tries to lull the masses to sleep, and which has transformed itself into an obstacle to the triumph of the revolution.”¹⁵

Here it says clearly that there are “two dangers”: “fascism” and “reformism”, but it puts an equal sign between them, and it doesn’t say that the immediate, evident, objective danger for the mass movement is “fascism”. Even less attention is drawn to contradictory role of reformism, which, according to Trotsky, is not just an obstacle to revolution, but also an obstacle to fascism. This difference, which is precisely the difference between Kerensky and Kornilov, is what the POR (C) never pointed out. The best demonstration that it failed to distinguish which was the immediate danger and that it put in the same bag all bourgeois sectors and regimes, is summarized in this statement regarding the policy of the “most advanced and militant sectors of the working class” weeks before the Banzer coup:

“In reality, they are struggling [for]... a workers’ and peasants’ government that would be definitively and concretely anti-imperialist and socialist.”¹⁶

The POR (C) comrades made characterizations similar to the Stalinist “third period”: they equalled reformists with “fascists”, bourgeois nationalists with “agents of imperialism”, Barrientos with Ovando, Ovando with Torres and Torres with the officers preparing the coup. And after all, why bother looking for differences, if government changes are nothing more than changing “masks” and the presidents are removed and put in by the Yankee ambassador, ringing a bell after talking with the military?

Our section and the coups

Making no the distinction between different types of regimes, led the POR (C) comrades to have the same policy against all of them. By not calling for the workers united front to face the “fascist” coups, the POR (C) comrades fell on the “third period” type model that Trotsky criticized.

To refresh our memory a little, let’s recall some dates: Barrientos died in a strange “aviation accident” on 27 April 1969. On 29 September the same year General Ovando rose to power. Also in 1969 guerrilla activities were resumed, which would end up unnoticed at Teoponte in October 1970. On 6 October 1970 general Miranda made the first attempt at “fascist” coup. The Torres government resulted from the failure of this coup. In January 1971, General Miranda, with General Banzer as his second, revolted again. The latter eventually knocked Torres on 21 August 1971, and is still in power.

As we see, in the short period from October 1970 to August 1971, there were three “fascist” coups. How did the POR (C) politically prepare the Bolivian masses, the working class and its vanguard to confront them? In our opinion it did not prepared them at all.

¹⁴ Gonzalez, Hugo: “An interview”, in *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 9, No. 23, 16 June 1971, p. 544.

¹⁵ “Appeal of the POR on May Day 1971”, in *Combate* new series, No.5, first fortnight of May 1971, quoted by Germain in *In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International*, International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. X, No.4, April 1973, p. 7.

¹⁶ Gonzalez, Hugo: “An Interview”, op. cit. p. 15.

The first coup

Among the materials of the POR (C) immediately prior to Miranda's coup, we have carefully searched for any mention of the threat of a coup and any call for unity of all workers parties and currents to face it. We found nothing.

Instead, we did find passages like this: "What is happening with the government? Arrogant and reckless in speaking to the people, but unable to confront the anti-national right wing that it itself denounces. Or does this right wing act by official commission?" "If it is necessary to speak of an anti-national conspiracy, this is the only one that exists, draping itself in sheep's clothing to hide the wolf snout and sink its fangs into the people".¹⁷

The POR (C) comrades not only told the workers they doubted a right wing conspiracy existed, but they hinted that the conspiracy was acting "by official commission" of the government itself, that it was draping "in sheep's clothing" to "sink its fangs into the people".

But there's even more. In the next issue of *Combate* we read:

"From this point of view, for us the military crisis does not exceed the limits of the ideology of the institution called army and whose rationale is anticommunism". "So, where are the differences between the generals? Do differences exist? Obviously, they do. But beware! Dissent is tactical and concerns how to defeat communism and how to prevent the access of the masses to power".¹⁸

For the POR (C) comrades, the differences within the Bolivian military, three months before Miranda's coup, were "ideological", "tactical" disagreements, and they warned: "Beware!" of getting confused by giving importance to these differences. This is opposite of warning about the danger of a right wing coup.

This raises some very important questions for us: Why would the POR (C) comrades not advise, as Trotsky did: "Assuming a defensive position means a policy of closing ranks with the majority of the German working class and forming a united front with the Social Democratic and non-party workers against the fascist threat."¹⁹

It is true that the POR (C) comrades distributed a flyer in the Miners' Congress at Siglo XX. But why, as Trotsky taught us, didn't they present to the Miners' Congress and to all the trade unions and workers parties "a concrete, carefully detailed, and practical program for a joint struggle against fascism and demanded joint sessions of the executives of both parties, with the participation of the executives of the Free Trade Unions? Simultaneously, one should have carried this same program energetically down through all the layers of both parties and of the masses."²⁰

When a Trotskyist organization detects the danger of a "fascist" coup, it knows that in such country a stage of the class struggle opens in which the first priority is the fight against the coup, through the strategy of the united front with the reformist organizations. To propose that the miners arm themselves, not to oppose the coup, but "... to revive the armed miners' pickets and courageously proclaim militant solidarity with those who are struggling today by means of guerrilla warfare..." was and is a political crime. To tell the miners to arm themselves to engage in guerrilla against Ovando, and not to confront the coup that Miranda was preparing against Ovando, meant to break from the onset with every anti-coup worker who wasn't in favour of the guerrillas. It meant to call the workers movement to split between pro-guerrillas and anti-guerrillas, when there was a common task for all of them: to combat the Mirandist right wing (even in armed form). The need for this task was understood by all Bolivian workers; the need for guerrilla warfare by almost no one. And this was demonstrated in the facts: the working class mobilized against the Mirandist coup and caused the crisis of bourgeois

¹⁷ *Combate*, No. 1, second half June 1970.

¹⁸ *Combate*, No. 2, second half June 1970.

¹⁹ Trotsky, Leon: "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany", 26 September 1930, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, Pathfinder Press, Nueva York, 1971, p. 72.

²⁰ Trotsky, Leon: "What next? Vital questions for the German proletariat", 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 172.

institutions and the army for two or three days, but it didn't responded in any way to the calls of the POR (C).

Our policy should have been united front and not guerrillas. We should have told the miners as follows:

“Comrades, although many of you and the organizations you belong to may have not noticed, we Trotskyists make a warning and a call: we are in serious danger of an ultra-reactionary coup. We must defend ourselves in a united way. For that, we must form armed pickets squads and call on all unions in the country and the COB to also organize such squads to confront the inevitable coup which the reaction is preparing. The military— like the bourgeoisie— are divided as a result of the rise of our struggles. One sector of the bourgeoisie and the army wants to use harsh methods against us, other sectors— instead— want to use milder methods and dominate us through negotiations. We disagree with the conceptions of Lechin and the Communist Parties, in whom many of you trust, and we want to convince you our revolutionary ideas are better. This is, we want to convince you not to place any trust in any bourgeois sector and to fight uncompromisingly against all exploiters, mild and hard. But for that there is time; to confront the fascist coup, there isn't: We know you hate fascism as much as we do. Therefore we propose we organize ourselves against it, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. We have begun by inviting Lechin and the Communist Parties to a united front. We are also inviting the guerrillas to this workers united front for the fight against the “fascist” coup, as long as they join the common action and don't break the front or sabotage it with isolated or adventurist actions. If we don't join together to organize against the coup, if we don't build the pickets squads, it won't be the Trotskyists fault, but rather of your leaderships. Because we are willing to do anything— except to abandon our political independence and the right to defend our positions— in order to achieve unity of the workers to fight against the reactionary coup. If we, the unions and parties that claim to represent the working class, are united, we will be able to win the peasants and students before long.”

This would have been a Trotskyist position. But, more importantly, it would have enabled our organization to establish itself as the undisputed political leadership of the entire Bolivian proletariat.

The POR (C) did none of this. One could admit that they were wrong, but then one has to add that they didn't learn anything from their mistakes. Under the Torres regime, they followed the same characterizations and raised the same policies as under Ovando. For the POR (C), it passed completely unnoticed the fact that the Bolivian working class had mobilized, had created a de facto united front and had defeated the reactionary coup by imposing a bourgeois nationalist regime. This regime, weak, that consistently yielded to the pressure of the masses, which daily accentuated its Kerenskist features, represented a great victory of the Bolivian working class. But didn't the masses fail to impose a workers and peasants government? That is absolutely correct, but who was responsible? The fault falls on their bureaucratic and reformist leaders, and from the revolutionary point of view, on the POR (C) comrades. If they had contended for the leadership of the struggle against the “fascist” coup, if they had been the first and most consistent in denouncing the coup, if they had been the champions of the united front to face it, they would have sooner or later imposed their leadership and boosted the struggle towards the seizure power.

From the documents of the POR (C) one can deduce that not having reached the worker and peasant government was the masses fault, and having imposed Torres was a defeat of the mass movement and not of the “fascist” reaction. And so they said it: “In the military and political crisis of October the masses were not victorious. The victory of General Torres is rather a defeat of the revolutionary masses and a triumph for the army as party of the bourgeoisie. The October crisis demonstrates the limitations of the direct action of the masses.”²¹

The second coup

This characterization will become the basis of the POR (C)'s policy under Torres. We have already seen that in the ten months of Torres government, there were two “fascists” coups: Miranda's second (and Banzer's first) and Banzer's definitive coup in August 1971. But fighting them, through the workers united front, was never the main task of our Bolivian section.

²¹ *Combate*, 1 November 1970.

The line voted by the Executive Committee of the POR (C), as soon as Torres comes to power, and whose considerations we have already quoted, was based on three key claims (which have little to do with the program Germain claims the POR (C) had):

“a) Organization of a Worker and People’s Revolutionary Command, with all political tendencies which support the socialist solution for the current situation in the country and which support the armed struggle for power, to overcome the reformism and economism, the capitulation and class collaboration, cause of successive defeats and frustrations of the Bolivian people.

“b) Creation of a Revolutionary *Workers and People’s Army*, an essential tool for taking power.

“c) Develop of a body representative of the masses, where they can express all their revolutionary force, their initiatives, concerns and transformative will.”²²

As we see, except for this last slogan (having something to do, but very little, with the workers united front and the subsequent People’s Assembly), the essential tasks posed by their program are opposed by the vertex to the workers united front to fight the “fascist” coup. Furthermore, neither in this program of the POR (C), nor in any other, does the struggle against a Banzer’s, or anyone else’s, coup figure as central axis.

It is true that in the program are included several correct economic and democratic slogans, slogans surely felt by the mass movement. But Trotsky grew weary of criticizing similar programs of the ultra-left. For example, *Pravda* of 14 May, 1931 put forward the following program for Spain: “to organize the workers for the disarming of reaction, for the arming of the proletariat, for the election of factory committees, for the realization of the seven-hour working day”.

This program earned the following criticism from Trotsky: “The slogans enumerated are incontestable, even though they are presented without any internal cohesion and without that sequence which should flow from the logic of the development of the masses...” “By speaking only of the seven-hour working day, of factory committees and the arming of the workers, by ignoring “politics”, by not having a single word to say in all its articles about the elections to the *Cortes*, *Pravda* goes all the way to meet anarcho-syndicalism...” “To oppose the slogan of the *arming of the workers* to the realistic political processes which grip the masses at their vitals, means to isolate oneself from the masses and the masses — from arms.”²³

The program of the POR (C) had all the flaws Trotsky saw in *Pravda*, it had no internal cohesion and its slogans didn’t revolve around any central or real political problem. At that time in Bolivia, wasn’t there a central political problem that would allow us to define one or more decisive slogans? We think there was, that this central axis was the coup and some of the slogans might have been: let us arm ourselves through the workers organizations to stop the inevitable right wing coup! Or, let’s build a united front with all workers organizations which want to fight against the “fascist” coup!

The program of the POR (C) was opposed to the workers front and to the fight against the “fascist” coup. It called to form a “Revolutionary Command” to fight “reformism” and “economism”, when reformism should have been called to a united front to fight against the “fascist” coup. It called for unity with all who agree with “socialism “ and “armed struggle” when it should have called for the unity of all workers sectors ready to fight against the coup, in the first place with Lechin and the CPs, i.e. with “economism and reformism”.

But all this is excusable, considering that the danger of “fascist” coup was systematically ignored by the POR (C). What is not excusable is precisely this ignorance, because after Miranda’s first coup—under Torres the second coup (or Banzer’s first) took place, and the POR (C)—listening to the rain but ignoring the flood— continued without adopting a policy against the danger of “fascist” coup. More correctly, they did not say a single word about it.

²² *Combate*, No. 3, first fortnight November 1970.

²³ Trotsky, Leon, “The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening it”, 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. p.114, 117 and 117.

Then the third coup arrived

Barely starting from April 1971— six months after Torres took over and after two “fascists” coups— that is, with the waters reaching their chin, the POR (C), in passing, begins to talk about the coup inevitability.

To see this in more detail, let us examine some of the five recommendations resolved in an expanded Central Committee meeting, held in April 1971. The first thing to notice is that none of them is a call to fight against the coup.

The first of the recommendations to the party leadership from the CC was:

“1. To intensify political work aimed at the masses in order to win them away from reformist the influence and promote the emergence of truly revolutionary leaderships to.”²⁴

The second recommendation was: “To intervene, following the above guideline, in all workers organizations”, the third, fourth and fifth, which we will discuss later, deal with the party’s military activity.

Not a single word on our policy of united front towards reformist organizations to fight against the “fascist” coup! On the contrary, if anything is clear from these recommendations is that they put forward as a fundamental political task the fight against reformism, not the united front with it to confront the “fascist” danger.

We also believe that the struggle against reformism was, and is, a matter of life or death for the Bolivian revolution. But the problem lies in how to fight it. The Bolivian masses witnessed the following spectacle: the coup was approaching, and it was clear to everyone; Lechin and the communist parties warned of this danger and called to keep the peace and slow down the workers mobilizations to prevent it; the POR (C) did not give it the least importance, and spoke of the need for a workers and peasants government imposed by revolutionary war. How could one convince the workers that the POR (C) was a leadership they should recognize, if it was the only group which did not make the fight against the coup the axis of its policy, which was the only way to defeat reformism at the time? Within this united front, with this common goal, was the place to fight for leadership. Reformism and bureaucracy were saying “do not mobilize”; the POR (C) had to answer: “The only way to defeat the coup is by the arming of the workers”. Thus we would have beaten reformism! If we had raised the task most heartfelt by the masses, we could have shouted: look at the vacillation and betrayal of the reformists!

Comrade Germain insists, despite the evidence of facts, that the POR (C) had a correct policy against the coup. He places emphasis mainly on the issue of *Combate* prior to 1 May 1971. We don’t know the full issue, but we do have a photograph of its first page. Actually, what we find there is more than enough for all of comrade Germain’s proofs to collapse. There are two articles; the first has a full-page headline that is a symbol: “Forward to the final assault on power for socialism.”

Obviously this isn’t calling to fight the reactionary coup but to launch a struggle for power. But wasn’t General Torres who was in power at the time? Again, the POR (C) was calling on the masses, who trusted Torres, to overthrow him and seize power, and not to prepare to fight against the reactionary coup.

In the part of the article that falls under this headline at our disposal, and which is where comrade Germain gets his quote, it is predicted that there will be a coup d’état. This is not of a great merit because for quite a while the coup preparations were public and notorious. But perhaps did they call to fight it as the most immediate and fundamental danger to the Bolivian workers? Again, they did not. There is a subtitle that is another symbol: “Neither with fascism nor with reformism: with the socialist revolution.”

Maybe elsewhere in this article, which is not at our disposal, we might find the right caption: “Together with reformists in a united front against fascism”. We doubt it very much. If this is the case, we beg comrade Germain to tell us where to find it.

The second article of the front page we have in full. In it we can verify the actual policy of the POR (C). Its title says that the People’s Assembly must be born from the rank and file and calls for the

²⁴ Report of the expanded CC of the POR (C) of April 1971, in “Bolivian Trotskyists Hold Plenum, *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 9, No 25, p. 599.

democratic election of delegates to it. Nothing is said about the coup, or the need for the People's Assembly to confront it mobilizing and arming the masses, or on the urgent need to build a united front against it. It ends with three slogans which, we assume, would be the main ones of the POR (C) at the time: "Reformism, No; Socialism, Yes. Bourgeois army, No; People's Revolutionary Army, Yes. Bourgeois parliament, No; People's Assembly, Yes".

Clearly, for the POR (C) comrades the most important risk to "socialism" (i.e., to the Bolivian masses), was reformism, not the reactionary coup, since they don't even mention it in their slogans.

The last issue of the POR (C)'s paper we know was issued two months before the coup. It has the number 6, and corresponds to the first fortnight of June. In it was predicted that "the days of Torres are numbered".

The fascist counterrevolution is also mentioned. The "responsibility of the left" is mentioned, but there is no call on the leftist parties to unite against the coup and, what is more serious, the People's Assembly isn't even mentioned. The position of the POR (C) is summarized as follows:

"Leaving abstractions behind, it is essential to immediately create the armed forces of university students, miners, factory workers, peasants, etc. We have to arm and train for the battle that it is coming. At the same time, not a single step back in the sit-ins and interventions on capitalist and imperialist property. We have to strike blows against the economic power, the nerve centres of imperialism and the native bourgeoisie.

"We must strengthen the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, indispensable tool for welding revolutionary currents in a solid front. Forward with the sit-ins and workers armament! Death to imperialism!"²⁵

Once again, two months before the coup, the POR (C) calls for a front of the "revolutionary currents" (not of the worker parties, including primarily the reformists), with the aim of "death to imperialism and capitalism" (i.e., once more, against Torres, not the reactionary coup which was being prepared).

Why go on? The POR (C) never raised as its policy against the "fascist" coup the united front or mobilizing the workers through the People's Assembly. If from the point of view of the class struggle, the blame for the defeat at the hands of Banzer was the reaction and imperialism, if from the point of view of the workers movement, the culprits were the reformists and bureaucrats, from the point of view of the revolutionary movement, the blame for that defeat was our Bolivian section, the POR (C).

The actual policy of the POR (C)

We have described the facts, which leave no doubt about the political mistakes of our Bolivian section. But if we were to summarize, defining it, what the actual policy of the POR (C) was, we would say that it was and is the arming of the masses as a task "*in itself*", a task for any time of the class struggle. The same policy of the Spanish ultra-leftists, that Trotsky criticised.

No one disputes that the POR (C) took as central task the rural guerrilla warfare under the Barrientos regime. No one can dispute, either, that such guerrilla had nothing to do with the change that took place under Ovando, nor with the conquests that the mass movement earned during the administration of the latter, such as the legal operation of the trade union movement, and semi-legality for the left.

We have said and continue to say that, with several variants, the line of "armament *in itself*" and building a "People's Revolutionary Army" that the POR (C) had under Barrientos, was kept under Ovando, under Torres and under Banzer. Under Barrientos, Ovando and the first period of Torres, it was expressed as rural guerrillas. Then it changed its form, even to include something seemingly correct: armed union picket squads. This was always done under the label of "building the revolutionary army". And it was always raised completely outside the situation of the class struggle and the needs of the masses: Never ever— just as an example— they raised the armament to fight against the "fascist" coups!

²⁵ *Combate*, No 6, June 1971.

Comrade Germain asserts the opposite. He poses a question: “Did the Bolivian section fail to make the distinction between Kornilov and Kerensky, between Torres and Barrientos or Banzer?” And he replies: “The implication that the POR (Combate) followed essentially the same line under Barrientos and Banzer as under Torres is completely unfounded.”²⁶

Both in the question and in his reply, comrade Germain “forgets” the Ovando government, during which the first “fascist” coup, by General Miranda, took place. For Marxists, memory is political. It is no coincidence that Germain forgets the Ovando government and the coup by Miranda. Miranda’s coup was extraordinarily important. As reported by Hugo Gonzalez, caused nothing less than a “... conflict among the military chiefs (that) paralysed the repressive force of the army; for two days there was a power vacuum; the presidential palace and government ministries were abandoned. At that moment, we had to act with the masses in the streets, to defeat the Mirandists in action and struggle”.²⁷

We see that, for Gonzalez, there was a two day “power vacuum”, during which the central task was to “defeat the Mirandists” (and not to fight against Ovando and Miranda at the same time), and the fight had to be done “with the masses in the street” (and not a guerrilla group in the field). We agree with this characterization and this task as posed by Gonzalez, but was this the policy of the POR (C)?

We hold, despite Germain’s protest, that under Ovando the Bolivian section was devoted to do exactly what it had done under Barrientos, preparing itself for the rural guerrillas. We also hold that it didn’t use the legal loopholes left by the Ovando regime to work on the mass movement. Finally, we hold that it didn’t make the fight against the coup its axis of activity, nor, much less, raised the workers united front to “defeat Mirandism”. In short, and this was demonstrated when the coup came: the POR (C) was not able to fight “with the masses in the street” to “defeat Mirandism” because it never had such a policy.

This is, moreover, what the POR (C) comrades claim. Hugo Gonzalez says:

“Under the Ovando government the party operated in complete clandestine conditions and was totally absorbed in armed work”.²⁸

It is clear that a party that operated in “complete clandestine conditions” could take little or no advantage of the legal margins that the regime left to penetrate the mass movement. On the other hand, this was not its purpose, since it “was totally absorbed in armed work”.

What armed struggle? Rural guerrilla, as clearly expressed in the own publications of the POR (C). Let’s look: December 1969, comrade Vallejos, editor of *Combate*, affirms:

“In this context [the new upsurge], the guerrillas were nothing more than the continuation of the revolutionary mass movement, whose development was cut off and truncated by the massacres and repression by military circles”. “While in Che’s time, in 1967, the guerrilla movement had broad popular support, its reappearance in 1969, with Inti Peredo, occurred in a much riper situation...”²⁹

February 1970: the POR (C) officially says the same that Vallejos had said regarding Inti’s guerrillas. And it adds:

“This popular attitude of accepting and supporting the guerrilla route is what sustains and encourages the guerrillas”. “Our position is clear. Bolivia’s backwardness and underdevelopment will not be solved with partial measures of a bourgeois program, but by the socialist revolution led by a National and Social Liberation Army, arising from the guerrillas...” “The guerrilla warfare is still valid. Never mind the beatings and losses of men and materiel. All that, however painful, can be replaced. What is important is to note that there is no other path for the truly revolutionary.”³⁰

April 1970: in its message to the Miners’ Congress (the first legally performed in years), the POR (C) called the miners to follow the example of Che, support Inti and “... to rearm the miners’ unions

²⁶ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence de la Fourth International”, op. cit. p.12.

²⁷ “La universidad y el Comando Político de la COB” [University and the COB’s Political Command] by POR (C), *Revista de América*, No 6/7, October 1971, p. 50.

²⁸ “An interview”, article cit.

²⁹ “The replacement of Siles”, *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 7, No. 41, 8 December 1969, pp. 1100-1.

³⁰ “El gobierno Ovando y la situación boliviana” [The Ovando government and the Bolivian situation], editions *Lucha Obrera*, February 1970, pp. 10 and following.

and create a large armed force of miners who should be part of the great Army of National and Social Liberation, whose construction began in Ñancahuazú. This is the path to victory.”³¹

May 1970: “On the other hand, to the revolutionaries of Latin America, the revolutionary methods employed [referring to the kidnapping of German ambassador in Brazil Von Lolleven] appear as the most effective ones for saving from jail and torture the anti-imperialist patriots who fall into the clutches of the sinister CIA”. “In our country, since Ñancahuazú, a concrete and real strategy for power has shown its worth, arising from our own politico-social situation”.³²

July 1970: “Therefore, far from being contrived, guerrilla warfare is the natural solution to the current situation,” “... mass politics, after a certain point in time, becomes armed struggle; guerrilla warfare, therefore, is the continuation of the mass movement by other means”. “Therefore, for socialism to take power it is vital to build a real army of the people arising from its vitals, which rises as alternative against the bourgeois professional army. In Bolivia such people’s liberation army began its march from Ñancahuazú with Commander Che Guevara.” “The resolution of the IV Congress of the COB, as of the previous Miners’ Congress of Siglo XX, ignored one of the most important acquisitions of Bolivian masses, which is the experience with revolutionary war and the guerrilla. A document that disregards the guerrilla struggle of Che Guevara, of Inti and what now the ELN and the POR propose to open, is a document that does not take into account the concrete reality of the country. The masses in their confrontation with the military dictatorship came to feel the need for new methods of struggle, which Che’s guerrilla knew how to give expression to; hence they gave him their sympathy and support, which the guerrillas themselves through a series of circumstances failed to take advantage of. But regardless of this, the masses saw and see now that the revolutionary war is the way to defeat an army that massacred them and deprived them of freedom”.³³

Why go on? Words and more words about guerrilla, people’s armies, unconditional support to Inti’s guerrillas, categorical statements that this was the only path for revolutionaries. What was the aim of all this guerrilla verbiage? To overthrow Ovando and make the “socialist revolution”. Not one word of warning about the danger of a right wing coup, not a single call to the workers united front against the coup. And when the miners are called to arm themselves, it is not under the discipline of their unions and to fight in united front against the right. They are asked to arm themselves through their unions (!) to form part of the rural guerrilla (the “army began to be built in Ñancahuazú”).

Despite the POR (C) the masses mobilize

The Miranda coup came; the bourgeoisie and the army went into crisis; there was a two days power vacuum which finally was filled by Torres. The masses “took to the streets” with its reformist and bureaucratic leaderships. They “defeated the Mirandists” and imposed a bourgeois nationalist president. That is, the masses met the two tasks that comrade González pointed to. But, as a logical consequence of its policy, the POR (C) had nothing to do with it.

The masses took to the streets unarmed, but responsible are those who didn’t tell them that a coup d’état was approaching, and that they had to arm themselves to confront it. The culprits are those who told them to armed themselves to go make guerrilla warfare, those who called for “armament in itself” and not to defeat Mirandism. The culprits that the masses didn’t impose a workers and peasants government are those who were isolated themselves from the masses because they were “totally absorbed by the armed struggle” and left the masses at the mercy of their bureaucratic and reformist leaderships.

The masses performed a huge task by defeating the Mirandist right through their, moreover, a heroic victory, considering that the POR (C) — the only hope for revolutionary party— had not alerted them about the danger of a coup.

³¹ Flyer to the Miners’ Congress, op. cit. p. 434.

³² *Combate*, Nueva Epoca [New era], No 1, 15 May 1970.

³³ *Combate*, No 2, 15 July 1970.

October 1970: a “defeat of the masses”?

But this was not the conclusion the POR (C) drew from the October crisis. As we have already seen, for our Bolivian section, the rise of Torres meant “a defeat of the masses” and “a triumph of the army”. Moreover:

“There are still those who argue that, as against the armed struggle, it was the direct action of the masses that triumphed, and they call the government of Torres a victory.” “The October crisis demonstrates the limitations of the direct action of the masses. A general strike can only lead to workers’ power if simultaneously there is a Revolutionary Army, which has emerged precisely through armed struggle. When this workers army doesn’t exist, the mobilization of the masses only serves to elevate a section of the bourgeoisie if it doesn’t end in a bloody massacre.”³⁴

This is how the POR (C) faced the new stage, the period of the Torres government. And it continued, despite comrade Germain’s protests, within its constant policy of “armament in itself”, again calling for the rural guerrillas: “Despite the defeats the guerrilla remains the path of national and social liberation.” “As in October 1967, the theorists about the failure of the guerrillas as a method for taking power have reappeared.” “Regardless of the contingencies of each guerrilla front, above the personal qualities of the combatants, despite the loss of valuable lives, guerrilla warfare remains the way to take power.”³⁵

Don’t tell us that rural guerrillas aren’t what they are talking about here. The only “guerrilla fronts” that were known in Bolivia, were rural, and *Combate* is very clear when it says that “regardless of the contingencies of every guerrilla front ... the guerrilla remains the way to take power”.

From rural guerrilla to ... “armament of the masses”

The each day more pronounced Kerenskyism of the Torres regime, its constant concessions to the mass movement, the emergence of embryonic organisms of dual power, the almost absolute legality for the left-wing and revolutionary currents, left the guerrilla increasingly isolated, condemned to cook in its own juices. This caused a formal readjustment in the POR (C) policy of “armament in itself”. The sacrosanct guerrilla was disappearing from the propaganda of our Bolivian section and it was replaced, as stated before, with general calls to the arming of the masses. These calls came to take the apparently correct form of armed union detachments. But these changes, we insist, were formal: the new way of considering the problem of armament still remained in the ultra-left line of “armament in itself”. Never, ever was the armament raised as a need tied to the actual and concrete class struggle!

In the meeting of the extended Central Committee of the POR (C) on April 1971, already close to the coup d’état, the following agenda was discussed:

“a) Report on the work of the Fourth International. The present stage of the revolutionary process in Latin America and the role played by the sections of the Fourth International. The situation in Argentina and the struggle being waged by our comrades of the PRT and ERP.

“b) The national situation. The characterization of the Torres government, the position of the army and its interlocking with the civilian legal structure. The mass movement and its limitations. The left and the deviations to be combatted. The permanent danger of coup d’état. Perspectives.

“c) Guerrilla warfare. Balance sheet and experiences. The POR (C)’s conception of the revolutionary war.”³⁶

In the previous subchapter we have seen the first two of the five recommendations voted by this extended Central Committee for the leadership of POR (C). In them, the political axis of struggle against reformism was adopted, without a mention at all of the coup and the need for a workers united front to face it. Let’s now consider the remaining three recommendations:

“3) To stimulate the workers to arm by taking the initiative to form armed detachments at the trade union level.

³⁴ *Combate*, No 3, 1 November 1970.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Intercontinental Press*, No. 25, 28 June 1971, p.598.

“4) To intensify at the same time the party’s military work and strengthen its military apparatus, for the future actions that will be intimately linked with the revolutionary masses.

“5) Mass work and the party’s military activity must proceed in a balanced way under one centralized leadership of the party.”³⁷

As we see, of five resolutions, three are related to the military question, but in none of them they say that the call to arms of workers must be done because of the need to fight against the “fascist” coup. What did the POR (C) propose the workers to organize “armed detachments at trade-union level” for? To be consistent with the two political points of these recommendations it had to be for the central and unique task of “fighting against reformism”. But we don’t believe the POR (C) has carried to such an extent its political clumsiness. It simply raised armament as armament “in itself” without any concrete political goal except the struggle for “national liberation”, “socialism” and “building the revolutionary army”.

A Truly Trotskyist agenda and recommendations

What should have been the agenda and the recommendations of the extended Central Committee meeting of a Trotskyist party in Bolivia at the time? Very simple:

I) The danger of right-wing coup against the government of Torres as greatest danger for the workers and mass movement. The policy of workers united front against the coup as our central policy. Work by the Party in the mass organizations: the trade unions and People’s Assembly.

II) The arming of the workers for the fight against the coup through the mass organizations (trade unions and People’s Assembly).

Recommendations: 1) To immediately call for all workers organizations, and especially the reformist ones and the trade union bureaucracy, to form a united front against the “fascist” danger.

2) To immediately launch of a campaign exposing each and every vacillation or betrayal of the reformist or bureaucratic leaderships regarding this central task.

3) To put forward in the unions and the People’s Assembly the need to organize armed detachments to fight against the coup.

4) To take the initiative in the construction of these armed detachments in places (unions or working-class neighbourhoods) where our party has already won the support of workers for this task.

5) To start immediately the political work on the ranks of the army, with the slogan of internal democratization, election of delegates from the soldiers and NCOs to the People’s Assembly. Keep within their regiments all soldiers or NCOs who sympathize with us and give them the guidance of the party to form groups within their regiments.

This was the only correct way of calling for the armament. This was also the only way to achieve it. But the POR (C), unfortunately, did not have this policy.

Armament “in itself” a few days before Banzer’s coup

Let’s get back to comrade Germain’s favourite issue of *Combate*, No 5 of 1 May 1971. We have already seen that one of the three main slogans was “Bourgeois army, No; People’s Revolutionary Army, Yes”.

Once again we see here the famous “People’s Revolutionary Army” whose construction, according to comrade Germain, was not the central policy and task of the Bolivian section. Again, the strategy of “armament in itself” is displayed here in all its splendour. This splendour is even more radiant in the last issue of the POR (C)’s paper before the coup, No. 6, already quoted. In it, they reported on the massive workers mobilization of May Day with the full page heading of “Socialism and Arms, May 1 battle cry”.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 599.

Once again, the arms will be to achieve “socialism” and not to confront the danger of a coup, which is not mentioned even once in the article. There are only ponderings, praise to the policies and the banners of the demonstration, mainly referring to the column of the union controlled by the party:

“Before the jubilation and loud applause, the Federation of Flour Workers marched with a large banner that said, ‘We need a People’s Revolutionary Army’ and behind it marched selected groups of workers in guerrilla uniforms, with the beret and star of Che, carrying some weapons. This is the workers army created to bring socialism through the only realistic path: the Revolutionary War.” “The masses are committed to the line of armed struggle, the Revolutionary War, and in their midst the embryos of future People’s Revolutionary Army begin to arise.”³⁸

Again re-appears the People’s Revolutionary Army, the “guerrilla” uniforms and the “workers army” to do “revolutionary war” and achieve “socialism”. For the POR (C) the policy of these protesters of not mentioning the risk of a coup is very correct. Further on the POR (C) summed up its position saying that it is necessary:

“Promote the formation of popular political–military instruments.” “We have to bring into being in every union, in the universities, in the countryside, armed detachments as embryos of the future revolutionary military force essential to overcome the fascist military and lackeys of imperialism. In the approaching clash of classes it will be the arms what will decide the fate of the revolution.”³⁹

What is the purpose of these “popular political–military instruments”, of this “future revolutionary force” into which the armed detachments of the trade unions, the universities and the countryside should be incorporated? For the first and only time it would seem the POR (C) posed the question of armament in an appropriate manner, in order to defeat the “fascist military and lackeys of imperialism”. But, alas, this is just a slip, a bright spot in the midst of an article where armament is proposed, repeatedly, to “make revolutionary war” for “socialism”. Which of the two reasons did the POR (C) really give to the workers when it called on them to arm themselves? This for the POR (C) is of no importance; either of the two serves. It’s the same to call to arms for socialism as against Banzer; it’s the same to call to arms for the revolutionary war as for the defeat or the fascist military. The point is to call to arms. And this political line, clear example of “armament in itself” is what the POR (C) continued to push in its last paper before the “fascist” coup.

However much comrade Germain tries to hide reality, all calls to arms of the POR (C) were permanently taken as a central task, whether under Barrientos, Ovando, Torres or Banzer, and they had just one, organizational, objective: building the “revolutionary army”. At times it was the rural guerrilla, other times a “workers army”, still other times a “workers and peasants army” or a “People’s Revolutionary Army” or a “revolutionary military force”. If this isn’t having one and the same policy (or strategy) for every situation, if this isn’t the ultra-leftist line of “armament in itself”, we ask the majority comrades, especially Germain, to explain to us what it is.

How to knead your own failure

We have seen how never— not even before-fascist coups— did the POR (C) centred its policy on the united front against the coups. Under all governments and against all the coups, the POR (C) had one and only one policy: “building the revolutionary army”.

The deep reason for this policy is their total underestimation of the potential of the mass movement. Comrade Gonzalez tells us:

“An insurrectionary mobilization of masses, however extensive it may be, will eventually be defeated by modern armies functioning as parties of the bourgeoisie. Example: Mexico City, Cordoba ... The mass uprisings in Mexico City and Cordoba, and the COB in Bolivia, were defeated because they were missing two key elements... b) the armed instrument or military organization, prepared, trained, capable to take on the capitalist army at the level of armed force”.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Combate*, No 5, 1 May 1971, p. 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ “El gobierno Ovando y la situación boliviana” [The Ovando government and the Bolivian situation], op. cit.

Although not clearly stated, a well-known guerrillaist argument lies here: the old armies could be taken on by the mass movement and a correct policy, modern armies cannot. This argument is false to the core. The new imperialist armies differ from the old for having air forces, tanks, missiles and nuclear weapons. Today it is still more difficult than in the old days to build a people's army to militarily confront the bourgeois army. Therefore, any attempt to oppose an army to the reactionary army, instead of the mass movement with a correct political line is doomed to failure. However, for the majority comrades:

“If the revolutionary army is lacking, it cannot be built only by the heroism of the masses.”⁴¹

This tremendous pessimism of the POR (C) comrades on the possibilities of the mass movement explains their perpetual line of “building the revolutionary army”. That impotence of the masses is constant, eternal, permanent, under any type of government, whether Barrientos, Ovando, Torres or Banzer. So get diluted the differences between governments, the progress and setbacks of the workers movement, the hot political issues the workers face and suffer— for example, the threat of “fascists” coups. And, after all, why bother to specify stages, make characterizations, search for slogans, etc., if everything is simplified with the universal panacea: the revolutionary army? Here it is clarified the proposal of the POR (C) to the Miners' Congress calling it to take arms to “express solidarity with the guerrillas”. It also clarifies the POR (C) position at the beginning of the Torres government of creating “[Workers and People's] Revolutionary Army. This is the essential instrument for taking power”.⁴²

Who must seize power?

In summary, the ultra-leftist syllogism again presents itself perfect, but useless and false: major premise, major mass struggles always culminate in armed struggle against the military; minor premise, a modern army can only be overcome with another army. Conclusion: let us immediately begin to build the revolutionary army, since this takes years. The final conclusion, moral and non-political, is obvious:

“Power is taken by those who have arms and are determined to take it relying in their own strength.”⁴³

The capture of power is no longer a problem of correct policy, of the objective situation, of relations between classes, of fighting and “confidence” in the mass movement; it becomes, instead, a moral-military problem: having weapons and be willing to use them.

The organizational conclusion of the POR (C)'s policy is twofold: first, the invention by the party of artificial organisms (once again, something Trotsky's criticised the ultra-leftist for), in this case the “Revolutionary Army”, and second, the disregard for the natural bodies of the mass movement, in this case for the unions and the People's Assembly. We will stop on this second issue in the next chapter. Let us now turn to artificial body invented by the POR (C), the famous “revolutionary army”.

The idea that in Latin America at this stage our central task is the construction of these “revolutionary armies” modifies our entire transitional program and our Marxist conception, because it means that our central task is no longer building revolutionary Bolsheviks and Trotskyists parties. Comrade Germain makes a pun about all this: he says the party is built by building the army or by calling the masses to the armed struggle. Comrade González is more precise when he says that the only way to build the revolutionary army is “through armed struggle”. Yet this is not what we are discussing, but whether the revolutionary army “is the essential instrument for taking power”.

This discussion goes much deeper than it seems: it's about the power of the working class, its weaknesses and shortcomings. For the POR (C), the essential need is the “revolutionary army”; for us, it is the revolutionary party and a correct revolutionary policy.

This is what our teachers permanently proposed. Thus, the Communist International, in its Third Congress voted as follows:

⁴¹ “Our role in battling against the military coup”, *Intercontinental Press*, No 38, vol. 9, 1 November 1971, p. 936.

⁴² “Declaración del Comité Ejecutivo del POR (C)” [“Declaration of the Executive Committee of the POR (C)”] op. cit.

⁴³ “El gobierno Ovando y la situación boliviana” [The Ovando government and the Bolivian situation], op. cit.

“The political party may have only a few days to mobilise for military activity. Not only the Party, but also its reserves, organisations of sympathisers and even the unorganised revolutionary masses, may have to prepare for action in this short time. In such a situation the formation of a regular Red Army is out of the question. Victory must be won without the assistance of a previously organised army; victory must be won by the masses alone, under the Party’s leadership.”⁴⁴

For Lenin and Trotsky, and for us, the workers are capable of anything — yes, anything! — including defeating the bourgeois army without having built its own army, provided they follow the correct political line, are headed by a Bolshevik party and they have thrown off the reformist, bureaucratic and treacherous leaderships. The defeat of the Bolivian workers wasn’t because they had failed to form an army, but something much simpler: the Trotskyists didn’t manage to rid them of those leaderships and to build our party with mass influence.

Trotsky and the armed struggle

This was Trotsky’s conception of the armed struggle. He never called for building “revolutionary armies”, although he was the maximum organizer of the Red Army. Trotsky pointed out, above all, the need to arm the masses with correct politics. Only in this way could they be armed in the strict sense of the word, and build workers militias. And it was possible to secure victory, again by means of correct politics, only by destroying the armed forces of the regime from within, taking the class struggle to its bosom, politically winning and organizing the workers, students and peasants wearing uniform.

Just as Trotsky never proposed, before the outbreak of the revolution, the construction of any kind of army as the central and permanent task, neither did he hold that the correct policy was to constantly call on the masses to prepare for armed struggle. For Trotskyism, the correct policy is to raise the slogans appropriate to each moment of the class struggle. Just as no one can raise the general strike as a permanent slogan (except for Posadism),* because no one would think that the general strike is the daily task of the masses from now until the victory of the socialist revolution, neither can one propose the armed struggle this way, because the armed struggle is the answer to a certain stage of the class struggle, and not a permanent task of the exploited masses or of their revolutionary party. Just as the slogan of general strike when raised at a time that has no rationale isolates us from the masses and is detrimental to the possibility that the masses will throw themselves into strike at the right time, the permanent calling for “armed struggle in itself”— or the preparation for it by building “revolutionary armies”— means, we insist together with Trotsky, “to isolate ourselves from the masses and the masses from the arms”.

That was the POR (C)’s tragic mistake in Bolivia: because if there was a path to arm the masses, that path was to convince them to make a united front and arm themselves to fight the coup. The POR (C) chose the other path, to join the small group of militants of the ELN and dedicating itself creating an artificial organisation, the famous “army”. For eight years now they have been doing this, and such “army” has not been seen anywhere. Unless you want to pass off as “army” the handful of militants who every once in a while, as in Teoponte, are massacred by the Bolivian armed forces. Meanwhile, a colossal revolutionary situation was wasted.

Our Transitional Program says exactly the opposite of what comrade González sustains:

“When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, else leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International.”⁴⁵

Although the majority comrades argue that they say the same thing, that the proletariat has to have the will and take up the task, what this phrase really means is that the working class can arm itself at any time, when conditions are right. Exactly the opposite of asserting that this is a permanent task of the masses, or the party.

⁴⁴ “Theses on The Organisational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work”, in *Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congress of the Third International*, Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/party-theses.htm.

* **Translator’s Note:** Refers to followers of **J. Posadas**. See Biographical Appendix, p. 232 of this edition.

⁴⁵ Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973 p. 86.

Trotsky asserted that:

“It is neither locks nor walls which separate the proletariat from arms, but the habit of submission, the hypnosis of class domination and nationalist poison. It is sufficient to destroy these psychological walls — and no wall of stone will stand in the way. It is enough that the proletariat should want arms — and it will find them. The task of the revolutionary party is to awaken this desire and to facilitate its realization.”⁴⁶

The work within the army

This propaganda task — “awaken this desire and to facilitate its realization” — is complemented by another: to destroy the bourgeois army from within. Opportunists, and their twins of the “ultra-left” consider this last task as impossible, because against modern armies nothing can be done.

“We reply [said Trotsky]: behind each machine there are men who are linked not only by technical but by social and political bonds. When historic development poses before society an unpostponable revolutionary task as a question of life or death, when there exists a progressive class with whose victory is joined the salvation of society — then the development itself of the political struggle opens up before the revolutionary class the most varied possibilities — as much to paralyse the military force of the enemy as to win it over, at least partially.”⁴⁷

When we accuse the POR (C) and PRT(C) of not working on the bourgeois armies, comrade Germain elegantly sidesteps the issue, saying that the first thing to do is the workers militias. Nobody argues this, but we point out the difference between “workers militias” and the phantom “revolutionary armies”. But this does not invalidate the fact that the POR (C) and the PRT(C) have not worked on the bourgeois armies. They have applied a typical anarchist, guerrillaist policy; a position incompatible with permanence in our ranks. Its best exponent is, once again, the POR (C): “In this new army there can be a place for the officers and military men of the bourgeois armed forces who break with them, and who actually want to fight for the liberation of Bolivia”.⁴⁸

Since when has individual defection been a Marxist and Trotskyist position? Is it a coincidence that it is sustained by both the POR (C) and the PRT(C), both official sections of our International? Or, on the contrary, isn't this the logical consequence of the ultra-leftist and guerrillaist policy voted in the Ninth Congress?

The POR (C) comrades never understood that artificial organisms for armed struggle (or for any other type of struggle) cannot be built; they never understood that the armed struggle (like any other kind of struggle) must be put forward from the immediate and concrete needs of the mass movement, provoked by the immediate situation of the class struggle, and thus did the POR (C) come to the coup without understanding that:

“*The armed organization of the proletariat, which at the present moment coincides almost entirely with the defence against Fascism, is a new branch of the class struggle.*”⁴⁹

Six years of guerrilla activity versus a day of the masses

And what happened to the famous phantom “revolutionary army” invented by the POR (C) when the coup came? Let's see what comrade Gonzalez himself says:

“The struggle was fierce and heroic: more than 5,000 fighters — but 90 percent of them unarmed. At the last moment an assault on an army depot captured 1,300 old Mauser rifles from the Chaco War...”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Trotsky, Leon: *Whither France?* 9 November 1934 in *Whither France?* New Park, London, 1974, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 28.

⁴⁸ “Declaración del Comité Ejecutivo del POR (C)” [“Declaration of the Executive Committee of the POR (C)”] op. cit.

⁴⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “Once Again Whither France?” 28 March 1935 in *Whither France?*, op. cit. p. 76.

⁵⁰ “Our role in battling against the military coup”, op. cit. p. 936.

No one can ever, ever bury the “revolutionary armies” and with them the policy of the POR (C) (and of the majority), as definitively as comrade Gonzalez does in these few lines. Since 1965, with the enthusiast adherence and the financial and moral support of the majority comrades, the POR (C) has been preparing for the inevitable armed struggle, for the “prolonged war”. There is also the ELN (National Liberation Army) which has been doing the same since the Ñancahuazú guerrillas, and supported, at least initially, by the Cubans. Both, the POR (C) and the ELN, have taken as a strategic task the construction of the “revolutionary army”. And when the supreme moment comes after many years of intensive “preparation” for “armed struggle”, building day by day the army which was to confront and defeat the bourgeois army, between the POR (C), the ELN and all the leftist organizations gather only 500 weapons (one each for 10 percent of 5,000 fighters). Meanwhile, the masses were able, in a single day, to get 1300.

Something is wrong here. Comrade Germain asserts that the political line of POR (C) was a model; and the IEC’s resolution on Bolivia assures us that only organizational shortcomings existed. We ask: do the majority comrades consider satisfactory the results of this “correct” political line? Don’t they think it’s a bit paltry, after so many years of applying a “correct” line, to get so few weapons?

The majority blames the masses

Rather than assuming responsibility, the majority of the United Secretariat—just as Trotsky said ultra-leftism would do—bail out by placing the blame on the incomprehension of the mass movement or on the reformists. The majority does not say a word about the fact that, since 1965, our section had been allegedly preparing itself for armed struggle and, therefore, it has responsibility for its outcome: “The Bolivian experience bears out the illusory character of all the conceptions that hope a vigorous mass upsurge might, solely through its breadth and strength, hold in check the appetite of the ‘gorillas’ in Latin America. If such a mass movement doesn’t understand the imperious need to prepare itself for armed confrontation with the bourgeoisie, for arming itself and disarming the reaction, it will be driven back and wiped out in a moment by violence, as happened once again to the mass movement in Bolivia.”⁵¹

Now this is an insult to the working masses. Here it is said that “if they don’t understand” the need to arm themselves they are destined to be massacred. And what did we do to help them “understand”? Did we explain that our greatest enemy was a “fascist” coup d’état, and we had to unite to defeat it? Did we perhaps propose that they should arm themselves from their own organizations? None of that. We told them there was no difference between a Torres and a pro-imperialist coup and that they should not “choose between two feuding military factions”. We told them to arm themselves, not to fight the coup, but rather to confront the bourgeois regime (which at that time was represented by Torres). Put another way, we told them to arm themselves against Torres and against the coup at the same time. We told them to form an artificial organism, the “Revolutionary Army” rather than to build the armed branches of their organisations—the trade unions and the People’s Assembly.

And on top of that we have the nerve to recriminate the Bolivian workers for not having understood the need to be armed? It was the POR (C), the official section of the Fourth International, that didn’t understand the need to arm the workers, despite all its “armed struggle” propaganda, despite any “technical training” it had done and despite the “Revolutionary Army” that it had imagined.

Artificial organisms versus organisms of the masses

Just as the flipside of the POR (C)’s policy of armament “in itself” was its impotent effort to build an artificial organism (the “Revolutionary Army”), the flipside of its refusal to implement the policy of workers united front is its ignorance of the natural organisms of the workers movement. This is because in these organisms takes place a de facto united front of the workers of all political persuasions. This happens constantly in the unions, and so it did in the People’s Assembly.

⁵¹ Statement of the United Secretariat, in *Intercontinental Press*, No 32, 20 September 1971, p. 799.

Marxism is characterized for fighting against sectarian tendencies, vindicating the need to work on the organisms of the masses and rejecting any artificial ones. One of the main objectives of this work is to dispute the leadership of the workers and mass movement to the opportunistic leaderships of those organisations, putting ourselves forward as alternative revolutionary leadership. We are there and we will stay there so the masses can verify daily that our policies and leadership are correct.

The POR (C) and the People's Assembly

As result of its policy, the POR (C) was unable to take a consistent line on the People's Assembly. It began by not joining its Political Command that fought against the first coup of Miranda, causing a "two day power vacuum". Comrade Germain has said it was correct to not join the Political Command since some bourgeois sectors were participating in it. This is an unacceptable confusion between a committee for joint action for a specific purpose (the struggle against Miranda's coup) and a united front. It was Trotsky who said that for action — at a time of struggle against reactionary coups—we even had to join with the devil. Although the ultra-leftism of the "third period" saw them as a capitulation to the bourgeoisie, for Trotsky it was a question of momentary and specific agreements which were not only permissible but obligatory. And the POR (C), by not taking part in the Political Command, closed a major path to influence the mass movement since the Political Command would be the future organizer of the People's Assembly.

The POR (C) did not give any importance to the People's Assembly as an organism of the masses. It continued showing its ultra-leftism like this: The Popular Assembly "should be a body that discusses national problems and solutions for them would but leave the power in the hands of the mass organizations (unions and popular militias or people's army)." "In the present situation [...] its perspectives are extremely limited. An acute political crisis might revive it, but that is not certain. The POR comrades in the People's Assembly [...] had no illusions. They are using the People's Assembly as a forum, as a platform. That is all."⁵²

The characterization is abysmal; creating artificial organisms rather than participating in those the masses have created and recognized, is worse. Putting the "popular militias or people's army"—non-existent— as power organs at the same level as the unions and at a lever superior to the People's Assembly (great achievements of the mass movement), is a typical ultra-left atrocity. The POR (C) wanted to use an existing organism, — full of flaws, but existing— the People's Assembly as a "forum" rather than as an organizer of the masses. At the same time it wanted to use a non-existent organism— or existing only in its guerrillaist imagination —, the "People's Army", as an organ of power.

A few weeks elapsed, and the POR (C), without interruption, dares to ensure that:

"The People's Assembly can have no role except as an organ of dual power ... [It] must become a government of workers and peasants and we must fight both inside it and outside it to achieve this".⁵³

A "forum" without possibilities has become an organisation we must fight both inside and outside of it to transform it into a "government of workers and peasants".

But the ultra-leftist and guerrillaist virus of the Ninth Congress was too strong not to sterilize this correct statement:

"In this process, a political-military instrument will grow up alongside the Assembly which can serve as the power it lacks to enforce its decisions."⁵⁴

This is to say that the "political-military instrument" (the "Revolutionary Army"?) runs "alongside" the People's Assembly, it isn't a dependent branch of it. The militias should not be dependent on the unions and the People's Assembly, but parallel to them.

This parallelism is typical of guerrillaist conceptions, which always believe it is a military organism and not the mass organizations who decide the struggle. The armed militias that defined the Russian revolution were not parallel to the soviets, but subordinate to them. They were not political-military organisms independent of a political organisation. They were the armed branch of the soviets.

⁵² "An interview", op. cit. p. 48.

⁵³ Intercontinental Press, vol. 9, No 24, 21 June 1971.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

What we said

Around the same time we proposed a political line which we reproduce textually, as it doesn't need anything added.

“The People's Assembly is a triumph, a fruit of the rise of the masses. That it lacks a revolutionary leadership should not confuse us. Apart from the exciting perspectives, we can only say that it is an embryo of dual power. Nothing more. If the Bolivian masses and vanguard take this body as their own, if they set it up at regional and area level, and through it they centralize and develop their struggles, demanding for the assemblies all the national and regional political power, if they call on the soldiers, NCOs and revolutionary officers to join it, if they form workers and people's militias, we will face to face with Bolivian Soviet power”.⁵⁵

This is the approach to the People's Assembly the POR (C) neither had not thought of having. It should have endeavoured to do all this in the peasant and miners neighbourhoods and villages where it had influence. One truly democratic People's Assembly anywhere in Bolivia, united and ready for action with armed pickets subordinate to it and the workers and peasant unions, would have been an explosive example for the rest of Bolivia. The POR (C), despite its limited influence, could and should have done this. And if it could not, it should have tried. The correct policy to address this task was to have proposed the need to take up arms to fight against the coup, systematically denouncing the Torres' government's inability to do so. We should and could have been the champions in the development of the People's Assembly as an organ of the united workers front. But the POR (C) never forgot its famous “Revolutionary Army”. The failed attempt to build an imaginary organism prevented it from developing a proper policy in the most advanced organization of the Bolivian masses, the People's Assembly. And the POR (C) good memory in relation to its “army” (which is nothing more than a good memory for the resolutions of the Ninth Congress) produced a complete amnesia about one of the key definitions of Marxism “with the masses everything, without the masses nothing”.

With the masses nothing, with the bureaucracy and reformism a few things

Every ultra-leftist policy, sooner or later, presents its opportunistic face. So it was with our Bolivian section, which did not battle within the mass organizations against the reformist and bureaucratic leaderships of the Bolivian workers movement.

Comrade Germain has used as an argument the number of delegates that the POR (C) had in the People's Assembly. He says there were twelve; we and the comrade from the French section who visited Latin America say that there were six. But it is not a matter of numbers but of policy. We Trotskyists intervene in the mass organizations with three objectives: the first is to mobilize them; the second to win the masses for our policy through the most patient education, the third to expel the treacherous and opportunistic leaderships of these organisms, relentlessly denouncing them and postulating ourselves to take their place.

To achieve these three tasks, it is necessary to raise the precise slogan, to put forward the correct task at every moment of the class struggle and to denounce the reformist leaderships for not being able to fulfil them.

Unfortunately the type of tasks and discussions raised by the POR (C) comrades in the mass organizations, did not follow this approach:

“The COB thesis remains silent on this issue. At the congress through wiles of the presidency, university students and other workers delegates were prevented from developing this point. Collusion among opportunists, government agents and partisans of pacifism prevented the strategy of power for socialism to be discussed, which in particular in the current concrete conditions of Bolivia, is armed

⁵⁵ *La Verdad*, 30 May 1971.

struggle and guerrilla warfare. But the fighting vanguard, with weapons in hand, in the mountains, in the cities and in the mines, will overcome this vacuum of the workers program.”⁵⁶

So the battle of the POR (C) against the leadership of the COB, three months before the first coup by Miranda, centred on discussing the “strategy of power for socialism”, which was “armed struggle and guerrilla warfare”. And they have the face to complain that the president has used “wiles” to prevent this discussion! Have the POR (C) comrades ever wondered why the “wiles” of the presidency had such an overwhelming success?

Could it be perhaps because the POR (C) was raising issues far removed from the class struggle, unrelated to the Bolivian workers movement and completely general and abstract? Don’t they think that if they had proposed a discussion about the danger of a coup, the need to unite to fight against it, the need to arm through the unions and the COB itself, the presidency would have found it much more difficult to respond with “wiles” to these problems felt by the Bolivian proletariat?

But this is only the preliminaries. Let’s return to the People’s Assembly. Comrade Germain criticizes Lora’s POR for trusting that General Torres would fight the reactionary coup. May that voice not tremble when comrade Germain censures, with the same tone and forcefulness, the self-criticism of comrade González who says that armed actions were delayed:

“We wasted time waiting for the COB and the People’s Assembly leaderships to decide to fight, knowing as we knew that they could not overcome their vacillations and misconceptions”.⁵⁷

This was exactly the same position of the POR (Masas) with the difference that Lora trusted in General Torres and comrade González trusted in “the COB and the People’s Assembly leaderships”. And he does so knowing that “they could not overcome their vacillations and misconceptions”!

When and where did the POR (C) put itself forward as an alternative revolutionary leadership of the mass organizations and relentlessly attacked the bureaucratic leadership? Never and nowhere. What policy did the POR (C) have to expose Lechin and the sinister bureaucracy of the PRIN and the CP in the unions and the People’s Assembly? None.

For the Miners’ Congress of April 1970, the POR (C) published a flyer with a whole political program, where it did not criticize Lechin nor did it propose a revolutionary, not even classist, leadership alternative against the reformist and bureaucratic leadership.

According to all reports about the People’s Assembly, the POR (C) voted for Lechin for president and Lora for the CP candidate. Let us suppose that these facts are wrong, supplied by comrade González’s enemies. All the witnesses and even the POR (C) comrades themselves say it didn’t run its own candidates against Lechin and the CP. Why didn’t it? Why didn’t the POR (C) insist that this leadership would lead to a disaster for the workers movement and to the almost inevitable triumph of the reaction?

Neither in the People’s Assembly, nor in the unions, did the POR (C)— as the of only leadership able to carry it out— introduce or fight for a program of armament and mobilization of the working class, the peasantry and students against the coup. By not doing so, it committed a historic mistake. Gonzalez is right in asserting that he fell entangled “in Byzantine discussions on the People’s Assembly”.

They should have discussed clear proposals for the armament and the unity of the working class against the coup and, around these objectives, they should have raised the main slogan of struggle against bureaucratic leadership: out with Lechin and his cronies from the leadership of the COB and the People’s Assembly, because these leaders are unable to carry out this program!

Germain falsifies the POR (C)’s policy

So far we have mostly not polemised with comrade Germain. We did not for two reasons: firstly because the policy which was implemented in Bolivia is the POR (C)’s, and we must refer to it;

⁵⁶ *Combate*, No. 2, 15 July 1970.

⁵⁷ *Combate*, No. 9, January 1972.

secondly, because comrade Germain repeatedly falsifies the POR (C)'s policy to readjust himself in the international discussion after his obvious failure. We will see some of these falsifications.

Comrade Germain falsifies the POR (C)'s policy under Ovando when he says: "The Bolivian section of the Fourth International, which had begun to prepare its cadres for armed struggle during the period of the Barrientos dictatorship, and had centred its orientation towards guerrilla warfare under that dictatorship, understood the necessity of making a turn as soon as the Ovando dictatorship allowed a semi-legal margin for working class activities."⁵⁸

The IEC majority resolution on Bolivia further exaggerates the alleged change of orientation of the POR (C) under Ovando, by insinuating that they were in fact against the guerrilla orientation of Peredo. Beautiful picture! But ... nothing falsier.

We have already seen that comrade Gonzalez was telling the truth when he said that under Ovando the POR (C) operated in "complete clandestine conditions" and "was totally absorbed in armed work". Furthermore, we add, they were absorbed by the preparation of the rural guerrilla, as we demonstrate in the many quotes in the subchapter "*The actual policy of the POR (C)*". Except for formal aspects (the publication of the newspaper and the flyer for the Miners' Congress) that was the orientation of the POR (C).

The newspaper is our main instrument for relating with the mass movement, and even more so in times of semi legality like under Ovando or full legality, as the one that existed under Torres. However, since June 1970, when number 1 issue of *Combate* (New Era) was published until June 1971 when number 6 was published, twelve months lapsed. That is, they published an issue every two months. We do not know when numbers 7 and 8 were published because we do not have them, but we know that number 9 was published in January 1972, i.e. that the rate decreased further. On this point, the majority makes the criticism that the paper did not appear regularly, which is merely an organizational criticism. We think what we need to ask is whether Germain believes that the way to make a turn to the masses, is to publish a bimonthly newspaper. We assume he will say no, but then he will have to find some justification. Do not tell us there was no money to publish more often, because in Europe important collections were made bound for the Bolivian section. If the money did not go to the publication of the paper, we assume it must have been for the purchase of arms, as the POR (C) did not make any "expropriations", as their Argentine colleagues of the PRT(C) did. And to devote the bulk of finances and organization of the party to such tasks, does Germain think it should be called, without falling into a falsification, a "turn" of the POR (C) towards work on the masses? The truth is otherwise: the POR (C) under Ovando continued its guerrilla line and to justify this approach reluctantly began publishing a newspaper, taking advantage of the legality. No such shift to the masses, as we have tired of demonstrating.

In regard to the POR (C) non-participation in Inti Peredo's guerrilla adventure, suffice to say that on the flyer addressed to the Miner's Congress they called the workers to follow the example of Che and support Inti, just as *Combate* of 15 July 1970 they talk about "the guerrilla of Che Guevara, Inti and what the ELN and the POR favour now".

Germain also falsifies the POR (C)'s policy when he says that under Torres it never raised the rural guerrillas. We have already reproduced the quote of *Combate*, which insists that "regardless of the contingencies of the guerrilla fronts [and the only ones that had existed in Bolivia were rural] ... guerrilla warfare remains the way to take power".⁵⁹

In what comrade Germain is correct is that under Torres, the POR (C) moved away from the rural guerrillas, but continued to propose as always, as we have already shown, a policy of "armament in itself" and of construction of a people's army, so far removed from the Bolivian class struggle classes as the guerrillas had been before.

Finally, comrade Germain asserts that the POR (C) systematically denounced Banzer's coup and knew how to apply a line that "while encompassing a whole series of immediate and transitional demands (including a whole programme for agrarian revolution), was centred around three key demands:

⁵⁸ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 5-6.

⁵⁹ *Combate*, No 3.

“(I) Transformation of the Popular Assembly into a real power organ of the workers and toiling people, through the establishment of local assemblies (i.e., Soviets), which would elect the delegates to the national assembly and could recall them.

“(II) Immediate arming of the workers and the peasants.

“(THIRD) Extension of the revolutionary process of the countryside.”⁶⁰

We do not know if this is a new falsification, since Comrade Germain does not say where or when the POR (C) published such a program. But we have seen that the real program of the POR (C) was also centred on three claims: 1) to create a Revolutionary Command based on those proclaiming socialism and adhering to the armed struggle, to fight against reformism; 2) to create the Revolutionary Army; and 3) to develop “a representative body of the masses, through which they can express all their revolutionary power ...”

This last slogan is the only one that has something to do with the People’s Assembly, and it is much less than what comrade Germain may claim, because the POR (C) did not participate in the Political Command which was to become its organizer. The first claim of Germain is totally false because the organism assigned the task of taking power was the “Revolutionary Army” and not the People’s Assembly.

We have already seen that the POR (C) was changing its position and some of the slogans Germain attributed to it, as a consistent policy on Torres, were only ink on paper and sporadic issues because never did the POR (C) abandon the construction of “People’s Revolutionary Army”, but kept it as the central task under all regimes. That was the real political axis of the POR (C)’s action.

Either way, the program Germain attributed to the POR (C) is not much better than the program it actually had.

What happens is that Germain supported in general and in particular the POR (C)’s policy and in this, we must admit, he was consistent with what was voted in the Ninth Congress. There, it was voted the rural guerrillas and the “strategy of armed struggle” (of armament “in itself”, as Trotsky would say) for a whole period in Latin America.

There is only one question to clarify. Comrade Germain— as his last argument to refute the charge that the POR (C) and the majority were unable to see the differences between the regimes that occurred in Bolivia— says the best proof they did is that the POR (C) comrades fought alongside Torres and against Banzer. This is a childish argument. Here we are examining a political line, not on which side the militants fought when the tide of events swept them, inexorable, alongside Torres.

With the criteria of comrade Germain, Stalinism had a correct policy when they capitulated to Chiang Kai-shek in China, because its militants ended fighting and dying in armed struggle against Chiang’s coup. That tragic end does not decrease, but rather it confirms the Stalinist crime. Imagine Stalin saying: “How dare Trotskyists say we capitulated to Chiang, if we fought and died in the fore lines fighting against him?”

This is not a political but emotional argument. Right now, after Allende’s fall, Argentine Stalinists also exhibit their dead in Chile to hide that their political trust in the Chilean armed forces led to disaster for the entire workers movement, and their own comrades with it.

But perhaps the German Communist Party would be the most similar example. Can comrade Germain imagine German Stalinism arguing it had a correct policy towards Hitler’s danger with the single argument that their members were massacred in the fight against the fascist regime?

It can be imagined, because so it happened. Doesn’t comrade Germain think this argument has a curious similarity to his?

Germain’s argument is no better than those Stalinism used to justify the disasters in China, Germany and Chile. What is at issue is the general line adopted, rather than the inevitable readjustments caused by a runaway collision with a reality that had not been foreseen in the characterizations. Come the time of the coup, to fight against Banzer it was no longer necessary to have a political line but simply instinct for self-preservation.

⁶⁰ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 7.

FRA: a front with the Bolivian police and army

For comrade Germain, the Banzer government is “reactionary”, for the POR (C) it is “fascist”. How can then the majority agree with and defend the policy of the POR (C)? This is one of the many mysteries of the majority, in whose ranks coexist all kinds of characterizations and policies. Thus, instead of the policy that our Transitional Program proposes for fascist countries (to carry out propaganda essentially, since there is a retreat), Germain approves the POR (C)’s policy for dealing with the “fascists” regimes of Barrientos and Banzer, which he sums up this way: “*POR (Combate)* [...] acted illegally under Barrientos and Banzer, following an orientation of preparing armed struggle by smaller contingents”.⁶¹

This quote sums up admirably Germain’s anti-Marxist and guerrillaist conception of: in a stage of retreat of the masses we have to confront a whole regime only with the vanguard (“smaller contingents”). He also believes that the current stage (Banzer regime) is a stage of greater struggle than under Torres, since, with the pro-imperialist coup, “out of a nascent and intermittent civil war, Bolivia now passes over to open and permanent civil war”. All this being said despite Trotsky already alerting that:

“Assuredly, the course of the political life of a country cannot be altered by *every* group armed with revolvers, at any time. Only those armed detachments which are the organs of specific classes can play a decisive role under *certain* conditions.”⁶²

Germain’s position was expressed and adopted by the United Secretariat majority in the statement on Banzer’s coup:

“And already the revolutionary vanguard, especially our comrades of the POR, the ELN, the Zamora wing of the pro-Chinese CP and others, are continuing the struggle by organizing guerrilla warfare.”⁶³

Meanwhile, the POR (C), as if nothing had happened, as if there were no possibilities of new Kerenskiist regimes like Torres, asserted:

“The people have no alternative but to seize the political power of the state by means of armed struggle in a long and protracted war, in which the people will participate armed and organized in a people’s army, as the highest expression of political struggle of the exploited masses”.⁶⁴ The POR (C) and Germain remain consistent, the great task remains the same: to develop a “long war” through a “people’s army”.

To be a revolutionary it is enough to be for the armed struggle. As we know, for Germain the Latin American vanguard is divided, not by the different political programs, but rather between those who are for and those who are against the armed struggle. If we combine this concept with the previous (a vanguard fighting alone, arms in hand, against the “fascist” regime) we find the FRA. Since General Torres, Major Sanchez and all military men and police who follow them are in favour of the “armed struggle” and since as we align ourselves with those who are in favour, we are also in the FRA, along with the Bolivian military men and police and the guerrilla vanguard.

Thus Trotskyism degrades to abjection. Thus our Bolivian section ends up “bent on their knees” before a sector of the Bolivian bourgeoisie and the military. Although it outraged us, we should not be surprised. This reminds us of what Trotsky predicted when he said that Stalinism— after its “third period” policy, after placing an equal sign between fascists and reformists, after rejecting the policy of workers united front against the reactionary danger— would end giving in to “democratic” sectors of the bourgeoisie. Stalinism did it with the “popular fronts”, the POR (C) did it by entering the FRA— yet with this we don’t want to even imply that our Bolivian section has some traits of Stalinism.

The ground shakes under the feet of Germain who, to defend himself, brings up his heavy artillery: hiding political events of the utmost gravity to the ranks of our movement.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Trotsky, Leon, “France at the Turning Point”, 26 March 1936, in *Whither France?*, op. cit. p. 108.

⁶³ *Intercontinental Press*, No 32, 20 September 1971, p. 799.

⁶⁴ *Combate*, special issue, August-September 1972, p. 5.

The POR (C) subordinates to the FRA

Germain has said, with a straight face, that the comrades of the Fourth International are entitled to discuss past history. But what he meant, actually, is they are entitled to polemise as they see fit, and he gives the example: he takes a magazine, *International Socialist Review*, reads only one article, which he uses to attack Camejo, and ignores that in the same issue there is another article by Moreno providing the documentation to show that the POR (C) has made an unconditional entryism to the FRA. We will not allow him this, we demand that he should read it and reply to it, also providing evidence if he believes the facts to be different. In there we reminded that “The highest political – union – student commission is the leadership of FRA, and the political parties and organizations must subordinate themselves to it in executing of the line determined by the Front”. “The FRA will act as a unitary authority on all fronts of social life ...” “In elections of any kind the Front will present common slates...”⁶⁵

Let’s remember who makes up the FRA: the two CPs, a group of officers of the armed forces, Lora, Lechin’s PRIN, a socialist party and the POR (C). As our Bolivian section shall be subordinated to the FRA, it means that it shall be subordinated to all those parties. It means, for example, if there are elections in trade unions we go in a common slate with the bureaucrat Lechin. Or if there are national elections we go in a common slate with the reformist bourgeois General Torres, to whom we were denouncing until yesterday as a danger for the Bolivian masses equivalent to Banzer. This means, plain and simple, the liquidation of Trotskyism in Bolivia. Unlike Germain, the POR (C) recognized this saying honestly that “... we must forget our party slogans to act on a solid front”.⁶⁶

What is this “solid front”? An anti-imperialist front? Or perhaps, a workers front? For the POR (C), and for Lora, it is an anti-imperialist front. In either case, we cannot lose our political independence in that organism. The Fourth Congress of the Third International was categorical about it. Moreover, if the goal is to make the working class independent of any bourgeois sector, we do not understand how we can achieve this by forgetting “our party slogans”.

For us, the FRA would be an anti-imperialist front if, as in any front, all organizations involved in it maintained their political and organizational independence. As this is not the case, but the converse, the FRA is not a front, but a new “party” with a more or less anti-imperialist program. For his part, Germain is very careful; he defines it for the negative: the FRA *is not* a popular front for three reasons:

- 1) The program (not the manifesto) is “explicitly socialist in character and purpose...”. “The line of this Charter is substantially that of the theory of permanent revolution”.
- 2) “The ‘revolutionary armed forces’ under Major Sanchez state that they are in favour of a socialist revolution and adhere to Marxism-Leninism.”
- 3) “That the FRA, contrary to the ‘Political Command’, is not a coalition with the bourgeoisie, as not a single bourgeois party participates in it.”⁶⁷

We will examine each of these arguments to lay bare the great deception. The four sentences that lead Germain say that it is a program of permanent revolution are:

- 1) “The Bolivian people ... are prepared for the struggle for socialism as their political aim”;
- 2) “All the revolutionary sectors which unite themselves under the banner of the fight against fascism, for national liberation and the building of socialism”;
- 3) “Our patriotic position, publicly open to an alliance with progressive sectors, does not imply any hedging over our class position, as the alliance which we establish and which will be in the forefront of the struggle for national liberation and socialism, expresses the ideology of the working class”;

⁶⁵ *Revista de América*, No 8/9, May-August 1972, p. 21. Article reproduced in *International Socialist Review*, February 1973, p. 37.

⁶⁶ *Combate*, especial issue, August-September 1972.

⁶⁷ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 14 and 13.

4) “Bolivia will have to reach the culmination of its historical process of liberation and of the building of socialism, within the framework of a revolutionary development on a Latin American scale.”⁶⁸

The Third International alerted the communist parties against the danger presented by bourgeois nationalist movements that take up communist slogans and phrases to better deceive the masses. The phrases quoted above fall into this category. If this is the program of permanent revolution, all the major bourgeois parties and personalities in Argentina are “socialists” and “Trotskyists”. And, what to say about native Stalinism, even Peron is more to the left. Peron once said that he had to destroy “the bourgeois army and create workers militias”; he said daily we had to fight for socialism. Stalinism repeats every day that the historical goal is to build socialism in Argentina.

A program of permanent revolution does not consist of two or three sentences to agitate on the holidays, but the political slogans extracted from the reality of the country’s class struggle. In Bolivia there can be no program of permanent revolution which does not clearly raise the issue of the government and the armed forces: it must categorically say that governments like Torres must never again govern Bolivia; that we need to impose a government of the workers organizations, supported by peasantry on the basis of liquidating the bourgeois armed forces. It must be so because that is the most recent and immediate experience of the masses. A program of permanent revolution must say that the “crisis of the Bolivian revolution is the crisis of its leadership”, of all the Lechíns, the CPs of both persuasions, the socialists, Torres, Lora, Sanchez, and it must point out that what is needed is the construction of a genuine Trotskyist party. If it doesn’t say this, it will only make demagoguery to the masses, embellishing the image of these traitors.

In addition, the program must be expressed in concrete policy applied in action. To our knowledge, the FRA has never propagandized this program. The pamphlet where the FRA officially unveils its positions does not include it, but it does include the manifesto, which clarifies that the FRA is for a popular government.

Do we need more evidence that these “Trotskyists” phrases are a typical case of the bait a bourgeois nationalist movement dangles before the masses to get them to swallow the hook? When Germain characterizes it as a “program of permanent revolution”, isn’t he showing he swallowed the hook?

Germain’s second argument is that the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias [Revolutionary Armed Forces — FAR] of Major Sanchez “are in favour of socialism and adhere to Marxism-Leninism”. The FRA pamphlet that we mentioned includes an open letter by the FAR and another by Major Sánchez, which have the approval of the POR (C), since it is published in a prominent place in its newspaper *Combate*. (Unless this is a publication imposed by FAR discipline). This means that comrade Germain must also know them. Let’s listen to Major Sánchez:

“Declarations and purposes which I have no connection with are being slanderously attributed to me. Sometimes it is said that I am a member of the ELN, or that I have asked to join that organization; they argue that I favour the dissolution of the armed forces and their replacement by armed militias; they state that I intend to make a Vietnam of the country ... Nothing could be more false”.⁶⁹

Did you hear, comrade Germain? Nothing could be more false! Major Sanchez is for keeping the armed forces and against militia forces. Strange example of “Marxist-Leninist”! But there’s more:

“Never, before now, have army barracks, shrines of citizenship of the Bolivian youth, been converted into prisons, where there is torture and [prisoners] are shot. Never had the national army been used like this ...”⁷⁰

Now our “Marxist-Leninist” has forgotten the murder of an unarmed and wounded prisoner, Che Guevara, in that “shrine of citizenship”. Doesn’t it make you nauseous to lie so much to the new cadres, comrade Germain? Have you shown them this which Sanchez said? “My struggle has no other purpose than to achieve the integration of the armed forces with its people”. “We are living a historical moment and I want to take this opportunity to announce that, by spontaneous and patriotic decision, the political instrument of unity that will lead us to victory has been organized, composed of all

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Combate*, No 9, January 1972, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

political and popular forces of the left, trade union, university and popular movements, the FAR and the Bolivian police”. “Our struggle is not anti-militarist, it is essentially anti-imperialist. No revolution can go forward without the support and efforts of the armed forces, an institution born from the heart of the people to serve the people”.⁷¹

As we see, our “Marxist-Leninist” now finds that the armed forces are an “institution born from the heart of the people” (and not the armed wing of the bourgeois regime), and that “no revolution can go forward without them”. And even less, we would add, if it intends to destroy it.

In this crystal clear exposition of the “Marxist-Leninist” Mayor Sanchez is also the answer to Germain’s argument that the FRA is not a popular front because in it there no bourgeois parties. Mayor Sánchez is no less explicit when he says that the “Bolivian police” are in the FRA. And the FAR isn’t any less explicit:

“Either you are with those who betray the armed forces, in alliance with the MNR which is vetoed by the armed forces, or you are with the national majority. You are, in short, with those who commit crimes jeopardizing the prestige and honour of the Bolivian armed forces and the police, or you are with the country”.⁷²

Furthermore, “like all men and women fighting against the bloodthirsty and unpatriotic who are smearing our institutions with blood, each of us, in the armed forces and the police, must take our own decision.” “For our people, for our institutions, we must fulfil this duty as Bolivian: to die rather than live as a slave!”.⁷³

Despite Germain’s complaints, these neophytes of “Marxism-Leninism” openly tell us what their intentions are. In Bolivia Banzer’s massacres are “smearing blood” in their “institutions” (the Armed Forces and Police) and “compromising their prestige and honour”, therefore, they have the mission to save this prestige and honour, and with them, their “institutions”. Put another way: with the atrocities being done by Banzer, the Bolivian masses will never again trust in the armed forces and police as they did under Torres; the FAR are fighting to avoid such danger to the bourgeois regime.

Next, the senior military and police officers who are in the FAR tell us why they are within the FRA. Anybody who believes in Germain must assume that his “Marxist-Leninists” are in the FRA at least on behalf of the working class. Not at all:

“From clandestinity and from exile, we inform all comrades of the Bolivian armed forces and police that, together, and on behalf of both institutions we have joined the FRA”.⁷⁴

This is the truth and we must recognize the bourgeois honesty of Mayor Sanchez and his comrades. Not only do they provide political insurance for the bourgeoisie, but also insurance for the military and police caste: they are the guaranty the FRA needs to impose, as the statement indicates, a new bourgeois Bonapartism in Bolivia.

With their characterization that there is no bourgeois sector in the FRA, the majority comrades, as always, forget what they said yesterday. They have been insisting for years that the bourgeois parties have almost ceased to exist in Latin America, and their place has been occupied by the military party, i.e. the armed forces.

For us it is relatively true that the armed forces tend to play the role of big reserve party of Latin American bourgeois regimes. This has to do with the little democratic tradition of our countries. But there is not truth in the idea of their “monolithic unity with imperialism”. The friction between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism is what explains the emergence of Bonapartist “sui generis” leftist governments, as the first of Peron, the one of Ovando, or the beginning of Torres’s.

For the majority comrades, military personnel who respond to the FRA have apparently ceased to be military, because they are no longer in their famous “monolithic unity”. For us, the military will always defend the regime politically, even when taking a nationalist slant, posing the sole condition that they be allowed to continue to exist as an institution. And the military men who are in the FRA are

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 14.

⁷² Documento del FRA [FRA’s Document], Ediciones Liberación, Bolivia, November 1971, p. 6.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 7-8.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

just the “nationalist” wing of the bourgeois armed forces of Bolivia, the “left” wing of the military party. The fact that, incidentally, they are in opposition and exile does not invalidate that character.

The military and police men who are in the FRA show we are right when they say that they are there precisely to preserve the armed forces and police as “institutions.”

Thus, when Comrade Germain says there are no bourgeois parties in the FRA, he has a point. In the FRA are not the bourgeois parties, but the Bolivian army and the police, through their political representatives of the left. But ultimately, they are the representation— or a shadow of representation — of the bourgeois armed forces of Bolivia.

We still have a few questions for comrade Germain: if it is true that there is no bourgeois sectors in the FRA, if it is true that the military men and police who are there have adhered to Marxism-Leninism, if it is true that the FRA has a program of permanent revolution, if it is true (as we have shown) that it has a centralized leadership and a steely inner discipline, if all this is true, why don't we propose for the FRA to be incorporated as an official section of the Fourth International? What is the requirement they need to fill to be able to enter?

From here on in, no one can be fooled in the international discussion. Either you are with the minority's Trotskyist program (fight to the death against the imperialist and capitalist system, against all institutions, against all reformist bureaucracies and national bourgeoisie in the leadership of mass movements or worker states), or you are with the majority's program (monolithic front with the political representatives of the Bolivian police and army, “forgetting our party slogans”). In this dilemma not only does it come in play one's principles but also one's stomach and smell: to be with the majority one has to be with opportunism and in favour of unity with the most rotten institutions of the bourgeois regime.

Moreno, advisor of the POR

The section entitled, “Moreno, advisor of the POR” must be one of the “bombs” from which Germain expected greater effect. Only this would explain that he wasted so much space in it (it's one of the longest in the document). But in so many lines he does not answer the essential question: was Moreno right or wrong? Should we have entered OLAS or not? *

The resolution of the Ninth Congress says the same as Moreno: “working as an integral part of the OLAS”. If Moreno was wrong, the resolution of the Ninth Congress was also wrong, very wrong. If Moreno was right, if his analysis was correct, in general terms, we should recognize this merit, and then criticize him for having changed his position without there being a change in reality. But Germain does none of this.

Moreno was wrong, the Ninth Congress as well

We do not beat around the bush: we contend that Moreno was wrong in giving the general policy which is quoted by comrade Germain; and we also contend that the Ninth Congress was wrong in adopting the Latin America resolution. Moreover, we argue that Germain knows perfectly well that Moreno was against our Bolivian section embarking to prepare on guerrilla warfare under Barrientos. The document Germain quotes is an internal document which lasted for five months, from November 1967 to May 1968; whereas Moreno's position on the political line that we should adopt under Barrientos was put forth by him in a letter dated 20 November, 1965.

We will not give Germain the pleasure to start a polemic backwards. We are not starting from a line that was held for five months, but we will start from all the other work by Moreno and the minority dealing with the Bolivia from Barrientos onwards. Only after having shown what the proposed policy

* **OLAS** (Organization of Latin American Solidarity), sponsored by the Castro government and notable chiefly for a conference in Havana, July-August 1967, that broke with Moscow's policy of “peaceful path to socialism” in Latin America. [**Translator's Note**]

for Bolivia was in all those years, we will take on the task of explaining the reasons for the document quoted by comrade Germain, a task that could have been avoided if the comrade had acted in good faith, i.e. placing the document in the context of the life of our International.

The true position of the minority

Let's begin, then, with the letter of 20 November, 1965, which was published several times (which is why we say Germain cannot ignore it), with slight modifications in form. In it Moreno told Gonzalez: "You repeatedly define in *Lucha Obrera* [Workers Fight] the government as fascist. As it is clear from our resolution we disagree with your characterization. We believe it is a reactionary Bonapartist government, agent of the Pentagon, product of a semi-counterrevolution, but we do not think it fascist". "Saying it once and for all: in Bolivia the pre-revolutionary stage is not closed with the triumph of fascism, but rather it has been exacerbated by the triumph of an ultra-reactionary, Bonapartist, government which has not yet managed to crush the mass movement, and which for the time being finds it impossible to achieve a mass base to crush the workers movement".⁷⁵

As at that time the Barrientos government had not yet crushed the mining workers movement, we adopted an essentially correct line there:

"This is the key of the current Bolivian situation and from it clearly flows a whole policy, which can only be: to prevent an isolated fight by the miners and to organize the rest of the workers to fight together with the miners. If we achieve this, the defeat of the military junta is assured". "From what organizations can we help the miners?" And we replied: "... we're especially for the reorganization of the COB through clandestine union defence committees and we will focus all our efforts on propagandizing and carrying out this mammoth task".

The workers united front

At that time, Gonzalez argued that it was not necessary to fight for a united front with the workers and popular parties, because the working class began to follow him and his party. We disagreed, because we thought that the reformist parties would continue to have influence in the workers movement. We argued that our duty was, therefore, to put forth a political line of united front with them for specific tasks. This united front was tied, for us, to the problem of power:

"We believe that the first slogan that addresses the problem of power is 'Down with the military junta'. On this slogan we all agree. And when I say all, I mean all the popular grassroots and all the parties with popular influence, from sectors of the Falange to MNR, both CPs, the PRIN, the POR and the COB in clandestinity. The problem arises when we answer the following questions: how to overthrow the military junta? Who should overthrow it? And, why should the military junta be overthrown? Let's start with the answer to the last question: why to overthrow it? If we are to be guided by your paper we must overthrow it to implement socialism, 'the only real alternative is socialism', and 'it is a matter of confronting the bourgeois program with the socialist program'. We believe that you commit here a serious error of method, which is to confuse your aspirations with those of the masses and the dynamics of class; the methods, with the big tasks that the masses have posed, which are three closely related, but not identical aspects of reality. For example, the great tasks of the Russian Revolution were democratic, although its methods and class dynamics were proletarian. We are convinced that the current great task that unifies all Bolivian workers, the proletariat with the peasantry and the middle class of the cities is to overthrow the government to call for free and democratic elections. And not, as you propose, to overthrow it to inaugurate socialism. This task, much more modest than establishing socialism, requires proletarian leadership and insurrectional methods to achieve it. This is 'how' to achieve it. We now have to answer of 'who', or to whom, we must put the achievement of this goal, or put another way, what formula of power to advocate as a replacement of the Military Junta we want to overthrow. We believe it's appropriate we call for the formation of a front whose base of support is the COB, in a united front with the students, teachers and peasant

⁷⁵ Moreno, Nahuel: "Letter to Hugo González", reprinted in *Revista de América*, No 6/7, pp. 40-43.

organisations, with the support of all parties which are against the government, have a popular base and are for the call within 60 days for absolutely free and democratic elections. That is, we believe that the military coup in May has expanded the need to call for a united front rather than diminished it. We have no doubt that the petit bourgeois parties and the union bureaucracy as well will sabotage this united front and that they will not accept the leadership of the COB and the workers movement. But we have no doubt either, that this will serve to expose them to the mass movement, if we make this call for the united front according to the general guidelines of Trotskyism, not only to the ranks but also to the leaderships with a mass base.”

The armed militias of the COB and the trade unions

Anticipating that the miners would be slaughtered— which was what happened— we proposed a specific armed struggle task:

“We fully agree with you that the great problem is to be prepared for the inevitable armed struggle that will happen against the Military Junta. This issue has many facets. First of all, the relationship with the heroic fighters who want to organize guerrilla warfare, following the teachings of Castroism.

“We have to try to tie these comrades into our fundamental strategy and tactic of achieving the armed and inevitable support of the miners’ movement. In this regard we have to urge them to coordinate their action with the trade union organizations in clandestinity and mainly the COB. Without expecting much from these comrades, the great task of preparing ourselves for the armed struggle involves the organization of an armed self-defence apparatus of the COB and its unions, and parallel to this, through the united organizations of the front, which will neighbourhood, peasant or urban based. Our party must start, where it can, to implement this policy. It has to reorganize unitary armed committees of defence with three or four comrades and, wherever possible, to centralize and discipline them. This task, which is crucial, is closely linked to another one which is just as important—the work on the ranks of the army. If we combine and organize all these tasks, we will accelerate the crisis of the regime and its defeat will be a matter of a short time. If, otherwise, we leave the masses to act on their own accord, quite possibly the regime can defeat each of these sectors.

“From our characterization of the regime follows the possibility that at certain times legal loopholes will open. Our justified hatred for the military dictatorship should not make us forget that we are required to use these legal loopholes. We must use them to demand wage increases or raise minimum slogans, whenever possible unified, to accelerate the crisis of the regime. What we said of wage increases we could also say of any opening within the recognized ‘yellow’ unions or a future rigged national election. Before declaring a boycott of these openings we take the pulse of the situation of the class struggle very well and only call for it if there are optimal conditions.”⁷⁶

This line had the immediate objective to prevent miners from being crushed. It came in a letter polemising against attempts of Bolivian comrades, especially comrade Gonzalez, to scoot over to the guerrillas. As we see, in that letter all current differences were already expressed.

What *La Verdad* said in March 1971

This same line continued later. When the first news of Che’s guerrilla began to filter, our newspaper, *La Verdad* [The Truth], said that we supported the perspective that these were a massive guerrilla struggles, within an insurrectional and not a guerrillaist strategy. Throughout the year 1967, *La Verdad* insisted that the outlook for the Bolivian revolution was insurrection and not guerrilla warfare.

The same method of analysis and elaboration of the political line made again us disagree with the POR (C) comrades about the Torres government. Let us remember that, for them, Torres was an agent of imperialism, a tactical variant resolved between the Bolivian military and the Yankee embassy, and his rise to a government a defeat of the masses by the army. For us, however:

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 43 and 45.

“The strike on 6 October, 1970 made possible the defeat of the army’s most reactionary wing and the rise of Torres to power, it did not liquidate the pro-imperialist forces by far”. “It is a fact that there are still sectors of the right inside and outside the army”. “We have defined Torres as the Bolivian Kerensky, oscillating between the workers movement and the bourgeois and imperialist forces”. “... the Lora group falls in the same opportunistic sin (it acts as if the Torres government was the government of the working class, with the excuse that the COB is bureaucratized), it does not demand that the COB take power, or for the unions to become armed to fight against the danger of reaction”. And seeing the danger that hung over the Bolivian proletariat as a result of the “Trotskyist” policies of Lora and Gonzalez, we said: “Unfortunately, we do not see any party in Bolivia taking the strategy of the Russian revolutionaries”.⁷⁷

We will not dwell in quotations; we just want to show that from Barrientos until now we have always maintained our strategy of forming “a party that takes the strategy of the Russian revolutionaries”. We have always been against the guerrilla warfare policy, we have always called for the mass organizations armament, we have always opposed the famous “Revolutionary Armies” and we have always said that mass organizations should arm themselves and seize power, under the direction of a revolutionary party and that for this it was essential to work on the army ranks.

The reason for our “guerrillaism”

Only now can we deal with the document quoted by comrade Germain which, we repeat, was an internal document that was valid only between November 1967 and May 1968.

What happened towards the end of 1967 to change our minds and become guerrillaists and pro-Cuban? Why did we turn in full in favour of entering OLAS? Did a whole leadership and a whole party go mad? We’ll leave these psychological explanations to Livio and Germain, who are specialists. We remain in the field of revolutionary politics and the class struggle. Except for Germain, who suffers from amnesia, we all know and remember what happened: the Cubans entered into a very tough polemic with the Latin American Communist parties. Their public position was to extend the socialist revolution through guerrilla warfare to our entire continent. It is true that the Cubans since their triumph, had supported materially and morally all types of guerrilla groups but without intervening directly. The difference now was qualitative: we were before the program of direct intervention of the state and Cuban leadership in this new course. On the other hand, Yankee imperialism embarked in its escalation in Vietnam. It was logical to think that this escalation would be extended to Cuba in the short term. The Cuban leadership thought so. Its policy of developing the revolution on the continent was the best way to paralyse imperialism and, eventually, defeat it. Two events promoted by the Cuban leadership showed us the seriousness of the new course: the departure from Cuba of Che Guevara to launch a guerrilla war on the continent and the founding of OLAS. For the whole of the Fourth International, this new course of the Cuban leadership was progressive, and deserved our support. This didn’t mean to support the guerrilla strategy, but rather the course towards the development of the socialist revolution in the continent. For the whole of our international, including the current majority and minority, it was a question of supporting the new course to direct it towards our positions in the development of the struggle they were undertaking.

Cuba, OLAS and the continental civil war

To put it even more categorically: in 1967 all our International believed the Cuban leadership, with the state behind it, was throwing itself to develop with all its strength the guerrilla warfare in Latin America as defence against the likely imperialist attack. If this were the orientation of Fidel and Che, it would open in our continent a stage of continental civil war similar to the then existing on the Indochinese peninsula. The guerrilla of Che would be the beginning of this continental civil war. And, like the entire International, we believed that we had to participate actively and in the frontline of this civil war promoted by the Cubans to fight their merely guerrillaist orientation.

⁷⁷ *La Verdad*, No 254, March 1971.

But comrade Germain, in his extensive quotation, forgets to give the quotes from the same document where we criticized the political orientation of Cubans regarding OLAS, and mainly he forgets to point out that our entry into the OLAS did not in any way mean an abidance or support for its policy, but simply that we put ourselves under their military discipline. “Our ‘entryism’ into OLAS must not be essentially entry into its political organization, but rather into its military apparatus. Our party has the obligation to register as their number one militant task to form a technical apparatus rigidly disciplined to OLAS for the technical tasks that OLAS order within their armed struggle strategy of struggle for power. There cannot any other meaning to our entry to OLAS”.⁷⁸

This was the position of our international. Nothing shows this better than a letter from comrade Maitan in the same crucial year of 1967, where he said: “I have seen that *La Verdad* has stressed the positive evolution of the Cuban attitude. We currently know, from a sure source, that the Fidelist leaders now regard as a mistake the attack against us at the end of the Tricontinental”. “We think that now we have to put emphasis on what unites us to the Cubans. We do not ignore that there is still among them the tendency to generalize excessively the tactic of guerrillas, and the book by Debray they propagandize is pretty bad (I have a response in the pipeline). But today it is more important to discuss the concrete cases that arise at this stage, namely, Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia and Bolivia, and in this I believe we agree with the Cubans”.⁷⁹

Maitan’s visit in late 1967 strengthened this consensus and originated the document Germain quoted. This was the way we prepared our party for the line our entire international held at that time.

Specifically: we held the International’s position and prepared the party for the civil war that Cuba, with its OLAS, was readying to begin in the entire continent immediately.

The fact that Cuba would unleash a continental civil war deserved our support, although we deemed it wrong from the tactical point of view. This was an act independent of our will, something like a workers strike, which may have been launched at the right or wrong time, with or without sufficient preparation, but in which we must participate (disciplining ourselves to the tasks set by its leadership, not to its political orientation), because in it our class faces the class enemy.

The report by the comrade of the United Secretariat indicated that a process similar to the war in Indochina opened in Latin America. There our class (the Cuban state) and the army of our class, with its paramilitary agency (OLAS), would clash against imperialism, the national bourgeoisie and their armies. It was not a guerrilla adventure by a handful of radicalized and desperate petty-bourgeois or by militants disappointed or demoralized with their work on the mass movement. There was only one possible policy: we had to fight with the Cubans and under the “military discipline” of OLAS. If Cuba, through its state and its army, was launching a continental civil war against Yankee imperialism, the guerrillas in Bolivia might be correct or not. But, although we believed it a mistake, we had the duty to support it. But then, and only then. Something similar to the support for French guerrillas against Nazism during World War II.

Our position, although wrong, shows better than ten volumes that when we say we are in favour of the guerrillas at certain times of the class struggle, and against transforming it into an absolute method or strategy, we tell the truth.

When comrade Maitan visited us again in 1968, it was enough for us to realize he had the guerrillaist conception of armed struggle. Whether Cuba launched itself to the continental civil war meant nothing essential to his strategy. At the same time, we saw that the Cubans were not going to the continental civil war. For us, this was the objective fact, what could have transformed the guerrillas in Bolivia in an objective fact of the class struggle, not an adventure by a handful of brave volunteers.

Thus, our position of unconditional support to the Bolivian guerrilla, with its organizational corollary of entry to OLAS (and therefore incorporation of the POR (C) to the ELN), as military centre of the civil war in Latin America lasted the same time elapsed between the two tours by Livio. One opened the stage, the other closed it. They were a few months of support to the Bolivian guerrillas as tactical aspect of the civil war that the Cuban state, we assumed, would unleash in Latin America.

The current division of our International began from that moment. For reasons similar to ours, the SWP began to question the line of our whole leadership and movement relative to OLAS, which it

⁷⁸ Moreno, Nahuel: *La revolución latinoamericana y argentina* [The Latin American and Argentinian revolution].

⁷⁹ PST archives. Maitan’s letter of 5 May 1967.

had also supported enthusiastically. This change by our two parties was due to an objective fact of fundamental importance: the Cubans, impacted by the failure of Che, completely changed their strategy of promoting revolution in Latin America, with any strategy whatsoever. They began to approach the Soviet Union and its policy of peaceful coexistence. They left OLAS to its fate.

While we drew the logical conclusion that there was no real possibility of continental civil war in the short term due to the change by the Cubans, the majority went ahead with the Cuban's strategy and Cuban's analysis, but without the Cubans, trying to replace Cuba with our International. This methodological mistake of trying to replace an objective political factor (the political line of the Cuban state) with a subjective factor (our will and our party), spread from the Latin American scene to all other stages of world politics, widening the gap between the majority and the minority. Despite this explanation, ours was still a mistake. Logically we self-criticised publicly for this, as we have done for so many others. Mistakes, all these, which have almost always originated in a poor assessment of objective reality, not for applying abstract formulas ("strategy of armed struggle", construction of the "Revolutionary Army" and many others) like those that we have come to expect from the majority.

Today, when in Bolivia there is a similar situation to that which existed under the Barrientos government, comrades in Bolivia and around the world can benefit from comrade Moreno's different positions and from those held by the majority. Which advice from Moreno to the Bolivian section was correct? The advice which matched the resolution of the Ninth Congress to make the guerrillas and enter the OLAS? Or the advice which said not to expect anything from the guerrillas, nor to even prepare for guerrillas struggle, because we had to turn to work in the mass movement within existing organizations, using all legal openings, and in this way — and no other— to organize the masses for political and armed struggle?

The facts give the most categorical answer. After eight years the Bolivian guerrillas have achieved nothing and OLAS is dissolved. The large armed battles have been given by the masses in the cities, with their traditional organizations, political parties and trade unions.

Therefore we cannot but recall Moreno's self-criticism which confirms that the greatest success of a Bolshevik is to recognize when to change a characterization and a political line that the facts have proved wrong.

Chapter II

Argentina: the ultimate test of two lines

The facts belie Germain

Germain asserts that the PRT(C) [Revolutionary Workers Party (Combate)] had an incorrect line from the second Cordobazo^{*}, which was to try to develop a popular army. In this we agree, so we will not discuss it. But he also said that, in terms of predictions before the first Cordobazo, the PRT(C) was right and we were wrong. This point we are going to discuss. As usual, Germain dissolves a particular problem in a matter of historical perspective. It is of little interest to know whether someone forecasted a year or two in advance the possibility of an insurrection. (How would we qualify Lenin, who did not anticipate the proximity of the Russian revolution!) What is truly important and decisive is to determine when an insurrectional or semi-insurrectional situation arose, and whether or not we had the correct policy for that situation. What Germain does here is part of the strange method he uses to defend the PRT(C). Other characteristics of this method are: 1) to mention facts (and even publications) that nobody knows in an imprecise way (“several” instead of “2” or “5” as we were doing until now); 2) to ignore other facts of which there is evidence or to tell them in a confusing or different manner; 3) not to use the evidence we bring to help him (he doesn’t even deign to answer us).

First fact: the Cordobazo

We assert that we anticipated the Cordobazo would burst and were in favour of it and that the PRT(C) didn’t anticipate it and, when it began, was against promoting it. The proofs are the same we gave in *Argentina and Bolivia, a balance sheet*. In the subchapter “Two positions on the Cordobazo” we’ve selected two quotes that categorically show that we predicted a month before the Cordobazo, the rise that was incubating and how it would manifest itself (“mass demonstrations, occupation of university faculties and buildings, resistance to the repressive forces. It’s crucial to extend and coordinate these actions”), as opposed to the PRT(C) that, a few days before the Cordobazo, said it was “suicidal to confront the police and other law enforcement agencies with empty hands”, advising against mobilizations for a long time, until the masses were armed. Who was right?

Second fact: workers conflicts

Germain ignores our arguments when he has to answer our charges that the PRT(C) did not attach any importance to workers’ struggles in their leadership meetings, nor did it have a policy for them, to the point of forgetting the general strikes of those days, as a result of their removal from the class struggle caused by their guerrilla line. We have reported that throughout the year 1971 (a year of workers disputes), the official organ of the PRT(C) published only three articles of union general nature and none on the conflicts, whereas our organ published 250 articles. Comrade Germain alludes to unknown facts: “It [the PRT(C)] publishes several special factory and union caucus papers”. What and where are they comrade? In Argentina, we know only one issue of one paper.

* The **Cordobazo** was a civil uprising in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, at the end of May 1969, during the military dictatorship of General Juan Carlos Onganía. (**Translators Note**)

In Tucumán there was a general strike that paralysed the entire province, preceded by several days of student unrest, a miniature French May. But as the student unrest was more “violent” than the general strike, the official organ of the PRT(C) never mentioned the general strike. It said that Tucumán lived intense days ... up to the day of the general strike, which was not mentioned. For them everything ended on that day; absolutely nothing happened in the province (which was paralysed for two days). To say this is the same as if analysing the French May, we said that after the night of the barricades everything returned to normal in Paris. And the same thing happened with all the general strikes, starting with the strike which gave rise to the first Cordobazo. We do not know what partial strikes the PRT(C) led. Maybe some. In any case, very few, because all the important ones, the best known, were led by the Stalinists, Maoists or us, in some cases supported by *Política Obrera* [Workers Policy party] or other groups of the extreme left, including the PRT(C). Which are the strikes that the PRT(C) led?

Third fact: Sitrac-Sitram *

The same can be said of SITRAC-SITRAM. Nobody here knows the chair of the SITRAC-SITRAM plenary sessions that Germain talks about. The chair was always the same person, “Old Pedro”. In one of the of the plenary sessions, a comrade, very young, a delegate, outstanding speaker, belonging to the PRT(C), shocked the audience with her speech. Does comrade Germain refer to her? Well, she was not chair, comrade. The political leadership of the classist tendency of SITRAC-SITRAM was in the hands of the ultra-left and Maoists (both tendencies led Córdoba) and us (leaders of almost all conflicts and the most important classist factory committees in the Greater Buenos Aires). That is the only truth. The PRT(C) did not appear as a sector of importance in the plenary sessions of Córdoba and Buenos Aires and much less as a national tendency.

A definitive criterion: compare the two organizations

There is no better way to compare the effectiveness of the respective lines, than to compare the current status of both organizations. Let’s start with the 40,000 registered adherents. Germain explains, correctly, that we’re not dealing with members. That’s why we call them adherents and not members. But the comrade minimizes their importance as an indicator of political influence: members must register as such with a judge and the electoral authorities. This is not a simple signature to apply for legality, but they must fill out a form stating adherence to the party and its program. We are the only organization of the left that has managed to fill this requirement and it is difficult for any other, except for the CP, to do so. Germain also completely ignores the opening of premises: we have opened more than 50 nationwide. And this is accompanied by a growing number of militants (not “adherents”) of the party and its youth, to an average of approximately 400 per month, since the completion of the election campaign. But the most important thing to note is the rate of growth and expansion in activity. We have grown to 100 party full-timers; we have reached an audience of over 10,000 people at the rally closing the electoral campaign.

Against all this, the PRT(C) opposed us the total concentration of its forces, in alliance with the Peronist left and with Tosco, in its base of Tucumán (with trains and buses paid by the PRT(C) from anywhere in the country). There they only managed 1,500 attendees. We alone, without agreeing with any other current, gathered in Buenos Aires 4,000 militants and sympathizers. Two thousand of them were rank and file working class leaders; and entry to the hall was made by card, indicating that the attendance was effectively secured by the party’s work. A plenary meeting done by all left tendencies in Córdoba gathered 40 delegates and working class leaders. Another, convened by us, had 80. Today we are the strongest left-current in the most important factories of Córdoba. This is the current situation of both organizations, a consequence to the state of affairs that existed at the time of SITRAC and SITRAM.

* SITRAC-SITRAM are acronyms for two unions associated with the companies ConCord and Materfer, subsidiaries of the Italian multinational Fiat, in the city of Córdoba, Argentina. They are strongly linked to trade union disputes surrounding the Cordobazo of 1969, milestone in the history of Argentine workers movement. (Translator’s Note)

Our alleged capitulation to the fraud and the military government

According to Germain, our party published “several platforms both for its own campaign and its proposals for the mass movement. In none of these was the fraudulent character of the elections...” “This led to the sad spectacle of *Avanzada Socialista* interviewing the trade-union leader Tosco, just released from prison, asking him what he thought about the idea of a workers slate in the elections, and receiving the answer from Tosco that first of all one had to say that these were fraudulent elections. Trotskyists being taught such an elementary lesson by a CP sympathiser. What a humiliating experience for comrade Moreno!”¹

Where did comrade Germain find this lesson Tosco has supposedly taught us? Surely not from the interview quoted. Let’s see.

The “lesson” Tosco gave Moreno

The first question of the interview was whether Tosco was in favour of “power to the working class” and “building a workers’ party” as the way to propose the “national and social liberation”. Tosco evasively replied in the negative, saying he was in favour of “the unity of popular forces with a program of transformative change and revolutionary content”. Let’s quote the second question textually and in its entirety:

“AS: The electoral solution proposed by the dictatorship is a trap set to deflect the rise of masses that Argentina lives. Do you consider it to be so?”²

(Let’s clarify, in passing, that “trap” is a term stronger and defining more precisely than “fraud” the content of the electoral manoeuvre mounted by the bourgeoisie in Argentina). Tosco replied confirming what we said in the question, i.e. that the elections were a trap of the dictatorship. Still other questions unrelated to the question under discussion, until the fifth, used by Germain, which reads:

“AS: Our party has announced through its official organ *Avanzada Socialista* that we made available for workers candidacies the political status attained nationwide. That is, we believe in the nominations of the Toscos, the Gregorio Flores, the Meras and the best of the workers’ vanguard that has come forward in the process opened three years ago. We have named it Workers and Socialist Pole, because socialism is the historical need of the workers. Do you consider it feasible, and in this case, would you be willing?”

Germain says Tosco replied “first of all one has to say that these are fraudulent elections”. In issue No 31 of *Avanzada Socialista*, of 27 September, 1972, where this interview was published, Tosco says: “I understand that workers are moving towards a socialist Argentina. But as I intend to act responsibly, I cannot answer this type of questions. Logically we fight for the Argentine national and social liberation and our march is towards a socialist homeland”.³

So the reply — again evasive — that- gave Tosco to our question has nothing to do with the words Germain puts into the mouth of this centrist leader.

This issue of forged quotes to make it appear as Tosco giving us a “lesson” is important to qualify the method of discussion used by Germain. But, in order to characterize our party’s policy it is much more important the constant campaign by *Avanzada Socialista* denouncing the elections as fraudulent or the campaign made in favour of a struggle for the legality of the CP and the other leftist parties.

¹ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p.28.

² *Avanzada Socialista*, paper of the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST), No 31, 27 September 1972.

³ Ibid.

Our “silence” against the dictatorship

But the falsehoods do not end here. Germain also accuses us of “remaining silent about the existence of the dictatorship — under the pretext that in this way you ‘gain’ the possibility of legal propaganda — is an unacceptable concession to electoralism ...”⁴

It is natural that, after having “proven” that we committed this sin, to declare us guilty of “unacceptable concession to electoralism”. But, is it that comrade Germain doesn’t read us or, more likely, he does it on a selective basis? We cannot quote each and every time we denounced the existence of the dictatorship in *Avanzada Socialista*, in our flyers or in the public interventions of our comrades. It would be a tedious and time-consuming task. This may be easily checked by comrades who read Spanish. Unfortunately most of the comrades in the International cannot do so. That’s why we call attention to the first and second questions asked in the *Avanzada Socialista* interview to Tosco, upon his release from prison. And we point out that the defence of political prisoners, the call to fight for their freedom and denouncing the dictatorship’s repression were permanent subjects on our press and election campaign.

Finally let’s remember that in the midst of the campaign to achieve legality we said in a full-page headline : “Against Lanusse’s candidate, Workers and Socialist Candidates” and in another, “The Proscriptions Game”, we said , “The speech at San Nicolas, which is no surprise to us because we have been denouncing from these columns the meaning of the ‘Agreement’ [the ‘Great National Agreement’ between the military and Peron], cannot make us lose sight the lies included in the previous speech by General Lanusse, where he maintained that in the process of institutionalization only those who want choose to voluntarily be proscribed will be proscribed. We now know that those who do not accept the rules of the proposed game will be left behind. But even if this were not so, are voluntarily proscribed those who, by dint of law 17.401, which penalises the expression of ideas, protected by the Constitution, cannot achieve legal status, and must renounce the open public activity? Are voluntarily proscribed officials, professors and teachers who, due to the application of this law have had to abandon their livelihoods and in some cases go off in search of better atmosphere elsewhere? Are voluntarily proscribed the hundreds of exemplary children of the working class and the people who remain in prisons of the Republic by the sole will of the Executive Branch? What about those serving sentences imposed by laws restricting freedom of thought, generously applied by the ‘Chamber of Terror’? What about the political groups that have not yet been able to overcome the obstacles to their action placed by the police-state law regulating the activities of political parties? Will the parties that do not accept to enter the capitulating agreement offered by dictatorship be voluntarily proscribed?”⁵

“One and thousand times have the workers shown their combativity. Particularly from 1969 onwards, the workers and popular movement has given virtually no respite to the military dictatorship, and the fight has forced to change governments and political plans. Urban outbreaks, strikes and demonstrations, have been constant in the last four years. If the victories have not been even greater is not only due to the brutal repression of the dictatorship that defends the interests of the regime, nor to the manoeuvres that it carries out by their skimmed concessions. There is another element that acts on behalf of the dictatorship and is stronger than the repressive apparatus, it is the shackling and police-type control by the union leadership backed by the authority of Peron”.⁶

No need to give more quotes, as this permanent denunciation of dictatorship was a campaign constantly intensified, which included the bourgeois parties, especially the Peronist and its leader, General Peron.

Comrade Germain: we do not believe that hiding and distorting the facts is the best way to educate new members of all sections of the International in the methods of revolutionary Marxist Trotskyism. Let us set aside all procedures that do not contribute to clearly and seriously discuss the policy positions at stake.

⁴ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 28.

⁵ *Avanzada Socialista*, 7 June 1972.

⁶ *Avanzada Socialista*, 20 September 1972.

Have we capitulated to Peron?

After accusing us of not having denounced the government's fraud, Germain charged us with capitulating to Peron and Peronism. What is his accusation based on? Perhaps in the whole of our election campaign, which lasted more than six months? No way. If he had reviewed the activity in those six months he would have been forced to recognize that, along with the denunciation of the military dictatorship, the second focus of our campaign was the attack to Peronism from the Marxist and proletarian view. Dozens of articles and front page headlines of our paper prove it so.

A tactic taken out of context

Comrade Germain centres his indictment on a tactic we had for a month, after Peron returned to the country, and which consisted of calling on the Peronist left to demand from Peron to accept 80 percent of workers candidates. We actually called the Peronist left to mobilise for that goal and also to impose a "program of struggle", the latter aspect being oddly "forgotten" by Germain. If the Peronist left accepted this condition and that the workers candidates be elected by the rank and file, we were willing to critically support their struggle.

To make its criticism, Germain, once again, separates one element from its historical context. This is a serious error, because no slogans are good or bad by nature and at all times. For example, there are few transitional slogans as good and useful as that of workers' control. But raised during the French general strike instead of "struggling for power", it become a slogan that hindered the movement of masses, which side tracked the proletariat from the real immediate task before it, to deflect it into a blind alley, and to make it lose a historical opportunity for victory. During the third period Trotsky tirelessly criticized Stalinism for using the slogan to form soviets (the most important of the transitional program), at a time when the masses could not carry it out. By contrast, an anodyne slogan, traditionally considered as non-Marxist — that of "peace" — was revolutionary in a specific situation: when the Russian bourgeoisie and the Tsar could not grant it to the masses, it was an imperative necessity. The same can be said of land distribution, petty bourgeois slogan, which in 1917 became revolutionary.

It is clear, then, that the value of a slogan is closely dependent on the specific situation in which it is formulated. That's what happened with our slogan, and it's what comrade Germain leaves aside. Now, what was the concrete situation in which we raised this slogan? Or, put another way, based on what analysis of reality we did?

A dynamic analysis of Peronism

We hold that our tactic was correct for the simple reason that it was based on a dynamic analysis of Peronism as a political phenomenon. This analysis indicated that Peronism was committed to the military government to impose a reactionary agenda, i.e. its dynamics was not to make any concessions to the workers movement. That's what we pointed out to the Argentine workers, when we said, as Germain quoted: "We believe that ... Peron defends the bosses and accepts the agreement (with the military) consciously".⁷

With this dynamic, it was absolutely impossible for him to accept, not just 80 percent of workers candidates selected by the ranks and a program of struggle; it was impossible for him to accept on his slates a single classist worker. The task of imposing workers candidates and a program of struggle within Peronism, was not invented by us, it was an aspiration of a sector of the Peronist workers movement, its more radical wing. Based on this analysis, the only logical and correct tactic was ours: to propose to the Peronist vanguard a task they saw as fair but they just could not achieve it within the Peronist party. If they accepted this task, their efforts would clash into the dynamics of the Peronist party and Peron; they would make a rich experience and would end up breaking with Peron and his party:

⁷ *Avanzada Socialista*, 15 November 1972.

“Let’s demand from Peron a plan of struggle for a wage increase of \$ 50,000 and a minimum wage of \$ 120,000, indexed every two months, and against unemployment”. “Let’s ask him to deliver 80 percent of the Justicialist party’s nominations for the workers to choose between themselves, their candidates” “If the fault (for the anti-worker policies of Peronism) is not Peron’s, then we will help him to break the ‘siege’ of the bureaucrats. If, unfortunately, it is as we believe, the workers themselves should impose the plan of struggle and the workers candidates”.⁸

As we anticipated, Peron did not accept the proposal and, therefore, part of the Peronist union leadership of Tucumán broke with Peronism, and maintained good relations with us.

This tactical manoeuvre weakened Peronism, caused a serious breach in a key province and opened a favourable prospect for our party and for the workers movement. And it is interesting to note that recently, the most consistently left-wing political sector of Peronism has raised a very similar demand, which Peron did not answer, so there was a break indeed.

Our whole approach was a simple tactical manoeuvre, which gave good results. We never pretended that a bourgeois party would cease to be bourgeois by the fact of having 80 percent of workers candidates in its slate. Moreover, we agree with comrade Germain that the character of Peronism does not change with even 99 percent of workers candidates or with a program of struggle or with candidates selected by the ranks. It doesn’t change because these candidates, even if elected by the ranks and with a program of struggle, continue to maintain that they have to be in the Peronist party, with Peron. This political fact alone —the presence of Peron and the fact that candidates believe in him —shows that the problem is political not numerical; i.e., it isn’t exclusively related to the proportion of workers candidates. It is political because it has to do with the belief in the need to ally with an old agent of the bourgeoisie. Even if the party’s sole representative of the bourgeoisie left was Peron, and the rest were workers, the party would still be bourgeois.

However, since our whole tactic was based on Peron not accepting the demands, one can wonder finally, what would have happened if we had been wrong? Suppose it had escaped from our analysis the existence of a deeper trend of the workers movement and the vanguard to build a class party, a strong enough tendency to impose its majority within Peronism, but still too weak to reach the critical breakpoint with Peron and his party and building an independent workers party.

Clearly, such organized proletarian force would be progressive, because it would constitute the manifestation of that tendency of the workers movement and its vanguard. The negative aspect would be the possibility of opening the way to Peron’s countermove of yielding positions trying to assimilate this tendency within his party, to neutralize it.

In that case, our party should make a self-criticism for having erred in the analysis; it should mark the progressive aspect of this phenomenon as well as its limitations; it should make a self-criticism for having proposed this task to the Peronist vanguard; it should put more emphasis on the limitations of its victory within Peronism and it should go ahead with its electoral policy of running workers, classist and socialist candidates. For the last task the party was in perfect conditions, as it had not made any commitment to support Peronism.

How many bourgeois are needed to make a popular front?

It is unfortunate that both Germain and the leadership of the French section do not share with us this orthodox Trotskyist conception of parties, fronts, etc. If Germain considers a capitulation that we called the Peronist vanguard to fight to fight for an 80 percent of workers in the Peronist slate, and that we committed ourselves to support this struggle (we never gave electoral support to Peronism nor did we commit ourselves to do it), we do not understand why he does not criticize the French comrades for having electorally supported the Front of the Left. For the French comrades obviously the Front of the Left was not a popular front, since they never reported it as such, but they called it a “global reformist project”. We do not understand why, for Germain, a front with 99.9 percent of workers candidates (socialists and communists), a 0.1 percent of bourgeois candidates and a “reformist” program — this is the case with the Front of the Left — ceases to be a popular front, if Peronism, with 80 percent of

⁸ Ibid.

workers candidates and “program of struggle” would still be a bourgeois party. For us, the first remained a popular front and the second a bourgeois party.

We do not understand the reasoning of the French comrades whereby political unity with the bourgeoisie is not such if there are few bourgeois in it. In the same way that Peronism, with 99 percent of workers candidates, plus a program of struggle and Peron, would have remained bourgeois, the Front of the Left with 99 percent of workers candidates, 0.1 percent of bourgeois candidates and a reformist program remained a “popular front”. The big difference between our policy and the French section’s is that, while we did not commit ourselves to support Peronism, even in the best conditions, the French comrades spent a lot of time criticizing the Front of the Left, but they ended up supporting it.

The French Front of the Left was akin to the Spanish Popular Front: there was no important bourgeois sector in it, but a political shadow of the bourgeoisie. And just as Trotsky never tired of denouncing the Spanish Popular Front, he would not tire of denouncing the French Front of the Left as a popular front as well.

Why do popular fronts continue to be popular fronts, even when strong bourgeois sectors aren’t participating in them? Very simple: because Stalinism builds its popular fronts with the bourgeois who want to build them at the given time.

In France, as in Spain before, these bourgeois were few. Well, they build a front with those few. Therefore, what is important is the likely dynamics of this coalition.

Just as we made our dynamic analysis and foresaw that Peronism could not accept workers candidates chosen by the rank and file and a program of struggle, we assume that the French comrades have also made an analysis of the dynamic of the Front of the Left. In other words, they must have asked themselves what its future was. What we don’t know the precise answer to this question. But we can give ours: the dynamics of the Front of the Left is to become, just as soon as it has favourable objective conditions in a fully grown popular front, with any bourgeois party which wants to enter it. Do the French comrades agree that this is the perspective of the Front of the Left? If not this, what is it? We assert that the French Front of the Left foreshadows the dynamics of becoming a fully-fledged popular front (not a popular front with a political shadow of the bourgeoisie as it is now). This definition starts from the general, historical, policy of Stalinism. And that policy is simply to build the popular fronts, or national units with the national bourgeoisie, to curb the revolution and achieve a government friendly to the USSR. Do the majority comrades know some other historical objective of Stalinism? If they do, they should specify it clearly. The historical objective of Stalinism is no other than what we noted. Therefore, the French Front of the Left is only tactical, electoral, step in the Stalinist strategy of building popular fronts. Moreover, this tactic of building electoral popular fronts as a prelude to democratic front- populist bourgeois governments is not exclusive of French Stalinism; it is a global tactic of Stalinism.

When the French comrades characterized that the Front of the Left was not a popular front because it had few bourgeois, they committed a very serious error, which then led to another worse: they fell into opportunism and they played into the hands of the popular frontist policies of French Stalinism. So we cannot be other than surprised that, with such a policy in France, the majority comrades make such a fuss about our electoral tactic of a month against Peronism.

The Broad Front in Uruguay

But the scandal is not limited to this: the majority comrades accuse us as well of having yielded to the bourgeois and Stalinist pressure in Uruguay, for supporting the Broad Front in the last elections.

We held that, when we were forced to vote for Seregni and other bourgeois candidates in order to stay in the Broad Front, we should have pulled out, making a sovereign scandal. We believe that having entered the Broad Front was a success because it facilitated our work on the mass movement. The Uruguayan comrades’ mistake was not having entered it, rather not having come out on time, as soon as the bourgeois leadership tried to impose their discipline.

But we say that was a grave mistake, not a betrayal, because the Uruguayan comrades, as Hansen demonstrated with plenty of quotes, made a principled denunciation of the Broad Front.

Uruguayan comrades committed their mistake within the context imposed on them under the dilemma of staying in the front and vote for its candidates (the wrong orientation) or be forced out of it making a big deal (the correct orientation). The opportunism of the Uruguayan comrades had at least a weighty reason: their work against the Broad Front from within. That of the French comrades was, however, a gratuitous opportunism: they supported the Front of the Left from the outside, without having even the excuse that such support was formally required to work from within to destroy it.

Now let's see what the French section did. In France we were not constrained by tactical demands of any kind, neither were we practicing entryism in any reformist party. We risked losing absolutely nothing if we didn't vote the Front of the Left. No voting for bourgeois candidates and all was sorted. Nevertheless we voted for the Front of the Left.

The two errors, both of Uruguayan as of the French comrades, are serious errors, but in no way a betrayal. What it is a betrayal is to electorally support a popular front or a bourgeois nationalist movement without denouncing that their existence means a betrayal of the workers movement. In other words, the vote itself is for us a tactical and not principled issue; what is principled is the policy, and the policy must be a relentless denunciation of every popular or nationalist front where the working class finds itself, as a betrayal of the reformist worker parties that promote them.

The Uruguayan comrades carried out extensively this principled policy. We, in Argentina, also carried out a relentless campaign of denunciations of Peronism and the abortion of Popular Front which vernacular Stalinism tried through the People's Revolutionary Alliance. Did the French comrades do the same?

The French comrades (with the support of the whole majority) have carried out a campaign denouncing the Front of the Left in all the nuances. This is correct. But the only nuance they defaulted (and which was also supported by the majority) was not denouncing that the Left Front was a potential popular front, an organism enemy of the interests of the working class.

If our characterization of the dynamics of the Front of the Left is correct, if this is just the electoral tactics of the French Communist Party in its strategy of building popular fronts, if our French section did not denounce that this is the dynamic the Front of the Left is taking, if it supported it in the elections (as it did), then we can draw, unfortunately, only one conclusion: we voted in France, without denouncing it as such, the electoral tactics of the Popular Front strategy. This opportunism had the approval and encouragement of the majority comrades. Wouldn't Comrade Germain think that before criticizing (even if he is right) a secondary facet of our electoral policy, he should begin with a self-criticism for defending the atrocities they did in France?

But there is something else. Comrade Hansen made a public criticism of the electoral tactics of the Uruguayan comrades against our view that, before the public criticism to them we had to make one of the Bolivian comrades, or, better yet, not to make any public criticism. Is it not enough for comrade Germain, that the Uruguayan comrades have accepted this criticism? What more does he want? We expect from him an attitude similar to Hansen's regarding to electoral tactics of the French section.

Should we have taken part in the elections?

According to Germain, we have acted in Argentina as if we were in "pre-1914 Britain or the United States in 1938 or 1946". For him, the situation in our country is similar to that of Spain and France in 1936. All analogies are dangerous. In the situation of the Argentine proletariat, and hence the objective situation in Argentina, there is a sharp contradiction, perhaps unique, but in any case, it makes the comparison with the countries cited by Germain impossible.

The Argentine workers movement is Peronist and recognizes as its main political and union leader a bourgeois leader: General Peron. However, at the same time it has a high degree of combativity and trade union organization. To overcome this contradiction, i.e., matching the political development of the working class to the level reached by their union and their struggles is the main task the revolutionaries in Argentina have in front today. This means that the great historical task for this period is to ensure the political independence of the workers movement. This task was not raised in any of the countries named by Germain (at the time he indicates), since the proletariat had its class political organizations.

Naturally, the political independence of the workers movement can only be achieved through the mobilization of the class. But this does not mean we cannot use the elections and the bourgeois legality to support, and to any possible extent, to lead these two combined, but not identical, processes: political independence and the mobilization of the working class.

We repeat: analogies are dangerous because they emphasize the similarities and ignore the differences, which may be more important than the differences. Knowing the risk we dare make one: more than that of Spain or France in 1936, Argentina's current situation appears similar to that of Spain in 1931. Trotsky pointed out that a revolutionary stage opened, but as the masses still had great confidence in the parties and parliament of the bourgeoisie, it was imperative to act in the elections and support the learning of the masses in bourgeois parliamentarism, participating in the "Cortes" [Parliament]. The fact that the situation was revolutionary or pre-Revolutionary was no obstacle for intervention in the elections. On the contrary, it became more necessary. Stalinism opposed this position of Trotsky, calling for the arming of the proletariat. Let's hear how Trotsky qualified this:

"To counterpose the slogan of the *arming of the workers* to the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals, means to isolate oneself from the masses — and the masses from arms."⁹

Why was it right in the middle of the Bolivian revolution?

But there is an analogy that Germain doesn't even think to mention: that of Bolivia between 1952 and 1956. During those years, workers' militias existed in Bolivia; they had raised the possibility of a worker-peasant insurrection to give "all power to the COB with its militias". It was a situation much more critical than in Argentina after the Cordobazo. After all the Bolivian masses through an insurrection had completely defeated the military dictatorship and were left with weapons in hand. In such a situation, much more revolutionary than that of Argentina, the leadership of our international systematically proposed for Bolivia presentation in the elections. The Fourth Congress of the International with the approval or the pen of comrade Germain advised in 1954 for Bolivia: "[A] campaign for general elections with the right to vote for every men and women over 18 years of age to elect a constituent assembly and the running of COB's worker slates in these elections".¹⁰

And this analogy extends to June 1956, when the POR took part in the elections despite their fraudulent nature.

These analogies are quite illustrative. However, the majority comrades categorically refuse to answer our question about whether we should have participated in the elections. For them to take part in the elections is not decisive, the decisive factor is the policy that we present in them. This is a wrong way to address the problem.

Without participation there was no correct policy

What's the significance of Trotsky's statement already quoted, that we should not raise slogans that oppose "the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals"?

Does this perhaps mean that because the masses have illusions about the elections, we should get carried away by electoralism? Trotsky never proposed this. What Trotsky posed is that only when we are in those real political processes we can concretize our policy.

That is, if the masses have illusions in the elections, if they are discussed in all workplaces, if even (as it was the case of Argentina) mobilizations are bridled in the expectation that the elections (or Peronism winning them) will solve the problems, if all this happens, the only way to formulate our policy is from that question — the elections — that has grabbed the attention of the mass movement.

⁹ Trotsky, Leon, "The Spanish Revolution, and the dangers threatening it", 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. p. 117.

¹⁰ Resolutions of the Fourth Congress, June 1954.

Do the more general slogans of the stage change due to this? No, they don't change, but now we can only formulate them from the standpoint of the elections. Participation in elections is the necessary starting point for reporting they are a trap, to argue that the only way is to mobilize and to stress the need for a workers' party independent of the bourgeoisie. If we do not participate in them, our political dialogue with the mass movement is cut off. We can say exactly same things without participating in the electoral process, but the masses, embarked in them, will not listen to us.

Therefore, it is a duty of the revolutionaries to participate in elections when the masses still rely on them. This is the first thing to be defined; it is the basis to realize a correct policy. No matter what stage of the class struggle we are in.

What happened to the Argentine sects

In our country there were several Marxist organizations (Política Obrera [Workers Policy], the Maoists, the ERP), which said, like us, that elections and parliamentarism were a fraud and that we had to go ahead with the mobilizations. But they did not say it within the electoral process in which the masses were embarked, but from outside it. The results are obvious: these organizations could not be understood by the masses or the workers' vanguard. They seemed like Martians who spoke a different language and on different issues to what the masses were discussing. They came out of the elections much more weakened than before, and on the verge of political liquidation. Instead, saying in general the same as them, with the addition of the need for an independent workers party (formulated through the working-class candidates), the elections were a key in the development and growth of our party; they meant a qualitative leap for us.

The majority comrades reason like these Argentine sects mentioned: what is important is the policy and standing for election is a secondary issue. Therein lies their mistake. For us it is just the opposite: at this particular moment, only taking part in the elections could we formulate our policy. If we hadn't taken part we could not have formulated any correct policy because we would have isolated ourselves from "the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals".

We could say the same things but we would have become a sectarian propaganda group, oblivious to the concrete, immediately present, problem of the Argentine masses. And still worse, we would let the masses be drawn, without opposition, by the bourgeois parties, leaving them bereft of a class position in front of the most important problem to them at that time, the electoral process.

So we insist: in Argentina we could not formulate any revolutionary policy if it was not from participating in the elections. This was the strategic question that we had to solve first and we did solve it. Let us now see what tactics we used in the elections.

Our electoral tactics and demonstrations

Comrade Germain has made serious charges against our organization. Mainly one: that our core activity, in a pre-revolutionary stage littered with popular and workers demonstrations, has been the election and not the mobilizations. Thus he says our axis was "the question of independent working class candidates in fraudulent elections under a decaying military dictatorship and not the question of how to overthrow the dictatorship (how to generalise the Cordobazos into an Argentinazo)".¹¹

We don't know where Comrade Germain gets this from. Let's examine our electoral documents (published in a booklet) and our election platform. In the document voted on 17 December 1972, there is an entire chapter titled "Using elections to explain the need for an Argentinazo". There we said: "So the great slogans of our election campaign must be: Freedom for all political and related social prisoners! For democratic freedoms, for the repeal of all repressive laws! Down with the present military government! Down with the bourgeois government of the day! Let's make an Argentinazo to permanently become free from imperialism and capitalism".¹²

¹¹ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p.29.

¹² El PST ante las elecciones [The PST and the elections], booklet of the PST(A), pp. 3, 4, & 6.

And further on we clarified: “We do not want the dead and wounded of the Cordobazos, but we must prepare for it, because it will be inevitable, since the exploiters will see to it”.

Our election platform and our use of television

By resolution of the party of the same date, the electoral platform consisted of seven points. This resolution received wide publicity and was published in the mentioned brochure. The seven points were:

“1) Freedom to political and related social prisoners; 2) For democratic freedoms, down with repressive legislation; 3) Down with the military government; 4) Out with the future capitalist government; 5) Let us resist the imperialist and capitalist repression with an Argentinazo that puts a workers’ and popular government in power; 6) Do not vote military, or union bureaucrats, do not vote doctors, nor bosses. Vote for your comrades, vote for workers candidates; 7) Do not vote for capitalist candidates of Coria and Miguel” (the two most important and better known at the time union bureaucrats: Coria in the construction union and Miguel in the metalworkers union).¹³

According to the provisions of the electoral law, the government gave us two hours on television. Those two hours revolved around a single idea: all we have we owe to the Cordobazo and workers and popular mobilizations (the exposition was accompanied by the screening of films of these mobilizations), therefore, the elections are a fraud which leads to a dead end, and what we need to do is an “Argentinazo”, a workers and popular insurrection that overthrows the government.

Our electoral campaign and the workers struggles

But there is something more important and much more concrete. At the time of the election campaign, the renewal of collective labour contracts was being negotiated. The party anticipated that the most important workers mobilizations would occur around these negotiations. The conclusion was obvious: prevent the elections from diverting the working class from these struggles, as was the plan of the bourgeoisie and the union bureaucracy. Obviously, we took in the reality of the class struggle. There is a multitude of quotes; we’ll take only one among many. In the document “Let’s Wage a Revolutionary Socialist Campaign”, we said: “The party’s major national slogan at this time should be: let’s prevent the elections from diverting the working class for the fight for good labour contracts and for substantial salary increases”. “Our approach has to be: the elections are causing a general intoxication which makes the working class forget its true large real problems, at this time, starvation wages ...”¹⁴

And in a special chapter entitled “The Electoral Campaign and Workers Conflicts”, we added: “This is the essential axis of our electoral campaign, with its practical consequence: we have to get into all conflicts for labour contracts that arise during this period. Electoral activity should not be a reason for us to turn away from conflicts; on the contrary, the campaign will allow us to detect and participate in many more conflicts than usual. If we take this approach, our campaign will not be electioneering; otherwise, despite all the revolutionary phrases we use, we will be turning off of actual experiences and struggles of our class to propagandism”. “To summarize, we can say that the election campaign does not mean the party will be abandoning its typical activity in the concrete struggles of the working class, from wage increases to Cordobazos, but rather we will be expanding and developing the vast experience we have in this kind of struggle”.¹⁵

The electoral campaign was the millimetre perfect implementation of these resolutions. In its course, we greatly multiplied the party’s bond of with the workers conflicts. Our members played a prominent role in the struggle for labour contracts, as well as countless other partial battles, by factory

¹³ Ibid. p.19.

¹⁴ “Hagamos una campaña socialista revolucionaria” [“Let’s Wage a Revolutionary Socialist Campaign”], PST archives.

¹⁵ Ibid.

or guild. Let's cite a few of the many possible examples. In the metalworkers union, there was a major demonstration against the discounts the union leadership decided to carry out on the amount of wage increases agreed with the bosses. Our party was at the forefront of this mobilization that spanned numerous factories. In the country's largest steel mill, SOMISA in San Nicolas, our party's mayoral candidate led the occupation of the plant against the bullying methods of the union bureaucracy. In the long strike of the Panam plastics factory in Tucumán, a party leader was elected to the strike committee, although he was not a worker of the plant. It is no coincidence that in the last days of the election campaign, the highest authority of the union bureaucracy, the CGT's general secretary, José Rucci, violently attacked our presidential candidate in a telegram sent to him, something he did not do with any other candidate.

Once again: did we or didn't we have to participate in elections?

It is clear, then, that is not true that we have made participation in "elections ... the main axis of our political activity", as comrade Germain asserts. On the contrary, we used the electoral activity as another weapon in the class struggle. The problem is political, but comrade Germain gives no response. He doesn't even raise it. Was it mandatory for an Argentine Trotskyist party to use the legality and the elections, to the fullest of the possibilities? Did it have to take part in the elections? Comrade Germain replies with evasive generalities: in general and in principle it is not incorrect to stand for election. The question is: in the case specific of Argentina, should we have done it or not, comrade Germain?

Because situations are concrete and must be given concrete answers.

One of the basic policies of a Trotskyist party is to use the legality and the elections, did we apply this basic policy or not, comrade Germain? Did the PRT(C) do right or wrong by not applying it? Only after giving a categorical response to these questions, we can begin the discussion of our electoral tactics and our slogans. Only then we can discuss whether it was right or wrong to centre the electoral propaganda on denouncing the dictatorship and the need to overthrow it, on the repeal of repressive legislation and on the need for an "Argentinazo"; whether it was right or wrong to focus our activity in the class struggle, subordinating the electoral campaign to it and combining them.

Because, if we did wrong in taking part of the elections, then the slogans and the work orientation around those choices must have been wrong as well. Never mind that these slogans and orientation were correct in themselves. But, if we did right, if we had to stand for election, then we were correct in the decisive factor, in the specific response to a specific situation, but perhaps we may have erred in the slogans and on the orientation of our work, which were the same ones which comrade Germain touted as correct.

The pro-guerrilla policy of the majority

While we oriented ourselves towards the use of legality and running in the elections, to better intervene in the mass movement, the PRT(C) developed a radically different orientation: the urban guerrilla and terrorism. In this orientation, it had the enthusiastic support of the majority of the International.

The criticisms come too late

Now, when it is already obvious to our whole movement the disaster of such orientation, comrade Germain tries to criticize it retroactively. Now he tells us that it was a mistake for the PRT(C) to have dedicated itself after the second Cordobazo to building a revolutionary army. To comrade Germain therefore PRT(C)'s political line began to be wrong since the beginning of 1971. However, the leaders of the majority applauded this policy at the time and failed to criticize it timely. Listen to comrade Maitan, leader, together with comrade Germain of the majority tendency: "The strategic perspective the Argentine comrades are following is the one lay down by the Ninth World Congress of

the Fourth International— elaborated and made more precise over the last two national congresses of the PRT”.¹⁶

The national congresses the article referred to are those which, several months before the second Cordobazo, voted to build the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), resolution that today, after three years, comrade Germain finds wrong.

An enthusiastic balance of the ERP’s activity

To leave no doubts about what was the position of the majority to the orientation that the official Argentine section gave to its activity, we quote the summary of the actions that the PRT(C) carried out in the period of the great Argentine mass mobilizations, taken from the same article:

“These actions, which have come in rapid succession since the start of the year, especially in February and the first half of March, and which have made a very great impression on the daily and weekly bourgeois press, can be categorised as follows:

a) Actions aimed at acquiring of funds by expropriations carried out in the old Bolshevik tradition (the most spectacular stroke was the one in Cordoba, which, according to the Argentinian press, brought its organizers 121,000,000 pesos [around US\$ 350,000]).

b) Actions aimed at acquiring arms and medical supplies (the most spectacular stroke in this area was at a clinic in Buenos Aires).

c) Actions designed to win the sympathy of the most deprived strata by handing out food (meat, milk, etc.) taken from big distributing firms.

d) Actions linked to the workers struggle (the most important so far was conducted by an armed detachment which invaded the Fiat factory in Cordoba and held a meeting there).¹⁷

This representative of the majority cannot contain his enthusiasm over such balance sheet:

“All these actions have effectively achieved their objective of armed propaganda. At the present time, the ERP is the best known revolutionary organization and has won very broad sympathy—in some big plants too”.¹⁸

And this was published at the time of the second Cordobazo, i.e., when the PRT(C) had already adopted the wrong orientation, as comrade Germain has come to find out now. Wrong orientation? Without a doubt. But the majority cannot deny its share of responsibility for its guidance and its full support to it. We choose three examples from the three main leaders of the majority, after the second Cordobazo, to show how only now they criticize the PRT(C) and the ERP.

In June 1971, months after the second Cordobazo, Maitan wrote:

“The entire International should be elated over the fact that in the period from the end of last year until early June 1971 — following its own rebuilding and the difficulties faced by other groups— the ERP, founded by the PRT, emerged as the most dynamic of the organizations waging armed struggle in Argentina, capable of unleashing a wide range of actions at an intense pace, with certain effectiveness. Could these be actions which don’t fit the criteria of revolutionary Marxism, of Leninism?”¹⁹

Pierre Frank too, months after the second Cordobazo, made his overall assessment of the political line of the PRT. In August 1971, he wrote:

“Concerning the activities of our comrades of the Argentina section, the PRT and its armed organization, the ERP, we do not look at them as being ultra-left. We think that their policy corresponds largely to the present needs of the class struggle in their country.”²⁰

¹⁶ Intercontinental Press, vol. 9, No. 16, 26 April 1971, p. 388.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Maitan, Livio: “Let’s stick to the topic and avoid digressions” in *International Information Bulletin* of the SWP, No. 6, January 1974, P. 147.

²⁰ Frank, Pierre, Letter to the SWP convention, August 1971, in *Internal Discussion Bulletin* of the SWP, No 6, November 1971, p.15.

Germain in April 1972, one year after the second Cordobazo, was still declaring his agreement with the PRT's general orientation towards armed struggle. Here is what he wrote:

“Next, while affirming our agreement with the PRT's general orientation of developing the armed struggle, we express the hope that our comrades will find the means to link this struggle in the most intimate way to the development of the mass struggle, with a clear political orientation towards the socialist and proletarian revolution, against any concept of a revolution by stages.”²¹

Finally, Maitan, Germain and Frank summarized their assessment of the PRT – ERP in the resolution adopted in December 1972, more than a year and a half after the second Cordobazo. They characterized the actions of the PRT – ERP as having raised the level of “... armed struggle in Latin America after the Cuban revolution, as far as they went in the sense of an integration of the armed struggle in the actual dynamics of mass struggle.”²²

Frank, Maitan, Germain and the POR (C) — which in a Central Committee meeting held in Bolivia in April 1971 adopted a resolution “to support all the PRT and ERP actions” —, believe he PRT – ERP reached a level of armed struggle higher than that of the Dominican masses, when they resisted the invasion of 30,000 U.S. Marines, or than the armed struggles that occurred in the Peruvian peasant mass movement led by Hugo Blanco.

This is documentary proof of the positions held by the leaders of the IEC majority tendency regarding the PRT – ERP's “armed struggle” “after the second Cordobazo”.

From guerrillaism to the ultra-left unionism of the general strike “in itself”

Today, comrade Germain tries to detach himself from the failures, unloading on Maitan the responsibility for the old enthusiasm for the PRT(C). He also washes his hands as to whether it was correct or not for us to run in elections. Despite these ambiguities, he indirectly gives us an answer-program for our country. Here's the program:

“But in a pre-revolutionary situation, a revolutionary Marxist does not tell the workers that to have workers candidates in general elections is a step forward. He should tell them to following:

‘If the dictatorship is retreating, it is as a result of your powerful extra-parliamentary struggles, as a result of six Cordobazos and of the appearance of groups committed to armed struggle. Continue along this road. Build up local factory and neighbourhood committees to organise in a permanent way for your mobilisations. Start to draw together all radicalised unionists, students, women and militants who are ready to join in these preparations. Coordinate nationally the class struggle factions in the unions and tie them in with the vanguard committees. Start to arm yourself. Beware of a continuation or a quick return to sharp repression and confrontation. Don't give in to parliamentary illusions. Argentine capitalism cannot grant you a significant increase in your standard of living. That's why the class struggle is sharpening every day. That's why you have to continue on the road of the Cordobazos. Whatever retreat the army will undertake today will only be temporary. Large-scale clashes with the army are unavoidable. Don't go towards it spontaneously and in an unorganised way. Prepare and organise yourselves for it. Prepare an insurrectional general strike.’”²³

This program, so carefully developed, has nothing to do with our country. It does not say a word of the CGT and the trade unions, with its rotten and treacherous leaders. Not a word on Peronism, on Peron and his presentation to elections. Not even a mention the fact that the working class believes in Peron and will support him massively in his presentation to elections!

²¹ *La Gauche*, 21 April 1972.

²² Maitan, Livio: “The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina”, 15 November, 1972, in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* of SWP, Vol. X, No. 6, April 1973, p. 18.

²³ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 16-17.

A program that never found its reality

Unfortunately for comrade Germain, Argentina's reality does not match at all with his scheme ... The workers movement is solidly organized in unions and, politically, following Peron. When comrade Germain speaks of the Cordobazos (and we assume this encompasses the demonstrations of Rosario, Tucuman and Mendoza, because otherwise we do not know how his count reaches six), he forgets that these struggles originated in calls to strikes and rallies by the traditional organizations of the workers movement—the unions and regional chapters of the CGT. These mobilizations were the product of a particular combination of circumstances, one of the most important being that Peron, sectors of the union bureaucracy, important sectors of the bourgeoisie and the entire middle class, were against the military governments. This was even reflected in a split in the own ranks of the army. Since Lanusse, these bureaucratic sectors and the entire bourgeoisie turned to the elections, dragging the middle class and the working class. Therefore, the Cordobazos decreased and were not repeated with the same sharpness of the first. The problem of the leadership of the workers movement began to come to the fore. The extremely favourable combination of circumstances passed, especially the total repudiation of the middle class and the proletariat to the bourgeois governments, as expressed by the military regime. Before the elections a period opened of renewed confidence in bourgeois governments or, at least, in the bourgeois electoral mechanics, as a result of the trust in Peron.

Germain ask us how was Argentina ripe for generalised insurrection in May 1970 and not ripe in the beginning of 1972. With this, he believes that he has found a contradiction in us. But we reply that's how things happened; that circumstances changed because Peron (undisputed leader, lest we forget, of the Argentine masses) entered the electoral arena and thus diverted the masses away from extra-parliamentary confrontation with the regime towards an electoral confrontation.

Of course, this does not mean that the situation has changed at a historical scale. The change is temporary, since the molecular process continues. But if we want to help it ripen, we will have to accompany the new learning of the mass movement, the depletion of the experience of "their" government and "their" candidate, Peron. There is no other way.

An "insurrectional general strike" anarcho-syndicalist style

What is most striking about comrade Germain's proposition is its character centred exclusively on the question of organization and preparation of the general strike, without slogans or proposals of any kind, unless he deems as such programmatic comments of general type or traditional lessons of the class struggle.

Because, who will "prepare the general strike"? And to what end? To overthrow the government? Who will have to replace it? Should we "organize" and "prepare" a general strike without slogans of any kind related to the class struggle in the country? If the general strike had to be against electoral fraud, should we have called it to get Peron to run in elections, given that the military government did not allow him to do it?

If so, why didn't he state this clearly? If not, should we have called for the insurrectionary general strike for any other purpose, ignoring the reality of Peronism and elections? In such a case, would comrade Germain kindly tell what objective might be able to mobilize the proletariat for the insurrectionary general strike bypassing its unions and its political leadership? But if the insurrectionary general strike is to replace the government, we face the problem of policy towards the middle class: do we get them on our side or neutralize them? With what slogans? Do we leave them to their own fate?

Perhaps, the objective should be power to the factory, local and neighbourhood committees? But these committees have to start to be built (as comrade Germain himself tells us), and we can attest that they have not been built anywhere, nor is there any traces of this new organizational form. What to do then? Should we call on these non-existent organisms to "prepare" and launch insurrectionary general strike, or should we wait until they have developed and gained strength before burdening them with such a task? Meanwhile, what about the only existing workers organizations: the CGT and the trade unions? Do they have a role to play? Since the classist factions in the unions are very weak, can they call the insurrectionary general strike directly? Or should they first contest against the bureaucratic and treacherous leaders for leadership of trade unions and of the masses?

And as for the insurrection, who prepares it? Who leads it? Isn't it shameful to put forth this line without raising the need for armed workers pickets? A lapse of memory? Isn't the neglect of this fundamental slogan for the preparation of the general strike unforgivable? Is it enough to give workers super-general advice (in Spanish we say "platitudes") such as "large-scale clashes with the army are unavoidable... Prepare and organise yourselves for it", instead of specifying the appropriate form of organization to carry out this task?

The secret lies in the fact that comrade Germain's proposal is unionist not Trotskyist. He presents the preparation of the general strike as a supra-historical task, as a universal panacea, unrelated to the stages of class struggle, without slogans of any kind (and least of all, political slogans), regardless of the real level of consciousness and organization of the workers movement or its needs at each moment and without raising the organization of armed pickets. Exactly what the anarcho-sindicalists proposed.

The official section breaks with the International

The majority criticize us saying that we have no sound clear perspectives. We believe the opposite: that it is the majority comrades who never succeed in a prognosis or ever have a clear perspective. To prove it, nothing better than the policy taken towards one of the fundamental sections of the majority: the Argentine. The entire International knows that since the Ninth Congress this section was one of the pillars of the majority tendency in regard to Latin America.

Now it has left the International, accusing it of being petty bourgeois and of having the wrong program. When did the majority comrades anticipate this would be the probable course of the Argentine section? What measures did they take to prevent it or fight it? For years, we heard nothing but praise for the Argentine section: it was constantly put as an example of application of the line voted. The result is in plain sight.

Who failed to foresee the breakup?

In this case as well, the majority wants to cover up its responsibility with retrospective critiques. The organ of the English section *The Red Weekly*, which reflects the positions of the majority, published on issue 13 of 27 July 1973, a note on the death of Joe Baxter, which stated that Baxter, Pujals and Bonnet recognized "populist tendencies and ideological confusion" within the PRT(C). Obviously, this had to happen at least by September 1971, since Pujals was killed that month.

The admission that the PRT(C)'s leaders had long been concerned about deviations of this organization is very important. Didn't the international leaders of the majority feel the same concern? And, if they did, what did they do to prevent the development of these deviations? Nothing. On the contrary, they continued supporting and defending the official section's policy which led, with an ironclad logic, to the break with Trotskyism.

When the rupture within the PRT took place and we denounced the anti-Trotskyist character of the sector which would later be recognized as the official section, the majority, through comrade Maitan, outlined a theory explaining the phenomenon: the theoretical Maoists deviations were the result of Moreno's teachings, who was theoretically and politically pro-Maoist and in this school he had educated the leaders in the official section. For that matter, Maitan wasn't interested that the official organ of the section had characterized Moreno as a maniac Trotskyist. The false accusation had overtones of seriousness through old quotes (taken out of context, as usual) from a document published when Moreno was in prison, based on draft notes and comments. But what mattered was to build a theory to show that the official section was formed by true revolutionary Marxists and their differences with the International were a consequence of the ("Morenist") past and did not imply a danger for the future.

The majority deceives the ranks of the International

The anti-Trotskyist positions kept developing with increasing strength and the majority comrades continued explaining it as Moreno's heritage. But, in order to defend the official section (while it was "educated") they committed the worst possible crime against the ranks of our International: not to inform them of the official section's positions and, on the contrary, to deceive them hiding these.

With the pretext that it was not an official position, the publication of the *Red Book* ("The Only Road for Workers' Power and Socialism") was prevented.*

Only when the leaders of the section demanded that it be published, the United Secretariat did it, but only in English. But, even then, it wasn't reported that the section was attacking the positions of Trotskyism and questioning the role of the International from its official organ. Only after the PRT(C) breaks with the majority, the International published the *Red Book* in French.

Germain PRT embellishes the PRT(C)'s positions

In his work, comrade Germain criticizes the section twice: for its pro-Cuban and pro-Maoist positions at international level, and for its strategy of building a people's army. Of these two criticisms, he emphasises as the most important the second, relegating the international issues into the background. But not only does he relegate the international positions of the PRT(C) into the background, what is more serious, he embellishes them. According to comrade Germain:

"The comrades of the PRT correctly understand that the Fourth International today is only the initial nucleus of the future revolutionary mass international."²⁴

Instead, the comrades of the PRT(C) said publicly again and again, since 1970:

"We ratify our adherence [to the Fourth International] with the intention of the proletarianization of the International, to its revolutionary transformation, and struggling to orient it towards the formation of a new international revolutionary party based on the Chinese, Cuban, Korean, Vietnamese and Albanian parties and on the sister organizations struggling in a revolutionary way in every country against capitalism and imperialism".²⁵

Where did comrade Germain read that for the PRT(C) "the Fourth International today is only the initial nucleus of the future revolutionary mass international"? According to him:

"For the PRT leadership, this fusion is envisaged with all those forces engaged in objectively revolutionary struggles..."²⁶

Completing this with what we know that the PRT(C)'s leadership says, we come to the conclusion that, for comrade Germain, Chinese, Korean and Albanian Communist parties, are "engaged in objectively revolutionary struggles".

Who characterized the PRT(C) correctly?

Let's not follow comrade Germain over the twists and turns he builds to embellish the PRT(C) positions. There is only one truth, that the majority comrades have struggled to hide—the PRT(C), for years, has been attacking our International arguing that it is not revolutionary; they considered it as a mere element of secondary importance for the construction of a new international based on pro-Chinese Stalinist parties which, in their view, are truly revolutionary.

* Immediately following the split between PRT–*El Combatiente* and PRT–*La Verdad*, the *Combatiente* faction held a Congress in February 1968, where the armed struggle as a central strategy to take power was imposed. The most important thesis of this Congress was published in the document "The Only Road for Workers' Power and Socialism" (The *Red Book*, as it became known because of its cover). (Translators Note)

²⁴ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 18.

²⁵ "Resolutions of the Fifth Congress of the Partido Revolucionario De Los Trabajadores (PRT (Combatiente)) Plus Resolutions of the Subsequent Meetings of the Central Committee and Executive Committee", *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* of the SWP, Vol. X, No. 5, April, 1973, p. 26.

²⁶ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 18.

And for all these years, we have differentiated ourselves from the majority by holding the opposite attitude: we have tirelessly denounced the revisionist character of this populist organization and the inevitability of its final break with the international. In 1968, when the split in our party took place, we said the *Combatiente* faction was an unprincipled front, which would fracture into a thousand pieces. We were not mistaken. Since then, there have been over eight major splits. We did a class characterization: we said that they reflected petty bourgeois sectors driven to desperation due to the endless crisis in Argentina. We said we had to fight them politically (while respecting and defending them as magnificent and honest revolutionaries) and that we had to defend our International and the heritage of Trotskyist revolutionary Marxism. At the last IEC, we proposed to comrade Germain a united front of defence of our International, against public attacks and the inevitable breakup. Who was right? The facts have been quick to give their verdict.

According to the majority, the two fractions in which the PRT divided in 1968 had a common birth defect: the Trotskyist–Maoism (the feared and repudiated “Morenism”). The PRT(C) and the PRT (LV) had then a common formation. Now then, *El Combatiente* tied to the majority and finished breaking in a public and brutal way with the International. *La Verdad*, however, tied to the minority and still vindicates itself as Trotskyist, more vigorously than ever. It is in and will continue to be in the International.

Chapter III

The European document and the French section

Comrade Mary Alice Waters has pointed out the serious methodological and orientation errors of the majority's European document. While we are not specialists in Europe and while we consider essential the views of the European comrades, the document causes a series of doubts that we consider necessary to state. That is the purpose of this chapter. Hence there will be many more questions we ask than the definitive answers we can provide. Thus, posed without pretensions, these questions can help explain why we believe that the European document in question has, at least, the fault of not arming our European sections for the development of their activities.

Has Western Europe become an island?

The document does not suffer from lack of audacity in the analysis, or meanness in the forecasts, when it says that our sections must be prepared for "the socialist revolution [which] is once again on the agenda ... from a conjunctural point of view" and demands to "prepare the masses of the European proletariat for any attempt at counter-revolutionary intervention against a socialist revolution winning victory first in a single country of capitalist Europe, preparation that must be taken in advance and in a systematic way as the proletariat returns to its internationalist traditions".¹ This ethereal formula summarizes an important part of the majority comrade's thought and, indeed, taken with the entire the document, requires us to formulate five questions which we consider important:

First: Who will lead the socialist revolution in capitalist Europe?

The majority's document states the "the socialist revolution is once again on the agenda ... from a conjunctural point of view" and, further, it outlines a policy for "a socialist revolution winning victory first in a single country of capitalist Europe". The first question that arises is: who will lead the "first socialist revolution"? For a Trotskyist, the answer is only one: "in principle, only a Trotskyist party transformed into a party with mass influence can guarantee that the victory of the socialist revolution in any country be achieved".

But the document asserts that the perspective of building mass Trotskyist parties is excluded at this stage of the class struggle in Europe. From here it follows that, for the majority comrades, there are chances that the proletariat will seize power in a country in Europe without our leadership. This would amount to saying that we should revise all our analysis and program.

If this is not the case, if this means that the comrades think that we can build in some European country a Trotskyist party that will lead the masses to a "first socialist revolution". Then, we are in the presence of a second contradiction: the mere existence of such a party would mean a complete change in our entire International, since it would indicate the possibility of building similar parties around the world or at least throughout Europe-.

¹ International Majority Tendency, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 5, pp. 9 and 26.

Whatever the response of the majority comrades be, it will destroy the basis for the entire document. If a socialist revolution is going to take place without our leadership, we have to start revising Trotskyism as a whole, which is something that the document does not propose. If we are going to lead the revolution, the possibility of building Trotskyist parties with mass influence is posed immediately across Europe; therefore, the rest of the document loses rationale, since it is based on the opposite premise.

Second: Does Western Europe have nothing to do with Eastern Europe?

In the majority document for Europe, it would seem that Western Europe had become an island that has nothing to do with the rest of the continent. The document aims to build revolutionary parties in “capitalist Europe”, preparing the masses for the triumph of the socialist revolution in some capitalist country, but not for the triumph of the political revolution in some country in Eastern Europe.

A document dealing with theoretical hypotheses should point out that one possibility is as likely as the other. The intensification of trade between East and West will cause serious crisis in the Eastern European workers states. Although this intensification of trade can minimally lighten the intensity of the crisis in the West, which we do not believe to be the case, it is absolutely certain that it will accelerate the crisis of the Eastern bureaucratic regimes by strengthening the restoration tendencies and quickly sharpening the internal contradictions.

There are multiple reasons for this to happen. Without the counterweight of democracy and the permanent mobilization of the working class, increased trade of the capitalist West with the bureaucratized workers states strengthens the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies of the bureaucracy majority sectors and the middle class, encouraged by the highest economic level of imperialism. At the other pole it is raised the defence of the workers state by the workers.

A great revolution can be provoked by a great danger and a brutal offensive unleashed by the reaction. Hence we must pay close attention to the general course of events in the workers states of Eastern Europe, especially Yugoslavia and the USSR, because in them there can be situations that fertilize the revolutionary process in the West, raising the fraternization of Western workers with the political revolution.

But as in the previous case, the political revolution in one of Eastern Europe workers’ state can only take place if it has at its head a mass Trotskyist party. This would bring the final crisis of Stalinism and would signify an enormous leap forward, of masses, for our sections worldwide. That mass Trotskyist party that would have led the political revolution would become the backbone of our International.

An European document worthy of the name should include a whole chapter devoted to the transitional program for the political revolution in Eastern Europe. This program, which should start from elementary democratic slogans and minimum economic demands for reduction of the bureaucracy’s privileges, is completely absent from majority’s European document.

This absence is a serious mistake, for two reasons. The first, which we have already seen, is that nothing allows us to predict whether the first the victory of the socialist revolution will take place in a country in Western Europe or of the political revolution in one of Eastern Europe. The second is the the European revolution high degree of organic interconnection ever since the French Revolution. This factor makes the European revolution a unique process, both from a historical as well as conjunctural point of view, and, wherever it may begin (in the East or the West) it will spread like wildfire throughout Europe, almost instantaneously. The proletariat of capitalist Europe has great tasks raised if the first political revolution breaks out in a country in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is of no avail that this document refers to the construction of our parties in capitalist Europe, even if the document had been accompanied by another about building parties in Eastern Europe, with a specific program. Because, when neither such tasks nor their respective slogans, are being raised for the entire Europe, any analysis of the European situation and any policy based on this analysis will not hold water.

Third: What is to be done after taking power?

The third question that arises when reading the European document has to do with the next sentence, apparently correct: “to prepare the masses of the European proletariat for any attempt of

counter-revolutionary intervention against a socialist revolution winning victory first in a single country in capitalist Europe”.²

Clearly, the first socialist revolution will be in danger of being attacked by the bourgeoisie of the rest of Europe and the entire imperialistic world. It is fair then that we call for the European and world proletariat to defend it. But, is this our strategy?

According to the theory of permanent revolution, if the revolution is successful in one European country, what is immediately needed is to develop the revolution in the rest of Europe. That is, an offensive and not defensive policy. According to the theory of socialism in one country, if in any country of the world the socialist revolution triumphs, the communist parties must dedicate themselves to defend it, instead of trying to extend it to all countries. This was the theory that, carried into practice by the Soviet bureaucracy, meant turning all the communist parties of the world in agents of Kremlin’s diplomacy, and eventually destroyed the Third International.

The formulation of the European document is extremely dangerous, because it formally coincides with the Stalinist formula: it raises as fundamental a defensive task. This defensive task is correct and just, if it is part of an offensive strategy; when it is raised as the only task, as it is in the European document, it is, to say the least, dangerous.

Fourth: Why isn’t the Socialist United States of Europe included among the ten central slogans?

Forgetting Eastern Europe and the incorrect formulation of a defensive policy after taking power in a capitalist country of Europe, lead us by the hand to this fourth question. The slogan “For the Socialist United States of Europe” is not among the ten core tasks of this stage. It’s only mentioned as a secondary axis of propaganda. However, when Trotsky formulated this slogan, he did so based on a theoretical issue (the theory of permanent revolution, especially its international character) and on a matter of concrete reality (the specific unity of the European revolution).

This last characteristic has been strengthened by the unity, increasingly stronger, of European capitalism in recent decades.

For Trotskyism, if a political revolution triumphs in the East or a socialist revolution in the West of Europe, what is raised is to develop the revolution in permanence extending it to all European countries. And what slogan do we have to do this, but the European Federation of Socialist States? The absence of this slogan from among the ten central tasks of the majority’s European document is a clear example of the dangers that threaten us behind other obscure or incorrect formulations. Of course, if we think that Western Europe has nothing to do with Eastern Europe, and that, after seizing power in a country, the central task is to defend it and not to spread the revolution; the fact that this slogan is not among the central tasks, seems to be an inevitable consequence.

Fifth: isn’t there any relationship between the European revolution, and the revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies of European imperialism?

This question has its origin in the European document not taking any account of the organic relationship between the European revolution and the revolution of the few colonies and abundant semi-colonies of European imperialism, nor in those that it may still conquer.

We’re not talking here about the general relationship between all revolutionary processes, whether or not colonial, but — for example — of the relationship between the European revolution, and the current heroic struggle of the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies against Portuguese imperialism and European imperialism in general. Also we’re talking about the guerrillas or mass movements of the French colonies and semi-colonies against French imperialism. We are talking about the concrete, specific, relationship of the national liberation struggles in all the colonies and semi-colonies of various European imperialisms, with the socialist revolution in Europe.

Thus, for us, there is no possibility of building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe other than permanently raising and agitating fundamental slogans against European imperialism. This is so because the underpinning of European capitalism is imperialist exploitation of the colonies and semi-

² Ibid. p.26.

colonies, and the only way to destroy European capitalism is destroying it as the imperialist capitalism that it is. Without this central slogan of struggle against European imperialism, any kind of parties can be built in Europe except revolutionary Trotskyist parties.

Is Western Europe no longer imperialist?

The most apparently weak section of the document is precisely the first. Here the document considers the economic and social crisis of “neo-capitalism” but it devotes not a single line, let alone a chapter, to the crisis of European imperialism; to the relationship of the metropolis with the colonies and semi-colonies. If we follow the economic and social analysis of the document, European capitalism only exploits the working class of their countries. We cannot deny that this is consistent to the end with the workerist character of the entire document, but the reality is not so: European imperialism exploits the working class in their countries and its colonies and semi-colonies. There is an economic dialectic, as well as political and social, between Europe and the countries that it exploits, that the document does not point out.

European imperialist countries, although they are minor imperialisms, have not ceased to be imperialist. They have become, by their structure, younger brothers of Yankee imperialism. As a result of the colonial revolution, they have transformed their form of domination, imitating the Yankees, but the domination remains. From a colonial empire, they have gone — mostly — to a semi-colonial empire, its domains are no longer colonial but dependent countries and semi-colonies. The shifts of history have caused this transformation of the colonial revolution, of struggle against the colonial political domination to the struggle for the national, economic and political liberation of the semi-colonies. Imperialist domination has become more subtle, but no less important.

But if European countries have transformed from colonial into semi-colonial empires, a hypothetical and general document should attempt to clarify their current situation and their likely dynamics. Will the European empires come to armed intervention in their semi-colonies (like Yankee imperialism), when their dominance is threatened? Are the interventions in Ireland, Chad and the Portuguese colonies the last interventions or an indication of the most likely future?

For us there is no doubt: Ireland and the Portuguese colonies indicate the future course of European imperialism, if workers fail to tie their hands. French imperialism already lives causing coups and interventions in the countries it dominates.

But there is something equally serious: the document foresees inflation and unemployment for the Western European workers, with the possibility of decisive battles within four or five years between workers and capitalist reaction. Won't this growing poverty and unemployment, and the trend to reactionary governments and decisive struggles be expressed in a much more brutal way in the relations between European empires and colonial and semi-colonial masses? We categorically say yes, since this is the logic of imperialist domination.

And there will also be brutal reactions from the colonial masses if we take as reference the strike movements of Mauritania, South Africa and Rhodesia, or the guerrilla movements in Angola and Chad.

None of this is foreseen or mentioned in the majority's document. We see contradictions between the European document and some general statements by *Rouge*: “The Fourth International assumes its responsibilities for supporting and actively participating in protests against the imperialist stranglehold in the black continent”.³

But of this solemn commitment there is not even a hint in the majority's document on Europe. As much as we have read and reread it, we could not find a single similar phrase. In short, the defence of self-determination of all the colonies and semi-colonies of European imperialism is not among the ten core tasks. The fact that it is considered that revolutionary parties can “be built in capitalist Europe” without raising this slogan or others related to the expulsion of imperialism, constitutes a dangerous

³ *Rouge*, No 200. [Translators Note: *Rouge* was the newspaper of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Workers League), French section of the Fourth International (United Secretariat)].

ideological deviation which we might fear it could become an objective political capitulation if we didn't know that in daily practice our European sections and militants hold a real struggle against European imperialism.

A document that remains silent about the Portuguese colonies, Vietnam of European imperialism

The apparent neglect of the imperialist character of Europe is reflected in a fundamental lack of the majority's program: Not a single word about the Vietnam of European imperialism — the guerrillas and the national liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. This silence would be inexcusable even if the Portuguese colonies were oppressed only by Portugal. But, for worse, it is not so; the Portuguese colonies are such only formally. They are actually colonies of European imperialism as a whole, mainly of Britain, Germany and France in partnership with Belgium, the U.S. and Japan.

Portugal is, in fact, a sub-metropolis or sub-imperialism. It is the poorest country in Western Europe, and its economy is controlled by foreign investments, particularly British.

Portugal has launched a huge repression on the liberation movements of its colonies, funded and armed by imperialism, particularly European, through NATO. The brutality of the repression has produced horror in world public opinion. In the year 1961 alone, when the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) launched the guerrillas, the imperialist war produced around 50,000 dead.

Of the NATO countries, Germany, Britain and France are the largest arm providers for the war against the peoples of the Portuguese colonies. France is the extreme case: it has not placed any restriction on the supply of arms, it has refused to vote any sanctions against Portugal, both in the United Nations and in the European Council and hasn't allowed, since 1960, representatives of the liberation movements to enter its territory.

Currently, the war in the Portuguese colonies has the same characteristics as that of Vietnam. Of the 150,000 Portuguese NATO soldiers who were in Europe, only 10,000 remain; the rest have gone to Africa. The Portuguese are attempting to raze the liberated areas and relocate the peasant population in fortified villages, which are true concentration camps. Communications between urban centres are made almost exclusively by air, since the guerrillas are controlling the major land routes. This is the reality of the class struggle in the Portuguese colonies: the real Vietnam of European imperialism.

A "solidarity" which is not enough

Nevertheless, the majority's European document does not say a single word about this struggle. And this silence is not compensated by saying we will have "solidarity" with the anti-imperialist struggles in general. No use talking about "solidarity" when the countries in which we live are slaughtering an entire people. We cannot talk of "solidarity" when we partly owe our high standard of living to the exploitation of those who are being massacred. It is wholly insufficient to speak of "solidarity" when the only way for our class brothers in the Portuguese colonies to succeed is that we mobilize ourselves against the imperialism of our own country and our own continent. It is even more insufficient if we are aware that the success of the guerrillas would be a breakthrough for European workers. The majority comrades think it's enough to talk of "solidarity" in general, without even naming the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies.

This is not a question of "solidarity", of a phrase mentioned in passing in an entire document. It is a question of something far superior: together with the denunciation and the struggle against "our capitalism", the struggle against "our own imperialism" is our main task on a historical scale. It is a question that if the working masses of our continent or our country, are poisoned by imperialist chauvinism, and do not understand their countries are imperialists, we must denounce imperialism all day and every day; never taking this denunciation and this struggle as a secondary task not worth more than a sentence said in passing.

Do the majority comrades perhaps believe we can “build revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe” today without putting in the spotlight the fight against European, imperialism murderer of African peoples? Are they sure that these parties can be “revolutionary”?

Or do the majority comrades perchance think this omission is remedied by a campaign of solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish? On the other hand, does the document of the majority seriously consider this campaign? We think not, since it does not say we should do right now a specific campaign around the slogan “British troops out of Ireland now!” Perhaps isn’t this one of the key slogans that we have to agitate in the British and European proletariat in general? What remains of the campaigns of “solidarity” without this slogan? For us, absolutely nothing.

What happened to the love for “armed struggle?”

But this is compounded with respect to the Portuguese colonies. Ireland enjoys the privilege of being part of Europe; it is at least named in passing in the majority’s European document. But the Portuguese colonies not even mentioned.

Isn’t it suggestive that those who defend guerrilla warfare and armed struggle for Latin America do not even name the heroic guerrilla fighters of the Portuguese colonies? How can they explain they don’t pose the need to defend these guerrilla fighters from the brutal attacks of European imperialism? How can we understand they propose the armed struggle for a whole period and for a whole continent dominated by Yankee imperialism and they do not say a single word about the armed struggle in the countries dominated by they own imperialism? Is not it strange how those who defend the ERP in Argentina vote with both hands for a European document which does not take a political line for the only people who are now in civil war with their own European imperialism, the Portuguese colonies?

We should not lose sight that this European document, which does not revolve around the only two places of European imperialism where there is or there may be armed struggle, is the other face, and has the same authors, of a document that raised the armed struggle for a whole continent: the Resolution for Latin America of the Ninth Congress of our International.

The French section and French and European imperialisms

Just as the majority comrades consider Bolivia as the Latin American model section, the French section holds equal prize in Europe. Is it perhaps because in the same way that the Bolivian section applied (with disastrous results) the resolution of the Ninth Congress, the French section is a clear reflection of the inconsistency of the European document against imperialism on the continent? We have some reason to suspect this is the case, since the European document is characterized by not having a systematic policy of denunciation of French imperialism and European imperialism in general, and for not raising as a permanent, central slogan, the self-determination of the colonies and semi-colonies of these empires.

Let’s begin with *Rouge*

What articles has *Rouge* published about European imperialism and its Vietnam? Throughout 1972 and so far in 1973, *Rouge*, official organ of the French section, has devoted three. The first was entitled “Halt the arms shipments to the Portuguese colonialists!”, where it says:

“The French bourgeoisie, which has considerable holdings Portugal itself and in the Portuguese colonies, actively participates in providing military (and other) support to the Portuguese colonialists, above all by furnishing arms to the Portuguese army. France is one of the most important suppliers of the Portuguese army.

“Halt the arms shipments to the Portuguese colonialists! Long live the struggle of the peoples of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea”.⁴

Second article: a declaration by the Political Bureau of the Communist League, which took half a column in the “International Notes” section, which states: “We call on the French and Portuguese workers to arouse public opinion and strengthen their unity against Portuguese colonialism and against the French government’s support to Lisbon”.⁵

Third article: a page dedicated to the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies, where it says: “The French revolutionary militants should bear in mind that a number of French corporations are taking part in the pillage of Mozambique and that only a few months ago [Finance Minister Valéry] Giscard d’Estaing, was there on a ‘safari’. We must also demand of the leaders of FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC to enter France. Finally, we must participate in solidarity actions like those held by our comrades of the IMG when [Prime Minister Marcel] Caetano came to London”.⁶

That’s it. Being a struggle for national liberation whose historical importance to European imperialism is almost as great as that of Vietnam for Yankee imperialism our French comrades do not shine much. And yet, these three quotations are enough to show that they do not lack courage to denounce their own imperialism. Why isn’t there, then, a campaign of systematic denunciation? Simple, because the majority comrades who head the French section give it the importance they consider it merits; the same importance evidenced reading the European document— for them this is an entirely secondary task.

It would be good for every French comrade to compare a collection of *Rouge* with a collection of *The Militant*. Thus they could study the systematic campaign of our American comrades on a similar theme: the Vietnamese guerrilla struggle against their own empire. In the entire collection of *The Militant* there isn’t a single issue in which a great importance is not given to the defence of the guerrillas and the denunciation of their own imperialism. But, as we know, for the majority comrades, this is “archaeo-Trotskyism”.

French imperialism

The comrades in the leadership of the Communist League may reply that, if in two years they only made three references to the Portuguese guerrillas, this is because they are semi-colonies of Portugal, and not of their own, French, imperialism. We have already said that this is not the case, that the Portuguese colonies are of European imperialism in general, plus American and Japanese imperialism. But let’s see what happens with French imperialism.

If we actually analyse French economic reality we discover that French imperialism still exists and exploits its former colonies, although most of them are now politically independent countries. Treaties such as OCAM establish a semi-colonial relationship with these former colonies. The Yaounde I and II treaties extend this relationship to the European Common Market. The Treaty of Evian placed the Maghreb countries under the control of France and Europe. As if this were not enough, there are military bases in Djibouti and Malagasy, where it has units ready to “intervene” to the “calls” of Francophile governments, such as it has doing in Chad, trying to crush the uprising headed by the Liberation Front of Chad (Fronilat).

French imperialism clearly exists and it is relatively powerful.

When we set out to track down what policy the comrades in the French section have taken against their own imperialism, we had a promising start. The Central Committee in late August 1972 launched “... a campaign against French colonialism, for the acquittal of Courbain (a leader of the Martinique Liberation Movement) and to present proposals on these questions to the French revolutionary organizations”.⁷ More promising still was the denunciation of *Rouge* that “French imperialism, ‘our’ imperialism, occupies a select position on the Olympiads of colonialism: after

⁴ *Rouge*, No.164.

⁵ *Rouge*, No. 167.

⁶ *Rouge*, No. 216.

⁷ *Rouge*, No. 170.

Portugal (of which, by the way, it is one of the principal arms suppliers. France is today the number two direct colonial power in the world”.⁸ The promise seemed to become reality when *Rouge* told us that: “the revolutionaries fighting inside the metropolis are duty bound to carry out permanent propaganda against colonialism. Against chauvinism, against ignorance, it is up to us to show the the true fact of French colonialism”.⁹

When the French comrades said that France was the number two direct colonial power, they told a half-truth, and this is no accident. France ranks third or fourth in the list of indirect colonial powers: it maintains semi-colonial relations with its former colonies and also acts as a junior partner of Yankee imperialism in the exploitation of some of its major semi-colonies, such as Argentina. By not attacking the foundation of French imperialism which is the exploitation of the semi-colonies, *Rouge*, whatever it may say on the colonies, will never be making a consistent anti-imperialist campaign. The bulk of the French imperialist foreign investments are based in their semi-colonies and in those colonies and semi-colonies of other empires for which France acts as junior partner. Therefore, *Rouge*, while only denouncing French dominion over its colonies, will not be doing a consistently anti-imperialist campaign. It is also striking that they don't talk of political and economic self-determination for the colonies. They don't say “Out with French imperialist monopolies in the semi-colonies!” Nor “For an immediate break with all semi-colonial treaties”.

Anyway, excited about the promise of a “permanent propaganda campaign against colonialism”, albeit partial, we reviewed the 86 issues of *Rouge* ranging from 6 January 1972 until 19 October 1973. We had a big disappointment. We found 23 articles in total, i.e. an average of one article every four issues. That is, the Communist League comrades denounce their own imperialism once a month.

These articles are mostly descriptive. That is, they do not constitute a permanent campaign; they're not unified around any central slogan and, with few exceptions, these articles are signed or are reproduced statements of national liberation movements and not official positions of our French section.

The 86 issues of *Rouge* we reviewed include a total of 1548 pages. Of these, the colonial problem occupied 11, i.e. the denunciation of French colonialism occupies much less than one percent of the official organ of the Communist League. Finally, of the 23 articles we found, two fill two pages each, four which fill a page and three others take up half a page each. The remaining 14 articles take up less than half a page each, i.e. they are entirely secondary in relation to the newspaper as a whole.

What the program, the Central Committee and the Congress of the Communist League say

This shortcoming is not unique to *Rouge*. Both in the analysis and in the program of the French section one must work hard to find any mention of France colonies and semi-colonies.

The last Congress of the Communist League opened with a paper approved by the Central Committee: “Ce qui veut la Ligue Communiste” [“This means the Communist League”]. Neither in this paper nor in any of its documents, did the leadership of the League discuss the crisis of French imperialism; as if Martinique, the Guianas, Ivory Coast, Togo didn't exist, as if millions of francs were not invested by the French monopolies in their colonies and semi-colonies and in the colonies of other imperialism where they act as junior partners. The national document of the League centres around the analysis of the crisis of capitalism and the “neo-capitalist system” and there's not a single mention let alone a paragraph or chapter on French imperialism.

The programmatic part of such document is slightly better than the analytical part, since it includes the immediate recognition of “... the right to self-determination and independence of the so-called Overseas Departments and Territories (TOM – DOM)” and it supports “... the struggle for national independence” and the “national independence of the TOM and DOM”.¹⁰

⁸ *Rouge*, No. 174.

⁹ *Rouge*, No. 176.

¹⁰ Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, National document, p.167 and 161. (**Translators Note:** DOM is a French acronym for Overseas Dominions and TOM is an acronym for Overseas Territories.)

And these words were said in passing, without raising the liquidation of the semi-colonial covenants, such as the OCAM, Evian, etc. Finally, throughout the document, consisting of 171 pages, the importance given to the issue of French imperialism can be gauged from the fact that all references to it include only two pages.

Let's leave this document behind and see to what extent the leadership of our French section is concerned with the fact that their country is imperialist. The Central Committee of 8 and 9 January 1972 voted four campaigns: education about "The socialism we want and how to achieve it"; Vietnam and the Indochina Solidarity Front, for the release of three French comrades imprisoned in Spain, and of denunciation of General Massu (murderer of the Algerian war). Except for this last point, which is only very indirectly related with it, of the French colonial problem not a word is said.

The August Central Committee voted, at last, a campaign which we already saw was not systematically conducted by the official organ.

The Congress of the Communist League did not raise the slogan of national self-determination of the French semi-colonies. The May Day manifesto did not mention European or French imperialisms. The political resolution adopted by the Congress doesn't even name French imperialisms; much less the right of national self-determination.

The election campaign

We still had a little hope: the election campaign. This was a wonderful opportunity, since it allowed us to spread our propaganda on much broader sectors of the population. But overall, the election campaign forgets about imperialism. Its three axes, as we see in *Rouge*, are quite clear: "In the first place, it must be an intense campaign of capitalist denunciation... This means denouncing capitalist exploitation, oppression, and waste in all their forms". "Second, our campaign must be a campaign of demystifying the common program and the Union of the Left". "Third, revolutionaries should use their the campaign to expose bureaucratic 'socialism' which, no matter what he says, George Marchais still supports..."¹¹

We also discovered that [presidential candidate Alain] Krivine spoke against French imperialism in Martinique, a French colony. But we ended up disappointed in regards to anti-imperialist propaganda in the heart of imperialism, i.e. in France.

In addition, the election manifesto of the League doesn't even mention France is an imperialist country, nor it deigns to say it has colonies and semi-colonies.

What an abysmal difference with the SWP comrades! They have never made a Congress that did not have as one of its major axis the fight against their own imperialism! They have never made an electoral campaign that did not raise the denunciation of their empire and the specific struggle against it. No matter if their tactics were correct or not, since it is a question of principles. The SWP throughout its political history has revealed itself as Trotskyist and Leninist to the end. First and foremost, it denounces its own imperialism. The Communist League, with a confusing and abstentionist orientation, has been unable to consistently denounce the imperialist role of its bourgeoisie, although, we repeat, has no fear to do so with vigour the few times it does. We also know the practical activity of the French comrades against their imperialism. Unfortunately this practice is not reflected consistently when they write or perform their core campaigns.

And finally let's see what [party leader Henri] Weber said, apparently on behalf of the party, in a programmatic article on the election campaign. He explained the "real transitional program to socialism" in France, as follows: "... for our part, we say to the communist workers: a genuine workers government would not limit itself to nationalize 13 new trusts and instituting a phony form of workers control. It would nationalize without indemnity or repayment, the main capitalist corporations, in order to assure that the public sector really becomes the dominant sector of the economy. It would at the same time nationalize foreign trade, in order to remove the economy from the unchecked control of the world capitalist system. It would place the public held corporations under workers' control, and would give supervisory committees — which would be made up of workers delegates, who are elected

¹¹ *Rouge*, No. 186.

and can be recalled at any moment — real power and the real means for supervising their factories. In the factories in the private sector, it would institute workers supervision over production recognizing and protecting the workers supervisory committees. The power of the workers over the entire economy would be exercised through the democratic elaboration of an economic plan that would be debated in every workers council and approved by their national congress. The realization of such an economic program by a government that, moreover, would have at its disposal a ‘new logic of development’, assuring a prodigious growth of the productive forces. But this would require something quite different from an electoral victory. It would require the existence of a ‘mass movement of unparalleled breadth’, which alone would be capable of expropriating the bourgeoisie and dismantling its state. In short, it would require a social revolution”.¹²

Not a word about the liquidation of French imperialism, nor of economic and political freedom for the colonies and semi-colonies, i.e., on the right of national self-determination. Curious neglect by one of the main leaders of the League.

This neglect is not casual. Comrade Weber’s article follows the same conception of the European document and the leadership of the French section: denunciation and struggle against its own imperialism is not one of the central tasks of the revolutionary party of the French proletariat.

Hence, the Central Committee and the French section have characterized the Union of the Left as a “global reformist project” and not a popular front.

There is another more serious problem: at no time was the Union of the Left defined as a pro-imperialist project, as Trotsky defined the popular front in Spain and France. What do the majority comrades think? Is the Union of the Left pro-imperialist or anti-imperialist? They must be careful when answering this question, because in a metropolis like France, to be anti-capitalist is tantamount to being anti-imperialist, and if it is a “reformist” project, it can hardly be anti-capitalist. But, if it isn’t anti-capitalist, how can the comrades in the leadership of the League explain that they have not denounced the pro-imperialist character of the Union of the Left?

This “oversight” contrasts sharply with the fact that the same document calls as a major task the “Indochinese work” and a united front on Indochina with the Communist Party is proposed. That is, the anti-imperialist work that arises is that which has to do directly with a different imperialism, Yankee imperialism.

Ten Commandments or one single correct policy?

At the beginning this chapter, we identified five serious flaws in the European document. One of them, the lack of a consistent policy against imperialism, we’ve discussed extensively. But these are not all the observations we must make.

Ten central tasks and no fundamental political axis

The document says in Europe there are currently ten central tasks that: “... are the tasks whose achievement will stimulate the dynamic of mass struggles and the growth of class consciousness ...”¹³

The authors assert that these tasks have a deep inner connection. We believe the opposite: that, rather than a program, it is a list that can be taken in any order, from front to back or back to front, because it does not matter. It looks like a catechism of Ten Commandments, all very important, and none more important than another, from “workers control” to “systematically popularizing” the “socialist model”.

What is the axis of all this programmatic scaffolding for Europe? It is impossible to know, because the document does not answer this question. And it doesn’t answer it because it cannot do so; because these axes vary from country to country, because in every European country there is a specific

¹² *Rouge*, No. 190.

¹³ International Majority Tendency, “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 17.

situation of the class struggle, which needs specific slogans. Are we saying with this that we should give up an analysis of the whole European situation? No at all; this analysis is very important as a starting point for the national analyses. If we say, for example, there are one or two vanguard countries, which point to a trend for all of Europe to enter a pre-revolutionary situation, this analysis is then essential to formulate policy for each country. But if we limit ourselves to this general analysis, we will be unable to formulate policy for each country.

Nor do we expect the document to be a long list of countries with a specific political line for each. But what would be correct is to define the essential features of the policy for the countries that are in a similar situation. What is the policy for Ireland that lives a special situation? What is the line for France and Italy that face great defensive economic struggles? What is the line for Spain and Greece that suffer fascist or semi-fascist dictatorships? These are the specific questions that the majority's document does not answer.

A document which doesn't arm the militants

Political documents must serve so that all our militants, after reading them, know what to do the following day at their factory, their school, their university or on the street. That is, so the day after the World Congress the militants are armed to throw themselves to their revolutionary task of mobilizing the masses and upholding and strengthening the party.

Does the European document of the majority comrades serve for this? Does it serve, as Lenin put it, for militants to grasp "the first link in the chain"? Where should a worker militant in Belgium begin? By "supporting the day-to-day struggles of the masses" or by defending "a series of transitional demands centred on workers control"? What about a Spanish militant? Should he begin with "systematically popularizing our 'socialist model'" or by "educating the workers class vanguard on the need for armed self-defence"? And an English militant? Will he start with "internationalist propaganda in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles" or by "educating the workers vanguard and broader layers of workers in a non-electoralist and non-parliamentarian view of the question of power"?

Many of these ten tasks are correct, but if we give equal importance to all, we are forced to carry out the ten tasks at the same time.

Obviously they cannot do it, because the situation of the class struggle is different in each country and requires beginning with a different task. For this reason we say that this document doesn't arm the militants and, therefore, it is not a useful political document for the development of the class struggle or of our International.

But in addition, this enumeration has missing tasks, some highly important.

First major omission: economic slogans

According to the document, there will be growing unemployment and lowering of standards of living in Western Europe, in the coming months and years. This means, at this time the offensive is in the hands of the bourgeoisie in most of the European countries, which is the reason for the disruption of the equilibrium. This reality is the source of almost all of the current workers struggles. That is, the European masses are already developing major defensive economic struggles: they fight to defend their living standards and their jobs and not to win from the bourgeoisie new economic concessions.

If there is such economic offensive on the workers movement, if the workers movement has begun to mobilize to defend itself against this offensive, what is the reason that throughout the European document there isn't a single slogan around this problem? It only says in passing, that we must intervene in economic struggles however modest or reformist they be. That's quite good, but, with what slogans do we intervene in them? If we limit ourselves to intervene without raising any general slogan to mobilize broad sectors, aren't we falling into unionism? Why not raise our transitional slogans of "sliding scale of wages and hours of work", or some tactical adaptation of the same? Why not raise the slogan for this entire period of "Stop the capitalist offensive against the working and living standards of the workers' movement? Why do we not start raising the line of workers united front to

stop this offensive? By not doing so, are we not condemning these economic struggles to its original reformist framework, which is where reformists and bureaucrats want to keep them in?

This first omission may have to do with the latest five-year tactic voted by the majority comrades: to work primarily on the vanguard.

But, regardless of where it comes from, the absence of defensive economic slogans disarms us to face the concrete struggles that the workers are carrying on in important countries of the continent, and those which will continue to develop in the immediate future.

Second important omission: democratic slogans.

This bourgeoisie's economic offensive will be inevitably accompanied by a political offensive: a trend towards reactionary governments, the curtail-ending of democratic freedoms, to attacking the most exploited sectors of the workers, etc. That is, it a defensive political stage will be open, where the bourgeoisie will break the equilibrium, and, initially, the workers and other exploited sectors will try to maintain it.

Each new "hardening" by some government will pose to the masses the need to mobilize to regain the lost democratic right or to defend those threatened.

But the European document does not prepare our sections for this situation. Its indifference to the basic democratic slogans begins by not raising "British troops out of Ireland and Portuguese troops out of the colonies" and it continues by leaving abandoned the Spain, Greece and Portugal sections, whose semi-fascist regimes have destroyed all democratic freedoms.

What do we tell the workers in these countries? To fight for "workers control" or for our "socialist model"? Wouldn't the majority comrades think it's much more correct if we raised some specific democratic slogan (constituent assembly, free elections, freedom for political prisoners, legality for political parties, or some other more suitable)?

The contempt for democratic slogans reaches the omission of the old slogan of our International for the unification of Germany into a Soviet and socialist Germany. The task of restoring the German people their right to form a unified nation with a unified and socialist state is the largest democratic task posed for Europe, much more than the independence of Ireland. It is a task that confronts both imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy, and that it can only be fulfilled defeating them; that is, by the socialist revolution in the West and the political revolution in the East. However, the majority comrades ignored it.

Third important omission: the workers and peasants government.

The European document considers the possibility of a coming victory of the socialist revolution in some country in Western Europe, but it doesn't raise the central slogan of "workers and peasant's government". However, in most, or at least in a very important number, of European countries, this revolution will take place through the alliance of the working class and the peasantry and impoverished sectors of the urban petty bourgeoisie.

For the revolution to triumph, the proletariat must win leadership over all other classes involved, and it must, therefore, have a policy to win them. Our party, as historical representative of the proletariat must have, therefore, a transitional program for those classes or class sectors. We do not understand how we propose to popularize our "model" of socialism and in this model doesn't fit the alliance of the working class and the peasantry.

Not having a transitional program for the poor peasantry and middle class of the cities to make possible and put the workers in its leadership, has all the appearance of a workerist position and makes seizing power impossible.

How can we be asked to vote for a document which on the one hand says in the coming years there will be a "first socialist revolution" and on the other, it does not propose among the ten central tasks the workers and peasants government, the only way to make this socialist revolution? We are flexible, but there are things we cannot understand. We hope the majority comrades explain them someday.

The program for immigrant workers

Immigrant workers are not a small marginal sector of European bourgeois society or economy; on the contrary, they are one of its pillars. In France, for every four manual workers one is a migrant worker, which means they constitute a quarter of the backbone of the workers movement. For this fundamental sector, the resolution of the European document considers it enough to state in a sub-item among ten central political tasks, that we organize campaigns of “solidarity with immigrant workers (in opposition to any form of racism or anti-foreignism)”. This term — “solidarity” — means that is alien to us in a way. Put another way, it is not the job of our parties in Europe to have a transitional program for this sector, but only to have “solidarity” with their struggles, as if they occur in distant countries. The best proof of this is that the resolution refers to this as part of the international tasks and not as part of our national agenda for each section. It goes together with the solidarity with “anti-imperialist struggles”, “workers’ struggles in other European countries” and “anti-bureaucratic struggles in Stalinised workers states”.

Immigrant workers are one of the main and perhaps the main area of immediate or short-term work for many of our European sections. It can be, will be, the basis of many “unity outflanking” manoeuvres of the reformist organizations that ignore them. This will be the sector hardest hit by unemployment and poverty and the hardening of the regime. This process will be parallel to the colonial process, in the attempt by imperialism to escape its crisis using the inequalities. In addition, like colonialism, immigrant workers are a source of super-profits for European capitalism and, to this extent, they are an objective basis for reformism. This is an economic and social problem that neither the European document nor that of its French disciples solves.

The way the European document addresses this issue indicates it doesn’t consider immigrant workers part of the proletariat of each country when, as the sector most disinherited by capitalism it should be the privileged sector of our work. To the extent that they are an economically, socially and politically discriminated sector of the European proletariat, slogans for immigrant workers should be: equal pay, equal political and union rights. To the extent that they come from colonies, semi-colonies or former colonies of European imperialism, we should raise all claims that have to do with national self-determination: the right to lead their neighbourhood communities by appointing their representatives and to keep their beliefs, their language, culture and customs. We should put forth that we, the Trotskyists, are the only ones who are willing to respect their will, even if they represent only one percent of the active population.

Let us return to a glorious tradition

Despite making a good and intense work among immigrant workers and that its paper gives importance to this issue, the French section did not take this issue as important in its national document or in its election program. Moreover, in the elections it did not raise the slogan “Down with the Fontanet decree!” For the last congress, they wrote about everything except about immigrants and colonial workers.

However, the French section of the Fourth International has a glorious trajectory and experience in this regard: our work with the Indochinese and Algerian workers. The new generation should study these Trotskyist activities that allowed us to displace the Stalinists in the leadership of the Indochinese and Algerian workers movement in France.

Chapter IV

Two trajectories

The majority falsifies our history

In the IEC meeting of December 1972 the majority comrades adopted a resolution on Argentina in which our organization was seriously questioned. Two of the approved theses contained a few lines as our whole history. Surprisingly, given that no documentation was provided or any attempt was made to prove what was said there, this “history” was voted.

Something similar happened when the European document was approved. By voting for the strategy of entryism “sui generis” it was voted without proof or documentation for the almost twenty year’s trajectory of comrades Germain, Frank and Maitan.

Guerrillaism within the International

Both ballots are something akin to applying the “guerrilla” method to the inner life of our International. Both were made in surprise: no one was aware that they had to vote for or against our party’s history from its origins or for a “strategy” that already belongs to the past of our International. With this method, the majority comrades have set a very bad precedent: historical resolutions may be voted without any kind of preparatory discussion and without documentation. They have also violated one of the agreements of the reunification, which was precisely to discuss issues about our policy but not those that deal with the history of our movement.

Finally, by voting for an historical issue that has nothing to do with our present policy and the current situation of the class struggle, the majority comrades have broken a tradition of the Trotskyist movement. But although lamentable, these resolutions have already been adopted and we are forced, against our will, to refer to them.

We are punished for not obeying a madman

In the thesis 13 of the resolution on Argentina, gratuitous statements or insinuations are made against our organization. We’ll rebut them summarily so as not to transform this issue in one or two books. Let’s look at them.

In 1951, the leadership of the International and the World Congress recognized the Posadas’ group as Argentina official section. Commenting on this recognition, the thesis says:

“The choice in favour of the Posadas tendency was determined fundamentally on political grounds. The Moreno tendency was characterized at the time by a completely false analysis of the Peronist regime and by a sectarian attitude against the mass movement led by the Peronists.”¹

There is no written evidence, but this was not the case. The resolution would be right on one aspect, if it had said that until 1948 (not until 1951, date of Posadas’ recognition), we had a sectarian stance on Peronism. All our works about the history of our party say it. Comrades who have left the movement and who are neutral will sooner or later confirm who is telling the truth.

¹ Maitan, Livio: “The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina”, op. cit. p. 19.

But to this fact others must be added and very important ones. First, the Posadas tendency militated in the pro-Yankee social democracy, without worker members, and marginalized from the Peronist mass movement when this emerged. Second, our sectarianism didn't lead us to ignore the Peronist movement of masses; on the contrary, we were the first organization of the left that went to work very successfully within the Peronist unions.² Third, the Posadas tendency as a result of our successes in our work within the Peronist unions, made a radical shift to the Peronist workers movement, two years after us. Fourth, that this shift was, from its birth, a total ideological capitulation to Peronism, a complete and absolutely opportunistic position, exactly the same as what they have adopted now supporting FREJULI and Peron in the elections of March and April.

There is a comprehensive documentation is of the policy that the Posadas group had at the date of recognition. But this documentation was not made public by the majority comrades before voting on the resolution, or afterward; if they had done so their claim would have been quite battered. Why? Because while our organization denounced with all its might the Peronist government for being the first to support Yankee imperialism in its aggression against North Korea, Posadism, meanwhile, supported with all its might the Peronist government, saying that it had liberated the country from imperialism, and waged an intense campaign of agitation for South Korea and against North Korea.

When we took this issue and the corresponding documentation to the World Congress, Pablo, who was the International Secretariat official informant in favour of the Posadas group recognition, said it was not for their political positions that this group was recognized, since both those relating to the Peronist government and Korea were wrong, but because of its proletarian character. This supposed proletarian character made them to be disciplined, not pretentious petty bourgeois as we supposedly were, defending our positions to death, and refusing to recognize our "errors". What was this great example of discipline? That Posadas, after a communication from the International Secretariat against its position on Korea, changed instantly, as if by magic, his position. This acrobatic elasticity and this obsequiousness (called "discipline" by the International Secretariat) to rotate 180° in position on the most important revolutionary struggle at that time in the world, was the guarantee to fulfil the true objective of the International Secretariat: the unification of the Argentine Trotskyism.

Let's go to the second statement of the majority comrades:

"During the period of the split, the Moreno group established ties to the International Committee, but on several occasions took positions which were not shared by other components of the IC and which provoked violent polemics, especially in Latin America."³

It is absolutely true that some of our positions were not shared by the rest of the International Committee, and caused "violent controversies". But this is not a sin. Why don't the majority comrades say what those positions were and who was right? Why hide the problem behind the occult term "violent polemics"? We shall say what those polemics, which are well documented, were about.

1) A discussion with comrade Luis Vitale about whether or not we had to push in Bolivia the slogan "All power to the COB" and the worker and peasant militias and; about if, since the armament of the proletariat and the peasantry existed in the form of militias disciplined to the COB, whether dual power existed or not. Comrade Vitale thought it didn't and we thought it did. After a discussion, and a strong one, comrade Vitale acknowledged he was mistaken.

2) A discussion with the tendency headed by Luis Vitale about the Moller group in Bolivia. The Vitale tendency thought it was the most progressive Trotskyist group and we thought they were revisionists of Trotskyism and the worst variant of our movement. Comrades of Luis Vitale's tendency, opposing ours, self-criticised.

3) An infernal discussion with the same comrade and his tendency on the role of Yankee imperialism. Luis Vitale argued that it was neither aggressive nor colonizing Latin America, we thought it was. Comrade Vitale self-criticised, accepting our positions.

4) A very hard discussion with the Lambertists, for being too slow to move from support for the MNA to support for the FLN in Algeria.

² This earned us the accusation of being pro-Nazi by all the Argentine left which, headed by Stalinism, who defined Peronism as a fascist movement.

³ Ibid. p.17.

5) A new discussion, the strongest, with comrade Luis Vitale about Castroism and Cuba's role. Comrade Vitale was of the opinion that the Cuban revolution had no importance, that it did not change at all the balance of power, or opened a new stage in the class struggle in Latin America; we thought otherwise.

6) Parallel to this, another discussion about armed struggle and guerrilla warfare occurred. Luis Vitale argued that this aspect of the program was not within orthodox Trotskyism, we said it was and that we had to incorporate the guerrilla warfare to the Transitional Program, within the general issue of armed struggle.

7) Discussion about our entryism to the "62 Organizations" of Peronist unions. Luis Vitale argued that this tactic of us, mainly since we did not have an independent organ, was opportunistic. We argued it was an indirect and tactical entryism, for a brief time, in the Peronist workers movement. We entered the 62 organizations, i.e. a political-union organization, where the best elements of the working class were, and from where all the fights against the regime of the "Liberating Revolution" (the pro-imperialist coup d'état which overthrew Peron) were directed. There, we did not have to submit to any political discipline to publicly express our positions because the only requirement was to formally accept the discipline of the Supreme Council and take out our jackets at Peronist union meetings.⁴

These were all the great differences, perfectly documented, which appeared within the International Committee. Out of seven discussions, our adversaries self-criticised on three; facts showed we got it right in another three (Algeria, and the two about Cuba), and we argue we were correct on the last discussion about our tactical entryism to the 62 Peronist Organizations. But even if in the latter we had been wrong, as the majority comrades say, were we wrong in raising these arguments and defending our positions? Were we guilty of the "violent polemics" they unleashed? Do the majority comrades know of any other "violent polemic" that we have not mentioned? If the latter is true, they should say which one or ones they were, and provide documentation.

In addition to the two accusations that we have seen, they made other charges against us, of theoretical and political type. Some of them are made in the letter by Domingo*: "attitude towards the Peronist movement, eventual role of the middle class, policy of alliances, characterization of the 1938 Transitional Program, characterization of the Chinese CP leadership and of the Chinese cultural revolution". All we have to say is that we've actually made a lot of theoretical and political mistakes in our party's development, and we have self-criticised for them all. But to criticize us for those mistakes without putting them in the political context within which we developed, is a great disloyalty by the majority comrades. Above all, since they were responsible for this political context.

We had to form ourselves completely and utterly alone. For years, the doors of our International were hermetically sealed to us for a single and fundamental "sin": for refusing to capitulate to the madman the majority comrades appointed in 1951 as Viceroy of the International in Latin America: Posadas. To not say that Posadas was an integral part of the leadership of our International, with the unconditional support of comrades Germain, Pablo, Frank and Maitan; to not say this madman did what he wanted for years and years; to not say that Posadas made Latin American Trotskyism go crazy raising insane positions and making febrile manoeuvres; to not say that such manoeuvres and positions had the unconditional support of comrades Pablo, Germain and Frank; to not say that by refusing to comply with such raving lunatic we were isolated from the International, to not say all of this is not placing our trajectory within the political context in which it occurred.

Moreover, the theoretical and political mistakes for which we self-criticised are not mistakes nearly as severe as stated in the resolution. But, like any theoretical problem, they deserve a more serious and better placed discussion in the context of the whole of all our contributions.

Who fought against opportunistic deviations from our organization?

Finally, there is a permanent accusation against us: that we capitulated to Peronism. It is quite true that, from our entryism, and especially since the publication of *Palabra Obrera* (Workers Word), our organization suffered severe opportunistic deviations. All these deviations had a common parent: capitulation to Peronism and the union bureaucracy. Moreover, the capitulatory tendencies had the

⁴ To take the jacket out was to become a "descamisado" (shirtless), as Peron called his sympathisers.

* **Domingo**. Pseudonym used by Livio Maitan in his "Letter from Domingo". [Translator's Note]

leadership of our organization for long periods. But those who make these charges against us forget to say that there were great tendency and factional struggles against the capitulation to Peronism. Nor do they say that comrades Ernesto González and Nahuel Moreno formed all kinds of fractions and tendencies and that they wrote many internal documents against the tendencies that capitulated to Peronism. Nor do they make it clear that this factional struggle meant for them to be marginalized in the party leadership, being left in decorative positions. To prove it, we have all the documentation that the comrades of the International need. Do the majority comrades approve of our struggle against opportunist and capitulating to Peronism deviations carried out against the old majority leadership of *Palabra Obrera*? Or do they make us responsible for the errors and deviations from that leadership? Do we Trotskyists approve of Lenin's struggle against the opportunist errors of the old Bolsheviks? Or do we hold him responsible for them?

The answer by the majority comrades to this question is very important, because precisely the previous pro-guerrilla tendencies, and the last one (the PRT(C)), were nurtured by those old opportunistic sectors. It is even more important because our party now is the result of deep factional struggles we held against them. Therefore we estimate it is impossible, even when we demand it loudly, that the majority comrades will categorically answer this question. If they answer they do not approve our fight against the tendencies that capitulated to Peronism they have to support the policy of these tendencies (which they attribute to us). If they reply they approve of our struggle against them, they will be vindicating, in general, our trajectory and our current party. Therefore, although they know them perfectly, the majority comrades hide these tendency struggles and the position we assumed in them.

This document attempts to show that all concrete political accusations that are made for our last period are false. We did not go into an extensive discussion of all our theoretical – political mistakes for the reason we gave: a theoretical discussion should be done in a serious and documented way and cannot be subject to a resolution. But we still have something very important to say.

A merit exclusively ours: to continue being Trotskyists

Despite all the theoretical and political mistakes, our party is, the only one in Argentina composed of Trotskyist cadres. The two official recognitions conducted by comrades Germain, Frank, Maitan and Pablo, have proved ill-fated for our movement worldwide. Posadas and PRT(C) are, today, mortal enemies of the Fourth International. And the real story is that the only consistent Trotskyism we've seen in the last thirty years in our country is from our organization.

If the majority comrades behaved as such, they should have said, "The Argentine party has committed in its life many theoretical and political mistakes, we have disagreed frequently with it and there are still many concrete political issues on which we disagree, but we defend to the bitter end its trajectory. We defend it because, despite our mistake to recognize Posadas and isolate the comrades from the International (thus creating a fertile ground for them to commit mistakes) until Posadas became enemy the International; despite that we again made another mistake in recognizing the PRT(C), which was demonstrated when in a short time this group became enemy of the Fourth International. Despite all this, the comrades of the Argentine party have remained Trotskyists, and have defended to the bitter end our world party, and today, in the midst of tough polemics, they're still defending it. We, the majority of the International, did everything possible to get the Argentine comrades to turn their back on us and on our movement. Nevertheless, the Argentine comrades are now more Trotskyist than ever, they are more firmly than ever with the Fourth International, while those who we supported yesterday are our enemies today. For this reason alone, we defend the trajectory of Argentine comrades."

But the majority comrades say nothing like this. On the contrary, they have made themselves real censors of our organization; they are ready our excommunicate us. What is their political right? Do they perhaps have had a spotless political trajectory, full of successes? They must believe it, since they have never any important self-criticism.

It is curious that the December 1972 resolution which we are discussing almost doesn't touch our policy towards the great facts of international class struggle, which is a shame because what best defines an organization or tendency is precisely its international policy.

Therefore, there is no better way to demonstrate the opportunism of any organization than to point out its capitulation against major international events. Around most of these major events the majority comrades of the International have erred in the analysis, characterization, forecasts and policy. However, in most cases, we proposed a correct policy. Let's compare.

Two trajectories vis-à-vis major world events

In the majority's European document is predicted that there will come a period of "four or five years before the decisive battles are fought". And in the all other documents by the majority comrades, but especially in Germain's, the future is foreseen with comparisons relative to fascism or Nazism. It would seem that if we do not embrace their strategy, we run the danger of fascism to succeed in Latin America or in the world and that, conversely, if we accept it, at least we won't fall without a fight. This true mania for predictions which are never fulfilled is a constant in the political trajectory of Germain and of the best known majority leaders. Let's do a little history.

If we had to point out some of the most important events in the economy and politics of the last 25 years, we are confident that, among others, we would note the following:

- 1) The imperialist post-war economic boom and the huge resurgence of German capitalist economy;
- 2) The transformation of Eastern Europe in "deformed" workers' states;
- 3) The Chinese revolution;
- 4) The USSR's permanent policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Imperialism's inability to start world war in the 1950s;
- 5) The Stalinist trajectory and character of the Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties. The need, therefore, for political revolution and for the construction of Trotskyist parties;
- 6) Intensification of the class struggle in the colonial world, to the point of uprisings in many countries (Algeria, Congo, etc.);
- 7) The Cuban revolution and its worldwide repercussions;
- 8) The Yankee imperialism aggression in Korea and more recently in Vietnam;
- 9) The appearance of an international anti-war movement against Yankee imperialism intervention in Vietnam, with strong support in the United States;
- 10) The radicalization of youth around the globe;
- 11) The rise of mass movement in Europe since the mid-1960s, centred in France, Ireland, Greece and Spain;
- 12) Armed struggle, with characteristics of civil war in only two Latin American countries (since Santo Domingo): Bolivia and Chile.

All these facts are better known to the cadres of the International than national tactical problems. The majority comrades make a "mistake" by not trying to show our opportunism and wrong method through these examples. And it's unfortunate because on many of these key points we have had profound differences. On others, our whole movement apparently had a common appreciation. Lately, some of the majority's documents make us doubt that it has been so.

Leaving aside these latter documents, we have disagreed or criticized the following analysis of comrade Germain or his comrades in the majority:

A) The imperialist post-war economic boom and the colossal resurgence of the German capitalist economy.

By 1946-1948, most of our movement, with Pablo-Germain at the head, held that Yankee imperialism was going towards its greatest economic crisis and that the European economy would remain in stagnation and decay:

“The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by war, and in particular continental Europe, will be marked by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economies at levels bordering stagnation and decay.” “The American economy will soon experience a relative boom, since the U.S. is the only country capable of satisfying the immediate needs of the world market. This fact will facilitate the full functioning of its productive apparatus.”

“However, this increased production will in a short while run up against the limited capacities of the domestic and world markets will soon experience in a short time.” “The United States will then head for a new economic crisis which will be more deep-going and widespread than that of 1929-33, with far more devastating repercussions on the world economy.”⁵

Around the same time, Germain and his friends predicted that Germany would remain a backward country and were opposed “to the plans to transform the industrial heart of Europe in an agricultural half desert...”⁶

Two years later, at the very start of the Marshall Plan, they insisted that:

“It should be noted that the policy desired and consistently applied (from the ‘Morgenthau Plan’ to the Potsdam agreements) by the victors, has been the partial destruction of this potential, the transformation of the German people into a ‘people of shepherds’, and the final disposal of its industrial potential.”⁷

In this same article, so that no one believed that he limited himself to describe imperialism’s plans for Germany, comrade Germain launched another of his “famous predictions”:

“Consequently, the tendency of economic change is clearly towards a dissolution of the ‘classical’ capitalist market, and progressive pauperisation. Paralysed by the dismemberment of its very body, and despite the doses of oxygen given by American imperialism, the German economy will not be capable of a noticeable recovery.”⁸

By 1948, nearly a year after the Marshall Plan had started, comrade Germain proposed a draft resolution on Germany for the Second World Congress. There he said that Germany was to be reduced to be a backward agricultural country.

Against these fatalistic conceptions of the imperialist economy in our International, a tendency formed between 1946–48, established by the English majority and our party. Among other documents, we quote from the first produced by this tendency:

“All factors on the world and European scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the coming period cannot be characterized as ‘stagnation and decay but rather as a period of recuperation and expansion.’”⁹

The resolution that we proposed, as a tendency, to the Second World Congress was rejected and the line of Comrade Germain, which we discussed, was adopted. The same thing didn’t happen with his draft on Germany, which was rejected by the Congress, before a motion against it by Pablo – Roura — Moreno. We mention all these facts because, except for the discussion between defencists and anti-defencists, the most important tendency fight from pre-war to the Second World Congress was this polemics over the economic outlook.

It’s good to be known that, despite our agreement with the British majority around this problem, we didn’t form any political tendency with it. Moreover, we voted for the policy of entryism in the Labour party of the British minority who were supporters of Pablo–Germain. And we voted this way for reasons other than those given by these comrades: we did it because we held that it was the correct policy towards the stage of stillness that opened in the British workers movement, as a result of Labour’s betrayal and the economic reconstruction.

B) *The transformation of the capitalist States of Eastern Europe in “deformed” workers States*

⁵ “Resolution adopted by the International Conference of April 1946,” in *Quatrième Internationale*, April-May 1946, p. 14-15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Germain, Ernest, “The Ruin of the German economy,” *Quatrième Internationale*, January 1948, p. 31.

⁸ Ibid. p.39.

⁹ *Quatrième Internationale*, December 1946, p. 46.

In 1946, Germain and his friends argued that the Soviet bureaucracy, due to its “class nature advocated “private property” and “state capitalism” in eastern Europe.

In April 1946, they defined the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy thus:

“By the intent inherent in its class nature, to combine in some way the regime of private property with a system of state capitalism, once its own control over the state has been assured.”¹⁰

This is how the leadership of our International (Pablo, Germain, Frank), raised the thesis that, there could be no structural change in the countries of Eastern Europe without revolutionary mobilization of the masses.

In 1948 there was, without our foreseeing or understanding, the Soviet bureaucracy carried out this change in the structure of the Eastern Europe countries. This caused a profound shock in our ranks. Pablo, Hansen and us began the theoretical struggle to prove that new “deformed” workers states had emerged, mainly in Yugoslavia, and that this was the product of the mass movement. The leader of the other tendency was comrade Germain, who clung to the characterization we have summarized above, which held that the states of Eastern Europe were not worker states but remained capitalist. Only after an arduous debate, Germain self-criticised and shifted position.

C) The USSR’s permanent policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. The imperialist inability to start a world war.

The majority comrades held that a world war would inevitably occur before 1954.

“It is precisely for this reason — said comrade Germain in July 1951 — that imperialism has thrown itself into military preparations for the war, in order to carry it out as soon as possible after the military apparatus has reached a certain level (at most two or three years from now). No international revolutionary victory, save that of the American Revolution, can stop this march towards war by Wall Street... War has again become inevitable precisely because of this peculiar polarization of forces: the extreme weakness of international capitalism, and the overwhelming potential of American capitalism. The American bourgeoisie has come to understand that if delays any longer after the completion of its present armament program, it runs the risk of introducing a revolutionary crisis into its own bastion.”¹¹

We argued, against what Germain said, that: “There isn’t for world imperialism just one possibility: world war in one or two years as hasty Marxists believe. But for imperialism to do this or not depends on many factors, one of the most important, is that the leadership of non-capitalist states, especially the Kremlin, is firmly committed to reaching an agreement with imperialism. This possibility will always be open given the counter-revolutionary and opportunistic nature of the bureaucracy that dominates the USSR and China respectively. Faced to the dilemma: either lose privileges for giving concessions to the mass movement, or save the privileges agreeing with imperialism, we believe that the bureaucracy has to opt for compromise with imperialism.” “In these general conditions Yankee imperialism finds it impossible to carry out or declare at this time the world war.”¹²

D) The Stalinist trajectory of Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties. The need for political revolution and Trotskyist parties.

In 1954, comrade Germain said that Yugoslav and Chinese communist parties were no longer Stalinist, to become centrists that “approached revolutionary Marxism”.

“Spontaneity of masses, empirical leadership, first advances in consciousness towards revolutionary Marxism: these characterize the first phase of the worldwide revolutionary wave. These three characteristics can be summed up in a single formula: the first phase of the world revolution is a centrist phase. The term is imprecise and vague: it joins together, *de facto*, all the working-class political

¹⁰ *Quatrième Internationale*, December 1946, p. 39.

¹¹ . “Faux Fuyant et confusion: ou de l’art de couvrir la retraite”, in *Bulletin of La Verité*, July 1951, p. 5 and 7.

¹² *Frente Proletario*, organ of the Argentine POR, 5 December and 12 December 1953.

phenomena that have gone beyond reformism and traditional Stalinism, and are closer to the revolutionary Marxist. In this case, Tito and Mao Tse Tung, Bevan and the leaders of the left currents in the Japanese Socialist Party, the leaders of 17 June 1953 [East Berlin uprising] and the leaders of the Vorkouta [Soviet labour camp] strike, the first leaders of the left oppositional currents in the mass CPs (Marty, Crispin, etc.), find their place in this heterogeneous assemblage of centrists”. “This is a completely different centrism from the centrism of the 1930s, the centrism of tendencies which were moving away from revolutionary Marxism during the downturn in the revolution. This is, on the contrary, the centrism of tendencies approaching revolutionary Marxism under the pressure of the advancing revolution”.¹³

This analysis of the Yugoslav and Chinese parties was carried over to the respective states and to our policies, the conclusion was obvious: in Yugoslavia and China were not raised neither the political revolution nor the construction of Trotskyist parties was on the agenda in Yugoslavia and China.

“While the Chinese CP and, to some extent, even the Yugoslav CP, are really bureaucratic centrist parties, they are still under the pressure of the revolution in their countries, and we do not call on the proletariat of these countries to establish new revolutionary parties or prepare a political revolution in those countries”.¹⁴

Our characterizations and our policy towards Maoism are, in international politics, like entryism to the 62 Organizations in Argentina politics: the centre of the attacks the majority makes to us. For this they misrepresent our positions suggesting we capitulate. They will find it impossible to prove, since, unlike them who saw the Chinese evolving towards revolutionary Marxism, we have always maintained that Maoism was a petty bourgeois and bureaucratic current.

Not to bore you with quotes, we will stop only at those dealing with the period of our unification with the FRIP led by Santucho, the period most attacked by the majority comrades. For this unification we posed as a *sine qua non* condition the acceptance by these comrades of our 1963 International Thesis. The comrades accepted. Let us now look at these theses:

*“Maoism is qualitatively different from Trotskyism because it ignores in its program and in its activities the essence of Trotskyism: the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale — a world strategy, a program and an organization.”*¹⁵

Our position, taken out of context as usual, may have led the majority comrades to confusion about our characterization of Maoism. We called the Chinese CP, like the Yugoslav and Cuban, as “revolutionary”. We did so because we believed that Cuba and Yugoslavia and China, fit within the definition of Trotsky that in some countries and in exceptional cases, an unresolvable objective situation could drive petty-bourgeois parties to take power, to break with the exploiters and to establish workers and peasants governments. To describe these petty-bourgeois parties that have made the revolution, we used the name of “revolutionary” which the Communist International used to define bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist movements fighting against imperialism. The Communist International called those bourgeois nationalist movements who collaborated with imperialism, “reformist”; and those who fought against it were called “revolutionary”. But even if we had used the wrong adjective, we never said, as did the majority comrades, that these parties could evolve towards revolutionary Marxism, but exactly the opposite.

The second issue is whether the political revolution was called for in China and Yugoslavia. We have already seen that the majority comrades were of the view that it was not. We were of the opinion that it was, but we made a distinction between the nature of the governments of these countries and Russia, as well as between some stages of the political revolution that were raised in each of them:

“The Chinese state is not like Russia the product of a socialist economy and state conquered by the masses, and whose power and economic control was snatched by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. It isn’t a highly contradictory unity of revolution – counter-revolution, such as Russia, but rather the product of a unique incomplete revolutionary process, which did not give rise to organs of workers power and revolutionary Marxist parties and leaders. China, like Indochina, Korea and Cuba, and possibly Yugoslavia and Poland, are revolutionary processes still in transition, dynamic, within a

¹³ *Quatrième Internationale*, July-August 1954, p. 41.

¹⁴ *Quatrième Internationale*, special issue, December 1957, p. 54.

¹⁵ “International Theses”, *Palabra Obrera*, 1963.

permanent world revolutionary process. Hence our definition as workers states in transition with dictatorial revolutionary workers and peasants governments, i.e., petty bourgeois.”¹⁶

Concretely, we placed an equal sign between Cuba and China and insisting on the differences between the latter and the USSR, we said:

“We believe that the diametrically opposite characterization of both governments and states, should lead to a careful adjustment of the program-theory of political revolution for both countries. First of all we must point out that the dynamics and the stages of the political revolution must inevitably reflect the profound difference in the structure of both states and governments.”¹⁷

Then we tried to clarify the situation in China and Indochina:

“The character the process of political revolution in China and Indochina will assume has never been clarified... Concretely, these countries live a political period of transition between the revolutions of February, already accomplished, and the October revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat. This period arises with a very slow dynamics owing to the lack of objective and subjective organisms of the dictatorship of the proletariat: organs of power, parties and Marxist revolutionary leaders.”¹⁸

Finally, we summarized our whole position as follows:

“The political revolution that we envisage for Russia is qualitatively different from what we envisage for China. In the first we call for the urgent, immediate and massive liquidation of the current governmental regime. In the latter, we call for the development of the revolution in progress and in this way a differentiation and a development of the workers power that may allow us to consider, albeit in another stage, the dictatorship of the proletariat, by the means and through the struggle that continue the development of objective and subjective elements to make this dictatorship possible.”¹⁹

Also in this matter we fail to see why the majority attacks us: we held that the political revolution in the “deformed” workers states was needed, for example China, and they held it wasn’t. It is true that we confused the struggle for workers democracy, that is, the political revolution, with the term “dictatorship of the proletariat”. What we have argued is that the political revolution in China is going to take shape in a different way and with different slogans to the Russian.

Finally, we’re attacked on a third matter: for having maintained that the Maoists are great theoretical and practical exponents of rural guerrilla warfare, and a few of their military lessons should be incorporated into the transitional program (in the same way that Lenin incorporated the teachings of a petty bourgeois current, the populists, to his conception of the party).

In these three theoretical issues, the character of the Chinese, Yugoslav and Cuban Communist parties, the problem of the political revolution and its stages in the deformed workers states, and the problem of guerrilla warfare in relation to the Trotskyist program, our International doesn’t yet have a fully satisfactory theoretical answer. Many of our statements are arguable. Is it true that a democratic February stage took place in China, Yugoslavia and Cuba? Can the same definition of Cuba be applied to China and Yugoslavia? Should we incorporate rural guerrilla warfare to the Transitional Program? How do we do so?

All these theoretical issues are still raised and there our old contributions are available for the discussion on the development of a scientific and definitive theoretical answer. But, back to history, there are two certain facts: the majority comrades maintained that the Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties were approaching revolutionary Marxism and we maintained that they were bureaucratic petty-bourgeois currents which were prevented from becoming revolutionary for the simple reason of class; the majority comrades maintained that the political revolution in China and Yugoslavia was not on the agenda, and we maintained that it was.

E) The rise of the mass movement in Europe since the mid-1960s, with epicentres in France, Italy, Northern Ireland, Greece and Spain.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Germain and his friends claimed that there would be no important problems in France and Italy during 1968 and 1969.

Let's see how they prepared to intervene in the famous French May.

"In capitalist Europe, the most important problems are found on the one hand in the oldest capitalist country, England, and on the other in Spain and Greece, because the aggravation of the economic situation in Europe, where the number of unemployed has presently reached three million, has reduced capitalism's room for manoeuvre in the poorest countries."²⁰

Far removed from the realm of facts, we did not foresee what would happen. It certainly was our failure, but what can the majority comrades argue? What name do we give to those who cannot foresee the events that, in a period of weeks, dramatically changed the reality they were immersed in? What to say of theoreticians who live making theoretical predictions for four or five years and who don't know how to make them for two or three months? And to think that they criticize us for not having foreseen the Argentina situation one or two years in advance!

F) The armed struggle, with characteristics of civil war, in only two Latin American countries (since Santo Domingo): Bolivia and Chile.

Germain and his friends said, in 1971, there would be armed struggle in Latin America, except in Bolivia and Chile.

The majority has insisted, over and over again, that for our entire continent armed struggle was on the agenda. Virtually there was no country where not to tactically implement the strategy of "armed struggle", so dear to Germain. But in 1971, there were countries where the armed struggle, according to the majority comrades, was not "on the agenda".

Less than two months before the fall of Torres, Comrade Frank stated: "For the time being, but for how long no one can say, armed struggle is not today on the agenda in Chile or in Bolivia."²¹

At beginning the of Torres government, comrade Blanco, expressing the opinion of the minority, said the opposite: "Thus, Leninist work is required not only in Peru, where we are in a holding pattern, but also in Bolivia and Chile which are or could be on the verge of armed struggle."²²

G) The bloody end of the reformist experience of Allende in Chile.

In 1971, Germain and his friends maintained that Allende and imperialism would move in agreement towards a democratic variant.

To see how the majority comrades characterized this Latin American bourgeois nationalist government and its relations with imperialism, nothing better than to refer to an article by comrade Mandel "Imperialism and the National Bourgeoisie in Latin America".

"It is in this change of economic interests is where we must seek the explanation for the strange complacency that American imperialism has displayed up to now with respect to the nationalizations of General Velasco, General Ovando and even those prepared by Allende. 'Compensation and permission to reinvest in our country's manufacturing sector of is all we ask'."

"Military reformism', acting as the last barrier to 'Castrist' or 'anarchist' subversion', that's the strategic line that American imperialism seems to have adopted since the Rockefeller report."²³

And in particular, referring to Allende, *La Gauche*, an organ closely linked to comrade Germain, said:

²⁰ Resolution of the IEC of the Fourth International, February 1968.

²¹ Frank, Pierre, "Letter to the 1971 SWP Convention", op. cit. p. 16.

²² Blanco, Hugo, "Carta a Livio Maitan" ["Letter to Livio Maitan"], 17 October 1970, in *Boletín de Informaciones Internacionales* of the SWP No. 3, October 1973, p. 110.

²³ Mandel, Ernest: "Imperialismo y Burguesía Nacional en América Latina" ["Imperialism and the National Bourgeoisie in Latin America"], *Revista de América*, July-October 1971, p. 33 & 34.

“Nationalization of the copper mines has been the most spectacular of these measures. But this kind of action is no longer an affront to the imperialists. In view of the ever growing threat of revolution in Latin America, which threatens to definitely overturn their interests, the imperialists have decided, after Rockefeller tour, to modernize the forms of penetration in the area.”

“Now imperialism is withdrawing from the extraction of raw materials, which was the principal and crudest form of plundering the third world. Such a turn allows an apparent liberalization of the economy and social life, for limited sectors, of course. That’s why the atmosphere seems to be loosening up in Latin America. Imperialism has new perspectives. The military ‘left’ regimes have the wind on their sails. And with this perspective Allende could very well provide a democratic alternative to go in perfect agreement with the plans that neo-imperialism has for Latin America.”²⁴

While the majority comrades made this type of characterization, we argued the exact opposite:

“At the moment the Chilean bourgeoisie is unified behind the Allende government in support of the expropriation of the copper mines, creating a situation of great friction with the United States...” (*La Verdad*, 27 October 1971). “The continuation of workers and peasants uprising in Chile and the bourgeoisie’s manoeuvres and pressure against Allende’s populist concessions, and of imperialism against the nationalist measures, will be raising the boiler pressure despite the ‘good behaviour’ the government may try and the brakes applied by the reformist parties and the trade union bureaucracy.” (*La Verdad*, 11 October 1971). “The only path to socialism for Chilean workers is the revolution. The worker, student and peasant vanguard, without making concessions to the reformism of Unidad Popular, must develop the organization and mobilization of the masses for their economic and political demands. On this basis, and with the methods of class struggle, they must be at the forefront of the defence of the Allende government against the attacks from the right and the bourgeois imperialist coup, without giving the slightest trust to the Allende leadership. This is the only method that guarantees what has been won: the other, Allende’s method, prepares defeats in the style of Peron or Torres.”²⁵

It’s time to make a balance sheet

We have reported the most important points on which there were differences between the majority and us. It would be disloyal of us to deny that, among their blunders, the majority comrades have had some major successes, like their propaganda and activity in the process of the Algerian liberation struggle, and having supported from the beginning, as soon as the first news of its existence were received, the Castro guerrillas in Cuba, as well as their denunciation of the Yankee aggression in Korea and Vietnam, the recognition of the new youth vanguard, etc. Of these successes, some were not total, either. The policy of entryism “sui generis” was also reflected in them (not so much in Cuba where we had nothing, as in Algeria, where there was a group of our International). In Algeria this policy led to change the axis of entryism, no longer was it Stalinism as it was worldwide, but the FLN. The result was political claudication to that petty-bourgeois movement, of which our comrades ended up being something like advisers. They failed to achieve that our participation in the Algerian process culminate, as a minimum, in the construction of a strong section of our International.

We have been accompanying each of the chapters of this history with the relevant documentation. That is, we have fulfilled a fundamental methodological requirement that the majority comrades cannot deliver because if they did, they would bring down the false stories about our organization and their own trajectory, which they are circulating throughout the International.

However, despite being documented, and although we can contribute at any time the proofs we may be asked, we will not fall into the same methodological error of the majority, as it would be to propose that an organ of our international vote this history of the trajectory of the majority.

If our International wants to remain the world revolutionary party of the working class, it must return to the tradition of voting only political resolutions to arm all its cadres for the class struggle, never historical balances of the political trajectory of any organization or tendency.

²⁴ *La Gauche*, 8 January 1971.

²⁵ *La Verdad*, 15 December 1971.

The aim of this chapter is to show on which points we disagreed, on which side were the successes and on which side were the mistakes in over 25 years of struggle for the construction of the International. The new cadres of our movement are now in position to make that balance sheet. Regrettably, the result is obvious: the bulk of the errors were committed by the comrades who today lead the majority tendency.

The cause of so many mistakes

After many years of studying the positions of the comrades and of polemics with them we can say without fear of being mistaken, that the source of their errors is impressionism. This impressionism consist in isolating from its context one or more spectacular events — “impressive” ones — and, ignoring opposing trends, i.e. by granting them favourable to the maximum dynamics, and from there to draw their conclusions. These events are often the bourgeois analysis or the actions of the vanguard, because they occupy the front pages of the newspapers, although the size of the news is unrelated to its importance to the mass movement. We will try to explain how the world events that we have summarized above “impressed” the majority.

A) The journalistic commentary of the years 1946-48, was that Europe and Germany were exhausted after the war and there was a Morgenthau plan* to keep Germany as a backward country. Comrade Germain wrote all the atrocities we saw because he believed devoutly the plans of imperialism, especially the Morgenthau plan, would come into operation. He did not think like us (and like any good Marxist), that the “rational”, subjective plans of imperialism in the economic field are rarely, if ever, fulfilled, because the “irrational”, objective laws of capitalism and imperialism prevail instead. On the contrary, Germain translated his belief in imperialism’s plans into a Marxist language and drew the overall conclusion that Europe was doomed to stagnation and the decay, and Germany to be an agricultural country for eternity.

B) Stalinism, faced with the rise of the mass movement, was making efforts to reconcile with Eastern European imperialism and capitalism. These were its “plans”. But the plans of the bureaucracy could not overcome the objective laws of the class struggle either. Comrade Germain, forgetting the social character of the bureaucracy, and revising the Marxist analysis, drew the conclusion that reconciling with capitalism and private property was an “eternal quality” of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. This bureaucracy, as a product of a workers state (and precisely “for reasons inherent in its social nature”), could not co-live (or combine) with “private property”, much less with capitalism (whether state or private) and imperialism in the countries the Red Army had entered.

C) Then came the Cold War and the US armed itself to the teeth to attack the USSR, while every newspaper in the world was saying that only a miracle could prevent World War THIRD. Comrade Germain, in agreement with Pablo’s ideas, forgot one detail (the same one that bourgeois journalists forget in their descriptive and mechanical analyses): the class struggle at worldwide scale. And he launched the theory that war was inevitable, once United States’ armament plan (again a “plan” appears here) were ready. The class struggle taken as whole was powerless to influence this “plan” of imperialism. Same as for the bourgeois press, for Germain only a miracle (he said the American Revolution), could prevent world war in the short term.

D) Tito had broken with the USSR and Mao had led a great revolution, the greatest since the Russian revolution. An explanation of these phenomena was needed. Comrade Germain forgot that for

* The Morgenthau Plan (proposed by US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau), advocated that the Allied occupation of Germany following World War II included measures to eliminate Germany's ability to wage war by eliminating its armament industry, and the removal or destruction of other key industries basic to military strength. [Translator’s Note]

Trotskyism, when a petty bourgeois or bureaucratic leadership is forced by circumstances to lead a mobilization (from a strike to the seizure of power), it doesn't cease therefore to be petty bourgeois or bureaucratic.

And he took a revisionist position, which is a constant in the majority comrades (as the SWP comrades have comprehensibly demonstrated) and which can be summarized as: "any reformist and bureaucratic party which leads the masses to power, ceases to be such". Based on this statement, Pablo, supported by Germain, concluded that Tito, Mao and their parties, had ceased to be bureaucratic and Stalinist and that they approached revolutionary Marxism, and, therefore, the political revolution was not called for in Yugoslavia and China. Nowadays, the majority comrades again raise the same revisionist conception of the years 1951–56 regarding China.

And thus Pablo and his friends closed the circle of their analyses of the great revolutionary wave of post-war without a single correct serious prediction.

E) But the new European uprising, which originated in the 1960s, came and comrade Germain, avid reader of economic reports and supporter of translating those reports to his conclusions, didn't fare any better than before. As the worst economic situation occurred in England, Spain and Greece, these three countries were facing the "most serious problems". And thus he repeated his economist error of 1951 when, based on the American armament plan he made his prediction of the outbreak of war.

Comrade Germain, instead of taking class struggle as a whole, and the economic factor as an important element to be taken into account, did exactly the opposite: he ignored it.

If he had used the Marxist method, he would have realized that the student movement could explode at any time; that France was coming from solving serious colonial problems (such as the Algerian War), which combined with the Vietnam War, and that there was a leftist tradition in the student movement; that, ultimately, the new uprising had to retake the old experiences and, finally, that the French and Italian workers and revolutionary movement had been the most powerful in the immediate post-war period, and logically they had to reconnect. Germain noticed none of these when he made his prediction for Europe in the resolution of the EIC in February 1968.

F) The rise of the European student movement filled our ranks with enthusiastic admirers of Guevara's guerrilla warfare and of Fidel Castro's Cuba and the Guevarist's theses began to become fashionable, close to us. One of these theses holds that the more reactionary a regime is, the better the conditions for armed struggle, and, conversely, the more democratic it is, the more such conditions deteriorate until its practical disappearance. Continuing his tradition to follow and to make our International follow the fashions that appear on the European intelligentsia and in the student movement, the majority comrades transferred this Guevarist thesis to our ranks. So Frank wrote, on behalf of the majority of the United Secretariat, the letter to the SWP where he stated that the only Latin American countries where there was no possibility of armed struggle were Bolivia and Chile, where there were "coincidentally" at the time, regimes with broad democratic margins. A prediction opposed by the vertex opposite to what happened.

G) Finally, the emergence of bourgeois nationalist regimes also took comrade Germain and his friends by surprise. They came from saying that there was no perspective of regimes of such characteristics that made economic and democratic concessions to the mass movement. But when they made their appearance and the bourgeois journalism began to speak of them, they could not but accept their existence.

But, how to explain them? The minority did so based on the friction of the national bourgeoisies with imperialism and the pressure of the mass movement on the rise. The majority, as it could not be satisfied with these simple reasons based on the situation of the class struggle, turned then, again, to the scholarly study of imperialism's plans, in this case the "Rockefeller Report". And from there they extracted the new category of "military reformism" and they concluded that a reformist government, in this case of Allende, "may very well offer a democratic variant that would fit perfectly with development plans that neo-imperialism has for Latin America". It is unfortunate for the authors of

such forecast, and much more for the Chilean masses and Salvador Allende, that imperialism did not pay as much attention to the “Rockefeller Report” as the majority comrades did.

Our proposal

The furthest thing from our mind is to want to convince the new comrades that we have not made mistakes, or from wanting to vote a resolution justifying all our past policy. Posadas used to always sneer at us because in all oral and written reports in our Party we routinely stopped to recount the mistakes we had made in order to draw a conclusion. At the beginning we were an isolated, new, and inexperienced leadership, which naturally had to make many mistakes. It was a question of every time committing increasingly less.

But what distinguishes us from the present majority is recognizing our mistakes and that these do not have a systematic nature.

That’s why to dear comrade Germain, companion of 25 years in this hard struggle to build our International, we propose a deal: to sign a joint statement addressed to the new cadres of the International.

It should say: “we, the undersigned advise you to scrupulously study all our past positions, riddled with errors of all kinds. We do this because we want you to avoid repeating them, because the only thing we are proud of is of our trajectory and not of this or that position. Our mistakes are due to a deeper reason: we are a leadership that was built in the middle of the retreat of the mass movement during the Cold War and the capitalist economic boom.”

Comrade Germain: if you agree, we do grant you to add in the postscript that you “clarify that comrade Moreno said in his political life some more stupidities than me”. And we promise not to form a tendency or faction to correct that statement — if it was published — although we consider it false.

Chapter V

Decennial strategies

Theory, strategy and tactics

If anything characterizes Germain and his colleagues of the majority is to give line, orientation and slogans for future events. The comrades are more concerned with looking at the crystal ball than to give a revolutionary political response to the present facts. This activity has two shortcomings: first, by looking so much at the future they are generally left without an answer (or an incorrect one) to the present; and second, that the answers for the future do not help either because from their wrong predictions arise tactics usually irrelevant or tragic.

In addition, this approach manifests itself in a mania for taking long-term strategies. It's already four years, at least, since they hold the strategy of "armed struggle" for Latin America and they clarify that it will still go for a long while. Before, they had — and kept for seventeen years! — the strategy of "entryism *sui generis*" for the whole world.

A theoretical and strategic history of the workers movement

To justify his last two decennial strategies, the "armed struggle" for Latin America and the "work on the vanguard" for Europe, Germain gives us a version of the history of our movement, and tries to get it voted by the young cadres of our International at the next Congress. Here is this peculiar history:

"Since 1905, the revolutionary movement in the underdeveloped countries has been split between protagonists of the theory of the permanent revolution and those who defend the thesis of the revolution by stages, a bourgeois-democratic one having to be first completed before the proletarian-socialist one can start. Should we refuse to line up with the first as against the second, under the pretext that there is a 'third strategy,' the 'Leninist strategy of party building'? Since 1917, the international workers movement has been debating whether it is necessary to destroy the bourgeois state machine and to build a higher type of democracy, called soviet democracy, as the precondition for the proletariat conquering state power and for capitalism being overthrown, or whether parliamentary bourgeois democracy and its state machine creates the necessary institutional framework for overthrowing capitalism. Should we refuse to line up with the first as against the second, under the pretext that there is a 'third strategy,' the 'Leninist strategy of party building'?"¹

History is an objective science. The most powerful imagination cannot eliminate the historical facts and the times in which they took place. Therefore, comrade Germain has to tell us which "underdeveloped countries" had, from 1905, this objective, historical division between supporters and foes of the theory of permanent revolution. We don't know any other than Russia and its sphere of influence. In China, Marxism comes only after 1917. In the Far East there was a similar phenomenon. In Latin America it had already penetrated but the discussion in the workers movement was between anarchists and Marxists. But even in Russia, this discussion is not a chapter in its history. Except for Germain, there's no one in the world who doesn't know that in Russia, between 1905 and 1917, the main division was that between Bolsheviks on the one hand and Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries on the other. This is the real, political, history of tendencies in Russia. Similarly, the real, political, history of tendencies in Germany is the struggle between Kautskyites and Bernsteinians

¹ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 3.

late last century and early this one, and among Luxemburguians, Kautskyites and later on opportunists until the war in 1914. In Spain and France, the fight was between socialists and anarcho-syndicalists.

Taking as axis of the workers movement's political history the theoretical discussions, Germain has been victim, once again, of his intellectual tendencies. Theory is one of the essential elements of all currents and political organizations, but it is not everything. What is fundamental is the location of currents and organizations in the process of class struggle. This is what explains that the development of the theory of imperialism had been started by great opportunist theoreticians and not by Lenin and Trotsky, who could lead the Russian Revolution.

A revolutionary party can have an incorrect or only partially correct theory without ceasing to be revolutionary, because the relationship between theory and the organization is not mechanical but dialectical. Logically, an incorrect or false theory, which certainly will be reflected on its practice, may be overcome by the party, may cause it critical delays or may even take it to catastrophe.

We could formulate the following political theorem: a Bolshevik party may overcome its theoretical errors and lead the masses to take power, but a correct theory is absolutely sterile when the revolutionary situation comes if you have not had the previous strategy of building a Bolshevik party. And one of the demonstrations of this truth is that Trotsky, who had the correct theory, and could not guarantee the triumph of the Russian Revolution because he had not had the strategy of building the party, however, despite its theoretical shortcomings, the Bolshevik Party with Lenin at its head could.

The Bolsheviks were in favour of the revolution by stages, but against the class dynamics that the Mensheviks attributed to it. The Mensheviks trusted on the liberal bourgeoisie to do the bourgeois democratic revolution; the Bolsheviks trusted on the workers and peasants. Where does this fit in Germain's history? On what side of his scheme are they?

It is possible he won't say it because he would have to mention that one of the key differences between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, the one that caused the split between them, had to do with the strategy of party building, a matter that is best left unsaid.

To analyse events after 1917, Germain proposes a new historical scheme: the workers movement discusses whether to destroy the bourgeois state to impose Soviet democracy or if it can liquidate capitalism from bourgeois democracy. Where does in Germain's history enter the discussions between Stalinists and Trotskyites on "socialism in one country"? Does the fight of the THIRD and IV Congress of the Communist International against ultra-left not matters? What about the debate between Stalinists and Trotskyists on the united workers front only to defeat fascism, during the third period?

The real history of the world workers and revolutionary movement is concrete, it has names and surnames: anarchists and Marxists; revisionists and orthodox Marxists; Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; revolutionaries and opportunists; left communists and Leninists, Stalinists and Trotskyists. Within this real process, we can make a generalization, which is the one Lenin makes: "In fighting what enemies within the workers movement grew, strengthened and tempered Bolshevism? [...] First, and above all [...] against opportunism". But secondly, "little is known that Bolshevism was formed, strengthened and tempered in long years of struggle against petty-bourgeois revolutionarism..." which "was considered particularly 'revolutionary' or 'left' because it recognized individual terror, the assassinations, something which we, the Marxists, categorically rejected".

In short, Bolshevism was not tempered in the struggle for or against the "theory of permanent revolution", but a in a permanent struggle against two enemies: the opportunists and the ultra-leftists. The history of the Third and Fourth Internationals is, like that of the Bolsheviks, a constant struggle against these two deviations.

Germain's manoeuvre is obvious. He tries to prove that, along the historical process, although with different names, the workers movement was always divided into two main schools of thought: supporters of permanent revolution and supporters of the revolution in stages, or those who defended the need for the destruction of the bourgeois apparatus and those proposing peaceful way to socialism. With this, he wants to place face to face, as irreconcilable enemies, opportunism and ultra-leftism, with which he eliminates both one and the other as enemies of Bolshevism. After doing this, he asks us to opt between one side and the other and to not insist on the strategy of party building. That is, he wants to encourage us to join ultra-leftism against opportunism.

By this he wants to theoretically justify his chronic tail-ending of the different positions having an impact on the vanguard in each period of the class struggle. A tail-ending whose most recent expression

is the famous “strategy of armed struggle”. As he puts it, between 1905 and 1917, we should have been with Trotsky who defended the Permanent Revolution and against Lenin who defended the stages but was building the party. After 1917 we should have been with the ultra-leftists who proposed to impose Soviet democracy as the current task for all countries, and against Lenin and Trotsky who, fighting against them, were building the world party, the Third International. And at the present, we have to be with guerrillaists of all stripes, because the vanguard discusses armed struggle and we have to choose one of the two sides.

We say no, that before 1917 Lenin didn’t choose between ultra-leftists and opportunists; he dedicated himself to building the revolutionary Marxist party. After 1917, Lenin and Trotsky did not choose between opportunists and ultra-leftists, but they fought both as part of their strategy of building the revolutionary Marxist party.

Currently, we refuse to choose between ultra-leftists and opportunists. With the modern ultra-leftists, the guerrillaists, we can have only a very general theoretical agreement against the opportunists: there is no peaceful way to socialism, the armed struggle between exploiters and exploited is inevitable. And there ends our agreement. We are against both the opportunistic strategy of peaceful road to socialism, and against the guerrilla strategy of armed struggle on behalf of the party.

Against both, we are for building the Trotskyist party with mass influence; capable of leading at all times the struggle against the bourgeoisie, which includes the armed struggle.

Relationship of theory with strategy and tactics

On all these issues what Mandel does is to confuse three basic elements of revolutionary politics: theory, strategy and tactics. The strategic objective is long-term; tactics are the means to reach that objective. Theory is neither one nor the other, since it has to do with the general laws of the historical process and not strategic or tactical objectives. Between these three elements there are close connections, yet not mechanical but rather dialectical.

Let’s start with the theory. We may disagree with Mandel’s economic analysis, but agree with him on the strategic objective of mobilizing the masses and building Bolshevik parties to sweep away imperialism and capitalism and to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat. This strategic agreement does not mean we agree at all times with the different theories that get developed and discarded during the process which culminates with the seizure of power and the construction of socialism.

The relationship of theory with strategy and tactics exists, but it does not manifest itself immediately or directly. In its congresses, the party does not vote theories but political lines from which emerge strategies and tactics. The party is only identified with a theory when it has been proven by events. Such is the case of the identification of our International and its sections on the theory of permanent revolution, which is not a strategy or a tactic, but the general law of the revolution and the mass movement in the transition from capitalism to socialism that we are living.

Regarding the issue of strategy and tactics, it is very important to remember they are relative terms. In a stage of retreat in the workers movement we may have a defensive strategy to develop trade union struggles. The proper tactic for that strategy may, for example, be the long strike. But the long strike is a strategy in relation to a means, a tactic: picketing to ensure it. And pickets become a strategy in relation to the tactics we use to build them (if we do it publicly, elected in assembly, or clandestine, secretly chosen by the leadership of the strike). The very strategy with which we begin, the development of defensive union struggles, becomes a tactic in relation to our strategic objective to obtain important victories that change the stage of retreat into a stage of rise of the workers movement.

Trotskyism has only two long-term strategies: to build the party and to make the revolution to take power

As Germain does not see things this way, he ridicules the fact that we have used the word strategy for a short period. But the core of our polemic with Germain has to do with long-term

strategies. If we can assure something is that for Trotskyists there are two fundamental long-term strategies at the international and national level: taking power with the workers movement to begin to build socialism and building the party as the only tool to achieve this. In relation to these strategic objectives, everything else is tactical, albeit we may call it “strategy”. To build the party and take power we can and should use the right tactics at all times: entryism, attend elections, promote the revolutionary united front, raise slogans of power, call for the armed struggle, and propose defensive and ultra-minimum slogans, etc. All tactics are valid if they are suited to the specific, present time of the class struggle and if they help to mobilize the masses and build the party. But the tactics are used and discarded many times as the status of the class struggle changes. The tactics are never voted for long periods; they must never become long-term strategies.

Bolshevism is characterized by using all means and tactics to serve the strategy of building the party, mobilizing the workers and taking power. The other currents of the workers movement are characterized by the opposite: they confuse strategy with tactics and they raise tactics to permanent strategy. The history of Bolshevism is a constant struggle to impose the means and tactics appropriate to each moment of the class struggle. Bolshevism fought the terrorists, but knew how to use terror; fought against the unionists, but was able to work in the unions; fought against the parliamentarians, but knew how to use parliament; fought against anarchists, but knew how to destroy the bourgeois state; fought the guerrillaists, but knew how to do guerrilla warfare, fought the spontaneists but knew how to direct the spontaneous mobilization of the mass movement. And why did it do all this? To build the Bolshevik party and mobilize the masses to take power.

An illustrative example

When comrade Germain systematically tries to ridicule comrade Hansen, telling him that you cannot tell a worker on strike (who is embarked on picketing), that “our strategy is to build the party” he’s telling a truism which shows he doesn’t understand anything. What Germain says is something no militant with some experience in the workers movement stops to think about. If someone in a strike tells the picketing workers that our strategy is to build the party, he in fact opposes the building of the party to the existence of the picket, because he would be saying that only those who agree with the need to build the party can be on the picket. He would be a pedant who dissolves a particular situation, a medium, a tactic, into a ten-year strategy. We have never seen this mistake that worries Germain committed.

But otherwise, the mistake of hiding our strategy of party building, it may be easier to commit to those inexperienced militants who want to quickly grasp the strikers’ sympathy. Taking it to the extreme, it would be akin to telling those workers who are picketing that our strategy and our core business for 10, 15 or 20 years will be picketing, whereupon we would be deceiving them and not preparing them to face future changes.

And what should we be doing? First, get to the head of this picket as the best militants, i.e. to win the strike. Second, we explain to these vanguard workers that just as they are picketing today, tomorrow the class struggle will put forth to them to organize a demonstration, or a defence of an occupied factory or the workers’ militia, or to make propaganda, or to be candidates in the elections, because the fight against the bosses doesn’t start or end in the strike, but began over a century ago and will end when the working class takes power and builds socialism. Third, that to get to that we need a party to lead all workers, as they lead their fellow factory workers, and that we are building this party and invite them to join in. If we knew how to be the picket most dedicated militants, if we knew how to explain our policy, we will win these workers on the picket line. And this, what does it mean other than to be building the party?

The most serious mistake

We said that we must not confuse strategy with tactics. But it is far more serious to confuse a means or tactic with a decennial strategy, i.e. historical: transforming the tactics into something more than strategy, almost into a principle. If the workers only see the need to do any of these tasks, and if

we do as Germain does, who turns this task on a decennial strategy, we are tail-ending the consciousness of the masses. So did Germain with the entryism “sui generis”: by tail-ending the communist parties, indirectly or ultimately he was tail-ending the mass movement. Currently, he is falling into the worst expression of tail-ending—the tail-ending he does to the vanguard.

In his polemic with the minority around the “strategy of armed struggle” voted in the Ninth Congress, comrade Frank has shown that this is precisely the policy of the majority. In his letter to the Convention of the SWP he correctly states our conception. For the minority ... “the majority of the International, in accepting the strategy of armed struggle for Latin America, renounces to build revolutionary parties...”

This is precisely what we think of the majority. But then, Comrade Frank makes another summary, and not so faithful, of our position:

“The dilemma armed struggle versus building the party does not exist for us. No more, shall we say, as the syndicalist dilemma ‘general strike versus building of the party’.”

Here Comrade Frank “forgot” the most important word “strategy”. There is actually no antagonism between armed struggle, general strike and any other tactic, with party building as long as we take them for what they are, for tactics. The armed struggle, the general strike, or any other tactic, oppose building the party when they are intended to become permanent strategies for an entire era.

How do they oppose party building? Simply because we can only build the party if we use at all times different and appropriate tactics, which change as much as the class struggle changes. If there are elections we can be electoralists. But if there are not, we must not. If there are peasants willing to fight against the landlords in armed way, we must be rural guerrillas. But if there are not, we must not. If we impose for five, ten or fifteen years to be electoralists or rural guerrilla, we tie our hands to change as much as needed the various tactics that are essential to strengthen the party and the mass movement along with it. Thus, repeating the same slogan as stutterers, we can never grow the party. If today a comrade raised as a permanent central strategy the general strike, we all — minority and majority — would accuse him of unionist. If he raised as a permanent core strategy to be involved in the elections, we’d accuse him of electoralist. The majority comrades feel very indignant because we have accused them of “guerrillaists” when they voted the “rural guerrilla strategy” for an entire period and that we have told them that their strategy was opposed to building the party. Now they tell us they did not vote rural guerrilla warfare, but the “armed struggle”. Well, as a central strategy for an entire period, the “strategy of armed struggle” is much more dangerous than the guerrilla, because in it are included terrorism, urban guerrilla and rural guerrilla, methods of armed struggle but when elevated to strategy they all represent deviations that are opposed to building the party.

Germain, Frank and the rest of the majority comrades have done several times the same. Before they chose a tactic, which tail-ended the backwardness of the masses led by Stalinism and now a tactic that tail-ends the backwardness of the vanguard impacted by Castroist guerrillas. Yesterday it was entryism “sui generis”, today is “armed struggle” for Latin America and the work essentially towards the “mass vanguard” in Europe. We argue that Trotskyism has only two long-term strategies: building the party and mobilizing the masses for taking power.

We say that converting tactics into strategies will, in the long term, go against building the party. The correctness of this assertion is demonstrated by the results had by the concessions to the Guevarists. If the Fourth International persists in making the guerrilla warfare into an strategy, this will end with the liquidation of the sections that apply it — as we have seen in Bolivia and Argentina — and eventually with the liquidation of the Fourth International itself.

The history of entryism “sui generis”

Perhaps the most typical case of Germainist behaviour of adopting a policy for a hypothetical future and of making a tactic into a strategy for the long-term has been entryism “sui generis”. If we are to be guided by the majority’s resolution on Europe, seeking to justify this strategy, it consisted of the following:

“The entryist tactic for building a revolutionary party proceeded from the hypothesis that the process of radicalization —of forming of a new mass vanguard — was taking place for the most part within the traditional mass organizations. Such hypothesis was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe in the period that extended from the early fifties until the beginning of 1969...

“The error committed in conceiving this tactic did not, therefore, lie in the objective perspective — which events have by and large confirmed— but in underestimating of the numerical relationship between our own forces and those we could impel to break from the mass parties in a social climate in where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared.”²

This new version of the analyses and forecasts that formed the basis for the tactic of entryism (a tactic which was not such, since it lasted no less than 17 years), has nothing to do with the analysis and forecasts they made when it was voted, in the early 1950s. Now it turns out that the error was simply a miscalculation of our “numerical relationship” with the tendencies that we could take to “break from the mass (opportunistic) parties”. Otherwise, “events confirmed the validity” of the “objective perspective”, since the “process of radicalization” and “of forming of a new mass vanguard” would happen “within the traditional mass organizations” for a period in where “no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared”.

It is absolutely untrue that when the tactic of entryism was voted these forecasts and analysis had been made.

First things first. Is it true that a period without “revolutionary tensions” was predicted? Nothing could be falser; we have already seen that it had been predicted the world war was inevitable in the short term and that it would produce civil war. Just the opposite to the absence of “revolutionary” tensions. In this new version of history they want to pull the wool over our eyes and it isn’t said that the inevitable world war between the USSR and imperialism was the main objective premise that justified the tactic of entryism.

Why was entryism voted?

Let’s keep going, is it true that the tactic of entryism was voted foreseeing that the “forming of a new mass vanguard” would occur “within the traditional mass organizations” and to bring these radicalized sectors to “break from the mass parties”? Again, nothing could be falser. It is true that the emergence of centrist tendencies was predicted, but it is false that entryism was voted to make them “break with mass parties”. Entryism “sui generis” was voted, essentially, based on the characterization that the opportunist parties, as a whole, would evolve objectively towards revolutionary centrist positions and a revolutionary orientation. This is what was said when the tactic was voted and not what is now invented, 23 years later, to justify it: “It’s because this movement (referring to the communist parties) is otherwise placed in such objective conditions, by the evolution in the international situation towards the counter-revolutionary war of united imperialism that independently of the plans and the will of its bureaucratic leadership in the service of the Kremlin’s policy, it will be forced, compelled, to radicalize (...) to outline practically a revolutionary orientation and act in case of a war, with arms in hand for power.”

And, comparing this with the entryism proposed by Trotsky, it was added “... today is not exactly the same type of entryism. We don’t enter these parties to exit quickly. We enter to stay in them for a long time, relying on the strong existing possibility to see these parties, placed in new conditions, developing their centrist tendencies that will lead a whole stage of radicalization of the masses and the objective and revolutionary process in their respective countries.”³

Where is the line to bring the centrist tendencies to break with the opportunists mass parties? Here it says clearly that these parties will develop “their centrist tendencies” and that they will lead “a whole stage” of the “objective and revolutionary process” and that’s why we must enter into them. Moreover, it says that our entryism is not like that Trotsky advocated for a brief period, but “we enter to stay” in the opportunist parties “for a long time”. That is to say, it is not within our plans at all to

² International Majority Tendency, “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p.18.

³ Letter of the International Secretariat to the Central Committee of the French PCI, 14 January 1959.

bring the centrist tendencies to break with them, because, if we do so, we would enter for a short term, just the time needed to define them for our positions and drag them with us in our withdrawal.

What were the tendencies which, according to this new version of entryism “sui generis”, would happen in the opportunistic organizations? According to the European document of the majority, they were: “... the Bevanist left followed by the Cousins tendency in the British Labour Party; Communist Youth and Ingrao tendency in the Italian CP; opposition tendencies and UEC within the French CP, and Social-Democratic left within the SFIO giving rise to the PSA and the PSU, Renard tendency inside the Belgian workers’ movement, trade union left and Communist opposition giving rise in Denmark to the SF, etc.”.⁴

This is a new falsification of what was said at the time when the tactic of entryism was voted. It is true that at that time there was also talk of Bevan, but it is not less true, as we have already quoted in the previous chapter, that also “Tito and Mao Tse Tung find their place” in that “centrism of tendencies approaching revolutionary Marxism”. Why aren’t the Chinese and Yugoslav CPs now mentioned among those tendencies of the left which, according to the majority comrades, were forecasted with all correction and “confirmed by events”? Why hiding from the young cadres of the International that, as part of the conception which originated the tactic of entryism, it was argued that Tito and Mao approached revolutionary Marxism and so, as we have already quoted, “we do not call the proletariat of these countries (China and Yugoslavia) to build new revolutionary parties or prepare a political revolution”? Why not say that we didn’t call the proletariat of the capitalist countries to build Trotskyist parties either, but for 17 years, we called them to remain within the opportunist parties?

And with leftist tendencies, what happened? It would be appropriate, after having worked on them for 17 years, to make a balance sheet of our activities. Why isn’t an analysis made of the dynamics of these tendencies that we so “correctly” anticipated? Why not say how many of them, under our influence, “approached revolutionary Marxism”? Why are there no reports on the political and organizational developments of the Trotskyism who worked on them? How many cadres did we win? Which sectors of the mass movement we manage to lead or, if nothing else, to link to Trotskyism fruit of our relationship with these tendencies?

Castroism: A significant “omission”

But the worst of the matter is that this new version of entryism “sui generis” does not mention at all the most important and progressive “mass vanguard” of the 1960s: Castroism. This silence is rare, since Castroism changed all power relationships regarding the mass vanguard. The reason for this silence is not difficult to discover. What happens is that, according to the majority, one of the “objective perspectives” “that events confirmed in its validity” was that the “formation of a new mass vanguard” “would essentially occur within the traditional organizations of the masses”. And Castroism is the “event” that not only doesn’t “confirm its validity” but denies any validity to this “objective perspective”.

Did this “radicalization within traditional organizations” happen in Europe after 1960? Where did the new spontaneist vanguard of 1968 incubate? Inside or outside traditional organizations?

Isn’t this perhaps a combined process where the external to such organizations dominated? If there was one thing in common in all the manifestations of that time was the portrait of Che Guevara. Where did all those young people who lifted it come from? From the traditional organizations? From the Stalinist and social democratic parties?

⁴ International Majority Tendency, “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p.18.

Translator’s Note: **Aneurin Bevan**, British Labour Party politician, Minister for Health in the post-war government from 1945 to 1951. **Frank Cousins** British trade union leader and Labour politician. **Pietro Ingrao**, politician, journalist and former partisan, senior figure in the Italian Communist Party. **UEC**, *Union des Étudiants Communistes* (Union of Communist Students). **SFIO**, *Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière* (French Section of the Workers’ International). **PSA**, *Parti Socialiste Autonome* (Autonomous Socialist Party). **PSU**, *Parti Socialiste Unifié*, (Unified Socialist Party). **André Renard**, leader of an important tendency in the Walloon trade unionism. **SF**, *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (Socialist People’s Party).

The majority comrades point out that “such hypothesis (a massive vanguard that comes from within traditional organizations) was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe” in the 1950s and 1960s. Apart from Castroism, born essentially outside of the traditional organizations, what other “mass vanguard” can the majority comrades name, which was born in that period and has been radicalized within traditional organizations, as revolutionary tendencies emerged from them? Absolutely none; this is the reason for their silence on Castroism.

If the majority comrades had done a real balance of the centre-left tendencies that came from within and without the traditional organizations and if they hadn’t “forgotten” Castroism, they would have concluded that even with the policy of working essentially on these tendencies the right thing would have been never to apply the tactics of entryism. Our work should have been on that vanguard and the movements impacted by Castroism which arose primarily in the student movement and the periphery of the opportunist parties, but not within them.

Can entryism be voted for a long period?

Having finished with this series of justifications of brand new invention for 17 years of entryism, it remains, however, a question which is, ultimately, much more important. Can a tactic of entryism be voted for a long period? Do Leninism and Trotskyism allow staying for 17 years in the opportunist parties? Absolutely not. Even if the conditions that Pablo and his friends posed in 1952, or what the majority pose today, took place you can never vote for a tactic of entryism “for a whole stage”, to stay in the opportunist parties “for a long period”, as the IS voted at the time and ran for 17 years.

The first and fundamental reason to not vote for a tactic of entryism for the long term is the need to preserve the Trotskyist party as a clearly differentiated current from the others that exist in the workers movement. This can be summarized by saying that the revolutionary party must never lose its public, political and organizational independence, which enables it to clearly differentiate itself to the masses, from the opportunistic or centrist parties and the ultra-left sects.

The reason for this sacred principle of Leninism and Trotskyism has nothing to do with either a moral approach or with the mania of the sects according to which the essence of revolutionary politics is to differentiate from others. It has to do with the firm belief that we will only come to take power if the working class and the masses are led by the Trotskyist party.

And to win the leadership of the masses, the key is to participate at the forefront in each of their struggles as an organizationally independent party, with its own policies, answers, slogans and program appropriate to each situation. This constant publicly standing for itself and its program as a revolutionary alternative to the reformist parties and programs, is the only way the party can actually be seen by the masses and the vanguard as a potential alternative leadership.

Put another way: in the course of their struggles, the masses deplete their experience with opportunistic organizations, but this doesn’t lead them, by themselves, to break away from them and adhere to revolutionary Marxism. To do so they must have been accompanied throughout the experience by the revolutionary party. The workers movement will accept our leadership only if they have seen us for years by his side and were able to learn about our organization, our politics and our program and compare them in each fight, with other organizations, policies and programs. No worker or student of vanguard will break with his party if he does not know a better organization to which to adhere, and in which to trust because he has witnessed it in the struggles. He will not, for the simple reason that he will prefer to stay in an organization than breaking up with it and become disorganized.

What we have been saying could not be ignored by Pablo and his friends. Therefore, to justify the long-term entryism was necessary to review all the scientific foundation of contemporary Marxism which asserts that without a revolutionary party there can be no revolution. That’s how it was discovered, through the famous World War unavoidable in the short term, that those who would lead the revolution would be Stalinist and social-democratic parties transformed into centre-leftist parties. In this way eliminating the need of a Trotskyist party and explaining that we remained for 17 years within the opportunist parties.

A tactic for exceptional situations

This sacred rule requiring us to keep our activity public and independent has, like any rule, its exception. Such is the case of the tactic of entryism. But in this dialectic between the normal and the exceptional, what primes is the normal. This is to say that the exceptional moment where we lose our public delimitation as a current of the workers movement to do entryism, is subject to the rules of the revolutionary party. Specifically: entryism is a tactic that can only be justified when it is used to leave quickly and in better shape as independent revolutionary party, clearly delimited from other organizations. It's a tactic that helps, in exceptional circumstances, in party building, never takes another organization or centrist tendencies towards taking power.

We have already seen that the only two long-term strategies that we Trotskyists have are mobilizing the masses to take power, and building the party. There are rare times when it is particularly difficult to link to the mass movement and gain members for the party working as an independent organization. Those moments are what make necessary entryism tactics. In this analysis are already designated the only two objectives that such tactics may have: entering into an opportunistic party to win those cadres who are evolving to the left (left-leaning centrist tendencies) or for better linking ourselves to the mass movement.

With any of these objectives, entryism is a tactic that can only be voted for short periods, because if we do it to tie ourselves to the mass movement, entryism ends as soon as we have achieved a minimum insertion in it that allows us to move forward with an independent public activity. But, furthermore, when this is the case, we need to practice entryism in organizations which lead us to act as a public faction of them in the short term. And this stresses the fact that it be for a short period, since there is no opportunistic organization that can allow acting within it for a long time a Trotskyist faction which sooner or later will be public.

But, what happens if we do entryism to work on the left-leaning centrist tendencies as the majority comrades now say? Again entryism is for a short period, just by the nature of centrism. There is a first type of centrism, which goes to the right, i.e., from Marxism to opportunism. Such is the case of the Stalinist bureaucracy. On this centrism we cannot work, because its dynamics is counter-revolutionary, we can take nothing from it. A second type of centrism: the opportunism that goes towards Marxism, i.e., the one that goes to the left. It is on this that we can work.

But this dynamic can last only for a short time. Either we win it for the Trotskyist positions quickly, or it stops halfway, sentenced to be permanent centrism, thus constituting a third type: "crystallized" centrism as defined by Trotsky; the POUM case, the Ceylonese LSSP, Lora and so forth.

This dynamic is what explains that, also to work on centrist tendencies, our entryism be short term.

But, again, this was not the case of entryism "sui generis". When that tactic was voted, it was not to win the centrist tendencies for Trotskyism, but rather to lead them, without them ceasing to be centrist, to force them or help them take power. This is what explains the "long terms" which were voted for entryism and the 17 years during which it was applied.

The entryism advocated by Trotsky in the 1930s

What a profound difference with Trotsky's entryism in the 1930s! Trotsky never intended to lead centrist tendencies. His only two objectives were to quickly gain Trotskyist cadres and to insert Trotskyism in the mass movement. What he proposed was leaving entryism having advanced on the road to move from small groups of revolutionary propaganda to real parties revolutionary parties with many more cadres than before and able to influence, they themselves, without intermediaries, a fraction, however small, of the mass movement.

So Trotsky's entryism has a profound difference with Pablo's and his friends' entryism. For Trotsky, this period should be necessarily brief, the time required to achieve those objectives. For Pablo and his friends it should be very long, nothing less than that required to achieve for Stalinist and reformist parties, while remaining centrists, to make the revolution.

The results of the long strategy of entryism "sui generis" were catastrophic for the Pabloist faction. Most of the militants capitulated to the organizations they did entryism in and the leaders

capitulated to opportunism and broke with our movement. They came out of that period still much weaker than they had entered, with far fewer cadres and less tied to the mass movement. Most of the cadres of the two most important sections, Ceylon and Bolivia, broke with Trotskyism to the right. The first went to work with a bourgeois government and were expelled from our International. The Bolivian comrades were divided into three wings: Moller, who capitulated against the Bolivian MNR, Lora who capitulated to Stalinism and Gonzalez who remained in the International. Another major section, the Argentine Posadism, also broke with the International to the right and dragged most of its Latin American cadres. The remaining sections came out of entryism virtually destroyed: without cadres, without militants, without party tradition.

That was the result of the decennial strategy of entryism “sui generis”. That’s what today the young European cadres are asked to vote for. They are asked to approve that war was inevitable, that the Stalinist parties were to outline “a revolutionary orientation” and struggle for power “with arms in hand”, that it was right to have entered the Stalinist parties for 17 years and relinquish for that time the building of Trotskyist parties, that was a great treat to destroy all our European sections and push the Ceylonese, Bolivian and Argentine sections towards the arms of the enemy or class reformism. The vote will be a good test to see who has revolutionary mettle in our International.

Was it a mistake to found the Fourth International?

The decennial strategy of entryism “sui generis” was not without its consequences on the analysis and characterization of Trotskyism regarding the Stalinist parties and the political revolution in the workers states. We have already seen that, in regard to China and Yugoslavia, Pablo and his friends abandoned the task of building Trotskyist parties and carry the political revolution, for the sake of entryism “sui generis”. But this issue didn’t remain there. It worsened with the revision of Trotskyism traditional program regarding the “pure” Stalinist parties (i.e. directly dependent of the Soviet bureaucracy), including the CP of the USSR, and the political revolution in the workers states of Eastern Europe and Russia itself.

We will begin with the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries. As we have seen, Pablo and his friends predicted an imperialist war against the USSR and thence they deduced that the Communist Parties would “practically outline a revolutionary orientation” to “act in case of a war , with arms in hand for the power” and to lead “a whole stage of the revolutionary process in their respective countries”.

In the late 1930s world war started: there were possibilities of war against the USSR and rise of the mass movement in some countries. In other words, there was a situation very similar to that envisaged by Pablo and Germain for the 1950s. However, Trotsky took a conclusion totally opposite to that of Pablo and his friends: we had to work publicly and independently. Who was wrong? Trotsky in the 1930s or Pablo in the 1950s?

Trotsky supported his position as follows: “Bureaucratic centrism, because all its zigzags, has an extremely conservative character corresponding to its social base: the Soviet bureaucracy. After a ten-year experience we came to the conclusion that does not draw nearer and is incapable of drawing nearer to Marxism, from the ranks of which it emerged. It is precisely because of this that we broke with the Comintern”.⁵

As we see, the matter is not limited to the historical analogy. If Pablo was right, Trotsky was wrong, “after a ten-year experience”, to characterize that Stalinism has an “extremely conservative character” and is “incapable of drawing nearer to Marxism”. That is, if Pablo and his friends were right, we must change all Trotskyists characterizations of the Stalinist bureaucracy that, placed in certain objective situations, can be transformed into a progressive, leftist, centrism able to approach Marxism and fight for the power, leaving its extremely conservative character.

This analysis, ultimately, takes us back to the days before the founding of the Fourth International. During “ten years” Trotskyism did the experience of change from within, as a faction of

⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “Principled Considerations on Entry”, 16 September 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933-34*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, p.84-85.

the communist movement, the bureaucratic characteristics of the International and its national sections. Trotskyism failed. During “ten years” Trotsky left off founding a Fourth International because he thought he could rescue the Third. He failed.

With the victory of fascism in Germany because of the Stalinist policy, Trotsky exhausted his “ten-year experience” and decided to break with the Third and found the Fourth International, because he characterized that the counterrevolutionary process of global Stalinism was irreversible. According to Pablo’s analysis, taken to its ultimate conclusion, not only was Trotsky wrong in his characterization, he was also wrong to found the Fourth International. It was a hasty attitude, as we come to discover, 13 years later, the revolutionary role that parties of the former Third International can fulfil placed in a favourable objective situation. And these analyses were voted and defended by the current leaders of the majority tendency.

Conditions change by the “strategy” never!

It was based on these analyses that the line of entryism “sui generis” was voted. The facts showed that both the forecasts and the characterizations were wrong.

There was no world war nor were we close to it; neither was there civil war or fighting for power or a rise of the mass movement; nor did majority centrist tendencies emerge in the Stalinist parties. The USSR, invaded East Germany first and Hungary later, instead of fighting against imperialism. And for this it had the support of the communist parties that, according to Pablo and his friends, were going to fight for power in their countries outlining a revolutionary line. However, entryism continued: conditions changed or were radically different from those imagined by Pablo, secretary of the Fourth International at the time. But the “strategy”, voted for an indefinite time, remained.

The supposed course to the left of the Stalinist parties led Pablo and his friends to not foresee the struggle of East Germany workers first and later of Hungary and Poland. It was inevitable. If Stalinism was turning left around the world, what need had workers in the workers states to make the political revolution? But the first feints of political revolution came and Pablo and his friends, consistent with entryism “sui generis”, elevated their characterization of Stalinism at programmatic level.

A reformist program for the political revolution

We are not talking here of the slogans that had to be raised for agitation in the USSR after Stalin’s death. Evidently this fact opened a period when Russian Trotskyists should be listening carefully to the mass movement to find the precise slogans to mobilize it. But one thing are the slogans we tactically agitate and quite another is the program of political revolution. This program should not have changed because Stalin had died, but on the contrary, it should be more relevant than ever.

But entryism “sui generis” was still making the rounds. When the political revolution was an incontrovertible fact, demonstrated by the struggles of the German proletariat which augured those of the Hungarian and Polish, Pablo and his friends were forced to develop a program for that struggle, and if we add to the fact of the political revolution the characterization that Stalinism was turning to the left we find the only possible outcome: a reformist program throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR.

“Here is the program of the political revolution that is currently on the agenda in both the USSR and the ‘people’s democracies’:

- Real organs of dual power, democratically elected by the working masses, exercising effective control over the state, at all levels, including the government;
- Real democratization of the communist parties;
- Legalization of all workers’ parties;
- Complete autonomy of trade unions in relation to the state, including the workers’ state;
- Development of an economic plan by the workers, for the workers.”⁶

⁶ International Secretariat Statement of 25 June 1953, in *Quatrième Internationale*, July 1953, p. 19-20.

And the three basic slogans are:

“Down with capitalism and the counter-revolutionary war it’s preparing! Long live the proletarian democracy! Long live the socialist revival of the USSR, the ‘people’s democracies’ and the international workers movement”.⁷

This program does not call the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy, nor does it even attack it by name, nor does it fight against their material privileges. Neither does it raise the right to national self-determination of the countries in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. This program raises the “real democratization of the communist parties”, which is the same as saying there is no need to build Trotskyist parties. It is a reformist program. We say this not because of the slogans — which may be good or not — but because of the system they form, by the way they are interconnected. By not raising the overthrow of the bureaucracy by a revolution of the Soviet masses and the need for the Trotskyist party, they become reformist.

The revolutionary program of orthodox Trotskyism

This reformist program had nothing to do with our Transitional Program:

“Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labour!” “*It is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets.* In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective peasants, peasants and Red Army men.” And then... “*Legalization of soviet parties.* The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties.”

It follows a series of slogans on the planned economy, kolkhozes and international politics (*Down with secret diplomacy!*) and ends:

“Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development towards socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection — the party of the Fourth International!

Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

Long live Soviet democracy!

Long live the international socialist revolution!”⁸

One tactic developed by a specific situation (war, which did not break out), but transformed into year strategy, quickly pushed the then International Secretariat to revisionism.

Bolivia 1952-1955: Why we did not fight for power

If a young Trotskyist tries to study the history of our movement with an approach different to the approach taken by Frank to make his, he will find almost insurmountable difficulties to learn what our policy for Bolivia was. Although our section there was, according to statements by Pablo and his friends, the most important of our International (along with Ceylon), a closely guarded secret kept under wraps for years surrounded its history. It seems that never before had existed in Bolivia an important section.

The reason for this conspiracy of silence is simple: in Bolivia took place the greatest, most perfect and classical workers revolution so far this century, with a strong influence of our International. And there, in its purest form, the terrible danger that the “strategy” of entryism “sui generis” brought with it was expressed.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution”, op. cit. p. 105-106.

The failure of bourgeois nationalism

Bolivia is a very poor country. The strongest proletariat is in mining, which is concentrated in Oruro and La Paz, all the factory proletariat and petty bourgeoisie are substantially based in La Paz.

The attempt to achieve a military Bonapartist government, supported by the workers movement to resist Yankee pressure, as had been achieved in Argentina with Peronism, crashed into the miserable condition of the Bolivian economy. In Argentina, this bourgeois project was smooth sailing for its exceptional commercial and financial location (third in the world in the last post war); and Peron could make big economic concessions to the masses, acquiring great prestige among them. In Bolivia, instead, the deplorable economic situation left the bourgeois government with no room for manoeuvre: it could not make major concessions and the growing prestige of Trotskyism was massive and shining.

Trotskyism acquires mass influence

Thus, the Bolivian Trotskyists became a leadership of great political prestige in the workers movement and the Bolivian masses, although it failed to consolidate that influence organizationally. This was recognized, repeatedly, by the official organs of our International, and our influence was reflected in the actual facts of the class struggle. An example of this was the famous thesis of Pulacayo, programmatic basis of the union-organized movement in Bolivia. In November 1946, in Pulacayo (a mining town), delegates from all Bolivian mines met and unanimously approved the thesis developed by the Trotskyists, voting against the MNR and the Stalinists. These theses, which were called “program of transitional demands”, put forward, among other positions, the following: 1) basic living wage and sliding scale of wages, 2) Forty-hour week and sliding scale of working hours, 3) occupation of mines, 4) collective contract, 5) union independence; 6) workers’ control of the mines; 7) arming of the workers; 8) strike fund; 9) regulation of the abolition of cheap grocery stores; 10) removal of work by contract. This program, especially what went against the army and for the arming of the proletariat, with workers’ militias, was massively propagandized by the Trotskyists and the mining union during the years up to the 1952 revolution.

One consequence of the colossal Trotskyist triumph among the miners will be the establishment of workers’ block or front to stand for elections. Although 90 percent of the Bolivian population did not vote at the time (there was qualified vote: only those who could read could vote), the workers’ bloc won the mining districts and scored a senator and five representatives. The highest Trotskyist leader, Guillermo Lora, and other comrades made a good use of the bourgeois parliament, when from their seats attacked the army and proclaimed the need to destroy it and impose the workers’ militias.

Presidential elections were held in 1951 and the MNR won, but it was not given the government since, because due to of this victory the military staged a coup and installed a dictatorial, extremely repressive, regime. On 9 April 1952, the police and an army sector in agreement with the leadership of the MNR, attempted a counter coup, but this failed and its military chief sought asylum in an embassy. The police, when seeing it was to be defeated by the military, gave some weapons to factory workers and people of La Paz, to resist the military counteroffensive. Meanwhile, the miners, who had already liquidated the army in Oruro and had seized the regiments, began to descend towards La Paz. This shift plus the takeover of a military train heading to La Paz with arms, led to the total liquidation of the Bolivian army. In La Paz, for example, workers completely defeated seven regiments (the foundation of the Bolivian army), and took all weapons from them. The dictatorial government fell, and the MNR was given government.

The workers and peasants militias were the only armed forces left in Bolivia after 11 April 1952 and were led, for the most part, by the Trotskyists. Only on July 24, more than three months later, the government issued a decree reorganizing the army.

Our Trotskyists comrades, relying on the workers and peasants armed militia — between 50,000 and 100,000 men (on a day of parade the peasant militias alone had 25,000) — and in trade union organizations, founded and organized the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), which grouped all militias and all workers and peasant organizations in Bolivia .

Faced with this situation, unique in this century — a revolution which liquidates the bourgeois army and organizes its own proletarian army, with a Trotskyist leadership and program— what do

Pablo and his friends do? They apply one of the decennial tactics: entryism. This line was imposed globally. Where there was no Stalinist party, it was replaced by socialist parties or bourgeois nationalists parties, since the centrist tendencies that were going to lead the revolution would arise from them. Here is what Pablo and his friends wrote in 1951:

“On the other hand, in the event of the mobilization of the masses under the preponderant impulsion or influence of the MNR, our section should support the movement with all its strength, should not abstain but on the contrary intervene energetically in it with the aim of pushing it as far as possible up to the seizure of power by the MNR on the basis of a progressive program of anti-imperialist united front.”⁹

Not a single word about the workers movement and its class organizations, the trade unions and, for tomorrow, militias or the Soviets! Comrade Pablo proposed this, while at the same time he defined the MNR as a party of the lower mining bourgeoisie, i.e. as a bourgeois party. So, according to Pablo, we should not use mobilizations to expose the MNR, to denounce its inevitable role as ultimate agent of imperialism. We should not oppose to it class organizations, unions or future militias or soviets. Instead, we should push it, overall, to “take power”. And he disguised this capitulation to a bourgeois nationalist party behind the program of anti-imperialist united front.

In fact, this policy was directly contrary to the tactics of anti-imperialist united front. The essence of this tactic consist of proposing joint actions that unmask the vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeois nationalists, and it aims to achieve political independence of the workers movement with respect to these bourgeois leaderships. The other side, even more serious, of this prostitution of anti-imperialist united front tactic is giving up the fight for the organization and political independence of the workers.

This total capitulation is taken to disgust in another paragraph of the resolution:

“On the contrary, if in the course of these mass mobilizations, our section proves to be in a position to share influence over the revolutionary masses with the MNR, it will advance the slogan of a Workers’ and Peasants’ Government of the two parties on the basis, however, of the same program, a government based on committees of workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the urban petty bourgeoisie.”¹⁰

Put another way, if we start to defeat the MNR at the head mass movement, we should not take this task to its conclusion, but we must raise a government shared between the MNR and us. This government should not be the government of the workers and peasants committees, but “lean” on them.

To reach such a policy, Pablo had to review the Leninist position of workers and peasants government. Lenin agreed with supporting the capture of government by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (when the revolutionary party still had no strength to do so), but he categorically said that we should never share a government with them (and he did not enter the Kerenskyist government of Mensheviks and SRs). The essence of the Leninist position was to keep out of the government, precisely to be the only alternative when reformism becomes exposed to the masses after demonstrating its impotence in power.

If as a political line, that of Pablo and his friends was revisionist and surrendering, as forecast of events it was catastrophic. The revolution of 1952 did not follow any of the guidelines they predicted in 1951, but rather the opposite: the working class, through class organizations, unions and militias, liquidated the military regime. But as always, the reality may be different, but Pablo’s strategy continues. And that’s when the leadership of the Bolivian workers movement (with the Trotskyists in

⁹ “Latin America: Problems and Task”, Resolution Adopted by the Third Congress of the Fourth International, Paris, April 1951. In *Fourth International*, Vol.12 No.6, November-December 1951, pp.207-12.

The SWP’s delegate (Clark) voted for this resolution. Other resolutions of similar tenor were also voted by the SWP. Leaving aside the fact that Clark broke with the SWP to support Pablo, it is important to note that the SWP supported and helped build the International Committee of the Fourth International. In doing so, the SWP was explicitly or implicitly supporting the battle against the line in Bolivia carried out by our party and the SLATO (Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism), the organization of the International Committee for Latin America.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the front row, saying and doing what Pablo commanded) leads to bourgeois MNR government and gives it critical support.

We insist: Pablo and his friends supported in Bolivia a bourgeois government, which had no army or police to lean on, because they had voted that long term “strategy” in the World Congress of 1951.

Proofs at the ready: after April 1952, our Bolivian section, directly controlled by Pablo and his friends told us:

“At present our tactic consists in grouping our forces, in binding the proletariat and the peasantry in a single block to defend a government that is not ours”. “Far from advancing the slogan of the overthrow of the Paz Estenssoro regime, we propped it to withstand the onslaught of the right”. “This attitude is first manifested as pressure on the government to make the deepest aspirations of the workers and peasants.”¹¹

While we proposed that the slogan for Bolivia was “All power to the COB and armed militias” in *Quatrième Internationale*, without dropping their heads in shame, comrades Germain and Frank, one year after the 1952 revolution, said the following:

“The POR began by justifiably granting critical support to the MNR government. That is, it desisted from issuing the slogan “down with the government”; it gave the government critical support against attacks of imperialism and reaction, and it supported all progressive measures.”¹²

As an aside, we don’t know what failure to raise the immediate slogan “down with the government” has to do with critical support, since we may not raise the slogan without implying support the government either “critically” or in any other way.

In July 1953, the official magazine of our International — *Quatrième Internationale* —, in its Spanish edition (but supervised by Pablo and his friends to the millimetre) made the following picture of the Bolivian situation:

“The organization of workers’ militias was amplified in parallel to that of the peasant masses...” “The regime has indeed evolved into a kind of very ‘Kerenskyism’ advanced, much more pronounced than the Mossadegh in Iran, for example.”¹³

And in that situation of “advanced Kerenskyism” we still did not put forward the slogan “All power to the COB and its militias”.

Another year lapsed — two since the revolution — and the Fourth Congress of the International met. In it, Pablo and his friends continued their decennial strategy; they didn’t lose at all their deep love for non-proletarian organizations and for centrist tendencies, and continued without calling the COB, the workers organization par excellence, to take power. They had found another centrist organization worthy of their “critical support”: the left of the MNR.

“In Bolivia, the turn to the right and reactionary of the MNR’s policy, yielding to the pressure of imperialism and indigenous reaction, makes more urgent than ever a candid denunciation of this turn by the POR, which has to remove all trust on this government, as well as the workers ministers, constantly calling the COB and systematically working within it to implement genuine class policy independent of the MNR and engaging the COB in the path of workers and peasants government; the systematic campaign for this perspective as well as the program for such a government, the general election campaign, with voting for all men and women over 18 years to elect a constituent assembly and presentation of workers slates of the COB in these elections. It is only such a policy which may result in a differentiation within the MNR and force its very diffuse and disorganized left wing to break with the right and their bureaucratized ‘worker’ leaders and engage in the path of workers and peasants government”.¹⁴

¹¹ Thesis of the POR’s Tenth Conference, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Revolution Defeated], Rojas Araújo editor, Cochabamba, 1967, p. 223.

¹² *Quatrième Internationale*, April 1953, p. 25. English Translation in “One Year of the Bolivian Revolution”, *Fourth International*, Vol. 14 No.1, January-February 1953, pp.13-16.

¹³ *Quatrième Internationale*, July 1953, p. 74.

¹⁴ “Resolutions of the Fourth World Congress” in *Quatrième Internationale*, June 1954, p. 54.

The line would have been perfect with an addition: to ensure all this (constituent, elections, etc.), it is necessary for the COB to take power. But Pablo and his friends did not say that. Who would then call this constituent? If it was not the COB in power, it only remained left the Paz Estenssoro government or a supposed government of the MNR's.

This line confirmed the line given by the Bolivian section a year earlier, expressed in a manifesto released on 23 June 1953, with the blessing of Pablo and his friends. There it said:

“The threat of right wing conspiracy has become permanent...”, therefore we must “... defend the current government...” with the “...armed defence of the government”.¹⁵

Although it seems incredible, they are referring to the bourgeois— bourgeois! — Government of Paz Estenssoro. Perhaps the danger of “right wing conspiracy” did not justify momentarily raising the offensive slogan “All power to the COB” and replacing it with the defensive “Workers Front against the reaction”. But the strategy for the COB to take power was still valid and in no case we may raise the slogan of “defence” of a bourgeois government. However, what is the slogan of power that this manifesto ends with?

“This entire struggle should revolve around the slogan: total control of the state by the left wing of the MNR”.¹⁶

Time passed and the left of the MNR failed. Thus —four years after the revolution!— when the army had managed to restructure, when they could no longer trust the MNR— as in the beginning— or the left wing— as afterwards— Pablo and his Bolivian friends adopted the line that our party had consistently fought for from the start. In a resolution of the Bolivian POR's Executive Committee of May 1956 — finally! (but too late) — it is stated:

“Strengthening and developing all the organs of dual power, against the clashes with the government, with the bourgeoisie, with the oligarchy and imperialism, against the parliament and the attempts by the Siles government to subtract influence to the unions, we will push the desire of the masses proposing: that the COB solve all the problems! And, All Power to the COB!”¹⁷

We say: Finally they realized! It was a belated victory of our preaching and our polemics. The capitulations of Pablo and his friends had been exposed. The terrible dangers lurking behind his famous long term “tactics”, based on assumptions for the future and not in reality had come to light.

“Entryism sui generis” and the Argentine reactionary coups of 1955 and the gorilla governments of 1955–58

Not only in Bolivia did we have dire consequences with the decennial strategy of “entryism sui generis”. In Argentina, this strategy was not without tragic consequences for Trotskyism. It is no coincidence that the word “gorilla” which has acquired universal predicament has been coined in our country. It is here (along with Guatemala) where in the early post-war emerged the first ultra-reactionary government, similar to the current Brazilian government. With the Argentine military dictatorship appear concentration camps with thousands of prisoners, the illegality of the trade unions, of leftist parties and bourgeois who parties opposed it, murder and torture of trade unionists, leftist and opposition militants. It is very possible that this was a dictatorship much more brutal than the current Brazilian one. Hence it is very justified that these dictatorships be called as the Argentine proletariat called the military government: “gorilla” dictatorship. It's correct to see what was the policy followed by Pablo at that time and the one we had, against both the coups and the gorilla governments.

In a resolution imposed by the majority, the IEC has called the policy of our party at the time as opportunistic and of capitulation to Peronism. We decided then start with the true exposure of our supposed “opportunism”. What makes this task more necessary is that we have made a severe criticism

¹⁵ POR's Internal Bulletin, May 1956, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Revolution Defeated], ob. cit., p. 225.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 225.

¹⁷ Resolution of the Bolivian POR Executive Committee, May 1956, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Revolution Defeated], ob. cit., pp. 232-233.

of our Bolivian section for its policy against the recent reactionary coups. Many new or foreign comrades in our movement and who do not know our true history will wonder, does our track record justify that criticism?

We have repeatedly published in the form of leaflets or books, our work at that time. The majority comrades have a most abundant and easy to use documentation to prove their allegations, no need to resort to any archive or collection of newspapers.

We anticipated the coup and fought it for previous ten months

From this documentation emerge quite clearly the following facts:

1) From November 1954, i.e. seven months before the first coup and ten before the triumphant coup, we began a campaign of denunciation and opposition to the reactionary coup we considered a sure thing from our newspaper. Milciades Peña, a recognized historian made a preface to the collection of our articles where he said the following:

“From the first moment the socialist revolutionary Trotskyist militants told clearly what the real meaning of that struggle was, and their position in it. And from the outset they foresaw the ‘putsch’ and cautioned the working class against it”.¹⁸

2) Without placing any trust in the Peronist government we learned to distinguish the differences it had with the enemy, not minimizing the fact that they were bourgeois variants. We pointed out that Peron was bourgeois and unable to stop the coup, but he also had differences with Yankee imperialism and its political agents, the Catholic Church and the opposition parties, who were preparing the reactionary coup.

3) We insisted that the main political task that had opened since December 1954 was to address the inevitable coup being prepared by the reaction. We called the Peronist government to a technical agreement, and called for a united front to all the workers parties and mainly the CGT to fight against the coup. We took part in all the demonstrations of the workers and mass movement against the coup preparations. We played a role of first magnitude in the actions with which the workers movement crushed the first coup and in the formation of the first workers’ militias which the country has known since the “Tragic Week” of 1919.

4) We called for the formation of militias and for armament of the trade unions to fight against the coup. We systematically denounced the Peronist government as a bourgeois government, which was going to yield to the coup and was unable to face it. We systematically emphasized that we had nothing to do with Peronism. That is, we foresaw the coup and fought to stop it, ten months before its triumph.

Let’s see some hard evidence. The first article on the subject was published in our newspaper on 3 December 1954. In the most important headline we said: “The Catholic Church at the service of Yankee imperialism’s the coup d’état. Only the mobilization of the working class will stop the coup and the colonization of this country.”

There we pointed out: “While Peron’s speech, measured in all words and in explanatory tone and not agitational, is the best indication that the government is not interested in mobilizing the masses beyond the formal rallies it might control. However, only the broad mobilization of the working class will strengthen the country against the attempted colonization of Yankee imperialism.” “The Peronist government has embarked on a policy of class collaboration and leans more and more, with increasing evidence, on the bosses’ side, it is not willing to give in to any of the claims that the working class could put to it.” “We, as an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist party, wish to clarify our position on this issue.

¹⁸ Moreno, Nahuel, “¿Quiénes supieron luchar contra la revolución libertadora antes del 16 de septiembre de 1955?” [Who knew how to fight against the ‘liberating revolution’ before 16 September 1955?] in *El golpe gorila de 1955* [The gorilla coup of 1955]. Editorial Pluma, Buenos Aires, 1974, p. 82.

But it isn't a declarative position, rather one affirmative and of struggle. Despite all our differences with the Peronist government, despite our criticisms, we wish to express publicly that while the government does not yield to Yankee imperialism, against the danger of a coup encouraged by Wall Street, we offer the government a technical, well-defined, agreement, public and without political commitments in order to stop all attempts of imperialism to colonize the country and to super-exploit our working class."¹⁹

And in the last newspaper before the successful coup, we said the following:

"We neither had nor we have trust in the policies and the methods of the present government, although we'll abide to the discipline of the majority." "The fact that we accept the will of the majority of workers does not mean we are either Peronist or the left wing of Peronism, or even allies of Peronism. We are a different organization to Peronism. Our party is a worker's party: Peronism, however, is a bourgeois party, i.e., that it's for the defence of the existing order of things."

"What makes that in some events we are next to the Peronist government, and against the opposition, is that, although we are in favour of replacing the current government with a government of the CGT and all workers and peasant organizations we are against the current government being replaced by a government of the priests, the bosses and Yankee imperialism."²⁰

5 September 1955, reprinted in *The Gorilla coup of 1955*, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

In an official flyer of the same time we did this call:

"Workers:

"The Socialist Federation of Buenos Aires (National Revolution) that publishes the newspaper '*La Verdad*', launches an urgent call:

"Support the instruction of the CGT leadership; defend the current situation against the reaction which wants to implement a reactionary military government!

"This is not about defending a government: the Peronist, but to prevent the triumph of a government openly pro-capitalist and anti-worker.

"We, for example, are not in favour of the Peronist politics or the workings of the union leaders who enrich themselves at the expense of workers and suppress union democracy, but in this case, we put first the unity the working class and the union movement, against the attacks that the reaction carries out to implement its government. If the military coup succeeds, the workers movement will lose their unions and their unity and the bosses, imperialism and the clergy will be complete masters of the country.

"We therefore believe that we must support the action of the CGT against the coup. This does not prevent us from fraternally alerting you on the following dangers:

- If the working class doesn't mobilize;
- If the decision of the CGT on workers' militia isn't implemented;
- You can lose EVERYTHING.

"We must not forget that on 14 June the leadership of the union movement said nothing was going on, and two days later the coup broke. We must not forget that until a few days ago it was said that nothing would happen and we had to keep quiet going 'from work to home and from home to work'. This policy has proved to be a serious mistake; if the working class had been mobilized, it would have not suffered two coups in three months.

"What we have been saying for a year now we repeat again:

"Only the mobilization and initiative of the working class can crush once and for all the reactionary coups. Therefore, we dutifully asked and pressed the union leaderships to implement the resolution of the workers' militias.

¹⁹ "The Catholic church in service of the Yankee imperialism coup", article in *La Verdad*, 3 December 1954, reprinted in *The Gorilla coup of 1955*, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

²⁰ "Iron fist against the clergy-bosses-imperialist reaction. Free hands to the working class!", article in *La Verdad*, 5 September 1955, reprinted in *The Gorilla coup of 1955*, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

“Comrades: All workers together, without exception, we must fight against the coup of the reaction and we must demand the implementation of the resolution on workers’ militias, the only way to crush ONCE AND FOR ALL the reaction of the clergy, the bosses and imperialism.

“Socialist Federation of Buenos Aires (National Revolution), 17 September 1955. Read ‘*La Verdad*’.”²¹

The official section did not say a word against the coup

While we gave this entire struggle, while we were risking our lives in the streets against the reactionary coup, the section led by Posadas and recognized by Pablo, did not say a single word. Not even one. Let’s look at just one example. In the section’s paper for May Day 1955, i.e. one month before the first coup, which occurred on 16 June and that caused the emergence of workers’ militias, hundreds dead (it’s never been known) and the confrontation of the workers movement with the Navy, there isn’t a single article touching the problem of the coup, let alone giving a line against it. In the editorial the official program of the section appears for the coming months.

The first item, it could not be otherwise, is “against the war preparations” (the line put forward by Pablo of the coming world war in the short term). The second, “for the expulsion of imperialism”. The third, “Support for the Bolivian revolution”, etc. And from the fourth point start the national type slogans-tasks, which we quote in full:

“4) Defence of all conquests! Not one step back in the gains made! 5) Defence and strengthening the trade union organization!, etc. 6) Living and minimum wage and sliding scale of wages! 7) Workers’ control of production! 8) Against any law and repressive measure against the workers movement! Freedom to all imprisoned worker activists! 9) For a Congress of Trade Unions against bourgeois offensive and shortages! 10) For the formation of a worker’s party based on the unions to fight for the program and the interests of the working class and the masses! 11) For a workers and peasants government!”²²

Not a word of warning about the danger of the coup, not a word of the need for the workers’ militia, or a policy against reaction.

And the coup succeeded, the fiercest repression against the workers and the Peronist movement came, the unions were taken over. The official section was forced to recognize that there was a “clergy, oligarchic imperialist” coup. In a flyer after de coup they recognize that there are “killings of workers by tanks, bombs, strafing by aircraft guns, cannons and machine guns. The most criminal and bloodied mass slaughter of workers, in the history records of the bourgeoisie of the country, has been accomplished and is developing”. “Without having yet complete reports from around the country, we have seen and know that this peace and freedom they call us to join and promise us, is already leaving a balance of 6,000 workers killed in Mendoza, nearly 20,000 in Cordoba, slaughter of workers and executions of leaders in Mar del Plata and Bahia Blanca (we have no precise data of the bombing of worker sectors of Santiago del Estero); in Rosario (according to imprecise reports) the slaughter reached 7,000 workers; CGT protesters carrying signs that read ‘Soldiers do not shoot: We are the people’ were shot from fighter jets; in Córdoba they threw bombs on workers neighbourhoods from the windows of commercial aircraft; from radios from abroad we know that in Tucumán (we don’t yet have direct evidence) the slaughter has been terrible.”²³

The true explanation: entryism ‘sui generis’

Despite this recognition of the characteristics of the coup, neither Posadas nor his intimate friend and staunch defender Pablo made any self-criticism of the policy they had in 1955. This policy stemmed from a deeper reason: the “entryism sui generis”. The program quoted above does not mention the rotten policy of the Argentine CP which was playing into the hands of the clergy’s

²¹ Moreno, Nahuel: *The Gorilla coup of 1955*, ob. cit., pp. 132-133.

²² *Voz Proletaria* [Proletarian Voice], No. 104, 25 April 1955.

²³ Supplement of *Voz Proletaria*, September 26, 1955.

reaction. Throughout the newspaper it is not mentioned either the rotten world politics of Stalinism. All the ponderings were about China and its politics. Within this general policy, the main enemy was the Peronist government and the bourgeoisie as a whole, especially the bourgeoisie linked to Peronism. It was a tactical application of entryism, of tail-ending local and international Stalinism, which had always been against Peronism for tactical reasons, to corner the workers movement and so to have an exchange commodity more appetizing to negotiate with Yankee imperialism. The Pabloist section was the left variant of local Stalinism.

Afterwards, the fight against the gorilla governments came. Our party raised as one of the main points of its struggle against these governments, democratic rights. We started the struggle for the right of General Peron and Peronism to participate in politics, for the legality of this bourgeois party which had the support of almost the entire workers movement. We denounced the gorilla dictatorship stating that the struggle was to overthrow it. We were among the founders of the “62 Organizations”, workers organs of resistance to the military government. We were in all the fights. The gorilla government “honoured” us by viciously haunting us, even more viciously than Peronism. The same happened to all anti-gorilla parties of the left and which were against the coup. Even the CP suffered repression somewhat.

But there was a party which was totally and absolutely legal. The only leftist party whose press was legal, it was sold in all newsstands under police protection, the only one which was given the opportunity to speak in the official gorilla radios (and which took that opportunity and spoke). While anyone fighting against the gorillas went to concentration camps or prison, this party, miracle of miracles, obtained legally. And in its press it boasted that it had obtained it through its intense struggle. That was the party of Posadas, the darling companion of comrade Pablo, the section shown as a model to the world Trotskyist movement in the stage of entryism *sui generis* and of the whole policy of the majority at the time. This party received on the 24 October 1955, a month after the coup against which it did not fight, and published in January 1956, in its legal paper under the gorilla dictatorship, greetings and congratulations of the International Executive Committee.

Where was the secret of so much love from the gorilla dictatorship to the official section? In a number of important political events. First, the section believed, and publicly said that the workers should not fight for the legality of General Peron and Peronism, because “they were bourgeois parties”. Second, in the “entryism *sui generis*” the section was followed Stalinism like a shadow and this had pretty good relations with the gorilla dictatorship for the purpose of seeing if this would let them have a cut in the military occupations of the trade unions (the main enemy for both the section and Stalinism were the Peronist union bosses, not the gorilla governments). Logically the section had no prisoners, to our knowledge, since its militants were legal.

Today Comrade Germain criticizes us for using the legal loopholes which our workers got in their struggles. We believe that before criticizing, being right or wrong, he should publicly criticize himself for having supported for years and years, the disastrous policy of the official section of our country.

The strategy of workers’ control

Within the period of the strategy of “entryism *sui generis*” the majority comrades began to raise a new decennial strategy: workers’ control. This strategy was born around the year 1964, and remains to date, and comrade Germain threat us to keep for a century of centuries.

At its birth, Germain justified it with his theory of the new structure and laws of neo-capitalism: we no longer were struggling against low wages and unemployment, but against the management of the enterprises. Currently, the justification seems that it tends to change, given that the economic situation of the imperialist countries, especially in Europe, has denied Germain’s theory and put back in the agenda the “traditional” economic struggles. But the strategy remains, without further justification elaborated in full ... but it remains.

However, if we follow Trotsky we ascertain that the slogan “workers’ control” was put forward for a whole period by the right wing of communism, the Brandlerites, as opposed to Trotskyism, which denied it. It is because for Trotsky you can only propagandize it and agitate it on a revolutionary stage,

when it is raised the dual power, the socialist revolution and the nationalization of the industry. Opportunists, however, use it permanently.

“[Workers’] control is a transitional measure, under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war, and conceivable only as a bridge to the revolutionary nationalization of industry.”²⁴

Trotsky insists that this nationalization can only be done with the workers’ power and the Soviets.

“Generally speaking, control is conceivable only during the indubitable preponderance of the political forces of the proletariat over the forces of capitalism. [...] For us, therefore, the slogan of control is tied up with the period of dual power in industry, which corresponds to the transition from the bourgeois régime to the proletarian. [...] [The Brandlerites] condemn themselves when they cite the fact that they have been repeating for a number of years the slogan which is suitable only for a revolutionary period.”²⁵

Trotsky may say whatever he wants: the majority comrades, especially Comrade Germain, do not care. The first time they raised the workers’ control strategy was in 1964:

“The demand for workers’ control is, currently, the strategically central demand of socialists and of the workers movement in general.”²⁶

In the congress of 1965, long before the wave of mass struggles of the European proletariat, whose best expressions were France in May 1968 and Italy in 1969, they were saying that:

“The slogan of workers control appears as the central slogan of this stage of the struggle to which all other transitional demands lead”.²⁷

After May 1968, Mandel stated that:

“The demand for workers’ control is on the order of the day” and “The French experience of May 1968 shows one of the main reasons why the demand for workers’ control holds a prime position in a socialist strategy aimed at overthrowing capitalism in industrialized countries.”²⁸

In the European document of the majority, this line of workers’ control is given twice as essential. Among the ten core tasks for our sections, it stated:

“Systematic intervention in all agitation among workers, in all strikes and campaigns around economic demands, striving to link up these actions to the general approach outlined in the transitional program— that is, to propagandize a series of demands (essentially around the axis of the demand for workers’ control) that objectively lead the workers to challenge the authority of the bosses and of the bourgeois state and create organs of dual power.”²⁹

And at another point it insists:

“Conducting a systematic propaganda campaign in the organized workers’ movement around transitional demands and helping in the regeneration of this movement by getting these demands— especially the demand of workers’ control — adopted by-radicalizing factions of the trade-union movement and in the traditional workers.”³⁰

²⁴ Trotsky, Leon: “What Next? Vital questions for the German proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 242.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 243.

²⁶ Mandel, Ernest: “La economía del neocapitalismo” [“The economy of neo-capitalism”], in *Ensayos sobre el neocapitalismo* [Essays on neocapitalism], ERA, Mexico, 1971.

²⁷ Eighth Congress Fourth International: “The Evolution of Capitalism in Western Europe”, in *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 1966, pp. 66-75.

²⁸ Mandel, Ernest: The Debate on Workers’ Control, in *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 30 No. 3, May-June 1969, p. 1 and 3.

²⁹ International Majority Tendency: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p.17.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 17.

Workers' control and the issue of power

This position to abstract a slogan of our program (workers' control) to turn it into the axis of our entire policy is something typical of the majority, since the same has been done with guerrilla warfare and armed struggle for Latin America. But in this case is much more dangerous because by its own logic this line can fulfil the same reformist role that the slogan "socialism" of the Social Democracy pre-war.

Like any wrong position it goes against the experience of the class struggle. The problem of power, according to the same document, will be raised because:

"The nature of the period not only imparts an objectively political thrust to mass struggles, but also carries with it an urgent need to raise the question of political power..."³¹

Moreover, the same document acknowledges that the detonator of the European mass movement explosions may be varied:

"... economic demands (1919-20, 1925-26); acute economic crisis (1923), abrupt change in the economic situation (1960-61); reaction to a violent move by the far right (Spain 1936, Greece 1963); hope for fundamental political change (June 1936 in France), student revolt (May 1968); monetary crisis; colonial war; defence of rights y the workers' movement has won (right to strike, trade-union freedom, etc.). It would be futile to attempt to set up a possible timetable in advance."³²

Comrade Germain and the rest of the majority comrades tell us that there will be different triggers for mobilizing the masses; we are told that "the nature of the period... also carries with it an urgent need to raise the question of political power", and these two statements are quite correct. But then they tell us that in all situations our main slogan should be that of workers' control. This is very dangerous, and can make us fall into reformism. In the first place, because workers' control is not a slogan of power and, secondly, because we delude the masses that workers' control under the bourgeois regime can solve this whole range of problems (economic crises, violent displacement towards right, colonial war, etc.).

Can socialism be built without seizing power?

Following the logic of this way of posing workers' control as the central task for an indefinite time, we may even say that socialism can be built without taking power. That is, our main task is no longer to educate workers on the need to take power, but on workers' control and socialist administration within the bourgeois state. The comrade Mandel approaches dangerously to this conclusion:

"In the wave of strikes sweeping Europe since May 1968, the sections and militants of the Fourth International have pursued basically a threefold objective:

1) to popularize, to extend regionally, nationally and internationally, the most outstanding experiences of workers struggle both for the claims advanced as for the form of organization and combat taken.

2) to propagate, to root within the working masses the challenges to the bosses' authority, the struggle for workers' control. It is through this challenge that workers will gain the consciousness and the practice necessary to pass in future strikes and revolutionary explosions to occupation of factories and the socialization of production.

3) to stimulate the creation of organs of strike management controlled by the masses of workers, this is to say, democratically elected strike committees to account regularly to the general assemblies of strikers.

If workers learn to manage their own strikes, the sooner will they also learn to manage their own state tomorrow and their own economy."³³

³¹ Ibid. p. 12.

³² Ibid. p. 14.

³³ Mandel, Ernest: "Speech of 16 May 1971 in honour of the Paris Commune" in *Intercontinental Press*, vol. 9, No. 25, p. 608.

Fortunately, we do not know of any other theoretical positions of majority comrades that match this of comrade Mandel. But the “strategy” of workers’ control is there and, in fact, the only theoretical attempt to justify it has been given so far by Mandel-Germain. Following this path, the danger that lurks in our International is clear, start with the “strategy” of workers’ control to finish abandoning the struggle for power.

Two interpretations and two policies for the general strike of May 1968 in France

Just as the incorrectness of the decennial strategy of “entryism *sui generis*” manifested in all its tragic consequences, among others, in the cases of Bolivia 1952-55 and Argentina 1955, the decennial strategy of “workers’ control” is displayed, with all its terrible dangers, in comrade Mandel’s interpretation of the general strike of May 1968, and in the policy which, according to him, should have been applied.

Trotsky and the general strike

There is a phrase of Trotsky which should be the introduction to any analysis of a general strike anywhere in the world. Even more for the strike in 1968 in France, since Trotsky is talking about the French situation on the eve of the general strike of 1936.

“Above all the tasks and partial demands of our epoch there stands the *QUESTION OF POWER*.”³⁴

This categorical and definitive assertion by Trotsky is stated in his analysis of the meaning of a general strike:

“The fundamental importance of the general strike, independent of the partial successes which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner...

“Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: *Who will be the master of the house?*”

“The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers. Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power.”³⁵

“The general strike is, by its very essence, a political act. It opposes the working class, as a whole, to the bourgeois state ... [and] it poses directly the question of the conquest of power by the proletariat.”³⁶

Mandel and the general strike of May 1968

For Mandel, this is not true. He said that in May 1968 the French workers...

“...they used much more radical forms of struggle than in 1936, [or] in 1944-46...”³⁷

However, Comrade Mandel has no qualms in holding that:

³⁴ Trotsky, Leon: “Once Again, Whither France?” In *Whither France?*, ob. cit. p. 71.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 71 and 72.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 73.

³⁷ Mandel, Ernest: “Workers under neo-capitalism”, in *International Socialist Review*, November-December 1968, p. 15.

“Had they been educated during the preceding years and months in the spirit of workers’ control, they would have known what to do: elect a committee in every plant that would begin by opening the company books; calculate for themselves the various companies’ real manufacturing costs and rates of profit; establish a right of veto on hiring and firing and on any changes in the organization of the work; replace the foremen and overseers chosen by the boss with elected fellow workers (or with members of the crew taking turns at being in charge).”³⁸

In a unique situation, a few days, which once passed nobody knows when it will repeat again, when what was raised was the issue of power, when what he had to do was to raise it and denounce opportunistic organizations for not doing so, Mandel advises: “elect a committee in every plant... begin by opening the company books; calculate for themselves the various companies’ real manufacturing costs and rates of profit, etc.”. A consistent Trotskyist would have said the opposite: “If they had been trained over the years and months proceeding in the spirit of socialist revolution, of the urgent need for the working class to take power as leader of exploited people, they would have known what to do; to transform the general strike in a struggle for power.”

Fortunately, neither the comrades of the French section, nor the majority which heads the International, nor even Mandel himself applied this line in May 1968. On the contrary, their policies towards the mass mobilization were essentially correct. We are not in charge of explaining this contradiction between the theory which is defended and the practice being performed. We just want to highlight the dangers that would result in the consistent application of such a theory. In the largest general strike that the French proletariat made in this century, when raised to take the Elysee, the “strategy” of workers’ control and the theory that goes with it, want to lock the French Trotskyists in the accounting houses of factories to ... “calculate costs and profits”!

The strategy of the Ninth Congress for Latin America

We argue that the Ninth Congress voted for Latin America one of the famous long term “strategies” of comrade Germain: the rural guerrilla strategy, with the name “strategy of armed struggle”. Comrade Germain argues that it is not what they voted for: instead of recognizing the error of comrade Maitan in the Ninth Congress, Germain becomes his defence attorney and attacks Hansen, through a cheap accusation, of misinterpreting him.

“Let us add that an objective reading, without preconceptions, of the Ninth Congress document makes it possible to conclude that it by no means advocates ‘a strategy of rural guerrilla warfare’ (to say nothing of ‘a strategy of the *foco guerrillero*’), but the strategy of armed struggle, which is an entirely different thing. To try to give the opposite impression, Comrade Hansen has been forced to single out *a single sentence* in the document adopted by the Ninth World Congress and polemicize against it instead of analysing the document as a whole and polemicizing against its general line.”³⁹

This argument, primarily highlighting “a single sentence”, seeks to confuse to the very end, giving the impression that comrade Hansen has taken the single sentence in favour of the “rural guerrilla warfare” and uses it, along with the minority, to carry out a false and tendentious polemic. Comrade Hansen quotes this sentence because it best summarizes the position of the entire document of the majority. But it has a number of similar, the same or in the same sense. Let’s do the “objective reading” comrade Germain ask of us:

First phrase:

³⁸ Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers’ Control”, in International Socialist Review, May 1969 p. 3.

³⁹ Germain, Ernest y Knoeller, Martine: “The Strategic Orientation of the Revolutionists in Latin America” ob. cit., pp. 13-14.

“Even in the case of countries where large mobilisations and class conflict in the cities may occur first, civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the main axis for a whole period will be the rural guerrilla warfare, the term ...”⁴⁰

Second phrase:

“In this sense, the armed struggle in Latin America primarily means ‘guerrilla warfare’.”⁴¹

We note that this clarifies the previous sentence, so it is implied that the “guerrilla warfare” it talks about is the rural guerrilla, unless the drafter of the document has lost, along with the political orientation, his grammatical orientation.

Third phrase:

“The strict selection of this central axis must be complemented ...”⁴²

This is a second complementary sentence of the first where “central axis” is equivalent to “main axis”, i.e., the “rural guerrilla warfare”.

Fourth phrase:

“Under the prospect of a prolonged civil war with rural guerrilla warfare as its principal axis ...”⁴³

This is the phrase that begins thesis 18 and summarizes the previous thesis 17, which is the one Hansen used to gain time. Here the fundamental concept of the entire document is repeated: the rural guerrilla warfare is the central or main axis.

Fifth phrase:

“In a situation of pre-revolutionary crisis such as Latin America is now experiencing on a continental scale, guerrilla warfare can in fact stimulate a revolutionary dynamic, even if at the start the attempt may seem to have come from abroad or to be unilateral (which was the case with Che’s Bolivian guerrilla movement).”⁴⁴

This is an explanatory phrase of the one quoted in fourth place.

Sixth phrase:

“In fact, in most of the countries the most probable variant is that for a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie in considerable measure will provide the cadres of the movement.”⁴⁵

While not speaking directly of rural guerrillas as the main axis, this is the most important phrase because it suggests that peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle and the cadres will be provided by the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. What kind of struggle is this? There is no doubt that it is the rural guerrilla, unless the document considered the possibility that the peasants as a class, go down to the city “for an extended period” to bear main weight of the struggle, led by students (cadres of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie).

Seventh phrase:

“Take advantage of every opportunity not only to increase the number of rural guerrilla nuclei but also to promote forms of armed struggle especially adapted to certain zones ...”⁴⁶

⁴⁰ “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol. X No. 4, 14 July 1969, p. 720.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 720.

⁴² Ibid. p. 720.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 720.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 720.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 719.

According to this quote, the rural guerrilla is (“not only”) the fundamental: and the subsidiary (“but also”) are other forms of struggle. But let’s invert the reasoning: why doesn’t the document say (as *Rouge* proposes for Chile) “to take advantage of every opportunity not only to increase the workers’ militias, peasant, neighbourhood, area, NCOs committees, of united defence from bourgeois gangs, etc....”? The document does not say it because this is not its conception. Its conception is that the “central axis” is the rural guerrilla” and other forms of struggle, adapted to other areas, are subsidiaries, that should be promoted after having guaranteed the rural guerrilla nuclei.

Eighth phrase: Comrade Maitan makes the same interpretation as Hansen.

“Taking into account the geographical conditions, the demographic structures of the majority of the population, and the technical and military considerations that Che himself insists on, it follows that the most probable variant will be that of rural guerrilla warfare at continental scale.”⁴⁷

This is explained to us by comrade Maitan, author of the document and reporting officer of the Ninth Congress, in his article “Cuba, Military Reformism and Armed Struggle in Latin America”. Do comrades Germain and Knoeller agree in this interpretation by Maitan of the majority’s positions? This is like ours and diametrically opposed to that of Germain. Why doesn’t comrade Germain polemise with Maitan to show him that’s not what the resolution of the Ninth Congress said? Why does he denounce US for making a false controversy?

The conclusions are obvious. The first is optical: in politics, four eyes willing to confuse see less than a blind person. The other is political, and categorical: there is not a single sentence, as Germain hints, but many, which specify the meaning of the whole document voted by the Ninth Congress. And its meaning is that the “main axis” “throughout a period” will be the “rural guerrilla”.

This attempt to confuse the discussion is not the only one. So let’s clarify the differences that occurred during the Ninth World Congress.

First difference: about the “main axis” of our activity.

For the majority the “civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the main axis for a whole period will be the rural guerrilla warfare” from the perspective of a prolonged civil war.

For the minority this strategy was false because:

“The key task facing the vanguard in the Latin American, as elsewhere, still remains the construction of the revolutionary Marxist party. This takes priority over all questions of tactics and strategy in the sense that these must be directed to achieve this end, as a decisive link in the revolutionary process...”

“Construction of the party must be viewed and presented as the central task, the main orientation, the almost exclusive preoccupation of the vanguard. And the explosiveness of the situation in Latin America situation does not lessen the need, it intensifies it.”⁴⁸

Sometime later, the minority insisted:

“What the Fourth International should do, by every conceivable means is insist on the fundamental task *at the present stage*. This is to begin at the beginning — to assemble sufficient cadres to start serious construction of Leninist combat parties.”⁴⁹

Specifically, the minority considered a complete mistake the orientation towards “rural guerrilla warfare”, which led us away from a seemingly more modest task: to capture Trotskyist cadres and begin the construction of the Trotskyist parties closely linked to the mass movement. Given the weakness of Latin American Trotskyist movement, we thought this was the only immediate and viable

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 720-721.

⁴⁷ Maitan, Livio: “Cuba, Military Reformism and Armed Struggle in Latin America” *Intercontinental Press*, 20 April 1970, p. 360.

⁴⁸ Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, *International Information Bulletin*, No. 3, February 1969, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Hansen, Joseph: “A contribution to the discussion on revolutionary strategy in Latin America,” *International Information Bulletin*, No. 6, July 1970, p. 9.

task. The alternative was suicide, it would lead us to not win anything in the mass movement and destroy the possibility of building the party.

Second difference: about the classes and locations that will be mobilized in the post-Congress period.

For the majority categorically:

“The most probable variant is that for a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle.”⁵⁰

To avoid further discussion, the thesis continues clarifying the role of the proletariat and the urban masses:

“This means that the leading role of the proletariat can be exercised under diverse forms: either directly by the wage workers (industrial workers, miners or agricultural workers) participating at the head of the revolutionary struggles, which will doubtless be the case in only a minority of Latin American countries; or indirectly, the leadership of these struggles being in the hands of organizations, tendencies, or cadres issuing from the workers movement; or in the historic sense of the term, by means of the program and theories issuing from Marxism. The completion of the revolution into a socialist revolution is in any case inconceivable without wide mobilization and very broad participation of the proletariat”.⁵¹

What this means to say is that in the years to come, immediately, the working class and the urban masses in Latin America are not going to do anything important; they will not be the axis of the revolutionary process, except for a minority of countries. The proletariat, absent as a class from the revolutionary process, would have to play its role “indirectly” through “organizations, tendencies, or cadres issuing from the workers movement” or “by means of the program and theories issuing from Marxism...” This is just the modern version of Stalin’s theory, as criticized by Trotsky, of substitutionism of classes for organizations and programs. The anti-proletarian mania of this thesis in relation to the more or less immediate perspectives is so great that it doesn’t even leave the agricultural proletariat a role of some significance. We have to admit, the document is consistent to the end. “For a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle”. Logically, the urban proletariat and masses, as well as the cities, passed into the background.

For the minority this social orientation of the work was directly criminal, since the struggle was moving to the cities and the working class. Here’s a strict proof:

“So far as the strategy of our movement is concerned, the main characteristics of this thrust of the youth in a revolutionary direction are 1) its occurrence in urban centres, 2) its involvement of considerable masses, 3) its tendency to try to link up with the workers or other sectors of the masses and to draw them into action.”⁵²

Third difference: on the immediate and main for our Latin American sections to execute.

For the majority:

“This is why the technical preparation cannot be conceived merely as one of the aspects of revolutionary work, but as the fundamental aspect on a continental scale, and one of the fundamental aspects in the countries where the minimum conditions have not yet been met.”⁵³

This technical preparation is combined with the “main axis”, “rural guerrilla warfare”, to give us a strict practical conclusion:

“... the term [referring to the rural guerrilla warfare] having primarily a geographical-military meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even preponderantly of peasant composition)”.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit. p. 720.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 719.

⁵² Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., pp. 11.

⁵³ “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit. p. 720.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 720.

In plain speaking: we must prepare the guerrilla in the best place, whether we have peasants who support us at first or not. Just as previously the struggle of the urban masses was liquidated for a whole stage, now the need for peasant support at the beginning of the fight has been left behind. Now it's more than enough with a nuclei of fighters!, without any solid contact with any sector of the mass movement, to start rural guerrillas.

For the minority the immediate task was to develop a transitional program to penetrate and work on the urban masses, tending to mobilize them. And we said it so:

“Thus if the concept of rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period is adopted as the principal axis of revolutionary work, then the problem of mobilizing the urban masses becomes somewhat irrelevant and along with it most of the Transitional Program.”⁵⁵

Fourth difference: about the organisms of the mass movement where we must work.

For the majority, consistent until the end with the “main axis” of the “rural guerrilla”, the traditional, especially workers, organizations of the mass movement were so worthy of contempt that they're not even named as mandatory workplaces. Instead, the majority gives precise information about which organizations we have to penetrate at continental scale:

“Integration into the historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban Revolution and the OLAS, which involves, regardless of the forms, integration into the continental revolutionary front which the OLAS constitute.”⁵⁶

For the minority, logically, this was a suicidal policy.

“The impression given by this is that just as the main orientation advanced in the draft resolution on Latin America appears to be an adaptation to the orientation of the Cuban approach at the present level of development, so the prescription of working as an ‘integral part’ of the OLAS appears to be an adaptation to the organizational level they have reached.”⁵⁷

Indeed, only taking the same line as the Cubans at the time (rural guerrilla warfare on a geographical military basis) our entryism to OLAS could be explained.

From the minority, we argued we should keep independent, and leave the door open to common actions or fronts with the Cubans.

We've outlined the four basic differences. The militants of our movement must check against reality to seriously decide on who has been right.

1) No section carried out the rural guerrilla: we all dedicated ourselves to “collect cadres” in order to build the Party.

The majority stated that “the main axis for a long period will be the rural guerrillas”.

The minority argued that we had to “gather enough cadres to seriously start building Leninist parties of combat”.

The reality shows that nowhere did our sections carry out the rural guerrillas. The Bolivian section tried to do so for years without success and with catastrophic results. In all countries — even those who voted for the resolution of the Ninth Congress— no party started the armed struggle, devoted only to “gather enough cadres”. The only exception was the PRT (Combatiente), which has now broken with our International and whose experience, as we saw, confirmed the positions of the minority.

2) The struggle was carried out by workers in the cities and not the peasants in the countryside.

The minority argued that the weight of the struggle was to manifest “in urban centres” with “considerable mass participation” and the “tendency to try to link workers and other sections of the masses and lead them to action”.

⁵⁵ Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., p. 11.

⁵⁶ “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit. p. 722.

⁵⁷ Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., p. 10.

The reality shows that in the last four years there was not a single peasant mobilization of importance. The only exception was Chile, where, in any case, the working class and urban mobilization is infinitely more important (as reaffirmed by the *Rouge* article which refers to the need for many more urban than peasant organisms).

3) *Our main task was to mobilize the masses and not the “technical preparation”.*

The majority stated that the “technical preparation” was the “fundamental aspect at continental scale”.

The minority argued that the essential task was to “mobilize the urban masses developing a transitional program”.

The reality of the past four years is there to prove who was right. It is in the hands of the majority to explain why the only group which carried out its call to “technical preparation” as a “fundamental aspect” broke with the International.

4) *No section entered the OLAS, we kept as independent Trotskyist parties.*

The majority stated that we had to integrate “into the continental revolutionary front which the OLAS constitute”.

The minority argued that we had to remain independent and leave the door open for united fronts with the Cubans.

Reality shows that not a single section entered the OLAS, among other reasons because the OLAS strategy of “rural guerrilla warfare” failed so miserably by the rise of the workers and urban mass movement, that Cubans indeed dissolved the organization they had built for centralizing rural guerrillas.

The differences are there, and are categorical. The facts, hard facts of objective reality, are also categorical. There’s only missing a statement, no less categorical, from our International.

Our real differences on the armed struggle regarding four examples

As we have seen, the objective facts of the class struggle knocked to the canvas the rural guerrilla strategy advocated by the majority comrades at the Ninth Congress. This resulted in a quick tactical shift by comrade Germain, who now denies having sustained such a strategy, and argues instead that it was the “strategy of armed struggle”. What differentiates this new long-term strategy of comrade Germain from that he held four years ago? That it no longer speaks about the peasantry or rural guerrilla, or the entrance into OLAS. What do they agree on? In that it still argues that the Party must take the initiative in the armed struggle and must have as a fundamental task the technical preparation for it.

To theoretically justify this position, comrade Germain uses four historical examples. According to him, what Trotsky proposed for China between 1925 and 1927, and for the fight against fascism, and what Hugo Blanco did in Peru, was to take the initiative of the armed struggle into the hands of the party, after being technically prepared. And the triumph of the Cuban Revolution was an example of the correction of this line, which can be repeated.

We will show that all this is not true, and that comrade Germain tries to adapt reality to his theories actually making false interpretations of Trotsky’s positions, distorting the Peruvian experience and concealing the truth in the case of Cuba. We will take each of these examples in chronological order.

Trotsky on China

To understand something about the Trotskyist position to China, one has to start by reading the full quote from Trotsky which comrade Germain gives:

“Neither the workers nor the peasants would have followed the national bourgeoisie if we ourselves had not dragged them by a rope. Had the Comintern pursued any sort of correct policy, the outcome of the struggle of the communist party for the masses would have been pre-determined — the Chinese proletariat would have supported the communists, while the peasant war would have supported the revolutionary proletariat.

“If, at the beginning of the Northern expedition we had begun to organize Soviets in the ‘liberated’ districts (and the masses were instinctively aspiring for that with all their might and main) we would have secured the necessary basis and a revolutionary running start, we would have rallied around us the agrarian uprisings, we would have built our own army, we would have disintegrated the enemy armies”.⁵⁸

As interpreted by Germain, Trotsky was talking about a party of only 10 to 15 thousand members, two thirds of which were in the cities, immersed in a country of 450 million people. Regarding this party:

“He was, thereby, regretting that a few thousand communists, no more, didn’t start to organise a communist-led peasant army.”⁵⁹

Then comrade Germain suggests that if Trotsky did this, why cannot we recommend our sections, which are as weak as the Chinese CP was at that time, also to begin building an army?

It is no coincidence either that, although he quoted it, comrade Germain has deleted the first phrase in the paragraph quoted. There Trotsky is not referring at all to the Chinese Communist Party, but to the International. Even in the case that he really was recommending to create the army; does Germain think we can compare the Communist International in 1927 with our International in the present? The Chinese CP might be stronger or weaker than our sections, but of what there is no doubt is that the Communist International was infinitely, qualitatively, stronger than ours, from all points of view, including the military.

But let’s move on to the matter of content. Trotsky’s policy for China was not essentially to build a peasant army, as Germain thinks. What Trotsky proposed was to have a correct policy, which was not synthesized in building an army, but in achieving political independence of the CP and the Chinese working class in relation to the Kuomintang and to raise the slogan of soviets:

“The chief significance of the Soviets was to be that of *opposing the workers and peasants to the Guomindang bourgeoisie* and its Left Guomindang agency. The slogan of Soviets in China meant above all the break with the suicidal and infamous “bloc of four classes” and the withdrawal of the communist party from the Kuomintang. The centre of gravity consequently lay not in bare organizational forms, but in the class line.”⁶⁰

Now let’s get back to the quote by Germain. For him, the “most fatal consequence” of the “Chinese CP in 1925-27” was “the refusal to stimulate, organise, coordinate and arm the peasant uprisings, and tie them together with the communist-led urban working class to create a powerful alliance...”⁶¹

In his entire interpretation the word “soviets” does not exist.

For Trotsky, there was a wrong political orientation. What was the correct orientation? Start creating the Soviets from the beginning. “If (this is a conditional preposition, isn’t it comrade Germain?) at the beginning of the Northern expedition we had begun to organize Soviets ... we would have secured the necessary basis ... we would have rallied around us the agrarian uprisings, we would have built our own army, we would have disintegrated the enemy armies”.⁶²

⁵⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “The Third International After Lenin”, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1970, p. 185.

⁵⁹ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 22.

⁶⁰ Trotsky, Leon: “The Third International After Lenin”, op. cit. p. 205.

⁶¹ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 21.

⁶² Trotsky, Leon: “The Third International After Lenin”, op. cit. p. 185-186.

That is to say, for Trotsky, the only way to gain the necessary basis, to concentrate around the communists the agrarian insurrections and to create the army, was to start by creating the Soviets. And the orientation of creating soviets is a very political orientation, “a line of class behaviour”, which has nothing to do with the famous “party initiatives in the armed struggle” and “technical preparations” of comrade Germain.

Trotsky and the fight against fascism

We come now to the problem of the fight against fascism. Comrade Germain transfers to Europe his “strategy” of “preparing technically” and “taking the initiative of the armed struggle”. As for the most part Europe has no dictatorial regimes against which to fight, he decides that the goal of our “initiatives” should be the fascist danger. And he argues:

“It is the capacity of our comrades, wherever they have reached a minimum strength, to take the initiatives of open confrontation with the fascists, which the mass organisations still fail to take.”⁶³

To endorse this position, he again resorts to the false interpretation of Trotsky. Both in the quote that Germain cites as in and others of the same work, it is crystal clear that what Trotsky thinks is the exact opposite of what Germain interprets. To arrive at this interpretation, Germain “forgets” what is the question Trotsky is answering in the paragraph he quoted.

“Question: *Does the party itself create the defence group with its own members?*

“Trotsky: The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathizers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defence organization. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions.”⁶⁴

Then, comrade Germain “forgets” the final sentence, because in it is very clear that the defence against fascism is tied to our trade union activity:

“In Minneapolis where we have very skilled powerful comrades we can begin and show the entire country.”⁶⁵

Finally Germain “forgets” the rest of the article, including Trotsky’s response to the question on how to practically launch defence groups against fascism. Here’s the answer:

“Trotsky: It is very simple. Do you have a picket line in a strike? When the strike is over we say we must defend our union by making this picket line permanent.”⁶⁶

In short, the whole of Trotsky’s position is summarized in the following:

“We can become victorious the same way but we must have a small armed body with the support of the big body of workers.”⁶⁷

It is clear that for Trotsky, the key is always having the support of the population, the working class, from the beginning. We must act in “quarters where we have sympathizers” or with “workers who will defend us”, or “in Minneapolis” (the main centre of trade union work of the Party), to form pickets “in our unions,” and never to create an “independent defence organization.”

All this has nothing to do and is the opposite of what comrade Germain raises. For him, the party has to create an independent defence organization (the essential task is “technical training”), which must act even without support of the workers (“take the initiative”) in confronting fascism. Comrade Germain has every right to defend its decennial tactic of “armed struggle” transferred to Europe, but he has no right to falsify Trotsky to make this defence.

⁶³ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 25.

⁶⁴ “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program” (June 1938), in Fourth International, Vol.7 No.2, February 1946, pp.53-59.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The Cuban Revolution

Nor is Comrade Germain entitled to falsify the facts, as he does in the third example we are going to touch on, that of the Cuban Revolution.

In this case, the comrade Germain tries to destroy comrade Camejo's argumentation, who argues correctly that the example of Cuba is practically impossible to repeat.

One of the assertions of Comrade Camejo is that the revolutionary movement in Cuba had the "semi-neutrality" of US imperialism. Germain replies that:

"The formula 'semi-neutrality of US imperialism' is simply grotesque. Washington was arming and financing Batista till the very eve of his downfall."⁶⁸

As usual, not a single word of comrade Germain is true. Our own International published (QI No. 31, July 1967) comrade Maitan's following position:

"Despite their very close ties with the Batista regime, the American imperialists did not display such aggressive hostility towards Castro's movement in 1956-59 as to deprive it of all margins for political manoeuvre, even in capitalist circles in the United States."⁶⁹

To avoid a semantic argument between "semi-neutrality" and "did not display such aggressive hostility", we turn to the facts.

Germain said that "Washington was arming and financing Batista till the very eve of his downfall". We say that Washington imposed an embargo on all weapons sent to Batista on 14 March 1958. But we also say that the Catholic Church, the largest representatives of US companies, the Yankee diplomats in Cuba (except for the Ambassador) and the surface organizations of the Yankee Freemasonry as Rotary and Lions Clubs, were fully supporting Fidel Castro.

A CIA agent reported:

"The next night, a representative group of Santiago citizens honoured me with a banquet at the Country Club. Besides Pepin Bosh attended: Manuel Urrutia, who was still a judge, Daniel Bacardi, president of the Chamber of Commerce, the rector of the Universidad de Oriente, the Reverend Father Chabebe, head of the Catholic Youth Movement, Fernando Ojeda leading exporter of coffee, the presidents of the Rotary Club, Lions Club, the Medical Association, the Bar Association, civic institutions, and other groups... The table was oblong, at one end there was an empty chair before the covered position, and a sign that had been carefully placed there with the intention for me to see and saying 'Reserved'. Fernando Ojeda, who offered the banquet stood up and turned to me. One of our compatriots had intended to attend the dinner in his honour, but — he said — he apologized for not being able to. We understand and accept his excuses because he's busy on an important mission to Cuba. His name is Fidel Castro. I asked Father Chabebe whether he considered Fidel Castro was a communist and he answered with a resounding negative. Castro asked chaplains for his rebel army — father Chabebe told me. The first chaplain, Father Guillermo Sardines, arrived at the headquarters of Castro last Thursday, the same day I sent forty boys to the mountains to join Castro. Last week I sent a gross of blessed medals up there."⁷⁰

This book is a definition by itself, since it was written by a known agent of the CIA and the U.S. State Department and is strongly in favour of Fidel Castro. We should not be surprised, then, that Dubois follows:

"Father Sardinas had left his parish in Nueva Girona on the Isle of Pinos, under an assistant and had obtained permission from the Archbishop's Palace in Havana to join the rebel forces. This contrasted with the army of Batista, who had no chaplains."⁷¹

This does not mean that imperialism and the church fought against Batista. Yankee imperialism played a double game: the ambassadors were with Batista, the consuls and senior officials, with Castro;

⁶⁸ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 22.

⁶⁹ Maitan, Livio: "Major Problems of the Latin-American Revolution", in *International Socialist Review*, Vol.28 No.5, September-October 1967.

⁷⁰ Dubois, Jules: *Fidel Castro*, Grijalbo, Buenos Aires, 1959, pp. 137-138. [Translator's Note: This quote and the following have been back translated as the English original, *Fidel Castro, Liberator or Dictator*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1959 was not available for corroboration.]

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

they had an embargo of weapons for Batista, but they met the last delivery of rockets agreed before the embargo. Everything indicates an ambivalent, or “semi-neutrality” policy.

Relations between the Castro movement and the State Department existed and were fluid. Yankee imperialism recognized Castro and his movement long before Batista fell. On 26 August 1958, the Civil Revolutionary Front, in agreement with Fidel Castro, sent to Eisenhower a letter of “solidarity” and “congratulating” him for his recent speeches. It requested, on behalf of that solidarity, the withdrawal of the military missions in Cuba. On 13 October, the State Department replies in a most cordial way that note, although it does not accept the request. I.e., it is recognition of fact.

Finally, we will hear from a witness who knows a lot more of the Cuban Revolution than comrade Germain: “Che” Guevara. In his private letters to Ernesto Sabato (a known Argentine writer), Guevara agrees that Sabato is right when he “points out that the Castro movement is supported by the oligarchy, this is, the most reactionary sectors in Argentina. But he adds something else:

“What never crossed the Americans mind was that what Fidel Castro and our movement say so naively and drastically be the truth of what we thought to do: we constituted for them the great scam of this half century, we told the truth apparently distorted. Eisenhower said we betrayed our principles; it is part of their truth, we betrayed the image they had of us, as in the story of lying shepherd, but backwards, and we were not believed either.”⁷²

And, anticipating objections of the Germain, who would qualify as “grotesque” the support to Fidel Castro by an entire sector of Yankee imperialism (linked to the Jesuits and part of the Freemasonry) and the entire Latin American oligarchy, “Che” explained the reasons for this support with the following definition of Fidel Castro and his movement:

“After all, Fidel Castro was a candidate to parliament for a bourgeois party, as bourgeois and as respectable as could be the Radical Party in Argentina, which followed the trail of a missing leader, Eduardo Chibas, of characteristics that we could find resembling those of the same Yrigoyen.”⁷³

To this quote we just have to add the clarification that Yrigoyen was the darling of British imperialism (that dominated Argentina as Yankee imperialism dominated Cuba).

(We argue that the experience of the Cuban Revolution has nothing to do with a handful of militants who prepared technically and took upon themselves the initiative of the armed struggle. They already had, before the beginning of the struggle, a great mass influence through precisely that party which Chibas had led. That it was a bourgeois party is irrelevant, because the question is whether the mass support was earned before or after initiating the armed struggle. But this is another topic of discussion).

What remains clear is that even if the Cuban Revolution was the result of the initiative of a handful of revolutionary in the armed struggle, conditions were absolutely exceptional and virtually impossible to repeat. Comrade Germain may tell us if any guerrilla movement after Castro had the tolerance of imperialism and support of Latin American exploiters. He may tell us if they all did not end in total disaster because they had, from the beginning, the opposition of imperialism and the national bourgeoisie and did not have any kind of mass support, precisely because of taking into their own hands, isolated from the masses, the initiative of the armed struggle. Unless comrade Germain has gotten semi-neutrality guarantees by imperialism and the support from the native oligarchy, his “long-term strategy of armed struggle” will take the sections of our International that apply it to disasters similar to the Castrist guerrillas of our continent.

Hugo Blanco in Peru

Very briefly, we will finish with the fourth example of comrade Germain: the activity of Hugo Blanco in Peru. We have nothing to add to what was said by comrade Hansen in his latest work. We can only say that comrade Germain is fully aware of this misrepresentation he does. Does comrade Germain forget that everything Hugo Blanco did, he did it from the peasant unions, and not from a

⁷² Guevara, Ernesto “Letter to Ernesto Sabato of 12 April 1960” in *Claves Políticas* [Political Keys], Ernesto Sabato, Alonso Editor, Buenos Aires, 1972, p. 90.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 88.

“revolutionary army” created by the party on its own initiative? Does comrade Germain forget that the armed struggle emerged as a need of the peasant movement (organized in a union by Hugo Blanco) to defend against the repression unleashed by the regime before the massive land occupation? What does this armed struggle, the result of a moment of the class struggle in Peru, have to do with the “strategy of armed struggle” of the majority for all of Latin America and for all moments of the class struggle? Does comrade Germain forget that the said armed struggle emerged as a need of the peasant mass movement and not as an initiative of a vanguard party?

Comrade Germain’s four examples, interpreted appropriately, clearly illuminate this discussion. This is not about, although Comrade Germain insists on it, to define oneself for or against the armed struggle. It is about the majority intending to enact that the armed struggle, or the preparation for it, is our central task for an entire long period of class struggle. It is about the majority intending that said armed struggle be an initiative taken by the party. It is about the minority understanding that the armed struggle is one more task of the mass movement, which can only be carried forward when the mass movement is willing to it, which will only be raised at the precise moment when the class struggle otherwise requires it, which will only be successful if done from the bodies of the mass movement. It is about, finally, the minority refusing to take the armed struggle as a strategy in itself for every stage of the class struggle, but is willing, in this as in any other task, to get to the head of mass movement, when its own struggle drives it to the need to carry it out. The best proof of this is that comrade Hugo Blanco, the most important mass leader of Trotskyism in the last 20 years (at least), who had in his hands the responsibility to take up arms when the situation of the class struggle demanded it, who knew how to fulfil that responsibility, does not belong to the majority but it is in the ranks, and in the leadership of our Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency.

Chapter VI

Mandelist party or Leninist party?

The new character of our parties

We believe that the origin of the differences we have with the majority in all areas — theoretical, programmatic, strategic and tactical — stem from a fundamental difference: the one we have about the method of construction of our sections. The majority comrades, among whom Germain - Mandel stand out with his theoretical work, pose a number of definitions and tasks that seek to change the Leninist principles of party building. For them, the key sector on which we must turn our propaganda and agitation, that which defines the fundamental features of our policy is the “mass vanguard” that exists around the world. These claims have become an actual principle.¹

To ensure the success of our strategy, which would be to gain hegemony within the vanguard, we must employ two tactics: 1) conduct political campaigns whose axes are determined by the concerns of the vanguard, with the sole condition that these concerns are not opposed to the struggle of the masses,² and 2) concentrate as much as possible on making known the “exemplary” actions of the vanguard.³ Once we have won that mass vanguard, we’ll use it for two tasks. Firstly, to aid the advanced workers of the trade unions to fight against the bureaucracy. Secondly, to propagandize and agitate among these workers the need to organize in factory committees and organs of dual power in order to be prepared to meet any future wave of generalized mass struggles.⁴

To complete this scheme, Mandel elevates this conception, which at first appeared to be specific to the current stage, to the general terrain. It no longer is about how our parties function at this stage and for a region, but rather about its character around the world and throughout all of history.^{5,6} Not

¹ These are some of the quotes which cannot be disputed: “Setting our main goal as winning political hegemony within the mass vanguard...” in *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe*, op. cit. p. 14.

“... the central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967-1968 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build revolutionary qualitatively stronger revolutionary organizations in the preceding stage, to make the transition from revolutionary propaganda groups to the status to revolutionary political organizations beginning to sink roots into the proletariat” (Ibid, p. 13).

² “...organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond with the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against current of the mass struggles, and offer a chance of demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections”. (Ibid, p. 24).

³ “Our sections’ ability to centralize their forces on a regional and national level in order to break the wall of silence and indifference surrounding certain exemplary workers struggles, wildcat actions and to start off solidarity movements”. (Ibid, p. 24).

⁴ “... the fundamental orientation of the European Trotskyists must be to implant themselves in the working class, to use the weight of the mass vanguard to modify the relationship of forces between the bureaucracies and the advanced workers in the unions, the factories, the offices and on the streets, and to concentrate their propaganda and whenever possible, their agitation, on the preparation of these advanced workers for the appearance of factory committees, of organs of dual power, at the height of the next wave of generalised mass struggles massive strikes, general strikes, general strikes with factory occupations (Germain, Ernest: “In Defence of Leninism ,in defence of the Fourth International”, op cit. p 46).

⁵ “Now, instead of saying that the purpose of the party is to develop the political class consciousness of the working class, the formula becomes much more precise: The function of the revolutionary vanguard consists in developing *revolutionary consciousness* in the vanguard of the working class.” (Mandel, Ernest: The Leninist Theory of Organisation, in *International Socialist Review*, Vol.31, No.9, December 1970).

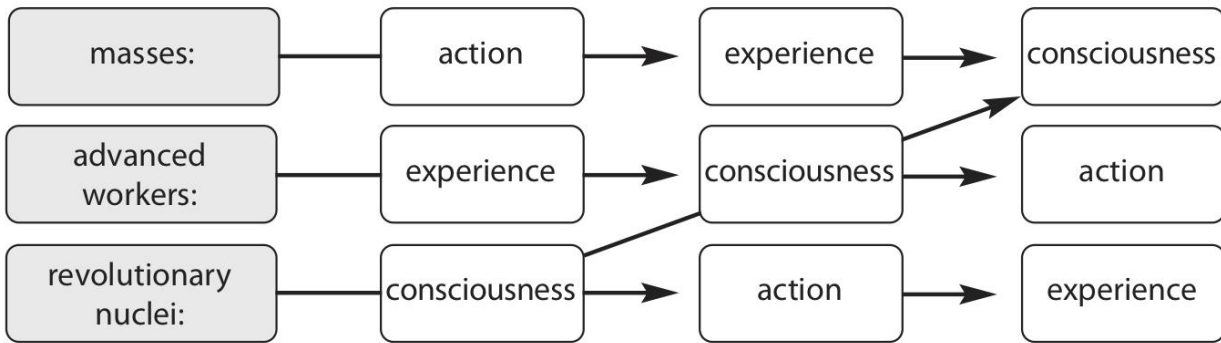
⁶ “According to Lenin’s concept of organisation, there is no self-proclaimed vanguard. Rather, the vanguard must win recognition as a vanguard (i.e., the historical right to act as a vanguard) through its attempts to

only is this conception opposed to Leninist-Trotskyist party building, but it is useless: not even to win over the vanguard (at most it would allow the vanguard to win us for its “exemplary” actions).

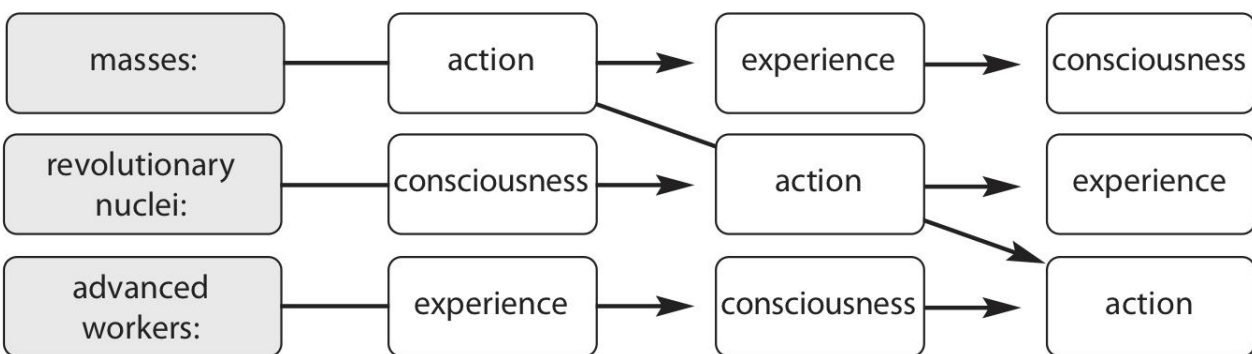
For Bolsheviks, things are otherwise: the revolutionary party has to win political hegemony in the working class and the mass movement. This is achieved by working with them, with a policy which is set forth for them to take up. Only when this happens can the bureaucracy be defeated. And only this way does the party earn its historic right to be considered the revolutionary party, the vanguard of the working class in the struggle against capitalism.

What is the vanguard?

By the way in which things are posed, it is evident that the starting point of this discussion should be a precise definition of what the vanguard is, what role it fulfils and what its relationship with the Bolshevik party is. In the work quoted above,⁷ Mandel, anticipating the conclusions of the European document, attempted to give a theoretical interpretation on the new role of the Bolshevik party and of the vanguard. In this diagram summarizing his entire conception he states that there are three fundamental segments in the formation of class consciousness: the masses, who move from action to experience, and then to consciousness; the advanced workers, who move from experience to consciousness and from consciousness to action, and the revolutionary nuclei who moves from consciousness to action and from there to experience:



Then Mandel said that inverting this scheme, you get “the next image” (?), from which we can take “practical conclusions” (?). Here it is this revealing picture:



We will stop first on the issue of the three sectors: the masses, the advanced workers (vanguard) and the party.

establish revolutionary ties with the advanced part of the class and its actual struggle.” (Mandel, Ernest: *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*, op. cit.) Note that in these last two quotes Mandel uses the term “vanguard” as equivalent of “party” and “the most advanced part of the working class”.

⁷ We refer to the quoted work, *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*.

In Marxism as used by Marx, there are structures (the classes) and superstructures (the ideologies and institutions). The masses are in the structure and the revolutionary party in the superstructure. The working class, the masses and society as a whole, have superstructures which are of two types: objective and subjective. The objective ones are institutions and the subjective ones are the ideologies and consciousness. A union, a workers paper, a party, a soviet, a nationalist publication, are objective “institutional superstructures” of the class or the mass movement. The communist and socialist parties as well. The trade unionist and reformist consciousness forms part of the ideological, subjective, superstructure of the working class. As they are bourgeois ideologies, they are “false consciousness” of the workers. The Trotskyist ideology is the “true consciousness” of the working class and it is part of the ideological or subjective superstructure. The Trotskyist party is the objective form of this ideology and, therefore, it is part of the institutional superstructure of the working class.

In the struggle to win over the working class and the mass movement, all these institutions and ideologies fight each other fiercely. This is very clear. Summarizing, we see that there are two key segments: the structure and superstructure. Or, put another way, we have the classes on the one hand and the institutions and ideologies on the other. Mandel, who speaks of three segments, parts of a true, obvious fact: there is a large vanguard. But within our outline we have nowhere to place it; it is neither a class nor an institution. Is it then necessary to revise Marxism? Namely, is there a third category? Is the vanguard located in the structure, together with the working class and the mass movement? Or is it located in the superstructure, next to the party?

All of Mandel’s theoretical work debates in this intractable problem. Aware of having to give a definition that fully justifies the discovery of this third “category”, he says: “The category of ‘advanced workers’ stems from the objectively inevitable stratification of the working class. It is a function of their distinct historical origin, as well as their distinct position in the social process of production and their distinct class consciousness.”⁸

But this definition does not solve any problems. If the decisive element is the “objective stratification” within the class, the vanguard forms part of it, i.e. the structure.

And if it is defined by its “distinct position in the social process of production”, it means that although it is still part of the structure it is another class. Finally, if it is defined by its “distinct class consciousness” it forms part, along with the rest of consciousness, of the superstructure.

This contradiction is exacerbated when Mandel describes the “advanced worker” (or vanguard). Here it turns out that this new category has a frankly surprising “essence”. It’s “that part of the working class that is already engaging in more than sporadic struggles and has already reached a first level of organisation” and “what distinguishes the workers vanguard from this mass is the fact that even during a lull in the struggle it does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, ‘by other means’. It attempts to solidify the resistance funds generated in the struggle into ongoing resistance funds — i.e., into unions. By publishing workers newspapers and organising educational groups for workers, it attempts to crystallise and heighten the elementary class consciousness generated in the struggle. It thus helps give form to a factor of continuity, as opposed to the necessarily discontinuous action of the mass, and to a factor of consciousness, as opposed to the spontaneity of the mass movement in and of itself.”⁹

What has all this to do with “distinct historical origins” “distinct position in the social process of production” and “stratification of the working class”? A union activist of the British miners fulfils part of Mandel’s requirements to be considered “advanced worker”: “he has reached a first level of organisation”, “does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle” even “during a lull”, “publishes newspapers”, “attempts to crystallise and heighten consciousness”, he “opposes spontaneity” and “helps” to “form to a factor of continuity”. But he does not meet the other requirements: he has no “distinct historical origin” from the British miners, he is not located in any “class stratification”, or occupies a “distinct position in the process of production”.

Conversely, the proletarianised technicians of the American automotive industry who do meet these last three requirements (they have a different historical origin to the American working class, they occupy a — relatively — distinct role in the social production and are particularly stratified within the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

working class), do not meet the others, at least in Detroit, where the undisputed vanguard (the “advanced workers”) have been the black workers, who practically revolted a few years ago. Currently the same happens with the immigrant workers in the French Renault.

Mandel has no way out of this contradiction, and he inexplicably mixes the quantitative with the qualitative. If the definition is quantitative, the vanguard are made of the “most conscious” workers, the “most determined fighters”, the “smartest” of the working class. That is, they form part of a structure (the working class) where they differ from the rest of their comrades for being “more” in some sense. If the definition is qualitative, i.e., those who “continue the fight”, those who “publish newspapers”, who “have reached a first level of organisation”, then the vanguard is located in the superstructure. The contradiction is ironclad and cannot be overcome; regardless of how much one wishes to develop a different definition, confirming thus Marxism — there are only two categories, not three.

But then: how to define the vanguard? If we wanted to define it using dialectical logic, we would say that the *vanguard is a phenomenon*, not an existence (a being), i.e. that unlike classes and superstructure it has no permanent existence for an entire era. The sectors that are at the forefront in the fight are the vanguard. It’s a relative term; its very name indicates the existence of a rear-guard. In a general sense, the party is the vanguard of the working class; the working class is the vanguard of society as a whole. If we look at concrete examples, in France in 1936, the workers movement was the vanguard, but in 1968 the student movement was. In Argentina, from 1955-1966 the metalworkers were, in 1968 the students, from 1969 on the workers in the automotive industry. In Peru, led by Hugo Blanco, the peasants were the vanguard; during the presidency of Velasco Alvarado the teachers were.

It is no coincidence that Germain, somewhat contradicting his own definitions, refers only to the workers’ vanguard, because that is where it becomes most evident that the vanguard is not defined by “stratification” or by levels of consciousness and organization; but rather by the role it plays in a given struggle. The character of “phenomenon” also may occur within the same struggle: in the Cordobazo the more advanced role was played by the students at the beginning, later by the workers movement and the auto workers union. In the struggles of the French proletariat after the Russian Revolution, there was a vanguard like Thorez and Marty who later, in 1936, were in the rear-guard. We could say that each uprising or struggle has its vanguard: there was the IWW or the US Socialist Party and also that who led the struggles of the CIO; from the first one emerges Cannon, from the second Farrell Dobbs; of that of the students in 1968 of which we discussed, Krivine, Dutschke and Cohn Bendit; of the oppressed nationalities, Malcolm X.

Summarizing, we can say that the vanguard is unique to each struggle, that in a same struggle different groups can alternate in that role; a sector which today is vanguard not only may tomorrow cease to be so, it may even become rear-guard. The fate of the vanguard is to be absorbed by the class or be assimilated by the superstructure.

For example, if one of them makes its activity permanent, creating an ideology and building an organization, it becomes part of the superstructure. Sometimes they are absorbed by some of the existing parties or mass organizations. Thorez became Stalinist, Reuther a bureaucrat (as Lechín in Bolivia or Vandor in Argentina); Cohn Bendit dedicated himself to cinema and Krivine to building the Trotskyist party in France. Other large sectors of the vanguard, when giving up the fight, become fused with their class, thus remaining in the structure.

Germain’s scheme, which attempts to imprison the vanguard in a “category”, instead of defining it, makes it lost to our understanding. By ignoring the unevenly developed aspects that combine to give rise to this phenomenon, he completely revised historical materialism. But this is not the only flaw in his invention.

Where do reformist organizations fit?

Germain does not know it. And, indeed, this is another mistake and far more serious than the last. It seems that for Mandel and Germain the Stalinist and social democratic organizations have nothing to do with the revolutionary party, nay, it seems that they do not exist. This is because Mandel-Germain thinks our fundamental struggle is against the false and backward consciousness of the working class and the masses, which is correct only in a general sense. Because false consciousness is not simply

made up of the wrong ideas that the vast majority of individual members of the working class or the mass movement have in their head, but it is expressed in very strong, objective institutions, large reformist organizations. They capture and organize workers, educate them in the false consciousness, print newspapers to propagandise it; and use bureaucratic and gangster methods to defend it. Our fight against this false consciousness is not a surgical procedure or a session of psychoanalysis to remove from the minds of individual workers misconceptions. It's a fight to the death against the organizations that support them, against their ideology, against their methods and fundamentally against their policy.

Can we ignore these organizations in a scheme about the relationship of our parties with the workers movement and its vanguard? Is there really such a pure relationship "party–vanguard–masses"? Not at all, our relationship with the working class is a relationship of revolutionary superstructure to class structure. And the vanguard is not the only mediator, because between us and the working class there are other superstructures, workers parties, trade unions and other class organisations, which are generally reformist and sometimes ultra-leftist. This also applies to our relationship with the mass movement. So our party cannot have a policy for the working class and to win its vanguard, without one for the unions, the Communist parties, the Social Democrats, the factory committees. We're not just saying that we cannot ignore the reformist and bureaucratic organizations, they must be destroyed. Trotsky said: "The class itself is not homogeneous. Its different sections arrive at class consciousness by different paths and at different times. The bourgeoisie participates actively in this process. Within the working class, it creates its own institutions, or utilizes those already existing, in order to oppose certain strata of workers to others. Within the proletariat several parties are active at the same time." ¹⁰

His subjectivist, phenomenological tendencies lead Mandel–Germain to forget that one of our primary objectives, if not the principal, is to wipe out the leaderships and opportunist parties from the leadership of the workers movement. Since he doesn't see what an obstacle for the development of class consciousness are the counter-revolutionary parties, he discovers something amazing: what "today holds back the working class" from "acquiring political class consciousness" is, above all, "the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification". And that is why, for Mandel–Germain, "the eye-opening function of critical social science can play a truly revolutionary role in the new awakening of the class consciousness among the masses". ¹¹

So now our main struggle is against "the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification" and we must abandon the fight we have always held against the treacherous and reformist leaders of the mass movement? So this is the best way for the masses to achieve class consciousness? We archeo-Trotskyists, will continue as usual, but additionally, to fight those leaderships, instead of opening more eyes "to critical social science" we will use a Trotskyist, against the Stalinist and Social Democrat policies.

The true relationship between action, experience and consciousness

From the Mandelian scheme whereby the masses, the vanguard and the party, travel different and difficult paths to reach consciousness, action or experience, we have eliminated the vanguard. Given that it is a phenomenon, its development cannot follow any predictable sequence. We would need to add that, while fulfilling its vanguard role, any sector then follows the same laws of development that the very mass movement and the party, albeit in a contradictory way. For Marxists, "spontaneity is the embryonic form of consciousness". Meaning that action, experience and consciousness are parts of a whole that takes part at all levels, from the party to the masses. The decisive factor of this whole is the actions of the mass movement.

We do not see anywhere this action without conscience that Mandel attributed to the working class and the masses. On the contrary, we believe that there is no action without prior conscience. The capitalist and imperialist regime, with its infamies, causes changes in the mass consciousness (hatred, rejection, indignation, anger, etc.), which precede any action. If there were a sequence we could say that it is the following: the objective reality of bourgeois society makes an impact on the consciousness of the masses and this causes their actions. But this objective reality has an impact through experience, the experience of suffering exploitation. For example, the boss exploits the worker (objective reality of the capitalist

¹⁰ Trotsky, Leon: "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat", 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit. p. 163.

¹¹ Mandel, Ernest: "The Leninist theory of organization", op. cit.

system), this suffers the exploitation (makes the experience of being exploited), feels the desire to change his situation (comes to the realization that he must fight the boss), he throws himself into the fight (takes action).

Anyway, this sequence is just a scheme because the contemporary worker, for example, before going out to struggle, goes to his union; that is his experience does not start from zero, since he relies on previous generations of workers and he does not need to repeat exactly their experiences nor to reinvent the union before every struggle. He already knows to some degree what is a strike, an occupation, a demonstration, a petition and he's conscious of that experience.

Mandel could tell us now that the working class learns only through its actions. This is true, but it does not contradict the above. It does not mean that the working class perform actions without consciousness. The actions of the mass movement connect different levels of consciousness and experience, making each action to always have as a starting point a certain level, which will lead to a higher one, which, in turn, will be the starting point for new actions.

Within the consciousness of the working class and the exploited masses, there is a struggle between true and false conceptions. For example, a social democratic worker who hates fascism, he considers it his worst enemy and wants workers unity to fight it, but at the same time, he trusts in his bureaucratic and reformist leadership. Regarding fascism he has a true conscience, regarding his leadership, and therefore the way to fight the enemy, a false one. Here, as in all knowledge, the role of practice is crucial. Only practice can assert it in his class consciousness or attack his false consciousness, only practice will enable him to overcome the false and attest what is true to reach a new level of consciousness, which will have new contradictions which can always be overcome through new actions. But to say that practice is the determining factor on the way to class consciousness does not mean that the road begins there.

Mandel might insist that, anyway, we agree with him that is only action which leads to class consciousness and, therefore, on this point we have no differences. Not true, we have two and fundamental. The first is that Mandel speaks of an unknown level of consciousness and we speak of the class consciousness, which we all know what it is. For him, each sector arrives at a different level (e.g., the vanguard at an "empirical and pragmatic" consciousness) and only the revolutionary party arrives at class consciousness (that for Mandel it is scientific and not political). The second difference is that for us class consciousness is achieved precisely through a superstructural factor, the revolutionary party, and not by mere actions and experiences of the workers movement.

The masses do not automatically reach class consciousness, the universal and historical consciousness. We could say that the mass movement approaches it asymptotically, i.e. at each stage it is closer to it, but never reaches it through its own means. The party is the only agent who can make those two lines, increasingly closer to each other, no longer be asymptotes; that the mass movement merge with the political class consciousness.

The Mandelist conception is the typical position of the European anti-conformist existentialist intellectuals and phenomenologists of the post-war, one of whose classical exponents is Sartre. It means the denial of man, and in this case, of the human nature of the mass movement and the working class, because man is distinguished from animals by being conscious, to varying degrees, of his actions.

The party abides by the same laws as the mass movement but at a qualitatively higher level. The consciousness of the revolutionary party is nothing more than the historical experience of the workers and mass movement. Instead of starting from a partial and limited consciousness and experience, the party starts from a historical and universal consciousness and experience. To extract them, the party uses a series of science combined in one — Marxism —, it elevates them to a historical, universal and abstract consciousness, and transforms them into a political Marxist program.

Scientific or political conscience?

For Mandel, "the category of the revolutionary party stems from the fact that Marxian socialism is a *science* which, in the final analysis, can be completely assimilated only in an individual and not in a

collective manner.”¹² This is so because “Marxism constitutes the culmination (...) of at least three classical social sciences: classical German philosophy, classical political economy, and classical French political science (French socialism and historiography)”¹³ and “its assimilation presupposes at least an understanding of the materialist dialectic, historical materialism, Marxian economic theory and the critical history of modern revolutions and of the modern workers movement”.¹⁴

This means that achieving class consciousness is reaching the theoretical, scientific and comprehensive understanding of Marxism as a science; to handle dialectics, sociology, economics and Marxist history. So it can only be assimilated in “an individual and not in a collective manner”, i.e., only a tiny scientific minority can reach it. This is the most defeatist concept that we can imagine; it is really an impossible task to fulfil for the workers movement. If we intend to expel from the consciousness of the workers all the ideological rubbish accumulated by the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, and replace it with “Marxist science” (the “critical social science”) we should not build a party, but we should ask imperialism to subsidize a university with capacity for hundreds of millions of workers worldwide, with scholarships for all to attend. As Mandel sees that this is impossible, he’s happy to say that only a small minority of individuals can rise to class consciousness.

This creates the problem of what to do with the masses which are unable to acquire class consciousness. Mandel–Germain “solves” this problem by liquidating the party as a revolutionary political party and attaching great importance, instead, to a specific social sector, the “technical intelligentsia”. The latter would have, according to Germain, “the possibility of its massive participation in the revolutionary process and in the reorganisation of society” which will bring to the “critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientist knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognise the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is”. In other words, this intelligentsia, which becomes revolutionary as social sector, not as part of membership of the party, has in its hands the task of awakening class consciousness. And the main task of the revolutionary party, since the key was left in the hands of intellectuals, will be to theoretically advise that technical intelligentsia, giving courses in Mandelian “critical social science”. Whereupon the role of this “critical social science” is to decree the death of the Bolshevik party. With this Mandel, among other things, gives arguments to the accusation the bourgeoisie permanently makes to the revolutionary mass movement: it is an unconscious mass dragged along and deceived by a handful of agitators who hide their political aims.

For Mandel, the working class is not able to reproduce any knowledge in mass form and this amounts to saying that society as a whole does not advance in knowledge. He believes that, just as only individuals can assimilate scientific socialism, only individuals are capable to assimilate and reproduce the knowledge accumulated by humanity from prehistoric times to present day. What Mandel is doing is confusing the specific part of knowledge (i.e., the results) with its processing. But society (or the working class or any segment thereof) advances incorporating scientific results, not the methods of research that led to these results. To deny this would be the akin to saying that an individual who has not studied medicine and pharmacopoeia would not know how to use aspirin. However, for many years mankind has made use of aspirin to get rid of headaches with good results.

What Mandel does is to develop two types of consciousness: consciousness of the vanguard, which is “empirical” and “pragmatic” and class consciousness which is “global scientific”, i.e. of “theoretical understanding”. This means that the political consciousness and the program do not exist in this modern phenomenology of the working class. For Mandel whether the worker agrees or disagrees with the program of the revolutionary party has nothing to do with his level of consciousness; it does not mean he has attained class consciousness. For Trotsky, however, “The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party.

“The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious...

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

“The progress of a class towards class consciousness, that is, the building of a revolutionary party which leads the proletariat, is a complex and a contradictory process.”¹⁵

As we see, for Trotsky the “progress of a class towards class consciousness” is an objective process.

The category of revolutionary party emerges from the fact that Marxism, as a party, is a program. Imagine a supposed party composed of great intellectuals who manage to perfection the science of Marxism, but who are not concerned with formulating a political program or with working with it in the mass movement. Is this a revolutionary party? No. A revolutionary party is obviously one in which some comrades thoroughly understand Marxism and collaborate with the immense majority of workers who militate in it, to formulate a correct political program and put it into practice.

There is a dialectic relationship between the program of the party and Marxist science: without Marxist theory (science) a revolutionary program cannot be developed. There is also a dialectical relationship between the program and the actions of the masses: if it doesn't start from the actions of the masses, the program cannot be revolutionary. And there is, as well, a dialectical relationship with the party activity: without a party putting it into practice no program is, in itself, revolutionary. All these elements come together to achieve this specific reality that is the revolutionary party with its program. And this party is “the highest degree of development of proletarian class consciousness” as Mandel would say. This is why we say that Mandel, by having magnified an essential part of the revolutionary party, the Marxist science, falls in an intellectual scientific deviation about the role of the party and class consciousness. According to Trotsky, class consciousness is the transformation of the “social class in itself” into “political class for itself”. For Mandel, following his reasoning, class consciousness should be the transformation of the working class in scientific consciousness and not in political consciousness, as for Trotsky. And this is outrageous. It is enough for massive sections of the working class to politically support the Marxist party for them to have attained class consciousness. It is enough that individuals or sectors of the class join the party and accept its program and statutes, for them to be the epitome of class consciousness. This is true even if the masses that politically support the party and individuals or sectors who join it accepting his statutes and program, do not know a single word of philosophy, economics or Marxist sociology, i.e. they have not “completely” assimilated Marxism as “science”. This was the classic criterion of Lenin and Trotsky. As we see, much less demanding than Mandel's.

Class consciousness means that the workers know that society suffers from a cancer, the capitalist and imperialist system, and that the only remedy for this cancer is our program and our party. This knowledge, as Trotsky pointed out, can and must be acquired in bulk rather than individually by the workers and mass movement. And the workers and mass movement acquires this knowledge confronting different policies put forth by the various parties that exist within it. If there is a revolutionary party that puts forward the correct policy (i.e., which responds to the historical and immediate interests of the working class) in each of the struggles, the workers and mass movement will recognize it as their Party and will have achieved political class consciousness. If this party does not exist, it cannot be done. The role of Marxism “as a science” is to transform the historical and immediate interests of the working class in a program of mobilization, that is, into a political answer for each actual struggle of the mass movement, which tends to raise the struggle towards taking power. And in this way, to win the masses for our program and our party, liquidating their treacherous and opportunistic leaderships.

A vanguardist and strategist analysis

Analysis, reality and politics

If for Mandel “critical social science” fulfilled the role of awakening class consciousness, for his disciple Germain, analysis meets an even more revolutionary role, since it “is always” to “change existing conditions in favour of the proletarian revolution, not to adapt to the given situation”.¹⁶

¹⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit. p. 163.

This dangerous assertion confuses analysis with Marxist policy, (in the same way as previously Mandel confused Marxist science with a program and revolutionary party). A slight difference with the view of Lenin, for whom: “Marxism requires of us a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of the relations of classes and of the concrete features peculiar to each historical situation.”¹⁷

That is, to carefully study reality to uncover the trends towards proletarian revolution and those which oppose it and the relations between them. This is nothing less than the characterization of the given “historical moment”. And it is the “scientific basis” that Lenin speaks of, not necessarily as Mandel believes “to wield against reality and change it” — but only to forge the tool that will change it. That tool “is political”, said Lenin. And in particular we refer to the policy of the party towards the masses to impose a revolutionary change.

The aim of analysis is to deepen, once and again, the study of a particular situation, in order to develop correct slogans that can strengthen the revolutionary tendencies and those slogans which will try to destroy the counterrevolutionary ones.

But the analysis does not meet at all the objective of “changing the existing conditions in favour of the proletarian revolution”. Policy serves that objective. Analysis and policy are therefore closely linked but are not the same. We cannot put forth a revolutionary policy if we do not start from a scientific analysis and characterization of reality. At the same time, our analysis is useless if it does not become a policy for changing that reality.

Here’s an example. *Analysis*: the workers movement is on the uprise; it is headed by the Social Democrats and Stalinists; the bourgeoisie is in crisis; there is a weak government that is forced to give democratic freedoms and to make concessions to the workers movement; a sector of the bourgeoisie prepares a fascist coup d’état; the middle class is divided: one sector tends to be dragged by fascism and another by the workers movement; our party has no mass influence but it is recognized by sectors of the vanguard. *Characterization*: we are in a pre-revolutionary situation that will result in either the workers revolution or in the fascist counterrevolution; towards the workers revolution push the rise of the class, the radicalization of a section of the petty bourgeoisie and the existence of our party; towards the counterrevolution push the bourgeoisie and imperialism, the right-wing middle class and the treacherous politics of the opportunistic leaderships of the mass movement; only if we displace these leaderships and win the leadership of the mass movement will the situation result in the workers’ revolution. *Policy*: we have to unify the workers movement in a front against fascism and begin to raise the armament of the mass organizations, denouncing the vacillations and betrayals of the reformist leaderships; in this task we have to win over the mass movement; we have to work on the army ranks; we have to propose a program that also addresses the needs of the petty bourgeoisie to drag it towards the workers’ revolution; we must work in the organizations of the workers and mass movement raising slogans emerging from the previous points: “Unity of all workers organizations and workers and popular parties against fascism”; “armed detachments from unions and soviets (if they exist)”; “democratic rights for soldiers and NCOs” etc.

The Marxist analysis of the stages

To formulate our policy, the first thing we do is to carefully define the stage of the class struggle which a country, a continent, the world, a guild, a factory, or even a school or university is going through. The basis for the Marxist analysis and characterization is the situation of the class struggle. It is a matter, above all, of a structural analysis, which should answer the following question: What is the relationship of forces between the classes in the situation we want to characterize? Upon this basis we incorporate the superstructural elements: the situation of the political parties, trade unions and other mass organizations, of the different tendencies within them, etc. The general relationship of forces between the classes is expressed in the type of regime which exists at each stage. A general shift in the balance of power (i.e. of stage) becomes in a short-time a regime change.

¹⁶ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 39.

¹⁷ Lenin, V. I. “Letters on Tactics”, 8-13 April 1917, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Vol.24, pp. 42-54.

Within these stages there are times when a class takes the offensive and times when another class takes it; within the same class different sectors can be on the offensive at each moment; sectors of the same class can sometimes fight each other. Additionally, there are the superstructures of the different classes, and the State, which have some independence from the movement of the classes, leading to contradictory situations between the ranks and the superstructure (such as when the workers movement is oriented towards the revolution and the workers' parties are oriented increasingly to the right). All these fluctuations which occur within a stage can determine sub-stages, which we must carefully specify.

Trotsky has said that there are generally four types of stages, which reflect four states in the process of class struggle: counter-revolutionary, non-revolutionary, pre-revolutionary and revolutionary. Governments reflect in a non-mechanical way the characteristics of the stage, and in them are summarized all the contradictions. Governments may be fascist, Bonapartist, semi-Bonapartist, bourgeois-democratic, Kerenskists, or Kornilovists. In the backward countries, according to Trotsky, there may be Bonapartist *sui generis* governments, which are those that, while being bourgeois, confront or resist some imperialist power for which they tend to rely on the mass or workers movement or, on the contrary, crush the workers as servants of imperialism.

The existence of these different types of government, sometimes even within the same stage, is because, like all superstructures, they reflect not only the fundamental relation exploiter–exploited, but all the other contradictions and combinations of classes or class sectors as well. They all remain bourgeois governments, but some are supported by the middle class in the cities, others are forced to rely on the peasantry or the working-class parties, in some the military-bureaucratic apparatus of state has more weight than in others, and so on. From these different combinations emerge different types of government which reflect individual situations of the class struggle. But all these governments are determined by the specific characteristics of the stage and by the regime. In a pre-revolutionary stage, there can be a democratic–bourgeois or a Kerenskyist government, but there cannot be a fascist government; in a counter-revolutionary stage there can be a fascist or a Bonapartist government, but there cannot be a bourgeois-democratic government.

This method, which consists in defining the stages and regimes by the situation of the class struggle and the governments by the particular combination of social sectors and superstructures that express it, was the method of our International in the good times of “archeo-Trotskyism”. Our policy began with the serious, tenacious, thorough and scientific attempt to define the stage which we were going through and the government we were under at any time. But, since the majority is prevalent in the leadership of our International, this method has been abandoned. Our analyses are now based solely on existing relationships within the workers movement and very especially, almost exclusively, in the situation of the vanguard. As a result of such analysis a policy emerges whose objective is no longer correctly leading the masses in the situations they must face but rather to impact the vanguard. Hence the contempt for the scientific method that Trotskyism has produced.

Previously, we would have discussed for whole months whether comrade González Moscoso's definition of the Banzer government as “fascist” was correct or not. Why? Because only by agreeing on that we could agree on the policy to follow. Currently, the majority comrades agree on the POR (C)'s policy and strategy for Bolivia, without agreeing, apparently, in the definition of the government, as González says it is “fascist” and Germain calls it “reactionary”. This might be a fluke, but unfortunately, it is the rule. The majority comrades said the policy of the ERP and the PRT(C) was an example (i.e. they approved it with praise), although the PRT(C) had defined the Argentine situation as “civil war” and the comrades of the United Secretariat as pre-revolutionary.

The “analysis-justification” of the majority

It seems impossible to agree on a policy starting from diametrically opposed characterizations of the actual situation. And indeed it is. But what happens is that the majority comrades do not start from the analysis of the situation of the class struggle, but they do almost the opposite: they formulate a strategy according to the internal phenomena of the workers and mass movement and then they concoct an analysis of reality that fits and justifies that strategy.

In the past, the sector to which they gave fundamental importance was the bureaucratic organizations of the workers movement, especially the communist parties. At that time they formulated a strategy for this sector: entryism “sui generis”. To justify it, they began by asserting that world war was inevitable and that the communist parties would be forced to lead the struggle of the masses, with the consequent emergence of centrist tendencies who would lead an entire stage of the revolution.

There was neither world war nor did the centrist tendencies emerge, but they kept inventing new analysis of reality to continue justifying this decennial strategy. We have already seen the last of them, which tells us that the strategy of entryism “sui generis” was adopted because it was anticipated that the “... radicalization process (...) would essentially happen within the traditional mass organizations”.¹⁸ And we have also seen that, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of Castro and Guevara phenomenon, it was not so.

The Ninth Congress’s policy for Latin America is another good example of this method. The majority comrades did not take into account at all the Marxist analysis of the class struggle to define their strategy. They did not give any importance to the stages each Latin American country was living. They took as reference point what the “vanguard” was discussing: rural warfare or not, armed struggle or not. From there they took their strategy. First it was the rural guerrilla, later — when it became hot potatoes as all the rural guerrillas had come to nothing — they distilled it and extracted the quintessence, the “strategy of armed struggle”. The majority comrades did not care that in Brazil there was a semi-fascist or ultra-reactionary regime, in Peru a Bonapartism “sui generis” regime, a certain nationalist shift in other Latin American countries and different stages of the class struggle in each country. They lumped them all together in one analysis for which they needed a common strategy.

The first analysis–justification for the strategy of armed struggle was to invent a kind of common regime common to all of Latin America, a regime of monolithic agreement between imperialism, the national bourgeoisie and the armed forces. After the World Congress, however, emerged governments like Torres and Allende and Onganía fell in Argentina, events that collapsed this analysis. As they had to hold the strategy, they invented a new type of regime: “military reformism”. Actually, the only thing new about those encompassed by this name, was precisely the name itself. It was Rockefeller who invented it. When he visited Latin America, he wrote a report recommending a new policy for imperialism, the “military reformism” with which imperialism, the national bourgeoisie and the military agreed. This characterization also collapsed when the bloody pro-imperialist coups of Banzer and the Chilean military junta came, for obvious reasons.

Much of Torres’ and the last part of Allende’s government had the characteristics of “Kerenskist” governments. The only approximate definition is what Germain gives us in the negative, when he qualifies Banzer as “Kornilovian”, but much in passing. Why were the majority comrades unable to foresee these governments and adopt a policy against them? Because the correct analysis meant, for example in the case of Kerenskist governments, to propose the workers united front against the reactionary coup and the formation of militias as part of the natural organizations of the mass movement. In other words, it meant there was no need for guerrillas. The correct analysis did not serve to justify their strategy.

How did we characterize the Latin American regimes? Let’s see: “The defeat or the need to confront the mass movement, as well as the economic situation, facilitated the unity of the national bourgeoisie and imperialism, and this unity allowed the emergence of dictatorial Bonapartist governments, supported by the army or directly military, and in some cases semi-fascist, as in Brazil.

“This brings up an important theoretical problem: the monolithic united front between Yankee imperialism and the national bourgeoisie... will it be within a historical period of five, ten or more years, or on the contrary, is it a temporary phenomenon as seen in all other Latin American periods of strong governments that were followed by weak governments when there was an upsurge of the mass movement? In principle, we believe that the Castroist and Guevarist solution of the problem, that these governments will remain to be like this, is false.

“The growing current crisis between national bourgeois sectors and between some of these with imperialism, combined with a much more important and decisive factor, the uprising of the mass movement, is causing crisis in all these governments. That is, they are not a monolithic and eternal

¹⁸ International Majority Tendency: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 28.

phenomenon; on the contrary, it is very temporary, as much as the regression of the mass movement lasts.¹⁹

Two years later we said: “Defining the Latin American governments and regimes is not an idle concern, but one of the most urgent revolutionary needs”. “The attempt to ignore the serious theoretical problem of defining the current Latin American regimes with witty journalistic phrases such as, for example, ‘military reformism’ does nothing but obscures the problem and moves us away from a Marxist analysis of class. The pincers of Yankee colonization on the one hand, and workers mobilization, on the other, cause violent and dramatic changes in the character of the bourgeois regimes. Some are semi-fascist, like in Brazil, or directly reactionary upon the basis of bourgeois legality, such as in Uruguay. Others, according to the teachings of Trotsky, are bourgeois nationalists who tend to turn or become Bonapartist *sui generis*.”

“The spectacular upsurge of the mass movement originates situations of institutionalized or atomized dual power, giving rise to another type of government and regimes, Kerenskists. This is typical of revolutionary situations, when the workers power is so strong that the government is suspended in the vacuum between the two powers.”

“[Kerenskyism is] ... highly unstable, Bonapartism or semi-Bonapartism between the exploiters and the mass movement, and not like the [Bonapartism] *sui generis* between imperialism and the mass movement”. “The current revolutionary upswing tends to transform Bonapartism *sui generis* in Kerenskyist Bonapartism or reactionary.” “We believe that the Velasco regime has Bonapartist *sui generis* elements. Allende is halfway.”

“The three types of Government that we have defined have taken place in Bolivia: the reactionary or semi-fascist of Barrientos; tending to Bonapartist *sui generis* of Ovando; Kerenskyist of Torres.”²⁰

For us, each type of regime, since it expressed a different situation of the class struggle, had to be confronted with a different strategy. For the majority comrades, the analysis was limited to explain why the same strategy was applied to any type of stage, regime and country. The explanation is actually very simple: because this was the strategy most sympathetic to the vanguard. This vanguardist character was proclaimed openly by Mandel when he told us we had to make “... national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to concerns of the vanguard...”²¹

All this denial of Marxism navigates with open sails in the European document of the majority. No distinctions of any kind are made there among the stages that the different European countries live in. However, some live in a counter-revolutionary situation (such as Greece, Spain and Portugal) which evolves towards pre-revolutionary (like Spain) or is combined with civil war within its empire (as in Portugal); others live in a non-revolutionary situation but evolving towards pre-revolutionary (like Italy, France and, perhaps, Britain, which is experiencing a de facto war in Ireland) or revolutionary (like Northern Ireland). The other countries live a non-revolutionary situation, without possibilities of transforming into pre-revolutionary in the short-term.

Our characterization is summary and possibly wrong; we just wanted it to be taken as a methodological example.

What we want to emphasize is that from different situations emerge, obviously, different tasks, sometimes diametrically opposed.

In Greece, Spain and Portugal — with similar situations — the major tasks raised are democratic, and in the last two countries urgently because in Spain the workers movement is in continuous raise and Portugal confronts the guerrillas in its colonies. In Britain, where there is a situation opposite to the above, the essential task is to get the British troops out of Northern Ireland and further develop a transitional program to face the growing destitution of the workers’ movement. In Italy and France we contend with objective problems different from the rest of the European countries, because the class struggle is at a higher level. The majority comrades say workers control and work on the vanguard, not because they believe that the situations of all countries are the same, but because they travel in a reverse

¹⁹ “Draft Thesis on the Latin American Situation,” presented to the Central Committee of the PRT (La Verdad).

²⁰ Fifth Congress of the PRT (La Verdad): “Latin American governments and the revolutionary struggle”, Revista de América, No. 819, p. 10-11.

²¹ IMT: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit. p. 24.

direction: instead of saying for this situation this is the task, they say “since we will apply the same strategy, all countries are the same”.

Why did the Second and Third International degenerate?

The shift of the majority comrades to a vanguardist conception is expressed not only in the field of concrete analysis, but also in general theoretical issues. There are two of them in which the size of the aberrations reaches the limit on revisionism: the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals and the characterization of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations.

In both cases, comrade Mandel–Germain bases his entire explanation on the internal relations of the working class and, within this, on the role of the vanguard. For Mandel “the root of the degeneration of both the Second and the Third Internationals, i.e., the subordination of the mass social-democratic as well as the Communist parties of Western Europe to conservative, reformist bureaucracies which, in their day-to-day practice, have become part of the status quo” responds to a general law of degeneration.

Let’s take a look at this law: “The outcome of these contradictory tendencies depends on *the struggle between them*, which, in turn, is ultimately determined by *two social factors*: on the one hand, the degree of *special social interest* set loose by the ‘autonomous organisation’, and on the other hand, the extent of the *political activity* of the vanguard of the working class.”²²

We Trotskyists have always taken the general process of the class struggle worldwide as the fundamental element to analyse the causes of the Second and Third Internationals degeneration. We believe that the Second International degenerated because of the existence and rise of imperialism, which granted large concessions to important sectors of the working class thanks to the exploitation of its colonies. This led to the birth of a labour aristocracy intimately tied to the awarding of concessions by capitalism. Mandel now discovers that the “apparatus becoming autonomous” and the “self-preservation of the apparatus” in itself are explained by the need to preserve the specific social interests of the apparatus itself and not as part of the overall formation of the labour aristocracy. The Third International degenerated because of the defeats and retreat of the workers movement worldwide and through the refraction of this same retreat in the first workers’ state, the USSR, a rural and backward nation. Hence the importance that again had the preservation of the “apparatus itself”.

However Mandel now abandons this classic analysis, and so the bureaucratic degeneration is the result of the relationship between a bureaucracy that defends its apparatus and the “extent of the political activity of the vanguard”. The masses with their struggles count for nothing. With this method, it can be deduced that the bureaucracy can be liquidated by the mere “activity of the vanguard”, i.e., without resorting to mobilization.

Pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations

A revision of the theory regarding the qualification of the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations constitutes an entire chapter of the “new Mandelian methodology”.

Always starting from the internal relations of the workers movement and of the vanguard with the party, Mandel states: “The ripening of a pre-revolutionary situation (of potentially revolutionary explosion) is the merging of action by the broad masses with that of the advanced workers. A revolutionary situation — i.e., the possibility of a revolutionary conquest of power — arises when a merging of *actions* by the vanguard and the masses with the *consciousness* of the vanguard and revolutionary layers has been accomplished”.²³

In short, the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie do not fit into this scheme. We have the right to think that Mandel considers the situation of these classes and their relationship with the mass movement of no importance. Instead, Trotsky thought that: “*The discontent, the nervousness, the instability,*

²² Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist theory of organization, op. cit.

²³ Ibid.

the fluidity of the petty bourgeoisie are extremely important characteristics of a pre-revolutionary situation".²⁴ And he defined a situation with the "basic conditions for that of the victory of the proletarian revolution" as one in which the following conditions were met : "(1) the bourgeois impasse and the resulting confusion of the ruling class; (2) the sharp dissatisfaction and the striving towards decisive changes in the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, without whose support the big bourgeoisie cannot maintain itself; (3) the consciousness of the intolerable situation and readiness for revolutionary actions in the ranks of the proletariat; (4) a clear program and a firm leadership of the proletarian vanguard."²⁵

This ordering that Trotsky systematically repeated during the 1930s is instructive: first, the situation of the bourgeoisie; second, the petty bourgeoisie; third, that of the working class; and, finally, the existence of a revolutionary party. As a good Marxist, he begins with the objective and ends with the subjective. For the pre-revolutionary situation Trotsky has not given us such a precise definition. He noted that it is an intermediate situation between a non-revolutionary and a revolutionary situation. He has hinted that it is characterized by the existence of the first three conditions and the absence of the last one, the party.

Moreover, this is not just a matter of Trotskyist orthodoxy, but simply common sense: if the bourgeoisie is united in a solid front, enjoys a good economic situation, keeps the petty bourgeoisie satisfied and has its sympathy, then Mandel's famous "integrations" cannot lead, even by chance, to the revolution. The most advanced of cases we could imagine — mass, vanguard and party integrated in their actions and conscience — would end with a brutal and bloody crushing of the working class at the hands of the united bourgeoisie, supported by the petty bourgeoisie and defended by an army without any kind of cracks. Luckily, there is no real possibility that such Mandelist "integration" to occur in the class struggle as we know it so far.

The Germainist concept of normality

Now, this majority comrades' incomprehension, especially Germain's, of what is a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation has caused an entire vicious discussion around the word "normal". This discussion began for Latin America, but it has critical importance to the Marxist analysis of the world situation. The majority comrades argue we will not see in Latin America "normal" processes of development of the mass movement, because there will not be long periods with conditions of bourgeois democracy. With this they attempt to show that the minority's forecast that Latin America is ever closer to the classic rules of the proletarian revolution is false.

The question of whether or not the revolution tends to be "normal" has nothing to do with the longer or shorter duration of the regimes of bourgeois legality. It has to do with whether or not the revolutionary processes around the world tend towards the situations described by Lenin and Trotsky, i.e. whether situations similar to the Russian Revolution are generalized or not. "Normal" are the revolutions having at its centre the industrial proletariat, cities as geographical environment and urban insurrection as the axis of armed struggle. "Normal" also means that these revolutions succeed if they have at its head a Bolshevik party.

This concept of "normality" was born in opposition to the "abnormality" which we have witnessed in this post-war where petty bourgeois or bureaucratic parties, from Stalinism to Castroism, were forced to head workers and peasants governments. This abnormality was due to a combination of several factors: the first was that two of the conditions of a revolutionary situation (the impasse of the bourgeoisie and the radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie) were transformed from conjunctural into chronic. The financial crash, the chronic crisis of the economy, reflected in an endless crisis of the bourgeoisie over the years and a permanent leftward shift of the petty bourgeoisie which could not find any possibility of relying on a slight recovery of the bourgeois economy.

²⁴ Trotsky, Leon: "Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit. p.46.

²⁵ Trotsky, Leon: "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution," Adopted by the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International 19-26 May, 1940. MIA, www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/fi/1938-1949/emergconf/fi-emerg02.htm.

These factors combined with the crisis of Yankee imperialism in the post-war and its division before Castro and with the lack of two fundamental revolutionary elements: those of the workers movement and its leadership. Peasantry began to play a dominant role and the objective conditions ended up taking the petty bourgeoisie to government and to the rupture with the imperialist, landowning, and finally, bourgeois regime.

The abnormality consisted, in short, that, by the absence of the workers movement and the revolutionary party the first two conditions of the revolutionary situation acquired a colossal weight and the role of the revolutionary party was fulfilled by petty bourgeois parties with mass influence. This unusual combination was foreseen by Trotsky in the Transitional Program.

The current return to “normality” does not mean a plain and simple return to the situation prior to World War II, but that the workers movement joins the revolutionary situation and that our parties, the only revolutionary and worker parties existing in the world today, grow.

Not only will the other conditions not regress, but they will continue to advance. The chronic nature of the crisis will spread to capitalist countries with a much more solid structure than the backward countries and this will increase the weight of the intervention of the industrial working class.

The combination will be much more explosive than at any stage we have known before: deeper chronic crisis of the bourgeois economy, greater leftward shift of the petty bourgeoisie, stronger revolutionary feelings and activity of the working class, phenomenal growth and influence in the mass movement of our parties and our International. That is, the revolution increasingly retunes to “normal” because it becomes objectively easier and, above all, because the working class and our parties come into the picture. “Abnormal” revolutionary situations can happen again, but they will be subordinate to (and assist in) normalisation at a global scale.

What has all this to do with the shorter or longer periods of bourgeois legality? The Russian Revolution, the most “normal” of all triumphant revolutions, took place in Tsarist Russia, with centuries of despotism, a year of legality in 1905 and a few months in 1917, plus a few years of legal openings. This is our “normality”: a clandestine revolutionary movement and confrontation to reactionary governments of different colours most of the time. We do not understand “normality” as the situation in Western Europe, with a century or more of bourgeois legality, briefly interrupted by phenomena such as fascism.

We do believe, yes, that the clandestine stages will be far less long than in Russia, because the conditions are much more favourable to the mass movement. And we maintain firmly that, as in Russia, the legal openings and democratic stages will be achieved only by the action of the mass movement; and that the stronger the blows the latter deals to the bourgeoisie, the weaker regimes that will emerge. The tendency to Kerenskiist governments will become increasingly stronger, to the extent that the rise continues and only a revolutionary opportunity squandered by the lack of a Bolshevik Party and a Trotskyist policy, will explain the partial setbacks to semi-fascist regimes.

These have been the experiences of Bolivia and Chile, which our Marxist method of analysis was able to foresee and the strategist and vanguardist method of the majority comrades most completely ignored. Comrade Germain, by calling the Banzer government “Kornilovian”, recognizes the Torres government as Kerenskiist. Doesn’t he realize that recognizing the existence of Kerenskiist governments means recognizing the “normal” patterns of the Russian Revolution? Obviously not. They believe that the coups of Banzer and the Chilean military prove they are right, because they demonstrate the “exceptionality” of periods of bourgeois democracy. However, Bolivia and Chile have had more time of bourgeois democracy in the last five years than revolutionary Russia in a whole century! Absolute silence: the majority comrades are still comparing the situation in Latin America with Europe dominated by fascism.

Several countries— including Bolivia and Chile— have entered the classic pre-revolutionary situation, which did not become revolutionary due to the lack of the party. This does not mean that all Latin American countries have entered this stage. Quite the contrary, it is a minority of countries which are heading towards it in an overall uneven process. But these Latin American Russias will point the way to the other countries of the continent and, dare we say, at least, to the entire Western world.

For us, the Latin American and world process confirms this trend, and this turns into fundamental tools of our analysis the teachings of the Russian Revolution against the majority’s strategies of “armed struggle”, “work on the vanguard” and “workers’ control”. The Bolsheviks did not

approach any other forms of armed struggle which were not marked by the rise of the mass movement. With or without armed struggle, with or without a “workers’ control”, they kept building the party at all times. Why change? We have not yet been defeated, nor do we see the danger of Nazi occupation of our countries that makes the majority tremble. When and if this perspective exist, something which we do not believe will happen, we can discuss the new forms of armed struggle. Meanwhile, we remain proud of our analysis and our policy.

The majority comrades, Germain included, have to stop playing in “made in Italy” Western films, and return to the traditional method and program of our movement. This is more necessary than ever. We have to start from reality and not from “The Hour of the Furnaces” or the films of Costa-Gavras,²⁶ or the “concerns of the vanguard” which in many cases, are inspired by them. We have seen the rapid development of another Kerenskyist regime: that of Allende. We have just seen how the momentary triumph of the Chilean Kornilovs was facilitated by the absence of a Bolshevik policy and party. Therefore, that policy and those parties are needed more than ever. Let’s dust off the Lenin’s three volumes from 1917, and Trotsky’s analysis of the Russian Revolution!

Lenin and Trotsky on the orientation of the communist and Trotskyist parties

Comrade Mandel has noted in passing that his interpretation of the new role of the Leninist party was anticipated by Lenin, in *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*. We assume that the paragraphs taken are as follows: “While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism...”²⁷ and “The chief thing has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over...” “... The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing”.²⁸

Lenin said this at a specific historical moment: when he was fighting against opportunism to win the left socialists and anarcho-syndicalist workers to the Third International. And he also referred to a specific vanguard: a labour vanguard, which was the most advanced of its kind, and had strong influence and was widely recognized by large sectors of the working class. The whole chapter containing these quotes begins by noting this fact, which sets a different situation to the current one, where the extensive existing vanguard is not recognized by the working class, and in which the non-proletarian elements dominate. For Lenin it was about winning this vanguard to realize the victory of Russian workers at organizational level and of the world vanguard. But this central task on the vanguard did not lead him to modify the central characteristics of the communist parties; he continued considering them an organ for leading the masses to the proletarian revolution. Lenin’s effort was directed precisely to convince said vanguard it should organize Bolshevik parties, with a revolutionary Marxist policy for the masses and not for the vanguard in each of their countries.

Placed these quotes in context, one wonders why Mandel used them instead of the resolutions of the Third International. We know why: because the first four congresses of the Communist International have said the opposite of what Mandel -Germain says: “... a minority that is Communist, that wishes to act, that has a programme and wishes to organise the struggle of the masses, is *precisely the Communist Party*.”

“The Communist Party differs from the whole working class because it has an overall view of the whole historical road of the working class in its totality and because at every turn in this road it strives

²⁶ *The Hour of the Furnaces*: Argentine Film made in 1967, which records the history of popular struggles in Argentina since the fall of the Peronist government in 1955. Its filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, were living in exile. The film has been banned in Argentina. Costa-Gavras: Greek filmmaker, who lives in France, producer of “protest” films as *Zeta*, *The Confession* and *State of Siege*. Here, the reference is to the latter film, whose plot unfolds in Uruguay before the coup of 1973 and recounts the kidnapping of a US diplomat by a Tupamaro commando.

²⁷ Lenin, V. I.: “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 31, pp. 17-118.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

to defend not just the interests of a single group or a single trade, but the interests of the working class in its totality.”²⁹

“The Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class... if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited...”³⁰

As we see, the Communist International clearly stated that the objective of the revolutionary parties must be “to organize the struggle of the masses” (not of the vanguard), to always defend (“at every turn”) the interests of “the working class in its totality” not of some groups (which is the vanguard but a “group” within the workers movement?) and for all this the party must know how to “link itself inseparably with the whole life of its class” (not to the partial existence of a sector, even if it is of “vanguard”).

Trotsky vs Germain

Germain argues that the position of the majority’s European document with respect to the mass organizations, is similar to that of Trotsky between the years 1934-36 for Belgium, France and Spain, despite that our organizations were weaker. It is a pity that Germain does not go ahead with his comparison and explain to us what Trotsky’s position was on the role of our parties for the same period. He never proposed anything of what the majority comrades say. He never said there was no immediate prospect of achieving parties with mass influence. He never said that our central tactic for the coming period is to work on the vanguard of the masses. And even less did he say that what characterized the Bolshevik party was work on this vanguard.

What Trotsky pointed out was the opposite. He considered that the pre-revolutionary situation in these countries made possible an extensive work on the masses as well as rapid growth for our sections: “We have few forces. But the advantage of a revolutionary situation consists precisely in the fact that even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time, providing that it gives a correct prognosis and that it issues correct slogans in time.”³¹ “To be sure, during a revolution, i.e., when events move swiftly, a weak party can quickly grow into a mighty one provided it lucidly understands the course of the revolution and possesses staunch cadres that do not become intoxicated with phrases and are not terrorized by persecution.”³² “Ten thousand, with a firm and perceptive leadership, can find the road to the masses; break them away from the influence of Stalinists and social democrats, the charlatans and loudmouths.”³³ “We must go to the masses, to its lowest and most exploited layers.”³⁴ “But 20,000 or even 10,000 with a clear, decisive, aggressive policy, can win the masses in a short term, in the same way that the Bolsheviks won the masses in eight months.”³⁵ “We must turn our faces towards the great masses, make inroads into the mass organizations at any price, by any means, without allowing ourselves to be influenced or paralysed by a conservative intransigence.”³⁶ “To have an ear for the average worker in the factory, on the street, in the streetcar, in the café, in the family in order to know how he sees the situation, what hopes he cherishes, what he believes in – to listen

²⁹ “Theses on the role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution”, Second Congress of the Communist International, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch03a.htm.

³⁰ “Lenin, V.I.: “Theses on Fundamental Tasks of The Second Congress Of The Communist International”, *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 31.

³¹ Trotsky, Leon: “The Character of the Revolution”, 18 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. p. 155.

³² Trotsky, Leon: “The Class, the Party and the Leadership. Why Was the Spanish Proletariat Defeated?” 20 August 1940, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. pp. 410-426.

³³ Trotsky, Leon: “Is victory possible in Spain?” 23 April 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. pp. 296-304.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “A strategy for victory”, 25 February 1937 in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. p 282.

³⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “Letter to the International Secretariat”, 27 July 1936, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. pp. 267.

attentively to such a worker – that is the first duty of a revolutionary organization, above all in a critical period such as the present when the consciousness of the masses literally changes every day.”³⁷

The European situation at the time when Trotsky wrote these lines was similar to the current one: it was entering a pre-revolutionary period. But, in the same way that happens with the writings of Lenin and the resolutions of the Third International, everything Trotsky said is the opposite of what the majority comrades say. The majority tells us that there is no chance of achieving parties with mass influence, Trotsky never tires of repeating that “even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time”, “a weak party can quickly grow into a mighty one”, “with strong and perceptive leadership, can find their way to the masses with a clear, decisive, aggressive policy, can win the masses in a short term”, and so on. The majority tells us that we must focus our activity on the vanguard; Trotsky states that “we must go to the masses, to its lowest and most exploited layers”, “we must turn to the wide masses”, and so on. The majority tells us that our political campaigns should revolve around “carefully chosen problems that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard”; Trotsky asserts that “keeping ears open” to the “common worker is the first duty of every revolutionary organization”.

Trotsky does not depart a millimetre from this conception when he advises, for the same period, the entryst work. This entryism primary purpose was not winning any vanguard; it was a tactic to approach the mass movement. Trotsky said: “It is necessary to go to the masses. It is necessary to find a place for oneself within the framework of the united front, i.e., within the framework of one of the two parties of which it is composed. In actual practice, that means within the framework of the SFIO.”³⁸

For Trotsky, the role of the party is always to be fully involved in the struggles of the masses, contending for their leadership and raising the most appropriate slogans for these struggles. For Trotsky it is always possible to transform our parties, however small, in mass parties in a pre-revolutionary stage. In short, Trotsky always had positions contrary to those of Germain. The new type of Leninist party, whose fundamental mission is to work on the vanguard, is nowhere to be found in his writings of that time. But, perhaps anticipating that some Germain could appear in the Trotskyist movement in the future, he also said something about the vanguard: “If the proletariat were not to feel in the process of the struggle during the coming months that its tasks and methods are becoming clearer to itself, that its ranks are becoming consolidated and strengthened, then a decomposition would set within its own ranks. The broad layers aroused by the present movement for the first time, would once more fall into passivity. In the vanguard, to the extent to which the ground slipped out from under its feet, moods of partisan acts and adventurism in general would begin to revive.”³⁹

Summing up, only the mass movement, guided by the party, can save the vanguard from falling into adventurism and guerrillaist despair.

Our political work among the masses and the vanguard: propaganda and agitation

From what we have said so far, it would seem that we believe that the party should ignore the existence of the vanguard which appears at every moment of the class struggle and not to take up any activity towards it. This is not the case, we recognize that the vanguard of the workers and the mass movement is an area to which we must give importance and on which we must work. What we have said so far is that these vanguards do not define party policy or slogans, or its organization, or its analysis.

There is a large section of party policy which is addressed to the vanguard: the propaganda. Thus Lenin defined it when he says: “As long as it was (and inasmuch as it still is) a question of winning the

³⁷ Trotsky, Leon: “The League faced with a decisive turn”, June 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)*, Pathfinder Press New York, pp. 45-51.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “The Revolution in Spain”, 24 January 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., pp. 71-94.

proletariat's vanguard over to the side of communism, priority went and still goes to propaganda work..."⁴⁰

The problem is that for Mandel-Germain, our work on the vanguard should be much more ambitious than what Lenin proposed to us: It is a matter of "...organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of the mass struggle and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections".⁴¹ And "to concentrate their propaganda and whenever possible, their agitation, on the preparation of these advanced workers".⁴²

And Germain's document further clarifies this position. According to him, what was projected at the Ninth Congress "... was a *turn towards the transformation of Trotskyist organisations from propaganda groups into organisations already capable of those political initiatives of a mass vanguard level which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself.*"⁴³

For the majority we should aim to agitation and actions ("political initiatives") "at a level of the vanguard of the masses". Even if it were correct that the efforts of our sections should focus on the vanguard, merely proposing agitation and action on it is already in contradiction with Leninism ("priority goes to propaganda").

The definitions of propaganda as "the activity of giving many ideas, to a few" and of agitation as "giving a few ideas to many" should be widely known. Propaganda ranges from a course on Marxist economics or dialectical logic to an individual talk with a worker activist to whom we explain the national and international situation, our program and the differences between ours and other workers organizations. Agitation, however, consists of raising a few slogans (sometimes just one) to give an outlet for the struggle waged at any time by the workers or mass movement (higher wages, democratic freedoms, constituent assembly, all power to the soviets, etc.).

What characterizes a Leninist Trotskyist party is that its main activity is the agitation on the whole of all the exploited population, not on just a sector of it, albeit this sector be the working class. What characterizes a Mandelist party is that its main activity is agitation and political campaigns primarily on the vanguard.

The art of finding the slogans

A Bolshevik party begins with an analysis of the stage of the class struggle, from this analysis emerge one, two or three essential tasks for the mass movement, which we define in slogans. This is the concrete aspect of our policy; this is why it is fundamental. The theory and the propaganda serve to clarify this aspect. All our activity, including theory and propaganda, is subject to this final objective of defining what are the general tasks facing the masses in a determined stage, but posed in the form of slogans.

Let's see an example: a new government assumes power. The bulk of the party's theoretical effort will concentrate on defining it precisely, in carefully analysing the relationship of forces between the classes, what sectors make up the new government and those in opposition, and the relations of both with imperialism, the role played in it by the armed forces, and so on. If from there follows, for example, that it is a counter-revolutionary Bonapartist government, we will define a few agitational slogans which respond to the needs this government poses to the mass movement (defence of the economic gains; democratic freedoms; defence of workers' organizations). However we will find that this characterization and these tasks are different from those proposed by reformist and bureaucratic leaderships and the far left and also they collide with the spontaneist tendencies of the vanguard. This will force us to also focus our propaganda around the constant explanation of the characteristics of this regime, the polemics with our enemies within the workers movement about said characterization and why the tasks we propose the mass movement are correct. In short, our theory will focus on discovering what slogans we must agitate, our propaganda will focus on explaining to the vanguard why we should

⁴⁰ Lenin, V I: "Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, op. cit. Vol. 31, p. 17-118.

⁴¹ International Majority Tendency: "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", op. cit., pp. 24.

⁴² Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit. p. 45.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 41.

agitate these slogans and not others. This does not mean they are our only theoretical and propaganda activities, but they are the main ones.

Diagrammatically, we can say that the whole science and art of Trotskyism comes together in the capacity to formulate the appropriate slogans at each moment of the class struggle. It is the same thing that Lenin said: “For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organisation, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses.”⁴⁴

Lenin based this political line on a blind trust in the capacity of organization and mobilization of the backward worker or average worker, and not in the special capacity of the vanguard or “advanced” workers. He never dwells, in relation to the mass movement, in the workers vanguard or in the need for the party to take its own action initiatives, but only in the organization of agitational campaigns. For Lenin, if we impact the masses with one of these campaigns, the workers are capable of anything. The role of the party is to start those campaigns, to accompany and lead the mass movement. Thus he criticized the intellectuals “who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole”. “We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, *or will feel*, that the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life. Feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to react, and he will know how to hoot the censors one day, on another day to demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, on still another day to teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc.”⁴⁵

We have already seen how Trotsky said in reference to Spain (a country so dear to Mandel-Germain that he uses it as an analogy for the current European situation): “We have few forces. But the advantage of a revolutionary situation consists precisely in the fact that even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time, providing that it gives a correct prognosis and that it issues correct slogans in time.”⁴⁶

Trotsky summarized his position by saying: “Agitation is not only the means of communicating to the masses this or that slogan, calling the masses to action, etc. For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results.”⁴⁷ And he tired of saying the same for the United States: “When we start the fight we cannot be sure of victory. We can only say that our slogan fits the objective situation and the best elements will understand it and the most backward that do not understand it will not be opposed.”⁴⁸ “What is important, when the program is definitely established, is to know the slogans very well and to manoeuvre them skilfully so that in every part of the country everyone uses the same slogans at the same time. Three thousand can make the impression of 15,000 or 50,000.”⁴⁹

The specific nature of slogans

These extremely well known truths have been forgotten — or were never known — by the majority comrades. They support the work on the vanguard while Lenin and Trotsky support agitation over the masses. This difference between those of us who follow the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky and those who follow the majority comrades is most clearly manifested in the militant activity of our

⁴⁴ Lenin, V. I. “What Is To Be Done?” in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 347-530.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “The Character of the Revolution”, 18 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. p. 155.

⁴⁷ Trotsky, Leon: “Once Again Whither France?” in *Whither France?* Op. cit. p. 67.

⁴⁸ “*Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program*”, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

sections. As much as we strive to discover them, we do not know, for example, what the general and important slogans for action of our French section are. If anything characterizes it, it is the lack of general slogans for the workers and mass movement.

We're not talking about the program, but one, two or three slogans that characterize and respond to the needs of the mass movement in the current situation of France. The American comrades have had a fundamental slogan in recent years: "troops out of Vietnam, now". We, for the election campaign, had another: "Do not vote for bosses, the military or sold out leaders, vote for your comrade workers". What were the central slogans of the electoral campaign of the French comrades? It is impossible to know.

Let's go to the slogans for the French workers and mass movement. If we review the *Rouge* collection from June to August 1973, we will see that there are only three campaigns constantly put forward: solidarity with the workers of the LIP watch factory, with immigrant workers and the struggle against fascist groups.

The only one which might have something to do with the whole of the French mass movement is the campaign against fascist groups, but the slogan "let's halt or smash *Ordre Nouveau* and fascism" is not raised in it. The other two are partial campaigns for specific sectors. We ask: what are the general slogans giving solutions to the problems most felt by the workers movement? Except for the fascist groups, doesn't the regime create any kind of trouble to the workers movement? Doesn't the slogan "halt the bosses' offensive against our standard of living and working" respond to a need of the masses? If the only problem is fascism, why do we not raise a slogan to mobilize the masses against it? And for the record, we are not defending or attacking this or that slogan here, we are proposing something much more elementary: our obligation to put forth slogans for the action of the mass movement. That is to say: our obligation to do agitation.

We insist that we are not saying that we should not give a great importance to the work on the working or masses vanguard. On the contrary, there are periods in the class struggle when it becomes our fundamental work. When there has been a serious historic defeat of the workers movement, our essential activity is propaganda among the vanguard until the workers movement recovers. There has also been an exceptional situation that transformed the vanguard work on the axis of revolutionary activity over a period of upsurge. It was the situation that we witnessed of construction of the Third International, based on the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the appearance of the first workers' state. In this latter case it was raised for one or two years, to win in a single hit all or most of the vanguard, riding on the example and enthusiasm aroused by the spectacular success of the mass movement with a Bolshevik leadership, which expanded globally through the vanguard, because this assimilated the triumph of the mass movement. This situation is determined by the law of uneven and combined development of the world revolutionary movement: a colossal triumph with a revolutionary Marxist leadership of the mass movement in a given country goes parallel and interconnected with the reflection of this triumph on a worldwide scale at the level of the vanguard. But here again the decisive element is the mass movement.

The same will happen on a national scale as soon we get some very important triumph at the level of national class struggle. A decisive victory in a major sector of the French workers movement, such as metalworkers, automotive workers or teachers, led by our party, will cause an immediate impact and in one fell swoop on the whole vanguard of the French workers movement. The workers vanguard will approach by the thousands our party, and our central task, for a time, will be to win it in one single hit to Trotskyism. But we should not delude ourselves. This turnaround will occur based on a triumph of the mass movement, and for no other reason.

How to win the vanguard

Both a "normal" situation, in which the task is agitation in the mass movement as well as these temporary and exceptional situations which we have described, present us with a question. How do we work on the vanguard? How do we win it? Maybe with a specific policy? The majority think that yes, that the vanguard is won by developing national campaigns on issues that relate to "concerns of the vanguard" and by taking "effective initiatives" on these issues. Our view is the contrary: that we must win the vanguard by patiently explaining to it (carrying out propaganda on it) our policy for the

workers and masses movement and not with a specific policy for it. This problem is very important because herein lies the origin of the bulk of the concrete political differences between the majority and the minority.

The vanguard never emerges with trends towards Trotskyist or Bolshevik politics. It emerges expressing the spontaneous tendencies of the struggle of the mass movement at the time, and the first lesson in politics it receives is from the reformist parties with mass influence, from the trade union bureaucracy and from the world wide phenomena of the revolution. These are the ideas that it first knows, previously it only knew the poison spewing daily from the propaganda organs of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary party has no chance of competing with the propaganda of the bourgeoisie and its agents within the workers movement. We start, then, from a position of inferiority. The contemporary vanguard, for example, was born to political life under the pressure of the Stalinist propaganda on one pole, and Castroist propaganda on the other. This explains why for a while it mainly discussed the problems of armed struggle.

If we take as a starting point these “concerns”, we will have to choose (as happened to the majority comrades) between one pole or the other. Maybe, by adapting ourselves to this situation, we will succeed in capturing a sector of this vanguard, but only at the cost of sacrificing our own political line.

However: to recruit the pro-guerrilla vanguard by transforming ourselves into pro-guerrilla, or to recruit the Stalinist vanguard by transforming ourselves into pro-Stalinists, what is it good for? For nothing. It is a brutal blow to the possibility of leading the revolution. As we will be playing along with some incorrect policies expressed much stronger than ours in the vanguard. As soon as the Castroist or Stalinist strategy fails, our party will sink with it.

As Trotskyists, we trust in the mass movement; we think it will make the revolution if we build a party that leads it with a correct policy. This party will be built fundamentally by winning the vanguard for that Trotskyist policy, not for any policy or its deviation of the day. This task is much more difficult and harder than what the majority proposes, but it’s the only correct one.

Recruiting the vanguard is a step ahead for the revolutionary process only if it is recruited for revolutionary politics. Stalinism captured large sections of the vanguard for its policy, and sterilized them to lead the revolution, liquidating them as vanguard. Nowadays, Castroism also captured almost the entire world vanguard and led it to disaster; it politically demoralized a sector and led another, a large part of Latin American vanguard of the 1960s, to physical liquidation.

What does it mean to win the vanguard for Trotskyist politics? Something very simple: to win it for agitation in the mass movement of the slogans our party scientifically formulates at each stage, for the strategy of building a Bolshevik party and for the party program. It means to fight very hard, day after day, against the bureaucratic and reformist leaders first and against the ultra-left tendencies second. It is saying, at every problem of the class struggle: “Comrade of the vanguard, facing this situation, Stalinism raises such a slogan for the mass movement, the slogan is wrong because it leads us to place trust in some sector of the bourgeoisie which will end leading us to slaughter. Ultra-leftism proposes that you take action on your own, isolating yourself from the mass movement, from your everyday co-workers: when you do that we also end up being defeated by the bourgeoisie. We propose that you do not budge even a millimetre from your co-workers, that you stay connected to the mass movement, to become its leadership; that you carefully detect for which problems your co-workers are willing to mobilise, and then you find the precise slogan required to carry out this mobilization, and that you do this in your job you do as well at national and worldwide level. To perform this task you must take a step beyond your workplace, you need to get organized in a party of activists like yourself. In this party, which is what we are building, we do the same thing you do in your workplace: we seek the right slogan to mobilize at each time the exploited masses. But we also know that the mass mobilization will either end in the seizure of power or be defeated, and we have a program, the transitional program, which is the chaining of slogans to lead the masses to take power. We invite you to build this party with us and adhere to our program.”

The task on the vanguard is that simple: start from the slogans that we agitate in the mass movement, and win the vanguard for the party and the program from where such slogans come. And all this we have to say to the vanguard, what is it but propaganda (many ideas for a few)? But, how can we do this propaganda if we are not the champions of the agitation of these slogans?

Moreover, in the “exceptional” cases we brought up, our propaganda has the same meaning. After a historic crushing of the mass movement, we will keep doing propaganda amongst the vanguard. And what shall we say? “Comrade: the workers movement is defeated but we unconditionally trust that it will fight again. Do not launch into action on your own: study and learn all the experience accumulated by workers in more than a century of struggle; train yourself as the leadership of these new struggles that will inevitably come. Carefully probe your work-mates and, as soon as you see them willing to restart the fight, even for a very small and narrow issue, find and raise the appropriate slogan for this struggle. The only place where you can study and learn all this experience, the only place where you can develop such a slogan, is our party.”

Let’s look at the other the exceptional case, that of the Third International. Did Lenin perhaps define a specific policy for winning over the world vanguard? Did he carry out “national political campaigns” around the “concerns” of the vanguard? Did he put himself in favour of the socialist left and the anarcho-syndicalists, whom he wanted to win, against the opportunism and social chauvinism of the social democratic parties? None of that, to win the vanguard meant to have a “unified work of political agitation... that is directed to the masses”; to win it politically for the Russian Bolshevik party. And this meant to make it break with the social democratic parties and the anarchist tendencies to build in each of their countries Bolshevik parties in the style of the Russian.

Why was this the only time that Lenin argued that the central task was to win over the vanguard? Because the impact of that great triumph of the mass movement that was the Russian Revolution made for the first (and so far only) time in history, when the propaganda of revolutionary Marxism could compete successfully with the bourgeois and reformist propaganda, because for the first (and so far only) time in history, the vanguard worldwide was focused massively towards revolutionary Marxism, fascinated by the example of the Soviet proletariat and their Bolshevik party.

The masses-vanguard dialectic

Both Marxist theory and historical examples show that there is a dialectical relationship between the masses and the vanguard and, therefore, it is false the mechanical view of the majority comrades, according to which by the mere fact of winning the vanguard we have advanced on the road to lead the masses. If we win the vanguard for a policy that is not the Leninist-Trotskyist one of working on the mass movement, we move away our party from revolutionary politics, we separate the vanguard from the masses and end up liquidating both the party and the vanguard, abandoning the mass movement to their fate and closing off the road to the triumph of the revolution. If we win the vanguard for Leninist-Trotskyist politics we will have taken a huge step towards building a party with mass influence, which can lead to the triumph of the revolution.

In this dialectic, there is also the possibility of vanguards, or sections of them, which, for specific historical and social problems cannot be won to revolutionary Marxist politics. In a general sense, this is the case of an important sector of student vanguard, which is condemned by the inflexible logic of the class struggle to leave sooner or later the trenches of the mass movement to move to those of the bourgeoisie. Precisely this dialectic is what explains all we revolutionary Marxists win or lose, at all levels of the class struggle (mass movement, working class or vanguard) is determined by the class struggle itself, with its ups and downs; never because of a specific policy, more or less correct, for the vanguard. Viewed from another angle, the only way to win the vanguard is to have the right policy for the mass movement. But this is not enough: most importantly is for this policy to have important victories which will take us to the leadership of the mass movement at national or international level. This is what happened in France in May 1968: A correct policy for the entire student body and the workers movement led us to impact the vanguard, but we could not win it massively because the mass movement, in its first major mobilization as a whole of the past 35 years, did not achieve a complete and resounding victory over the bourgeoisie. The measure of success was such that we continued influencing the vanguard when the mobilization declined.

This dialectic is what exposes the basic error of reasoning by the majority comrades. They point to two certain facts: that there is a large vanguard and that “we cannot shelter the hope to win the general political sympathy among the working class in one fell swoop”. But from these two facts, they draw the wrong conclusion that we have to work primarily on the “mass vanguard”, with a specific

policy for it, which starts from its “concerns”. Although the majority comrades do not say it, the logic of this reasoning leads to the conclusion that this “mass vanguard” can indeed be won in “one fell swoop” unlike what happens with the working class.

We agree that we cannot win the working class “in one fell swoop”. But what is it that prevents us from winning them through a process? If at each moment of the struggle of the mass movement or its sectors we have the correct slogans, we will, gradually or by leaps, be winning their “sympathies”. And as soon as important struggles are triggered, the “political sympathy” of the mass movement or important sectors of it for our parties and our politics will grow geometrically.

Nor do we understand what is it that may allow us to win the “general political sympathy” of “the mass vanguard” in one fell swoop. The “mass vanguard” has no need for our party or our politics. In the lulls in the class struggle, it will tend to perform actions separate of the mass movement to which we must be opposed. This will result in only a minority of it approaching our positions, the rest will continue with its spontaneist trends. There is no way to avoid it. Orienting the party around those concerns can produce a momentary success. But it is also very likely that, unless we break completely and utterly with Trotskyism, there will be in the vanguard non-Trotskyist tendencies far more skilled and able than us to follow to the letter the deviation (or concern) of the day of that vanguard.

But the panorama will change as soon as the mass movement comes into the scene. At this time, the vanguard sectors will be much more concerned about giving proper guidance to the struggle of the masses than of making actions separate to them. Then they will remember our patient but uncompromising propaganda work, and say, “the Trotskyists were right when they told us to trust the mass movement and not budge from its side; let us go and discuss with them what the right policy for this mobilization is”. Other sectors, guerrillas for example, will continue with their actions isolated from the struggle of the masses, will separate more and more from them, and they will be disowned by them as alternative leadership to reformism and bureaucracy. The party will begin a broad and fraternal dialogue with the first sector, trying to win it for its policy towards the mass movement. Regarding the guerrillaists, all the party will be able to do is a characterization, “these comrades are unrecoverable for the time being to revolutionary Marxism; let’s defend them from the attacks of the bourgeoisie, but let them politically stew in their own juice”.

By means of this process and not in “one fell swoop”, we will win daily more influence in the vanguard of the mass movement. The dialectic of the vanguard – mass relationship is inflexible: we can only win the vanguard in “one fell swoop” at the time of this process when our party has led the mass movement to achieve a colossal triumph. Only at this time, and at no other, the task (which is still propaganda) to win them will be the central one. And never for an indefinite stage, as soon as we have exhausted the possibilities of this work, will we be back (with our forces multiplied by one hundred) to our central task of agitation of the right slogans for each moment of the struggle of the masses.

Many times our agitational slogans do not mobilize the masses and are only taken by sectors of the vanguard as when, for example, it carries out a demonstration in support of Vietnam or a workers strike. The majority here could draw the conclusion that the vanguard performs actions and from this fact alone makes necessary a policy for it.

In this there is some truth: the vanguard performs actions, but not all of them are positive. It is not enough the condition posed by the majority comrades for such actions of “not going against the tide of the masses struggle”. One can perform an action which in a general sense matches the struggle of the masses, but which at that particular moment only serves to unleash repression or to distract the masses attention from their central problems. For example, if in the middle of a mass mobilization for wages, a sector of the vanguard does a demonstration with the single slogan “down with the union bureaucracy”, this diverts the attention of the masses, since the central problem for them are salaries, and the fight against bureaucracy will only be raised as an aspect (at the beginning secondary) of this struggle against the bosses. If this demonstration of the vanguard ends with the death of ten police officers, it will cause the regime’s repression on a mass movement which is not yet ready to confront it. Therefore, it is not sufficient that the actions of the vanguard do not go “against the tide of the masses struggle”, but it is necessary to respond to the millimetre to the present needs of the mass struggle. Any other possibility should be strongly condemned by the party.

Now, what is the meaning of the actions of the vanguard, from the point of view of the class struggle as a whole? What for the vanguard is an action (a demonstration, a lightning rally, etc.) from the point of view of the class struggle is an agitational task that said vanguard does on the mass

movement. It fulfils the same role as talking on the radio or throwing a flier, trying to reach the masses with our slogans, it is an agitational action of the party and the vanguard. It is not a direct action of the mass movement, or of confrontation with the exploiters, but a technique, among others, for agitating slogans. If the bureaucracy, reformism, the ultra-left or us (because we were wrong) hand out a flyer or raise the wrong slogan we do a disservice to the struggle of the mass movement. The same applies to the actions of the vanguard: if the axis of these actions is correct, the agitation they cause in the mass movement is positive, otherwise it is negative. And what are the right actions of the vanguard, but those having as axis the slogans we agitate in the mass movement?

Let us summarize this entire problem. The majority comrades hold that our central task is to work on the “mass vanguard”. We hold that such central task is justified only in a period of historical crush of the mass movement or when a important victory of the mass movement under our leadership pushes the whole vanguard towards our positions, and that in the current situation, which tends to be pre-revolutionary worldwide, our central task lies in the mass movement in most countries.

The majority comrades hold that our central task is to agitate in the vanguard the slogans, based on their concerns that lead it to action. We hold that our agitation is reserved for the mass movement to take action, with correct slogans, and that our task on the vanguard, is propaganda and should revolve, fundamentally, around the explanation of those slogans.

The majority comrades take as almost absolute criterion for the tasks of the party the actions of the vanguard; they hold that our central task is to launch political campaigns that address their concerns, i.e. spontaneous objectives of their actions. They hold something still much more serious (to be discussed later): that our sections take actions on their own based on those concerns, to set an example and win the sympathy of the vanguard.

We are fully in favour of the vanguard being unified, growing, strengthening and taking initiative. But we do not get tired of telling them: “Comrades, tie yourself to the mass movement; trust it, undertake propaganda and agitational actions that serve to agitate the precise slogan required for each of their struggles; we will be with you in each and every one of those actions. But we will not be with you if you perform physical actions which attempt to replace the masses, even having good intentions. Moreover, we will be against you if these actions are detrimental to the masses. If this happens we will relentlessly denounce that you are mistaken, that your actions are harmful, and we will try to divide you to win the sector of you that you can be recovered for the ranks of revolutionary Marxism and to permanently discredit to the masses the other sector, which despises them and performs actions that are objectively against their struggles.”

Program and slogans: their relation to present needs and consciousness of the mass movement

This series of substitutions that we discover in Germain —scientific knowledge instead of political consciousness; political objectives instead of objective Marxist analysis; propaganda for agitation; work on the vanguard instead of work on the masses, and so on — are the “theoretical” basis underpinning his “serious” criticism of Camejo on his conception of the Bolshevik party at this stage.

According to Germain, while Cannon speaks of “proletarian revolution” Camejo names it only once, and in relation to the program: “The party seeks to lead the working class and its allies to state power as its fundamental goal, but does not try to substitute itself for the masses.”⁵⁰

We would ask comrade Germain whether he agrees or not with the definition of “proletarian revolution” made in our *Transitional Program*: the seizure of power by the working class and its allies. And the fact that the “seizure of power” is for Camejo the “fundamental purpose” of the party, does it not satisfy you, comrade Germain?

The first serious objection Germain makes is that Camejo presents “the relationship between the vanguard — the party — and the working class... unilaterally and mechanically. The party ‘Tries to

⁵⁰ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 37.

promote mass struggles... by mobilising the masses' around demands 'related to their present level of consciousness'." ⁵¹

To show that this is a mistake, he tries to support himself on Trotsky, bringing this quote: "What can a revolutionary party do in this situation? In the first place give a clear honest picture of the objective situation, of the historic tasks which flow from this situation, irrespective as to whether or not the workers are today ripe for this. *Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the worker...* We must tell the workers the truth, then we will win the best elements." ⁵²

As always, Germain has taken a quote out of context. These phrases are Trotsky's response to some American comrades who question whether the transitional program was appropriate for the mentality of the workers in their country. This answer is most correct because Trotsky is talking about the "historical tasks" of the general historical program for the whole epoch, i.e., the transitional program. He's not referring at all to the specific tasks the Americans comrades were facing at that time. And what Trotsky said is that we do not hide our program, but, on the contrary, we propagandise it with all our might, even if the average worker does not understand it, to win the vanguard elements ("the best elements"). This has nothing to do with Germain assumption that this is a governing rule of the political activities of the entire party at any particular time.

Germain repeats, revised and expanded, his earlier confusion between propaganda and agitation. Camejo never says you have to take into account the level of mass consciousness to formulate the general, historical, program of the party. This would be a total and absolutely reformist and economist position. What Camejo says is that you have to start from the "present level of consciousness of the masses" to formulate the "demands" that serve to "mobilize the masses". This means that Camejo refers to our concrete policy, the slogans we agitate for action of the mass movement, not to propaganda or the program. Trotsky's quote is correct, precisely because he does not refer at all to the slogans but the program.

A Trotskyist program which does not talk of armed pickets, soviets, insurrection, workers and peasants government, dictatorship of the proletariat, does not deserve such a name. But a party leadership that raises all these slogans, or some of them, permanently for all stages and times of the class struggle, should be committed to an asylum.

Trotsky, in the *Transitional Program* says exactly what Camejo says, with the only difference that instead of "present" he says "today's": "It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program 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 proletariat." ⁵³ For Spain he raised the same: "The participation of the communists in these fights, and especially a leading participation, demands from them not only a clear understanding of the development of the revolution as a whole, but also the capacity to put forward at the right moment such partial, sharp, fighting slogans that by themselves don't derive from the 'program', but are dictated by the circumstances of the day and lead the masses forward." ⁵⁴

The purpose of these slogans is to "lead the masses forward". In the same conversation of Trotsky quoted by Germain, he states: "The whole question is how to mobilize the masses to fight." ⁵⁵ Exactly what comrade Camejo raises: these slogans, "related to the present level consciousness (of the masses)" are used by the party to mobilize the masses.

What is Germain's attack to this definition by Camejo hiding? A typical ultra-leftist position: not having a policy to for the needs and current consciousness of the masses, but for alleged future needs and consciousness: "What is this 'present level of consciousness' of the masses? Is it always the same? Can it change rapidly? If so, must the combat party wait until it has shifted before it 'adapts' its demands? Or can it foresee these changes and act accordingly? In function of what factors can it foresee these shifts? Will the 'present level of consciousness' itself not be to a certain degree a function of the

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 38.

⁵² Ibid. p. 94.

⁵³ Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Trotsky, Leon: "Down with Zamora-Maura", 24 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 160.

⁵⁵ "Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program", op. cit.

role of the ‘combat party’ inside the mass movement? But if one of the main purposes of the ‘combat party’ is to *raise* the level of class consciousness of the working class, how then can the ‘present level of consciousness’ in itself be a decisive criterion for determining what kind of demands the party should raise before the masses?⁵⁶

These questions imply their respective responses, namely: Germain believes that the level of consciousness is not always the same; that it can change quickly; that the combat party should not wait until it has changed before adapting its slogans; that the party can foresee these changes and must act according to them, this means, it should raise its slogans appropriate to the future level of consciousness; that the present level of consciousness of the masses is, to some degree, a function of the role of the party; that one of the main objectives of the revolutionary party is to raise the level of class consciousness of the working class and, therefore, the present level of consciousness cannot be a decisive criterion for determining what kind of slogans the party should raise for the masses

Here is synthesized one of the most important differences between the majority and the minority. We will answer each of these assertions by Germain, but we will take the liberty of changing the order of presentation.

First assertion: “the level of consciousness of the masses is not always the same”. He is absolutely right. Moreover, within the masses there is an uneven development of consciousness, which results that at any one time there are sectors with different levels of consciousness.

Second assertion: the level of mass consciousness can change quickly. Again Germain is correct, but he doesn’t note that this happens only in some periods, of high activity of the mass movement. In periods of calm, the mass movement consciousness changes very slowly.

Third assertion: the immediate (“present”) level of consciousness of the masses is, to some degree, function of the role of the revolutionary party. False. The present level of consciousness is an objective factor for the revolutionary party and much more so for our small groups. It is the most dynamic factor of the objective situation, but it nonetheless is objective. This means that it is a fact, a fact of reality that we can help changing in the future, but at present it is as it is, the opposite of our party, which is a subjective factor.

As with any present fact, it is a consequence of the past, of history. If in this history our party had something to do, then and only then, “to some extent”, this consciousness is “function of the party”. But if we neither were nor are an objective factor, i.e. if sectors of the mass movement neither follow us nor have we educated them before now, we have nothing to do with their present level of consciousness.

Unfortunately, this is the current situation. Argentine workers are Peronist and trade unionists; the French Stalinists and socialists, and trade unionists, the British Labourite and the German trade unionists and Social Democrats. That level at present is not function of our party in “any degree”.

We have said that this level of consciousness is a historical consequence. We must complete this concept: it is a direct consequence of two combined factors— the objective changes of the regime and the development of mass struggles. The role of the party can be important, and sometimes decisive, but indirectly, as an agitator, organizer and director of these struggles.

Trotsky said the same thing. “For us as a small minority this whole thing is objective including the mood of the workers.”⁵⁷ “The mentality of class of the proletariat is backward but the mentality is not such a substance as the factories, the mines, the railroads, but is more mobile and under the blows of the objective crisis, the millions of unemployed, it can change rapidly.”⁵⁸

There is a conception very typical of the radicalised petty bourgeois intelligentsia which consists in attributing to the masses the same feelings they have. There are thousands of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who “love” to fight, and think, somewhat romantically, that with the masses it is the same. Unfortunately not, and every time one of these intellectuals speaks to workers to encourage them to fight for the simple emotional reason that “we must fight”, he suffers a tremendous disappointment: workers do not understand him; they believe that he’s crazy; they turn their backs on him. The

⁵⁶ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 38.

⁵⁷ “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program”, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “The Political Backwardness of the American Workers”, May 19, 1938, in *The Transitional Program*, op. cit. p. 125.

common worker, the exploited in general, feels no pleasure in going out to struggle. He is a normal human being, who has no interest in losing a portion of his meagre salary going out on strike or in risking his safety by going to a demonstration, or in risking his life taking arms against capitalism. The working masses come to fight because the capitalist system sinks them into misery, because it leaves them no other choice than fighting to survive. The worker does not “love” to strike, but he risk losing his wages or his job because if he doesn’t fight, he starves; he doesn’t “love” violence, but he is forced to use violence to defend himself from the capitalists; he doesn’t “love” guns, but is forced to use them when capitalism uses them against him.

This is the first factor that determining the current level of consciousness: the most serious and deeply felt problems which the masses suffer to the point that they are willing to mobilise to wrest a solution from the capitalist system.

The second factor is the development of the own mobilization of the masses. It’s not enough for the objective problem to exist for the masses to go, automatically, on struggle. Workers may be suffering from pitifully low wages, but their attitude to this problem depends on the situation of their struggles with the bourgeoisie at that time. If the issue of wages happens immediately after a fascist crushing of the mass movement, probably no mobilization will happen. Workers will be conscious that they are in an unfavourable situation with their leaders killed or imprisoned; with their organizations destroyed; with the full weight of repression on their backs, and they will not mobilize until they have reorganized their forces. If, however, this situation occurs at the other pole of the development of the struggle, with the masses on the offensive, in a revolutionary situation, they are able to reach the verge of taking power, driven by the need to solve the target problem. This explains why the slogan of “bread” has been one which brought to power the Russian proletariat.

Thus these two objective factors combine: the infamy of the day of the capitalist system is what creates the need to fight and sets the immediate objective of the struggle of the masses; the degree of development of the mass movement is what determines whether such mobilization breaks out or not, the magnitude it may have, the methods it uses, and its concrete results, which may be from the reorganization of a union to almost taking power.

The immediate, present, consciousness of the masses is determined by these two factors; it is the consciousness of the need they suffer and of the conditions in which they are in to confront the exploiters.

The party has nothing to do with this immediate consciousness of the masses. But Germain, arguing that the party’s role is “to some degree” (he does not define what this degree is) a determining factor in the immediate consciousness of the masses, falls in a typical ultra-leftist error: he confuses his own level of consciousness, or of the party, with that of the masses. It is the other face, the “rational” one, of that romantic intelligentsia we mentioned: the one that confuses not its feelings, but rather its political level with that of the masses.

Fourth assertion: the party can foresee changes in the level of consciousness of the masses. This is true only in a general and historical sense. We know the capitalist system is in decay, the imperialist system will push more and more misery and exploitation on the backs of workers; therefore, it will increasingly create needs for them, which will make the masses more conscious that their problems can be solved only through struggle. The struggles of the masses will develop increasingly deeper and more violent. Their relationship of forces with the bourgeoisie will become increasingly favourable; it will make them increasingly conscious of their own forces, they will be increasingly willing to embark on new demonstrations. This process will lead them to the very edge of class, revolutionary, politics, of what they are capable and of power. But there they will stop and then they will recede, if there is no revolutionary party that makes them fully conscious of the situation, which organizes them and guides them to move ahead.

But this is in general and for the entire historical period. In a concrete, immediate sense, the party has very limited possibilities of anticipating changes in the mass consciousness. Not so much for the economic factor (the needs the capitalist system creates for them), as this does not change very quickly, but for the development of their own struggles. Whenever the masses launch into combat, we do not know whether they will triumph or be defeated and this will be crucial to know what the level of consciousness later struggles will start from. Suppose a general strike, which is held for two or three days. It may happen that the masses end defeated, with their leaders dismissed and without having achieved absolutely anything. It may happen that they return to work without achieving all their

objectives, but having won important partial victories (higher wages, reduced working hours, etc.). It may finally happen that the strike would lead to an insurrection that leaves the political power in their hands. Obviously, their level of consciousness the day after the strike will not be the same in all three cases. In brief, in the first of them, they will begin to consider the need of reorganization for future movements. In the last case, they will try to organize the defence of the Workers State and will be considering beginning the construction of socialism.

The most the party can achieve is to manage some hypotheses, point out the most likely, and theoretically prepare itself to face this new situation. This will be relatively easy in periods of calm in the class struggle, and very difficult in critical periods, where the struggles, and the consequent changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses, happen day after day. So difficult is the task in the latter situation, that the hypotheses of Bolshevik party itself were falling behind with respect to reality as it approached October 1917.

But this is an internal work of the party, of theoretical preparation to face new situations. Nothing to do, as we shall see, with the policy towards the masses, because as soon as reality proves that our most likely hypothesis is not taking place, we will be forced to improvise a new policy according to the new situation. Marxists have been saying for long time since that reality is richer than any scheme.

We clarify that we keep talking about the immediate consciousness of the masses. The party is able to make general predictions based on the general laws of class struggle discovered by Marxism and for certain periods of time. For example: rise of the mass movement = trend to Kerenskiist governments; economic crisis = division of the bourgeoisie, and so on. Comrade Germain, who believes himself able of foreseeing changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses, has proved totally incapable of doing this other type of simpler forecasts.

Fifth, sixth and seventh assertions: one of the main goals of the party is to raise the level of consciousness of the working class, therefore, it should not wait until changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses occur to adapt its slogans to them, but rather (as it is able to anticipate such changes) it must act in accordance with these, not taking as decisive criterion for launching its slogans the present level of consciousness of the masses.

These statements are self-destructing, because the party, as we have already demonstrated, is unable to anticipate the changes in the immediate (present) consciousness of the masses. But let's give Germain that advantage. Suppose the party were able to foresee them. Eliminated this difficulty, Germain's syllogism unfurls neatly. The party aims to raise the consciousness of the masses towards the (correct) political class consciousness. Therefore, its slogans should not start from the present level of consciousness, but of what the party foresees to come in the future (false, thousand times false).

If Germain talks about future levels of consciousness and proposes that our slogans be subjected to them, we wonder why he does not propose that our sole slogan be to take power, the proletarian revolution on a worldwide scale. We see no difference between raising a slogan for a future level of consciousness that will happen within a month or a year and a slogan for 10 or 20 years. Why should we deal with trifles? Let's only raise taking power worldwide. It is a slogan for future levels of consciousness as good as any other. And if the masses are willing to listen and mobilise with a slogan for the near future, we do not see why they will not be willing to do it with a slogan for the distant future. In the terms raised by Germain, the problem is quantitative, not qualitative. And a quantitative problem (amount of time) cannot define the character of a slogan. So, future for future, we keep the one we like best: the seizure of power worldwide.

Actually the problem (slogans for the present or slogans for the future) is qualitative. We are totally in favour of using all the slogans that start at the level of consciousness and the needs of each moment (present) of the mass movement, and we are dead set against using any slogan that starts from an assumed (or forecasted) future level of consciousness and need of the mass movement.

One may argue that when we raised in the United States for the first time, troops out of Vietnam now!, the mass movement had no immediate consciousness of the need for that slogan, it didn't feel it was its own.

This happens because between the immediate need and immediate consciousness of the masses exists the same contradiction and dialectic as between the objective and the subjective: the fact that an objective need exists, does not mechanically determine that the masses are aware of the need. Moreover, the immediate consciousness is always lagging behind the immediate need. That's exactly

why our agitational slogans should be a bridge between these two factors unevenly developed. Of these two the decisive as always is the objective element: the present need. This is what Germain does not even bring up since for him the determining factor of our slogans is not this immediate objective need, but the likely future consciousness.

If we manage to build this bridge, elaborating the precise slogan that summarizes the immediate need of the masses with their immediate consciousness, will we have managed to become “up to a certain degree” a determining factor in their level of consciousness? This depends on whether the masses or some part of them take up our slogan. Because, even though our slogan has been scientifically prepared and may be perfect, there are many historical and immediate objective reasons that may prevent the masses from crossing this bridge that we tend, which is the same as mobilizing for our slogan. This does not depend on us, other than in the sense that we put forth the correct slogan. The rest, and the truly decisive, as always, is the objective factor. If the masses take up our slogan and are mobilized by it, we will have effectively been, to a certain degree, a determinant factor of their consciousness. Else, we will not be.

Trotsky did not reason as Germain does, but as we do. He saw that, due to unemployment, the immediate need for the American working class after the great crisis was to get a job. “Theoretically”, the appropriate slogan was “sliding scale of working hours”. But Trotsky did not apply this slogan. He took into account, in addition to the immediate need the immediate consciousness of the American working class which trusted in Roosevelt and proposed: “... we ask that Mr. Roosevelt with his brains trust propose such a program of public works that everyone capable of working can work at decent wages”.⁵⁹

With the slogan of asking Roosevelt, we have bridged the gap between the immediate need (unemployment) and immediate consciousness (the workers believe in Roosevelt) to achieve the mobilization of the working class. If Trotsky had taken only the immediate need (“unemployment”) to formulate his policy, this would not have been appropriate to mobilize the working class, for not taking into account what its immediate consciousness was (the workers trusted Roosevelt).

From the Yankee escalation in Vietnam it was raised as an immediate need the withdrawal of troops, whether or not this was appropriate to the level of consciousness of the time. The bridge we had to tender could not reduce this need to adapt to the immediate consciousness other than in form or language, never to the extent of ignoring the need that originated our slogan. Any attempt to base our slogans only in the level of consciousness of each moment, that does not take as decisive element the immediate need of the mass movement and that it mobilizes to overcome it, is adventurism, and since our policy is a whole, it includes an analysis, a program (historical needs and consciousness), propaganda, agitation (immediate needs and consciousness) and aims at the permanent mobilization of the masses towards the seizure of power by the working class. That is, everything is closely related and the factors depend on each other, the slogans to mobilize the masses being the decisive factor.

Trotsky, criticizing this habit of taking tasks based on predictions, told us more than thirty years ago: “After all, the task consists not in making prognostications from the calendar but in mobilizing the workers around the slogans flowing from the political situation. Our strategy is a strategy of revolutionary action and not of abstract speculations.”⁶⁰

Any attempt to put forward for an immediate stage of the class struggle slogans and demands for a level of consciousness which is not that of the stage, is an ultra-leftist mistake. Even more when in addition to slogans and demands a comprehensive strategy is developed, as it was the case with entryism “sui generis”. While Stalinism had an ultra-opportunist policy and engaged in raising signatures for peace, Germain and the majority comrades argued that there would be war, that Stalinism would change its policy and mindset forced by circumstances. From there they took the strategy of entering Stalinism waiting for those changes (which never occurred) to happen.

The same goes for our slogans. We cannot develop them for a future stage of the class struggle, or the consciousness and needs that the masses will have in an uncertain future. We cannot, firstly, because we do not know them. But even if we were able to predict the future (“foresee” as Germain

⁵⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “The Political Backwardness of the American Workers”, May 19, 1938, in “The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution”, op. cit. op. cit. p. 128.

⁶⁰ Trotsky, Leon: “A Strategy of Action and Not of Speculation”, Letter to Pekin Friends, 3 October 1932, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 246-255.

would say) we cannot use these slogans because of another much more important reason: because the slogans have only one goal, which is to mobilize workers. And if the slogans reflect future needs and level of consciousness, they would be incomprehensible to the masses. An example: if instead of the slogan of peace, the Bolshevik Party, due to imperialist war, had posed to yield to the Germans, as in Brest-Livstovsk, it would not have made the Russian Revolution.

That the party has as a goal to raise the consciousness of the masses towards the political consciousness of class does not mean it is able to do it by itself. Comrade Germain is the first to insist that the masses only learn through their actions. Our goal is thus to mobilize the masses so that, through this mobilization, they acquire political class consciousness. So far we all agree. What we do not agree on is how we mobilize them. Germain says we mobilize the masses agitating slogans for the consciousness they will have later. We say what we mobilize the masses raising slogans for the needs and level of consciousness they have in the present.

Germain and us in a general strike

Suppose there are conflicts over wages, in isolation in 30 to 40 percent of industrial enterprises. What is the need of the masses at this time? To unify all these conflicts into a general strike. What should our slogan be? General strike for general wages increase! What is the slogan that Germain would pose? He would reason as follows: since the general strike will pose the problem of power, our slogan must be “general strike to take power!” But this would be a catastrophic mistake. The masses have the need to hold a general strike to get higher wages, and are or should become conscious of it, but they are not conscious that they need to take power. Our slogan of ‘general strike for wages increase!’ would fall on fertile ground, it would spread throughout the mass movement, and the general strike would be a fact. Germain’s slogan would fall in a vacuum and would only be followed by a small sector of the vanguard; it would liquidate the possibility of a massive general strike.

However, we are conscious, just as Germain is, that the general strike raises the issue of power. But it poses it when the strike is already a fact. To be able to raise the seizure of power, we must first ensure that the general strike is done. If we succeed in getting the masses to go out on strike and in paralyzing the country, making the bourgeoisie despair, and this see its entire system in jeopardy and it begins to organize repression, only then will the masses be able to clearly see that the only way out for the general strike is taking power. This will be the most immediate need of the masses; this will be its only way out. At this time, if the party continues to hold the slogan of a general strike for higher wages, it will commit a crime and a betrayal. The time to change the slogan has come! The mobilization of the masses has reached the point where they can understand the need to take power. The slogan for that stage must match the need. ‘All power to the Soviets (or the committee leading the strike)!’ is the slogan of the moment.

If we do not succeed in getting the masses to hold a general strike, because we have raised for this strike a different objective from what the masses feel and want (power instead of wages), we can spend centuries screaming ‘general strike for taking power!’ but we will not achieve anything. It may happen that the general strike occurs despite us, but it is certain that the masses will not take power.

Here Germain could reply to us with the following reasoning: if we before the general strike have already been proposing that the only way out is to take power, then at the time when the masses face this situation they will acknowledge it and consider us a good leadership who knew to foresee events. This is an intellectual, false reasoning. This is how the vanguard moves, but not the masses. To the vanguard, indeed, we have to explain patiently on the eve of a general strike that this will pose the problem of power and it has to be prepared to take it. All our propaganda on the vanguard should have that one and only axis. And the vanguard will recognize that our forecast was correct and will enter the party massively.

If the masses behaved this way, to make the revolution would be easy: we spend five, ten or twenty years agitating the slogan of the seizure of power. When the revolutionary crisis takes place (general strike, for example) — which can take place even if we do not exist because it is an inevitable moment of class struggle— the masses will remember our many years of agitation, will recognize us as their leadership and take power. But the masses do not move this way: they recognize as leadership those who knew how to mobilize them, giving appropriate slogans for each of the struggles they

undertook. And those who gave a slogan that had nothing to do with their needs or their consciousness, not only will they be neglected as its leadership, but they also will be considered as alien element to the mass movement.

There are then two reasons why the party must agitate to the masses the slogan that meets their level of consciousness and their present needs. The first reason is that it is the only way to mobilize the masses, and the mobilization of the masses is the only way they raise their consciousness level. Thus, the important thing is to get the general strike, because only during the general strike will the masses be able to raise their consciousness to understand that they must take power. The second reason to agitate these slogans is that it is the only way to be recognized as leadership and gain prestige, influence and trust among the masses. What the masses remember, and for this they have a good memory, is who told them they had to make a united front against fascism when they needed to do so, who proposed them the fight for wages when they needed to fight for wages, who raised to them (why not?) to back off when they needed to retreat and not be crushed.

Only in this way, by agitating these slogans, can a party earn the right to be leadership. Only in this way it will be recognized as a leadership before the revolutionary crisis. Because if this does not happen, at the time of the revolutionary crisis there will be no one with authority, who is listened to by the masses, to raise the only slogan, the only task which the mass movement can never be fully aware of by its own means: the slogan and the task of taking power.

This is nothing new. Trotsky led a long fight against ultra-leftism with this same axis. Against launching the slogan of soviets in Germany, of armament in Spain, of workers' control in Germany when the conditions and the level of consciousness of the mass movement did not demand it.

The whole secret of the Trotskyist politics precisely consist in measuring to the millimetre the needs and consciousness level of the masses at each time and finding the correct slogans for them. Trotskyist politics is concrete, present, at the level of its slogans; historical at the level of its program. This is merely the expression of the old contradiction between the immediate and mediate, between the concrete and the abstract which, at this level, is expressed in the contradiction between the slogans and the program, between agitation and propaganda.

This explains why the Bolshevik Party kept changing slogans in the short span of a few months: All Power to the Soviets! Out with the bourgeois ministers! All against Kornilov! Constituent Assembly!, once again, All Power to the Soviets!

The whole art and science of our parties and leaderships is about how to detect changes in the needs and consciousness level of the mass movement. But to detect these changes in the mass consciousness we are forced to use two tools. The first is agitational slogans. "For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results."⁶¹

The second tool is what allows us to evaluate "the results" of our agitation and to "reach this or another decision". This tool is our method of analysis and our historical program, which, in turn, summarizes the historical and of class struggle of the workers movement and the whole history of the class struggle.

This dialectic between the mediate and immediate, the historical and the present, the abstract and the concrete, is synthesizes or unified when the revolutionary party succeeds in leading the workers movement towards the conquest of power. But to achieve this overcoming of the contradiction, we must go through different stages of the class struggle; stages which are always concrete, immediate and present, until they become historical; in brief, until the immediate struggle of the mass movement is the seizure of power, the great historical task.

The immediate, the concrete struggles of the workers movement, become a historical task through the party. This synthesis is manifested when the unity of our party and its program, both expressions of the historical interests of the proletariat, and the working class, and of this with the large masses, takes place. There the contradictions between party and mass movement, between program and slogans, between propaganda and agitation, between tasks of the party and tasks of the mass movement are synthesized. In the insurrection, the masses, the working class and the party have one

⁶¹ Trotsky, Leon: "Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit. p. 67.

and only task, one and only slogan, a one and only program, and perform one and only action, immediate and historical at the same time: to seize power.

Party “revolutionary initiatives”?

The third criticism of comrade Germain to Camejo’s six points is: “Third: Another essential dimension of the Leninist concept of the revolutionary party is missing from Comrade Camejo’s ‘essence’: the dimension of *revolutionary initiative*. It is true that comrade Camejo wants the party to ‘promote mass struggles by mobilising them’ around a certain number of demands. But this is formulated in such a vague way, immediately weighed down with the consideration of the ‘present level of consciousness’ of these masses, and further restricted by the warning against ‘the party substituting itself for the masses’, that the absence of the word ‘initiative’ is by no means an accident.” “One of the ‘essential’ characteristics of the classical centrism of the Kautsky-Bauer school was precisely this inability of perceiving the need of revolutionary initiatives by the party, ‘relationship of forces,’ ‘objective conditions,’ ‘the mood of the masses’ deciding everything always in a fatalistically predetermined way. Leninism separates itself from that type of centrism precisely by its capacity to understand how revolutionary initiatives can *modify* the relationship of forces.”⁶²

The disaster of the guerrilla (a “revolutionary party initiative” par excellence) in Latin America makes comrade Germain very cautious and elusive in his definition of “revolutionary initiative”. First he tells us that there is a difference between doing unionism and “taking the initiative to organise and being capable of leading anti-capitalist mass struggles”. Nobody can oppose this statement: it is clear that the party should take the initiative, with all boldness, trying to “organize and lead the anti-capitalist mass struggles”, and not be limited to trade unionism. On the other hand, we don’t see the point of this digression by Germain, unless he is of the opinion that there is some section of our International which is proposing to do (or does) exclusively unionism. If he thinks this, he should give more importance to the problem because it would be a serious deviation.

But then he begins to clarify the picture a little more. He says that Kautsky-Bauer centrism states that everything is fatally determined by the “relationship of forces”, the “objective conditions” the “mood of the masses”; that Leninism instead, differs from Kautsky-Bauer centrism because it understands how “revolutionary initiatives (of the party) can modify the relationship of forces”.

The relationship of forces measures, as the term implies, the relative strength at each time of the two main antagonists in the ongoing class struggle. When we say that we are stronger, we mean, therefore, stronger than the bourgeoisie. At a given point the mass movement may be on the offensive (rising) and the bourgeoisie on the defensive; it may be the reverse, and even there may be periods of relative stability. But in general terms, we can say that an abatement of the mass movement corresponds to an advance of the the bourgeoisie. This relation of forces between the classes, as we have seen, gives place, according to Trotsky, to four general situations, four regimens: counter-revolutionary, non-revolutionary, pre-revolutionary and revolutionary.

And if we return to Germain’s assertion that “the revolutionary party initiative” can “change the relationship of forces”, this means that the initiative of the party can transform a counter-revolutionary regime to a non-revolutionary one, this one into pre-revolutionary and this into in a revolutionary one. In contrast to his manifest tendency to overwhelm us with quotes and historical examples, Germain offers not a single one to illustrate this statement. It is no coincidence: there are none.

For serious Marxists, the superstructures (and the revolutionary party is one of them) are determined by the structures (classes) and not the reverse. It is absolutely impossible for a superstructure to modify, by its own “initiative”, the relations between classes. This also exists in a dialectic relationship: the superstructures take colossal weight in times of great instability and crises of the structure, for example in a revolutionary situation, and only at those times. But reaching this situation of crisis does not depend at all on the superstructures, but rather on the laws governing the struggle between classes.

⁶² Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p, 38 and 39.

What makes possible for the confrontation between the classes to reach the point of complete and utter crisis of the structure (revolutionary crisis) is that the existence of capitalism is ruled by a law according to which it will have ever deeper economic crisis and the mass movement will always react against the hardships that these crises cause. When the revolutionary crisis arrives, and only then, the superstructures define the way out of the crisis: the bourgeois state and the bourgeois or petty bourgeois parties with influence in the mass movement, push towards a reactionary, bourgeois outcome of the crisis; the revolutionary party pushes towards revolutionary, workers outcome. Which of these two sides win the leadership of the mass movement, will determine what the outcome of the crisis will be. That is, if the revolutionary party manages to win over the working class, if this firmly takes the leadership of the mass movement and the vast majority of the petty-bourgeois masses support or remain neutral in the struggle, the crisis will be defined towards the proletarian revolution. If the party does not manage this, and the bourgeois superstructure drags the petty bourgeoisie and succeed in confusing large segments of the mass movement and the working class, the outcome of the crisis will be a bourgeois, counter-revolutionary outcome.

But even in this case, the role of the superstructure is not directly determinant. The superstructure “revolutionary party” does not take “the initiative” of taking power: it tries to win the mass movement for it to take the “revolutionary initiative” of taking charge of the state. And this “winning the mass movement for revolutionary initiative” is simply a political task the party.

In periods of stability of the structure, this dialectic between the party and the relationship of forces between the classes is given in a qualitatively inferior way. The lower the momentum of the mass struggles, the smaller the influence of the party. When the struggles grow, so does the party’s influence. The party can only accelerate (and within very precise limits) the development of the mass movement, but never cause a change in the relationship of forces by its own initiative. Whether a strike wins or is defeated will not result in the same relation of forces between the classes.

The party can play a role in this situation, provided it is the leadership of the strike, or gets to be it at some point in its development. If the party leads the strike to victory, this speeds up the development of the mass movement, changing the relationship of forces in favour of the workers movement. If the strike was very important, it may even mean a regime change; such as moving from a non-revolutionary to a pre-revolutionary situation. But again, what produces the change in the relationship of forces is not the party directly, but this victory of mass movement. The party, correctly leading the mass movement in the strike, has accelerated the change from one regime to another, has helped the mass movement to change the relationship of forces with the bourgeoisie; but in no way has changed the relationship of forces due to its own initiative. If the masses had not been willing to go on strike or if this was lost (and this can happen because of objective factors, even with our leadership), the party could not have done anything.

This is the ABC of Marxism and it is what the historical and current reality shows us. So it is no coincidence that Germain was unable to substantiate with any quotes his famous “revolutionary initiatives” which are able to “change the relationship of forces” or to provide examples in this regard.

Or is it not so? Is there any revolutionary party initiative which has aided to change the relationship of forces between the classes? Could you mention some comrade Germain? May it be the guerrilla of the Inti Peredo in Bolivia? Or perhaps, the POR (C)’s long years of “preparing for armed struggle”? May be the actions of the Tupamaros in Uruguay? Or of the PRT(C)-ERP in Argentina? None of these examples supports the Germainist conception. In all these countries the only thing that has changed the relationship of forces was the mobilization of the masses: the general strike against Miranda’s coup in Bolivia; large general strikes, such as in banking and the meat workers in Uruguay; the “Cordobazo” in Argentina, and so on. And in these facts of class struggle that really changed the relationship of forces, neither the POR (C), nor the Inti Peredo, nor the Tupamaros, nor the PRT(C)-ERP, had anything to do with. All they had to do with was in giving excuses for the regime to increase the repression that the workers movement paid dearly for.

With the “revolutionary initiatives” or with the mass movement?

As with any theoretical question, this issue is not exhausted in theory, but it manifests itself, much more clearly, in practical politics. So far we had polemised with Germain about whether or not

the slogans we use should respond to the immediate needs and consciousness of the masses; about whether such agitation should be done on the mass movement or the vanguard.

It seems that we agree on the fact that the slogans (or demands) are the essential tool for developing our policy. But now the disagreement tends to widen.

To Germain, the “revolutionary initiatives” are an “essential dimension of the Leninist concept of the revolutionary party” which is the same as saying that, to be Leninist, the party must have as a central task to take “revolutionary initiatives”, on its own account and risk. The role of these revolutionary initiatives of the party is not very clear in the paragraph where Germain criticises Camejo, but from his entire conception and from the policy that has been applied by some sections oriented by the majority, it is clear that these initiatives have the function to provide example to the masses and show them the way by which they must mobilize. Examples: the POR (C) took the “initiative” of armed struggle (or the preparation for it) for the Bolivian masses to follow, launching armed struggle (or preparing for it); the Communist League took the initiative of physically fighting against fascism and broke out an act of *Ordre Nouveau* for French masses to follow suit and destroy fascism throughout France, and so on and so forth. If our parties do not take such initiatives they are unworthy, according to Germain, of the name of Leninist or Trotskyist parties.

How would Germain qualify the Russian Bolshevik Party? We don't want to even imagine it! Consider that only weeks before the October Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky discussed whether to take power on behalf of the Soviets or the party. Not even the Bolshevik Party itself at the height of its influence in the mass movement could venture to take “revolutionary initiative” of taking power! Obviously this party lacked the “critical dimension” that so worries Germain.

We are not against the party taking any kind of initiatives, but we opposed those with which it intends to replace the mass movement in tasks that are its own. That is, when it aims to confront on their own the bourgeois regime, or some sector of class enemy of the proletariat, or an organization that responds to that class sector (as in the case of fascist organizations). We are in favour of the party politically opposing all classes, sectors or enemy organizations of the mass movement, denouncing them in its propaganda, agitating slogans in the mass movement to try to mobilize against these enemies, but not for physically confronting them of its own accord and at its own risk, without the active support of the mass movement or a section of it.

This does not mean we should sit back and wait to convince the majority of the mass movement and its organizations to launch our slogans and try to mobilize sectors which are already facing objectively the need to do so. This is where we should deploy our major initiatives, but these have the one and only purpose: to create or discover the slogans which will lead to the mobilization and revolutionary organization of the mass movement, or some part of it. Interestingly, those who are in favour of the party taking initiatives on their own are not particularly imaginative or bold in the task of taking these true revolutionary party initiatives. That's how the POR (C) in Bolivia displayed their full imagination to invent a revolutionary army, but lacked enough initiative and daring to raise the slogans that would effectively led to the arming of the Bolivian masses: the arming of the mass organizations to face the reactionary coups d'état. And in Europe they have not had any initiative to support and defend the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies.

Neither are we suggesting that only when all or most of the mass movement take our slogans will be the time to take action. Precisely we make a polemic with Germain because he considers the vanguard as a sector formed by individuals of the mass movement, and we believe there is in the mass movement an uneven development which causes at every moment of the class struggle a sector to be in the vanguard with respect to others. As a general rule, we have to focus our work on those sectors that suggest the possibility of mobilization. The capitalist regime permanently promotes or demands different layers of the working class and the exploited to be mobilized to defend themselves against the attacks of the exploiters. We must be fully involved in these objective processes to advance the slogans to mobilize and organize these areas permanently. Each mobilization and triumph of these sectors of the mass movement will serve as a spur to mobilize and get others ready to fight.

It will not be as Germain believes that through the current vanguard or the party we will get to overcome the bureaucracy or provide a permanent example to the mass movement. We will succeed only through sectors of the mass movement impacting with their struggles other sectors. The entire science of our parties consists, precisely, in knowing how to determine which sectors of the mass movement, because of their objective situation and their current level of consciousness, are more prone

to mobilization. The whole secret of Bolshevik policy resides in this dialectic. It would have been a crime not to take as an axis the American youth, with a slogan expressing their immediate need and level of consciousness (“withdraw troops from Vietnam, now!”), waiting for the whole American mass movement to be able to mobilize. And this was a truly excellent and exemplary “initiative” of the SWP! But it has nothing to do with the “revolutionary initiatives”.

Everything in France forces us, for example, to focus on immigrant workers with their two specific problems, the national issue and being part of the most exploited sector of the working-class. We should try to mobilize them against the attack of fascist outbreaks and of French capitalism which wants to keep them in the condition of second-class workers and citizens. But our obligation arises from the fact that this sector is giving indications that it is ready to mobilize, that is a sector unevenly developed of the mass movement that may, for a period, be at the vanguard of the French working class and masses. This is why one of our most urgent tasks in France is to search the slogans which can mobilize immigrant workers, but in no way for us, our party, to take the “revolutionary initiative” to fight fascism on our own, without immigrant workers involved in that fight.

This issue of the revolutionary initiatives by the party is dangerous for several reasons. The first is that educates badly the mass movement and delays the development of their mobilization and consciousness. The majority comrades, for example, congratulated the PRT(C)-ERP for kidnapping Sylvester, the British consul in the city of Rosario, in exchange for his release they demanded (and got) a series of improvements for workers at the Swift meatpacking plant. Did this “revolutionary initiative” educate the Swift workers? According to the majority comrades, yes, it did give the example that through armed struggle they could achieve the improvements needed. According to us, no, because it showed the workers that the mere action of a group of well-meaning and courageous people could replace their active mobilization to defend their interests and rights. The harsh reality of the class struggle denied the majority: shortly after, the union elections were won again by the Peronist bureaucracy and working conditions became, again, as bad as or worse than before the “revolutionary initiative” of the ERP.

We could say the same about the Communist League’s action against *Ordre Nouveau*. And here we can show something else: how the greater relative success these “initiatives” have, the more harmful to the development of the mass movement they are. If we keep taking actions against the fascist outbreaks, and we keep having technical successes, with what argument will we try to mobilize the immigrant workers? When we attempt to do it, they will answer us: “What are we going to mobilize for if those good guys of the Communist League will be already in charge of liquidating the fascists?” However to the extent that the French immigrant workers and mass movement do not mobilize the masses against the fascists outbreaks, these will become increasingly larger (because this is a question of relation of forces between the classes), and the time will come when only the mass movement can defeat them. At this time our “revolutionary initiatives” will show their negative face: for hitherto trusting that the problem of fascism can be solved by the Communist League, there will be no mass movement sector politically prepared to mobilize against them. The consequences cannot but be dire. Luckily there is no great danger of this happening, because just as fascism grows, our section, and its “revolutionary initiatives” of facing it by itself, will be swept away by the mass movement.

The second danger of these “revolutionary initiatives” of the party is that they will lead us to forget or ignore the revolutionary initiative of the masses themselves and the obligation of the party and its cadres to intervene in them. We believe the process which Europe entered into, as with our continent before, will be characterized by thousands and thousands of mobilizations of all kinds made by the masses. For these thousands and thousands of mass mobilizations, our parties have few cadres to attend to them, to provide them with appropriate political and organizational orientation. We lack time, militants and leadership capacity for it.

Therefore, it is a crime to extract cadres out of the mobilisations the masses do, to separate them towards the achievement of independent actions of their own removed from those the masses take.

The proposition that the essential dimension of the party at this stage is its own revolutionary initiative tends to move us away from the resolution of the most serious contradiction facing our sections: their tremendous weakness in the face of the initiatives and mobilizations of the mass movement. This contradiction threatens to worsen or, at least, to become a sharp contradiction throughout an extensive stage, as our growth and elevated political level will be accompanied by greater revolutionary initiatives of the mass movement in both continents, if not all the world .

Unfortunately, we have not had the opportunity to chat with comrades of the European majority. But we have done so with the new Latin American vanguard and with representatives of the majority in our continent. Also, for a while we have been having a dialogue with the comrades of the SWP leadership. In these conversations it has always attracted our attention a profound difference between the language of the Latin American majority comrades in the one hand, and the Americans and our comrades on the other. The first have a mania for the words “create” and “revolutionary initiative”. We, for “discovering opportunities” and “with all boldness to develop a policy for these opportunities”. We could say, very schematically, that in this difference in language is currently expressed one of the fundamental differences between the majority and the minority. For the majority, it is necessary to “create” through “revolutionary initiative”, teachings, examples for the mass movement. For the minority, the mass movement does not need any kind of examples, or any “revolutionary initiative” on our part, but rather we need to know how “to discover the mobilizations the masses do or can do, led by their needs and immediate consciousness”. These mobilizations, present or for the immediate future, we call them opportunities, and all our policy should be directed towards using them through our slogans, to avoid halting them and to winning them for our leadership.

As noted above, in addition to theoretical, this is a practical matter. Why split our head thinking about how to attack *Ordre Nouveau*? If indeed *Ordre Nouveau* has begun attacking the Algerians and other nationalities by oppressed French imperialism, we must begin immediately a deep agitational work among the nationalities which are preferentially targeted by these fascist goons. Only this kind of work will enable us to know their mentality, their reactions, and whether they are willing to defend themselves against such attacks. If our slogans do not catch on, this indicates that the party must abandon momentarily the task. If the opposite happens, if our slogans are well received by immigrant workers, if we succeed in organizing them, then and only then, closely linked to the Algerians neighbourhoods attacked by *Ordre Nouveau*, we'll give exemplary punishment to these fascists. The condition for this task, as for every truly revolutionary policy is, then, that it responds to a pressing need for mass movement (defend against fascist attacks that occur repeatedly) and to the initiative of the movement itself (that this mobilizes itself against this danger).

Our role is to work within these mobilizations already existing or potential, raising the correct slogans that reflect the needs and consciousness of this sector of the mass movement, organizing them, presenting ourselves as alternative leadership if they have opportunistic leaderships at their head, and to lead them if we have no rivals. (This last can happen if we work within the most exploited sectors of the working class and the mass movement). It is not a matter, then, of “creating” but rather of “discovering” within the mass movement, where there are possibilities opening up to impose our transitional slogans.

The third danger of these “revolutionary initiatives” is that they transform the relations of the party with the mass movement from objective into subjective. For the majority comrades, initiatives are useful if they awaken sympathy within the mass movement. Maitan has praised the ERP actions for this reason; so has Frank.

Our relationship with the mass movement has to be essentially organic and political, not emotional and based on propaganda. We want party groups in the organisms and in the concrete, objective, struggles of the mass movement. We want these party groups and their militants to contest the leadership of the mass organizations and the struggles on behalf of the party. It is a precise and objective relationship: struggles and organizations of the workers and mass movement on the one hand, party organisms within them, disputing the leadership of these organizations and struggles on the other hand.

The majority comrades are not consistent in their policy of “revolutionary initiatives”. In Argentina, for example, there was no difference between the “initiatives” of the PRT(C) and those of the Peronist armed groups. Both were carried out outside the mass movement, both produced “exemplary” actions of a vanguard; both were characterized by trying to solve through their own initiative tasks that can only be solved by mass mobilizations. However, those who captured the largest share of “sympathy” were the armed Peronist organizations and not the PRT(C). This was demonstrated in all subsequent street demonstrations after the assumption of the Peronist government of Campora; the columns of FAR and Montoneros (Peronist armed organizations) came to mobilize up to 40,000 youth, the ERP never passed 500, those of our party reached a maximum of 4,000. Who caught more “sympathy”? Undoubtedly in the first place, the Peronist left, based on a permanent

submission policy to the trust the masses still have in Peron (i.e., based on an “armed submission” to Peronism). In second place, our party, but not based on any “revolutionary initiative” but for having been present in each and every one of the struggles of the mass movement and by differentiating itself very clearly from Peronist politics. Finally, the PRT(C), which also differentiated from Peronism, but was absent from the demonstrations because it was too busy meditating, organizing and taking their “revolutionary initiatives”.

The conclusions are obvious. The majority comrades should not sit on the fence: either you are with the “revolutionary initiatives” (and, consequently, abandon the political work amongst the mass movement) or you are with Trotskyist politics. And Europe will be no exception: as the economic crisis deepens, there will be sectors of the petty bourgeoisie desperate for “revolutionary initiatives” infinitely superior to those of our sections. At this time, our sections will have done very well if they have already defined their attitude. They may politically yield, and achieve the momentary successes and “sympathies” that once upon a time the Peronist armed organizations of Argentina had, or they may abandon these famous “revolutionary initiatives” and achieve the much more modest, but much more important, successes and sympathies of our party. What would be tragic is that they fulfil the same sad role of the PRT(C).

A superstructural and subjective conception of the united front

This polemic we have just seen on “revolutionary initiative” is expressed in another one, in a tacit way, that exists between the majority and the minority around workers united front. Thanks to the gracious visit of two members of the French section to our party, we had the opportunity to hear the clearest exposition of this conception: “We think that we don’t have the strength to impose, as a political organization, alone, the united front against the reformist parties, we can polemise with them, and we do, but it’s not enough. Trotsky posed the issue well when he said that the correlation of forces was between one-third and one-seventh of the workers forces. When you do not have even one seventh of the workers forces, the united front tactic is not enough, it cannot be applied it. When you have more than a third, the revolutionary party can assume its responsibilities.”⁶³

Germain, without as much clarity, holds the same conception. We disagree with this way of approaching the united front; it is a subjective deviation, as well as the remaining deviations of the majority. This interpretation is, by its content, superstructural and subjective, adventurist and sectarian. It considers that the united front is essentially a question of relationship between parties.

For our French section, the possibility of proposing a united front to the reformist parties depends on which numerical relationship we have with them within the workers movement: if we have less than a seventh, we cannot bring it up, if we have between a seventh and a third, yes we can, and if we have more than a third we do not we need to do it because we can manage by ourselves.

The united front is a tactic

The comrades of the Communist League are mistaken. First, the united front is not a principle, or a strategy of our party, but rather a political tactic for specific situations of the class struggle. Second, as any policy of ours, it should respond to deep needs in a stage of the mass movement, and not to the internal relations between the different sectors of the mass movement. Put another way: the front is a tactic that we apply when the situation of the class struggle objectively requires the workers movement to unify all its forces to confront the bourgeoisie; it depends on the relationship between the mass movement and the exploiters, not on the relationships between the different parties of the mass movement. That is to say, what determines our policy of united front is the structural factor (relations between the classes) and not the superstructural (relations between the workers parties).

⁶³ Statement by a comrade of the French Communist League leadership in a meeting in our headquarters, in Proceedings, Archives of the PST (A).

However, this policy has a major superstructural aspect, which is the way to propose the united front.

Contrary to opportunistic politics which propose the united front only to the leaderships and not to the rank and file to avoid friction with the former; and contrary to ultra-left politics, which only propose it to the rank and file and ignore the leaderships; Trotskyist politics consist of proposing a united front to the rank and file and the leaderships, with three goals: first, not to break with the rank and file of the reformist parties by ignoring the leaderships that they recognize; second, to promote rank and file pressure on them to force the leaderships to accept a united front; third, to exhaust the experience of the rank and file with the reformist leaderships, unmasking them for their vacillations and betrayals to the tasks of the united front, and to stand as alternative revolutionary leadership.

But this superstructural aspect, this way of proposing the united front, without which there is no real united front policy, is just that: a way, a superstructural aspect but not the determinant one. What is crucial is that there are very compelling needs for the entire workers movement that force us to raise this policy.

Precisely because the united workers front responds to an objective need of the mass movement at a precise stage of the class struggle, it is usually defensive. If for years the united front was not posed for Europe, it was not for numerical reasons, but for a deep objective reason: there was not a brutal offensive by the exploiters which raised the need for a defensive policy of all the exploited. The relative poverty (or absolute wealth) of European workers is what explains that the united front was not raised in an immediate, agitational way. It could not be, it cannot be, while the entire working class objectively does not face, does not feel a serious threat that affects them immediately: fascism, reaction, cost of living, unemployment, racism, etc.

How do we implement the policy of united front? This is a very delicate problem: how do we distribute our militants, on which sectors of the mass movement we preferably hit and with what slogans we do it, is something that will be resolved correctly according to the ability of our leaderships and parties to evaluate the objective situation and our own forces, and their capacity for distributing and arming them with correct slogans. There is no general answer to this problem, because every situation is specific. The most we can say is that we will have to hit on the sectors of the mass movement in which the objective problems are most intense (if we are dealing with partial economic or democratic issues, such as national problems) or on those which have demonstrated greater sensitivity and willingness to mobilize in the case of general political problems (risk of reactionary coup, for example); we must assign into those sectors the biggest and best part of our forces, and we must look for the specific slogan that reflects the core of general problem which the mass movement is facing as a whole. Like any other policy of ours, its chance of success depends on the objective process of the class struggle and secondarily on our numerical relationship with other workers parties.

The united front in France

For example, if today we raise a program and a slogan for the defence of the living and working standards of the whole of the French workers movement, and we call for the unity of the two or three trade union confederations with this axis, it is quite possible we may have a partial or complete success after a certain time if the objective conditions help and we know how to properly implement our policy. If the bosses' offensive against that standard of living continues to intensify, if we know how to tactically implement this defence strategy of living and working standards in the various guilds, concentrating on those where there are greater chances of a united struggle in the short term, there will be chances for these partial, united struggles, of united front, to succeed. If any of these struggles is victorious, it will impact the whole of the French workers movement, and take it to an overall struggle to curb the bosses' offensive. Then our united front policy will have triumphed.

In France we have already an experience of what it means an incorrect, subjective and superstructural conception of the united front. On 21 June 1973, the French fascist organization *Ordre Nouveau* made a demonstration against Algerian immigrants. Our section, the Communist League, had called for the creation of a counter-demonstration by the left. Finding no echo, it performed it alone, and there was a violent confrontation with the fascists. The French government took advantage of this event to outlaw the League and imprison Alain Krivine and Pierre Rousset, two of its most prominent

spokesmen. Some days later, the Committee for Freedom, an organization of the Socialist Party called a rally where the whole of the left and 15,000 people attended. A *de facto* united front had been formed, of all the left parties, including the CP, against the government and in favour of democratic freedoms. But although the motive of the rally was to demand the revocation of the decree illegalizing the League, our colleagues could not speak.

It would have been a different situation if they had put in practice, correct and consequently, a united front policy. If the Communist League had transformed its campaign against the fascist outbreaks and the reactionary trends of the government in an ongoing campaign of united front addressed to the CP and SP and systematically maintained since a year ago, the rally would have been a spectacular success of our united front policy. All attendees would have said or thought: “The league was right: we had to make a united front, and this has begun to be structured”.

Perhaps the comrades of the League would not have been able to speak anyway, but before the manoeuvrings of the CP leadership to try to stop them, the rank and file of the rally would have wondered: why are they not accepted if they are the only ones who for more than one year have stressed the need for concrete action, not just an act, against the reactionary government and ongoing fascists outbreaks?” and this fact alone would have allowed the CP rank and file to begin to press on their leadership and even to question it.

But the most important thing would have been to raise the united front among immigrant workers. We still have time to do so. Together with our patient work on these nationalities, the policy of united front of all tendencies to defend themselves from racist attacks would make its way, sooner or later, if the attacks continued.

But if the comrades of the Communist League keep waiting for a certain numerical proportion to happen, in order to raise the united front policy as the central tactic of the party for defensive tasks, it will happen again what has already happened in the rally in defence of the League and in the Bolivian People’s Assembly: the united front happened *de facto* and neither the Communist League nor the POR (C), respectively, were able to hold to the masses the proletarian and revolutionary award of being their highest agitators and organizers. Those who took the prestige of doing so were Stalinism in one case and the Lechin bureaucracy on the other. It can also happen that the united front does not take place and, therefore, the defeat of the mass movement is inevitable. This defeat will have as theoretical origin the superstructural and subjective conception of the united front and as politically responsible the comrades who have not taken as a central task the agitation of the slogan of a united front in the mass movement, in addition to the opportunistic leaderships.

Two omissions: professional militants and democratic centralism

It is remarkable that the furious attack of comrade Germain to Camejo about his conception of the party is not supplemented with another to Mandel, who missed two of the pillars of the Leninist conception of the Bolshevik Party: professional militants and democratic centralism. These two oversights of Mandel have an explanation. We have seen that for him the overcoming of the consciousness of the advanced workers is happens intellectually and is carried out by intellectuals: it is a subjective process of learning Marxist philosophy, sociology, economy and history. That is, of “Marxism as science”. This process, which can only be met individually has its executors, always following Mandel, in the intelligentsia, whose role as class sector, is “to bring the awakened and critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientist knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognise the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is”.⁶⁴

On what objective basis does this learning of the “awakened and critical layers of the working class”, i.e. the workers’ vanguard, happen? Or, put otherwise, how does the vanguard worker have to organize his life to become a revolutionary militant? Mandel answers us, in another of his works,

⁶⁴ Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.

saying that one of the political privileges of revolutionary militants is that of ... “dedicating to the social activity a fraction of their lives much larger than that of other workers”.⁶⁵

Here comrade Mandel is telling us (through what he does not say) that the vanguard worker must stay in the same objective situation as before, only with far more sacrifice. This means, he should organize his life as follows: meets the schedule every day at the factory, then at home he receives at home an intellectual who teaches him and makes him study Marxist and Trotskyist socialism, and then he has to go and visit other workers, or the union where he will fight for his workmates and the party. In short: in the transformation of vanguard worker into revolutionary militant, the party has nothing to do, the task of education in Marxism is met by the intellectual, the task of coping with life is met by the worker himself continuing his factory work, and if intellectuals do their job and the worker his, he will have achieved the “scientific knowledge” and, therefore, “consciousness”. This is neither Marxist nor Leninist theory of organization.

The professional militants

Marxism is materialistic, Lenin was too. For Lenin, overcoming the fragmented consciousness of the advanced worker was essentially a material process, rather than intellectual: it was giving free time to the worker to be trained in all aspects (both theoretical and practical) as a professional revolutionary. It was not a arduous and dreadful obligation which was added to the already arduous and dreadful obligations the worker had by the mere fact of being a worker. It was a task that began by giving time to the advanced worker so he could cease to be a fragmented worker in real life and begin to be revolutionary in also real life.

Because Lenin was materialist and dialectical he could not conceive that a consciousness derived from a material situation (the alienation of lot work for 8, 11 or 14 hours per day) could be overcome through courses. That is, while the worker devoted so many hours of his life to do a job to which he was indifferent, within a production chain whose mechanism was unknown, to develop a product whose final destination he did not mind, his consciousness should reflect these characteristics of his activity, should be a fragmented, partial, consciousness. The courses the party might offer (and not the intellectuals as social sector, comrade Mandel!) could alleviate the problem, but they could not solve it. The only way to fix it was starting from modifying his material living conditions.

The solution, Marxist to the core, that Lenin offers to this problem is his theory of professional revolutionaries. This theory is almost an obsession for him: “And we must see to it, not only that the masses ‘advance’ concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers ‘advance’ an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries. Thus, we have reached the question of the relation between an organisation of professional revolutionaries and the workers movement pure and simple.” “A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and ‘promising’ must not be left to work eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party.” “And we *will succeed in doing this*, because the spontaneously awakening masses will *also produce* increasing numbers of ‘professional revolutionaries’”. “We do not recognise our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional agitator*”. “To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary.”⁶⁶

This “forgetting” by comrade Mandel of the party’s transformation of workers into professional militants of vanguard, is not limited to the theoretical plane. There is a very exemplary statistic about it, which is linked to an underlying polemic, not yet formulated, among the majority comrades and the SWP and our party. The statistics are as follows: of all professional militants that our International has, between 70 and 80 percent at least belong to the minority. Moreover, if we take the leaderships of the two numerically strongest sections of the Fourth International — the French and our Argentine party — we see that the proportion of comrades who live or have lived off a liberal profession in the Communist League is 20 or 30 to 1 in relation to the comrades of the PST. This means, taking the hundred most important leaders of the French section and of the leadership of the PST, for every 20 or 30 doctors and professors in the French section, there is one in our Argentine party. Specifically, in our

⁶⁵ Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers’ Control”, op. cit.

⁶⁶ Lenin, V. I.: “What Is To Be Done?” in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 347-530.

Central Committee of 120 members, there are only three members with liberal professions, being nearly 100 professionals of the party, of which 80 percent have been leaders of the workers movement. In the Executive Committee, the top leadership of our party, except for four comrades, it is entirely made up of professionals who have been important leaders of the workers movement. Finally, there is a tradition in our party, that the current rapid growth prevents us from applying to the letter, which stipulates that no one can reach leadership without having served two years of outstanding professional militant activity within the workers movement. If we compare other sections of the majority with the SWP, there are similar relations and situations.

There is one final aspect of the problem of the professional militants: they must be the support base of the party. That's because the revolutionary activity demands total, not partial, attention and learning. A thorough revolutionary militant, a cadre of the party leadership, of a zone or a major front, is one who can resolve on his own the political (not the "scientific") issues referred to him by any situation of the class struggle. He must know how to analyse a situation, formulate precise slogans that match it, define the appropriate organizational forms, distribute the forces of the party in general or in his zone, or front, define the key areas of work, orient the axes of propaganda on the vanguard, give training courses in elementary Marxist education, recruit for the party and suitably organize the new sectors entering the party. It would be absurd to require one party cadre to be the highest expression in all these tasks, since the work of leadership is a team effort where unevenly developed skills and experiences of those who compose it are combined. But a leadership cadre must be able to provide an initial response, however elementary, to these tasks.

It is absolutely impossible the specialization as true, Marxist revolutionary, can be achieved otherwise than by taking this activity as a full-fledged profession. For that we need a professional militant, a "full-time" revolutionary. And these professional militants are, we emphasize, the foundation stone on which the party sits. Hence, it is all the more unforgivable that comrade Mandel has "forgotten" them.

Democratic Centralism

In his definition of Leninist combat party, Mandel commits another equally dangerous omission: democratic centralism, which is an organizational form that makes to the essence of the Bolshevik party. It means that, along with an internal democratic life, our organization needs centralized leadership endowed with executive power, and strict internal discipline.

The need for strict and centralized discipline has two objective reasons imposed by the class struggle. The first is that our ultimate goal as a party is to lead or postulate ourselves to lead the struggles of the masses permanently until taking power and then until socialism is built. And this mortal struggle can only be carried out as a tightly organized army; we cannot afford the luxury of offering the enemy the least dis-concentration or lack of coordination of our forces. The second reason is the existence of counter-revolutionary parties and bureaucracies within the workers movement, which also form part of the enemy. To the enemy's organization we cannot oppose a mess even in the name of democracy. Given a fascist attack on our branch premises, we will not consult by telephone the whole party about what we do. In an assembly where the bureaucracy wants to divide us, we will not outline different positions although within the party the discussion may not yet be finished.

The need for democratic internal life has to do with the objective relationship that the party has with the mass movement and with the dialectics of this relationship. First, the party needs democracy because the development of its political line is collective. It is not the work of some particularly intelligent or educated individuals, but the clash of the views of all those who make up the party, of all those militants expressing the sector of the mass movement where they develop their activity. But once elaborated, that line must be confronted with reality, which is done through the militant activity of each of the teams and individuals and the party as a whole. This practical activity is the only one that tells us the correct and incorrect aspects of the line voted, and the democratic discussion of this evaluation is what allows the necessary corrections of the policy.

Summarizing, democracy is what establishes the relationship of the subject (revolutionary party) with its object (mass movement) and, therefore, the only guarantee of an objective (scientific) development of the political line and its objective (scientific) confrontation with the reality of the class

struggle. But the phrase “democratic centralism” is split up into two poles which, at their limits, are antagonistic: absolute centralism means the leadership solves all problems, from theory and characterizations to the smallest tactical details, through the general political line. When this happens, democracy disappears. At the same time, absolute democracy means that all these problems are solved through discussions that can only function in a permanent deliberative state of the whole party, and this is where centralization disappears. The proportion in which these two elements are combined at a particular time cannot be fixed in advance; neither is it a recipe nor an arithmetic formula. No one can say, for example, the party should be at all times 50 percent centralist and 50 percent democratic or something similar. Our parties are a living reality, a process of permanent construction, so democratic centralism is an algebraic formula. The specific combination of centralist and democratic element is different in every moment of its construction and must be worked out in each moment.

But, what do we do to always find this right proportion? Currently there is in our International a pending discussion with comrades Frank and Krivine. They are of the opinion we have to strengthen in our world party the centralist pole of the formula; we say that we need to strengthen the democratic pole. We will take a first step in this discussion.

One of the great virtues of this formula is precisely that it is algebraic. This is, that it leaves open to the circumstances of the class struggles and of party development its “quantitative”, “arithmetical” precision. To achieve this precision we must bear in mind, as one of the essential elements, the political prestige earned by the party leadership with the rank and file. Schematically, we can say that the more prestigious the greater centralization.

We say this because the higher the leadership’s political successes, the greater will be the trust of the rank and file on it, and the higher the trust, the stronger will be the discipline and centralization. Conversely, minor successes cause distrust, and this distrust works against, like it or not, discipline and centralization. Ultimately, the formula of democratic centralism is a political–moral–organizational expression, not just moral–organizational. It is not a formula remote from the class struggle and the development of the party, but intimately related to them. It is not confused with these two factors, because even in a leadership’s worst moments, we must consciously strive to maintain centralism as much as possible just as in the best of times we must closely monitor the continued existence of democracy. But, although not confused with the vagaries of the class struggle and the process of party building, the pinning down of the democratic centralist formula is, we insist, strongly influenced by them.

We are building the most formidable revolutionary organizational weapon known in history: the Bolshevik world party. Precisely for this reason, the task is so difficult and takes so long. In this process of party building it is necessary, for this stage, to strengthen the democratic rather than the centralist pole, precisely because our leaderships, both national and international, have not yet earned great political prestige with the rank and file of our sections for their successes in the leadership of the mass movement. Only this prestige could strengthen the centralist and disciplinary pole; meantime, the democratic aspect should prevail.

This does not mean that we abandon all centralism and all discipline; we remain centralized and democratic, but giving predominance to the democratic factor. The current struggle between two tendencies, incorporated into clearly delineated factions, shows this analysis of ours fits the reality and needs of the Fourth International. Trying to impose now a strong centralism, having two factions differ in key aspects of the policy that we must follow, would fatally rupture the International, whatever faction wins the leadership in the next congress.

Returning to the Leninist-Trotskyist party

Germain’s most original attack is that he makes when he says that Camejo’s definition of the revolutionary party attributes to this the same characteristics of the social democratic parties of the first pre-war. Let’s recall that, for Camejo, the revolutionary party “tries to promote mass struggles and give the masses confidence in their own strength by mobilising them around transitional, democratic, or immediate demands related to their present level of consciousness” and “promotes whatever forms of

struggle are appropriate, using tactics ranging from peaceful marches to armed struggle (including guerilla warfare).”⁶⁷ Thus, these would be for Germain the characteristics a social democratic party.

However, Mandel, Germain’s teacher, asserts that what characterized pre-war social democracy was, on the one hand, that it performed “electoral and parliamentary activity, and on the other to a struggle for immediate reforms of an economic and trade union nature”.⁶⁸ Do comrades Mandel and Germain agree that “immediate reforms” and “electoral and parliamentary activity” are the opposite of “mass struggles” and of mobilization “around transitional demands, democratic and immediate”? Which of these types of activities did the social democracy really perform? It would be desirable for Mandel and Germain to meet soon and come to an agreement on this issue. Although they will not find it easy, since their differences do not end there: Mandel, in his “Leninist Theory of Organization”, asserts that Stalinism’s current policy is similar to that of the social democracy; Germain, as we have seen, asserts that Camejo’s definition also matches with that of the social democracy. By transitive condition, if Germain equals Mandel, Camejo’s definition equals Stalinism. Conclusion for Mandel–Germain, contemporary Stalinist parties... “[are] built around a revolutionary programme [...] try to promote mass struggles and give the masses confidence in their own strength by mobilising them around transitional, democratic, or immediate demands related to their present level of consciousness [...] the party promotes whatever forms of struggle are appropriate, using tactics ranging from peaceful marches to armed struggle (including guerilla warfare) [...] seeks to lead the working class and its allies to state power as its fundamental goal, but does not try to substitute itself for the masses. Each national party is part of a single international party of world proletariat.”⁶⁹

If Germain had said all this clearly, our movement would have exploded unanimously in loud laughter, and would have understood that Camejo’s description is indeed that of a revolutionary Trotskyist party opposite by the vertex to the Stalinist and reformist parties. To avoid this, Germain tried to confuse the young comrades by assuring us that Camejo’s description matched what the pre-war social democrats (which the young comrades do not know directly as they know the Stalinists) did and said. But the move backfired when he forgot (as it is happening very frequently) that his teacher Mandel had asserted that Stalinism currently has the same policy that the social democracy had. We have done no more than join a statement of the disciple to a statement of the teacher and thus we have uncovered all the falseness of his attack on Camejo.

There is only one revolutionary program

Camejo said: “The party is built around a revolutionary program”. Germain replied: “A revolutionary party program? After all wasn’t the Erfurt programme of German social-democracy corrected and accepted by Engels himself?”⁷⁰

Specifically, Germain does not believe that the revolutionary party is essentially characterized by the revolutionary program; he does not believe that this is the first characteristic of a revolutionary party. However, Trotsky says, categorically, as Camejo does: “The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party.”⁷¹

We do not know whether Germain is for or against this statement, but we do know that in the contempt he feels for the revolutionary program as a support base for the party there is a typical idealist mistake: believing that the program is always the same, above the stages of the class struggle. Thus he makes his analogy to the Erfurt program. But he does not take it to the end.

What happens is that the program is not above the stages; it changes with them and is surpassed at the beat of the working class struggles, and the changes in the objective situation. The Erfurt program was revolutionary for a stage of capitalism and of the class struggle; it began to cease being so later and

⁶⁷ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 37.

⁶⁸ Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.

⁶⁹ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 37.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷¹ Trotsky, Leon: “What next? Vital questions for the German proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 217.

ended up being surpassed by another, which was logically imposed by the new stage. Suffice to say that this program did not define imperialism.

The same happened with the minimum programs of social democratic parties: they were useful, “revolutionary” for the period of political and trade union organization of the working class. This organization took place during the first phase of the imperialist era, which enabled the improvement of living standards of the working class in the metropolitan countries. At that time, and around the task of the political organization of class, the socialist programs were useful and “revolutionary” but only at that time and in that regard.

The great leaders and intellectuals who carried out this progressive task, the Bebel, Kautskys, Jaurès, underwent the same process as the socialist programs: from progressive to centrist, and from centrist to opportunist. Programs and leaders followed a slope reflecting the survival, by weight of inertia and the existence of a workers aristocracy agent of imperialism, of a program and leaderships which had ceased to be progressive and revolutionary once the independent political organization of the working class had been achieved.

From his idealistic and static conception of the program, Germain counter poses, as something much more important, “the revolutionary perspectives and struggles”. This opposition is incomprehensible: there cannot be a revolutionary program which is not precisely the synthesis of the tasks posed, at a certain period of the class struggle, by the perspectives and the revolutionary struggles of this period. When these struggles and these perspectives are not included in a program, that program is no longer revolutionary, or never was (as Bernstein’s).

In this transitional era from capitalism to socialism and of decadence of the world capitalist system, there is a single program that poses the general tasks of the working class and the mass movement, emerging from the “revolutionary perspectives and struggles”: our transitional program. Whatever Germain might say, this program is the basis of all contemporary revolutionary parties: without it there can be no revolutionary party.

What is for Germain the Fourth International

Camejo said that “each national party is part of a single international party of world proletariat”. Germain replies: “The need to be part of an ‘international party of world proletariat’: wasn’t German social-democracy the mainstay of the Second International?”⁷²

What does Germain mean by this? That the condition Camejo poses is false because the German Social Democracy was the mainstay of the Second International? The only thing this proves is that there was a Second International whose strongest party, the one which took the leading role, was the German party, but this does not prove that Camejo is wrong. Or maybe Germain is making an analogy, because he conceives the Second International as an “international party of world proletariat” of which the national social democratic parties were a “part”?

The latter is the only rational explanation. We can say that the syllogism is as follows: there was an “international party of world proletariat”, which was the Second International, the German Social Democracy was part and was the mainstay of such world party, the German Social Democracy was not revolutionary but opportunistic: therefore the requirement of Camejo that a revolutionary party be part of an international party of the world proletariat is not so important, as the German social democracy fulfilled it and did not thereby transformed itself into revolutionary party.

Unfortunately, this syllogism fails at the base. So far, the whole of the Trotskyist movement thought, following Trotsky, that the Second International was a “sum of national parties” and never an “international party of world proletariat” of which national sections are a “part”, as interpreted by Germain. In reality (and Camejo is right again!), at present being part of a “single international party of world proletariat” is a prerequisite for any national party to really be a Leninist combat party. And the only “world party” that exists, the only one that can be called so because it is not a federation of national parties is our Fourth International.

⁷² Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 37.

The essential features of the Leninist-Trotskyist parties

All this discussion about the characteristics and role of our parties forces us to ratify the six characteristics that Camejo gives and that we will not repeat, and amplify them adding four more, essential, of the Leninist–Trotskyist parties, which are the following:

First: The party uses a Marxist–scientific analysis of the relations between all classes and their likely dynamics before taking a line for a stage, with its strategy and tactics, its propaganda and agitation, its program and its slogans. This analysis must be synthesized in precise definitions of the character of the stage that it refers to. The party rejects the workerist analysis that takes into account mainly the internal relations of the mass movement to define the stages. It also rejects the economicist analysis which aims to extract the characteristics of the stage essentially from processes taking place within the bourgeois economy. And finally, it rejects the lack of analysis that comes from reversing this process, setting first a strategy or defining it by what the vanguard thinks or wants, and then imagining a pseudo analysis to justify this strategy.

To carry out this Marxist analysis the party uses the conceptual tool most perfected by Marxism, the law of uneven and combined development.

Second: Party policy is directed towards the whole mass movement, with all its sectors, although reflecting the interests of the working class and promoting it as the leader of the revolution. It focuses on the mass movement and not in the vanguard. Its aim is to mobilize the masses and not the vanguard. (Camejo points out this feature, but he does not stress enough that the party intends to raise the working class to the role of leader of the revolution).

This policy of the party has a theory-program, that of the permanent revolution, which is synthesized in one sentence: the party’s objective is to mobilize the working class and the masses permanently until socialist society. And it has a program and a method, the transitional program, which is also synthesized in one sentence: the party must launch those slogans that mobilize the masses against the exploiters, starting from their immediate needs and consciousness and to keep raising such slogans inasmuch as the mobilization itself raise the consciousness of the masses and create new needs for them, culminating in the slogan and the struggle for the seizure of power.

Third: The goal of the party within the workers and mass movement is to convert the elements of vanguard into professional militants, as the only way to convert them in true and total Trotskyist revolutionaries, since alienating work prevents them from achieving this level.

This goal for the vanguard responds to another much broader objective: the party must have a backbone of professional militants since to make the revolution must be, and is, a total activity, not a hobby, a charity or intellectual activity.

There is no Leninist–Trotskyist party with dilettantes, amateurs, members of the liberal professions, but rather with professional party militants, most of whom arose from the mass movement, mainly the workers movement.

Fourth: The construction of each party is part of the construction of the world party of socialist revolution. Both the national party and the world party are built under the rules of democratic centralism. The strictest discipline within the party is mandatory, first because of its aspiration to lead the masses in their struggle against the exploiters requires it to act as a single man, without the smallest hesitation; second, for the fierce struggle it must develop against the bureaucratic apparatuses, which also makes a necessity of centralism. But this centralization should be joined to the biggest democratic guarantees, because the democratic development of the political line is the only guarantee that this express the needs and level of consciousness of the mass movement, and because the democratic discussion of the results of its application is the only guarantee that it be ratified in whole or in part with the same objectivity.

Centralization must also be tied to the highest guarantees of morals and militant loyalty. It is also tied to the political prestige which the leadership applying centralism has earned, since this is not merely an oath or a moral commitment, but a political consequence. Therefore, to less prestige of the leadership the more democratic safeguards, within this formula which must be filled with different contents depending on the stages of construction of the national or world Leninist-Trotskyist party, and of solidification of their leaderships.

These ten characteristics of the Leninist-Trotskyist party are synthesized into just one: the relationship between the mobilization of the masses and the working class with the revolutionary party. Workers and mass movement on one end, the party on the other, are the two essential poles of the revolutionary movement. They are the two poles which divided the European left at the beginning of the century: Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky believed that the mobilization of the masses was omnipotent; Lenin did not come to believe that the party was, but some of his disciples did. Lenin's merit was to understand that a single pole, that of the mobilization of the working class and the masses was not sufficient; rather, it was completely and utterly inadequate if the other pole, the party, did not exist.

When the ebb of the workers movement in the industrially developed countries and the post-war economic boom made utterly difficult the revolutionary work on the mass movement, emerged in the movement tendencies tail-ending the bureaucratic organizations, arguing that we should abandon for a long period the task of building the revolutionary party. At that time we fought hard against them, claiming the need to continue in the central task of building the Leninist-Trotskyist party.

Currently, in the first steps of the greatest revolutionary upsurge that history has known, petty bourgeois, subjective conceptions arise, which tend towards proposing that the fundamental role is that of the vanguard, the armed organization, the heroism of those willing to fight. Against these subjective conceptions of the revolution it is necessary to reaffirm again that the decisive factor is the mobilization of the masses, and that these mobilizations take place due to deep objective needs, regardless of our will. But we also reaffirm that there is a dialectical, dynamic, relationship between the mass movement and the revolutionary party that conditions our entire policy. This relationship determines that the decisive factor, the mobilization of the masses is insufficient by itself, it desperately needs a revolutionary party to lead these mobilizations. Therefore, before as now, we keep the only strategy that remains even when conditions of the class struggle change: to mobilize the masses and to build the Bolshevik, Leninist-Trotskyist party.

Chapter VII

Revisionist Elements in Germain's conceptions

Mandel and Germain transform in subjective the objective prerequisites of the socialist revolution

Mandel asserts that in the current stage capitalism and imperialism are making significant progress in the development of the productive forces. Although he does not explicitly link this statement to the rest of his economic thinking, this is obviously the necessary premise from which both he and Germain started to get to the central idea: there is currently a trend to absolute increase in the wealth of the consuming masses in the world; therefore their fight is not directed towards solving a situation of unbearable misery (low wages, unemployment), but against those conducting business and against the alienating nature of this mass consumption of the wealth produced.

Mandel repeatedly insists that “the phenomenon of relative de-pauperization is indeed, the most typical of the capitalist mode of production”¹. In other words, in relation to the increase of the wealth of society, the working class is becoming poorer, but in relation to their standard of living in the past, it is getting better. His demonstration that this was Marx's position is convincing. But Marx formulated his law when capitalism was in full development and its crises happened every ten years and for a short time. We notice, then, that for Germain the new capitalist stage does not change that law. It seems, on the contrary, that strengthens it.

In “*The Leninist Theory of Organisation*”, Mandel, meanwhile, argues that “one of the three fundamental characteristics” of that theory is “the present relevance of revolution for the underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch.”² Whereupon he clarifies that he is talking about all countries of the world, even the underdeveloped. Then he states that “... neo-capitalism seeks to win a new lease on life by raising the working class's level of consumption...”³

“As the decisive barrier which today holds back the working class from acquiring political class consciousness is found to reside less in the misery of the masses or the extreme narrowness of their surroundings than in the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification...”⁴

This law is raised to its maximum power in developed countries: “... because capitalism is not definitively characterized by low salaries nor even by a large number of unemployed workers...”⁵

La Gauche, that with so much honesty usually takes to its last consequences comrade Germain's theoretical positions, took the obligatory conclusions of this theory: that “imperialism has new perspectives”, an “apparent liberalization” and a “democratic alternative” for Latin America.

¹ Mandel, Ernest: *Tratado de economía marxista*, Ediciones ERA, T. 2, p. 138 [The English version of this work was unavailable to the translator and had to be re-translated from Spanish into English. **Translator's Note**].

² Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers' Control”, p. 5.

This position of Germainists is an underhanded attack to Lenin and Trotsky's conception about the objective conditions of the socialist revolution in the imperialist era. That is, it is a complete revision of our thesis, which Germain has every right to hold, but for which he should clarify that he questions the support base of the foundation of the Third and Fourth Internationals.

"The productive forces have ceased growing"

For our teachers, there are a series of laws of emerging capitalism, in its free trade stage, which change with the imperialist stage, mainly from World War I. The first and fundamental change is that for humanity, capitalism ceases to be progressive and becomes degenerative, barbarian, in an absolute obstacle to humanity's development. This new general law of the capitalist regime maintains and accentuates its exploitative essence and modifies all its other subordinated characteristics or laws. For example, the law of misery, that from relative (the masses consume increasingly more) becomes absolute (they consume increasingly less).

Not to dwell on quotes, we give three which show this was the criterion of both the Third and the Fourth International: "The Communist Parties should be concerned not with the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist industry or the stability of the capitalist economy, but with proletarian poverty, which cannot and must not be endured any longer."⁶

"Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system inflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses."⁷

"The fundamental contradiction is between the productive forces of capitalism and the level of consumption of the masses".⁸

Referring to a possible improvement in the US economy, Trotsky says: "This is not at all inconsistent with our general analysis of a decadent, ailing capitalism, which produces increasing misery".⁹

Add new statements and writings of Trotsky which are thus transformed into a real campaign:

"Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class".¹⁰

"Dying capitalism is bankrupt. And the ruling class has only one plan for trying to get out of this historical bankruptcy: still more misery for the labouring masses! Suppression of all reforms, even the most trifling! Suppression of the democratic regime!"¹¹

And the current reality does nothing but showing he was absolutely right: The Food and Agriculture Organization's [FAO] Yearbook 1971 reports that 60 percent of humanity does not reach 2,200 calories (i.e., it is suffering from chronic hunger, as at least 2,700 are needed); and 13 percent consumes between 2,200 and 2,700, which is in a pre-starving state. With regard to proteins, the most important element in food, according to Josué de Castro, the picture is even bleaker. Except for the US, UK, Oceania, Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria and Finland, the rest of the capitalist world (i.e., two thirds of the population) is below 25 grams of protein per day, which is well below the 40 gram minimum needed for normal development of life. This outlook darkens even more when you consider that India, Indonesia and Pakistan are below 7 grams, which is six times less than what is needed to live.

⁶ "Thesis on Tactics", in *Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congress of the Third International*, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/tactics.htm.

⁷ Trotsky, Leon: "The Transitional Program", op. cit.

⁸ Trotsky, Leon: "On the SAP's Proposals", December 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-1935)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971, pp. 170-174.

⁹ "Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program", op. cit.

¹⁰ Trotsky, Leon: "The ILP and the new International", 4 September 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-1934)*, op. cit. pp. 86-93.

¹¹ Trotsky, Leon: "A Program of Action for France", June 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-1935)*, op. cit. pp. 24-37.

This dire situation does not tend to improve, the figures indicate otherwise, and also show that Trotsky and Lenin were right. FAO reports that calorie consumption in the backward regions of the world — Asia, Africa and Latin America (1.8 billion inhabitants excluding China) — was 2,130 in the pre-war, 1,960 in the post-war and 2,150 in 1960. With regard to proteins, the figures are 10, 8 and 9. In the latter case it is clear that there was an absolute low in relation to the pre-war. As for the calories, although the figures seem to indicate otherwise, FAO itself acknowledges that due to the fabulous increase of the rate of vegetative growth many more calories are required, because children need a lot more than adults. This average has not been done, but obviously would result that increasingly fewer calories and protein than humanity needs are consumed.

All we need to add is that, between 1960 and 1970, apparently the situation has worsened, as indicated by production statistics, very difficult to assess. For example, in India the food production in relation to the inhabitants has dropped 3 percent, and in Indonesia 2 percent, for the five-year periods between 1961-65 and 1966-70. There are similar figures for most backward countries of the world. But this situation is not unique to the backward countries.

We must acknowledge that in the developed countries there was an increased standard of living of the working masses in the last 15 years due to the post-war economic boom. But shortly after Mandel wrote the pages we quoted, the law of absolute misery began to also manifest in these countries. Already Mandel himself was forced to admit, in 1969, that “But it should be emphasized that the result of these inflationary tendencies, combined with the Vietnam war, has been that, for the first time for over three decades the growth of the real disposable income of the American working class has stopped”.¹² And the Communist League painted a picture of the capitalist world diametrically opposed to the cheerful Mandelian picture, in which the United States is included.

“This world where the hungry and the exploited are slaughtered to save them from communism. The rich United States, having its 50 million poor in the ghettos, in unhealthy neighbourhoods — this country, where 1.6% of the population has 80% of the share stocks, and where the income of fortune, i.e. the premiums for idleness, represent a quarter of national income— this modern country, where the degradation of the conditions of life and work has regressed in 10 years, from 10th to 24th place in hygiene and public health. This peaceful country, where every year two million workers are killed or injured by accidents, due to the infernal acceleration of rhythms. This large advanced country with six million unemployed, in which the increase in the number of unemployed exceeds, some months, 200,000, where 47 percent of workers are high school graduates, where hundreds of thousands of graduates cannot find anywhere where to employ their capabilities”.¹³

As much as Mandel says that capitalism is essentially characterized by “the constant influence of consumption” in relation to the masses of the world, we must recognize that the figures say the exact opposite. In the capitalist world there is increasing hunger and unemployment.

As for Mandel all these data have no value, he maintains his theory of relative impoverishment as a basis for minimizing the fight against poverty and unemployment. Thus he leaves up in the air, without concrete support, the fundamental task of fighting against capitalist corporate management and for workers’ control. Because precisely this struggle has its reason for being in the poverty and unemployment caused by the capitalist management of enterprises. Neither we, much less the working class, question the management of companies “in itself”, but rather for their attacks on the living and employment standards of workers. Moreover, the classics of Marxism held that, while they brought total anarchy in the whole production, the capitalists were the epitome of efficiency within each of their factories. Perhaps this situation has changed, as argued by Guerin, but we also doubt that the majority of workers are concerned about the degree of efficiency of capitalism in the management of companies. This may worry, at most, the salaried technical sectors and part of highly specialized operators. But let’s see what Mandel says:

“Capitalism is not definitively characterized by low salaries nor even by a large number of unemployed workers (...). It is characterized by the fact that capital, that capitalists, rule men and machines.”¹⁴

¹² Mandel, Ernest: “Where Is America Going?”, in *New Left Review*, No. 54, March-April 1969.

¹³ “Ce que veut la Ligue Communiste”, Publication of the French CL, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers’ Control”, op. cit.

So, while “classical capitalism educated the worker to struggle for higher wages and shorter working hours in his factory. Neo-capitalism educates the worker to challenge the division of national income and orientation of investment at the superior level of the economy as a whole.”¹⁵

And: “Questions of wages and shorter working hours are important; but what is much more important than problems of the distribution of income is to decide who should command the machines and who should determine investments, who should decide what to produce and how to produce it.”¹⁶

Translated into the language of our everyday militancy, this means that the fight against increasing poverty and unemployment — which, on the other hand, according to Mandel does not exist— is of secondary importance. “Much more important” is questioning the capitalist management itself, as the leadership (and also, as it says in another part, questioning the alienating nature of consumption).

In the first pre-war there was a never seen rise of the standard of living of the working masses. But it didn't occur to any Marxist at the time (and among them were Lenin and Trotsky) that this phenomenon changed all the laws of class struggle. They kept thinking that the masses would be mobilized from the immediate needs the capitalist system created for them. And the masses responded to those expectations, or at least they didn't mobilize questioning whether company management was efficient or not, or if the increased consumption that allowed them their higher standard of living had alienating features. Of course all this may have happened because neither the masses nor the Marxists had a Germain to point out the right way.

Seriously speaking, we don't have to look far in our theoretical arsenal to find the reply to this Mandelian orientation. Consider the *Transitional Program*. Is it a coincidence that the first slogan it raises is the sliding scale sliding scale of wages and hours of work? No way, in the substantiation of this slogan, our program says:

“Under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the meagerized life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism. They must defend their mouthful of bread, if they cannot increase or better it. There is neither the need nor the opportunity to enumerate here those separate, partial demands which time and again arise on the basis of concrete circumstances – national, local, trade union. But two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarized the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalized slogans and methods of struggle.”¹⁷

But let's again leave the field of quotes and let us have a look at the facts. Have the working masses of the world mobilized questioning the capitalist management of enterprises and the alienating nature of consumption? Our Argentine and Latin American experience suggests not. Moreover, it shows us that even the large demonstrations and urban semi-insurrections that became open political struggles for democratic tasks, were either born as such (occupations in Uruguay after the coup, demonstrations in Chile to confront the right) or were developed from issues that had nothing to do with the Mandelist arguments and but much with our *Transitional Program*. Thus it happened in the Cordobazo, originated by the half journey on Saturdays; in the rebellion of Mendoza, triggered by increases in electricity; in the large teacher strikes over wages that shook Colombia and Peru; in the strike, also for wages, of Venezuelan oil workers, and countless struggles throughout the continent.

In developed countries, this thesis by comrade Mandel does not do any better. It seems that there has been some or other struggle questioning company management. We are uncertain due to lack of information that they didn't have as objective decreasing the rhythms of exploitation, or against disciplinary action.

But let's see the most important workers mobilizations of this year 1973. In Belgium port workers fought for the collective agreement, workers at Cockerill for wage increases, those of the National Factory for wage increases, AKZO in defence of workers sources (including plants in Germany and the Netherlands), while in the workers General Motors for wage increases, bonuses and reduced working hours. In France, the workers fought in LIP in defence of their work sources, in Peugeot for increases

¹⁵ Mandel, Ernest: “Workers under neo-capitalism”, in *International Socialist Review*, November-December 1968, p. 12.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.12.

¹⁷ Trotsky, Leon: “The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution”, op. cit.

and bonuses, in Social Security for increases, in Renault for categories, in Citroen for categories. In England truck drivers mobilized against unemployment. In Italy, workers of Alfa -Romeo fought for the collective agreement, and so on.

Need we add more? Whatever Mandel may say, the working masses mobilize for the objective problems that the capitalist system creates for them: low wages and unemployment, growing poverty. If he still does not believe it, allow us to suggest for him to go to the gate of a factory to tell the workers they are wrong, because poverty and unemployment do not exist in this “neo-imperialist” world. Tell the workers they must fight against management, but not because it pays low wages, but because it is to blame for the alienation of consumption.

The only ones, who will follow him, if they work as workers in that factory, are Erich Fromm and Marcuse, but we doubt very much that the rest of the other workers would listen to him.

How does Mandel arrives to the formulation of these two theses, which basically are nothing more than one; namely that under imperialism the wealth of the masses grows in absolute form and, therefore, the increasing misery should not be the starting point of our policy towards them? What happens is that Mandel has failed to understand the combined and uneven development of the law of absolute misery under imperialism. Mainly he has been confused with the observation of the particular manifestation of this law in the imperialist countries during the post-war period.

An economic system for the world counter-revolution

We believe that the European and American economies have been able to have this splendour for 25 years due to the combination of three main reasons. The first is the awesome destruction of productive forces (machinery and men) which meant World War II; the second is the betrayal of Stalinism, which allowed the survival and recovery of capitalism in Western Europe; and the third is the exploitation of colonial peoples.

During these 25 years decaying imperialism has mounted a state capitalist economy for the world counter-revolution. There is no other serious Marxist economic definition for the stage we have lived since the war. This counter-revolutionary economy based on the production of weapons to crush the revolution, combined with the three factors noted above, allowed the development of the trends highlighted by Mandel-Germain: technological development as part of the third industrial revolution, relative impoverishment of Western workers (higher consumption).

But these two trends clashed with all the others arising from the very essence of the imperialist stage, which are identified by Trotsky and Lenin. However, they subsisted during 25 years by the three factors that we already saw and the enormous wealth (intellectual and material) accumulated by the capitalist world during several centuries of domination.

Currently this struggle between the opposing trends, which are synthesized in increased consumption of the Western masses and the lesser consumption of the colonies, is coming to an end as a result of the counter-revolutionary economy and the depletion of reserves and the ability for economic manoeuvres of imperialism. The stage of absolute impoverishment of the Western masses begins. Symptoms of absolute impoverishment existed for many years (sanitation, housing, health, accidents, etc.), but now they crystallize changing the stage of class struggle in the imperialist countries.

Comrade Mandel did not understand these particular conditions we describe, and that caused the law of increasing misery to manifest in the backward countries in absolute form and in relative form in those developed. Nor could he then understand that, taken as a whole phenomenon, the law remained that pointed out by Lenin and Trotsky. Mandel reasoned oppositely: from the particular and temporary refraction of the law in Europe and the US, he arrived at a new general law for everyone and forever; for the whole future of capitalism. A law that embellished imperialist capitalism; he even changed its name for that of neo-capitalism or neo-imperialism, and according to which mass consumption increased, making its misery something relative.

In formulating his new revisionist law, comrade Mandel left us without objective explanation for the victorious revolutions that occurred in colonial and semi-colonial countries in this post-war period. Because, as comrade Chen Pi-Lan rightly points in her work *The real lesson of China on Guerrilla Warfare*, the ultimate explanation of the Chinese revolution has to do with the objective situation of imperialism.

It is precisely the law of increasing absolute misery which explains the defeat of Chiang and Mao's victory, despite the rotten Stalinist, Menshevik policy of the latter. Without this law, Trotsky's prediction on the possibility of workers' and peasants' government caused by the permanent crisis of some bourgeois regimes cannot be understood either.

But the consequences of this blatant revisionism of Trotskyism are not confined to the backward countries. With this law of relative poverty, comrade Mandel disarms us to understand what is happening today, in nascent form, in Europe and the United States. And what is far more serious, he disarms us to adopt a correct line of work on the masses in the future when more and more mass demonstrations burst by the objective problems that the imperialist capitalist system creates to the working class

If in this new phase that has already already started we don't know how to see reality and continue chatting on subjective issues such as the management of business and consumer alienation, we will be digging the grave of the Fourth International.

The third industrial revolution and its limits

At the beginning of this chapter we said that it was necessary a premise from which to develop all this revisionism of Trotskyist ideas— that we are experiencing a stage of development of the productive forces under imperialism. And Mandel is indeed a tireless defender of this premise, although he does not take it as such, since he does not link it to its inevitable economic and political consequences which he also raises and defends.

Also in this area, the Mandelist conception is a revision of Trotskyism and Leninism. Not to dwell on quotes, we will only recall these phrases from our *Transitional Program*:

“Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth.”

This does not mean ignoring that there is a third industrial revolution. Mandel has the intellectual merit of being one of the best exponents of the existence and influence of the third industrial revolution. But he has biased this fact to change the basic laws of the current stage, without understanding its contradictions; he has not really grasped what the development of the productive forces actually means and has meant.

The productive forces, taken together, are composed of three elements: the means of work (whose essential source is nature), the tools and technology, and man. For Marx, the most important factor is man, so he called it the main productive force. We may say that nature and man are two essential poles of development of the productive forces, and the technique and tools the means relating the two.

Capitalism, in its time of ascent, caused a colossal development of the productive forces, precisely because it meant a total enrichment of them: greater mastery of nature, tremendous development of machines and techniques, increased consumption and overall enrichment of man and of society. Imperialism has caused a sharp contradiction within the system of productive forces: a systematic destruction of nature and of man, as opposed to the third industrial revolution. The ecological problem (which worries so much the scientists who see the destruction of nature), on the one hand, chronic hunger and war on the other, lead to a systematic destruction of both nature and man.

This which Mandel does not take into account is the theoretical source of his entire revisionism. But the methodological reason is the same one we discovered in the previous chapter as an explanation of his systematically wrong predictions. By giving so much emphasis to the increased consumption of the Western masses and the third industrial revolution, without noting its more negative aspects or its dynamics, he does nothing more than to bring into our movement the conception and the terminology of the theoreticians of capitalism in the current stage, the theoreticians of the consumer society. They are those who speak, like Mandel, of neo-capitalism and neo-imperialism.

It is true that Mandel combats these theoretical trends on behalf of the socialist revolution and our movement, but he does so by accepting its theoretical premises, which he tries to turn against them. Capitalism theoreticians say: “The productive forces continue on their march, the masses consume more than before, therefore there will be no revolution”. Mandel says: “The productive forces continue on their march, the masses consume more than before, let's make the revolution focusing our action on

the subjective problems created by capitalism”. We say: “The productive forces are no longer developing; the masses are at or are moving towards complete and utter misery, these are the objective bases for the revolution!”

A phenomenological interpretation of the Transitional Program

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, his first major book, old man Hegel constructed the world through the development of consciousness. It was not the development of the world what originated the various stages of consciousness, but in reverse: these originated the world. Comrade Germain brings us a similar interpretation of our transitional program. For him, our slogans do not arise from the deepest needs of the masses, they are not classified according to the type of needs of the mass movement they solve, nor are they used according to the objective mobilization they cause. According to Germain, the slogans are defined and used based on whether or not to raise the level of consciousness of the masses.

“In other words: the function of the *Transitional Programme* is not limited to raising demands ‘related to the present level of consciousness’ of the masses, *but to change that level of consciousness in function of the objective needs of the class struggle*. That is the key difference between transitional demands on the one hand, and democratic and immediate demands on the other hand (which of course should not be neglected or abandoned by a revolutionary party).”¹⁸

Continuing on the subject, Germain says:

“What is *transitional* about transitional demands is precisely the *movement from* the given level of consciousness *to a higher level*, and not a simple adaptation to the given level.”¹⁹

In short, according to comrade Germain, what characterizes the transitional slogans is that they raise the level of consciousness of the masses. And this characteristic is what distinguishes them from democratic and minimum slogans (which he calls “immediate”).

How does Germain arrive at this interpretation? Let us recall that, as we saw earlier, according to Germain imperialism does not bring increasing misery, lower wages and unemployment for the working masses, and even tends to “liberalize”. Therefore, imperialism does not create for the masses objective causes— or, more simply, material or democratic type needs— to mobilize for. For a Marxist, this situation (if true) would mean the end of the possibilities of revolutionary mobilization of the masses. But as Germain wants to remain a revolutionary, even at the cost of ceasing to be a Marxist, he must seek other kind of motives for the revolution. And thus he discovers subjective causes, i.e. something like the psychological conflicts that result in the worker because of the inefficiency of capitalist management of business and the alienating character of consumption. Clearly, these issues are problems “of consciousness”.

This conception of Germain takes him to his peculiar interpretation of the transitional program. Because what Germain needs is, precisely, a program that revolves around the different “consciousness”. But unfortunately, he finds that the Trotskyist program has to do with the needs of the masses, it starts from those needs and the present level of the mass movement, aiming to achieve, from there, its revolutionary mobilization.

As Germain also want to remain a Trotskyist, he has no choice but to make the most absolute revisionism of our program. And thus he makes his phenomenological interpretation of it: he gives birth to, classifies and proposes to be used, slogans according to the “level of consciousness” and not according to the objective needs of the mass movement, or the objective mobilization they cause.

This Germainist interpretation of the slogans and program bogs us down in insoluble contradictions. (This is not accidental, because revisionism is characterized by deforming a theory, not daring to break with it, and left halfway, it debates in a multitude of contradictions and inconsistencies). Here are some examples:

Germain says that transitional slogans are those which elevate the level of consciousness, but one of the main slogans that brought the Bolsheviks to power was the democratic slogan of nationalization

¹⁸ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 38.

¹⁹ Ibid.. p. 38.

and land redistribution. If this slogan was democratic, didn't it "change the level of consciousness"? If it changed the level of consciousness, was it not democratic?

Let's continue. Trotsky raised the need to strive for the formation of a labour party in the United States. Obviously, if we achieved that the American workers break with a bourgeois workers party like the Democrats, this would have meant a change in their "level of consciousness". According to Germain, "labour party" would be a transitional slogan, but Trotsky took care of clarifying that it was a democratic, non-transitional slogan.

A first classification of slogans

To get out of this confusion, we have to clarify what criteria we follow to define the slogans that combine with our transitional program.

Contrary to Germain, who defines the slogans based on the "level of consciousness" Trotskyism defines them for the role they have fulfilled and fulfil in the development of the mass movement. The mobilization of the masses has always had a specific goal: to solve a need caused by society. This permanent mobilization of the masses, confronting at each stage new needs arising from the class society, is what gives birth to more and more slogans, which alternate in the front lines of the mobilization and combine among them.

This is not complicated. A slogan is a written or spoken sentence expressing the need for which the masses mobilize at any given time. Workers suffer hunger: the slogan is "higher wages!", only a qualified minority can act in politics: the slogan is "universal suffrage!" Kerensky is incapable of solving the problems of peace, bread and land: the slogan is "all power to the Soviets!".

Each historical epoch has raised new needs to the mass movement which were addressed with new slogans: i.e., fighting for new solutions to the new problems. Therefore, contrary to the phenomenological definition, for "levels of consciousness" which Germain makes, Trotskyism classifies the slogans according to the needs of the mass movement to which they responded. Our classification of the slogans is, therefore, objective and historical.

Democratic slogans are those that people achieved during the period of bourgeois democratic revolutions: elections, universal suffrage, training in and right to the national language, school for all, freedom of the press, assembly and association, formation of political parties and fundamentally, national independence and agrarian revolution.

This historical epoch was followed by the beginning of the imperialist epoch, where the working class began, from 1890, to organize trade unions and workers' parties, and won the eight hours, the legality of their organizations, the limitation of night work and other partial demands. These are precisely the minimum or partial demands. So Trotsky defined them, when he says:

"... the struggle for immediate demands has for its task the *alleviation* of the condition of the workers".²⁰

Then came the epoch we live in today, of the socialist revolution, of the transition from capitalism to socialism. During this transitional stage, the working class in power will impose a set of measures to ensure the standard of living and working conditions of the working class and the exploited: sliding scale of wages and hours of work, workers' control of production, total nationalization of industry, foreign trade and banking, economic planning, and so on. These are demands superior to capitalism, they are already socialist demands. So Trotsky puts it:

"I think at the beginning, this slogan (sliding scale of wages and hours of work) will be assumed. What is the slogan? Actually, it is the system of work in the socialist society. The total number of workers divided by the total number of hours of work. But if we we present all the socialist system it will appear utopian to the average American, as something that comes from Europe. We present it as a

²⁰ Trotsky, Leon: "Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

solution to the crisis which must ensure their right to eat and drink and live in decent homes. It is the program of socialism, but very popular and simple”.²¹

In summary, we can say that our program covers traditionally three types of slogans: democratic (drawn by and for all the people in the time of the rise of capitalism), minimum or partial (drawn by and for the working class in the early imperialist era) and the transitional (which respond to the changing needs of the mass movement at this stage of imperialist decay and transition to socialism).

In 1958, our party formulated in Leeds the thesis that there is a fourth set of slogans, which are also an essential part of the transitional program: the slogans internal to the workers organizations. These slogans also have an objective historical origin: they are a distorted result of imperialist decay, manifested within the organized workers movement and within the first workers' state as bureaucratic degeneration, and it has created the working class need to combat this degeneration.

The struggle of the masses against the bureaucratic caste is a struggle within the workers and mass movement; it has nothing to do with the structure of the capitalist and imperialist system, but with the organizational structure of the workers movement. The slogans for this struggle may be included in summary form under the generic term of political revolution, as the most striking expression of this set are the slogans of the political revolution in the USSR. Out the bureaucracy of the organizations of the mass movement and of the Soviets! Down with the Bonapartist clique! Long live Soviet democracy! These are some of the slogans of the political revolution. And not only are they expressed in the USSR and the deformed workers states, but also in the capitalist states as a particular refraction of this degeneration in the organisms of the workers movement of the capitalist world and the need to fight it through general and specific slogans.

The problem of the immediate and the mediate

With this classification of slogans in democratic, minimal or partial, transitional and of the political revolution, we have unravelled the confusion created by comrade Germain with its phenomenological classification according to “levels of consciousness”. Now we dive into another tangle: the immediate and mediate slogans.

Germain and other comrades put an equal sign between minimal or partial slogans and immediate slogans. But what does it mean “immediate”? Immediate means current, present: its opposite is mediate, which is not raised for the present but for an indefinite future. That is, immediate slogans are those the party can raise right now for the mobilization of the masses, and mediate would be those which would only be raised in another future historical stage, more advanced, of the mass movement.

Assimilating minimum slogans into the immediate ones is a misinterpretation of some of Trotsky's quotes taken out of context. For example, when Trotsky says “the struggle for immediate demands has for its task the *alleviation* of the condition of the workers”, he is referring, to criticize it, to immediate program of French Stalinism at that time. Therefore, there is no contradiction with what he raised a few lines before:

“... the most immediate of all demands must be for the *expropriation of the capitalists and the nationalization (socialization) of the means of production.*”²²

Trotsky speaks only of immediate slogans in the same sense as minimal when referring to the programs of the Stalinist bureaucracy or socialism. Normally, he uses the classification we discussed before:

“Insofar as the old, partial, ‘minimal’ demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism — and this occurs at each step — the Fourth International advances a system of *transitional demands*, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime.”²³

²¹ “*Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program*”, op. cit.

²² Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?”, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

²³ Trotsky, Leon: “The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution”, op. cit.

Reading Trotsky carefully (and in good faith) there is no doubt about it. However, comrade Germain insists that, “on the one hand are the transitional demands” and on the other are the “democratic and immediate”. And in comrade Germain this is not a simple confusion in reading Trotsky, it is a result of his phenomenological interpretation of the transitional program. As for him slogans are divided between those which raise the level of consciousness and those which do not, all the slogans of the past (democratic and minimum or partial) do not raise the level of consciousness, because they were already incorporated into the consciousness of the masses when they fought for them in the past. According to Germain, talking to a worker about the eight-hour day, trade unions, democratic freedoms, does not raise his level of consciousness, because that is known by everyone already.

Instead, the transitional slogans that speak of a socialist future which the working class is not yet living, which they do not know, do raise the level of consciousness. Therefore, for the intellectual and professorial conception Germain has of the class struggle, the minimum slogans are immediate, because there is no need to explain them, because they are already known. And those that are not yet known, those of socialism, those you have to explain for the workers to take them and fight for them, those are not immediate, they are transitional.

According to Germain, if we do not have to waste time explaining (raising the “level of consciousness”), the slogan is immediate. If we have to explain it (raise the “level of consciousness”), it is transitional. Once again, the specific needs of the mass movement have nothing to do with these definitions.

If comrade Germain had acted as a Marxist (and not as a phenomenologist), instead of creating so much confusion he would have gone to search for the origin of this classification of slogans in the history of the mass movement. And there he would have found that the development of the mass movement itself was what has settled that division.

During the era of social democracy, the direct socialist slogans were not posed by the objective reality, because capitalism had not gone into decline and decay. Hence there were two programs, the minimum, the partial and the maximum, the socialist. The first was the program of the present, current, “immediate” struggles; the second was the program for the distant future. In that sense (and thus Trotsky used it), during that time you could talk about immediate slogans, which the party put forward to achieve— and consisting essentially of democratic and minimum demands— and slogans for the future, mediate, which were not raised in the present — the slogans of socialism.

But precisely the transitional program was born because the socialist slogans, fundamentally the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat, became the most urgent and immediate slogans when capitalism entered into decay, in its imperialist stage. This causes the old maximum program to become immediate, without the old democratic and minimum slogans losing currency. There occurs then a combination of slogans from different historical eras of humanity, which answer, all of them, the current objective and subjective needs of the mobilization of the masses.

This, which is the essence of permanent revolution and the program of transition, Trotsky said in multiple occasions:

“Between the minimum and the maximum programme (of the Social Democrats) a revolutionary continuity is established. It is not a question of a single ‘blow’, or of a single day or month, but of a whole historical epoch.”²⁴

Here’s another quote:

“The Marxist political thesis must be the following: ‘While explaining constantly to the masses that rotting capitalism has no place either for the alleviation of their situation or even for the maintenance of their customary level of misery, while putting openly before the masses the tasks of the socialist revolution as the immediate task of our day, while mobilizing the workers for the conquest of power, while defending the workers’ organizations with the help of the workers’ militia — the Communists (or the Socialists) will at the same time lose no opportunity to snatch this or that partial concession from the enemy, or at least to prevent the further lowering of the living standard of the workers’.”²⁵

²⁴ Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, New Park, London, 1962.

²⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?”, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

And, to finish with the quotes, let's see this one, where Trotsky, referring to the revolution in backward countries, says:

“Entering the government not as impotent hostages but as a ruling power, the representatives of the proletariat will by this very act destroy the boundary between minimum and maximum program, i.e., *place collectivism on the order of the day.*”²⁶

It is clear, then, that all these slogans are, in our present days, “immediate”. Precisely what all the slogans of our transitional program (democratic, minimum or partial, transitional and political revolution) have in common is their immediate character.

As we see, the fact that the four types of slogans are raised immediately, is not determined by phenomena “of conscience”, but by the objective situation of society and the development of the mass movement. This means that decaying imperialism brings more misery to the working masses and creates the need to combat this misery, putting in the agenda (making “immediate”) minimum and partial slogans. That imperialism pushes back the democratic gains that were obtained in earlier times, which also uses fascist or Bonapartist dictatorships, and places in the agenda (makes “immediate”) democratic slogans. That imperialism is capitalism in decay and it is completely powerless to continue advancing humanity, and puts in the agenda (makes “immediate”) the socialist slogans (transitional), fundamentally the taking of power by the working class. That the imperialist decay causes the phenomenon of bureaucratic degeneration of the organisms of the mass movement and the workers' states, and puts in the agenda (makes “immediate”) the slogans of the political revolution.

The transitional program is precisely the program that combines all these slogans for the immediate mobilization of the masses, because it is a need of the mass movement to fight for all these slogans at the same time while combining them according to the particular situation and directing, all of them, towards the seizure of power by the working class.

Search for the slogans that mobilize

But the fact that the four types of slogans are combined in our programs and they are all raised immediately does not mean that any combination of slogans is correct. To find the appropriate combination to each specific situation of the class struggle, we must take into account two factors: the country in question (the economic and political situation) and the actual mobilization on which we will act. In the backward countries democratic and minimum slogans gravitate more, and in the developed countries have more weight the transitional (with the exception of those which have Bonapartist or fascist forms of government, in whose case the minimum and democratic also come to the fore). Now let's see what our program and our slogans have to do with specific mobilizations on which we must act every day.

According to phenomenologist Germain, we have to give utmost importance to the transitional slogans, because they “raise the level of consciousness”. According to Trotskyism, we use the slogan or combination of slogans appropriate to the specific mobilization in question, to develop it towards the seizure of power by the working class. Because only placed in the context of the class struggle the slogans come alive, and then each slogan may have different consequences than those which would accrue from its historic location. In the live development of mass mobilization, minimal slogans can have transitional consequences, and transitional slogans may have minimal consequences. That is, from their historical character, from their definition (i.e. from the need of the mass movement they expressed at the time they were born), the slogans do not sprout superior properties over the class struggle.

The permanent mobilization of the working class and the working masses is the only thing that gives meaning to the slogans and many examples exist of this contradiction between the historical character of the slogans and their consequences when applied to a specific mobilization. Here are some:

²⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “Three conceptions of the Russian Revolution”, August 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 63-84.

The slogan of peace (or that of bread) in the Russian revolution, had transitional consequences, i.e., served to mobilize the masses to take power and the socialist revolution, because imperialism in crisis could not grant these concessions. But these slogans, “by themselves”, were minimal.

The same goes for Germain’s favourite slogan, the “workers’ control”. Trotsky noted how, if this is exercised through the bureaucratic leaderships, it becomes a tool of the capitalist system and not a slogan with transitional effects. If there is a general strike, as the French May, and we raise workers’ control as the central slogan of the strike, this becomes a slogan of bourgeois counter-revolution or bureaucratic reformism. And this is so, because it diverts the masses from what the general strike objectively poses, which is the problem of power, something far above workers’ control.

Both the slogan of workers’ control as any suitable tactical combination of slogans of power (workers and peasants government, all power to the COB, etc.) are transitional demands. But the result of applying one or the other, in a case like this, could not be more opposite. Germain does neither understand the classification of slogans based on objective criteria, nor does he perceive that all slogans are immediate because of the objective requirements posed to the mass movement by imperialist decay, or even less, that the same objective criterion is to prevail in its application. He continues with his famous “levels of consciousness”.

If the slogans serve to mobilize the masses, bringing them closer to seizing power, they are the best, whatever their “historical content”, since they combine with the fundamental transitional slogan: the seizure of power by the proletariat. If they serve to distract the masses from this immediate task, they are bad, even if they are “transitional” to its nth degree.

We can now move to the great problem that worries Germain: the role of the slogans in the development of the “level of consciousness”. The problem of consciousness, it is true, has an enormous importance. We believe that raising the consciousness level of the workers movement is an essential task of our activity. What we question is the location of consciousness in relation to the definition of slogans and their use.

What is this relationship? Very simple: it’s that our slogans have to start from the level of mobilization of the masses (which expresses their immediate consciousness of their need) to try to raise it to a higher level of mobilization (which will be expressed in a level higher consciousness). For example, if there are struggles for wages in many factories, we must start from that level of mobilization and that immediate consciousness: “we need more wages”, to try to raise it to the general strike for a general increase. If we can get the general strike to happen, this will carry the masses to set a confrontation with the capitalist system (if this cannot grant such increase) and will create in the mass movement the need for a political response (inevitably transitional), which we must fill with a slogan of power, transitional.

This is a linear scheme, which will never happen as such in the class struggle, but serves to pedagogically explain to Germain the direct relationship of slogans with the level of mobilization of the masses and indirectly, with their immediate level of consciousness.

Mass consciousness develops this way, learning from their own mobilization starting from the needs they are already conscious of. The stage of imperialist decay and transition to socialism poses as an immediate need for the mass movement the socialist revolution. But it poses it in a historical sense, for this entire period, which goes from the Russian Revolution to the final victory of the world revolution. It does not pose it for the start of any mobilization anywhere in the world: it poses as a necessity for this mobilization as long as it becomes permanent. Our efforts must be focused precisely on giving a permanent character to the mobilization of the masses, because only in this way they will rise to the higher consciousness that we must take power through the socialist revolution.

Summarizing: our slogans must serve to raise any mobilization to a higher level, because the only thing that raises the consciousness of the masses is the mobilization. This development will create the need for new slogans, more advanced, until, in an ongoing process, the need (and the slogan) of the seizure of power and the socialist revolution.

Trying to replace this objective process (through permanent mobilization) of raising the level of mass consciousness towards the higher consciousness that the masses must take power, by propaganda (spoken, written or by “exemplary actions”) of the party around slogans that, by themselves, miraculously, “raise awareness” is a crime of lese Trotskyism.

Trotsky himself says:

“Every attempt to skip over real, that is, objectively conditioned stages in the development of the masses, is political adventurism.”²⁷

And this attempt (which effectively in Germain becomes political adventurism) is done from the theoretical point of view, revising our transitional program. This revisionism has its roots in Germain’s permanent mania of separating the objective from the subjective and ranking this last element. So we saw him blindly believing in the “subjective” plans of imperialism or the Soviet bureaucracy churning wrong predictions. So we saw him discovering the goodness of imperialism that develops the productive forces and increasingly meets the needs of the masses. So we saw him deducting that the masses no longer mobilize due to their misery, but by subjective conflicts that capitalism creates for them. And so we see it now, fatally following the dictates of logic, which is inflexible, holding that our program, our slogans and the use we make of them have nothing to do with the misery and the needs of the masses or the concrete development of the mobilization, but with issues “of conscience”, i.e., once again!, “subjective”.

This is not just the revisionism of some partial aspects of Marxism; it is revisionism of the very foundations of historical materialism.

Germain questions the permanent revolution in the advanced countries

The theory–program of permanent revolution is the axis of the *Transitional Program*. It involves the mobilization of the mass movement and our revolutionary Marxists objectives in relation to it. We can formulate this theory–program very simply: permanently mobilizing the masses until achieving, at least, the international socialist society and definitely uprooting all vestiges of class society in all spheres of social life. It is the ultimate expression of our policy.

For Germain this definition, although so simple, has a “defect”: it takes as its point of reference the class struggle and the role of our parties. That is, it brings up how our parties must act in the class struggle to direct the uninterrupted mobilization of the masses until the final victory of the socialist revolution. Germain has a more “scientific”, “professional” definition. First of all he renamed it: instead of theory, thesis or program — as we usually call it in the Trotskyist movement— he calls it “formula”. He does this for deep reasons, and he does well, because for Germain the permanent revolution is an intellectual, almost chemical, formula, not a scientific, political, law of the mobilization of the mass movement in the world.

For Germain, the permanent revolution is applied in backward countries, and not in the developed countries.

“The whole notion of applying the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases. It can only be done with the utmost circumspection, and in the form of an analogy.”²⁸

The reason given by Germain to explain such a statement is very simple. Democratic and transitional tasks occur in all countries of the world, but combined differently. Where the weight of democratic tasks is larger than the transitional tasks, i.e. in the backward countries, permanent revolution applies. Where transitional tasks weight is greater, i.e. in the imperialist countries, it does not apply.

Germain made a real Mendeleev table for different types of formulas to be applied in different countries, but it is an incomplete table: greater weight of democratic tasks, permanent revolution; greater weight of transitional tasks, mystery (we only know that “the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases”).

Now, if the revolution in the advanced countries is not governed by the formula of permanent revolution, by what other formula is it governed? Which one does Germain apply? The formula of socialist revolution, perhaps? But this formula of the international socialist revolution is the formula of permanent revolution; or is there another? Has Germain found a new formula and is so modest he does

²⁷ Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, op. cit.

²⁸ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 34.

not want to publish it? The combination of democratic and transitional tasks (socialist) in mobilizing the masses in the imperialist countries, what formula does it fall under, comrade Germain? Can you tell us its name? Or, if it is a recent discovery, without name yet, would you kindly explain to all your comrades of the International, what does it consist of?

Germain explains his conception in a rather curious way:

“But it would be pure sophistry to draw the conclusion that no qualitative difference exists between the combined tasks facing the revolution in imperialists, and those facing it in colonial or semi-colonial countries, simply because of the undeniable fact that some tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remain unsolved in the most advanced imperialist nations, or rise up again there, whereas all the basic tasks of that revolution remain unsolved (or solved only in a miserably uncomplete way) in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Trotsky pointed out in the *Transitional Programme* that: ‘the relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat’s struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent — by the degree of its backwardness’.”²⁹

No one denies that there are “qualitative differences” in the mutual relations and the order of presentation — i.e., in the particular combination — of the democratic and transitional demands between different countries. We can even say that the democratic tasks have more weight in a backward country and transitional tasks generally in one advanced. We can, furthermore, define the qualitative difference by saying that in the backward country it is essentially raised a bourgeois-democratic revolution which becomes socialist, and in the developed country it is raised a socialist revolution that carries out important or fundamental democratic tasks. But to say the latter is already dangerous, because the truth is that, by its class dynamic (i.e. the class that carry it out taking power), what is raised in the advanced and backward countries is the socialist revolution, which performs important bourgeois democratic tasks.

What we cannot do is from to reach here the conclusion drawn by Germain: that this shows that in developed countries the formula of permanent revolution does not apply. We cannot say it, because this formula does not revolve around the varying weight of democratic slogans in the revolutionary process in a given country, but about something much simpler: the character the mass mobilization must have in this stage of transition to socialism. Proponents of permanent revolution, argue that it is international and permanent, those who do not defend it, argue that it is national or regional and by stages. Period.

That is, from the qualitative difference appearing between the combinations of slogans according to country, Germain concludes that this qualitative difference is the essence of the permanent revolution. What he’s doing, in fact, is dismembering the law of permanent revolution in national or regional parts, because not only are there qualitative differences in the combination of tasks between backward and advanced countries; there are also differences among different imperialist countries and among different backward countries. There are qualitative differences between the combination of tasks that occurs in Uruguay and that of the Portuguese colonies (two backward countries); there are qualitative differences between Germany and the United States (two developed countries).

A pause to remember Trotsky

Ultimately Germain considers the permanent revolution as the program for the national democratic revolution in backward countries. He does not consider it the program and the law of the world revolution until the establishment of socialism worldwide, of which a nation is only a contingent part. So it is no coincidence that he thinks there are countries where it does not apply.

Trotsky argued exactly the opposite:

“The theory of the permanent revolution now demands the greatest attention from every Marxist, for the course of the class and ideological struggle has fully and finally raised this question from the realm of reminiscences over old differences of opinion among Russian Marxists, and converted it into a question of the character, the inner connexions and methods of the international revolution in general.”

²⁹ Ibid.

“The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion, only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.”³⁰

As the confusion with the theory of permanent revolution does not begin or end with Germain, Trotsky himself took care to clarify it:

“To dispel the chaos that has been created around the theory of the permanent revolution, it is necessary to distinguish three lines of thought that are united in this theory.

“First, it embraces the problem of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist. This is in essence the historical origin of the theory.

“Vulgar ‘Marxism’ has worked out a pattern of historical development according to which every bourgeois society sooner or later secures a democratic regime, after which the proletariat, under conditions of democracy, is gradually organized and educated for socialism.

“The theory of the permanent revolution, which originated in 1905, declared war upon these ideas and moods. It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat led through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other by an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary development.

“The second aspect of the ‘permanent’ theory has to do with the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. Society keeps on changing its skin. Each stage of transformation stems directly from the preceding. This process necessarily retains a political character, that is, it develops through collisions between various groups in the society which is in transformation. Outbreaks of civil war and foreign wars alternate with periods of ‘peaceful’ reform. Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such.

“The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle.

“The struggle of the epigones is directed, even if not always with the same clarity, against all three aspects of the theory of the permanent revolution. And how could it be otherwise, when it is a question of three inseparably connected parts of a whole? The epigones mechanically separate the democratic and the socialist dictatorships. They separate the national socialist revolution from the international.”³¹

It is abundantly clear: for Trotsky, the permanent revolution is valid from backward countries to those that are building socialism. For Germain it applies only in the backward countries. But let’s continue with Trotsky:

“The Fourth International does not draw watertight distinctions between the backward and the advanced countries, the democratic and the socialist revolutions. It combines them and subordinates them to the world struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors. Just as the only genuinely

³⁰ Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, op. cit.

³¹ Ibid.

revolutionary force of our era is the international proletariat, so the only real program to liquidate all oppression, social and national, is the program of the permanent revolution.”³²

Trotsky alerts that there are “three lines of thought that are united in this theory”, “does not draw watertight distinctions between the backward and the advanced countries” and argues that the only program is “the program of permanent revolution”. Germain separates one part of the theory (which refers to the backward countries), makes no distinction between advanced and backward countries, and argues that the program of permanent revolution applies only to the latter. Hence it was necessary to return to Trotsky.

Imperialism and national self-determination

Let us continue with Germain’s argument that the different combination of democratic and transitional tasks defines what is and what is not within the formula of permanent revolution. To continue, Germain resorted to heavy artillery: the democratic demands are revolutionary, “transitional for their weight” in backward countries and they are not (they are, in fact, reformist and minimum) in developed countries, because in these countries imperialism has no fundamental class reasons that prevent it from granting them. Said in his words:

“In semi-colonial and colonial countries, democratic demands have generally the weight of transitional demands. It is impossible to realise them under capitalism, at least in their collective essence. In imperialist countries, this is not true. Democratic demands will normally not be granted by the decaying imperialist bourgeoisie. But nothing organically, economically, socially, (i.e. in terms of basic class relations), prevents the bourgeoisie from granting them as a “lesser evil” in order to avoid a mass movement approaching a victorious socialist revolution. Organically, the “national bourgeoisie” of the colonial world cannot solve the agrarian question without to a large extent expropriating itself. There is no fundamental obstacle of the same kind to prevent the realisation of free abortion on demand, or freedom of the press, or even a democratic electoral law in an imperialist country. Given a powerful mass upsurge with a revolutionary potential, the imperial bourgeoisie can grant these concessions precisely in order to avoid expropriation.

“In normal circumstances, imperialism was in the past never willing to grant national independence to Poland or Finland; nor is it prepared to do so even today to Quebec or Ireland. But given a pre-revolutionary situation, a powerful upsurge of the workers’ struggle, a concrete danger of a “workers’ republic” being set up, there is no fundamental class interest which would prevent imperialism from transforming any such nationality into independent puppet states.

“For these reasons the danger of a mass struggle in an imperialist country based solely on demands for national self-determination being absorbed by the bourgeoisie is very real.”³³

These paragraphs of Germain are full of unacceptable confusion. First, he attacks a non-existent enemy: a supposed revolutionary party which limits itself to only raising the demand for national self-determination in an imperialist country. Nobody raises such barbarity in our International, and if it is not so Germain should say who does. What is being discussed is whether democratic slogans, in their combination with transitional, have a large weight in the imperialist countries. Germain says no, we say yes.

The second confusion is regarding formal and substantive changes. Germain tells us that if there are large mass mobilizations, the imperialist country can grant the backward country formal independence. This is totally true, but the issue is, precisely, to achieve a true national liberation, of substance not formal. In other words, it is a question of trying to achieve independence as a sovereign state economically and politically, and not to turn from a colony into an independent “puppet” state. The point is how to achieve it. We see no other possibility than the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward country by means of a workers revolution that has the support of the working class of the imperialist country. Is it so, or not, comrade Germain?

³² Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on imperialist war and the proletarian revolution”, May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, op. cit. pp. 221-265.

³³ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 35.

But there is third confusion, which is the most serious. For Germain, imperialism can grant democratic demands, since there is no “organic” reasons in the structure of the imperialist country that prevent making minimal concessions of democratic type (abortion, freedom of press, etc.). In contrast, in backward countries, the national bourgeoisie cannot make such concessions “in their collective essence”, for example, it cannot support the agrarian revolution. This is true, but comrade Germain forgets that the national bourgeoisie can also make the minimum democratic concessions to the mass movement (abortion, freedom of press, etc.) Because they have no “organic” reason to prevent them from doing so. And he also forgets (and this is really serious) that imperialism cannot do, “in its collective essence”, the democratic concession of economically liberating all its colonies. If the national bourgeoisie cannot do the agrarian revolution because it would be “largely expropriating itself”; imperialism cannot grant dependent countries complete national independence, because it would also be “expropriating himself” and no longer “largely” but entirely. It would mean that it would no longer be imperialism.

From this monumental theoretical “forgetting” of Germain derives an equally monumental and extremely dangerous political “forgetting”. He supports the demand for national self-determination applied to any colonial country in particular, but he “forgets” that demand applied to the whole empire. And from there it follows that a mass movement in the imperialist country based on the struggle for national self-determination is in danger of “being absorbed by the imperialist bourgeoisie”. What do you think, comrade Germain, a mass movement that proposes the release of all the countries exploited by imperialism can be “absorbed” by the imperialist bourgeoisie?

The demand for national self-determination throughout the empire touches directly the structure of the imperialist regime: it is not a partial or formal, but a structural demand. No imperialist country can grant the right to national, economic and political self-determination to all countries of the empire, while still being imperialist. There is a qualitative difference between this democratic demand and the others quoted by Germain. This essential democratic demand is as important as the nationalization of all foreign trade, land and industry of the own imperialist country. These are not demands that can be absorbed by the capitalist system, nor can it be the national self-determination for the entire empire from the rule of the imperialist regime.

This simple problem is not even raised by Germain: he minimizes and fragments the demand for national self-determination to the country that fights for it, and he does not generalize it as a structural and fundamental democratic task for the proletariat of the imperialist country.

He recognizes that the workers of the metropolitan country should support the struggle for national self-determination, but he does not say that they should not only support it, but raise this task for the whole empire, nor he say that precisely the only ones who can generalize it absolutely are the workers of the imperialist countries.

However, Lenin wrote entire volumes explaining that one of the main democratic tasks of the Russian proletariat was to release the nationalities who suffered the imperialist yoke of Tsarism. And it is the same posed by the Communist International when it said:

“All the parties of the Communist International must continue to explain to the broad working masses the vital importance of the struggle against imperialist domination in the backward countries. The Communist Parties working in the Great-Power countries must set up permanent colonial commissions, consisting of Central Committee members, to work on these lines.” “The Communist Parties in the Great-Power countries must not miss a single opportunity to expose the predatory nature of the colonial policies adopted by their respective governments and by the opportunist bourgeois parties.”³⁴

And not only did Trotsky agree with that policy, but he outlined a course of action for the future:

“A Socialist Europe will proclaim the full independence of the colonies, establish friendly economic relations with them and, step by step, without the slightest violence, by means of example and collaboration, introduce them into a World Socialist Federation”.³⁵

³⁴ “Theses on the Eastern Question”, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, MIA www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm.

³⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “On the eve of World War II”, 23 July 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, op. cit. pp. 17-28.

Germain agrees, without a doubt, with the Bolshevik policy towards the oppressed nationalities. But his conception of imperialism does not extend beyond territorial, border imperialism. It's enough a sea or an ocean standing between the imperialist country and the colony or semi-colony, for Germain to think the democratic task of national liberation is almost exclusively in the hands of the proletariat of dependent country, which, we acknowledge, he proposes that it must be supported. Not even the fact that the largest mass mobilization in recent times in the United States has been objectively caused by the defence of national independence of Vietnam, makes him change his position.

Germain doesn't realize that, if in backward countries democratic revolution becomes socialist in the capitalist empires the socialist revolution becomes, in a sense, democratic, because it releases not only the metropolitan workers, but also peoples and nations colonized by that imperialism, which is a democratic task of first magnitude.

This issue has not been raised in depth in relation to the imperialist countries and, therefore, we have not developed it programmatically although, as we have seen, we have clear indications to fix it. The solution will come from answering these questions: How do we specifically apply in an imperialist country the democratic slogan of national self-determination for all colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries? How do we perform this task before the seizure of power by the proletariat, and after? Specifically: what do we do in the United States in favour of Latin American semi-colonies and in France for their colonies and semi-colonies before and after taking power? One slogan is breaking all colonizing agreements (OAS for the US, Commonwealth for Britain, OCAM and Yaounde I and II for France and the ECM respectively) and the granting of the total and absolute independence.

What we do with imperialist investments and loans? We have to be for the expropriation in favour of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. But how? We cannot give them to the bourgeoisie and landlords to continue exploiting workers. This raises a democratic program within the imperialist country, which has to have transitional effects. Because to avoid that national independence be transformed into new chains for the exploited in the colonies, we have to combine it with the slogan of the United Federation of Socialist Countries of the former Empire, stating that businesses owned in colonial imperialist countries expropriated by the metropolitan proletariat, are administered by the colonial working class. That is, we have to impose the workers' control as a fundamental condition; so it doesn't become a new vehicle of exploitation. If it isn't this, it will have to be a similar transitional variant.

But the point of this discussion is not this, but Germain's revisionism, which does not raise this fundamental democratic slogan of national self-determination of the colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries, for the whole empire, including, in the first place, the proletariat of the imperialist country. And he does not raise it because he only sees it from the point of view of a country, whose proletariat, isolated, fight for it. But the great democratic task of destroying the Empire, of freeing all the oppressed countries, can it normally be granted by imperialism? Is this what Germain thinks? Or does he think that it will only be achieved with the workers' revolution, and by no other means? And if he believes the latter, doesn't he think that the democratic tasks of the socialist revolution in the imperialist countries are huge and impossible to achieve if the proletariat does not take power?

Democratic slogans and the permanent revolution

Let us now continue with the permanent revolution from the "internal" point of view (to call it that) of the developed countries.

Trotsky has often stressed the importance of democratic demands in developed countries. Referring to fascist Italy and Spain, as well as to Germany, not only did he highlight the importance of these slogans, but he even said there may be a democratic stage in the revolution process in these countries (in Spain he took it for granted):

"But in the revolutionary awakening of the masses, democratic slogans will inevitably constitute the first chapter. Even if the further progress of the struggle should in general not permit, even for a single day, the regeneration of a democratic state — and this is very possible — the struggle itself

cannot develop by the circumvention of democratic slogans! A revolutionary party that would attempt to jump over this stage would break its neck.”³⁶

Trotsky draws this conclusion based on the analysis that the existence of imperialism pushes back humanity. “In Germany, there has not been and there is no proletarian dictatorship, but there is a dictatorship of fascism; Germany has been thrown back even from bourgeois democracy. Under these conditions, to renounce beforehand the use of democratic slogans and of bourgeois parliamentarism means to clear the field for of a new formation of the social-democracy.”³⁷

But this approach by Trotsky is not exclusively for fascist countries. He poses something very similar for the United States, comparing it with Fascist Italy and the democratic stage of the Russian Revolution:

“Must America pass through an epoch of social reformism? This question is touched on in the draft and answered in the sense that it cannot yet be definitely decided but that it to a large extent depends upon the Communist Party. By and large that is correct but not sufficient. Here we come once more to the laws of uneven and combined development. In Russia the fact that the proletariat had not yet gone through the democratic school which could finally lead to the seizure of power was advanced in rebuttal to the permanent revolution and the proletarian seizure of power. But the Russian proletariat passed through the democratic period in the course of eight months; if we count from the time of the Duma, in a period of eleven to twelve years. In England it is centuries and in America also the dirty mess lasts quite long. The unevenness expresses itself also in the fact that different stages are not just jumped over but are experienced in very rapid tempo, as the democratic stage in Russia.

“We can assume that when Fascism in Italy expires, the first wave to follow will be a democratic one. But that condition could only last months; it will not remain for years.

“Since the American proletariat as a proletariat has not made any great democratic struggles, since it has not gained or fought for social legislation, and as it remains under growing economic and political pressure, it is to be assumed that the democratic phase of the struggle will require a certain period of time. But it will not be as it was in Europe, an epoch of decades; rather, perhaps, a period only of years or, by feverish developments, of months. The question of tempo must be clarified, and we must also admit that the democratic stage is not inevitable. We cannot predict whether the new working-class stage will begin next year, within three years, five years, or perhaps not until after ten years. But we can say with certainty that the moment the American proletariat constitutes itself as an independent party, even if at first under a democratic-reformist banner, it will pass quite rapidly through this stage.”³⁸

All this was summed up by Trotsky in “The International Left Opposition, its tasks and methods” (December 1932), where he codified the essence of contemporary Marxism:

“Recognition of the necessity to mobilize the masses under *transitional slogans* corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under *democratic slogans* insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialistic dictatorship (Fascism, Bonapartism, etc.)”³⁹

In short, for Trotsky democratic slogans put an equal sign between almost all imperialist countries (those with “openly imperialistic dictatorships, Bonapartist, fascist, etc.”) and the backward countries (those with “feudal relations” or “national oppression”).

The majority comrades contend that Europe is reaching, or has reached, strong regimes, Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist. According to Trotsky, that means the need to fight “particularly under democratic slogans”. But Germain, by dividing countries as he does, removes the fundamental importance this type of slogans has in the developed countries.

³⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “Fascism and democratic slogans”, 14 July 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit. pp. 340-347.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “Uneven and combined development and the role of American imperialism”, 4 March 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit. pp. 133-138.

³⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “The International Left Opposition, its tasks and methods”, December 1932, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit. pp.54-71].

The combination of stages and tasks, also takes place in the USSR, and also there minimum and democratic slogans are very important. The struggle for self-determination of Ukraine, under the slogan “For an independent Soviet Ukraine”, which we can expand with tactical adjustments to all the countries of Eastern Europe, deals with the relationship between this fundamental democratic task and slogan and the political revolution. But even if we were under a “normal” workers state, combinations of tasks, one of the main features of the permanent revolution, will be raised. And more importantly, the formula of permanent revolution would occur in all its glory, since we would be on the verge of achieving the central goal of our program: the mobilization of workers in permanency.

This theoretical discussion against Germainist revisionism has profound and decisive practical consequences for the lives of all our sections. It is no coincidence that the majority’s European document does not propose as one of our basic tasks in Europe the bourgeois democratic task of German unity; perhaps the most important that must face our German section, our European sections and the European proletariat in its entirety. This task presents us with imperialist decadence, because the German bourgeoisie had achieved unity. Without Austria, but it had achieved it. Imperialism, along with the bureaucracy, has pushed Germany back by more than one century in this gigantic historical task. But Germain does not pose the need for this task because they probably think that, as it is democratic, imperialism may resolve without any “organic, economic and social” impediment. If for this it is necessary that Germany be on the verge of “becoming a workers’ republic” riding a “mass mobilization” behind the democratic slogan of German unity, and we have not raised this slogan, we will measure firsthand the catastrophic results of Germainist revisionism. Because this task combines the political revolution of the East and the socialist revolution in the West.

Germany exemplifies one way or another, the increasing validity of the formula of permanent revolution in all countries of the world including the imperialist ones. But the unity of Germany is not the only democratic task raised in Europe. Without much effort we can list others that are fundamental to the policy of our sections: the struggles for democratic freedoms in Spain, Portugal and Greece, for national independence of Northern Ireland, are democratic tasks that are on the agenda. The validity of this aspect of the theory of permanent revolution for Europe is expressed even around secondary issues; how to fight to liquidate the privileges of the monarchy and the nobility of England, Holland, Sweden and Belgium.

It is evident, and Germain does not deny it, that there are democratic tasks and slogans raised for Europe as a whole and for each of its countries. And we all agree that there are also transitional tasks and slogans. Without going, for the time being, into the discussion about which are most important and which are minor, the fact is that the two types of tasks and slogans are there. What do we do with them?

Trotsky is categorical in this regard when he says (as already quoted) that we “destroy the boundary between the minimum and maximum program”⁴⁰. We argue, like Trotsky, that the minimum and democratic slogans (old minimum program) and transitional (old maximum program), have to be combined according to the formula of permanent revolution.

Germain says that applying the formula of permanent revolution to the imperialist countries, is “extremely dubious in the best of cases”. “Extreme doubts” apart, Germain is telling us that we should not apply it.

Germain revises the theory of permanent revolution for the colonial and semi-colonial countries

As we saw repeatedly Germain believes that imperialism does not cause growing misery for the masses worldwide. This view has serious consequences when he moves it to the part of the theory of permanent revolution most elaborated by Trotskyism, i.e. the part referring to the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

⁴⁰ Trotsky, Leon: “Three conceptions of the Russian Revolution”, August 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 63-84.

Germain throws overboard, without considering the practical consequences, all the Trotskyist conception of the role of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries, when he ascribes to them revolutionary potential in the struggle against imperialism. The flipside of this error is to ascribe to imperialism a relatively progressive role, as when he holds that imperialism is capable of letting countries free themselves from it without much trouble.

“Is it true”, he asks, “that, because the national bourgeoisie is dependent upon imperialism, it is unable to *break all ties with imperialism and therefore* cannot lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression?” He answers: “This is completely wrong.”⁴¹

Germain usually hides his thought through negative statements, made as questions which have negative answers. But the fish dies by the mouth as this gives as a result in much stronger affirmations. So we will pass this phrase to its positive sense, in order to know well what he is saying and avoid shyster arguments. The phrase, in plain language, is as follows:

“It is completely true that the national bourgeoisie, despite being dependent on imperialism, is able to break all ties with imperialism and may, therefore, lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression.”

This assertion by Germain is the complete and utter denial of the whole Trotskyist conception of revolution in backward countries. For us, the real Trotskyists, the thesis of the permanent revolution has this unique meaning: in countries where the bourgeois democratic revolution is in the agenda, the national bourgeoisie is completely and utterly unable to break its ties with imperialism and, therefore, cannot lead a successful struggle against foreign oppression.

“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.”⁴²

Trotsky is categorical in pointing out the role of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries. It is very instructive his opinion on one of the strongest and most powerful, the Latin American bourgeoisie:

“The rising national bourgeoisie in many of the Latin American countries, seeking a greater share in the booty and even striving for an increased measure of independence i.e., towards the dominant position in the exploitation of its own country — does, it is true, try to utilize the rivalries and conflicts of the foreign imperialists to this end. But its general weakness and its belated appearance prevent it from attaining a higher level of development than that of serving one imperialist master as against another. It cannot launch a serious struggle against all imperialist domination and for genuine national independence for fear of unleashing a mass movement of the toilers of the country which would, in turn, threaten its own social existence”.⁴³

Germain may reply that this was Trotsky’s position in relation to the Latin American bourgeoisie, but not in relation to those of other backward areas of the world. But we hold that these positions are the application to Latin America of the general law of permanent revolution, and Trotsky, in the Emergency Manifesto of 1940, told us, referring to all the backward countries of the world:

“Surrounded by decaying capitalism and enmeshed in the imperialist contradictions, the independence of a backward state inevitably will be semi-fictitious”, and later on he clarified that it was “[...] the régime of the ‘People’s’ party in Turkey, the Guomindang in China; Gandhi’s regime will be similar tomorrow in India.”⁴⁴

And speaking in general of all the backward countries, he has not been less categorical: “Not a single one of the tasks of the ‘bourgeois’ revolution can be solved in these backward countries under the leadership of the ‘national’ bourgeoisie, because the latter emerges at once with foreign support as a

⁴¹ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 30.

⁴² Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, op. cit.

⁴³ “Thesis On the World Role of American Imperialism”, Founding Conference of the Fourth International, September 1938, Marxist Internet Archive: <http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/etol/document/fi/1938-1949/fi-1stcongress/ch09.htm>.

⁴⁴ Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on imperialist war and the proletarian revolution”, May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, op. cit. pp. 221-265.

class alien or hostile to the people. Every stage in its development binds it only the more closely to the foreign finance capital of which it is essentially the agency.”⁴⁵

And once again: “Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people. And if this is not yet the case? Then the struggle for national liberation will produce only very partial results, results directed entirely against the working masses.”⁴⁶

All this does not mean that the national bourgeoisie has no deep friction with imperialism at certain times. But it does mean that these frictions are never so serious as to take it to “break all ties” with it or “lead a victorious struggle” against it.

Seen from the side of Trotskyism, Germain does not do very well; it has come the time to confront his conception to reality. Where is this national bourgeoisie able “to break all ties with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression”? Perhaps in Bolivia or Chile? Maybe in Pakistan or India? Or in the Arab countries? This bourgeoisie, dear Germain does not exist anywhere except in the Stalinist and ... Germainist positions.

The fight against imperialism is a socialist task

As already mentioned, Germain believes that imperialism is not opposed in a brutal, “absolute” way to the national independence of the backward countries. Said so himself: “The struggle against national oppression is not an anti-capitalist struggle. It is a struggle for a bourgeois-democratic demand. The existence of the world capitalist system is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression, under conditions of imperialism.”⁴⁷

In fact, here are two statements, equally incorrect. First: the struggle for national liberation is not anti-capitalist; second: imperialism is not opposed in “absolute” form to the liquidation of national oppression. Let’s start with the first.

Germain draws, from the bourgeois democratic nature of the task of national liberation, the conclusion that it is not an anti-capitalist struggle. He has forgotten, if he ever knew, the essence of the transitional program and the theory of permanent revolution.

The task of the national independence of backward countries is bourgeois-democratic and at the same time, socialist. It is the combination, in a single slogan, of two tasks: the historically bourgeois democratic task of conquering national independence which, at present, is a socialist task.

“In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism.”⁴⁸

In other words more accessible to Germain’s Trotskyist knowledge: the struggle for full national independence of the backward countries is a bourgeois democratic task because it corresponds to the historical era of the rise of capitalism and the formation of nationalities, and it is a socialist task at present because the main enemy is imperialism, i.e., the highest expression of the capitalist regime.

And there’s something else. The world capitalist system is unique, it is a totality formed by national parts, which are determined (and this should not be news to someone who is proud to handle dialectics) by the whole, which is the world capitalist system. Backward countries are no exception: because of their relationships in domestic production and their close links with world capitalism they are capitalist countries. Therefore, any thorough struggle for national independence not only collides with an external factor— imperialism— but also with the domestic capitalist structure, dependent and part of the global system.

⁴⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “The Chinese Revolution”, in MIA www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/xx/china.htm.

⁴⁶ Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, op. cit. p. 135.

⁴⁷ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 30.

⁴⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution”, op. cit.

This explains why the countries which eliminated capitalist exploitation within their borders were the only ones able to fully liberate themselves from imperialism. This is the internal refraction of the fact that the struggle against imperialism is the struggle against the capitalist system as a whole and, therefore, against the capitalist system of the country which is liberated.

To conclude this point, we point out that here the phenomenological conception is repeated, not tied to the specific development of the mass movement that Germain has of our slogans and tasks. For him there is a logical sequence, which is: national independence – democratic task – democratic slogan – democratic consequences (not “anti-capitalist”). For us, who have already seen that the slogans are defined by their historical character, but whose results depend on the specific situation of the class struggle, the sequence is different: national independence – democratic task – democratic slogan (taken up by the proletariat because the bourgeoisie is unable to do so) – transitional consequences (dictatorship of the proletariat destroying the capitalist system in the country and attacking imperialism, i.e. the world capitalist system). Trotsky said it clearly, when noting that: “Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people.”⁴⁹

If this is not so, where is there currently a backward country led by the national bourgeoisie, who has managed to break "all ties with imperialism", after a "successful struggle against foreign oppression"? Nowhere in the world, whether Germain likes it or not.

Let us now turn to his second statement: the capitalist, imperialist, world system “is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression”. We do not know what he means by “absolute obstacle”. If he refers to the fact that world imperialism does not disappear or suffer a decisive defeat by the fact that a country becomes entirely independent from it, he is saying a truism, since the same happens when the working class takes power in an imperialist country, as happened in Russia and it can happen tomorrow in Italy or France. That is, we need not destroy the world capitalist system to make the workers revolution in a given country. The truth is that Germain tries to impress us with the word “absolute”. And he does not understand the dialectical relationship between “absolute” and its opposite “relative”; he does not understand how one becomes the other. At one point in the class struggle, what is absolute in one country, is relative on a world scale. But at historical scale (for all this time) the world relativity becomes absolute. Let’s look at this issue a little more closely.

We can say that in a developed country, the existence of the capitalist system within its borders is an “absolute obstacle” to the triumph of the proletarian revolution.

If the bourgeoisie continues to dominate the economy there will be no triumph of the revolution; and to make the revolution we have to “absolutely” liquidate this obstacle. But the existence of the world capitalist system is a “relative only” obstacle to the triumph of the national workers revolution. Although we do not destroy the world system, we can make the revolution and, despite it, the world capitalist system still works.

At a world scale, the workers’ revolution in a country, be it advanced or backward, does not liquidate the world capitalist system, it is only a relative triumph over it. And this is because the world capitalist system has only one “absolute” limit: its own existence as a worldwide regime. All triumphs of the workers revolution, in both developed and backward countries, are relative triumphs while the world capitalist system still survives. But from this we cannot minimize the workers triumphs in any country, nor the national liberation from the imperialist yoke, because they are the most important victories that the global workers movement currently achieves. On the contrary, they are the ones who bring us closer to the absolute limit, which is the liquidation of the world capitalist system.

Now, the relativity of all victories or defeats of the workers movement nationwide is part of the worldwide struggle between the exploited and imperialism for a whole historical epoch. Precisely because this struggle is global and historical, the national and momentary triumphs or defeats of either of the two sides are relative. But at a world-historical scale, the fight is total, absolute, to death; there is no relativity of any kind in it: it ends in socialism or barbarism.

From these considerations arises the law of imperialism at world-historical scale: decomposing capitalism is an “absolute obstacle” to the independence of the backward countries and to the socialist

⁴⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “The Permanent Revolution”, op. cit. p. 134.

revolution in the advanced. While imperialism persists all triumphs are relative, because this, sooner or later (if still alive) will enslave the workers of the whole world even worse than before.

Backward peoples or the working class that achieve a victory will need to know—and it is our duty to tell them—that as long as imperialism subsists this victory is relative, temporary and tactical; it will be questioned, compromised and threatened. They will have to know that imperialism cannot survive without re-enslaving them, because imperialism is capitalism in decay, whose absolute (i.e. historical) law is to bring more misery and exploitation for all the exploited of all countries of the world. And instead of telling them all of this, comrade Germain tells the masses of the backward countries not to worry, because imperialism is not an “absolute obstacle” to the liquidation of national oppression!

“Trotskyist Policy” with theoretical revisionism?

This liquidation of the theory of permanent revolution for the backward countries is also the liquidation of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat in said countries. But Germain is reluctant to draw this conclusion; he attempts to reconcile his theoretical revisionism with Trotskyist politics, and says that the proletariat of backward countries must take power to solve the problems of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

But if the dictatorship of the proletariat is not required to finish with national oppression (because the national bourgeoisie is able to lead this victorious struggle and imperialism is not an absolute obstacle to it), on what grounds should the proletariat take power? Germain replies to us with three arguments: first, because “national oppression” has nothing to do with “economic exploitation of the nation” (the first is finished but the second remains); second, because there is still raised the agrarian revolution (he implies this is the fundamental bourgeois democratic task); and third because we Marxists refuse (!) to delay the peasants and workers uprisings for another stage. Let’s consider these three arguments in order.

First argument; Germain speaks:

“... it is not necessary to ‘break all ties with imperialism’ in order to eliminate foreign national oppression.

“... Where foreign *national oppression* is eliminated, foreign *economic exploitation* remains and increases.”⁵⁰

But it is necessary to distinguish the formal issues of any exploitation from the real issues. Under capitalist imperialism, the essence of colonial exploitation is not political but economic. This difference between national oppression and foreign economic exploitation is a play on words. National oppression is nothing but the expression of economic exploitation and economic exploitation acquires different political forms (colonial, semi-colonial and dependent).

For Germain, national oppression is synonymous with colony. For us it is not, because a semi colony or a dependent country remains a nationality oppressed by imperialism, even if it has a formal political independence. There is no economic exploitation without national oppression, or vice versa. Under any of its forms, exploitation of one country by another remains national oppression and economic exploitation at the same time.

Second argument; Germain speaks:

“It is because the agrarian question is not solved today in any of the semi-colonial countries which conquered national independence after World War 2 that in spite of the minority situation of the proletariat, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat allied to the poor peasantry remains a realistic perspective.”⁵¹

Germain says the dictatorship of the proletariat is possible in semi-colonial countries because they have not yet solved the agrarian revolution; and the fact that they continue to be semi-colonial has nothing to do with the workers revolution? If semi-colonial means they have not yet managed to get

⁵⁰ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 30.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 31.

free from imperialism, isn't achieving an effective national liberation also a realistic perspective for the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why does he not give importance (from the point of view of the workers revolution) to the fact that these countries remain semi-colonial? The task of national liberation, is it not perhaps as realistic as the agrarian revolution for the proletariat of backward countries? We believe in backward countries the two most important tasks faced by the masses are national liberation and agrarian revolution, intimately linked and combined. (Germain recognizes this in his work). These two tasks are closely combined for objective reasons, by the conjunction of imperialist penetration with large landed property in the economic structure of backward country. Imperialism, when penetrating, builds capitalist relations of production dominated by foreign capital in the backward country. And the landed property is subordinated to these relationships.

Moreover, through the world market also controlled by imperialism, a close link is established between the landlord class and buyer imperialism.

All these economic relationships result in the two historic tasks posed for the backward countries (national liberation and agrarian revolution) are being closely linked. And, despite Germain's protests, the more difficult of the two tasks (if you could separate them) is the struggle against imperialism, as it is much stronger than the landowning class.

Third argument, or Germain's last trench and true conception: "Revolutionary Marxists do not reject this Menshevik theory of stages only or mainly because they stress the inability of the national bourgeoisie to actually conquer national independence from imperialism, regardless of concrete circumstances. They reject it because they refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings for their own class interests, which will inevitably rise spontaneously alongside the national struggle as it unfolds, and very quickly combine themselves into a common inseparable programme in the consciousness of the masses."⁵²

First of all, we should clarify that "Menshevik theory" was a theory developed in relation to the feudal absolutist oppression, that is, in relation to the classical bourgeois revolution, anti-feudal and anti-absolutist; not, as it would seem to spring from this assertion by Germain, in response to imperialist national oppression. (Who moved this Menshevik conception to countries dominated by imperialism was Stalinism.) For the Mensheviks, the peasant and feudal democratic revolution could be carried out under the direction of the national bourgeoisie. For Lenin and Trotsky, it could not. For the Stalinists, the national and anti-imperialist revolution can be carried out under the direction of the national bourgeoisie. For Trotsky, it cannot. For Mensheviks and Stalinists there is no "absolute" contradiction between the national bourgeoisie, the bourgeois democratic revolution and the agrarian revolution. For us, the Trotskyists, there is. And only from the angle of the Mensheviks and the Stalinists, there is a national bourgeoisie capable of meeting these historic tasks, and therefore, of reconciling with the workers and peasant uprisings. For Trotskyists, the national bourgeoisies are aligned with imperialism and landowners against the workers and peasant uprisings.

But in this quote there is an assertion as much or more serious than the previous one: the Trotskyists do not "mainly" reject the theory of revolution by stages in backward countries because we believe that the national bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying the democratic revolution: we reject it because we "refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings". So, we reject the theory of revolution by stages because we feel like making the socialist revolution now.

First of all, (and we regret to pull Germain off his pedestal) who decide whether to postpone or not the workers and peasants uprisings are the same workers and peasants. The most we can decide is what orientation we give to these uprisings: whether or not we orient them towards the seizure of power. But the fact is that, without asking permission to Germain, the workers and peasant's uprisings in backward countries in the world exist.

Secondly, then, we all agree, Germain and us, to guide these uprisings to seize power, but for different reasons. Germain's reason is that the Trotskyists have cravings now to make the socialist revolution and we refuse to postpone it. We do it because we believe that the socialist character of the revolution in backward countries arises from the structure of society. And that structure means, first of all, that the only class that can carry the democratic revolution is a socialist class, the working class. It also arises from the fact that under the capitalism regime (backward or not), any backwardness is a

⁵² Ibid., p. 75.

structural part of this regime, of this structure both nationally and globally. To combat the peasant or national backwardness, i.e. to fight against national or peasant oppression, means attacking for structural, objective reasons national and international capitalism. That is, it means attacking imperialism, base of support of all existing exploitation, because they are all combined and subject to imperialist exploitation.

This is not an academic difference, because in the backward countries Trotskyism will not be the only one trying to lead the workers and peasant uprisings and the democratic revolution. There will be the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, with its Stalinist agents in the workers movement, trying to take leadership, in order to betray the masses later, as it has happened with tragic results in Bolivia, Chile and Indonesia, to name but a few examples. And in the backward countries the working class will lead the proletarian revolution only if we dispute the leadership of the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie.

For the proletariat to fight for and earn the leadership, the duty of revolutionary Marxists is to denounce that the betrayal of the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie to the bourgeois-democratic revolution is inevitable, although at some point they may be involved, being filled with fear, in the revolutionary process. Our duty is to tirelessly explain to the workers that the only way to take the bourgeois democratic revolution to its end is that they take its leadership and impose their dictatorship.

If instead of doing this, we go and explain to the workers that imperialism is not an “absolute obstacle” to national liberation, that the national bourgeoisie can break all ties with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression and that they must take power for the simple reason that we Trotskyists refuse to postpone the socialist revolution, the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution will be no doubt in the hands of the bourgeoisie and defeat will be inevitable. And Germain will be politically responsible for the defeat, as well as his revisionism of the theory of permanent revolution will be theoretically responsible.

Any attempt to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward countries upon the socialist tasks of the revolution, getting out of the bourgeois democratic revolution, will liquidate any possible triumph of the working class.

Germain revises the Marxist conception of nationalist movements of oppressed nationalities

We have already seen that for Germain national bourgeoisie and imperialism play a relatively progressive role in the struggle against “foreign oppression”; the first is capable of liberating the backward country; the second is capable of allowing it. As very often happens to those who hold opportunistic positions, Germain (which came to them through the crudest revisionism) moves to a sectarian (and equally revisionist) position regarding nationalist movements of oppressed nationalities. He assumes that these movements are generally reactionary, not progressive. The political conclusion is obvious: with few exceptions, do not support them. To prove his thesis, he uses three arguments and a series of quotes.

First argument: nationalism is no longer a progressive ideology; it has become reactionary and the only progressive ideology in the imperialist epoch is proletarian internationalism. In reaching this conclusion, he starts by explaining that nationalism was progressive in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

“... in the classical period of bourgeois-democratic revolution of the pre-industrial era, when the bourgeoisie was historically a revolutionary class. It was a powerful ideological and political weapon against two reactionary social forces: particularistic feudal or semi-feudal regional forces, which resisted their integration into modern nations; native or foreign absolute monarchs...”

“With the epoch of imperialism, nationalism as a *rule* becomes reactionary, whether it is ‘purely’ bourgeois or petty-bourgeois in character. The universal idea of *independent* organisation of the working class, of the autonomous class goals followed by the proletariat and the poor peasantry in the class

struggle, of *international class solidarity of the workers of all countries* and all nationalities, is opposed to the idea of national solidarity or national community of interests.”⁵³

We believe that here is the explanation why the majority comrades, in their document for Europe, did not raise support for the struggle of the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies. Their reasoning must have been that, although it was an anti-imperialist struggle, its ideology was reactionary for being nationalist. However, majority comrades have given their warmest applause to the Tupamaros in Uruguay, and the July 26 Movement of Castro. Perhaps they had not had a nationalist ideology?

The comrades, if they were consistent, they should say that Fidel Castro and the Tupamaros had a reactionary ideology. This flagrant theoretical contradiction comes from the lack of criteria for judging the movements. If they did what we do—judge them for the objective role they play in the class struggle at national and international level at a given time—they could have a consistent policy and a correct theoretical analysis.

For the Marxist analysis, the nationalism which became reactionary is that of developed countries, because it is an imperialist nationalism. Instead, nationalism of the backward countries, still has, but accrued, the virtues of European nationalism of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Germain believes there is an absolute contradiction between the proletarian internationalism and nationalism in general, including that of backward countries dominated by imperialism. And, as the phenomenologist that he is, he raises the issue as an “ideological” problem. But nationalism, like every ideology has a class content and follows the ups and downs of the class struggle. Marxists define it as the ideology of such movement or social sector in such stage of the class struggle, and not as ideology “by itself”. The nationalism of the major imperialist countries is reactionary because it promotes the exploitation of backward countries. But it is precisely against imperialism (and imperialist nationalism) that arise in backward countries movements with nationalist or democratic ideologies. Is it true that these movements and their ideologies are reactionary in general? Can the ideology be reactionary and the movement progressive? Is equally reactionary the nationalist ideology of a nationalist movement in a backward country and the nationalist ideology of imperialism?

To Germain must be so, because he makes absolutely no distinction between the anti-imperialist nationalism in a backward country and pro-imperialist nationalism in one advanced. However, the nationalist movements of the oppressed nationalities are progressive to the extent that they go against imperialism, and their nationalist ideologies are contradictory, i.e. they are progressive to the same extent.

The relationship between nationalist ideology and proletarian internationalism is the same and is determined by the relationship between the nationalist movement and the revolutionary party. Once again, ideologies do not establish relationships with each other, as ideologies “in itself”, but their relations are based on objective relations, i.e. relations between the social movements they reflect.

Under imperialism emerge, in addition to the workers movement, all kinds of movements and social sectors that are objective and momentarily progressive, revolutionary (struggle against repressive legislation, release of prisoners, against imperialist domination, for the right to vote or to abortion, for the agrarian revolution). These non-proletarian movements have, logically non-proletarian ideologies, but they are still progressive. Their ideologies reflect the character of the movement that supports them.

The determining factor is always the social factor of the class struggle, not the ideological. The peasant movement, for example, is often in favour of land distribution. This is a petty-bourgeois ideology but, as far as it goes against the landlords, it is progressive. However, when the peasant movement holds to the distribution of lands, opposing it to the socialist nationalization, the movement will become reactionary, and this character will move to its ideology. A similar situation may occur in the case of a feminist movement: that it has a false feminist ideology does not mean it is not progressive to the extent that mobilizes large sections of women against capitalism. And so it is with the movements of oppressed nationalities, whose ideology is progressive at some point, although it is not proletarian.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 80.

Our world party and our national sections, as representatives of the historic interests of the working class, have a policy in relation to nationalist movements: linking intimately to them, forming fronts with them, but without losing political independence for a single moment. We have this policy precisely because we are representatives of the historic interests of the working class, which at this stage are synthesized into one: the destruction of the world imperialist system. To destroy it, we hit together with any movement or social sector which is willing to do so.

This relationship of our party and our class with the nationalist movements is what determines the relationship of our ideology with the ideology of these movements: they go together in all aspects of bourgeois or small bourgeois nationalist ideology facing the nationalist ideology of imperialism. However, proletarian internationalism, as an ideology, does not allow itself to be penetrated; it stays strictly independent from the reactionary aspects of bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalism.

Seen in this objective way, based on the class struggle, and not in ideologies “in itself”, Germain’s assertion that “the autonomous class goals followed by the proletariat and the poor peasantry” oppose the “national solidarity or national community of interests” in the backward countries, means the same as saying that there is an insoluble antagonism between bourgeois democratic revolution in backward countries and the international socialist revolution, when what actually happens is that there is an intimate relationship between the two tasks.

The same happens between proletarian internationalism and nationalism of the oppressed nations. Proletarian internationalism has an objective reason for its existence: it was born as a necessary response of the workers movement to the existence of the world capitalist system. Nowadays this world capitalist system has its highest expression in the imperialist system, and that is the actual objective basis of proletarian internationalism.

The nationalism of oppressed nations fights against the same enemy. We do not understand why, then, nationalism was progressive in the eighteenth century, when confronting feudal lords and absolute monarchies, and has ceased to be progressive now, when in the backward countries it confronts a much stronger and more dangerous enemy, the main enemy of the international proletariat which is imperialism. By the same token, all progressive movements of democratic type of previous centuries are no longer progressive. We see already Germain saying that, as imperialism turned ultramontane and wants to impose religious instruction in schools, the movement for secular education has ceased to be progressive. For us, however, a movement for secular education, in countries where there is religious education, is progressive; whoever it may lead it and whoever it may confront. If a century ago it confronted the landlord reaction and now confronts imperialist reaction, today it is as much or more progressive than before.

The movements are defined by their historical objectives and the enemies they confront. Nationalist movements of oppressed nationalities are progressive because they seek a progressive historical objective— national liberation—and they confront the most reactionary of enemies: imperialism.

Second argument: we can support, as an exception, the nationalist movements that have no bourgeois or petty-bourgeois elements in their leadership; those who do have them we should not give them any support.

“This Leninist opposition to nationalism is not an abstract and formal principle, but starts, as Lenin indicates, from a ‘clear notion of the historical and economic circumstances’. That is why there can be some exceptions to the rule based upon exceptional “historical and economic circumstances,” i.e. those of oppressed nationalities which do not yet possess their own ruling class, or which have only such a miserable embryo of a bourgeois that, in the given and foreseeable situation, it is excluded that this embryo could actually become a ruling class without a complete disintegration of the imperialist structure. The best example of such exceptions are of the black and Chicano nationalities inside the United States. [...]

“But it is clear that neither Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque country, India, Ceylon nor the Arab nation, can be classified as exceptional. All these nations have their own bourgeois class. Many of them even have their own semi-colonial bourgeois state. To support nationalism within these nationalities, under the pretext of supporting anti-imperialist liberation struggles, or even to defend the doctrine that ‘consistent nationalism’ would automatically lead to a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, is to lose the ‘clear notion of the historical and economic circumstances’, to lose sight of the class

structure, the class decisions and the irreconcilable class conflicts inside these nations, which national oppression or economic exploitation by imperialism in no way eliminates but, in a certain sense, even exacerbates when compared to what occurs in non-oppressed nations.”⁵⁴

Thus, Germain classifies movements by the greater or lesser importance of the intervention of bourgeois elements in them, and not by their mass character and the struggle they conduct against imperialism at a given time. Likewise he might classify any other struggle of the mass movement, and conclude, for example, we should support only unions or worker parties that have revolutionary leaderships or democratic movements that have workers leadership.

We, instead, have the opinion that, while criticizing and differentiating ourselves from their leaderships, we must support any democratic workers struggle that objectively goes against the bourgeoisie, which is progressive, whatever its leadership.

We must follow the same criteria with respect to any nationalist movement. If it objectively goes against imperialism, we should support it; whoever it may lead it, attacking and differentiating ourselves from the inevitable vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. And we should do the same with any movement that raises progressive claims (for the release of political prisoners, abortion, women’s equality), whoever may be part of it, and whatever sector may lead it at the time.

Third argument: the struggle for national self-determination and nationalist movements are not the same; we need to make a clear distinction between the two. “Sectarians and opportunists”, says Germain, “alike fail to make this basic distinction between the struggle for national self-determination and nationalist ideology. Sectarians refuse to support national self-determination struggles under the pretext that their leaders — or the still prevalent ideology among their fighters — is nationalism. Opportunists refuse to combat bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist ideologies, under the pretext that the national-self-determination struggle, in which this ideology is predominant, is progressive. The correct Marxist-Leninist position is to combine full support for the national self-determination struggle of the masses including all the concrete demands which express this right on the political, cultural, linguistic field, with the struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.”⁵⁵

There are several incomprehensible things in this argument. The first is, why does Germain limit himself to merely “the political, cultural, linguistic field demands”? Perhaps there is no economic field of struggle for national self-determination? Isn’t the expropriation without compensation of the imperialist enterprises the highest expression of the struggle for national self-determination (as taught by Trotsky in relation to Mexican oil)? The second issue is the claim that the “prevalent ideology among the fighters for national self-determination” is the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism. If with this Germain wants to tell us that the masses are mobilized after a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership, and we must strive to get the working class to take the leadership, we fully agree. But if from there it follows that its nationalist sentiment is reactionary and we have to frontally clash with it, opposing to it proletarian internationalism, then we totally disagree.

Nationalist sentiment of the masses is contradictory: as far as it is nationalist, it is progressive; as far as it places trust in the national exploiters, it is reactionary. And besides being reactionary, it is not consistently nationalist because the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are unable to carry to the end the national liberation of a backward country over imperialism.

Why do we have to reject outright this contradictory sentiment? If we develop the positive aspect of this sentiment (nationalism) to the end, to consistent nationalism, wouldn’t the vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeois leadership be laid bare? What is reactionary about the nationalist sentiment consistently anti-imperialist? How else does Germain propose to liquidate the bourgeois ideological influence and leadership of nationalist movements? Perhaps with general propaganda about proletarian internationalism and the reactionary content of bourgeois nationalist ideology?

All these questions remain unanswered, because Germain makes an absolute separation between anti-imperialist struggles and nationalism, when in reality they are intimately linked: nationalism is the ideological expression of the anti-imperialist struggles.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

We set aside to avoid create another axis of discussion, the problem that ultimately Germain proposes that we use basically negative slogans. That is, that we fall into the famous “anti” which, according to Trotsky, characterize the opportunists. We are for the positive slogans (nationalism instead of anti-imperialism) that characterized Bolshevism.

A scandalous falsification

Germain appeals to Lenin’s and Trotsky’s authority to support his arguments and his conclusion that, with few exceptions, we should not support the nationalism of oppressed nations. He says that “Lenin fully maintains the same position [as Germain]”. And he adds: “And in his final major contribution to the question, which has programmatic value, his *Thesis on the National and Colonial Question*, written for the 2nd Congress of the Comintern, we read the following illuminating passage.”⁵⁶ This “illuminating passage” that Germain mentions, is one of the most scandalous frauds in living memory.

At the Second Congress of the Third International there was a discussion on the national and colonial question between Lenin and India’s delegate, Roy, culminating in the vote of a document “Theses and additions...” which included both some of the initial positions of Lenin as those of Roy. The *Collected Works of Lenin* contains a document with the specific positions of Lenin, quite different from those of Roy. Here is the quote that Germain transcribes:

“... the Communist Party, as the avowed champion of the proletarian struggle to overthrow the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions; second, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; third, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations, in order to counter the bourgeois-democratic lies that play down this colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world’s population by an insignificant minority of the richest and advanced capitalist countries, a feature characteristic of the era of finance capital and imperialism.”

“... is very common, not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from it, and often even among parties which now call themselves communist ... Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact ...”

“In the oppressed countries, there exist two movements that each day move further and further apart: the first is the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement that has a program of political independence and bourgeois order; the other is the movement of the poor and backward peasants and workers for their emancipation from all forms of exploitation.

“The first attempts to lead the second and has often succeeded to a certain extent. But the Communist International and the parties belonging to it must combat this tendency and seek to develop independent class sentiments in the working masses of the colonies.”⁵⁷

Germain’s lie consists of the following: the first two paragraphs quoted are by Lenin, the last two (which appear as Lenin’s) are by Roy, the delegate of India. In addition, the two by Lenin are from “Theses on National and Colonial Questions” but those by Roy are from another resolution—“Supplementary Theses”— which Lenin did not write. As if this were not enough, to get his “illuminating passage” Germain jumps from Thesis No.2 to No.10, without clarifying that the subject had completely changed, and that the latter was speaking of parties and currents that broke with social democracy, mainly in the imperialist countries.

Let’s see, now, what Lenin says:

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

“First, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on”.⁵⁸

But not only does comrade Germain change the quotes, but he forgets to specify that there was an entire discussion between Roy and Lenin. In it, Roy was the one who had the most ultra-left position and Lenin the most favourable to the national bourgeoisie. Here’s how Lenin summarizes these discussions in his *Collected Works* saying:

“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the “bourgeois-democratic” movement.”⁵⁹

This change in the definition of nationalist movements has to do with the character of these movements (reformist or revolutionary), and not, as Germain seems to interpret, with the class leading them. Moreover, there was a conciliatory outcome, a concession from Lenin to Roy. And this is demonstrated in the fact that Lenin said, in the same document, that the two great world movements confronting imperialism were “the Soviet movements of the advanced workers in all countries, and, on the other, all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities”.

This position Lenin was developed further for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in the famous *Theses on the Eastern Question*.

There it categorically says: “The Communist International, though well aware that in different historical circumstances fighters for national political independence can be very different kinds of people, gives its support to any national revolutionary movement against imperialism [...] As far as possible must force the bourgeois-national parties to adopt this revolutionary agrarian programme [...] The refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the fight against imperialist tyranny, on the pretext of their supposed ‘defence’ of independent class interests, is the worst kind of opportunism and can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East.”⁶⁰

Clearly, for Lenin, who is directing the movement is secondary, what matters is whether it fights against imperialism. If this is the case, the Communist International “gives its support to any national revolutionary movement”, even if led by feudal lords, not just the national bourgeoisie. We agree with Lenin in supporting any movement that fights against imperialism; and we do not support the nationalist movements that rely on it, as Zionism. For Germain, we should not act so: we support nationalist movements in the exceptional case that the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are not involved in them. If they are involved, we do not support it! And the excuse he gives to hold this policy is “autonomous class objectives”, much like the “exclusive defence of class interests” which Lenin denounced as “opportunism of the worst kind”.

Trotsky, heir to the teachings of Lenin, further clarifies the Leninist criteria, supporting the nationalist movement, whatever its leadership: he directly removes from his political line the addition of “revolutionaries” made by Roy to the nationalist movements and considered the ideology of Sun Yat-sen progressive because it was nationalist. Let’s see what Trotsky said:

“[...] the national movement in the East is a progressive factor in history. The struggle for the independence of India is a profoundly progressive movement; but you and I know that at the same time this struggle is confined to national-bourgeois tasks. The struggle for the liberation of China, the ideology of Sun Yat-sen, is a democratic struggle and a progressive ideology, but bourgeois. We stand for the communists supporting the Kuomintang in China by driving it forward.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Lenin, V. I.: “Theses on National and Colonial Questions”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 31, pp. 144-151.

⁵⁹ Lenin, V.I.: “The Second Congress Of The Communist International”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 31, pp. 213-263.

⁶⁰ “Theses on the Eastern Question”, 5 December 1922, *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, MIA: www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm.

⁶¹ Trotsky, Leon: “Perspectives and Tasks in the East”, 21 April 1924, in Marxist Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/04/perspectives.htm.

“We can see how Turkey abolished the Caliphate and MacDonald resurrects it. Is this not a striking example which sharply contrasts in deed the counter-revolutionary Menshevism of the West to the progressive national-bourgeois democracy of the East? Taking place at present in Afghanistan are truly dramatic events: MacDonald’s Britain is toppling the left national bourgeois wing which is striving to Europeanize independent Afghanistan and is attempting there to restore to power the darkest and most reactionary elements imbued with the worst prejudices of pan-Islamism, the Caliphate and so forth. If you weigh up these two forces in their living conflict, it will at once become clear why the East will more and more gravitate towards us, the Soviet Union and the Third International.”⁶²

Trotsky’s position with regard to Latin American national bourgeois and petty-bourgeois movements reaffirms this. It is of sympathy towards Cardenas and the Peruvian APRA. This position is specified in the following resolution of our International:

“In the struggle against foreign imperialism in Mexico, the leadership of the LCI (Galicia group), instead of emphasizing above all in its agitation the struggle against the American and British bandits, emphasized rather the bourgeois nationalist Cardenas regime, attacking it in a way that was one sided, sectarian, and, in the given circumstances, objectively reactionary.”⁶³

Not only does Germain revise Trotsky and Marxism in the field of general conception; but he also does so in the specific cases he uses as examples. According to comrade Germain, Trotskyism is against Catalan nationalism, because it is a movement where the bourgeoisie involved. Let’s see what Trotsky said about the Catalan nationalist movement.

“I have already written that Catalan petty-bourgeois nationalism at the present stage is progressive — but only on one condition: that it develops its activity outside the ranks of Communism and that it is always under the blows of Communist criticism. [...] At the present stage of developments, with the given combination of class forces, Catalan nationalism is a progressive revolutionary factor; Spanish nationalism is a reactionary imperialist factor. The Spanish Communist who does not understand this difference, ignores it, does not advance it to the front rank, but on the contrary covers up its significance, risks becoming an unconscious agent of the Spanish bourgeoisie and being lost to the cause of the proletarian revolution. [...] Any other policy would be tantamount to supporting the reactionary nationalism of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nation against the revolutionary democratic nationalism of the petty bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation.”⁶⁴

Let us now continue with the black problem in the United States. For Germain it is an exception, since it is a nationalism which should be supported because it comes from an oppressed nationality where there is no bourgeoisie. The Communist International, however, consider the problem of black America as part of the worldwide black movement, and not as an exception limited to this country. For the Communist International, American blacks should be the vanguard of the global struggle of blacks in Africa and Central America.

“Therefore the Fourth Congress gives Communists the special responsibility of closely applying the ‘Theses on the Colonial Question’ to the situation of the blacks.

“6 i) The Fourth Congress considers it essential to support all forms of the black movement which aim either to undermine or weaken capitalism and imperialism or to prevent their further expansion.”⁶⁵

As we see, for the Communist International the black movement is one all over the world, and everywhere, not just in the US, we have to support it, regardless of who leads it, provided that it aims “either to undermine or weaken capitalism and imperialism or to prevent their further expansion”. Therefore, when Germain says that we only support the exception that is the black movement in the United States he is making a mistake; he tries to divide the worldwide Black Nationalist movement, splitting from it the American.

⁶² Ibid.]

⁶³ “On the Mexican question”, in *Documents of the Fourth International*, Pathfinder Press, Nueva York, 1973, p. 273.

⁶⁴ Trotsky, Leon: “The national question in Catalonia”, 13 July 1931, and “The Progressive character of Catalan nationalism”, 17 May 1931 in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit. pp.154 and 110 respectively.

⁶⁵ “The Black Question”, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 30 November 1922, in Marxist Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/blacks.htm.

This discussion is very important in relation to immigrant workers, as they are in many cases, a part of the colonial revolution entrenched in the imperialist countries themselves. In other cases, they are the expression of an oppressed nationality. This last one is not even suspected by the authors of European document of the majority. On the contrary, they confuse oppressed nationality with nation.

Class independence

Only now, that we have objectively defined our policy towards nationalist movements, we can get into the subjective problem, i.e. the problem of leadership. That we support nationalist movements, whatever their leadership, with the sole condition that they are against imperialism, does not mean that we get confused with the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership of these movements. In the same way that when we support a union movement fighting against the bourgeoisie, we do not get confused with its bureaucratic leadership, nor do we dilute our party in the unions. We keep our class independence, which means that we impose a strong separation between those leaderships and us and between our class and our party and those movements. This allows us to support the nationalist movement when it goes against imperialism and at the same time, to bring a relentless criticism of their leaderships and their limitations.

How do we make this distinction? On the one hand, keeping to the bitter end our defence and promotion of workers struggles for their specific interests and denouncing the bourgeois leaderships because they intend to use the workers movement to confront imperialism, but, simultaneously, they continue to exploit them. Furthermore, and this is fundamental, proposing to the workers movement to demand from those leaderships a consistent anti-imperialist struggle and measures (which we know they are unable to carry out) as a way of discrediting them with workers and raising the need for the working class itself to take the leadership of the nationalist movement. Finally, by opposing categorically that the workers movement put its organizations (union and political) under the discipline of bourgeois leadership and insisting *ad nauseum* in the need for an independent political organization of the workers.

But all this is nothing new: it is the same that we do facing every progressive movement, for example, the movement against the Vietnam War in the United States. We support the movement against the war, without losing the independence of our party, and without ceasing to attack for a single minute the opportunistic or liberal-bourgeois leaderships. The only thing we cannot do is to say that we do not support it because it is a democratic movement where the bourgeois liberals and reformist are involved (and at one point they led it).

Support for the progressive movements, with total independence to criticize the movement and their leaderships, yes; confusion and loss of our party within the movement, no. This is the essence of Leninist and Trotskyist politics.

Germain proposes something else: although they confront imperialism, we should not support nationalist movements if bourgeois or petty bourgeois sectors are involved in them. And this Germainist revisionism leads us to a very serious danger: that we become confused, for our politics, with our own imperialist bourgeoisie. This will take good care of not supporting nationalist movements which go against it, on the contrary, it will attack them. And Germain ... will not give them his support. To the masses, what is the difference?

Chapter VIII

The biggest danger is the majority tendency

We know beforehand Germain's reply

Many years ago Trotsky described the form of reasoning of opportunistic and sectarian thinking. That description achieves currency in this polemic, because this form of reasoning is the same used by the majority comrades, especially Germain:

“Marxist thought is concrete, that is, it looks upon all the decisive or important factors in any given question, not only from the point of view of their reciprocal relations, but also from that of their development. It never dissolves the momentary situation within the general perspective, but by means of the general perspective makes possible an analysis of the momentary situation in all its peculiarities. Politics has its point of departure in precisely this sort of concrete analysis. Opportunist thought and sectarian thought have this feature in common: they extract from the complexity of circumstances and forces one or two factors that appear to them to be the most important (and sometimes are, to be sure), isolate them from the complex reality, and attribute to them unlimited and unrestricted powers.”¹

Similarly, the majority comrades isolate the trend and the general law that without armed struggle there will be no revolution, and they transform it into the only law of our policy for Latin America. They separate the trend towards worker control of all other circumstances which may make it feasible at any particular time and only at that particular time of the class struggle, and they transform it into a strategy and tactics nearly permanent for Europe. They abstract an element of the current rise of the mass movement in Europe — the existence of a large vanguard which does not follow the reformist apparatuses— and they transform it into a social category and convert it into the strategic focus of our activity. Always, in every analysis and policy of the majority, we find the same error.

This fundamental error is combined with others to make even more wrong their way of thinking and arguing. In almost all the works of the majority comrades, there is a very manifest tendency to impressionism, subjectivism (giving primary importance to ideological issues— or of consciousness—, above the objective situation of the class struggle), economism (overestimating the economic factor and mechanically moving it into the political analysis) and scholarship (using a flood of quotes taken literally and out of context to support a position). All of this is transformed, in the polemics, in strokes of spectacular effect, in emotional intellectual manoeuvres to impress the audience.

Germain always acts as defence counsel: he cares much less about going straight to the point, clearly stating what he thinks and categorically proposing what to do, than to defend himself in advance of all possible attacks which can be made from every conceivable angle. From here come Germain's high peaks, but also the deep abysses: when the cause he defends is just, it shines in all its splendour, solidly protected by that defensive shell around it. But when the cause is unjust, the true position he proposes stays hidden and confused behind the same shell, now an inextricable tangle where completely opposing statements are added and subtracted, which serve to demonstrate that he has always said something right. If attacked because he said “white”, he we can always prove that elsewhere he said “black”, if attacked because he said “yes”, he can always show that some lines above or below he said “no”.

Unfortunately, Germain has not always defended just causes. And, as always, what is most important is to establish what policy is serviced by a particular form of reasoning or arguing. Germain's

¹ Trotsky, Leon: “Ultra-lefts in general and incurable ultra-lefts in particular (A Few Theoretical Considerations)”, 21 September 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p.338.

career, in that sense, is very contradictory, because it has two constants: to defend Trotskyism (a just cause) and to defend his prestige as leader (an unjust cause, even if he really were a leader without blemish). Hence his documents, especially when referring to an internal controversy of the Trotskyist movement where his reputation as a leader is at stake, serve for anything but to arm our cadres for militant activity.

Hence the title of this subchapter. We are confident that Germain as well the other majority comrades, will answer us opposing three or four quotations from his writings, (where they say the exact opposite), for each of the quotes that we have employed. To the quote where he holds that the national bourgeoisie are able to completely and utterly break with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against national oppression, they will oppose many others where he says, with the best Trotskyist orthodoxy, they cannot do so (to avoid them the work of looking for them we can tell them where to find one: in the last letter from Germain to Horowitz). We are sure that there are (and they will be brought to light) quotes exactly opposite to what we use for each and every one of the theoretical problems that have touched in this polemic. Moreover, we are convinced that after this flood of quotes, comrade Germain will accuse us of having falsified his thought. What we will never achieve is for a comrade of the majority to discuss about the quote we use, or recognize that there he made a mistake and accept our criticism. And here is where all possibility of a continuing polemic is over, because if we accept the method of addition and subtraction using statements that Germain uses, the debate between Marxists would cease to be a militant task to become a job using scissors, paste, cut and weigh on a scale. Because cutting and gathering the correct theoretical statements of comrade Germain could make one of the largest volumes of orthodox Trotskyist theory. But doing the same with the bad, could also make another volume, as large as or larger than the last, of Trotskyist revisionism. According to the method of addition and subtraction suffice to put each of these volumes in the pans of a balance, and depending which is heavier, to prove who is right. But this is far from the Marxist method. The theory is also dialectical, and a wrong theoretical statement can knock hundreds of correct statements, depending on the context of the specific problem being discussed when the claim was made.

This as far as theory, but what will happen to the specific policies discussed in this and other documents of the minority, will be much more serious. Policies are confronted with the facts, and the facts are thoroughly known by the young cadres of our International, which is not yet the case with theoretical issues. No one can deny for example that, since the Ninth Congress to date, Latin America was the scene of large workers and urban demonstrations, and virtually no peasant armed struggle (i.e. it happened the opposite to what was foreseen in the resolutions). This is a fact as impossible to misrepresent as any other contemporary fact. And even past facts are much more difficult to distort than theoretical issues. This great virtue that concrete facts and concrete policies (expressed in newspapers, flyers and other documents of agitational type) have is what will determine the course of action of the majority comrades. Directly they will ignore the hint regarding our documented claims that policy of the majority did not respond to the specific facts of the class struggle. For 20 years we have been asking them to explain their policy of critical support to MNR that led to the defeat of the Bolivian revolution of 1952, and they do not respond. Are they not doing the same when we insist on being told on what date the POR (C)'s paper began its political campaign against the coups in Bolivia? Perhaps, have they have answered our question about whether we had or not had to intervene in the elections in Argentina?

The responses of the comrades were always the same: silence, silence and more silence. Actually, a silence fraught with screams, smokescreens, endless arguments, but a silence in the end, as it never was broken by a categorical answer. The day the comrades tell us: "actually, we supported critically the government of MNR in Bolivia between 1952 and 1956, although the worker and peasant movement had liquidated the bourgeois army and had been organized in workers' militias, and now we think it was a tragic mistake (or that was very correct) for such and such reasons; indeed the paper of the POR (C) developed a campaign of political struggle against the coups, from the issue as of such a date, and held for so many issues consistently (or it never did and we self-criticise for lying); actually we had to participate in elections in Argentina (or didn't have to do so)": the day that the comrades say these things so simple, we will recognize that their method has changed.

But for now, there is no sign of this. So we think that our claim that the majority has committed in its European document one of the greatest crimes of history forgetting the Vietnam of European imperialism, the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies, will suffer the same fate as all the others on their previous political mistakes. Once again, we believe, the answer will be silence.

But if it isn't, of something we are sure: their answer will never be that of real proletarian leaders who, when they are wrong or forget to fundamental positions, simply say: "we were wrong, let us study together the reasons for this mistake".

The crisis of our International is the crisis of its leadership

For Germain, the main danger now facing our International is not ultra-leftism but "opportunistic tail-ending". To substantiate this assertion, as always, he does not part from concrete reality, but from a quote and a series of very partial, very small and counterfeit examples.

The most serious setback suffered by our International over the past four years— to make Argentina's official selection a group soon to defect from Trotskyism— is not basis for their analysis: they do not even mention it. Yet it is the best example of which is the gravest danger threatening us. Our tendency had warned this breaking of the PRT(C) with the International was inevitable. The break occurred, but Germain, despite its alleged clarity about the dangers that threaten us, was unable to foresee it. Instead, we did foresee it, as stated in our documents. This goes to show that the criterion we should have had to anticipate the dangers threatening our organization, should have been ours and not of "scholar" Germain.

A revolutionary party is always exposed to deviations of two types: from the right, opportunistic, and from the ultra-left and sectarian. Right deviations are caused by pressure on the party of privileged strata or the retreat of the mass movement or, according Mandel's theory, the existence of apparatuses in the mass parties. Left deviations are caused by the influence within the party of radicalized sectors of the petty bourgeoisie who tend to desperate and individualistic outputs.

In what situation are our parties today? Are they, even minimally, surrounded by the mass movement in decline or privileged sectors of it, or have costly and colossal bureaucracies? Or, rather, are they in the other situation, without penetration into the mass movement, even less in sectors in retreat, while their ranks are fed by thousands of youth activists from, mostly, the radicalized petty bourgeoisie, especially student?

Obviously, we are in this latter situation. Nowhere do these situations exist explaining and causing the "tail-ending and opportunistic" deviations. On the contrary, our eminently student sections must confront sometimes pre-revolutionary situations or close to them. For Trotsky, in those situations, "... the mighty pressure of the masses welds the party together".²

For all this, we accuse Germain of using a scholar's method: he extracted a quote from Cannon and slammed it on his argumentation, without explaining the SWP situation in relation to the mass movement at the time when it was written. He forgot then, that the SWP during the war was an influential party, albeit minimal, in the workers movement.

What is the relationship of these two deviations and the need to combat in the real life of a revolutionary party? Lenin defined it as follows:

"While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the *masses* to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors."³

As we see, there is a dialectic: from outside the movement, the enemy is opportunism, from inside it is ultra-leftism. Put another way, we are going to win the workers vanguard ideologically and politically liquidating Stalinism, the bureaucracies in general and reformist parties and we will only lead them to success if we liquidate ultra-leftism.

² Trotsky, Leon: "The Spanish revolution and the dangers threatening it", 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 133.

³ Lenin, V. I.: "Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder", op. cit.

This is relatively true, since outside the revolutionary movement there may be right variants due to the pressures of class, and within the mass movement itself (as with the hasty demonstrations of 17 July in the Bolshevik Revolution) can gain strength the trends of opposite sign. But these are only exceptions to the general rule.

Passing over this, Mandel stated that: “The large influx of new members into the Comintern after its first year of existence did not create exclusively or even mainly ultra-left, but rather opportunist deviations.”⁴

And he is talking about the same period that the whole struggle against ultra-leftism was developed within the Communist International, the same time period when Lenin had to write “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, one of whose paragraphs we have quoted!

Returning to the situation of our International, Germain’s position that the main danger today is opportunism, has not even precedents in the own positions of the majority. What did the majority comrades predicted in 1969? Let’s see:

“It is evident that *in this vanguard* the main present danger, owing to its lack of experience and social composition, is to be found in the ultra-left currents. One of the first conditions for an effective fight against such currents, and more particularly against their refraction in our own ranks... ”⁵

There’s more: “Until a vanguard of some numerical and social substance emerges from the mass of workers, we will have considerable difficulty with sectarian manifestations. These manifestations will take the form primarily of ultra-leftism, but in this we will see strange combinations with opportunistic, spontaneists, etc. features.”⁶

Finally, thesis 13 of the last European document points out how the ultra-left has been refined and organized into five currents, and in the following thesis we are given the task of working on ultra-left vanguard. But here is the unforgivable oversight from the Marxist point of view: it does not point out that the greatest danger is always to yield to the pressure of the sector on which we work. So it does not say that the greatest danger in Europe is giving in to ultra-leftism and its flip side, workerist opportunism.

What has changed in these four years so that the most important danger is no longer ultra-leftism and now is opportunism? The only thing that has changed is that our sections, mainly the Europeans, have nurtured their ranks with this ultra-left vanguard and, despite warnings that they themselves made, the majority comrades have ended up unconditionally yielding to their pressures.

How is it possible that old Trotskyist militants, who were able to foresee the danger, have capitulated to the new cadres coming from the new vanguard? Who is to blame? We do not believe that the fault lies with those new inexperienced cadres without any Marxist tradition, but in the limitations of our European leadership, mainly of comrades Germain, Frank and Livio. This assertion has a historical explanation, which is what will reveal the secret of the current crisis in our International.

The European leadership headed by the comrades we name is part of the history of European Trotskyist movement and its leadership, who lived in the past exceptional circumstances explaining its present. There are three that are fundamental, and that indelibly marked European Trotskyism.

The first of them is the desertion from our ranks of the leadership of the Spanish Trotskyist opposition (Nin) and the inability of the French Trotskyist leadership (Navilley Rosmer first; Molinier and Frank later) to form a proletarian leadership. With the defection of some and the inability of others, we were without strong and serious leaders or cadres in the two sections that, in turn, were the most important in Europe.

The second reason was the Nazi occupation, which we had to face without a proletarian tradition of cadres and leadership, and which exacerbated to the maximum the other ills.

The third reason was that the rise of European mass movement did not last long; the three years from 1944 to about 1947. This meant that our cadres and leaderships had no chance to forge themselves in the class struggle.

⁴ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit. p. 26.

⁵ United Secretariat, “Draft Resolution on our tactics in Europe” in *International Information Bulletin*, No 7, May 1969, p. 9.

⁶ Frank, Pierre: “Report on tactics in Europe”, in *International Information Bulletin*, No 10, July 1969, p.4.

The long retreat of the mass movement prevented for approximately twenty years the emergence of a leadership minimally tested in the class struggle and tied to the workers movement. The defence of Trotskyism could not be, for these circumstances, the daily confrontation of Trotskyist politics with other policies that exist in the mass movement: it became an essentially intellectual, theoretical exercise.

This was compounded when the leaders of the majority did not understand the process that had opened and did not realize that the only way that the party would survive the retreat was insisting on independently linking of our groups and militants with the workers and mass movement. There, even in the participation in the meanest struggles for the smallest claims, or even if they did not exist, in the propaganda of our positions on small sections of the movement who were willing to listen, was the key for our sections maintaining or recovering its proletarian character. But the comrades surrendered to the retreat, taking a strategy of entryism in Stalinism and other opportunistic parties for a very long time.

This policy led to a sharp division between our European members and the leadership. Militants had to hide, for nearly twenty years, their condition of Trotskyists; if they did not, they would be expelled from the opportunistic organizations where they worked. All their art and science was reduced to give our program in easy instalments, digestible by the discipline of the Stalinist parties.

The leaders, meanwhile, were devoted to wait for the “objective process” to take Stalinism, or its left currents, to the struggle for power. What else could they do without public militants without independent party? Only comments and more comments; there was no possibility of other policy which was not to comment on the events, comment on the political mistakes of others and comment on what should be the correct policy. Why formulate a concrete policy if no party or militants could carry it out? This accentuated the commentator, “journalist”, character of European leadership.

Life is what creates consciousness. And this double life, one for members and one for the leaders of the entryism “sui generis” stage left indelible consequences in both sectors. We were left with almost no militants or leaders. Most of the militants ended up capitulating to opportunistic organizations within which they operated. About 70 percent of the largest Trotskyist leaders who defended and practiced entryism “sui generis” left our movement. Where are the old comrades in the leadership, that comrade Germain was part of? There are only four left: Germain, Frank, Livio and Gonzalez. Where are Pablo, Posadas, Arroyo, Frías, Ortiz, Michele Mestre, Rivas, Levingston, Colwin da Silva...? These former comrades have nothing to do with Trotskyism. Their claudication was to the right, towards the class enemy, towards opportunism: Pablo became the left partner of Stalinism, Posadas the left partner of the national bourgeoisie. Overall, they all became hopelessly opportunistic.

In contrast to this process, the most important leaders who were against the entryism “sui generis” remain Trotskyists. Where are Cannon, Dobbs, Hansen, Moreno, Vitale, Humbergert, Healy, Lambert? In Trotskyism. Some of these comrades have moved to sectarian positions, ultra-left (if they did not have already them). But even so, they have caved to the pressures of the radicalized petty bourgeoisie or intelligentsia, not to our biggest of enemies, the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy, as did those who supported entryism “sui generis”.

This phenomenon has a Marxist explanation, not merely psychological. We believe to have discovered it.

The SWP managed to establish itself as a proletarian party for its cadres and leadership. For this, very important special circumstances were combined: their proximity and agreement with Trotsky, the formation and proletarian tradition of its leadership, the rise of the workers movement, and its distance from intellectual and petty-bourgeois trends through the break of the year 1940. Our party was also lucky because the objective circumstances helped: the struggle of the working class of our country and of Bolivia, on our borders, were the heaviest in the world in the last thirty years. The subjective circumstances did not help: our isolation and our independent formation were the cause of all our vices. But precisely because of those struggles, we could overcome our countless mistakes, learn from them, and link to our International to improve ourselves, without succumbing. We were lucky that we never had to wait to link ourselves to the workers and mass movement, because, year after year, waves of massive struggles happened in succession.

Noting the number of mistakes we have made, our independent training, our march as a pilgrim, as Trotsky said, two steps forward and one back, we baptized our party as “barbaric Trotskyism”. What

saved us from barbarism was our intimate bond with our class and their struggles in the first place, and our attachment to the International, second. And we put the factors in this order, because if not for that intimate bond with the workers and their struggles, we would have never integrated the International in the conscious and thorough way that we have. This only serves to show that the World Party of Revolution is not the result of mere effort of Trotskyist militants, but the expression of a profound objective need, of the most urgent need of workers anywhere in the world.

These two distinct formations— of European Trotskyism, on the one hand; that of the U.S. and Argentina Trotskyism, on the other— explain an important phenomenon, which sometimes goes unnoticed: the “tradition”.

The true tradition of the party is given by its struggles, which closely join the rank and file to the leadership and leave a lasting memory that is passed from party generation to generation. The SWP and our party have a tradition of great weight, which is the synthesis of years and years, decades of struggle as an independent party to enforce the Trotskyist program and impose ourselves as parties in the workers’ mass movement and.

European Trotskyism has no tradition; it has been lost due to entryism “sui generis”. If the ranks of European Trotskyism spent twenty years within the Stalinism or some reformist party, adapting to the environment to not be out casted, what common struggle with its leadership could they develop within the workers and mass movement? None. When did it defend the Trotskyist program and party, confronting them with all the other programs and parties of the mass movement, and proposed itself as leadership? Never, ever. This lack of tradition had its symbolic expression in the founding act of the French Communist League at its first congress: the new youth leadership of the League forbade comrade Pierre Frank to speak. Today they can give us any explanation of such a monstrosity. For example, comrade Frank did not want to talk or it was tactically more convenient not to talk. But for us this has a single political explanation: Pierre Frank was not the nexus between the old and new cadres incorporated to Trotskyism in France. If he had been, the young and the old would have loudly demanded that Frank’s was the central intervention.

Pierre Frank could not be this nexus because this nexus did not exist. Thanks to entryism “sui generis”, new cadres did not enter a party proud of its tradition; for them it was like they were founding Trotskyism in France. And, in a sense, they were right: as a result of entryism “sui generis” the Trotskyism of Pierre Frank had virtually disappeared from the French political scene.

The combination of this old leadership, without tradition and without firm Trotskyist policies for twenty years, with new cadres, inexperienced and bound by their origin and social relations to the new ultra-leftist and opportunistic vanguard, gave rise to the present majority tendency. Hence its centrist character, of unprincipled united front, where all kinds of tendencies, methods and programs coexist, from the PRT(C) to the various English factions. Whoever writes the history of our International, will not be able to blame the formation of this centrist tendency, this unprincipled front, on the new comrades of the European vanguard born in 1968. The main culprits are the comrades who have gone from surrendering, as commentators, to the large mass organizations, to surrendering as advisors to the new vanguard. The method of both surrenders is the same; the abandonment of tradition, as well.

The comrades Germain, Frank, Livio and Gonzalez had great historical merit: to constitute the 30 percent of great leaders who, despite having practiced entryism “sui generis”, have not succumbed to our enemies, the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy. These comrades have the great merit of not having followed the liquidationist course of Pablo nor did they break with Trotskyism. But they stood halfway, since they were not able to resume the proletarian tradition of our movement.

Thus, the majority tendency is shaping its trajectory: from ultra-leftist to centrist, from centrism to increasingly approaching liquidationism. It is no coincidence that one of their workhorses is fighting “archo-Trotskyism”, the same as used by Pablo. It’s time to stop before it is too late.

In the previous World Congress of 1969 we made a prediction. We said that in 1951 the recognition of Posadas had been able to last long time, before the movement found out who was who. The mass movement was in retreat and the only test for everything, in terms of revolutionary politics, is revolution. But now, with the new rise of the masses, the analysis and policy will be tested in a short time. When the PRT(C) broke with our International, less than four years after being recognized as the official Argentine section, our prediction was fulfilled.

If the majority, or rather, if their older leaders, those who have devoted a lifetime to the defence of Trotskyism, do not stop and begin a retreat to our principles and our methods, if they continue yielding to the pressures and irresponsibility of an inexperienced and non-proletarian vanguard, that they denounced four years ago as the greatest danger, they are at risk of ending up like Pablo, or as the old Trotskyists who joined the PRT(C). Of these, not a single one survives alongside the guerrilla vanguard of Santucho: they were used as theorists and writers for the polemic with us, only to be left out, just as the break occurred.

For our part, we have an assured future: the same as the global mass movement, to the beat of whose struggles we will be making the international party of the working class. Never a tendency had greater security.

We're done. We just have to make a clarification. Building a world revolutionary workers party is, as we have said, the greatest task that has ever been posed to human beings. For its vastness and for the very powerful enemies it faces, it is a very long and very arduous task. We are a handful of militants, who face, with the only moral weapon of our unconditional and blind faith in the mass movement and the working class, imperialism and the bureaucracy: a class and a caste who have concentrated in their hands the largest power ever known to humanity.

The new comrades who just now learn, amid a tough and violent argument between two factions of all the previous fights, even more harsh and violent, the new comrades who see that we are facing a new crisis, the new comrades who see the tremendous amount of mistakes made by the Fourth International in the last twenty years, these new comrades have every right to ask, and many do, why to stay in this International. We want to answer the following: what we have experienced so far is the prehistory of the World Revolutionary Workers Party. Despite all its mistakes, this International has had a huge merit: in the midst of the fiercest persecution of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy, it has preserved for the workers and mass movement all the experience gained in over a century of struggles. An experience whose loss would have delayed the development of the socialist revolution by several decades. An experience that is synthesized in a theory, that of the permanent revolution, in a program, the transitional program and in an organization, the Leninist–Trotskyist party. By the mere fact of having preserved these tools of struggle of the workers and mass movement, even this is prehistoric stage in the history of mankind.

But now we are leaving prehistory and entering into the history of the Fourth International. The mass movement has entered the most colossal rise ever known; the world capitalist system, imperialism, is still struggling in one dramatic deepening crisis, which expresses its decline and eventual putrefaction; decades of experience of the masses with Stalinism and reformism gets them increasingly closer to breaking with them. No longer is there a historical obstacle between the Fourth International and the masses: since 1968 we are able to start building Trotskyist parties with mass influence anywhere in the world. No longer is the World Revolutionary Workers Party only a historical necessity of this transitional stage: the objective bases already exist to build it. And all those errors, divisions and bitter arguments of the past and present, are but the birth pains of this world party with mass influence. The Fourth International we know is, at once, the embryo and the midwife of that party. So we are in it and so we will continue in it.

Biographical Appendix

Blanco, Hugo (b. 1934) is a native of Cuzco (Peru), son of a peasants advocate. He grew up among them, learning Quechua listening to their stories of struggle. At age 20, in 1954, he travelled to Argentina to study at the National University of La Plata. In 1957 became active in *Palabra Obrera*, the Trotskyist organization headed by Nahuel Moreno. He went to work at the Swift meatpacking plant. In 1958 he returned to Lima and joined the POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario [Revolutionary Workers Party], sister organization to *Palabra Obrera*, and entered again to a factory. That year participated in the demonstrations of protest to the visit of US President Richard Nixon, and had to take refuge in the Cuzco to escape the repression that fell on the POR. Working as a newspaper boy became delegate and entered the Workers Federation Cuzco. He started linking to the many peasant delegates and their struggles. From Chaupimayo he was driving peasant unionization, which became massive, and led an agrarian revolution in the valleys of Cuzco and the Central Andes, with land seizures and armed militias, and a strike that lasted nine months. They managed a series of conquests which, in facts, raised in an agrarian reform.

In May 1963, when the movement had already started to decline after the victory, he was arrested and sentenced to death. A vigorous campaign in Peru and worldwide, led by Morenism and all the Fourth International, saved his life. He was released and exiled in 1970. Then it was a constituent, Senator, always a fighter. Today he still vindicates Leon Trotsky and is an honorary member of the Peasant Federation of Peru. He edits *Lucha Indigena* [Indigenous Struggle] newspaper.

Bensaid, Daniel (pseudonym Jebrac, 1946-2010). Expelled from the CP in 1966. Leader of French May 68. He was one of the founders, along with brothers Krivine, of the JCR, then LCR. Since 1969 he joined the international Mandelist leadership. In 1973 he was in Buenos Aires to present the positions of the majority of the United Secretariat for the Tenth World Congress. In a plenary of the militancy that filled the Box Federation stadium to the rafters, he recognized in all honesty that *Avanzada Socialista* did not say what Mandel supposedly quoted. He became a leading theorist, publishing numerous books. After Mandel's death he was the main reference for his current. His main books are translated into Spanish are *Change the World* (2002), *Marx For our times* (2003), *Classes, plebes, crowds* (2005), *Resistance* (2006), *Trotskyism* (2006), *In Praise of secular politics* (2009), *Fragments disbelievers* (2010), *Marx is back* (2012), *The smiling ghost* (2012).

Burham, James (1905-1987). He was one of the leaders of the "antidefensist" minority which polemised against Trotsky and their definitions on the USSR. Broke with the SWP (Socialist Workers Party of the United States) in 1940 and went to the right. During the Cold War he was a supporter of Senator Joe McCarthy and helped his anti-Communist campaign (the so-called "McCarthyism").

Camejo, Peter (1939-2008). Leader of the SWP, in the early 1970s became quite well known as a presidential candidate and leading public figure. He had driven solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and was part of the new youth leadership which along with Joe Hansen was leading the SWP to abandon Trotskyism and become a propaganda agency of Castroism. He joined the Green Party and in 2004 he ran for U.S. vice president accompanying Joseph Nader, of the Reform Party.

Cannon, James P. (1890-1974). He was a founding member of the U.S. CP and delegate to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. There he met Trotsky's work (already expelled) against the policies of Stalin and the Comintern and joined the struggle against Stalinism.

Expelled from CP with Shachtman in 1928, he was founder and leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the U.S. and the Fourth International. In 1963 he head the reunification with Mandel.

Clark, George (1913-1964). Leader of the Sailors Union, he entered the U.S. SWP in 1929 and was elected to the national leadership in 1934. He was editor of the journal *Fourth International* and delegate of the SWP in the leadership of the Fourth International. Together with Bert Cochran he formed a secret Pabloist faction in 1953, and then broke with the SWP.

Da Silva, Colwin (1907-1987). He was one of the main leaders of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, an anti-imperialist nationalist left party in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). When the Stalinist leaders argued that the British were no longer enemies, a sector of the leadership headed by da Silva fought them and led the party to Trotskyism. The LSSP was outlawed in 1942, da Silva was arrested and then escaped to India.

In the fifties it was the largest section of the Fourth International and came to win elections in the capital, Colombo, and lead the workers union centre. In 1951-52 they lined with revisionist sector of Pablo and Mandel. Its course was increasingly opportunistic. They integrated reunited Fourth International in 1963, but were expelled in 1964 because they joined a bourgeois coalition government of Social Democracy. A small section broke with the LSSP and remained in the Fourth International. Colwin da Silva was Minister of Industrial Plantations and Constitutional Affairs in the government of Simiravo Bandaranaike.

Dobbs, Farrell (1907-1983). He was leader of the Teamsters in the 1930s when it was the great strike (“teamsters rebellion”) took place in 1934. He participated in the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948. He was elected general secretary of the SWP in 1953. He participated in the 1958 Conference of Leeds (England) of orthodox Trotskyism.

Domingo. Pseudonym used by Livio Maitan in the “Letter from Domingo”.

Frank, Pierre (1905-1984). He was leader of French Trotskyism and Trotsky’s secretary between 1932 and 1933. In 1935 he was expelled along with Raymond Molinier, for forming a public faction with own newspaper, which had a policy of capitulation to the “left” of the Popular Front, led by social democrat Marceau Pivert. Both later returned to the Trotskyist movement. He co-led with Pablo and Mandel the revisionist sector. Since the 1950s he drove the entryism to the French CP. He accompanied Mandel in the reunification of 1963. When as from May 1968 Trotskyism resurfaced in France, Frank was practically the only remaining historic leader, after the experience of 18 years of entryism in the CP.

Germain , Ernest. See Ernest Mandel.

González, Ernesto (1924-2007). In 1952 entered the Moreno’s current while studying history in La Plata. Then he proletarianized in the meatworkers union and started to become one of the main leaders of *Palabra Obrera*, the PRT, the PST and the MAS. In the 1967-68 he headed with Moreno the polemic against the guerrilla faction of Santucho. He militated not only in Argentina but also in Uruguay, Peru, Colombia and Spain and participated in numerous international meetings. He led *Revista de América* magazine, where he wrote numerous articles. He authored *Argentina and Bolivia: a balance sheet* (under the pseudonym Anibal Lorenzo, along with Moreno, Hugo Blanco and others), *What is and what was Peronism?*, among other papers. From 1995 he began to publish, as coordinator, *Workers and internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina*, which covered in three-volumes the history of Morenist current between 1943 and 1969. Only volume 4 was left unfinished. At 83, shortly before his death, he had been a candidate to legislator in in the City of Buenos Aires

on a front of *Izquierda Socialista* [Socialist Left] with Socialist Workers Unity (UST) and other groups.

Gonzalez Moscoso, Hugo (1922-2010). He was part of Bolivian Trotskyism since the 1940s, always following the lines of Pablo-Mandel, particularly in the 1952 revolution and supporting the MNR of Paz Estenssoro. In 1956, when Pabloism-Mandelism had begun to differentiate from the MNR, he was a presidential candidate, and took very few votes. He kept the POR in the International Secretariat when Guillermo Lora broke away and formed the POR (Masses) aligned with the International Committee. Then in 1962 he underwent the excision of the supporters of Jorge Posadas, who formed the POR (Trotskyist). His small group entered the 1963 reunification. In 1967, without participating directly, he supported the guerrilla focus of Che Guevara. Since 1969 he consequently applied the guerrilla deviation of the Ninth Congress. Under the government of Ovando he converged with Castroists, the Peredo brothers, to form the ELN [National Liberation Army]. While mass demonstrations in the streets were growing, the group of Osvaldo Chato Peredo, in June 1969, with 70 followers, initiated military action (blowing up an American-owned gold processing plant) in Teoponte, 100 km from La Paz. The Bolivian army launched an operation immediately which decimated them in a few months. When in October 1969 the first mass uprising that would lead to overall power Torres happened, there were only six guerrillas left, who were exiled to Chile by Torres. The POR (González) continued to vindicate the armed struggle and while the People's Assembly was unfolding, it insisted on the focus. After the triumph of Banzer in August 1971, it signed the founding manifesto of the FRA, led by General Torres. In March 1985, when again there was an insurrectional rise, Gonzalez Moscoso, heading the POR (Unified), section of the United Secretariat at the time, agreed with the proposals of Lora and POR Masas) not to call for the fall of President Siles, rejecting the call for the COB to take power .

Healy, Gerry (1913-1989). He was Irish but settled in England, where he entered the CP. In 1937 he joined Trotskyism. In the early 1950s he joined the International Committee, sector led the by U.S. SWP. In 1963, along with Frenchman Pierre Lambert, he remained outside the reunification. Since 1966 he promoted the Socialist Labour League, and in 1973 the Workers Revolutionary Party. He was closely linked to the Labour left and could get grants and financial agreements to develop a major apparatus. Later he started linking to the governments of Gaddafi in Libya and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. In 1985, WRP, with forces already quite small, broke amidst confusing political discussions and accusations against Healy of sexual abuse of WRP women militant. Since the 1940s his leadership became associated with increasingly brutal bureaucratic methods of leadership, a sickly hyper-activism in militancy and smear campaigns against other leaders of Trotskyism. In his later years he explained his group break as the action of by the of the British intelligence services, the MI5, and he defined Gorbachev as the expression of political revolution in the USSR.

Hansen, Joseph (1910-1979). He joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934 and was international leader of it until his death. Between 1937 and 1940 he was secretary of Trotsky in Mexico. He is the author of the reunification document in 1963. He founded the magazine *Intercontinental Press* and directed for ten years. After the death of Cannon, he led the SWP and its international work. In the early 1970s he formed with Nahuel Moreno an international tendency to reject the guerrilla deviation of Mandel and Maiden. Hansen and Moreno started to distance again in 1974-75, because of disagreements about the revolution in Portugal and the liberation struggle in Angola. The SWP was leaning more and more to direct capitulation to Castroism. In 1979, shortly after the death of Hansen it supported the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade in Nicaragua.

Jebrac, Daniel. See Bensaïd.

Justo, Liborio (1902-2003). He used the pseudonyms “Bernal”, “Quebracho” and “Lobodon Garra”. He was the son of the president of Argentina between 1932 and 1938, General Agustín P. Justo.

In 1933, when President Roosevelt visited Argentina, he cried within the precincts of the House of Representatives and in the presence of his father “Down with imperialism!” And he was imprisoned. He was linked to the CP, but turned away when they voted the line of unity with the bourgeoisie in 1935. He proclaimed himself Trotskyist and developed an intense propaganda and organization campaign in the early years of Trotskyism. He broke in 1943 and wrote violent texts slandering Leon Trotsky.

Knoeller, Martine (1935-1982). Pseudonym of Gisele Scholtz, the first wife of Ernest Mandel. They married in 1966. She was accompanying him in his activities and since 1968 took tasks in leading the United Secretariat. She had health problems and died at age 47, while living in Paris with Mandel.

Krivine, Alain (b. 1941). After being expelled from the French Communist Party, he promoted the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Youth in 1965— along with his brother Jean-Michel (1932-2013) — and was one of the main youth leaders in the French May 1968. He founded in 1969, the LCR and was its presidential candidate. MEP in 1999-2004 on Lutte Ouvriere slate with the LCR. One of the main leaders of the NPA, founded in 2009 after the self-dissolution of the LCR.

Lambert, Pierre (1920-2008). He was French and started militancy in the Trotskyist group led Raymond Miller before the war. From 1953 he led the group that confronted Pablo in France and joined the International Committee. Since 1963 he remained apart from reunification, along with Gerry Healy from England, with sectarian positions on the Cuban revolution. In 1979-80 he had a rapprochement with the Morenist current, because Lambertism took a principled stand against the repression of the Simon Bolivar Brigade by the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (which was supported by Mandelism). The unification attempt was thwarted in 1981 due to differences about the government of Mitterrand and the PS in France.

Lora, Guillermo (1922-2009). He was one of the main leaders of the Bolivian POR from the 1940s. When in January 1947 the Workers Block won a seat in the Senate and three seats in parliament, Lora was one of them. He had little involvement in the events of 1952, because he was abroad, but joined the Mandelist Pabloist policy of the leadership of the POR supporting the MNR government. After the breakup of the Fourth International he began to distance himself, in 1953-54, from the positions of Pablo and Mandel. Within the POR two tendencies were formed, and Lora's began publishing the newspaper *Masas* (the other tendency was the POR (Combate) of Hugo González Moscoso). He was approaching the positions of the International Committee sector led the U.S. SWP. At the time of the reunification of 1963 he rejected it and, along with Pierre Lambert and Gerry Healy, he headed the sectarian wing which kept the International Committee. Then he withdrew from them. For some years he had contacts with *Politica Obrera* [Workers Policy] and Jorge Altamira, from Argentina. Moreno polemised numerous times against Lora policies, such as when he supported the formation of the FRA with general Torres after the triumph of the Banzer coup. His organization, the POR (Masses), kept suffering periodic splits and expulsions, but remained until his death the known of the Bolivian Trotskyism.

Maitan, Livio (1923-2004). He was the most important Italian Trotskyist leader. He was part of the leadership of the Pabloist - Mandelist current since 1951, and led his group to entryism in the Italian CP. In 1967 he visited Argentina to push the Santucho guerrilla faction in the PRT. In 1969 he promoted the formation of the Italian LCR, which years later joined the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC). In 2007, after the death of Livio, when the PRC supported the government, the group withdrew and formed *Sinistra Critica* (Critical Left). It dissolved itself in September 2013.

Mandel, Ernest (1923-1995). He used the pseudonym Germain. Born in Belgium, in the Flanders region, and very young, before the war, he joined the Trotskyist movement, where his father was active. In 1942 the Nazi occupiers detected during a control his Jewish origin and he was imprisoned. He escaped and fled to France, where he became acquainted with Michel Pablo. Both headed the reorganization of Trotskyism in the post-war period, and formed the International Secretariat when the division started in 1951. Mandel drove the 1963 reunification with the American Cannon, which led to the formation of the United Secretariat. Since the 1970s, he was also becoming widely known for his work as a Marxist economist, and published numerous books on various subjects. In 1979 he supported the Sandinista government in its repression of the Trotskyists of the Simon Bolivar Brigade. Since the formation of the Forum of Sao Paulo in 1990 (a grouping of Latin American parties driven by Cuban CP and Brazilian PT , which involved the *Frente Amplio* [Braos Front] of Uruguay, the PRD and the PRI of Mexico, among others), Mandel was one of the most recognized leaders in their annual meetings. After his death, when Lula won the presidency for the first time in Brazil, his followers led the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003. He was author of countless articles and documents, as well as many books. In addition to his writings on economics, we can mention *The meaning of the Second World War*, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story*, *Beyond Perestroika: The Future of Gorbachev's USSR*, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, *Trotsky as alternative*, among others.

Milesi, Pedro (1888-1981). He used the pseudonyms “Maciel” and “Islas”. He was a municipal union leader, who started in anarchism and then entered the CP, from where he was expelled. founded A group in 1933 and was linked to Guinney, the first followers of Trotsky. It was called *Liga Comunista Internacional* [International Communist League] and published *Tribuna Leninista* [Leninist Tribune]. In various groupings he kept to the line of rejection of the of national liberation tasks, contrasting them to the socialist revolution, coinciding with Antonio Gallo, who formed the *Liga Obrera Socialista* [Socialist Workers League], publishing the magazine *Inicial*. Milesi remained always tied to union activity. In the 1970s he had settled in Córdoba, collaborating giving courses and lectures in the power workers union, and participated in the plenary sessions of Sitrac-Sitram.

Molinier, Raymond (1904-1994). He joined French Trotskyism in the 1930s and was expelled along with Pierre Frank in 1935 when they launched a public faction with own newspaper to defend a policy of capitulation to the “left” of the Popular Front, led by Marceau Pivert. Both were later reinstated. Molinier was always linked to organizational and financial activities, and remained in the ranks of Mandelism.

Moller, Edwin. He was a Bolivian Trotskyist who broke in 1954 with the POR and joined the MNR. He continued working closely linked to the COB leader Juan Lechín. When Lechín in 1963 broke with the MNR, Moller followed and participated in the founding of PRIN.

Moreno, Nahuel (1924-1987). He was the most important Latin American Trotskyist leader. In the 1940s began the first group of Argentine Trotskyism which linked to he working class and its struggles, at a time when Peronism emerged. The GOM (Marxist Workers Group) was later called POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), Buenos Aires Federation of the Socialist party for the National Revolution, *Palabra Obrera*, PRT, PRT (La Verdad), PST, and when he died he was leading the MAS. In addition to his dedication to the party building in Argentina and other Latin American countries and its international current, he left a comprehensive written work on political theory, history and Marxist logic.

Naville, Pierre (1903-1993). He founded the first French Trotskyist organization, the Communist League. In 1934 he opposed entryism to the Socialist Party. He participated in the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, and the beginning of World War II he abandoned Trotskyism. He was a prominent Marxist sociologist and researcher, author of numerous books. Among them, *Traité de Sociologie du Travail* (with Georges Friedmann), *Le Nouveau Leviathan Gorbatchev et la réforme de l'URSS*. In 1962 he published the biography *Trotsky Vivant*.

Nin, Andreu (1892-1937). He was Catalanian and founder of the Spanish CP, expelled in 1927 for supporting the Left Opposition of Trotsky in the USSR. He founded the same year the Spanish section, but in the 1930s he was having increasing differences with the positions of Trotsky. He totally opposed entryism to the Socialist Party when its youth paraded with posters of Lenin and Trotsky, and Largo Caballero he proposed forming a Fourth International. In 1935 he broke because of his differences over policy towards the Popular Front. He joined the Workers and Peasants Bloc and formed the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification). In 1936 he was Justice Minister for a few months in the Republican bourgeois government of Catalonia. He was murdered by the Stalinists soon after.

Pablo, Michel (1911-1996). His real name was Michel Raptis, a Greek resident in France. Along with Mandel he promoted the reorganization of the Fourth International at the end of the Second World War, and then the revisionist deviation. In the early 1960s he was dedicated to the work of solidarity with the Algerian FLN and edited a magazine voice of the same *Sous le drapeau du socialism*. When reunification came in 1963, was already practically separated from the Fourth International, with which he definitely broke in 1965, while he was an advisor to President Ben Bella. He raised the priority of the colonial revolution above the proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. He capitulated to Khrushchev, supporting the USSR in the Sino-Soviet split.

Posadas, Jorge (1912-1981). His name was Homer Cristalli. He was a football player in the team of Estudiantes de La Plata and set up a travel agency. He became active in politics in a break from the old SP. In the 1940s he founded the GCI group (Group Fourth International), which defined Peronism as the government of the industrial bourgeoisie, imperialism and almost revolutionary. Since 1948 he started to unconditionally align himself to the positions of Pablo and Mandel, who named his little group Argentina's "official section" and allowed him act as a "viceroy" in Latin America. His opportunism was mixing with sectarian and increasingly delusional positions, constituting the extreme right wing of Pabloism. Announcing the imminence of nuclear war he called for building underground shelters. In 1962 he broke with Pablo-Mandel, to found a "Posadist international" that dragged most of Latin American Pabloism. He came to have some weight in Brazil, Uruguay, Guatemala (in the guerrilla of Yon Sosa), among others. In his later years he gave guidelines to implement at interplanetary scale. After his death the Posadist groups were disappearing.

Rosmer, Alfred (1877-1964). During World War I he was a revolutionary trade unionist, then he joined the Third International and was elected in 1920 to its leadership. He was expelled from the French CP in 1924 and then he was one of the founders of the Left Opposition. He broke in 1930, but continued to be a personal friend of Trotsky and Natalia Sedova. With his wife visited them in Coyoacan a few months before an agent of Stalin murdered Trotsky in 1940.

Rousset, Pierre. Student leader in May 1968, was one of the founders of the French LCR in 1969 with Bensaid and the Krivine brothers. From the leadership of the United Secretariat of Fourth International he was dedicated to tracking the revolutionary processes in Asian countries. He was in charge of the work of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution between 1969 and 1975.

Santucho, Mario Roberto (1936-1976). I was a native of Santiago del Estero. He moved to Tucumán and being accountant at San José Sugar Mill, he linked ligated to the struggles of the sugarcane workers. He founded the *Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano y Popular* [Amerindian and Revolutionary People's Front], which had positions aimed at indigenous people and the guerrilla focus, then encouraged by Castroism, but they began to prioritize the role of the working class and get closer to Trotskyism and the conceptions of the permanent revolution. In March 1965 they unified with *Palabra Obrera*, led by Moreno, and the FRIP to form the PRT. In 1967 a faction

fight began, in which Santucho prompted a guerrillaist orientation encouraged by Mandel and Maitan. The division occurred in the summer of 1967-68. Moreno kept the programmatic foundations of unification and continued with the PRT–La Verdad. Santucho founded the PRT–Combatiente, and then in 1970 the ERP (People’s Revolutionary Army). He broke with the Fourth International in 1972, to form a “new international” with the Cuban, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Albanian parties. He was killed in a repressive operation by the military dictatorship in 1976. His body was never found.

Shachtman, Max (1903-1972). He was a leader of the United States CP and then, along with Cannon, was founder with Trotsky of the Left Opposition in 1928. Shachtman was an important intellectual, who promoted the revisionist faction, “anti-defencist” of the USSR against which Trotsky polemised in 1939-40, in his paper *In Defence of Marxism*. After his break with the SWP in 1940, Shachtman founded the Workers Party. In 1958 he joined the Socialist Party.

Vitale, Luis (1927-2010). He joined the POR, headed by Nahuel Moreno, while a student at La Plata. In 1955 he travelled to Chile, to make contact with those who opposed the policies of Pablo and Mandel. The Chilean POR was a small group, but with leaders of weight, as Humberto Valenzuela (“Old man”), leader of the municipal and provincial CUT of Santiago. In 1958 Vitale accompanied Moreno to England and both participated in the conference in Leeds. They had been systematically polemised on various topics, and Vitale years later linked to Mandelism. In 1965 he participated in the founding of the MIR and then was expelled along with other Trotskyists in 1969. When the Pinochet coup happened he was arrested and tortured. He managed to take asylum in 1974. He was the author of numerous books, notably othe history of Chile and its workers movement. In *From Martí to Chiapas. Balance sheet of a century* (Editorial Síntesis, 1995), he unfortunately speaks of the Latin American Trotskyist movement without respecting the facts and falling into slanders against the current driven by Nahuel Moreno.

Waters, Mary Alice. She was part of the youth leadership of the SWP that had entered the party in the heat of solidarity with the Cuban revolution in the 1960s. Journalist and author, part of the international work and drove from feminism the SWP line of large multiclass unity movements. She remained part of the address when the SWP went away from Trotskyism to become spokespersons of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party, writing articles and books in that regard.