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The Mitterrand Government, its Perspectives and our Policy

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The Mitterrand Government, its Perspectives and our Policy

I. Popular fronts according to Trotskyism

In the world Trotskyist movement, anxious to capitalise on the great revolutionary possibilities existing in France, we all agree in defining the Mitterrand government as a popular front. That is, a government in which the class collaborationist workers' parties occupy ministries and a dominant place. In this case, the presidency and most of the portfolios.

Trotsky wrote hundreds of pages about these governments. He analysed them even in countries where the semi-colonial character imposes some modifications to the types historically emerged in the advanced and imperialist nations.

He gave so much importance to the subject that he warned: "In reality, the People's Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch."¹

It is, then, fundamental, and making to the coherence of a debate referred to Mitterrand, to remember what Trotskyism taught about the popular front.

We have outlined in seven points the thought of Trotsky in this regard:

- The popular front government always coincides with a higher stage of the class struggle.
- It is a different kind of bourgeois government.
- It has a clear counter-revolutionary content.
- Supported by conciliatory workers' organisations, it can take different forms and, within certain limits, respond to different circumstances of the class struggle.
- Does not have, by itself, any incompatibility with the capitalist-imperialist regime.
- Its purpose is to demoralise and demobilise the workers, leading them to greater suffering or historic defeats.

¹ "The Dutch Section and the International", 15-16 July 1936, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*, p. 370, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1977.

- It is an objective result of the revolutionary leadership crisis of the workers' movement, but it provides Trotskyism with the greatest, perhaps the only opportunity to overcome it.

They emerge with a new stage

Popular front governments result from a victory, electoral or revolutionary, of the masses and imply an equivalent defeat of the bourgeoisie and its most representative parties.

That victory and this defeat inaugurate a new stage, superior to the previous "normal" stage, in the class struggle.

The stage will tend to be pre-revolutionary if the triumph has been merely electoral; or revolutionary, if there are major strikes, factory occupations, and mass street demonstrations.

In any case, the new stage raises prospects for strong confrontations, insurrections and the workers' conquest of power; and its opposite: civil war and Bonapartist or fascist coups.

A different bourgeois government

In a "normal" situation, for example, France before Mitterrand taking office, the government is exercised by the bourgeois parties, while the organisations that claim to be of the working class, although agents of the exploiters, remain outside the government, acting in opposition.

But the workers' victory and the bourgeois defeat weaken or directly provoke the crisis of the regime. The exploiters are then forced to integrate their counter-revolutionary agents into the government, especially the Social Democratic and Stalinist leaders, who "normally" are outside the government apparatus.

This causes a type of bourgeois government — popular front or worker-capitalist — that establishes a completely different, "anomalous" relationship, with the conscience of both the working masses and the capitalists. Before, the workers hated the government, for example, the one of Giscard d'Estaing, whereas now they consider Mitterrand's government as "their own". In the same way, the bourgeoisie, who considered Giscard as "their" government, now regards Mitterrand as "adversary" or "enemy".

The counter-revolutionary content

The popular front puts into practice a counter-revolutionary policy that, almost always, covers three facets: demobilisation of the workers, support for their imperialism (in metropolitan countries), and defence of the bourgeois state, its bureaucracy, and especially its backbone the reactionary hierarchy of the armed forces.

Lenin says of the first popular-front government that appeared in history, the one of Kerensky: "It is the Provisional Government which is really counter-revolutionary and which the defencists allegedly want to defend."² And the *Transitional Program* emphasises the popular front and fascist governments are the "last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution."³

Demobilisation of the working class is attempted through confusion and systematic deception, at a level that is not within reach of a "normal" bourgeois government. The

² VI Lenin, "Rumours of a conspiracy", 18-19 August 1917, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p. 248, Progress Publishers, Moscow, digital reprint, 2011.

³ L Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, p. 74, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971.

popular front tries to make the gains achieved by the struggle seem graceful concessions or its own initiatives. The ministers make them look like programmatic achievements of the workers' organisations, which materialise without the need to fight. When they do not want to give them up, they resort to blaming some official of the previous government and demanding "patience" from the masses.

Support to its imperialism has a social reason: to defend fiercely the crumbs of colonial and semi-colonial exploitation, from which the labour aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie feed themselves. This is why popular front governments have been champions of exploitation and repression of the colonies and semi-colonies of their imperialism.

Lenin said of the Kerensky government: "[it] is *already* bound hand and foot by imperialist capital, by the imperialist policy of war and plunder."⁴ And on the same terms, Trotsky got tired of denouncing the Blum and Largo Caballero-Negrin governments.

This characteristic may change in backward countries. Reflecting the nationalist bourgeoisies and under certain circumstances, popular-front combinations with anti-imperialist features emerge. Salvador Allende was an example. But there also the general law is confirmed that the popular front is a "last resort" against the proletarian revolution, which can prepare, as in Chile, the victory of fascism.

What synthesises the counter-revolutionary substance of all popular-front governments is their attitude towards the bourgeois state apparatus, the armed forces, and the state bureaucracy.

Precisely when the regime cracks or weakens and the hypotheses about decisive confrontations, counter-revolutionary coups, and civil wars are part of the analysis of all sectors, they systematically defend the caste of officers and the bourgeois and imperialist structure of the armed forces.

Trotsky said: "The Popular Front government, that is to say, the government of the coalition of the workers with the bourgeoisie, is in its very essence a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers. Such is the great lesson of the events in Spain, now being paid for with thousands of human lives."⁵

It is also the tragic lesson of Salvador Allende, who came out as guarantor of the "professionalism" of the military and photographed himself with Pinochet, to convince the masses to trust the officers.

Different forms

The popular front governments are formed by an alliance of counter-revolutionary workers' organisations and a sector of the bourgeoisie.

From this general definition a range of combinations opens that determine different forms of popular fronts are, in which their counter-revolutionary essence is kept, responding, as we will see, to different social situations.

If we made a historical summary of the popular front since the beginning of the international socialist revolution, in 1917, one could appreciate this diversity of types and circumstances.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the Third International of Lenin and Trotsky considered them in block as Kerenskyist, bourgeois, counter-revolutionary and defined by the intervention of social democracy, whether or not accompanied by the bourgeoisie.

In 1935, Stalinism would introduce a decisive element in this story, when it imposes on all the communist parties, as a world strategy, a "new" policy which it baptizes with the name of popular front. It is a whole theory to prevent workers' governments from breaking

4 VI Lenin, "Letters from Afar. First Letter. The First Stage of the First Revolution", *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 23, p.305.

5 Leon Trotsky, "The Lesson of Spain", 30 July 1936, *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, p. 237, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973.

with the bourgeoisie. Coupled with the theory of “socialism in one country”, which Stalinism had “invented” before, they are the two most counter-revolutionary political theories of our time, formulated on behalf of the workers’ movement.

Until then, the popular front had not had its own name. It existed as an empirical practice, on a national scale, and reserved for exceptional situations — war, revolution — by the social democratic parties. None of these or the Second International had generalised it or raised it to a general strategy. With all their opportunist rot, they collected votes and tried to reach government alone, resisting for years to make government alliances with the bourgeoisie, as a systematic policy. It was Stalinism that institutionalised the sacred principle that a workers’ party should not rule without the bourgeoisie, converting, in this nefarious terrain, social democracy into its disciple.

One consequence was that the types and circumstances in which class collaboration governments appeared were broadened.

Since then, the best known “classic” variety includes the government workers’ parties, Stalinist and/or social democratic, in a majority or minority regarding the bourgeois sector. When Stalinism participates with ministers, they have always been highly unstable, critical, and short-lived.

But Trotsky studied other forms of popular front. There is one in which workers’ organisations participate in government indirectly, through single parties, as in the first stage of Chiang-kai-Shek, in China, and those of Plutarco Elias Calles and Lazaro Cárdenas, in Mexico. To them, we can add that of Peron in Argentina. It is a “people’s front party”.⁶

These popular front governments reached stabilisation during more or less long periods. In the cases of Mexico and Argentina there were very strong rises, which posed the possibility of the proletarian revolution, but without the frame of a generalised chronic crisis or acute economic crisis, which allowed them to remain several decades in Mexico and over five years in Argentina.

Two other types of class collaboration governments escape the strict definition of the popular front, but in a broad sense— like the one applied by Lenin and Trotsky — it must be recognised they function as such. They are variations that have reached, in several cases, a very strong relative stability. One is the type of bourgeois governments that do not incorporate workers’ organisations into the cabinet, but they subsist thanks to their collaboration through popular-frontist pacts. This has been the case of the Roosevelt government, in the United States, with its “New Deal”, or the “Historical Commitment” of the Italian Communist Party, to support the Christian Democracy in power.

The other type is the governments of workers’ parties without bourgeois participation, as we have seen in England, Austria, Australia, the Nordic countries, Portugal, etc.

More recently, a new form of bourgeois-workers government has appeared. We refer to those established in colonial countries such as Angola and Mozambique, where the guerrilla war for national liberation dismantled the bourgeois state, without imperialism being able to restore it, by the absence of a solid bourgeoisie to serve as an intermediary. In the mentioned cases, Stalinism —taking advantage of its relative economic weight in the world market and applying its policy of gaining the confidence of imperialism — undertook the task of restoring the state and securing capitalist production relations. Thus, a bourgeois-Stalinist government has appeared in this way. Imperialism is belligerent against them, but it has not declared a war of extermination. It has had to accept its impotence and acknowledge that Stalinism or Castroism, in those cases, “is a factor of order”.

This phenomenon, of recent appearance, should lead us to relativise or be careful with the handling of the general law, verified until today, by which the Stalinist presence in a bourgeois government immediately unleashes the fury of imperialism.

6 “A Discussion With Trotsky on Latin American Questions”, *Intercontinental Press* #1319, 19 May 1975, p. 671.

In the “classical” forms of the popular front a bourgeois wing participates (not all of it, since it is not a government of national unity). The rest of the bourgeoisie remains outside; belligerent, tolerant, or, often, accomplice and expectant.

The bourgeois party or bourgeois front in the popular front can be important, as the Radical in the Blum government, or seemingly insignificant, the “shadow” of the bourgeoisie, as in the republican governments of the Spanish civil war and in the government of Mitterrand.

Here, the capitulators to the popular front usually argue it is unnecessary to agitate the traditional Trotskyist slogan “Out with the bourgeois ministers” since these have no weight.

Trotsky replied that in every agreement the most reactionary sector always prevails, regardless of its strength and number. The alliance is kept because it does what it demands, under penalty of breaking.

Precisely, the Largo Caballeros, Negrins and Mitterrands include those ministers to be able to tell the masses and the left wings of their parties: we cannot adopt such a progressive measure because they oppose it and if they break we lose our unity with the middle class.

A particular expression of the depth of the French bourgeoisie crisis is that Mitterrand would have many difficulties to use this argument, since the SP has in its hands the powers of the Presidency and together with the CP, without its bourgeois allies, an absolute majority.

No incompatibility with the regime

By themselves, popular front or worker-capitalist social democratic governments are not, in any way, incompatible with the capitalist-imperialist regime. The social democratic-liberal coalition that has long ruled Germany or the repeated alternation of Labor or Social Democrats in the governments of England, Australia, and the Nordic countries is conclusive evidence of this.

The bourgeoisie uses and accepts the discomfort of social democratic and popular front governments (and of Bonapartism and fascism), as long as they assure the continuity of exploitation and capitalist accumulation. Although it is necessary to recall here, to refer especially to it later, that the presence of the CP in government has almost always been an acute element of crisis.

But the only thing truly incompatible with capitalism is the emergence of the ungraspable, almost volatile situation of dual power. This cannot be tolerated by the bourgeoisie for a minute. It decrees the death of any form of bourgeois government — popular front, worker-capitalist, democratic-parliamentary, Bonapartist, or fascist — that is unable to control, with its different methods, the revolutionary rise and the embryos of workers’ power. This happened to Salvador Allende when in Chile emerged the industrial belts⁷ and the first movements of soldiers and non-commissioned officers opposed to the hierarchy of the armed forces.

When the bourgeoisie and its military caste decide and can unleash the counter-revolutionary coup, they wipe out the dual power, the working class, and the popular-front or worker-bourgeois governments.

This confuses many Marxists who believe the incompatibility lies between the popular-front or worker-capitalist form of government and the bourgeois or imperialist regime. In reality, what the capitalists cannot digest is the revolutionary rise of the proletariat and its organs of power, which generally intensify under those forms of government.

⁷ **Industrial Belts** (Spanish *Cordones industriales*) were organs of popular power and workers’ democracy established in Chile by the struggle of the working class against the putschist bourgeoisie and were boycotted by the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. They heroically fought against Pinochet’s coup and were crushed in September 1973.

We believe that some Marxist theorists, worthy of the utmost respect, are mistaken in studying the content of popular fronts believing they are always determined by an acute, even revolutionary, crisis. They argue popular fronts would always be unstable and their only purpose is to act as a “last resort” against a present workers’ revolution. With this argument, they try to show the popular front government is incompatible in the short term with capitalism and its relatively stable regimes — the bourgeois democratic or the Bonapartist with parliamentary forms. This theoretical approach recognises, however, that the worker-capitalist governments of Germany, certain Nordic countries, Australia, and England behave differently: they are relatively stable, although in certain circumstances they are also a “last resort” against a revolution. Hence, for them, these governments are not popular fronts.

We disagree with this characterisation. To substantiate the argument the popular front is always the “last resort” against the revolution, they must affirm that each form of government always reflects specific relations between the classes, (form : popular front, content : revolutionary crisis), as if this were an eternal, metaphysical truth.

However, they must immediately deny this law, which they claim to be universally valid, when they speak of worker-capitalist governments like England, Germany, etc. Here they admit the law is not fulfilled. Indeed, they themselves say that sometimes these governments reflect situations of bourgeois stability and other times a workers’ revolution in action. Said another way, the same form of government (worker-capitalist, social-democratic or labour) would not correspond to a specific relationship between classes but may reflect different circumstances. Different and even opposed, such as social stability and revolution.

As always, mechanistic thinking leads to a dead end.

First, we say that the forms, the superstructures of social phenomena exist with a relative autonomy of the class relations that gave origin to them. Those, generally, subsist with diverse contents. Other times, the opposite happens: superstructural forms anticipate social relations, playing a preventive role.

The relationship between form or superstructure and the content or relationship between the classes presents in this way acute contradictions.

We must clarify we are referring to medium or short-term relations (20, 10, or fewer years), not those established in the long time of a historical epoch. In the frame of a historical epoch, the stagnation of the productive forces, the capitalist crisis, and the socialist revolution originate the crisis of all systems of bourgeois and bureaucratic domination without exception and are the absolute determining cause.

But here we are considering things on a different scale, not historic but political. And in this dimension, the relations between form and content appear extraordinarily complicated.

We can say that one characteristic of the revolutionary period is the permanent contradiction and crisis between forms and contents. Far from presenting a univocal correspondence between each form of government (and, in general, of the superstructures) with a specific situation of the class struggle, the opposite takes place: a complex and changing kaleidoscope in which, in an unequal and combined way, a highly contradictory dialectic of form and content is established.

There are countless examples. The Bolshevik party, as a party-form, lost all the Leninist revolutionary content and was filled with a counter-revolutionary Stalinist content. That is, it did not always reflect the same specific relationship between the classes. The superstructural form of the October proletariat was preserved but came to shelter the new bureaucracy.

Similarly, a Bonapartist government is the form by which the capitalist state bureaucracy rises above society. However, it can also be observed in societies with content as different as the slave society or the bureaucratized workers’ society, (Trotsky defined

Caesarism as the Bonapartism of antiquity and characterised Stalinism as degenerated workers' Bonapartism).

A particularly notable example is the aforementioned one of worker-capitalist governments, especially the one of the German social democracy. The same form has corresponded to radically different class relations. In 1918, it played the role of a "counter-revolutionary last resort", while at present, and for several years, it rules with a relatively stable situation.

We could go on at length. For example, the same trade union can be revolutionary at one stage and counter-revolutionary at another.

Within this infernal and contradictory play of superstructures and relations between classes, there are, of course, certain laws. Every regime or government usually goes on much longer than the class relations or circumstances that gave rise to it. Regimes are more resilient than governments and these than changes in relations between classes.

While regimes (the structure of state institutions) are kept, their governments (parties and leaders who manage these structures) tend to change. Thus, the Fifth Republic has proved much more resilient than the de Gaulle government and this, in turn, that the abrupt change in class relations that led to the great mobilisation of 1968.

Likewise, the Franco regime survives in the monarchy of Juan Carlos, when the circumstances of the class struggle that originated it changed completely.

Of course, these changes do not leave the regimes immune; they enter into crisis. Thus, the Franco regime, to survive, under the monarchy must coexist, appealing to the collaboration of classes, with the traitor workers' parties.

Therefore, in the first instance, to define a government is to define a form, a political relationship. The popular front is the form in which counter-revolutionary workers' apparatuses co-rule with a political sector of the bourgeoisie. Like the workers-capitalist form, it can have different contents, sheltering different relations between classes.

It is usually a form related to a revolutionary crisis, as a "last resort" against it. But its spectrum is much broader, in the same way that streptomycin "last resort" against acute tuberculosis, is not always used against it. It is often used against non-acute forms of the same disease and also in other infections.

The presence of the communist parties in these governments has always caused great contradictions with the bourgeoisie and imperialism. This is because Stalinism is not organically linked to imperialism (like social democracy is) or to national bourgeoisies (and union bureaucracies). Communist parties are direct agents of the Kremlin and only indirectly and historically of imperialism and bourgeoisies. Therefore, they are unstable and conditional servers: their attitude depends on the relationship the exploiters keep with the USSR.

Yankee imperialism, on a world scale, and the bourgeoisie in each country, accept them into their governments only in very critical situations or situations they assume as such and try to get rid of their presence quickly. They want them to collaborate from outside.

Probably, as long as the communist parties remain agents of the Kremlin, the popular front governments they integrate will remain highly critical, unstable.

The same does not happen when the popular front is promoted and integrated mainly by the social democratic parties and/or the union bureaucracies. Thus, relatively stable governments emerge, such as those of Germany, Italy (composed of Christian Democrats and socialists), those of Mexico, and several other pure social democratic.

In particular, those of the social democracy enjoy bourgeois and imperialist trust. Trotsky already anticipated it: "The chief source of strength of the social patriotic' or more exactly, the social imperialist parties is the protection of the bourgeoisie, which through the parliament, the press, the army and the police protects and defends the Social Democracy

against all kinds of revolutionary movements and even against revolutionary criticism. In the future war, owing to the sharpening of national and international contradictions, this organic bond between the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie will be revealed still more openly and cynically.”⁸

Summing up our conclusions: The popular front or worker-capitalist social democratic form of government does not, by itself, have any incompatibility with capitalism.

Since 1917, we have seen multiple governments of these types, in circumstances ranging from civil wars and revolutionary crises to situations of stability. Within this variety, the cases in which the popular front is driven and then integrated by the communist parties pose unstable situations, due to the rejection by the bourgeoisie of the presence of Kremlin agents. But the only situations absolutely incompatible and intolerable for capital are those of revolutionary crisis and the development of dual power. In these cases, inexorably, it will prepare and try to unleash a Bonapartist or Fascist coup, liquidating the dual power, crushing the workers’ movement, its organisations, and the popular front government.

Threshold of Bonapartism or Fascism

If the popular front is not overthrown by the revolutionary upsurge led by a party like the Bolshevik, it leads to greater exploitation and misery or, worse, to the fascist or Bonapartist coup.

Trotsky explained: “By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralysing their will to struggle, the People’s Front creates favourable conditions for the victory of fascism. The policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie must be paid for by the proletariat with years of new torments and sacrifice, if not by decades of fascist terror.”⁹

If lacking a revolutionary party, the masses ignore the popular front, resist the bourgeois offensive, and confront the government, their struggles have no much prospect either. Devoid of a revolutionary general staff, they will not be able to centralise the combat or endow it with clear political objectives. Sooner or later, they will end up defeated. It will be the time of the Bonapartist or fascist putsches, of the crushing without mercy of the working class and all its organisations, including those that make up the popular front.

The non-existence or weakness of the Trotskyist party facilitates the counter-revolutionary victory. But we must never forget it is the ruling traitor parties that make it possible, by demobilising and confusing the masses and defending the caste of bourgeois army officers.

The key to the popular front

The objective factor that determines the emergence of the popular front is the most subjective element of the workers’ movement — its crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Stalinism, social democracy, and union bureaucracies display all their objective dimension and importance when they make up a government of class collaboration, in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary stage. They become then historical protagonists of the first magnitude, saving the capitalist system from being swept away by the workers’ movement.

But, contradictorily, the popular front stage is perhaps the only one in which all the conditions exist to overcome the crisis of revolutionary leadership because only in this stage the role of treacherous leaderships becomes fully visible to the masses.

The working class is forced to face a bourgeois government, formed by its traditional leadership. The struggle against the bourgeoisie must inevitably collide, directly or

8 “A Fresh Lesson”, 10 October 1938), *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)*, p. 71, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974.

9 “New Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International”, July 1936, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)*, p. 340, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1977

indirectly, with that government. And, eventually, traditional parties are laid bare as declared enemies of the exploited masses.

Since the 1920s, Trotsky pointed out the great opportunities the revolutionary party gets with the emergence of these governments. “The appearance of the working class in power will place the entire responsibility for the government’s actions upon the Labour Party; and will give rise to an epoch of English Kerenskyism in the era of parliamentarianism, providing a favourable environment without parallel for the Communist Party’s political work.”¹⁰

The same was true, for the time, in France: “If a “Left Bloc” materialises because the ancient hulk of the National Bloc has become decrepit, then the Communist Party will appear as the sole opposition party and, in consequence, such a change will be most advantageous to us.”¹¹

Trotskyism and the revolutionary centrist currents never have a greater opportunity to overcome the crisis of leadership and organise a revolutionary party with mass influence as in the era of the popular front, generated by the rise of the workers. To achieve this, an indispensable condition is the strong Trotskyist revolutionary will to stand firm, as a systematic, irreconcilable, daily opposition to the popular front government and its traitor parties, before the masses.

II. The Mitterrand government

The Mitterrand government is, in the final analysis, a delayed consequence, expressed in the electoral arena, of the great general strike of 1968. This strike unleashed the crisis of the Bonapartist regime of the Fifth Republic, but could not culminate it because of the betrayal of Stalinism and the social democracy.

The OCI(u) has well said it: “What the slow agony of the Fifth Republic, whose death began but has not yet disappeared, teaches us from the point of view of the working class, is this: the coercive force of the apparatuses, more particularly the Stalinist apparatus, has been able to defer for 13 years the consequences of the general strike of May-June 1968, deviating no less systematically, by means of a cleverly orchestrated division tactic, the struggle of the working class from the problem of power.”¹²

The delay of 13 years and the mediation of the counter-revolutionary workers’ apparatuses cause that the relation between the 1968 strike and the electoral victory is not immediate.

The meaning of the victory

Therefore, we cannot say of the Mitterrand government what Trotsky said after the rise of Blum and the great strikes of 1936: “The French revolution has begun”. Even Raymond Aron understands this when he describes that “the manifestations of joy among the victors” (of 1981) “do not resemble anything at all the social explosion” (of 1936). (*Le Monde*, 26 August 1981.)

For the time being, it is only a political-electoral victory, which has two expressions. One, the defeat of the bourgeoisie and its candidate, Giscard d’Estaing. And two, almost as important as the first, the defeat of the divisionist and pro-Giscardian policy of the CP.

¹⁰ L Trotsky, “Report on the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution and the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International”, 20 October 1922, *The first five years of the Communist International*, Vol 2, p. 211, Monad Press, New York, 1972, Vol 2, p. 211.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 212.

¹² *Draft Political Report for the 26th Congress of the OCI(u)*, adopted by the CC of August 1981.

(One-fourth of its traditional electorate voted against the CP, for the SP, causing the biggest electoral debacle of French Stalinism, in its entire history.)

But the rise of Mitterrand is neither effect nor cause of any revolutionary victory, although it opens the possibility, more or less immediately, for the confidence and aspirations that his political victory have stimulated in the proletariat that a revolutionary crisis should break out.

Preventing the “first wave”

However, many Trotskyists are making a dangerously mistaken analogy between the governments of Blum, in 1936, and of Mitterrand. Others recognise differences, but reduce them to the variation of the relative weight of the parties that form the popular front or derive them from the different regimes (parliamentary republic then, Bonapartism with parliamentary forms now). Anyhow, they believe we are living what Trotsky in 1936 defined as the preparation of the “second wave”. This is not the case.

Trotsky analysed that with the great strike of 1936 (and not with the Blum government), the “first wave” culminated and the French revolution began. He called to prepare carefully, avoiding thoughtless and hasty attitudes of the mass movement, the “second wave”. This should lead to the general insurrectional strike and openly raise the problem of power.

Today in France we are not preparing the “second wave” but only the “first”. Here there have been no strikes like in 1936 or 1968. The new Blum came, but not the occupation of factories. And Mitterrand came to power precisely to avoid and prevent occupations from happening.

The profound difference between Blum and Mitterrand is key to understanding the specific character of the current government. Blum was a consequence of the revolutionary crisis of 1936. Mitterrand comes preventively to prevent the outbreak of a revolutionary crisis or the repetition of a great strike like that of 1968.

If Giscard continued, the regime was in danger of a revolutionary crisis. Mitterrand, his Socialist Party, the Communist Party, its General Confederation of Labour (the main French union) and other unions have come to power to prevent it.

Saving the Fifth Republic

Directly related to the goal of preventing the “first wave”, the popular front aims to save the Fifth Republic.

The consequences of the 1968 strike, the ultimate reason for Giscard’s defeat, increasingly question the ways how the French bourgeoisie has exercised its domination for a quarter of a century. Therefore, the political victory of 10 May has placed on the agenda the need for the final liquidation of the reactionary institutions of the Fifth Republic, by the extra-parliamentary action of the proletariat.

The popular front government is the counter-revolutionary response to that danger. And that the bourgeoisie should tolerate this “last resort” is a fruit of the political victory of the masses.

The class collaboration content of the Mitterrand government is expressed, above all, in its desire to preserve the essentials of its institutions, granting some formal concessions, to divert the fight against them.

It is not surprising, then, that one of the main bourgeois and imperialist leaders, Chaban-Delmas, Gaullist “baron” and architect of the Fifth Republic, has “noted with satisfaction that the President of the Republic keeps the fundamental orientations of the Fifth Republic in the areas of diplomacy, defence, and institutions.” (*Le Monde*, 5 August 1981.)

And René Monory, former Minister of Economy of Giscard-Barre, assures: “Up to now, in all areas, the government has perfectly respected the Constitution. It seems essential to me that I also respect it on this point (of nationalisations).” (*Le Figaro*, 9 August 1981.)

Mitterrand himself has multiplied the statements insisting that he “accommodates” without difficulty to the institutions and that the reforms he plans to introduce are not urgent.

A known policy

This policy of the new French government is part of a general phenomenon. Everywhere, the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy understand that some formal democratic concessions must be granted to the mass movement, to save their current regimes. This is due to the great worldwide revolutionary upsurge underway, which began in 1968 and accelerated dramatically from 1974-75, with the defeat of Yankee imperialism in Vietnam.

They apply the policy that Lampedusa, in *Il Gattopardo*,¹³ synthesised with the phrase: “Change something so that everything remains the same”. Tsarism, when it granted the Duma and elections, resorted to it, with the same purpose.

We have called this policy “senile Bismarckism”. Bismarckism, because this was the Bonapartism that, in Germany, granted concessions to the bourgeoisie, to save the feudal regime of the Junkers. Senile, because it is a manoeuvre of Bonapartist bourgeois regimes, in the stage of mortal decay of imperialism and revolutionary rise of the workers.

Different types of bourgeois governments agree to apply this “senile Bismarckism”, to save the Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist regimes, with the *Gattopardist* technique.

Francoism, through the monarchy of Juan Carlos, granted the Cortes, legalised workers’ organisations and yielded the right to vote, to rely on the betrayal of the PCE and the PSOE and thus save themselves from the revolutionary thrust of the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities. The military dictatorships of Brazil, Ecuador and Peru have done or are doing similar manoeuvres.

In this sense, one being a popular front and the other directly being a bourgeois government, the comparison is imposed: Mitterrand is to the Fifth Republic what Juan Carlos to Franco or Figueiredo to the Brazilian military dictatorship.

If, as it is not ruled out, in the next Spanish elections the PSOE wins, a popular front of Felipe González and some bourgeois sectors could emerge, supported from the outside by Carrillo.

Of this popular front government, we would say it comes to save the monarchy, heir and continuation of the Franco regime. The analogy would be transformed into identity. We would say of Felipe González what we say today of Mitterrand: González comes to save the monarchy like Mitterrand comes to save the Gaullist regime.

A harsh policy at the service of the bourgeoisie

Mitterrand acquiesces to the government amid a serious crisis in the French economy and without there having been a “first wave” of major strikes forcing him to make concessions.

These two facts will push his government to impose the harsh plans of hunger and unemployment of the bourgeoisie, continuing the orientation of Giscard-Barre. He will try to convince the workers to accept it and, if he does not succeed, he will appeal to all means.

Mauroy, the Prime Minister, makes it known “the government is aware that the effort of national solidarity (...) should not be made only by companies.” (*Le Figaro*, 7 September 1981’) Next, he outlines measures aimed at helping business.

¹³ *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) refers to a 1958 novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa which became in 1963 an epic period drama film by director Luchino Visconti.

For the workers' movement and the popular sectors, life becomes harder; both inflation and unemployment have accelerated during the four months of popular-front government.

According to the CGT, public employees have lost 3.5 percent of the purchasing power of wages. (*Le Monde*, 19 September 1981.)

In the month of August, 1,834,000 unemployed were officially computed. Two hundred thousand layoffs have taken place in industry during the last year.

All comments agree that: "This situation is not new, but it seems that the movement is accelerating dangerously, especially in industry." (*Les Echos*, 15 September 1981.)

In addition: "That said, despite the creation of jobs in public companies, the impact of the energy savings plan, the large workshops and the reactivation of housing construction on jobs will not be enough to stabilise staff hired at their current level and avoid further unemployment." (*Les Echos*, 25 September 1981.)

A projected tax on fortunes was cushioned in such a way that the big bourgeoisie felt almost satisfied: "These corrections are far from negligible. (...) The promised amendments obey, of course, good intentions." (*Les Echos*, 25 September 1981.)

In return, the government prepared taxes on popular consumption. The CP's newspaper, *L'Humanité* (30 September 1981) applying its policy of critical support, said: "what is frankly criticisable in the budget proposal — if the press reports correspond to reality— is the use of certain tax measures that will affect the most modest incomes; this is the case of tax increases on gasoline (20 cents per litre), on motor vehicles (+ 25 percent) and on tobacco and alcohol prices."

The nationalisations have been handled with the same criteria. When the government claimed that the compensation would be fair, the stock market reacted with a significant increase in the shares of nationalised companies. Faced with new business claims, it is likely that the 30 billion francs initially planned for compensation, will be increased: "The adoption of a system of 'multi-criteria', as suggested by the State Council, will require some billions of francs extra. For the government, the new method increases the value of compensation by approximately 25 percent." (*Les Echos*, 28 September 1981.)

François Ceyrac, president of CNPF (National Council of French Employers), said about the monetary policy: "The measures taken, certainly too limited and sometimes difficult to implement, have made it possible to avoid the worst. It is essential to continue and simplify them." (*Le Figaro*, 3 September 1981.)

And Ceyrac's own judgment on the global situation is: "Opposed as we are to the principles defended by the current majority before the elections, it is our duty as leaders not to refuse to speak to the government or hold the policy of scorched earth. We must provide it with the reports we draw from our experiences to enable it to apply its principles. And since for each of these principles there are different application modalities, we have the right to think that some are better than others." (*Les Echos*, 1 October 1981.)

As we see, the opposite of a war between enemies. Yes, instead, an attitude of political and economic pressure for the government to implement the harsh bourgeois economic plan.

If the first wave of strikes develops, the government may be forced to make concessions to the workers, contradictory to the needs of capitalist accumulation. These concessions and reforms, granted to stop the struggles, would be a by-product of these.

Only if the automatic mechanisms of the economy allow a significant reactivation, Mitterrand could expand its margin of manoeuvre and tackle a policy of concessions.

It is the least likely course. Everything indicates that the popular front will rapidly bring greater misery and unemployment for the workers, if the strike and revolutionary "first wave" that, for a time, prevents it, does not break out.

Defending imperialism

The Mitterrand government will hold the positions and interests of its imperialism. This implies it will defend by all means its colonial and semi-colonial dominions, increasingly narrowing its ties with American imperialism.

In this last aspect, it is revealing the attitude held by Mitterrand at the Ottawa summit, supporting Reagan's counter-revolutionary armament plan, and the announcement made by the French government that a new atomic submarine will be built — the seventh of its nuclear fleet — and the study of the neutron bomb will be advanced.

As *Le Monde* comments: "It is necessary to go well back in the history of post-war international relations, to the good times of the Franco-Anglo-American tripartism that vanished in the middle of the 1950s, to find so much harmony between Paris, London, and Washington, at least as regards relations with Moscow." (*Le Monde*, 25 September 1981.)

Moreover, France is the second colonialist power in the world. Probably it is, also, after the United States, in terms of semi-colonial dominions. Through the pacts of Evian and OCAM, it tightly controls the economies, armies and even governments of its former overseas possessions.

What does the government say about it?

Charles Hernu, Mitterrand's Minister of Defence, said: "We have at the moment agreements of this kind with African countries. We must respect them. This also means France must possess the means for external intervention and equip itself for it. We must have intervention forces." (*Le Monde*, 11 July 1981.)

The popular front confirms by all means its blatant bourgeois and imperialist character. Mitterrand himself told the *BBC* in London that his country will continue to manufacture and sell war material, necessary for the continued modernisation of its army. (*Le Monde*, 28 September 1981.)

The Communist ministers

A characteristic and novel feature of the Mitterrand-Mauroy government is the incorporation of the PCF [French Communist Party] into the cabinet through four portfolios.

Since the last postwar period this fact has very precise precedents. If we discount the special phenomenon of the bourgeois-Stalinist governments, which we have defined for Angola and Mozambique, the outstanding cases have been: in France and Italy, at the end of the Second War; in Chile, during Salvador Allende; in Portugal, at the beginning of the revolution, and in El Salvador, with the Junta that dismissed Romero, two years ago.

The first profound difference is that all those communist parties were at their peak or kept much of their strength, whereas in today's France Stalinism is at its worst, despite its union positions, after its very serious political-electoral defeat.

Moreover, within its strategy of quickly excluding the CP from the bourgeois governments and resorting to them only *in extremis*, imperialism had its nuances: strongly opposed in Chile and Portugal; support in El Salvador; combat, but not to death, in Angola and Mozambique. In France, today, it has made its opposition known, but without unleashing, yet, a fierce campaign.

Truth is the entry of the PCF gives all its fullness to the popular front character of the Mitterrand-Mauroy government. It is indisputable that it shows the depth of the crisis in gestation; the two counter-revolutionary apparatuses are simultaneously forced to place themselves on the front line. Both must take their responsibilities to stop the masses.

In addition, there is, in the inclusion of the PCF, a political calculation of Mitterrand and his party. It would be dangerous for the Social Democracy to leave the PCF "loose" as a possible opposition. Critical of the government, Stalinism could recover from its current

crisis and force the SP to return, perhaps with interest, the 25 percent of its strength it snatched in the elections.

Mitterrand wants to avoid the risk by tying up Stalinism and preserving the Stalinist debacle for his own and the bourgeoisie's benefit.

The defeat of the CP is, thus, a contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, it was inflicted by the proletariat, who voted against its divisive and pro-Giscard policy. But, on the other, it benefits the social-democratic counter-revolutionary apparatus and, through it, imperialism, due to the non-existence of a Trotskyist party with mass influence to capitalise on it.

Although the Stalinist presence contradicts its strategy and introduces a serious crisis factor, the monopolies may consider, or let go for the time the SP manoeuvre, although criticising it, because it favours its goal of advancing in France towards a bipartisan system, in which the SP is hegemonic in the left pole.¹⁴

In short, the communist presence in the popular front government is due to two types of motivations and interests. Some are imposed by the seriousness of the crisis and are common to all the exploiters and their agents, the traitorous workers' apparatuses.

The others are more specific to social democracy. The latter wants to continue benefiting from the fraction of the French working class who understood that, to kick Giscard, it was necessary to break the lock of Stalinist politics.

Is a government presided over by the SP incompatible with the French bourgeoisie?

At least, from 1968 onwards, the French bourgeoisie prepared for the eventuality of losing the elections. The own Bonapartist Gaullist Constitution of 1958, when stipulating the existence of parliamentary forms coexisting with the presidential power, foresaw the integration to the regime of a social-democratic representation

After the crisis of 1968, the mutual adaptation between the bourgeois parties and the social democracy (and, in its way, Stalinism), in the perspective of the PS having to be hegemonic, as now, in a popular front, accelerated and did not cease for a moment.

Not only "the press, the army, and the police", as predicted by Trotsky, protected Social Democracy, but banking and the entire bourgeoisie, to prepare an SP and a candidate, Mitterrand, who, it was known, in any election could reach government and give rise to popular front Bonapartism.

This adaptation and preparation of the bourgeoisie for the unwanted moment when it should appeal to "last resort" Mitterrand, has its best example in the electoral behaviour of the Gaullist front led by Chirac. As is known, Chirac did not join Giscard in the first round of, in the run in, did not raise as a matter of life or death to close the way to Mitterrand. Chirac, thus, became one of the electorally decisive factors for the victory of the SP.

This shows the political crisis of the bourgeoisie, but also that it had foreseen the appeal to the resort of Mitterrand.

For his part, Mitterrand adapted for decades to the bourgeoisie and French imperialism. It is not a surprise he says now, quite naturally, that he "accommodates himself" to the Fifth Republic.

Throughout the last years and up to a time before Mitterrand's electoral victory, the OCI used in its analysis and denounced in its press the adaptation of Mitterrand, the SP and the popular front to the interests, needs and institutions of the bourgeoisie and the Fifth Republic.

¹⁴ France is practically the only imperialist country where monopolies have not yet imposed a bipartisan regime. The SP not only looks for its own benefit when it keeps the PCF in the cabinet but contributes with that to "bipartite" the French political regime. (NM)

The OCI denounced in 1971: "Mitterrand considers it useless to replace the Bonapartist constitution. 'It is better to correct', i.e., to try to mount a moderate and well-tempered Bonapartism at the level of large sectors of the French bourgeoisie." (*La Verité*, No 553, June 1971, p. 198.)

And in 1973: "The constitutional solution proposed by the Common Program (of the popular front) fully respects the 1958 Constitution in both letter and spirit." (*Informations Ouvrières*, No 593, 17 January 1973.)

And in February 1978: "Mitterrand is a true supporter of the 'Common Program of government', of the defence of the Fifth Republic and its institutions, of 'austerity' and of everything necessary for the survival of bourgeois society and the bourgeois state, including, if necessary, the repression against the masses." (*Documents de l'OCI*, No. 6, S. Just, p 94, 12 February 1978.)

And in December of the same year: "(The current of Mitterrand) is also strong in terms of the problems presented to the bourgeoisie. Trying desperately to prevent the collapse of the regime and the outbreak of a revolutionary crisis is, by the way, indispensable; but it is no less indispensable to be in a position to respond to such an eventuality, which ultimately, as everyone knows, will inevitably happen." (*La Verité*, No 584, December 1978, S. Just, p. 13.)

Because of this old and mutual adaptation between the French bourgeoisie and social democracy, we do not believe there is incompatibility, in the abstract, between them.

This is confirmed by the current situation, four months after Mitterrand taking office. The monopolies have unleashed no national and international campaign preparing the overthrow of the new government or the adulated military caste has seized the belt to draw the weapon of the full restoration of Bonapartism or the fascist coup.

Far from holding a violent, frontal opposition, the bourgeois attitude is, for the moment, worried but tolerant. It exerts a strong criticism of the government to extract more advantages from it — which it usually gets — and to begin capitalising on its inevitable loss of prestige.

The bourgeois leaders, within their political crisis, are making their plans not on the prospect of a violent overthrow of Mitterrand, but on regaining lost ground in an electoral calendar that begins with the 1982 cantonal elections,¹⁵ and they argue about the approaching crisis.

They are concerned about the presence of the PCF in the cabinet and, supreme fear, the future behaviour of the workers' movement. How long will it continue without exploding?

Le Figaro, on 9 September, wondered fearfully "How long will the grassroots accept the sacrifices it rejected in the era of Raymond Barre? How long will the Communist Party apparatus collaborate with the Socialists?"

And *Les Echos* (1 October 1981) analysed: "If the socialists are treated with wisdom, can they be expected to one day push the Communists away and replace them with more reasonable options? Or should we think that, faced with the tragic events that will occur ineluctably, the French will move away from the socialists as violently as they turned towards them, and that the succession will fall only on those who maintained an opposition without concessions?"

For the time being, while the workers' movement does not enter the arena massively, the most serious element of political contradiction that the bourgeoisie and its Fifth Republic have with the Mitterrand government is caused by the participation of the CP in the cabinet. There is an unresolved ambivalence in this: the Stalinist presence is rejected by the French bourgeoisie and Yankee imperialism. But it is also needed by them, so the government can fulfil its role of preventing the "first wave".

15 Says *Le Monde* of 29 September 1981: "Will the memory of the 1981 spring inspire in the supporters of the former majority the desire to prepare other springs less catastrophic for them? Cantonal, 1983, municipal... Does the opposition advance along the path of cohesion? Maybe, but the socialist power still has good times coming." (NM)

This contradiction is, strictly speaking, insoluble. This is why we are inclined to forecast an aggravation of the general crisis, accelerating those experienced by the bourgeoisie and Stalinism and openly posing the crisis of the SP.

Three variations: “Chilean”, “Russian”, and “English”

The whole situation evolves towards a generalised chronic crisis, which will favour the growth and the irruption of the struggle. In the national and international conditions constituted since 1968, the maintenance of the bastard Bonapartism, in the process of decomposition, of the Fifth Republic, the acute political contradiction caused by the presence of the CP in government, the rapid loss of prestige of this (as a consequence of the application of its hard counter-revolutionary plan), the economic crisis, and the rise of the workers movement (accelerated by the electoral victory) can turn, in the short term, the chronic crisis into a revolutionary crisis. The requirement is that the rise does not stop.

But the immediate course of the class struggle cannot be predetermined in a rigid, single way. It depends on many factors. So that in the short term of the next few years there is no forecast or a sure outcome, but, schematically, three possible variations: “English”, “Chilean”, and “Russian”.

Will the bourgeoisie continue alongside the popular front, defending the Fifth Republic in crisis and accepting its rules of the game, respecting the electoral alternation, as in England?

Will they opt, instead, to liquidate the semi-parliamentary forms of the Fifth Republic, by means of a Bonapartist and Fascist coup, as in Chile?

Will the revolutionary party achieve sufficient mass influence, riding on the uprise, to defeat fascism and the popular front or the established bourgeois government, when the revolutionary crisis breaks out?

The first wave is key

These questions can only be answered when we know if in the short term there is a “first wave”, equal or superior to those of 1936 or 1968. This, and not another, is the master key to the coming events. This, and not another, must be the concern of the revolutionaries: the preparation, organisation, and driving of the “first wave”, from the first struggles that have begun, such as those of the rail workers (who occupied Gare de l’Est), Renault (strike at the Le Mans and Billancourt plants), teaching sectors, etc.

In any case, the important thing is not to discuss whether the “first wave” is about to begin or has already begun, recognising it is still far from April, May, and June 1936 or May 1968, turn to drive with all strength its first symptoms or evidences.

If the “first wave” happens quickly and does not stop or deviates like the previous ones, we will enter the path of the “Chilean” or “Russian” variations. It will not be a road with no return: French capitalism will preserve many mechanisms of mediation and buffering. Not even at this time, still, the “English” variation can be ruled out. But, unquestionably, a strong and persistent “first wave” will put us at the door of fascism or revolution.

Whereas, it is categorical that without a “first wave”, large and lasting, that unleashes the beginning of the French Revolution, we will enter fully into the “English” variation. The Fifth Republic will survive, then. Surely, the current government with Stalinist participation will fall and other popular-front combinations will arise, presided over by Mitterrand. And, tomorrow, elections will show the evolution and whether Mitterrand has to leave.

The disillusionment of the masses can lower the votes of the SP and raise those of the CP or those of the bourgeois parties. The inevitable is a political crisis that will throw out

the CP from the government, possibly going to collaborate from outside with the bourgeois government of the day.

Within this chronic installation of the crisis, the workers' movement will not be defeated. It will not have managed to cause a revolutionary situation, but it will continue to fight against the exploiters and counter-revolutionary apparatuses. This would renew the conditions for the SP and strongest sectors of the bourgeoisie, surely without the CP, to make combinations of the popular front or, even, if the crisis becomes more dangerous, formulas of national unity, with the whole bourgeoisie.

The characteristic of this "English" evolution, in our opinion the least likely of the three which are raised, would be the extension of the Fifth Republic; more or less critical, more or less agonising. Its mantle would cover almost the entire spectrum of the French counter-revolution, leaving out the Stalinists, who would have to settle for supporting, without integrating, the bourgeois government.

It is the ideal hypothesis the bourgeoisie currently considers. It is based on what for it would be the best variation: to prevent or quickly conjure up the "first wave".

Only then could the abomination of a government become reality, as a columnist of *Le Figaro*, on 8 September, considered the bourgeois desideratum: "Four Ministers of State: Giscard, Chirac (forced, thus, to end their quarrel), Rocard, Jospin. In Finance, Raymond Barre. Under which prime minister? Who would have the necessary authority to tell these men who have faced each other, 'let's save France together'? The own Mitterrand."

The most dangerous analogy

The whole of the French situation, in the international context, makes us assume that, within the variables proposed, there is a greater possibility for the outbreak of an acute, revolutionary crisis. As we have said, this would get us into the path of a Soviet October or its opposite, a Pinochet-style coup like in Chile.

However, the most dangerous analogy can be made between Mitterrand's France and Salvador Allende's Chile, without taking into account the class struggle.

Not only is this a methodological error — dissolving the present in a possible but hypothetical future — but a political crime. Comparing the Mitterrand of his first 120 days of government with the cornered Allende of the end of his mandate, and asserting we are on the threshold of the "second wave", as in Blum's time, leads to embellish Mitterrand by the negative, making believe he enjoys the "fascist" hatred of the French bourgeoisie.

This hides the counter-revolutionary plan now being implemented by the government, with the tolerance and expectation of the bourgeoisie and the armed forces.

In this way, the masses and the revolutionary party are disarmed, separating them from their present, not future, the task of guaranteeing the preparation and the outbreak of the "first wave", as well as its effectiveness and forcefulness.

Those who now suggest we should remain silent before the masses about the fact Mitterrand heads a government of rogue bureaucrats and traitors because probably, later, we will have to fight, weapons in hand, together with him against the fascists, become agents of the popular front and its counter-revolutionary plan and in liquidators of the revolutionary party. Thus they do nothing more than make way for fascism itself.

The similarity of Mitterrand is not with the Allende being checkmated at the end, but with the one who rose to the government.

The Chilean popular front also came to power to divert, through concessions and confusions, the imminent threat of a revolutionary rise. It did not achieve it.

Like Mitterrand, Allende integrated a section of the bourgeoisie into his cabinet (he later did the same with several generals). Soon instability began because the presence of

communists in the cabinet, as suggested in the case of Mitterrand, fully installed a chronic crisis, combining with the other elements of the situation.

Here the similarities are interrupted. The Allende crisis worsened quickly. The dominant imperialism went into frontal attack, not only against the communist ministers but against the nationalisations. These, although timid, were a blow unparalleled in France, where neither the monopolist bourgeoisie nor French imperialism has been attacked.

The anti-imperialist measures in Chile produced a division of the national bourgeoisie, since a sector of it, of former President Frei, at the beginning supported them. The sectors most linked to imperialism and this one, of course, went on the attack.

But the biggest difference is between the levels of the class struggle. Since the electoral triumph of Allende, the degree of mobilisation of the Chilean masses was much higher than that presented in France. For example, the demonstrations of victory in Santiago, by comparison, reduced to a neighbourhood festivity those of the Bastille, in Paris on 10 May.

This combativeness, in Chile, quickly took a qualitative leap and reached an end located light years away from the one the French working class today lives. The socialist revolution began to develop, to an unbearable degree for the capitalist regime.

Two examples illustrate this: semi-Soviet or directly Soviet forms appeared: the industrial belts, which began to expropriate the bourgeoisie and to raise the problem of power. In addition, a movement developed within the troops and NCOs, mainly in the Navy, against the officer caste, which threatened to extend the embryos of dual power to the armed forces.

Given this, and faced with the fact there was an acute economic crisis, with a thousand percent annual inflation, the bourgeoisie and the middle class aligned themselves totally with imperialism, behind Pinochet. The bourgeoisie like Frei, who initially supported the government, a year earlier went to the coup.

There is, as we see, no similarity between the situation of the Mitterrand government and the final phase of Allende.

It is possible that in the future they will approach, but this can only happen when the class struggle in France hits such a colossal jump as the one seen in Chile.

This is why it is so dangerous to make a false analogy of situations. In any case, the parallel that can be established would be the opportunism of the working class currents of both countries. The MIR and the PSR¹⁶ (section of the USec), tail-ending Stalinism and Social Democracy, spent all the time and from the beginning aligned behind Allende, without educating the masses about his counter-revolutionary character or proposing an alternative of power.

They repeated to the point of exhaustion the argument we have begun to hear in France: as there is a danger of a fascist coup; we should not attack the government.

This opportunism led to the bulk of the workers' currents, tail-enders of Stalinism and Social Democracy, to waste the years of heroic struggle of the proletariat, without building the revolutionary party, capable of blocking the way to Pinochet and overthrowing Allende, as the Bolsheviks did with Kornilov and Kerensky. Thus they facilitated the demobilising and confusionist task, in the service of the counter-revolution, of the popular front, which led to the victory of the coup.

¹⁶ **MIR**, *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Movement) was a Chilean far-left guerrilla organisation emerged in 1965 under the influence of Castroism. It held opportunistic and sectarian positions. In the 1970 elections it calls to abstention, and after Allende's victory supported him and characterised his government as "non-bourgeois".

PSR, *Partido Socialista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Socialist Party).

Preparing the demolition of the regime

In the next three or four years, we see it unlikely the proletariat in France, or any other developed country, will suffer a counter-revolutionary defeat of a historic kind, in any of its variations.

This is why we have not considered, among the different prospects opened immediately, that the Bonapartist-popular front government of Mitterrand will fulfil the role of Pinochet against the revolution. This is what Negrin did, associated with the Kremlin, in the Spanish revolution, and the social democracy, at the beginning of the German revolution. In those cases, there was a popular-front counter-revolution, which led, slowly in Germany, to Nazism, and quickly in Spain, to Francoism. There is no immediate possibility this will repeat in France, but it is well to remember it to keep in mind all that governments like Mitterrand's can do to save capitalism.

Instead of these pessimistic hypotheses, the French situation induces us in the opposite direction: to prepare and act to make the "first wave" take place, that it does not stop and that the working class can blow up in the air the Fifth Republic, with its right-wing and popular front governments, and the imperialist regime that sustains them.

III. Sectarianism and Trotskyism

Every new phenomenon originates in the revolutionary Marxist movement the inevitable reappearance of sectarianism and opportunism. Among other reasons, because both sectarians and opportunists are united by the same method, which Trotsky defined when he said: "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."¹⁷

The clash between sectarianism and opportunism emerges, from the methodological point of view, from the fact the element abstracted by one is opposed to the one abstracted by the other. Neither of the two perceives that both elements are part of reality.

What is the element the sectarian abstracts from a popular front government? That it is a bourgeois government. This assertion, elevated above the rest of reality, becomes it is the same as all other bourgeois governments.

The sectarian refuses to take into account two fundamental issues. The first and decisive is that the workers consider it as their government because the workers' parties are there. That is, they consider the bourgeois popular front, and therefore counter-revolutionary, government as if it were their government, as if it were a revolutionary government. It is impossible a greater confusion in the minds of the working class. The other characteristic is that the bourgeoisie does not consider this its government and, therefore, confronts it, fights it, either electorally, politically or physically (by means of a coup). A Marxist cannot fail to take these two facts into account.

However, the sectarian refuses to change his language, his tactics, and his previous slogans. In "normal" times, when the bourgeois government is hated by the organised workers' movement, it is correct to raise, as the French OCI did under Giscard, different slogans whose axis is "Out with the bourgeois government". In tsarist Russia, the great slogan was "Down with the Tsarist government", along with "Constituent Assembly" and another series of government slogans, such as "Dictatorship of the proletariat", by Trotsky, or "Workers' and peasants' revolutionary-democratic dictatorship", of the Bolsheviks.

¹⁷ L Trotsky: "Ultra-lefts in general and incurable ultra-lefts in particular", 28 September 1937, *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, p. 338, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973.

But this policy and these crystal-clear slogans, this unequivocal tactic of confronting and trying to overturn the bourgeois government, are complicated when this is a popular front or worker-capitalist government. In these cases, we cannot say, as before, “Out with the government”, because the bourgeois government is not “normal”.

The sectarian, with the argument the two are the same, refuses to change his slogans and his language thus trampling the hopes and beliefs of the masses. Ultimately, it expresses petty-bourgeois contempt for the aspirations of the workers.

Lenin and Trotsky were so respectful of the false consciousness, of the ideologies and hopes of the workers’ movement, that both raised similar slogans to relate the revolutionaries with the workers’ movement at the beginning of popular front governments. While the masses believed in the Russian provisional government, Lenin did not propose its fall. He launched the orientation of “patiently explaining” to the masses, every day, that it was a counter-revolutionary government. The essence of his patient daily explanation to the masses was:

“If you believe this is your government, we will not fight for now for it to fall. But it is not, it is your enemy. You want peace and it will prolong the war, it has an interest in war. This is a capitalist, imperialist government. Do you want bread and land? You will never have it from this government because this is the government of the owners of the bread and the land, of the capitalists and the land owners. Only a government of the Soviets, of the workers and the poor peasants, can give you peace, bread and land! When you convince yourself that this government is your enemy, the enemy of the workers and the poor peasants, we will overturn it!”

In France, in mid-1936, Trotsky had the same tactic as Lenin in 1917. That is, of “patiently explaining”. He held the “do not excite” orientation against the Blum government. Our mobilisation policy should be to oppose the bourgeoisie that opposed Blum.

That is, he considered that at the beginning of the popular front government, the main enemy was the bourgeoisie and not the government, which had the trust of the workers and the opposition of the bourgeoisie.

Therefore, Trotsky insisted on mobilising slogans against the bourgeoisie, taking up the old Bolshevik banner that has since become a “classic” principled position against popular fronts: “Out with the bourgeoisie of the popular front” (before they enter the government) and “Out the bourgeois ministers” (after they do).

Sectarian politics lead, at certain times, directly to betrayal; for example, when a civil war or a Bonapartist coup breaks out against a popular-front or worker-capitalist government. The sectarians and ultra-leftists refuse to fight on the side of the government against the reaction. They base this policy on the fact it is a war between two bourgeois governments, but that leads them to the absurdity of not knowing which is their trench, which must be on the side of the working class, against the coup, until we have convinced the workers that the popular front government is not theirs and it must be defeated.

Lenin fought at Kerensky’s side to avoid Kornilov’s victory. Trotsky, next to Largo Caballero and Negrin against Franco’s fascist coup.

These teachings of Lenin and Trotsky have an application in Mitterrand’s France. They categorically demand from us to change the previous slogan of “Out with the bourgeois government in office” (which was correct with de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard) through a general strike, by “explaining patiently”, of Lenin, and by “not to excite”, of Trotsky. It would be criminal to lift the general strike to overthrow the government, now that the French organised workers’ movement and its vanguard believe in it. The general strike will have to be prepared at this time against the resistance of the bourgeoisie and against its anti-workers and anti-popular plans.

IV. Opportunism and Trotskyism

But the greatest danger threatening the revolutionary movement in the stage of popular front government is opportunism. The Bolshevik Party suffered it against the provisional government before the arrival of Lenin, the French Trotskyist movement against Blum, and the Spanish against Largo Caballero-Negrin.

Since the popular front government is always the result of a triumph of the workers' movement, it opens a stage in which the latter believes the government is on its side and the problems will be solved.

There is a generalised drunkenness, which seeps into the ranks of the revolutionary movement. The leaders suffer even more pressure and often get more confused than the ranks since they are added to the work of softening the ruling bureaucratic leaders do to them.

We have already seen that opportunist, like the sectarian, is characterised by abstracting a few elements of reality, oversizing them, and believing they are all the reality.

What element does the opportunist abstract? The hopes or supposed hopes of the masses.

The working class always has an unfortunate hope in its bureaucratic leaders. When they rise to the government, initially this hope is multiplied and combined with two others, equally or more disastrous than the previous one: the masses believe that the government is "theirs" and that they ceased to be their enemy.

Old and new beliefs are confirmed when they see the bourgeoisie opposes, hates and confronts the government. The great hope that their only enemy is the bourgeoisie is clearly imprinted on the masses.

The opportunist abstracts this false consciousness, generally exaggerating it, and formulates all or almost all his policies, accommodating himself to it.

Is the bourgeoisie the only enemy?

In this way, the opportunist goes on to fight only the bourgeoisie, suspending the denunciation of the counter-revolutionary workers' parties and their government.

This analysis and this policy are wrong and dangerous, because the *raison d'être* of Trotskyism is always to confront two mortal enemies: the bourgeoisie, in the society as a whole and with the class versus class method, and the trade union, social democratic, and Stalinist bureaucracies, within our class, where they embedded themselves as parasitic caste to serve the bourgeoisie.

These are two struggles that, in reality, are two sides of the same coin, because the workers' movement will not be able to defeat the bourgeoisie until it defeats the interior, treacherous, and sinister enemy.

The sectarian simplifies the issue by believing that the bureaucracy by coming to government becomes bourgeoisie or confused with it. Instead of two enemies, he also denounces a single one, without distinguishing that, even though they are co-ruling together, the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy have frictions, face each other and may even reach civil war, keeping their identity, one, as the dominant social class, and the other, as a parasitic caste of the workers' movement.

The opportunist, for his part, also has only one enemy, the bourgeoisie. It freezes the struggle against the trade union, Stalinist, and social democratic bureaucracy, and goes on to consider it as an ally, secure or unstable but an ally, against the bourgeoisie. His policy reflects symmetrically the hopes of the masses. And the worst is that they do it, precisely

at the moment when the bureaucrats, the SP, or the CP begin to rule and, for that matter, to reveal themselves more than ever as traitors in the service of capital.

This is how, for the opportunists, the bureaucracy disappears from everyday life, from its press, and even from long-term perspectives, turned into an ally or an unimportant ghost, just when it is deploying the full weight of its counter-revolutionary role.

The opportunists repeat, when the popular front rules, the same mistake, only much more serious, that they usually commit when they propose a united front to the organisations of the workers' bureaucracy and, in the name of this united front, they stop criticising it systematically.

That goes against Leninism and Trotskyism, for which there are always two enemies at the same time, even if they face different tactics. When circumstantially we join with the bureaucracy against the bourgeoisie, even then, we do not stop denouncing their capitulations.

The OCI (u) gave a good example of this Trotskyist policy, before the victory of Mitterrand: with no sectarianism, it proposed to the CP the unity with the SP to defeat Giscard. While doing so, it denounced the CP's national and international betrayals, minute by minute.

This is the dual Trotskyist struggle that must be kept after the SP and the CP rise to the government. We must continue to wage a relentless struggle against both, as the OCI (u) did, before the elections, against the CP.

What about imperialism? What about the armed forces?

The opportunist evaporates the struggle against the bureaucratic apparatuses that are in government and limits himself to an economic-political struggle (more economic than political) against the bourgeoisie.

This limitation inevitably leads to another. The bourgeoisie is reduced to an ideal and metaphysical concept, without taking it as it really is: the absolute owner of the centre of the bourgeois state, which are the armed forces, and the class that effects, with that army, the exploitation of the proletariat, not only the metropolitan but also of the colonies and semi-colonies.

Thus, much is said about the "bourgeoisie" but nothing is said that, in Ottawa, the government has aligned itself with Reagan's counter-revolutionary plan, that it keeps the colonial and semi-colonial army and the exploitation of overseas peoples, and that the caste of officers of the bourgeois army is still untouched and is worshipped and paid homage.

About all this, which is an essential component of the French bourgeoisie, the opportunist does not say a word. This is so because, by capitulating to the ruling bureaucratic apparatuses, the opportunist ends up capitulating to their social base, the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy, that receive the scraps of imperialist exploitation.

The same has always happened with all opportunistic deviations. This is why there is an infallible test to prove it. Let us take a French opportunist current, the most typical that Trotskyism had, that of Pablo, and read its press: What space does it devote daily to denouncing French imperialism and its armed forces?

The test is infallible. Pablo does not fight against Gallic imperialism or against its army. He is a classic opportunist. The same test can be applied to all the currents that claim to be of the working class and determine which ones have embarked on the most abject of opportunism, the abandonment of the struggle against their imperialism and their bourgeois army.

A complicit silence...

Since Mitterrand took office, the opportunist proposes we not clash with the hopes of the masses and that, to avoid it, we shut our mouths about the government, at least for now.

It is already known that silence gives consent. In practice, this position slips to exonerating the government of its faults. For example, Pablo keeps his mouth shut or does not campaign, denouncing that Mitterrand himself put his signature on the Ottawa summit. Nor does he denounce it is the government that carries out new imperialist interventions and defends tooth and nail the armed forces of France.

All opportunists proceed in the same way, which leads them to blame the bourgeoisie or the inheritance of Giscard when the government increases electricity, transportation, gasoline, and, in general, the high cost of living and unemployment. They do not speak about the government, or they do it elliptically and occasionally.

Why do they do this? Very simple. They say (and this is true) that the masses believe in the government and do not want to confront it but to dialogue with it. Therefore, the revolutionary party has to be the spokesperson for this dialogue and thus to accompany the experience of the masses. When the masses are one step away from discovering the government is counter-revolutionary (already in the Soviets and at the doors of the revolution), then we will say our characterisation of the government so they will finish drawing the conclusion. That is to say, “we have to be one step, only one step, in front of the masses”.

So simple and so wrong. They devilishly confuse the things in which we have the obligation to be far ahead of the masses — denunciation, education, propaganda — with those we have to be stuck to them: the proposals for action.

The opportunist does neither one nor the other; neither propaganda nor proposals for action and by keeping his mouth shut about the government he gives up on building the party.

The central axis of all our politics in this epoch of world crisis of imperialism has to do with government, with power.

When a popular front rises, this question of power quickly tends to become immediate, because we enter a higher stage, in which almost always objective reality poses the “all or nothing”. Not in vain do we define the popular front as a “last resort”.

When the popular front rules, the chances of winning tend to be closer than ever, sometimes at the fingertips. In other words, it opens up the prospect that the masses, with the revolutionary party at the head, overthrow and replace the popular front.

Therefore, it is essential to unmask it daily, preparing the workers in the perspective of insurrection. So the masses, falsely hopeful, can understand our proposal, the revolutionary political line must have two aspects. One, the explanation, by the negative, of the treacherous and counter-revolutionary character of the government, which must be systematic, taking advantage of the multiple opportunities for this; and two, the proposal, on the positive side, of what government we propose in its place, even if at the beginning we do not directly say “down with the current government”.

Such have been the features of Trotskyist Leninist politics regarding popular fronts, since Kerensky — the first known — onwards.

At the beginning, the Bolsheviks did not call to overthrow the Russian provisional government of 1917. But from the first day, Lenin, with one foot in the armoured train, proclaimed “no trust in Kerensky” and went on to develop the campaign against him, denouncing without mercy each and all counter-revolutionary measures, although the Bolsheviks were a small minority and the confidence of the masses in the new government was overwhelming. In this regard, Lenin did not distance himself one but a thousand steps from the masses. His only limit was not to call for the direct overthrow of the government

while the masses did not share it and carefully accommodate the alternative of power — i.e., the positive proposal of what government we want— to the changing circumstances. In this, he did remain stuck to the masses. But the “patient explanation” that it was a counter-revolutionary government — the negative proposal — Lenin started it on the first day and did not abandon it until its fall. For this, he had to start by imposing it on his own party, which he threatened to break if it did not abandon the opportunist course that had been imposed, among others, by Stalin, remaining silent before the government and supporting its positive measures.

Trotsky, before the Blum government, proceeded similarly. The first issue of *La Lutte Ouvrière*, newspaper of the French section, was closed by the popular front. Its reading and the later copies show, mainly through the articles signed by Trotsky himself, the campaign of denunciation of the government and the alternative proposal of power, although without calling to mobilise against it but against the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Of course, the opportunist, for example, Pablo, can show that in such a page of such an issue of his newspaper he says he is “for the workers’ and peasants’ government” or “for expelling the bourgeois ministers”. For Lenin and Trotsky it is not about that, but to make permanent campaigns, to base the policy on the denunciation of the popular front government and on the positive proposal of a different government.

The saying goes: “tell me who you are with and I will tell you who you are”. We could paraphrase it saying: “tell me what you say every day about the government, tell me what other government you propose, and I will tell you what you are.”

The proverb thus modified and applied to workers’ tendencies, including those of our movement, is the second test for opportunists, as infallible as the first.

But there is a third, equally effective: the test of the workers’ struggles, which have already begun on a small scale. Under the popular front, more than under a “normal” bourgeois government, every struggle implies — directly or indirectly — disobeying, contradicting and even confronting the government in which the union bureaucrats participate.

The opportunist finds himself, thus, on tenterhooks because he does not want to attack the government or the bureaucratic apparatuses. Then, he has to choose: he is with the strikes or he is with the government.

And there his problems begin. He begins to suggest, for example, that strikes should not be done but petitions. Or that the strikes are misguided because they “distance” the workers from the government.

It is enough to follow the French workers’ press to make the verification: who does not dedicate the main space to the unconditional support to the struggles that have already begun, as part of the goal of preparing and promoting the “first wave” and of postulating itself as the new revolutionary leadership of the same is doing Pabloism, consequent opportunism.

The capitulation to the popular front government extends, by its own dialectic, to all grounds. In fact, the opportunist stops presenting himself as an alternative to the masses: he has nothing fundamentally different to propose. Without a precise policy, with erratic slogans, without a propaganda for the negative and for the positive regarding the question of power, without the central concern of putting himself at the front line of the struggles announcing the “first wave”, the opportunist not only leads to demoralisation and confusion of the cadres formed over the years, but to the abandonment of the positive struggle for the construction of the party.

And it is a double tragedy, because never as in the stage of the popular front is necessary the urgent construction of the revolutionary party with mass influence and because there is never a more favourable ground to achieve it.

Today, in France, the SP has tied the CP — immersed in the crisis — in the government. Outside of this, to the left, all the ground is clear for a great party. Trotskyism can and must occupy it quickly, with a revolutionary policy.

The opportunist tends to destroy this possibility.

As usual, the opportunist tends to lose the greatest opportunities.

... and a shameful support

Already embarked on his course, the opportunist easily falls into open or shameful support to the government. It is a coherent step within his logic.

Since he is guided by the absolute law of not colliding with the masses, much less will he collide when they celebrate a measure that seems to confirm their expectations and hopes in the government. This reasoning makes him fall into Stalin's famous formula of support for progressive measures and rejection of negative ones. Lenin had to eradicate that orientation which, if continued, would have frustrated the Russian revolution.

Trotsky considered this Stalinist formula as the most dastardly and disastrous of opportunism, since all government measures, even the apparently "positive" ones, are at the service of its counter-revolutionary plan. Precisely, the characteristic of this plan is to use concessions — sometimes a policy of concessions — to demobilise the masses and dismantle the revolution.

What should revolutionaries do in the face of "progressive" measures adopted by a government the workers consider "theirs"?

An example to clarify it

It is easier to understand it by comparing the country with a factory. What do we do when in a company the manager announces, for example, he has decided to install a free meals room?

It is evident that, with measures of this type, the bosses seek to anticipate and divert possible strikes or movements.

No revolutionist would dream of going out to distribute a flyer thanking the hated manager and saying it is a "progressive" measure.

We would use the meals room but "we would ask for more", first because it is insufficient and second because it is a manoeuvre so that we do not fight. We would explain this to the workers, warning the deceitful concession of the bosses and their rascal manager means they will take away with the right hand, what they give us with the left. For example, they will make us stay to work more hours, off hours.

For a country, we do exactly the same. Faced with the enormous concessions made in Spain by King Juan Carlos and the Suárez government, giving the vote and legalising the unions and workers' parties, we proceeded as in the example of the factory. We do not go out with a flyer to thank the King. We denounce the traitor Stalinists and Social Democrats, who did. We used the concessions, that is, the unions and legality, to continue the struggle, although they were a manoeuvre by the Franco regime and the King to save his regime.

Returning to the factory, it may happen that the bosses, fearful of losing everything, decide to a much riskier manoeuvre: to agree with the bureaucratic leadership of the union that the next manager be chosen by the workers, between different candidates of the bosses and one designated by the own bureaucracy. The election is made and the old union bureaucrat, who could be called Marcel Mitterrand, is appointed. As soon as he is installed, the bureaucrat-manager orders the free meals room.

Faced with this novelty —the meals room is granted by the manager chosen by the workers and not by the hated one who was manager until yesterday — the opportunists are lost.

However, the essence of social relations and of the bosses' manoeuvre is exactly the same as in the previous case. The capitalist enterprise is the same, the exploitation as much as or harder than before, and the goal of the dining room, identical, i.e., that we stop fighting. Behind it, it even hides the same cheating goal the previous manager had, of making us stay to work more hours without paying them.

Therefore, we revolutionists have no reason to change our previous policy. What we will do, obligatorily, is to change the way we will continue to fight against the company, its bureaucratic manager, and his tricky manoeuvres.

For example, perhaps we will not call Mr Mitterrand scoundrel, even if he deserves it. But we will keep our plan to use the concession and demand more, calling to fight for it. We will demand they let us control the accounting books of the bourgeois company, which the new manager fiercely defends; that the dining room be controlled by the workers, and that our family members may eat for free. That, in addition, a school be installed for our children, etc.

If Mr Mitterrand answers saying the situation of the company does not allow it, more than ever we will alert he is at the service of the company, and that he refuses to show the accounting books, which would allow us to establish the real situation and adopt measures accordingly.

Come the time of the workers' assembly we will establish that given they do not allow us to bring our family, or open the school, or show us the books we are forced to vote No for the meals room, because it is a screen of the manager, Mr Mitterrand, to cover the bosses.

Applied to a country, revolutionists must do the same. If instead of Juan Carlos–Suárez, Juan Carlos–Felipe González had been the saviours of the Franco regime, through preventive concessions, the essentials of our policy should have been maintained. We should not have kept our mouths shut against Felipe González or considered his “concessions” to be “progressive”. And if the secretary-general of the Spanish Social Democracy had signed the Moncloa Pact not as he did — as party chief — but as Prime Minister, our denunciation should have been as harsh as or even harsher than it was.

Without treating him, perhaps, as a traitor and a scoundrel, we should have shown him as one of the two greatest counter-revolutionaries of the current Spanish workers' parties, agent of the monarchy and Francoism. The worst of all at that time, as head of government. That is, we should have said the same, although in other ways, but more systematically, than we said about him and Carrillo, of PSOE and of PCE, while they were not in government.

A Trotskyist policy

The “progressive” measures of a bourgeois government, whether or not a popular front, we use them; we never support them. And we defend them when they are attacked.

Opportunists confuse use with support. Leninism and Trotskyism have always defended the workers, their organisations and their conquests — including the indirect ones, which appear as concessions of the government but are also the product of the struggle, current or potential. That defence is doubly obligatory when the government and the bourgeoisie attack those conquests or when the reaction tries to crush them.

This behaviour has nothing to do with supporting the “positive” measures of a bourgeois government of any kind. We do not support, we do not vote, we do not thank or say that it is a social change that the manager Mitterrand grants a meals room or President Mitterrand decides the 39-hour work-week. We use these measures. We will not work 40 hours. But we explain that the 39-hour week is tricky, we want the 35-hour week and, especially, the sliding scale of working hours.

If tomorrow the bourgeoisie, their scabs and their parties campaign in the factories so we go back to work for 40 hours we will defend the 39-hour week. Even at that moment, we can say that we “support” the 39 hours because the support has a different meaning.

It is the same as what happens with the popular front government as a whole. If tomorrow there is a coup, we will fight on the side of the government, against the coup, for everything it means at that moment: the concessions it gave us, that the workers’ movement snatched, the workers’ organisations that support it.

Against the coup, we defend what for the workers mean Kerensky against Kornilov or Allende against Pinochet. What we defend are the working class and its achieved positions.

But not even then do we stop denouncing its counter-revolutionary nature and its direct responsibility for the attack of the reaction.

For this reason, seven days before Kornilov’s coup, when the rumours of it were already massive, Lenin wrote: “It is hard to believe that there can be such fools and scoundrels among the Bolsheviks willing to enter into a bloc with the defencists at present. (...) The Congress resolution being what it is, any Bolshevik who came to terms with the defencists for the purpose of “giving access”, or indirectly expressing confidence in the Provisional Government (which is allegedly being defended against the Cossacks), would, of course, be immediately and deservedly expelled from the Party.”¹⁸

This was the policy of Lenin, the Third International, and Trotsky. Against Kerensky, the bourgeois-worker- and the popular front governments, they defined them publicly as “a continuous betrayal of the workers’ interests”. They called to “demonstrate the absolute falsity of all their promises”, to “unmask” them as a “government of capitalists” and “ruthlessly before the masses”, to “not loosen one iota our hostility” towards them and to “condemn and denounce implacably before the masses to all the leaders part of the popular front”, because “it is about directing with supreme courage the masses against their treacherous leaders”, to destroy “their irrational faith” in those governments, to “remove the masses from the deception” and build our revolutionary party and the Fourth International. §

18 VI Lenin, “Rumours of a Conspiracy”, 18-19 August 1917, *Collected Works*, op. cit. Vol 25, p. 251.