

Nahuel Moreno

The Party and the Revolution

(Theory, Program and Policy —
A Polemic with Mandel)



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Foreword to the Second English Edition

When Editorial CEHuS decided to make a second Spanish edition, purely digital, of this work available to the public through the pages of www.nahuelmoreno.org, we realized that with little extra effort we could make a new version in English. This version that we present has some corrections in the translation of Moreno's thought written in Spanish. The biggest difference with the first edition is that we have now had access to documents in English cited by Moreno and have thus avoided double translation. We have only been unable to access articles that originally appeared in French in *Quatrième Internationale* and a few others which had to be retranslated from Spanish to English.

As this work was written 47 years ago, we have taken the opportunity to introduce some explanatory notes to place the reader in context; they are identified as "editor's notes".

The Editors

May 2020

Foreword to the First English Edition

Mercedes Petit¹

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

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

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

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

Let the reader judge if so.

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

Foreword to the First Spanish Edition: Polemics of the Twenty-first century

Mercedes Petit

Why do we republish this book?

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

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

Second, in different contexts and with greater or lesser importance, the reader will find that today are still fully in effect most of the controversial issues Moreno addressed then in his criticisms of revisionist positions. The current followers of Mandel,¹ as well as many sectors of the left-wing and anti-capitalist vanguard, fall into capitulation to the new (and the remnants of the old) non-worker and non-revolutionary leaderships that have emerged in the heat of the vigorous revolutionary processes that shook the late twentieth century and the beginnings of this new century. “Mandelism”, both as practised by the groups organised in that current, or as a general influence on the left and the fighters, remains a major liability. They are a stumbling block for the construction of a Fourth International earning mass influence and based on solid revolutionary parties which may carry in different countries the fight to take power, to establish real workers’ and peasants’ governments and to advance in the construction of international socialism with workers’ democracy. The influence of Chavismo in Venezuela on the present vanguard and the capitulation of Mandelism to it are just samples. In this introduction, we want to refer to some of these hot topics for political and theoretical discussion.

¹ See reference to **Mandel, Ernest** in the biographical appendix. Although they call themselves “Fourth International”, the world organisation of the Mandelists is heterogeneous, with organisations with different conceptions and political alignments. Their positions can be known from the page www.internationalviewpoint.org, among others.

Moreno vs. Mandel

In the 1970s the two main currents of the Trotskyist movement, organised in the Fourth International, were headed by the Belgian Ernest Mandel (1923-1995) and by the Argentinian Nahuel Moreno (1924-1987). Mandel oriented most sections and was strongest in Europe, mainly in France with, the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (Revolutionary Communist League, LCR), founded in 1969. Since 1967–68 he had promoted a guerrilla orientation to his followers in Latin America. In Argentina, he supported Mario Roberto Santucho, who after the division of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party), the Argentine section, formed the PRT–*El Combatiente* [The Combatant], recognised as official section in 1969 at the Ninth World Congress. The PRT–*La Verdad* [The Truth], which was headed by Nahuel Moreno, remained as a sympathiser section. In 1970 the ERP (People’s Revolutionary Army) guerrillas were founded. In 1972, the PRT–ERP publicly broke with the Fourth International, calling to form an international with Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party, Mao, the Vietnamese and Enver Oxa, of the Albanian CP.

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

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

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

Fortunately, in 1985, preparing a first public edition of this text, Moreno himself wrote a brief foreword —reproduced on pages 14–23 of this edition— which gives a quick overview of this trajectory, which began in the early 1950s, against opportunistic revisionism in Trotskyism. It is a great help in placing the reader in the controversy of the early 1970s that we are presenting. Although in passing, since it was not the subject of this book, we want to remind the reader that

² See p. 17 of this edition.

this opportunism gave birth to the opposite deviation, ultraleftism. Sectors of Trotskyism rejected Pabloism-Mandelism from sectarian positions, with which he crisis deepened.

The capitulation of Mandelism to “socialism of the Twenty-first century”

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

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

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

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

Since 2011, Chavez first, and Nicolas Maduro later, as well as the Castro brothers and the Cuban Communist Party, have been supporting dictators either defeated or questioned by revolutionary mobilisations in Arab countries, particularly Gaddafi in Libya and al-Assad in Syria. Has Mandelism repudiated these policies? Many simply remain silent. Others demarcate themselves from the support of Chavez and Castro to those dictators, but keeping intact their vindication of them and of “socialism of the twenty-first century”. These are not new attitudes. For example, Mandel never criticised Fidel Castro for advising the Sandinistas “to not make of Nicaragua another Cuba”; he

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

simply ignored it and continued to proclaim his support for an alleged “building of socialism” in Nicaragua under the Sandinista government.

One of the earlier and more severe precedents of supporting a bourgeois government happened in Brazil, since 1 January 2003, when Lula first assumed the presidency. The Mandelists organised within the PT as the Socialist Democracy (DS) current, were coming from many years of capitulation to the reformist leadership of Lula and the growing integration of most of the PT to the bourgeois democratic regime and the state apparatus. The Mandelists gained significant weight and occupied at the time the governorship of Rio Grande do Sul and the mayoralty of Fortaleza as well as numerous mayors and legislative seats. After the victory of Lula, they won the governorship of Para.

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

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

The building of revolutionary parties

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

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

Today, the debate on the need for and the nature of the revolutionary party takes place in the framework of the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships of the communist parties, since 1989, which impacted on Mandel. In his later years, he was increasingly connecting with the tendencies in fashion, booming since then: anti-Party, autonomists, anarchists, and horizontalists. These gave encouragement to his previous, traditional, anti-Leninist conception, contrary to the party centralised and for action, but he kept always calling himself “Leninist”. In a 1989 article he said: “We remain unrepentant Leninist, provided that Leninism does not turn into substitutionism”.⁵ What was he referring to? In his latest, 1994, book, *Trotsky as Alternative*, he criticised the Bolshevik line (i.e. Lenin and Trotsky) for “substitutionism”. And he explained it thus: “The main obstacle to the development of the strategy and tactics for the working class and the mass movements in

4 See p. 149 of this edition.

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

this century [the twentieth] is the theory and practice (the practice came before the theory) of substitutionism; in other words, the replacement of the independent working class as the agent of change and social transformation by some other agency: party, state, government, parliament, and so we on. These are all useful and, at times indispensable instruments of for the of working-class emancipation. But they must remain subordinate to the real movement of self-emancipation.”⁶

In 1992, with Mandel still alive, they officially set aside the “Leninist” conception —kept only in name— and adopted the orientation of “broad anti-capitalist parties”. At the same time, for the international organisation they explicitly renounced Trotskyism. A resolution of the United Secretariat that year said it was not a question of being “the party of the world revolution,” but to be “a common framework of reflection and political and militant coordination of national organisations, of lax operation, democratic and pluralistic”, which had to relativise the pre-existing fight with reformists.⁷

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

Actually Mandel, always visionary, was paving the way to the reformism and anti-partisanship of Sub-commander Marcos and anticipating his slogans. In a visit to Buenos Aires in July 1992, he said: “The left has two challenges. The first is to have the ability to formulate immediate fighting objectives (...). This must be done without power objectives. We’ll see then how the balance of power changes. The second challenge is honesty.”⁸ More prescient yet was the controversial question which 20 years before Moreno was already asking to Mandel: “Can we build socialism without seizing power?”⁹

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

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

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

Take the most important case, its organisation in France, LCR, the oldest and largest of its currents. In 2002 and 2007 it had significant electoral success, and the figure of the young Olivier Besancenot, former postman of 28 years, was growing. In the first round of the presidential elections of 2002, LCR scored eighth place, with 1,200,000 votes, or 4.25 per cent. It was close to the candidate of *Lutte Ouvriere*, Arlette Laguillier, which came fifth with 1,600,000 votes. But with those under the

6 *Trotsky as Alternative*, Verso, 1995, p. 6.

7 Quoted in the supplement of *Correspondencia Internacional* No. 3, July 1993, on the visit of Mandel to Buenos Aires.

8 Interview in *Pagina 12* of Buenos Aires, 2 August 1992.

9 See p. 136 of the present edition

age 25, Besancenot was second with 14 per cent surpassing the social democrat Jospin and the right-winger Le Pen.

In the first round of 2007, the young postman improved his results. He was fifth, with a million and a half votes (4.08 per cent), leaving for the first time far behind *Lutte Ouvrière*, which barely scratched the half a million votes, with 1.33 per cent. As way of example, let us recall the profile presented by Besancenot days before the vote: “I am neither Trotskyist nor Guevarist nor Luxemburgist, I am a revolutionary. And the revolution needs to be reinvented, because no revolutionary experiment has been successful. Many of them ended up as bloody caricatures.”¹⁰

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

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

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

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

In a few years, the “broad anti-capitalist” orientation was making water, leading Mandelism to an electoral regression and, more importantly, in the struggles and organisation of French and immigrant workers. NPA, with its few years of life, is in political and organisational stagnation, as

¹⁰ Interview in *Le Monde*, 6 April 2007.

its own leaders say. In the 2012 Congress they declared some 4,500 members and there were 3,000 participants, i.e., half or two-thirds less than the founders.

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

The debate about imperialist capitalism and the productive forces

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

In the early 1990s, like many other intellectuals, Mandel fuelled from Marxist positions the fire of that famous “globalisation” taken fully by the defeated communist parties. With these definitions they presented as a novelty the fact— almost as old as capitalism, global economic system par excellence— that local economies integrate into the world economy, and this would lead to an alleged development of productive forces. As a sample only, let us recall that in 1989 Mandel spoke of “the fundamental trend in the development of capitalism in the late XX century: the internalisation of the productive forces, which inevitably brings, despite all state and ideological resistance, the internalisation of capital and the class struggle.”¹¹

In his last book, of 1994, *Trotsky as Alternative* already quoted, he forcefully reaffirmed these views, directly criticising Trotsky. He said: “If we look at his theoretical and practical achievements in the light of the actual course of events this century, we would also have to point out to significant theoretical and practical errors of judgement. The most important of these was his continued acceptance of the theory (...) according to which the growth in productive forces was impossible under imperialism.”¹² In short, Mandel died totally convinced, beyond the overwhelming facts against, that under imperialism the productive forces develop.

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

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

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

12 *Trotsky as Alternative*, op. cit., p. 8.

Pitifully, reality confirms our diagnosis. Consider a few exemplary data.¹³ Although significant progress was made in the field of medicine, diseases that had been eradicated long ago are back. Tuberculosis now affects 8.8 million people worldwide. While the five richest people in the world accumulate a whopping USD\$293 billion (figure approximately equivalent to the amount of Argentina's foreign debt, one of the bulkiest in the world), according to the World Bank itself about 1.1 billion people (almost 20 per cent of the total) live on less than USD\$1 a day. Although the development of science and technology reach unsuspected levels, millions of people throughout the world live outside the most basic progress. There are 783 million people (approximately 13 per cent) in the world who lack access to safe drinking water; 1.6 billion people (25 per cent) have no access to electricity, about 3 billion people (nearly half of the population) cook inside their home with wood and coal, a situation that kills two million people annually, which according to WHO is the worldwide leading cause of death of environmental origin.

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

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

It is for the validity of this historical era that the chronic crisis and permanent economic counter-revolution of imperialist capitalism, began in the 1960s and 1970s, have been deepening, with increasingly recurrent acute crises. And this has not been modified by the capitalist restoration in the countries where the bourgeoisie had been expropriated and imperialism expelled. We only add that the global economic crisis started in the United States in 2007 made it once again untenable to maintain that "globalisation" was a new stage of progress of capitalism.¹⁴

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

13 Data in:

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

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

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

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

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

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

A revolutionary program or “eco-socialism”?

Since the end of last century Mandel himself was placing as a central concept ecosocialism.¹⁵ In 2003 his followers adopted a programmatic resolution that, after noting that “the prevailing currents in the workers’ movement, which have tended to ignore or downplay environmental issues”, said in the preface “In self-critical manner, we must say that also the revolutionary currents of the workers’ movement, including ours, have had to challenge old positions before realising the full implications of ecological problems in late capitalism.”¹⁶ In this text it is not clear what “old positions” they had to question. The last chapter is their “action program” which would be achieved only by “broad mobilisations and mass protests”. After listing a number of denunciations, they proposed “alternatives” which would be agricultural exploitation with ecological criteria, rational and planned use of energy, and alternative sources, public transport and railways, waste prevention and recycling, among others. This would be done with a profound agricultural reform in Third World countries, the abolition of the debt of developing countries, alternative energy plans drawn up by the workers’ movement, the ecology movement and progressive scientists, lifting of business secrets, establishing an “ecological counter-power” through social control of production, a production with environmental criteria and to satisfy needs, and finally, “a socialist, free, democratic, pluralistic and self-management-based society, which respects the environment”. Noting the “convergences between ecology and social questions”, the document states that there are “common remedies”: “It is essential to break the stranglehold of ‘economic liberalism’ and put human needs and ecological imperatives at the forefront. This is why there is community of ecological and social struggle and common terrain for convergence”. At the end, it adds that political ecology should not “fail to integrate/bring in a critique of capitalism”. As we will read a little later according to its leader François Sabado, the Mandelists are reflecting “on the need for a new eco-socialist program”. With this background of 2003 which we quoted, it is clear that it would have nothing to do with the Transitional Program, the revolutionary program with which Trotskyism was developed.

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

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

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

Overcoming the crisis of revolutionary leadership is Trotskyism *raison d'être*

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

In 2012, one of his principal leaders, François Sabado, said:

“We had already discussed the historical need of leaving a situation where we considered ourselves ‘the Left Opposition to Stalinism’. Stalinism has sunk. But beware; there are still post-Stalinist parties even if they are considerably weaker. But we cannot leave these conceptions marked by our situation as left opposition. It is difficult for us to confront the whole dimension that involves a reorganisation of the whole workers and social movement. We have difficulties in defining an independent project which at the same time allows us to make politics. It is difficult for us to formulate an long-term independent project. This also leads to a rethink of the program for the Twenty-first century: the Fourth International has begun to reflect on the need for a new eco-socialist program. We are at the beginning and we already see the consequences of the exit of nuclear energy, for example.

“What are the implications of reformulating the transitional program? A return to the discussion on democracy, the relationship between direct democracy and representative democracy, between democracy in factories and communities? And about the strategic axes of a seizure of power by the workers, that is, the outlines of a project of emancipation, with the centre in the self-activity of the workers? The programmatic cohesion that we had in the last century, or maybe the one we thought we had, which was the strength of the Trotskyists, although each current in its own way, can no longer meet the challenges of the Twenty-first century. We are facing a certain loss of programmatic, political, strategic substance. A series of key elements to build a political formation which the acceleration of history today puts us revolutionaries in difficulties. More questions than answers.”¹⁷

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

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

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

¹⁷ “Cuarta Internacional: notas para la preparación de la discusión del CI”, [“Fourth International: notes for the preparation of the discussion of the IC”], 27 January 2012, found in: <http://www.anticapitalistas.org/spip.php?article26339>.

democracy which they sought to build. They gave continuity to the fight of revolutionary Leninists against reformists.

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

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

Preface

Nahuel Moreno

May 1985

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

Our origins

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fourth International in the post-war period

Another issue is how the International was back then.

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

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

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

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

The discussion on the new workers' States

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

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

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

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

I would like to emphasise that we disagree with the method Pablo used to come to the same conclusion as us. We define the method of Paul as empirical —*a priori*. For us, Pablo worked with a

premise, an *a priori*, that any country where most of the bourgeoisie was expropriated was a workers' state. And then, supported by statistics he studied whether most companies had passed to the state. The conclusion was that when most of the companies in a country were nationalised, it is a workers' state. Thus, with empirical evidence based on statistics, Pablo arrived at his conclusions.

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

Admittedly, from a methodological point of view Comrade Mandel was right. He required Pablo to prove through what process the countries of Eastern Europe had become workers' states. If I remember correctly—I do not have my library and my archives at hand since I recently moved countries—Mandel refuted Pablo with the example of the Fascist Republic of Mussolini who, shortly before his end, expropriated the Italian bourgeoisie because it had gone to the allies side. And not just because Mussolini had done that, we would call the fascist state a workers' state.

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

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

Mandel's impressionism

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

For example, after the end of World War II, between 1946 and 1948, Mandel wrote two key characterisations of the European economy in general and in particular Germany. In a resolution adopted by an International Conference of April 1946, Mandel said that "The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by the war, and in particular continental European countries will be characterised by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economy at levels bordering on *stagnation and slump*" ("Resolution adopted by the International Pre-Conference," April 1946, Fourth International, Vol. 7 No. 6, June 1946, pp.169-183, emphasis by NM). Two years later, in his work *The Ruin of the German Economy*, Mandel stated that the policy of US imperialism and its allies was "the transformation of the German people in a 'people of shepherds' and the eventual elimination of its industrial potential" (*Quatrième Internationale*, January 1948, p. 31). Later in the same paper, he said that "the German economy will not revive significantly, despite the injection of oxygen US imperialism gives it" (*ibid.*, p. 39).

Then came 20 years of European economic boom and the so-called "German miracle"...

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

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

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

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

Pabloism

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

Pablo and Mandel, following bourgeois journalism, drew a conclusion that was fatal to the history of the Fourth International: in the third world war, which was inevitable and would soon begin, communist parties and leftist currents of nationalist bourgeois movements or social democratic parties were to launch guerrillas, revolutionary struggles that would lead them to take power. Mainly this was to happen with the communist parties that, in their eagerness to defend Russia, would come to guerrilla warfare or violent, physical, revolutionary methods to oppose imperialism.

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

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

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

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

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

The betrayal of the Bolivian revolution of 1952

The most pernicious consequence of this surrender to the counter-revolutionary leaderships took place in Bolivia. In 1949 there were elections in which triumphed Víctor Paz Estenssoro, of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Paz Estenssoro rules currently in Bolivia as a

direct agent of the United States but back then he appeared to the masses as an anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist leader. So the military refused to hand over the power. The response of the masses took place in 1952: it was a popular insurrection led by the working class in the city of La Paz. The insurrection destroyed the army, all existing weapons went over to the workers' and peasants' militias and although Paz Estenssoro assumed the presidency, the masses had his government in check. It was time to fight with all possible strength to take the power in the hands of the workers' and peasants' militias led by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* [Bolivian Workers' Centre, COB). Bolivian Trotskyism, which had become a mass movement, could decisively influence in this regard. Pablo and Mandel instead concluded that we had to critically support the government of Paz Estenssoro.

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

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

This was one of the most spectacular betrayals of the century. It turned out tragic for the mass movement that, because of the lack of a revolutionary orientation, was gradually demobilised and disarmed. And, finally, it suffered a serious defeat.

Also as a consequence of Pablo and Mandel's policy in the face of the 1952 revolution, a deterioration of Bolivian Trotskyism began, which was divided, transforming itself, from a massive current, into a small group of sects.

The International Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

The reunification of 1963

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

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

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

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

At the time of reunification, the International Secretariat was headed by Mandel. By then Pablo had been separated for moral and organisational reasons. Mandel, however, followed a methodology very similar to Pablo's. Not for nothing had they been together for so long —more than a decade— and written documents in common.

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

The guerrilla deviation of Mandel

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

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

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

it would lead all Guevarists guerrillas to failure and the International would lose many valuable comrades.

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

The capitulation to the ultra-leftist youth vanguard

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

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

A European rise triggered by the French May and the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia had begun in 1968. A very large vanguard over which Maoism and ultraleft currents had strong influence appeared then. Mandelism then stated that “The central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967–1968 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build stronger revolutionary organisations than in the preceding stage” (“The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, E. Mandel, *International Internal Discussion Bulletin SWP* Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972, p. 13.). The United Secretariat majority asserted the priority goal aim was to achieve “the transformation of Trotskyist organisations from propaganda groups into organisations already capable of those *political initiatives of a mass vanguard level* which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself” (Ernest Germain, “In Defence of Leninism: in defence of the Fourth International”, *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X No.4, April 1973, p. 42. Our emphasis).

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

This polemical against Mandel essentially revolves around his guerrilla deviation and subsequent vanguardist surrender to Maoism and the ultraleft in general, since they resulted from these lines which were to be evaluated in the Tenth World Congress. After the congress, in which Mandel's position was again consecrated, problems continued aggravating.

Mandel's capitulation to the European youth vanguard had serious consequences for the Portuguese revolution of 1974–1975. Activism and ultra-leftist and Maoist tendencies supported the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), a pro-imperialist petty-bourgeois current, composed of officers who had overthrown the dictatorship of Salazar and called themselves of the left. The MFA was actually the pillar supporting the bourgeois state against the revolution.

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

Our break with the American SWP

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

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

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

The still more serious differences over Angola finalised the split.

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

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

A majority of organisations and militants then withdrew from the FLT. Important parties in Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Italy and Spain, among others, besides the Argentine organisation formed then a tendency that in a few years would break with the United Secretariat and with the added contribution of leaders and organisations from other currents would become what is now our international organisation.

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

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

Mandel capitulates to euro-communism

In the late 1970s, some European communist parties, mainly Italian and Spanish —captained by Santiago Carrillo¹— began to move away from Moscow. This phenomenon, which was called “euro-communism”, also impressed Mandel, who attributed a progressive or a possible progressive character.

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

¹ **Santiago Carrillo** (1915–2012) was General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) from 1960 to 1982. [Editor]

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

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

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

Thus, he argued the dictatorship of the proletariat would be governed by the “programmatic and principled position” to give “unfettered political freedom” to all the political currents, including the counter-revolutionary (“The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialist Democracy”, 12th World Congress of the USFI, 1985, <http://www.ernestmandel.org/en/works/txt/1985/1985.htm>). And, if these currents rise up in arms against the workers’ government, the policy proposed by Mandel was to individually subject to trial those responsible with all the formalities and guarantees of an ultra-liberal penal code.

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

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

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

The Nicaraguan revolution splits the United Secretariat

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

The Simon Bolivar Brigade covered itself in glory in July 1979, releasing Bluefields, Nicaragua’s most important port on the Atlantic. It was recognised by the Sandinista leadership itself and the majority of the brigade remained to live in Nicaragua. Already with the FSLN in power the brigade

encouraged and participated in the founding of dozens of unions. But this process threatened to create a mobilisation of the working class beyond the control of the Sandinista movement. Because of this the FSLN leadership arrested the brigade and expelled them from the country. Our comrades were handed over to the Panamanian police who tortured them before letting them go.

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

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

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

We encountered a serious problem to follow this advice in Argentina: the FSLN has supported the government of Alfonsín.² In 1984 there was a referendum on a border agreement with Chile. The Sandinistas sent a representative to the main political event of the ruling party, the Radical Civic Union, which is very similar to the party of Thatcher or Reagan. The event, held to defend the government's policy of a pact compromise with Pinochet, legitimising him, took place in a football stadium. And on the stage, occupying a place of honour, was Ernesto Cardenal, Minister of Culture of the Sandinista government. If we followed the advice of Mandel, we would have to be with the FSLN in the box of the Radical Party, supporting the politics of hunger of the Argentine government.

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

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

² Raul Alfonsín (1927–2009) was one of the main leaders of the bourgeois Radical Civic Union (UCR). He was the president of Argentina between 1983 and 1989, following the military dictatorship.

Introduction

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

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

An objective criterion to polemicise

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

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

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

Comrade Germain argues as a lawyer

What, then, are the issues that our comrades should discuss? Perhaps, whether Yankee imperialism —or a sector of it— was neutral or supported Fidel Castro in 1959 (14 years ago)? Whether or not Moreno advised guerrilla warfare for Bolivia under President Barrientos (2 years before the last World Congress)? Whether Trotsky put forward the fundamental line of building a revolutionary army for China between 1925 and 1927 (47 years ago)? Whether the line of the

majority or the minority is confirmed in light of Hugo Blanco's experience of in Peru (11 years ago)? Whether Camejo defined well or poorly the characteristics of the Bolshevik party? Whether we interpret correctly what is a demand or a program? Whether we should take into account the immediate consciousness of the masses as the main factor in the development of our demands and programs? Whether we are for national self-determination and against all nationalism?

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

Are these the key issues we need to discuss?

Categorically not!! These issues relate, only indirectly, to the main events that took place in the class struggle since the last world congress and to the policy we adopted to confront them. In contrast, our document —*Argentina and Bolivia: the balance sheet*¹— does respond to this way of approaching the polemic. We start from specific facts of class struggle and examine the policy of our International and its sections concerning them. We do not fly off on a tangent.

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

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

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

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

What should we discuss?

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

For example, why doesn't *Cahiers Rouges* publishes a book with all the articles where POR(C) —and its most staunch supporters in the majority— denounced and warned against the "fascist" coup

¹ Available for downloading from www.nahuelmoreno.org.

as the greatest danger to the Bolivian workers' movement? Why is Comrade Germain's document so sparing of quotes about the policies of POR(C) against the coups? Why does he only refer in passing to the issue of *Combate* (new series, No. 5) dated the first fortnight of May 1971, just months before the third coup? Why does he devote only a few lines to the coups in contrast to the dozens and dozens he used for Camejo's interpretation of the Cuban revolution, for Moreno's advice to POR(C) under Barrientos or to attack the Canadian section? Doesn't Comrade Germain think that if he were to prove POR(C) had a correct line against the coups he would have an almost categorical proof that the Ninth Congress resolutions were useful and had prepared us to respond to the reality of the class struggle in Bolivia and Latin America?

The obligation (that the majority does not fulfil) to focus more attention on the line of the majority and the Bolivian section against the "fascist" coups is compounded by another fact. Precisely Germain and the majority of the IEC are those who believe the policy of POR(C) is an example of the correctness of the Ninth Congress resolutions and the entire orientation of the majority. We could almost say that the majority—or at least Comrade Germain—considers the Bolivian section a true model, which only admits organisational criticisms. Isn't true that large amounts of money were collected, after the Ninth Congress, for the Bolivian section? Don't the Europeans militants, who collected it with so much sacrifice, deserve to receive comprehensive balance sheet on the results of this "revolutionary investment"?

The youth of our movement, if they really have a critical mind and the revolutionary passion that should characterise them, are obligated to demand from Comrade Germain, and his defended, the sister section of Bolivia, a comprehensive demonstration that they not have fallen short of circumstances. That is, the evidence that they had foreseen and fought—with correct policies—the "fascists" coups. And the face of the attempts of all the "Germaines" to divert the discussion to save face as leaders, our youth must categorically state: We will include all the topics you want (Camejo's interpretation of the Cuban revolution, Moreno advisor of Gonzalez,² Trotsky and China in 1925, etc.) in the last points on the agenda of the next world congress! We will not have confusion or diversions: we are discussing the political line we had from the last world congress until now. Therefore, the first items on the agenda must be the major events of the class struggle that took place at that time. Among the major issues, the Bolivian "fascists" coups, the class struggle in Argentina and Europe (particularly in France) are of particular importance. These must be, and in that order, the first points of the congress. These are the topics of our document.

² It refers to **Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso** (1922-2010), Secretary General of POR (*Combate*), the official section of the United Secretariat.

CHAPTER I

Bolivia, the key to the current discussion

The majority's predictions

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

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

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

“Che” Maitan

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Frank-Germain Laboratory

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

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

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

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

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

The “contributions” of the United Secretariat

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

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

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

2 Ibid, p. 706.

3 Frank, Pierre; “Letter to the 1971 SWP Convention”, in *Internal Information Bulletin*, Vol 9, No 6, November 1971, p.16.

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

5 “Declaration of the Fourth International: On the reactionary *coup d’état* in Bolivia”, in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 9, No 32, 20 September 1971, p. 798.

A coherent development team: none was right

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

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

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

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

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

Ultraleftism and Trotskyism in the face of the fascist danger

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stalinist “third-period” ultraleftism

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

It was in the fight to the death against the “third-period” ultraleftism that Trotskyism was born as a well-organised international tendency. The break with the Third International and the plan that a new revolutionary international organisation was needed were a consequence of this catastrophic Stalinist policy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trotsky insisted until he was blue in the face that the workers' united front policy is based on proposing tasks understood by all the workers, mainly by the reformist workers. He also insisted that the proposal of the united front should be made to the reformist organisations, starting with their leaderships. The reasons Trotsky gave were conclusive: "If there are still broad sectors of workers who remain within the reformist organisations, it is because they believe in them and their leaders."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Trotsky, this was not just a "mistake". It was suicide and an unspeakable betrayal because the reactionary triumph would set back the revolutionary process to an incalculable degree.

The Guevarist ultraleftism

As a conception, Guevarist guerrillism repeats and expands on these tragic ultra-leftist errors just summarised. Consider the similarities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are all Governments the same?

We have seen that one of the errors of ultraleftism that Trotsky used to criticise was putting an equal sign between all bourgeois governments. For the ultra-leftist, all governments are "fascists" for the sole reason of being bourgeois.

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

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

Barrientos – Ovando – Torres

That the Barrientos regime was reactionary and an agent of imperialism cannot be doubted. But after Barrientos came Ovando and the regime changed. However, for POR(C), the Ovando government was the government "of moribund imperialist capitalism, which has assumed a 'revolutionary' mask to save itself".⁷

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

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

"The same 'revolutionary nationalist' tendency that surfaced with Ovando is being continued by the Torres regime." (Torres' concepts place him) "within the context of 'desarrollismo' ['developmentalism'] which imperialism is advancing for semi-colonial countries... The opportunists confuse this new role of the military chiefs, which falls in the sphere of modern imperialist tactics,

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

with the revolutionary process, which is a very different thing. (...) As a result, the Military High Command advised by the Yankee embassy, concluded that it had to replace the Ovando government.”⁸

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

“During the military and political crisis of October, the masses didn’t win. Instead, the victory of General Torres was a defeat of the revolutionary masses and a victory of the army as a bourgeois party.”⁹

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

Trotsky vs. the POR(C)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 *Combate*, No. 3.

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

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

12 Trotsky, Leon: “Ultralefts in general and incurable ultralefts in particular”, 28 September 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931–39)*, op. cit., p. 296.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our section and the coups

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

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

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

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

16 Gonzalez, Hugo: “An Interview”, op. cit., p. 544.

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

The first coup

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When a Trotskyist organisation detects the danger of a “fascist” coup, it knows that in such country a stage of the class struggle opens in which the first priority is the fight against the coup, through the strategy of the united front with the reformist organisations. To propose that the miners arm themselves, not to oppose the coup, but to “revive the armed miners’ pickets and courageously proclaim militant solidarity with those who are struggling (...) today by means of guerrilla warfare...”²¹ is and was a political crime. To tell the miners to arm themselves to engage in guerrilla against Ovando, and not to confront the coup that Miranda was preparing against Ovando, meant to break from the onset with every anti-coup worker who wasn’t in favour of the guerrillas. It meant to

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

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

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

20 “Flyer to the Miners’ Congress”, *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 8, No 18, 11 May 1970, p. 433.

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

call the workers' movement to split between pro-guerrillas and anti-guerrillas, when there was a common task for all of them: to combat the Mirandist right-wing (even in an armed form). The need for this task was understood by all Bolivian workers; the need for guerrilla warfare by almost no one. And this was demonstrated in the facts: the working class mobilised against the Mirandist coup and caused the crisis of bourgeois institutions and the army for two or three days, but it didn't respond in any way to the calls of the POR(C).

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

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

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

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

From the POR(C) documents one can deduce that not having reached the workers' and peasants' government was the masses fault, and that having imposed Torres was a defeat of the mass movement and not of the “fascist” reaction. And so they said it: “In the military and political crisis of October, the masses were not victorious. The victory of General Torres is rather a defeat of the revolutionary masses and a triumph for the army as a party of the bourgeoisie. The October crisis demonstrates the limitations of the direct action of the masses.”²²

22 *Combate*, 1 November 1970.

The second coup

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

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

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

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

"c) Developing a body representative of the masses, where they can express all their revolutionary force, their initiatives, concerns and transformative will."²³

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

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

This program earned the following criticism from Trotsky: "The slogans enumerated are incontestable, even though they are presented without any internal cohesion and without that sequence which should flow from the logic of the development of the masses..." "By speaking only of the seven-hour working day, of factory committees and the arming of the workers, by ignoring "politics", by not having a single word to say in all its articles about the elections to the Cortes, *Pravda* goes all the way to meet anarcho-syndicalism..." "To oppose the slogan of the arming of the workers to the realistic political processes which grip the masses at their vitals means to isolate oneself from the masses and the masses — from arms."²⁴

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

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

²³ *Combate*, No. 3, first fortnight November 1970.

²⁴ Trotsky, Leon, "The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening it", 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p.114, 117 and 117.

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

Then the third coup came

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

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

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

“1. To intensify political work aimed at the masses in order to win them away from the reformist influence and promote the emergence of truly revolutionary leaderships.”²⁵

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

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

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

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

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

In the part of the article at our disposal that falls under this headline, and which is where Comrade Germain gets his quote, a *coup d’état* is predicted. This is not of great merit because for

²⁵ Report of the expanded CC of the POR(C) of April 1971, in “Bolivian Trotskyists Hold Plenum, *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 9, No 25, 18 June 1971, p. 599.

quite a while the coup preparations were public and notorious. But perhaps did they call to fight it as the most immediate and fundamental danger to the Bolivian workers? Again, they did not. There is a subtitle that is another symbol: “Neither with fascism nor with reformism: with the socialist revolution.”

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

The second article on the front page we have in full. In it, we can verify the actual policy of the POR(C). Its title says that the People’s Assembly must be born from the rank and file and calls for the democratic election of delegates to it. Nothing is said about the coup, or the need for the People’s Assembly to confront it by mobilising and arming the masses, or on the urgent need to build a united front against it. It ends with three slogans which, we assume, would be the main ones of the POR(C) at the time: “Reformism, No; Socialism, Yes. Bourgeois army, No; People’s Revolutionary Army, Yes. Bourgeois parliament, No; People’s Assembly, Yes”.

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

The last issue of the POR(C)’s paper we know was published two months before the coup. It has number 6 on it and corresponds to the first fortnight of June. It predicted that “the days of Torres are numbered”.

It also mentions the fascist counter-revolution. It mentions the “responsibility of the left” but there is no call on the leftist parties to unite against the coup and, what is more serious, the People’s Assembly isn’t even mentioned. The position of the POR(C) is summarised as follows:

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

“We have to strengthen the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, an indispensable tool for welding revolutionary currents in a solid front. Forward with the occupations and workers armament! Death to imperialism!”²⁶

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

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

The actual policy of the POR(C)

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

²⁶ *Combate*, No 6, June 1971.

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

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

Comrade Germain asserts the opposite. He poses a question: "Did the Bolivian section fail to make the distinction between Kornilov and Kerensky, between Torres and Barrientos or Banzer?" And he replies the implication "that the POR (*Combate*) followed essentially the same line under Barrientos and Banzer as under Torres" is "completely unfounded."²⁷

Both in the question and his reply, Comrade Germain "forgets" the Ovando government, during which the first "fascist" coup, by General Miranda, took place. For Marxists, memory is political. It is no coincidence that Comrade Germain forgets the Ovando government and the coup by Miranda. Miranda's coup was extraordinarily important. As reported by Comrade Hugo Gonzalez, this caused nothing less than a "... conflict among the military chiefs (that) paralysed the repressive force of the army; for two days there was a power vacuum; the presidential palace and government ministries were abandoned. At that moment, we had to act with the masses in the streets, to defeat the Mirandists in action and struggle."²⁸

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

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

This is, moreover, what the POR(C) comrades claim. Comrade Hugo Gonzalez says: "Under the Ovando government the party operated in completely clandestine conditions and was totally absorbed in armed work."²⁹

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

What armed struggle? Rural guerrilla, as clearly expressed in the own publications of the POR(C). Let's look.

27 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence de la Fourth International", op. cit., p. 12.

28 "La universidad y el Comando Político de la COB" [University and the Political Command of the COB] by POR(C), *Revista de America*, No 6/7, October 1971, p. 50.

29 Gonzalez, Hugo: "An interview", op. cit, p. 545.

December 1969, Comrade Vallejos, editor of *Combate*, affirms: “In this context [the new upsurge], the guerrillas were nothing more than the continuation of the revolutionary mass movement, whose development was cut off and truncated by the massacres and repression by military circles.” “While in Che’s time, in 1967, the guerrilla movement had broad popular support, its reappearance in 1969, with Inti Peredo, occurred in a much riper situation...”³⁰

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

“This popular attitude of accepting and supporting the guerrilla route is what sustains and encourages the guerrillas. (...) Our position is clear. Bolivia’s backwardness and underdevelopment will not be solved with partial measures of a bourgeois program, but by the socialist revolution led by a National and Social Liberation Army, arising from the guerrillas... (...) Guerrilla warfare is still valid. Never mind the beatings and losses of men and materiel. All that, however painful, can be replaced. What is important is to note that there is no other path for the truly revolutionary.”³¹

April 1970: in its message to the Miners’ Congress (the first legal congress in years!), the POR(C) called the miners to follow the example of Che, support Inti and “... to rearm the miners’ unions and create a large armed force of miners who should be part of the great Army of National and Social Liberation, whose construction began in Ñancahuazu. This is the road to victory.”³²

May 1970: “On the other hand, to the revolutionaries of Latin America, the revolutionary methods employed [referring to the kidnapping of Von Lollevén, the German ambassador in Brazil] appear as the most effective ones for saving from jail and torture the anti-imperialist patriots who fall into the clutches of the sinister CIA.” “In our country, since Ñancahuazú, a concrete and real strategy for power has shown its worth, arising from our politico-social situation.”³³

July 1970: “Therefore, far from being contrived, guerrilla warfare is the natural solution to the current situation (...) the political line for the masses, after a certain point in time, becomes an armed struggle; guerrilla warfare, therefore, is the continuation of the mass movement by other means. (...) Therefore, for socialism to take power it is vital to building a real army of the people arising from its vitals, which rises again and again against the bourgeois professional army. In Bolivia, such people’s liberation army began its march from Ñancahuazú with Commander Che Guevara. (...) The thesis of the Fourth COB Congress, and also of the previous Miners’ Congress of Siglo XX, ignored one of the most important acquisitions of Bolivian masses, which is the experience with revolutionary war and the guerrilla struggle. A document that disregards the guerrilla struggle of Che Guevara, of Inti and what now the ELN and the POR propose to open, is a document that does not take into account the concrete reality of the country. The masses in their confrontation with the military dictatorship came to feel the need for new methods of struggle, which Che’s guerrilla knew how to give expression to; hence the masses gave him their sympathy and support, which the guerrillas themselves through a series of circumstances failed to take advantage of. But regardless of this, the masses saw, and see now, that the revolutionary war is the path to defeat an army that massacred them and deprived them of freedom.”³⁴

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

30 Vallejos, Mauro, “The replacement of Siles”, *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 7, No. 41, 8 December 1969, pp. 1100–1001.

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

32 “Flyer to the Miners’ Congress”, op. cit., p. 434.

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

34 *Combate*, No 2, 15 July 1970.

themselves through their unions (!) to form part of the rural guerrilla group (“the army that began to be built in Ñancahuazú”).

Despite the POR(C), the masses mobilise

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

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

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

October 1970: “a defeat of the masses”?

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

“There are those who still argue that, as against the armed struggle, it was the direct action of the masses that triumphed, and they call the government of Torres a victory. (...) The October crisis demonstrates the limitations of the direct action of the masses. A general strike can only lead to workers’ power if simultaneously there is a Revolutionary Army, which has emerged precisely through armed struggle. When this workers’ army doesn’t exist, the mobilisation of the masses only serves to elevate a section of the bourgeoisie if it doesn’t end in a bloody massacre.”³⁵

This is how the POR(C) faced the new stage, the period of the Torres government. And it continued, despite Comrade Germain’s protests, within its constant policy of “armament in itself”, again calling for the rural guerrillas: “Despite the defeats, the guerrilla remains the path of national and social liberation. (...) As in October 1967, the theorists about the failure of the guerrillas as a method for taking power have reappeared. (...) Regardless of the contingencies of each guerrilla front, above the personal qualities of the combatants, despite the loss of valuable lives, guerrilla warfare remains the path to take power.”³⁶

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

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

The Kerenskyism of the Torres regime, each day more pronounced, its constant concessions to the mass movement, the emergence of embryonic organisms of dual power, the almost absolute legality for the left-wing and revolutionary currents, left the guerrilla increasingly isolated, condemned to stew in its own juices. This caused a formal readjustment in the POR(C) policy of “armament in

35 *Combate*, No 3, 1 November 1970.

36 *Ibid.*

itself". The sacrosanct guerrilla war was disappearing from the propaganda of our Bolivian section and it was replaced, as stated before, with general calls to the arming of the masses. These calls came to take the apparently correct form of armed union detachments. But these changes, we insist, were formal: the new way of considering the problem of armament remained in the ultraleft line of "armament in itself". Never, ever was the armament raised as a need tied to the actual and concrete class struggle!

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

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

"2. The national situation. The characterisation of the Torres government, the position of the army and its interlocking with the civilian legal structure. The mass movement and its limitations. The left and the deviations to be combatted. The permanent danger of *coup d'état*. Perspectives.

"3. Guerrilla warfare. Balance sheet and experiences. The POR(C)'s conception of the revolutionary war."³⁷

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

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

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

"5) Mass work and the party's military activity must proceed in a balanced way under one centralised leadership, the leadership of the party."³⁸

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

A truly Trotskyist agenda and recommendations

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

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

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

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

³⁷ "Bolivian Trotskyists hold Plenum", *Intercontinental Press*, Vol. 9, No. 25, 28 June 1971, p.599.

³⁸ Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

Armament "in itself" a few days before Banzer's coup

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

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

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

"Before jubilation and loud applause, the Federation of Flour Workers marched with a large banner saying, 'We need a People's Revolutionary Army' and behind it marched selected groups of workers in guerrilla uniforms, with the beret and star of Che, carrying some weapons. This is the workers' army created to bring socialism through the only realistic path: the Revolutionary War.

"The masses are committed to the line of armed struggle, the Revolutionary War, and in their midst, the embryonic elements of the future People's Revolutionary Army begin to arise."³⁹

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

"Press on with the formation of popular political-military instruments. We have to bring into being in every union, in the universities, in the countryside, armed detachments as embryos of the future revolutionary military force essential to overcome the fascist military and lackeys of imperialism. In the approaching clash of classes, it will be the arms what will decide the fate of the revolution."⁴⁰

What is the purpose of these "popular political-military instruments", of this "future revolutionary force" into which the armed detachments of the trade unions, the universities and the countryside should be incorporated? For the first and only time, it would seem the POR(C) appropriately posed the question of armament — to defeat the "fascist military and lackeys of

³⁹ *Combate*, No 5, 1 May 1971, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

imperialism". But, alas, this is just a slip, a bright spot amid an article where armament is proposed, repeatedly, to "make revolutionary war" for "socialism". Which of the two reasons did the POR(C) give to the workers when it called on them to arm themselves? This for the POR(C) is of no importance; either of the two serves its purpose. It's the same to call to arms for socialism as against Banzer; it's the same to call to arms for the revolutionary war as for the defeat of the fascist military. The point is to call to arms. And this political line, a clear example of "armament in itself", is what the POR(C) continued to push in its last paper before the "fascist" coup.

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

How to knead your failure

We have seen how never —not even in the face of the fascist coups— did the POR(C) centre its policy on the united front against the coups. Under all governments and against all the coups, the POR(C) had one and only one policy: "building the Revolutionary Army".

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

"An insurrectionary mobilisation of masses, however extensive it may be, will eventually be defeated by modern armies functioning as parties of the bourgeoisie. Example: Mexico City, Cordoba ... The mass uprisings in Mexico City and Cordoba, and the COB in Bolivia, were defeated because they were missing two key elements... b) an armed instrument or military organisation, prepared, trained, capable to take on the capitalist army at the level of armed force."⁴¹

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

"If the revolutionary army is lacking, it cannot be constructed solely by the heroism of the masses."⁴²

This tremendous pessimism of the POR(C) comrades about the potential of the mass movement explains their perpetual line of "building the revolutionary army". The impotence of the masses is constant, eternal, permanent, under any type of government, whether Barrientos, Ovando, Torres or Banzer. All distinctions get blurred: the differences between governments, the progress and setbacks of the workers' movement, the hot political issues the workers face and suffer —for example, the threat of "fascists" coups. And, after all, why bother to specify stages, make characterisations, search for slogans, etc., if everything is simplified with the panacea: the revolutionary army? Thus it is clarified the proposal of the POR(C) to the Miners' Congress calling it to take arms to "express solidarity with the guerrillas". It also clarifies the POR(C) position at the beginning of the Torres

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

42 Gonzalez M, Hugo: "Our role in battling against the military coup", *Intercontinental Press*, No 38, Vol 9, 1 November 1971, p. 936.

government of creating a “[Workers’ and People’s] Revolutionary Army, the essential instrument for taking power.”⁴³

Who must seize power?

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

“Only those who have arms and are determined to take it relying on their strength can take power.”⁴⁴

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

The organisational conclusion of the POR(C)’s policy has two sides. First, the invention by the party of artificial organisms (once again, something Trotsky’s criticised the ultra-leftists for), in this case, the “Revolutionary Army”. And second, the disregard for the natural bodies of the mass movement, in this case for the unions and the People’s Assembly. We will stop on this second issue in the next chapter. Let us now turn to the artificial body invented by the POR(C), the famous “revolutionary army”.

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

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

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

“The political party may have only a few days to mobilise for military activity. Not only the Party but also its reserves, organisations of sympathisers and even the unorganised revolutionary masses, may have to prepare for action in this short time. In such a situation the formation of a regular Red Army is out of the question. Victory must be won without the assistance of a previously organised army; victory must be won by the masses alone, under the Party’s leadership.”⁴⁵

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

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

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

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

Trotsky and the armed struggle

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

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

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

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

"When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, else leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International."⁴⁶

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

Trotsky asserted that:

"It is neither locks nor walls which separate the proletariat from arms, but the habit of submission, the hypnosis of class domination and nationalist poison. It is sufficient to destroy these psychological walls — and no wall of stone will stand in the way. It is enough that the proletariat should want arms — and it will find them. The task of the revolutionary party is to awaken this desire and to facilitate its realisation."⁴⁷

The work within the army

This propaganda task —"awaken this desire and to facilitate its realisation"— is complemented by another: to destroy the bourgeois army from within. The opportunists and their twins of the "ultraleft" consider this last task is impossible because against modern armies nothing can be done.

⁴⁶ Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 86.

⁴⁷ Trotsky, Leon: "Whither France?", 9 November 1934, in *Whither France?*, New Park, London, 1974, p. 27.

Trotsky said: “We reply: behind each machine, there are men who are linked not only by technical but by social and political bonds. When historic development poses before society an unpostponable revolutionary task as a question of life or death, when there exists a progressive class with whose victory is joined the salvation of society — then the development itself of the political struggle opens up before the revolutionary class the most varied possibilities — as much to paralyse the military force of the enemy as to win it over, at least partially.”⁴⁸

When we accuse the POR(C) and the PRT(C) of not working on the bourgeois armies, Comrade Germain elegantly sidesteps the issue, saying that the first thing to be done is the workers’ militias. Nobody argues this, but we point out the difference between “workers militias” and the phantom “revolutionary armies”. But this does not invalidate the fact that the POR(C) and the PRT(C) have not worked on the bourgeois armies. They have applied a typical anarchist, guerrillaist policy; a position incompatible with permanence in our ranks. Its best exponent is, once again, the POR(C): “In this new army there can be a place for the officers and military men of the bourgeois armed forces who break with them, and who actually want to fight for the liberation of Bolivia.”⁴⁹

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

The POR(C) comrades never understood that artificial organisms for armed struggle (or for any other type of struggle) cannot be built. They never understood that the armed struggle (like any other kind of struggle) must be posed from the immediate and concrete needs of the mass movement, provoked by the immediate situation of the class struggle. And thus the POR(C) arrived at the coup without understanding that:

“*The armed organisation of the proletariat, which at the present moment coincides almost entirely with the defence against Fascism, is a new branch of the class struggle.*”⁵⁰

Six years of guerrilla activity versus a day of the masses

And what happened to the famous phantom “Revolutionary Army” invented by the POR(C) when the coup came? Let’s see what Comrade Gonzalez himself says:

“The struggle was fierce and heroic: more than 5,000 fighters —but 90 per cent of them unarmed. At the last moment, an assault on an army depot captured 1,300 old Mauser rifles from the Chaco War...”⁵¹

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

Something is wrong here. Comrade Germain asserts that the political line of POR(C) was a model, and the IEC’s resolution on Bolivia assures us that only organisational shortcomings existed. We ask: do the Majority comrades consider satisfactory the results of this “correct” political line?

48 Ibid. p. 28.

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

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

51 Gonzalez M, Hugo: “Our role in battling against the military coup”, op. cit., p. 936.

Don't they think it's a bit paltry, after so many years of applying a "correct" line, to get so few weapons?

The majority blames the masses

Instead of assuming responsibility, the majority of the United Secretariat —just as Trotsky said ultra-leftists would do— bailout by placing the blame on the lack of understanding of the mass movement or the reformists. The majority does not say a word about the fact that, since 1965, our section had been allegedly preparing itself for armed struggle and, therefore, it has responsibility for its outcome: "The Bolivian experience bears out the illusory character of all conceptions that hope a vigorous mass upsurge might, solely through its breadth and strength, hold in check the appetite of the 'gorillas' in Latin America. If such a mass movement doesn't understand the imperious need to prepare itself for armed confrontation with the bourgeoisie, for arming itself and disarming the reaction, it will be driven back and wiped out in a moment by violence, as happened once again to the mass movement in Bolivia."⁵²

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

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

Artificial organisms versus organisms of the masses

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

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

⁵² "On the reactionary *coup d'état* in Bolivia", Statement of the United Secretariat, in *Intercontinental Press*, No 32, 20 September 1971, p. 799.

The POR(C) and the People's Assembly

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

The POR(C) did not give any importance to the People's Assembly as an organism of the masses. It continued showing its ultraleftism like this: The People's Assembly "should be a body that would discuss national problems and solutions for them would but leave the power in the hands of the mass organisations (unions and popular militias or people's army). (...) In the present situation (...) its perspectives are extremely limited. An acute political crisis might revive it, but that is not certain. The POR comrades in the People's Assembly (...) hold no illusions. They are using the People's Assembly as a forum, as a platform. That is all."⁵³

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

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

"The People's Assembly can have no role except as an organ of dual power. (...) [It] must become a workers' and peasants' government and we must fight both inside it and outside it to achieve this."⁵⁴

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

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

"In this process, a political-military instrument will grow up alongside the Assembly which can serve as the power it lacks to enforce its decisions."⁵⁵

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

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

⁵³ Gonzalez M., Hugo: "An interview", ob. cit., p. 545.

⁵⁴ "Put the People's Assembly on the Road to Socialism!", *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 9, No 24, 21 June 1971, p. 575.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

What we said

During the same period, we proposed a political line which we reproduce textually, as it needs nothing to be added.

“The People’s Assembly is a victory, a fruit of the rise of the masses. That it lacks a revolutionary leadership should not confuse us. Apart from the exciting perspectives, we can only say that it is an embryo of dual power. Nothing more. If the Bolivian masses and vanguard take this body as their own, if they set it up at regional and area levels and through it they centralise and develop their struggles, demanding all the national and regional political power for the assemblies, if they call on the soldiers, NCOs and revolutionary officers to join it, if they form workers’ and people’s militias, we will face to face with Bolivian Soviet power.”⁵⁶

This is the approach to the People’s Assembly the POR(C) neither had nor thought of having. It should have endeavoured to do all this in the peasant and miners neighbourhoods and villages where it had influence. One truly democratic People’s Assembly anywhere in Bolivia, united and ready for action with armed pickets subordinate to it and the workers and peasant unions, would have been an explosive example for the rest of Bolivia. The POR(C), despite its limited influence, could and should have done this. And if it could not, it should have attempted. The correct policy to address this task was to have proposed the need to take up arms to fight against the coup, systematically denouncing the inability of the Torres government to do so. We should and could have been the champions in the development of the People’s Assembly as an organ of the united workers’ front. But the POR(C) never forgot its famous “Revolutionary Army”. The failed attempt to build an imaginary organism prevented it from developing a proper policy in the most advanced body of the Bolivian masses, the People’s Assembly. And the good memory of the POR(C) concerning its “army” (which is nothing more than a good memory for the resolutions of the Ninth Congress) produced complete amnesia about one of the key definitions of Marxism “with the masses everything, without the masses nothing”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁶ *La Verdad*, 30 May 1971.

of Bolivia, is armed struggle and guerrilla warfare. But the fighting vanguard, with weapons in hand, in the mountains, in the cities and the mines, will overcome this vacuum of the workers' program."⁵⁷

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

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

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

"We wasted time waiting for the COB and the People's Assembly leaderships to decide to fight, knowing as we knew that they could not overcome their vacillations and misconceptions."⁵⁸

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

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

For the Miners' Congress of April 1970, the POR(C) published a flyer with an entire political program, where it did not criticise Lechin nor did it propose a revolutionary, not even class-struggle, leadership alternative against the reformist and bureaucratic leadership.

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

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

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

57 *Combate*, No. 2, 15 July 1970.

58 *Combate*, No. 9, January 1972.

Comrade Germain falsifies the POR(C)'s policy

So far we have mostly not polemised with Comrade Germain. We did not for two reasons: firstly because the policy which was implemented in Bolivia is the POR(C)'s, and we must refer to it; secondly, because Comrade Germain repeatedly falsifies the POR(C)'s policy to readjust himself in the international discussion after his obvious failure. Let's see some of these falsifications.

Comrade Germain falsifies the POR(C)'s policy under Ovando when he says: "The Bolivian section of the Fourth International, which had begun to prepare its cadres for armed struggle during the period of the Barrientos dictatorship, and had centred its orientation towards guerrilla warfare under that dictatorship, understood the necessity of making a turn as soon as the Ovando dictatorship allowed a semi-legal margin for working-class activities."⁵⁹

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

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

The newspaper is our main instrument for relating with the mass movement and even more so in times of semi legality like under Ovando or full legality, as the one that existed under Torres. However, since June 1970, when the number 1 issue of *Combate* (New Era) was published until June 1971 when number 6 was published, 12 months elapsed. That is, they published an issue every two months. We do not know when numbers 7 and 8 were published because we do not have them, but we know that number 9 was published in January 1972, i.e. the rate decreased further. On this point, the majority makes the criticism that the paper did not appear regularly, which is merely an organisational criticism. We think what we need to ask is whether Comrade Germain believes that the way to make a turn to the masses is to publish a bimonthly newspaper. We assume he will say no but then he will have to find some justification. Do not tell us there was no money to publish more often because in Europe important collections were made bound for the Bolivian section. If the money did not go to the publication of the paper, we assume it must have been for the purchase of arms, as the POR(C) did not make any "expropriations", as their Argentine colleagues of the PRT(C) did. And to devote the bulk of finances and organisation of the party to such tasks, does Germain think it should be called, without falling into a falsification, a "turn" of the POR(C) towards work on the masses? The truth is otherwise: the POR(C) under Ovando continued its guerrilla line and to justify this approach reluctantly began publishing a newspaper, taking advantage of the legality. No such shift to the masses, as we have tired of demonstrating.

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

Comrade Germain also falsifies the POR(C)'s policy when he says that under Torres it never raised rural guerrilla warfare. We have already reproduced the quote from *Combate*, in which it insists that "regardless of the contingencies of the guerrilla fronts (and the only ones that had existed in Bolivia were rural) ... guerrilla warfare remains the path to take power."⁶⁰

In what Comrade Germain is correct is that under Torres, the POR(C) moved away from the rural guerrilla warfare but, as we have already shown, they continued to propose, as always, a policy

⁵⁹ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 6-7.

⁶⁰ *Combate*, No 3.

of “armament in itself” and of construction of a people’s army, so far removed from the Bolivian class struggle classes as the guerrillas had been before.

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

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

“2) Immediate arming of the workers and the peasants.

“3) Extension of the revolutionary process of the countryside.”⁶¹

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

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

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

Anyhow, the program Comrade Germain attributed to the POR(C) is not much better than the program it had.

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

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

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

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

61 *Combate*, No 3.

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

We can imagine it because it was what happened. Doesn't Comrade Germain think this argument has a curious similarity to his?

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

FRA: a front with the Bolivian police and army

For Comrade Germain, the Banzer government is "reactionary", for the POR(C) it is "fascist". How can then the majority agree with and defend the policy of the POR(C)? This is one of the many mysteries of the majority, in whose ranks coexist all kinds of characterisations and political lines. Thus, instead of the policy that our *Transitional Program* proposes for fascist countries (to carry out propaganda essentially, since there is a retreat), Comrade Germain approves the POR(C)'s policy for dealing with the "fascists" regimes of Barrientos and Banzer, which he sums up this way: "POR (*Combate*) (...) acted illegally under Barrientos and Banzer, following an orientation of preparing armed struggle by smaller contingents."⁶²

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

"Assuredly, the course of the political life of a country cannot be altered by every group armed with revolvers, at any time. Only those armed detachments which are the organs of specific classes can play a decisive role under *certain conditions*."⁶³

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

"And already the revolutionary vanguard, especially our comrades of the POR (Bolivian section of the Fourth International), the ELN [National Liberation Army], the Zamora wing of the pro-Chinese CP and others, are continuing the struggle by organising guerrilla war."⁶⁴

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

"The people have no alternative but to seize the political power of the state using armed struggle in a long and protracted war, in which the people will participate armed and organised in a people's army, as the highest expression of the political struggle of the exploited masses."⁶⁵ The POR(C) and Germain remain consistent, the great task remains the same: to develop a "long war" through a "people's army".

⁶² Ibid, p. 13.

⁶³ Trotsky, Leon, "France at the Turning Point", 26 March 1936, in *Whither France?*, op. cit., p. 108.

⁶⁴ "On the reactionary coup d'état in Bolivia", op. cit., p. 799.

⁶⁵ *Combate*, special issue, August-September 1972, p. 5.

Whoever is for the armed struggle is a revolutionary

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

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

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

The POR(C) subordinates to the FRA

Comrade Germain has said, with a straight face, that the comrades of the Fourth International are entitled to discuss history. But what he meant is they are entitled to polemise as they see fit, and he gives the example: he takes a magazine, *International Socialist Review*, reads only one article, which he uses to attack Comrade Camejo, and ignores that in the same issue there is another article by Comrade Moreno providing the documentation to show that the POR(C) has made unconditional entryism to the FRA. We will not allow him this, we demand that he should read it and reply to it, also providing evidence if he believes the facts to be different. In there we reminded that “The leadership of the FRA is the highest political–union–student commission and the political parties and organisations must subordinate themselves to it in executing of the line determined by the Front. (...) The FRA will act as a unitary authority on all fronts of social life (...) In elections of any kind the Front will present common slates....”⁶⁶

Let’s remember who makes up the FRA: the two CPs, a group of officers of the armed forces, Lora, Lechin’s PRIN, a Socialist Party and the POR(C). This means that our Bolivian section shall be subordinated to the FRA, i.e., it shall be subordinated to all those parties. It means, for example, if there are elections in trade unions we go in a common slate with the bureaucrat Lechin. Or if there are national elections we go in a common slate with the reformist bourgeois General Torres, to whom we were denouncing until yesterday as a danger for the Bolivian masses equivalent to Banzer. This means, plain and simple, the liquidation of Trotskyism in Bolivia. Unlike Comrade Germain, the POR(C) recognised this saying honestly that “... we must forget our party slogans to act on a solid front”.⁶⁷

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

For us, the FRA would be an anti-imperialist front if, as in any front, all the organisations involved in it maintained their political and organisational independence. As this is not the case, but

⁶⁶ *Revista de America*, No 8/9, May-August 1972, p. 21. Article reproduced in *International Socialist Review*, February 1973, p. 37.

⁶⁷ *Combate*, especial issue, August-September 1972.

the converse, the FRA is not a front, but a new “party” with a more or less anti-imperialist program. For his part, Comrade Germain is very careful; he defines it for the negative: the FRA *is not* a popular front for three reasons:

1) The program (not the manifesto) is “explicitly socialist in character and purpose (...) The line of this Charter is substantially that of the theory of permanent revolution.”

2) “The ‘Revolutionary Armed Forces’ under Major Sanchez state that they are in favour of a socialist revolution and to adhere to Marxism-Leninism.”

3) “That the FRA, contrary to the ‘Political Command’, is not a coalition with the bourgeoisie, as not a single bourgeois party participates in it.”⁶⁸

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

1) “The Bolivian people (...) [are prepared] for the struggle for socialism as their political aim”;

2) “All the revolutionary sectors which unite themselves under the banner of the fight against fascism, for national liberation and the building of socialism”;

3) “Our patriotic position, publicly open to an alliance with progressive sectors, does not imply any hedging over our class position, as the alliance which we establish and which will be in the forefront of the struggle for national liberation and socialism, expresses the ideology of the working class”;

4) “Bolivia will have to reach the culmination of its historical process of liberation and the building of socialism, within the framework of a revolutionary development on a Latin American scale.”⁶⁹

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

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

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

Do we need more evidence that these “Trotskyists” phrases are a typical case of the bait a bourgeois nationalist movement dangles before the masses to get them to swallow the hook? When

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

69 Ibid.

Comrade Germain characterises it as a “program of permanent revolution”, isn’t he showing he swallowed the hook?

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

“Declarations and purposes which I have no connection with are being slanderously attributed to me. Sometimes it is said that I am a member of the ELN, or that I have asked to join that organisation; they argue that I favour the dissolution of the armed forces and their replacement by armed militias; they state that I intend to make a Vietnam of the country (...). Nothing could be more false.”⁷⁰

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

“Never, before now, have army barracks, shrines of patriotism of the Bolivian youth, been converted into prisons, where there is torture and [prisoners] are shot. Never had the national army been used like this”⁷¹

Now our “Marxist-Leninist” has forgotten the murder of an unarmed and wounded prisoner, Che Guevara, in that “shrine of patriotism”. Doesn’t it make you nauseous to lie so much to the new cadres, Comrade Germain? Have you shown them what else Sanchez said? “My struggle has no other purpose than to achieve the integration of the armed forces with its people. (...) We are living a historic moment and I want to take this opportunity to announce that, by spontaneous and patriotic decision, the political instrument of unity that will lead us to victory has been organised. It is composed of all political and popular forces of the left, trade union, university and popular movements, the FAR and the Bolivian police (...) Our struggle is not anti-militarist, it is essentially anti-imperialist. No revolution can go forward without the support and efforts of the armed forces, an institution born from the heart of the people to serve the people.”⁷²

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

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

“Either you are with those who betray the armed forces, in alliance with the MNR which is vetoed by the armed forces, or you are with the national majority. You are, in short, with those who commit crimes jeopardizing the prestige and honour of the Bolivian armed forces and police, or you are with the fatherland.”⁷³

Furthermore, “like all men and women fighting against the bloodthirsty and unpatriotic who are smearing our institutions with blood, each of us, in the armed forces and the police, must take our own decision. (...) For our people, for our institutions, we must fulfil this duty as Bolivian: to die rather than live as a slave!”⁷⁴

Despite Comrade Germain’s regrets, these neophytes of “Marxism-Leninism” openly tell us what their intentions are. In Bolivia Banzer’s massacres are “smearing blood” in their “institutions”

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

71 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

73 *Documentos del FRA* [FRA’s Documents], Ediciones Liberacion, Bolivia, November 1971, p. 6.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 7 and 8.

(the Armed Forces and Police) and “compromising their prestige and honour”, therefore, they have the mission to save this prestige and honour, and with them, their “institutions”. Put another way: with the atrocities being done by Banzer, the Bolivian masses will never again trust in the armed forces and police as they did under Torres; the FAR are fighting to avoid such danger to the bourgeois regime.

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

“From clandestinity and exile, we inform all comrades of the Bolivian Armed Forces and Police that, together, and on behalf of both institutions we have joined the FRA.”⁷⁵

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

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

For us, it is relatively true that the armed forces tend to play the role of a strong reserve party of Latin American bourgeois regimes. This has to do with the little democratic tradition of our countries. But there is no truth in the idea of their “monolithic unity with imperialism”. The friction between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism is what explains the emergence of Bonapartist *sui generis* leftist governments, as the first of Peron, the one of Ovando, or the beginning of Torres’s.

For the Majority comrades, the military personnel who respond to the FRA have apparently ceased to be military men because they are no longer in their famous “monolithic unity”. For us, the Armed Forces will always defend the regime politically, even when taking a nationalist slant, posing the sole condition that they are allowed to continue to exist as an institution. And the military men who are in the FRA are just the “nationalist” wing of the bourgeois armed forces of Bolivia, the “left” wing of the military party. The fact that, incidentally, they are in opposition and exile does not invalidate this character.

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

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

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

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

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

the majority one has to be with opportunism and in favour of unity with the most rotten institutions of the bourgeois regime.

Moreno, advisor of the POR

The section entitled, “Moreno, advisor of the POR” must be one of the “bombs” from which Comrade Germain expected greater effect. Only this would explain why he wasted so much space in it (it’s one of the longest in the document). But in so many lines he does not answer the essential question: was Comrade Moreno right or wrong? Should we have entered OLAS or not?”⁷⁶

The resolution of the Ninth Congress says the same as Moreno: “working as an integral part of the OLAS”.⁷⁷ If Moreno was wrong, the resolution of the Ninth World Congress was also wrong, very wrong. If Comrade Moreno was right, if his analysis was correct in general terms, we should recognise this merit and then criticise him for having changed his position without there being a change in reality. But Comrade Germain does none of this.

Moreno was wrong, so was the Ninth Congress

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

We will not give Comrade Germain the pleasure to start a polemic backwards. We are not starting from a line that was held for five months; we will start from all the other work by Comrade Moreno and the minority dealing with Bolivia from Barrientos onwards. Only after having shown what the proposed policy for Bolivia was during all those years, we will take on the task of explaining the reasons for the document quoted by Comrade Germain, a task that could have been avoided if the comrade had acted in good faith, i.e. placing the document in the context of the life of our International.

The true position of the minority

Let’s begin, then, with the letter of 20 November 1965, which was published several times (which is why we say Comrade Germain cannot ignore it), with slight modifications in form. In it, Moreno told Comrade Gonzalez: “In *Lucha Obrera* [Workers Fight], you repeatedly define the government as fascist. As it is clear from our resolution, we disagree with your characterisation. We believe it is a reactionary Bonapartist government, an agent of the Pentagon, a product of a semi-counter-revolution, but we do not think it fascist. (...) Saying it once and for all: in Bolivia, the pre-revolutionary stage has not closed with the victory of fascism but rather it has been exacerbated by the victory of an ultra-reactionary, Bonapartist government which has not yet managed to crush the

⁷⁶ “Draft Resolution on Latin America”, reprinted in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin: Discussion on Latin America*, p. 10.

OLAS (Organisation of Latin American Solidarity), sponsored by the Castro government and notable chiefly for a conference in Havana, July-August 1967, that broke with Moscow’s policy of “peaceful path to socialism” in Latin America and raised the slogan “the duty of every revolutionist is to make the revolution”. [Editor]

⁷⁷ OLAS (Organisation of Latin American Solidarity), sponsored by the Castro government and notable chiefly for a conference in Havana, July-August 1967, that broke with Moscow’s policy of “peaceful path to socialism” in Latin America and raised the slogan “the duty of every revolutionist is to make the revolution”. [Editor]

“Draft Resolution on Latin America”, reprinted in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin: Discussion on Latin America*, p. 10.

mass movement, and which for the time being finds it impossible to achieve a mass base to crush the workers' movement."⁷⁸

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

"This is the key to the current Bolivian situation and from it, an entire policy flows. This can only be: to prevent an isolated fight by the miners and to organise the rest of the workers to fight together with the miners. If we achieve this, the defeat of the military junta is assured. (...) From what organisations can we help the miners?" And we replied: "... we're especially for the reorganisation of the COB through clandestine union defence committees and we will focus all our efforts on propagandising and carrying out this mammoth task."⁷⁹

The workers' united front

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

"We believe the first slogan that addresses the problem of power is 'Down with the military junta'. We all agree on this slogan. And when I say all, I mean all the popular grassroots and all the parties with popular influence, from sectors of the Falange to MNR, both CPs, the PRIN, the POR and the COB in clandestinity. The problem arises when we answer the following questions: How to overthrow the military junta? Who should overthrow it? And, why should the military junta be overthrown? Let's start with the answer to the last question: why to overthrow it? If we are to be guided by your paper we must overthrow it to implement socialism, 'the only real alternative is socialism', and 'it is a matter of confronting the bourgeois program with the socialist program'. We believe that you commit here a serious error of method, which is to confuse your aspirations with those of the masses and the class dynamic; to confuse the methods, with the big tasks that the masses have posed, which are three closely related but not identical aspects of reality. For example, the great tasks of the Russian Revolution were democratic, although its methods and class dynamic were proletarian. We are convinced that the current great task that unifies all Bolivian workers, the proletariat with the peasantry and the middle class of the cities is to overthrow the government to call for free and democratic elections. And not, as you propose, to overthrow it to inaugurate socialism. This task, much more modest than establishing socialism, requires proletarian leadership and insurrectional methods to achieve it. This is the 'how' to achieve it. We now have to answer of 'who', or to whom, we must pose the achievement of this goal, or put another way, what formula of power to advocate as a replacement of the Military Junta we want to overthrow. We believe it's appropriate we call for the formation of a front whose base of support is the COB, in a united front with the students, teachers and peasant organisations, with the support of all parties which are against the government, have a popular base and are for the call within 60 days for absolutely free and democratic elections. That is, we believe the military coup in May has increased, rather than decreased, the need to call for a united front. We have no doubt the petty-bourgeois parties and also the union bureaucracy will sabotage this united front and that they will not accept the leadership of the COB and the workers' movement. But we have no doubt either, that this will serve to expose them to the mass movement, if we make this call for the united front according to the general guidelines of Trotskyism, not only to the ranks but also to the leadership with a mass base."⁸⁰

78 Moreno, Nahuel: "Letter to Hugo Gonzalez", 1965, reprinted in *Revista de America*, No 6/7, July–October 1971, pp. 40-43.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

The armed militias of the COB and the trade unions

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

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

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

“From our characterisation of the regime follows the possibility that at certain times legal loopholes will open. Our justified hatred for the military dictatorship should not make us forget that we have the obligation to use these legal loopholes. We must use them to demand wage increases or raise minimum slogans, whenever possible unified, to accelerate the crisis of the regime. What we said of wage increases we could also say of any opening within the recognised ‘yellow’ unions or a future rigged national election. Before declaring a boycott of these openings we take the pulse of the situation of the class struggle very well and only call for it if there are optimal conditions.”⁸¹

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

What *La Verdad* said in March 1971

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

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

“The strike on 6 October 1970 made possible the defeat of the army’s most reactionary wing and the rise of Torres to power, it did not eliminate the pro-imperialist forces by far. (...) It is a fact that there are still sectors of the right inside and outside the army. (...) We have defined Torres as the Bolivian Kerensky, oscillating between the workers’ movement and the bourgeois and imperialist forces. (...) the Lora group falls in the same opportunistic sin (it behaves as if the Torres government were the government of the working class, with the excuse that the COB is bureaucratised), it does not demand that the COB take power, or for the unions to become armed to fight against the danger

⁸¹ Ibid.

of the reaction.” And seeing the danger that hung over the Bolivian proletariat as a result of the “Trotskyist” policies of Lora and Gonzalez, we said: “Unfortunately, we do not see any party in Bolivia adopting the strategy of the Russian revolutionaries.”⁸²

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

The reason for our “guerrillaism”

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

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

Cuba, OLAS and the continental civil war

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

But Comrade Germain, in his extensive quotation, forgets to give the quotes from the same document where we criticised the political orientation of Cubans regarding OLAS, and mainly he forgets to point out that our entry into the OLAS did not in any way mean an abidance or support for its policy but simply that we put ourselves under their military discipline. “Our ‘entryism’ into OLAS must not be essentially entry into its political organisation but rather into its military apparatus. Our party has the obligation to register as their number one militant task to form a technical apparatus

⁸² *La Verdad*, No 254, 9 March 1971.

rigidly disciplined to OLAS for the technical tasks that OLAS order within their armed struggle strategy of the struggle for power. There cannot any other meaning to our entry to OLAS.”⁸³

This was the position of our international. Nothing shows this better than a letter from Comrade Maitan in the same crucial year of 1967, where he said: “I have noticed that *La Verdad* has stressed the positive evolution of the Cuban attitude. We currently know, from a reliable source, that the Fidelist leaders now regard as a mistake the attack against us at the end of the Tricontinental [Conference]. (...) We think that now we have to emphasize what unites us to the Cubans. We do not ignore that there is still among them the tendency to generalise excessively the tactic of guerrillas, and the book by Debray they propagandise is quite bad (I have a response in the pipeline). But today, it is more important to discuss the concrete cases that face us at this stage, namely, Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia, and Bolivia and, in this, I believe we agree with the Cubans.”⁸⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore we can do no less than recall Moreno's self-criticism which confirms the greatest success of a Bolshevik is to recognise when to change characterisation and a political line that the facts have proved wrong.

CHAPTER II

Argentina: the ultimate test of two lines

The facts belie Germain

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

First fact: the Cordobazo

We assert that we anticipated the Cordobazo would burst and were in favour of it and that the PRT(EC) didn't anticipate it and, when it began, was against promoting it. The proofs are the same we gave in *Argentina and Bolivia— the balance sheet*.² In the section titled "Two views of the Cordobazo" we've selected two quotes that categorically show that we predicted a month before the Cordobazo the upsurge that was incubating and how it would manifest itself ("mass demonstrations, occupation of school departments and buildings, resistance to the repressive forces. It is necessary to extend and coordinate these actions"), as opposed to the PRT(EC) that, a few days before the Cordobazo, said "it is "suicide to confront the police and other law enforcement agencies empty-handed", advising against mobilisations for a long time, until the masses were armed. Who was right?

Second fact: workers' disputes

Comrade Germain ignores our arguments when he has to answer our charges that the PRT(EC) did not attach any importance to workers' struggles in their leadership meetings, nor did they have

1 **Cordobazo** refers to an important civil uprising which happened in Argentina on 29 May, 1969, in the city of Cordoba, one of the most important industrial cities of the country. Its most immediate consequence was the fall of the military dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía, and four years later, the return of democracy. [Editor]

2 Available for downloading from www.nahuelmoreno.org. [Editor]

a policy for them, to the point of forgetting the general strikes of those days, as a result of their removal from the class struggle caused by their guerrilla line. We have reported that throughout the year 1971 (a year of workers' disputes), the official organ of the PRT(EC) published only three articles of a union general nature and none on the disputes, whereas our organ published 250 articles. Comrade Germain alludes to unknown facts: "It [the PRT(EC)] publishes several special factory and union caucus papers."³ Which ones and where are they, Comrade? In Argentina, we know only one issue of one paper.

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

Third fact: Sitrac-Sitram

The same can be said of SITRAC-SITRAM.⁴ Nobody here knows the chair of the SITRAC-SITRAM plenary sessions that Comrade Germain talks about. The chair was always the same person, "Old Pedro". In one of the plenary sessions, a female comrade, very young, a delegate, outstanding speaker, belonging to the PRT(EC), shocked the audience with her speech. Does Comrade Germain refer to her? Well, she was not the chair, Comrade. The political leadership of the class-struggle tendency of SITRAC-SITRAM was in the hands of the ultraleft and Maoists (both tendencies led Córdoba) and us (leaders of almost all conflicts and the most important class-struggle factory committees in the Greater Buenos Aires). This is the only truth. The PRT(EC) did not appear as a sector of importance in the plenary sessions of Córdoba and Buenos Aires and much less as a national tendency.

A definitive criterion: compare the two organisations

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

³ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 17.

⁴ SITRAC-SITRAM are acronyms for two unions associated with the companies ConCord and Materfer, subsidiaries of the Italian automotive multinational Fiat, in the city of Córdoba in Argentina. They are strongly linked to trade union disputes surrounding the Cordobazo of 1969, milestone in the history of Argentine workers' movement. In 1971 they were repressed by the military dictatorship. [Editor]

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

Our alleged capitulation to the fraud and the military government

According to Comrade Germain, our party published "several platforms both for its own campaign and its proposals for the mass movement. In *none* of these was the fraudulent character of the elections (...) This led to the sad spectacle of *Avanzada Socialista* interviewing the trade-union leader Tosco, just released from prison, asking him what he thought about the idea of a workers slate in the elections, and receiving the answer from Tosco that first of all one had to say that these were fraudulent elections. Trotskyists being taught such an elementary lesson by a CP sympathiser. What a humiliating experience for comrade Moreno!"⁵

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

The "lesson" Tosco gave Moreno

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

"AS: The electoral solution proposed by the dictatorship is a trap set to deflect the rise of masses that Argentina lives. Do you consider it to be so?"⁶

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

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

Comrade Germain says Tosco replied, "first of all, one has to say that these are fraudulent elections". In issue No 31 of *Avanzada Socialista*, of 27 September 1972, where this interview was published, Tosco says: "I understand that workers are moving towards a socialist Argentina. But as I intend to act responsibly, I cannot answer this type of questions. Logically we fight for the Argentine national and social liberation and our march is towards a socialist homeland."⁷

5 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p.28.

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

7 Ibid.

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

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

Our “silence” regarding the dictatorship

But the falsehoods do not end here. Comrade Germain also accuses us of remaining “silent about the existence of the dictatorship —under the pretext that in this way you ‘gain’ the possibility of legal propaganda— is an unacceptable concession to electoralism.”⁸

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

Finally let’s remember that amid the campaign to achieve legality we said in a banner headline: “Against Lanusse’s candidate, Workers and Socialist Candidates.” And under another headline, “The Proscriptions Game”, we said: “The speech at San Nicolas, which is no surprise to us because we have been denouncing from these columns the meaning of the ‘Agreement’ [the ‘Great National Agreement’ between the military and Peron], cannot make us lose sight the lies included in the previous speech by General Lanusse, where he maintained that in the process of institutionalisation only those who voluntarily choose to be proscribed will be proscribed. We now know that those who do not accept the rules of the proposed game will be left by the side of the road. But even if this were not so, what about those who, by dint of law 17.401, which penalises the expression of ideas protected by the Constitution, cannot achieve legal status, and must renounce their open public activity? Is this by their choice? Are voluntarily proscribed officials, What about functionaries, professors and teachers who, because of the application of this law, have had to abandon their livelihoods and in some cases go off in search of better atmosphere elsewhere? Is this by their choice? What about the hundreds of exemplary children of the working class and the people who remain in prisons of the Republic by the sole will of the Executive Branch? Is this by their choice? What about those serving sentences imposed by laws restricting freedom of thought, generously applied by the ‘Chamber of Terror’? What about the political groups that have not yet been able to overcome the obstacles to their action placed by the police-state law regulating the activities of political parties? Will the parties that do not agree to enter the capitulating agreement offered by dictatorship be voluntarily proscribed?”⁹

“The workers have shown their combativity a thousand and one times. Particularly from 1969 onwards, the workers’ and popular movement has given virtually no respite to the military dictatorship, and the fight has forced to change governments and political plans. The urban explosions, strikes and demonstrations, have been constant in the last four years. If the victories have not been even greater is not only for the brutal repression of the dictatorship that defends the interests of the regime, nor for the manoeuvres that it carries out through their skimmed concessions. There is another element

⁸ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 28.

⁹ *Avanzada Socialista*, 7 June 1972.

that acts on behalf of the dictatorship and is stronger than the repressive apparatus; it is the shackling and police-type control by the union leadership backed by the authority of Peron.”¹⁰

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

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

Have we capitulated to Peron, Comrade?

After accusing us of not having denounced the government’s fraud, Comrade Germain charged us with capitulating to Peron and Peronism. What is his accusation based on? Perhaps in the whole of our election campaign, which lasted more than six months? Not at all. If he had reviewed the activity in those six months he would have been forced to recognise that, along with the denunciation of the military dictatorship, the second focus of our campaign was the attack to Peronism from the Marxist and proletarian view. Dozens of articles and front-page headlines of our paper prove it so.

A tactic taken out of context

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

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

It is clear, then, that the worth of a slogan depends closely on the specific situation in which it is formulated. That’s what happened with our slogan, and it’s what Comrade Germain leaves out. Now, what was the concrete situation in which we raised this slogan? Or, put another way, based on what analysis of reality we consider it?

An analysis of the dynamic of Peronism

We hold that our tactic was correct for the simple reason that it was based on an analysis of the dynamic of Peronism as a political phenomenon. Our analysis indicated that Peronism was committed to the military government to impose a reactionary program, i.e. its dynamics was not to make any concessions to the workers’ movement. That’s what we pointed out to the Argentine

¹⁰ *Avanzada Socialista*, 20 September 1972.

workers, when we said, as Comrade Germain quoted: “We believe that (...) Peron defends the bosses and accepts the agreement (with the military) consciously.”¹¹

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

“Let's demand from Peron a plan of struggle for a wage increase of \$ 50,000 and a minimum wage of \$ 120,000, indexed every two months, and against unemployment. (...) Let's ask him to deliver 80 per cent of the Justicialist [Peronist] party's nominations for the workers to choose among themselves their candidates (...) If the fault (for the anti-worker policies of Peronism) is not Peron's, then we will help him to break the 'siege' of the bureaucrats. If unfortunately, it is as we believe, the workers themselves should impose the plan of struggle and the workers' candidates.”¹²

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

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

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

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

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

In that case, our party would have had to make self-criticism for having erred in the analysis. It would have had to note the progressive aspect of this phenomenon as well as its limitations. It would have had to make self-criticism for having proposed this task to the Peronist vanguard. It would have had to put more emphasis on the limitations of its victory within Peronism and it would have had to go ahead with its electoral policy of running working-class, class-struggle and socialist candidates.

11 *Avanzada Socialista*, 15 November 1972; quoted by Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 29.

12 Ibid.

For the last task, the party was in perfect conditions, as it had not made any commitment to support Peronism.

How many bourgeois are needed to make a popular front?

Unfortunately, both Comrade Germain and the leadership of the French section do not share with us this orthodox Trotskyist conception of parties, fronts, etc. If Comrade Germain considers a capitulation that we called the Peronist vanguard to fight for an 80 per cent of working-class candidates in the Peronist slate and that we committed ourselves to support this struggle (we never gave electoral support to Peronism nor did we commit ourselves to do it), we do not understand why he does not criticise the French comrades for having electorally supported the Union of the Left. For the French comrades, the Union of the Left was not obviously a popular front, since they never reported it as such, but they called it a “global reformist project”. We do not understand why, for Comrade Germain, a front with 99.9 per cent of workers’ candidates (Socialists and Communists), a 0.1 per cent of bourgeois candidates and a “reformist” program—which is the case with the Union of the Left— ceases to be a popular front while Peronism, with 80 per cent of workers candidates and “program of struggle” would still be a bourgeois party. For us, the first remained a popular front and the second a bourgeois party.

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

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

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

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

Just as we made our dynamic analysis and foresaw that Peronism could not accept working-class candidates chosen by the rank-and-file and a program of struggle, we assume the French comrades have also analysed the dynamics of the Union of the Left. In other words, they must have asked themselves what its future was. We don’t know their precise answer to this question. But we know our answer.

The dynamics of the Union of the Left is to become, just as soon as it has favourable objective conditions, in a fully-fledged popular front, with any bourgeois party which wants to enter it. Do the French comrades agree this is the perspective of the Union of the Left? If not this, what is it?

We say that the French Union of the Left foreshadows the dynamics of becoming a fully-fledged popular front (not a popular front with a political shadow of the bourgeoisie as it is now). This definition starts with the general historic policy of Stalinism. And this policy is simply to build popular fronts, or national unions with the national bourgeoisie, to hold back the revolution and achieve a government friendly to the USSR. Do the Majority comrades know some other historic objective of Stalinism? If they do, they should specify it. The historic objective of Stalinism is no other than what we noted. Therefore, the French Union of the Left is only a tactical, electoral, step within the Stalinist strategy of building popular fronts. Moreover, this tactic of building electoral

popular fronts as a prelude to bourgeois-democratic popular-frontist governments is not exclusive of French Stalinism; it is a global tactic of Stalinism.

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

The Broad Front in Uruguay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If our characterisation of the dynamics of the Union of the Left is correct, if it is just the electoral tactics of the French Communist Party in its strategy of building popular fronts, if our French section did not denounce that this is the dynamic the Union of the Left is taking if it supported it in the elections (as it did), then we can draw, unfortunately, only one conclusion: in France, we voted without denouncing it as such the electoral tactics of the Popular Front strategy. This opportunism had the approval and encouragement of the Majority comrades. Wouldn't Comrade Germain think

that before criticising (even if he were right) a secondary facet of our electoral policy, he should begin with self-criticism for defending the blunders they made in France?

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

Should we have taken part in the elections?

According to Germain, we have acted in Argentina as if we were in "pre-1914 Britain or the United States in 1938 or 1946".¹³ For him, the situation in our country is similar to that of Spain and France in 1936. All analogies are dangerous. In the situation of the Argentine proletariat, and hence the objective situation in Argentina, there is a sharp contradiction, perhaps unique, but in any case, it makes the comparison with the countries cited by Germain impossible.

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

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

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

"To counterpose the slogan of the *arming of the workers* to the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals, means to isolate oneself from the masses — and the masses from arms."¹⁴

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

But there is an analogy that Germain doesn't even think to mention: Bolivia between 1952 and 1956. During those years, workers' militias existed in Bolivia; they had raised the possibility of a workers' and peasants' insurrection to give "all power to the COB with its militias". It was a situation much more critical than in Argentina after the Cordobazo. After all, the Bolivian masses through an insurrection had completely defeated the military dictatorship and kept their arms. In such a situation,

¹³ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁴ Trotsky, Leon, "The Spanish Revolution, and the dangers threatening it", 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 117.

much more revolutionary than that of Argentina, the leadership of our International systematically proposed for Bolivia presentation in the elections. The Fourth Congress of the International with the approval or the pen of Comrade Germain advised in 1954 for Bolivia: “[A] campaign for general elections with the right to vote for every men and women over 18 years of age in order to elect a constituent assembly and the running of workers’ slates from the COB in these elections.”¹⁵

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

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

No correct policy was possible without the participation

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

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

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

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

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

What happened to the Argentine sects

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

The Majority comrades reason as these Argentine sects we mentioned: what is important is the political line and standing for election is a secondary issue. Therein lies their mistake. For us, it is exactly the opposite. At this particular moment, we could formulate our policy only by taking part in the elections. If we hadn’t taken part we could not have formulated any correct policy because

¹⁵ Resolutions of the Fourth Congress, June 1954.

we would have isolated ourselves from “the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals”.

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

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

Our electoral tactics and demonstrations

Comrade Germain has made serious charges against our organisation. Mainly one: that our core activity, in a pre-revolutionary stage littered with popular and workers’ demonstrations, has been the election and not the mobilisations. Thus, he says our axis was “the question of independent working-class candidates in fraudulent elections under a decaying military dictatorship and not the question of how to overthrow the dictatorship (how to generalise the Cordobazos into an Argentinazo).”¹⁶

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

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

Our electoral platform and our use of television

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

- “1) Freedom to political and related social prisoners;
- “2) For democratic rights, repeal the repressive legislation;
- “3) Down with the military government;
- “4) Out with the future capitalist government;
- “5) Let us resist the imperialist and capitalist repression with an Argentinazo that puts a workers’ and popular government in power;
- “6) Do not vote for the military, or union bureaucrats, do not vote doctors, nor bosses. Vote for your comrades, vote for workers candidates;
- “7) Do not vote for capitalist candidates of Coria and Miguel” (the two most important and best known at the time union bureaucrats: Coria in the construction union and Miguel in the metalworkers union).”¹⁸

According to the provisions of the electoral law, the government gave us two hours on television. Those two hours focused on a single idea: everything we have we owe to the Cordobazo and the

16 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p.29.

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

18 Ibid. p.19.

workers' and popular mobilisations (the exposition was accompanied by the screening of films of these mobilisations), therefore, the elections are a fraud which leads to a dead-end, and what we need to do is an "Argentinazo", a workers' and popular insurrection that overthrows the government.

Our electoral campaign and the workers' struggles

But there is something more important and much more concrete. At the time of the electoral campaign, the renewal of collective labour contracts was being negotiated. The party anticipated that the most important workers' mobilisations would take place around these negotiations. The conclusion was obvious: prevent the elections from diverting the working class from these struggles, as was the plan of the bourgeoisie and the union bureaucracy. Obviously, we took in the reality of the class struggle. There is a multitude of quotes; we'll take only one among many. In the document "Let's Wage a Revolutionary Socialist Campaign", we said: "The party's major national slogan at this time should be: let's prevent the elections from diverting the working class for the fight for good labour contracts and substantial salary increases. (...) Our approach has to be: the elections are causing a general intoxication which makes the working class forget its true large real problems, at this time, starvation wages ..." ¹⁹

And in a special chapter entitled "The Electoral Campaign and Workers' Conflicts", we added: "This is the essential axis of our electoral campaign, with its practical consequence: we have to get into all conflicts for labour contracts that arise during this period. The electoral activity should not be a reason for us to turn away from conflicts; on the contrary, the campaign will allow us to detect and participate in many more conflicts than usual. If we take this approach, our campaign will not be electioneering; otherwise, despite all the revolutionary phrases we use, we will be turning away from the actual experiences and struggles of our class to propagandism. (...) To summarise, we can say that the election campaign does not mean the party will abandon its typical activity in the concrete struggles of the working class, from wage increases to Cordobazos, but rather we will be expanding and developing the vast experience we have in this kind of struggle." ²⁰

The electoral campaign was the millimetre perfect implementation of these resolutions. In its course, we greatly multiplied the party's bond with the workers' conflicts. Our militants played a prominent role in the struggle for labour contracts, as well as countless other partial battles, by factory or guild. Let's cite a few of the many possible examples. In the metalworkers union, there was a major demonstration against the discounts the union leadership decided to carry out on the amount of the wage increases agreed with the bosses. Our party was at the forefront of this mobilisation that spanned numerous factories. In the country's largest steel mill, SOMISA in San Nicolas, our party's mayoral candidate led the occupation of the plant against the strong-arm methods of the union bureaucracy. In the long strike of the Panam plastics factory in Tucumán, a party leader was elected to the strike committee, although he was not a worker of the plant. It is no coincidence that in the last days of the election campaign, the highest authority of the union bureaucracy, the CGT's secretary-general, Jose Rucci, violently attacked our presidential candidate in a telegram sent to him, something he did not do with any other candidate.

Once again: did we have to participate in elections or not?

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

¹⁹ *Hagamos una campaña socialista revolucionaria* ["Let's Wage a Revolutionary Socialist Campaign"], PST archives.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

stand for election. The question is: in the concrete case of Argentina, should we have done it or not, Comrade Germain?

Because situations are concrete and must be given concrete answers.

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

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

The pro-guerrilla policy of the majority

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

The criticisms come too late

Now, when it is already evident to our whole movement the disaster of such orientation, Comrade Germain tries to criticise it retroactively. Now he tells us that it was a mistake for the PRT(EC) to have dedicated itself after the second Cordobazo to building a revolutionary army. To Comrade Germain, therefore, the PRT(EC)’s political line began to be wrong since the beginning of 1971. However, the leaders of the majority applauded this policy at the time and failed to criticise it timely. Listen to Comrade Maitan, a leader, together with Comrade Germain, of the majority tendency: “The strategic perspective the Argentine comrades are following is the one laid down by the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International— elaborated and made more precise over the last two national congresses of the PRT.”²¹

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

An enthusiastic balance sheet of the ERP’s activity

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

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

²¹ Maitan, Livio: “Political Crisis and Revolutionary Struggle”, *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 9, No. 16, 26 April 1971, p. 388.

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

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

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

“d) Actions linked to the workers’ struggle (the most important so far was conducted by an armed detachment which invaded the Fiat factory in Cordoba and held a meeting there).”²²

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

“All these actions have effectively achieved their objective of armed propaganda. At present, the ERP is the best known revolutionary organisation and has won very broad sympathy—in some big plants too.”²³

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

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

“The entire International should be elated over the fact that in the period from the end of last year until early June 1971 — following its own rebuilding and the difficulties faced by other groups— the ERP, founded by the PRT, emerged as the most dynamic of the organisations waging armed struggle in Argentina, capable of unleashing a wide range of actions at an intense pace, with certain effectiveness. Could these be actions which don’t fit the criteria of revolutionary Marxism, of Leninism?”²⁴

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

“Concerning the activities of our comrades of the Argentina section, the PRT and its armed organisation, the ERP, we don’t look at them as being ultraleft. We think that their policy corresponds largely to the present needs of the class struggle in their country.”²⁵

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

“Next, while affirming our agreement with the PRT’s general orientation of developing the armed struggle, we express the hope that our comrades will find the means to link this struggle in the most intimate way to the development of the mass struggle, with a clear political orientation towards the socialist and proletarian revolution, against any concept of a revolution by stages.”²⁶

Finally, Maitan, Germain and Frank summarised their assessment of the PRT–ERP in the resolution adopted in December 1972, more than a year and a half after the second Cordobazo. They characterised the actions of the PRT–ERP as having raised the level of “... armed struggle in Latin

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

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

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

26 *La Gauche*, organ of the Belgian section of the USec, 21 April 1972.

America after the Cuban revolution, as far as they went in the sense of an integration of the armed struggle in the actual dynamics of mass struggle.”²⁷

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

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

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

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

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

“If the dictatorship is retreating, it is as a result of your powerful extra-parliamentary struggles, as a result of six Cordobazos and the appearance of groups committed to armed struggle. Continue along this road. Build up local factory and neighbourhood committees to organise in a permanent way for your mobilisations. Start to draw together all radicalised unionists, students, women and militants who are ready to join in these preparations. Coordinate nationally the class struggle factions in the unions and tie them in with the vanguard committees. Start to arm yourself. Beware of a continuation or a quick return to sharp repression and confrontation. Don’t give in to parliamentary illusions. Argentine capitalism cannot grant you a significant increase in your standard of living. That’s why the class struggle is sharpening every day. That’s why you have to continue on the road of the Cordobazos. Whatever retreat the army will undertake today will only be temporary. Large-scale clashes with the army are unavoidable. Don’t go towards it spontaneously and in an unorganised way. Prepare and organise yourselves for it. Prepare an insurrectional general strike.”²⁸

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

A program that never found its reality

Unfortunately for Comrade Germain, Argentina’s reality does not match at all with his schema. The workers’ movement is solidly organised in unions and, politically, follows Peron. When Comrade Germain speaks of the Cordobazos (and we assume this encompasses the demonstrations of Rosario, Tucuman and Mendoza, because otherwise, we do not know how his count reaches six), he forgets that these struggles originated in calls to strikes and rallies by the traditional organisations of the workers’ movement— the unions and regional chapters of the CGT. These mobilisations were the product of a particular combination of circumstances, one of the most important was that Peron, sectors of the union bureaucracy, important sectors of the bourgeoisie, and the entire middle class, were against the military governments. This was even reflected in a split in the own ranks of the army. With Lanusse, these bureaucratic sectors and the entire bourgeoisie turned to the elections, dragging the middle class and the working class. Therefore, the Cordobazos decreased and were not repeated

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

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

with the same sharpness of the first. The problem of the leadership of the workers' movement began to come to the fore. The extremely favourable combination of circumstances passed, especially the total repudiation of the middle class and the proletariat to the bourgeois governments, as represented by the military regime. Before the elections, a period opened up of renewed confidence in bourgeois governments or, at least, in the bourgeois electoral mechanics, as a result of the trust in Peron.

Comrade Germain ask us: "How was Argentina ripe for a generalised insurrection in May 1970 and not ripe at the beginning of 1972."²⁹ With this, he believes that he has found a contradiction in us. But we reply that's how things happened; circumstances changed because Peron (undisputed leader, lest we forget, of the Argentine masses) entered the electoral arena and thus diverted the masses away from extra-parliamentary confrontation with the regime towards an electoral confrontation.

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

An "insurrectional general strike" anarcho-syndicalist style

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

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

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

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

And, as for the insurrection, who will prepare it? Who will lead it? Isn't it shameful to put forth this line without raising the need for armed workers' pickets? A lapse of memory? Isn't the neglect of this fundamental slogan for the preparation of the general strike unforgivable? Is it enough to give the workers super-general advice (in Spanish we say "platitudes") such as "large-scale clashes with the army are unavoidable... Prepare and organise yourselves for [them]",³⁰ instead of specifying the appropriate form of organisation to carry out this task?

29 Ibid., p. 29.

30 Ibid., p. 17.

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

The official section breaks with the International

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

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

Who failed to foresee the break?

In this case, as well, the majority wants to cover up its responsibility with retrospective criticisms. The organ of the English section, *The Red Weekly*, which reflects the positions of the majority, published on issue 13 of 27 July 1973 a note on the death of Joe Baxter,³¹ which stated that Baxter, Pujals and Bonnet recognised the "populist tendencies and ideological confusion" within the PRT(EC). Obviously, this had to happen at least by September 1971, since Pujals was killed that month.

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

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

The majority deceives the ranks of the International

The anti-Trotskyist positions kept developing with increasing strength and the Majority comrades continued explaining them as Moreno's heritage. But, intending to defend the official section (while they "educated" it) they committed the worst possible crime against the ranks of our

³¹ **Joe Baxter** was a Peronist leader, founder of Tacuara (a right-wing movement in the 1960s) and later a guerrilla who had joined the PRT(EC) and left with the Red Faction. [Editor]

International: they did not inform them of the official section's positions and, on the contrary, they deceived them by hiding these positions.

With the pretext that it was not an official position, the publication of the *Red Book*³² ("The Only Road for Workers' Power and Socialism") was prevented.

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

Germain PRT embellishes the PRT(EC)'s positions

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

"The comrades of the PRT correctly understand that the Fourth International today is only the initial nucleus of the future revolutionary mass international."³³

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

"We ratify our adherence [to the Fourth International] with the intention of the proletarianisation of the International, to its revolutionary transformation, and struggling to orient it towards the formation of a new international revolutionary party based on the Chinese, Cuban, Korean, Vietnamese and Albanian parties and on the sister organisations struggling in a revolutionary way in every country against capitalism and imperialism."³⁴

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

"For the PRT leadership, this fusion is envisaged with all those forces engaged in objectively revolutionary struggles..."³⁵

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

Who characterised the PRT(EC) correctly?

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

And, for all these years, we have differentiated ourselves from the majority by holding the opposite attitude. We have tirelessly denounced the revisionist character of this populist organisation and the inevitability of its final break with the International. In 1968, when the split in our party took place, we said the *Combatiente* faction was an unprincipled front, which would fracture into a

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

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

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

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

thousand pieces. We were not mistaken. Since then, there have been over eight major splits. We made a class characterisation: we said they reflected petty-bourgeois sectors driven to desperation by the endless crisis in Argentina. We said we had to fight them politically (while respecting and defending them as magnificent and honest revolutionaries) and that we had to defend our International and the heritage of Trotskyist revolutionary Marxism. At the last IEC, we proposed to Comrade Germain a united front for the defence of our International against the public attacks and the inevitable breakup. Who was right? The facts have been quick to give their verdict.

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

CHAPTER III

The European document and the French section

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

Has Western Europe become an island?

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

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

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

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

If this is not the case, if this means the comrades think we can build in some European country a Trotskyist party that will lead the masses to a “first socialist revolution”, then, we are in the presence of a second contradiction. The mere existence of such a party would mean a complete change in our

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

entire International since it would signify the possibility of building similar parties around the world or, at least, throughout Europe.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This absence is a serious mistake, for two reasons. The first, which we have already seen, is that nothing allows us to predict which will take place first: whether the victory of the socialist revolution in a country in Western Europe or of the political revolution in a country of Eastern Europe. The second mistake is the high degree of organic interconnection of the European revolution ever since the French Revolution. This factor makes the European revolution a single process, both from a historical as well as conjunctural point of view, and, wherever it may begin (in the East or the West) it will spread like wildfire throughout Europe, almost instantaneously. The proletariat of capitalist Europe has great tasks raised if the first political revolution breaks out in a country in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is of no avail that this document refers to the construction of our parties in capitalist Europe, even if the document had been accompanied by another about building parties in Eastern Europe, with a specific program. Because, when neither such tasks nor their respective slogans, are

being raised for entire Europe, any analysis of the European situation and any policy based on this analysis will not hold water.

Third question: What is to be done after taking power?

The third question that arises when reading the European document has to do with the next sentence, apparently correct: “to prepare the masses of the European proletariat for any attempt at counter-revolutionary intervention against a socialist revolution winning victory first in a single country in capitalist Europe.”²

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Trotskyism, if either a political revolution wins in the East or a socialist revolution in the West of Europe, what is raised is to develop the permanent unfolding of the revolution, extending it to all countries in Europe. And what slogan do we have to do this? None other than the European Federation of Socialist States! The absence of this slogan from among the ten central tasks of the majority’s European document is a clear example of the dangers that threaten us behind other obscure or incorrect formulations. Of course, if we think Western Europe has nothing to do with Eastern Europe, and that, after seizing power in a country, the central task is to defend the revolution and not to extend it; the fact that this slogan is not among the central tasks seems to be an inevitable consequence.

Fifth question: Is there no relationship between the European revolution and the revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies of European imperialism?

This question has its origin in the fact the European document does not take into account the organic relationship between the European revolution and the revolution of the few colonies and abundant semi-colonies of European imperialism, or in those that it may still conquer.

We’re not talking here about the general relationship between all revolutionary processes, whether or not colonial. We are talking, for example, of the relationship between the European revolution and the current heroic struggle of the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies against

² Ibid. p.26.

Portuguese imperialism and European imperialism in general. We're talking, also, about the guerrillas or mass movements of the French colonies and semi-colonies against French imperialism. We are talking about the concrete, specific relationship of the national liberation struggles in all the colonies and semi-colonies of various European imperialisms, with the socialist revolution in Europe.

Thus, for us, there is no possibility of building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe other than permanently raising and agitating fundamental slogans against European imperialism. This is so because the underpinning of European capitalism is imperialist exploitation of the colonies and semi-colonies and the only way to destroy European capitalism is destroying it as the imperialist capitalism that it is. Without this central slogan of struggle against European imperialism any kind of parties can be built in Europe, except revolutionary Trotskyist parties.

Is Western Europe no longer imperialist?

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

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

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

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

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

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

None of this is foreseen or mentioned in the majority's document. We see contradictions between the European document and some general statements by *Rouge*: "The Fourth International

assumes its responsibilities for supporting and actively participating in protests against the imperialist stranglehold in the black continent.”³

But of this solemn commitment, there is not even a hint in the majority’s document on Europe. As much as we have read and reread it, we could not find a single similar phrase. In short, the defence of self-determination of all the colonies and semi-colonies of European imperialism is not among the ten core tasks. The fact the document considers that revolutionary parties can “be built in capitalist Europe” without raising this slogan or others related to the expulsion of imperialism, constitutes a dangerous ideological deviation which we might fear it could become an objective political capitulation if we didn’t know that in daily practice our European sections and militants hold a real struggle against European imperialism.

A document that stands mute about the Portuguese colonies, Vietnam of European imperialism

The apparent neglect of the imperialist character of Europe is reflected in a fundamental lack of the majority’s program: Not a single word about the Vietnam of European imperialism — the guerrillas and the national liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. This silence would be inexcusable even if the Portuguese colonies were oppressed only by Portugal. But, for worse, it is not so; the Portuguese colonies are such only formally. They are colonies of European imperialism as a whole, mainly of Britain, Germany and France in partnership with Belgium, the US and Japan.

Portugal is, in fact, a sub-metropolis or sub-imperialism. It is the poorest country in Western Europe and its economy is controlled by foreign investments, particularly British.

Portugal has launched huge repression on the liberation movements of its colonies, funded and armed by imperialism, particularly European, through NATO. The brutality of the repression has produced horror in world public opinion. In the year 1961 alone, when the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) launched the guerrillas, the imperialist war produced around 50,000 dead.

Of the NATO countries, Germany, Britain and France are the largest arm providers for the war against the peoples of the Portuguese colonies. France is the extreme case: it has not restricted the supply of arms, it has refused to vote any sanctions against Portugal, both in the United Nations and in the European Council and hasn’t allowed, since 1960, representatives of the liberation movements to enter its territory.

Currently, the war in the Portuguese colonies has the same characteristics as that of Vietnam. Of the 150,000 Portuguese NATO soldiers who were in Europe, only 10,000 remain; the rest have gone to Africa. The Portuguese are attempting to raze the liberated areas and relocate the peasant population in fortified villages, which are true concentration camps. Communications between urban centres are made almost exclusively by air since the guerrillas are controlling the major land routes. This is the reality of the class struggle in the Portuguese colonies: the real Vietnam of European imperialism.

A “solidarity” which is not enough

Nevertheless, the majority’s European document does not say a single word about this struggle. And this silence is not compensated by saying we will have “solidarity” with the anti-imperialist struggles in general. It is not enough to talk about “solidarity” when the countries in which we live are slaughtering an entire people. We cannot talk of “solidarity” when we partly owe our high standard of living to the exploitation of those who are being massacred. It is insufficient to speak of “solidarity” when the only way for our class brothers in the Portuguese colonies to win is that

³ *Rouge*, No 200.

Rouge was the newspaper of the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (Revolutionary Workers League), French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, headed by Mandel and Maitan. (Editor)

we mobilise ourselves against the imperialism of our own country and our continent. It is even more insufficient if we are conscious that victory for the guerrillas would be a breakthrough for the European workers. The Majority comrades think it's enough to talk of "solidarity" in general, without even naming the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies.

This is not a matter of "solidarity", of a phrase mentioned in passing in an entire document. It is a matter of something far superior: our main task at a historical scale is the denunciation and the struggle against "our capitalism" together with the struggle against "our imperialism". If the working masses of our continent or our country, poisoned by imperialist chauvinism, do not understand their countries are imperialists, then we must denounce imperialism all day and every day; never taking this denunciation and this struggle as a secondary task not worth more than a sentence said in passing.

Do the Majority comrades perhaps believe we can "build revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe" today without putting under the spotlight the fight against European imperialism, the murderer of African peoples? Are they sure these parties can be "revolutionary"?

Or, do the Majority comrades perchance think they can remedy this omission by a campaign of solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish people? On the other hand, does the document of the majority seriously consider such a campaign? We think not since it does not say we should do right now a specific campaign around the slogan "British troops out of Ireland now!" Perhaps isn't this one of the key slogans that we have to agitate in the British and European proletariat in general? What remains of the campaigns of "solidarity" without this slogan? For us, absolutely nothing.

What happened to the love for "armed struggle"?

But this is compounded for the Portuguese colonies. Ireland enjoys the privilege of being part of Europe; it is at least named in passing in the majority's European document. But the Portuguese colonies are not even mentioned.

Isn't it suggestive that those who defend guerrilla warfare and armed struggle for Latin America do not even name the heroic guerrilla fighters of the Portuguese colonies? How can they explain they don't raise the need to defend these guerrilla fighters from the brutal attacks of European imperialism? How can we understand that they propose the armed struggle for a whole period and a whole continent dominated by Yankee imperialism and they do not say a single word about the armed struggle in the countries dominated by their own imperialism? Is not it strange how those who defend the ERP in Argentina vote with both hands for a European document which does not take a political line for the only people who are now in a civil war with their European imperialism, the Portuguese colonies?

We should not lose sight that this European document, which does not revolve around the only two places of European imperialism where there is or there may be an armed struggle, is the flipside, and has the same authors, of a document that raised the armed struggle for a whole continent: the Resolution for Latin America of the Ninth Congress of our International.

The French section and French and European imperialism

Just as the Majority comrades consider Bolivia as the Latin American model section, the French section holds equal prize in Europe. Is it perhaps because in the same way that the Bolivian section applied (with disastrous results) the resolution of the Ninth Congress, the French section is a clear reflection of the inconsistency of the European document against imperialism on the continent? We have some reason to suspect this is the case, since the European document is characterised by not having a systematic policy of denunciation of French imperialism and European imperialism in general, and for not raising as a permanent, central slogan, the self-determination of the colonies and semi-colonies of these empires.

Let's begin with *Rouge*

What articles has *Rouge* published about European imperialism and its Vietnam? Throughout 1972 and so far in 1973, *Rouge*, the official organ of the French section, has devoted three. The first was entitled “Halt the arms shipments to the Portuguese colonialists!” It says:

“The French bourgeoisie, which has considerable holdings Portugal itself and in the Portuguese colonies, actively participates in providing military (and other) support to the Portuguese colonialists, above all by furnishing arms to the Portuguese army. France is one of the most important suppliers of the Portuguese army.

“Halt the arms shipments to the Portuguese colonialists! Long live the struggle of the peoples of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea.”⁴

Second article: a declaration by the Political Bureau of the Communist League, which took up half a column in the “International Notes” section, which states: “We call on the French and Portuguese workers to arouse public opinion and strengthen their unity against Portuguese colonialism and the French government’s support to Lisbon.”⁵

The third article was a page dedicated to the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies. It says:

“The French revolutionary militants should bear in mind that many French corporations are taking part in the pillage of Mozambique and that only a few months ago [Finance Minister Valéry] Giscard d’Estaing, was there on a ‘safari’. We must also demand of the leaders of FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC to enter France. Finally, we must participate in solidarity actions like those held by our comrades of the IMG when [Portuguese dictator Marcel] Caetano came to London.”⁶

That’s it. Being a struggle for national liberation whose historical importance to European imperialism is almost as great as that of Vietnam for Yankee imperialism our French comrades do not shine much. And yet, these three quotations are enough to show they do not lack the courage to denounce their imperialism. Why, then, is there no campaign of systematic denunciation? Simple, because the Majority comrades who head the French section give it the importance they consider it merits; the same importance evidenced reading the European document— for them, this is an entirely secondary task.

It would be good for every French comrade to compare a collection of *Rouge* with a collection of *The Militant*. Thus they could study the systematic campaign of our American comrades on a similar theme: the Vietnamese guerrilla struggle against their empire. In the entire collection of *The Militant*, there isn’t a single issue in which great importance is not given to the defence of the guerrillas and the denunciation of their imperialism. But, as we know, for the Majority comrades, this is “archaeo-Trotskyism”.

French imperialism

The comrades in the leadership of the Communist League may reply that, if in two years they only made three references to the Portuguese guerrillas, this is because they are semi-colonies of Portugal, and not of their own, French, imperialism. We have already said this is not the case, the Portuguese colonies are colonies of European imperialism in general, plus American and Japanese imperialism. But let’s see what happens with French imperialism.

If we analyse French economic reality we discover that French imperialism still exists and exploits its former colonies, although most of them are now politically independent countries. Treaties such as OCAM establish a semi-colonial relationship with these former colonies. The Yaounde I and II treaties extend this relationship to the European Common Market. The Evian Accords placed the Maghreb countries under the control of France and Europe. As if this were not enough, there are military bases in Djibouti and Malagasy, which have units ready to “intervene” to

⁴ *Rouge*, No. 164.

⁵ *Rouge*, No. 167.

⁶ *Rouge*, No. 216.

the “calls” of Francophile governments, as it has been doing in Chad, trying to crush the uprising headed by the Liberation Front of Chad (Fronilat).

French imperialism clearly exists and it is relatively powerful.

When we set out to track down what policy the comrades in the French section have taken against their imperialism, we had a promising start. The Central Committee in late August 1972 launched “a campaign against French colonialism, for the acquittal of Courbain (a leader of the Martinique Liberation Movement) and to present proposals on these questions to the French revolutionary organisations.”⁷ More promising still was the denunciation of *Rouge* that “French imperialism, ‘our’ imperialism, occupies a select position on the Olympiads of colonialism: after Portugal (of which, by the way, it is one of the principal arms suppliers) France is today the number two direct colonial power in the world.”⁸ The promise seemed to become reality when *Rouge* told us: “Revolutionaries fighting inside the metropolitan centre are duty-bound to carry out permanent propaganda against colonialism. Against chauvinism, against ignorance, it is up to us to show the true fact of French colonialism.”⁹

When the French comrades said that France was the number two direct colonial power, they told a half-truth, and this is no accident. France ranks third or fourth in the list of indirect colonial powers: it maintains semi-colonial relations with its former colonies and also acts as a junior partner of Yankee imperialism in the exploitation of some of its major semi-colonies, such as Argentina. By not attacking the foundation of French imperialism which is the exploitation of the semi-colonies, *Rouge*, whatever it may say on the colonies, will never be making a consistent anti-imperialist campaign. The bulk of the French imperialist foreign investments are based in their semi-colonies and in those colonies and semi-colonies of other empires for which France acts as a junior partner. Therefore, *Rouge*, while only denouncing French dominion over its colonies, will not be doing a consistently anti-imperialist campaign. It is also striking that they don’t talk of political and economic self-determination for the colonies. They don’t say “Out with French imperialist monopolies in the semi-colonies!” Nor “For an immediate break with all semi-colonial treaties.”

Anyway, excited about the promise of a “permanent propaganda campaign against colonialism”, albeit partial, we reviewed the 86 issues of *Rouge* from 6 January 1972 until 19 October 1973. We had a big disappointment. We found 23 articles in total, i.e. an average of one article every four issues. That is, the Communist League comrades denounce their imperialism once a month.

These articles are mostly descriptive. That is, they do not constitute a permanent campaign; they’re not unified around any central slogan and, with few exceptions, these articles are signed or are reproduced statements of national liberation movements and not official positions of our French section.

The 86 issues of *Rouge* we reviewed include a total of 1548 pages. Of these, the colonial problem took 11, i.e. the denunciation of French colonialism occupies much less than one per cent of the official organ of the Communist League. Finally, of the 23 articles we found, two fill two pages each, four which fill a page and three others take up half a page each. The remaining 14 articles take up less than half a page each, i.e. they are entirely secondary in relation to the newspaper as a whole.

What the program, the Central Committee and the Congress of the Communist League say

This shortcoming is not exclusive to *Rouge*. Both in the analysis and the program of the French section, one must work hard to find any mention of France colonies and semi-colonies.

The last Congress of the Communist League opened with a document approved by the Central Committee: “*Ce qui veut la Ligue Communiste*” [“This means the Communist League”]. Neither in

7 *Rouge*, No. 170.

8 *Rouge*, No. 174.

9 *Rouge*, No. 176.

this paper nor any of its documents did the leadership of the League discuss the crisis of French imperialism. It is as if Martinique, the Guianas, Ivory Coast, Togo didn't exist, as if millions of francs were not invested by the French monopolies in their colonies and semi-colonies and in the colonies of other imperialists where they act as junior partners. The national document of the League centres on the analysis of the crisis of capitalism and the "neo-capitalist system" and there's not a single mention let alone a chapter or paragraph on French imperialism.

The programmatic part of such document is slightly better than the analytical part since it includes the immediate recognition of "... the right to self-determination and independence of the so-called Overseas Departments and Territories (TOM-DOM)" and it supports "... the struggle for national independence" and the "national independence of the TOM and DOM".¹⁰

These words were said in passing, without raising the liquidation of the semi-colonial covenants, such as the OCAM, Evian, etc. Finally, throughout the document, consisting of 171 pages, the importance given to the issue of French imperialism can be gauged from the fact that all references to it include only two pages.

Let's leave this document behind and see to what extent the leadership of our French section is concerned with the fact their country is imperialist. The Central Committee of 8 and 9 January 1972 voted four campaigns: education about "The socialism we want and how to achieve it"; Vietnam and the Indochina Solidarity Front (FSI), for the release of three French comrades imprisoned in Spain, and of denunciation of General Massu (assassin of the Algerian war). Except for this last point, which is only very indirectly related to it, of the French colonial problem, not a word is said.

The August Central Committee voted, at last, a campaign which we already saw was not systematically conducted by the official organ.

The Congress of the Communist League did not raise the slogan of national self-determination of the French semi-colonies. The May Day Manifesto did not mention European or French imperialisms. The political resolution adopted by the Congress doesn't even name French imperialisms; much less the right of national self-determination.

The electoral campaign

We still had a little hope: the election campaign. This was a wonderful opportunity since it allowed us to spread our propaganda on much broader sectors of the population. But overall, the election campaign forgets about imperialism. Its three axes, as we see in *Rouge*, are quite clear: "In the first place, it must be an intense campaign of capitalist denunciation... This means denouncing capitalist exploitation, oppression, and capitalist repression in all their forms. (...) Second, our campaign must be a campaign of demystifying the common program and the Union of the Left. (...) Third, revolutionaries should use their campaign to expose bureaucratic 'socialism' which, no matter what he says, George Marchais still supports..."¹¹

We also discovered that [presidential candidate Alain] Krivine spoke against French imperialism in Martinique, a French colony. But we ended up disappointed in regards to anti-imperialist propaganda in the heart of imperialism, i.e. in France.

Besides, the election manifesto of the League doesn't even mention France is an imperialist country, nor it deigns to say it has colonies and semi-colonies.

What an abysmal difference with the SWP comrades! They have never made a Congress that did not have as one of its major axes the fight against their imperialism! They have never made an electoral campaign that did not raise the denunciation of their empire and the specific struggle against it. No matter if their tactics were correct or not since it is a question of principles. The SWP throughout its political history has revealed itself as Trotskyist and Leninist to the end. First and

¹⁰ *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, National document, p. 167 and 161.

DOM is a French acronym for Overseas Dominions and TOM is an acronym for Overseas Territories. (Editor)

¹¹ *Rouge*, No. 186.

foremost, it denounces its imperialism. The Communist League, with a confusing and abstentionist orientation, has been unable to consistently denounce the imperialist role of its bourgeoisie, although, we repeat, has no fear to do so with vigour the few times it does. We also know the practical activity of the French comrades against their imperialism. Unfortunately, this practice is not reflected consistently when they write or perform their core campaigns.

And finally let's see what [party leader Henri] Weber said, apparently on behalf of the party, in a programmatic article on the election campaign. He explained the "real transitional program to socialism" in France, as follows: "... for our part, we say to the communist workers: a genuine workers' government would not limit itself to nationalising 13 new trusts and instituting a phony form of workers' control. It would nationalise without indemnity or repayment, the main capitalist corporations, to assure that the public sector becomes the dominant sector of the economy. It would at the same time nationalise foreign trade, to remove the economy from the unchecked control of the world capitalist system. It would place the public held corporations under workers' control and would give supervisory committees—which would be made up of workers delegates, who are elected and can be recalled at any moment— real power and the real means for supervising their factories. In the factories in the private sector, it would institute workers supervision over production recognising and protecting the workers' supervisory committees. The power of the workers over the entire economy would be exercised through the democratic elaboration of an economic plan that would be debated in every worker's council and approved by their national congress. The realisation of such an economic program by a government that, moreover, would have at its disposal a 'new logic of development', assuring a prodigious growth of the productive forces. But this would require something quite different from an electoral victory. It would require the existence of a 'mass movement of unparalleled breadth', which alone would be capable of expropriating the bourgeoisie and dismantling its state. In short, it would require a social revolution."¹²

Not a word about the liquidation of French imperialism, nor of economic and political freedom for the colonies and semi-colonies, i.e., on the right of national self-determination. Curious neglect by one of the main leaders of the League.

This neglect is not accidental. Comrade Weber's article follows the same conception of the European document and the leadership of the French section: denunciation of and of struggle against its imperialism is not one of the central tasks of the revolutionary party of the French proletariat.

Hence, the Central Committee and the French section have characterised the Union of the Left as a "global reformist project" and not a popular front.

There is another more serious problem: at no time was the Union of the Left defined as a pro-imperialist project, as Trotsky defined the popular front in Spain and France. What do the Majority comrades think? Is the Union of the Left pro-imperialist or anti-imperialist? They must be careful when answering this question because in a metropolis, like France, to be anti-capitalist is tantamount to being anti-imperialist, and if it is a "reformist" project, it can hardly be anti-capitalist. But, if it isn't anti-capitalist, how can the comrades in the leadership of the League explain that they have not denounced the pro-imperialist character of the Union of the Left?

This "oversight" contrasts sharply with the fact that the same document calls as a major task the "Indochinese work" and they propose a united front on Indochina with the Communist Party. That is, the anti-imperialist work that arises is that which has to do directly with different imperialism, Yankee imperialism.

Ten Commandments or one single correct policy?

At the beginning of this chapter, we identified five serious flaws in the European document. We have discussed extensively one of them, the lack of a consistent policy against imperialism. But these are not all the observations we must make.

¹² *Rouge*, No. 190.

Ten central tasks and no fundamental political axis

The document says in Europe there are currently ten central tasks that: “are the tasks whose achievement will stimulate the dynamic of mass struggles and the growth of class consciousness...”¹³

The authors assert these tasks have a deep inner connection. We believe the opposite: that, rather than a program, it is a list that can be taken in any order, from front to back or back to front, because it does not matter. It looks like a catechism of Ten Commandments, all very important, and none more important than another, from “workers’ control” to “systematically popularising” the “socialist model”.

What is the axis of all this programmatic scaffolding for Europe? It is impossible to know because the document does not answer this question. It doesn’t answer it because it can’t; because these axes vary from country to country, because in every European country there is a specific situation of the class struggle, which needs specific slogans. Are we saying with this that we should give up an analysis of the whole European situation? Not at all; such analysis is very important as a starting point for the national analyses. If we say, for example, there are one or two vanguard countries, which point to a trend for all of Europe to enter a pre-revolutionary situation, this analysis is then essential to formulate policy for each country. But if we limit ourselves to this general analysis, we will be unable to formulate policy for each country.

Nor do we expect the document to be a long list of countries with a specific political line for each one. The correct way would be to define the essential features of the policy for the countries that are in a similar situation. What is the policy for Ireland that lives a special situation? What is the line for France and Italy that face great defensive economic struggles? What is the line for Spain and Greece that suffer fascist or semi-fascist dictatorships? These are the specific questions that the majority’s document does not answer.

A document which doesn’t arm *the militants*

Political documents must serve so that all our militants, after reading them, know what to do the following day at their factory, their school, their university or on the street. That is, so the day after the World Congress *the militants* are armed to throw themselves to their revolutionary task of mobilising the masses and upholding and strengthening the party.

Does the European document of the Majority comrades serve for this? Does it serve, as Lenin put it, for militants to grasp “the first link in the chain”? Where should a worker militant in Belgium begin? By “supporting the daily struggles of the masses” or by defending “a series of transitional demands centred on workers’ control”? What about a Spanish militant? Should he begin with “systematically popularisation of our socialist model” or by “educating the working-class vanguard on the need for armed self-defence”? And a British militant? Will he start with “international propaganda in solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggles” or by “educating the masses in non-electoralist and non-parliamentarist views”?

Many of these ten tasks are correct, but if we give equal importance to all, we are forced to carry out the ten tasks at the same time.

Obviously, they cannot do it, because the situation of the class struggle is different in each country and requires beginning with a different task. Therefore, we say that this document doesn’t arm *the militants* and, thus, it is not a useful political document for the development of the class struggle or our International.

But besides, this enumeration has missing tasks, some highly important.

¹³ International Majority Tendency, “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 17.

First major omission: economic slogans

According to the document, in the coming months and years, there will be growing unemployment and a lowering of the standard of living in Western Europe. This means, at this time the offensive is in the hands of the bourgeoisie in most of the European countries, which is the reason for the disruption of the equilibrium. This reality is the source of almost all of the current workers' struggles. The European masses are already developing major defensive economic struggles; they fight to defend their living standards and their jobs and not to win new economic concessions from the bourgeoisie.

If there is such economic offensive on the workers' movement if the workers' movement has begun to mobilise to defend itself against this offensive, why there isn't a single slogan around this problem throughout the European document? It only says, in passing, that we must take part in economic struggles however modest or reformist they are. This is quite good but, with what slogans do we participate in them? If we limit ourselves to participate without raising any general slogan to mobilise broad sectors, aren't we falling into unionism? Why not raise our transitional slogans of "sliding scale of wages and hours of work", or some tactical adaptation of the same? For this entire period, why not raise the slogan of "Stop the capitalist offensive against the working and living standards of the workers' movement"? Why don't we start raising the line of workers' united front to stop this offensive? By not doing so, are we not condemning these economic struggles to its original reformist framework, which is where reformists and bureaucrats want to keep them in?

This first omission may have to do with the latest five-year tactic voted by the Majority comrades: to work primarily on the vanguard.

But, regardless of where it comes from, the absence of defensive economic slogans disarms us in the face of the concrete struggles the workers are carrying on in important countries of the continent, and those which will continue to unfold in the immediate future.

Second major omission: democratic slogans

This bourgeoisie's economic offensive will be inevitably accompanied by a political offensive: a trend towards reactionary governments, the curtailment of democratic rights, to attacking the most exploited sectors of the workers, etc. That is, it will be open a defensive political stage, where the bourgeoisie will break the equilibrium, and, initially, the workers and other exploited sectors will try to maintain it.

Each new "hardening" by some government will press upon the masses the need to mobilise to regain the lost democratic right or to defend those under attack.

But the European document does not prepare our sections for this situation. Its indifference to the basic democratic slogans begins by not raising "British troops out of Ireland and Portuguese troops out of the colonies" and it continues by leaving abandoned the Spain, Greece and Portugal sections, whose semi-fascist regimes have destroyed all democratic rights.

What do we tell the workers in these countries? To struggle for "workers' control" or for our "socialist model"? Wouldn't the Majority comrades think it's much more correct if we raised some specific democratic slogan (constituent assembly, free elections, freedom for political prisoners, legality for political parties, or some other more suitable)?

The contempt for democratic slogans reaches the omission of the old slogan of our International for the unification of Germany into a Soviet and socialist Germany. The task of restoring the German people their right to form a unified nation with a unified and socialist state is the largest democratic task posed for Europe, much more than the independence of Ireland. It is a task that confronts both imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy and which can only be fulfilled by defeating them; by the socialist revolution in the West and the political revolution in the East. However, the Majority comrades ignore it.

Third major omission: the workers' and peasants' government

The European document considers the possibility of a coming victory of the socialist revolution in some country in Western Europe but it doesn't raise the central slogan of "workers and peasant's government". However, in most European countries —or at least in a very important number of them— this revolution will take place through the alliance of the working class with the peasantry and impoverished sectors of the urban petty-bourgeoisie.

For the revolution to triumph, the proletariat must win the leadership of all the other classes involved and it must, therefore, have the policy to win them over. Our party, as historical representative of the proletariat, must have, therefore, a transitional program for those classes or class sectors. We do not understand how we propose to popularise our "model" of socialism and in this model, the alliance of the working class and the peasantry doesn't fit in.

Not having a transitional program for the poor peasantry and middle class of the cities to make possible and put the workers in the leadership, has all the appearance of a workerist position and makes seizing power impossible.

How can we be asked to vote for a document which on the one hand says in the coming years there will be a "first socialist revolution" and on the other, it does not include among the ten central tasks the workers' and peasants' government, the only way to make this socialist revolution? We are flexible but there are things we cannot understand. We hope the Majority comrades explain them to us someday.

The program for immigrant workers

Immigrant workers are not a small marginal sector of European bourgeois society or economy; on the contrary, they are one of its pillars. In France, for every four manual workers, one is an immigrant worker, which means they constitute a quarter of the backbone of the workers' movement. For this fundamental sector, the resolution of the European document considers it enough to state in a subsidiary clause among the ten central political tasks that we organise campaigns of "solidarity with immigrant workers (in opposition to any form of racism or anti-foreignism)". This term —"solidarity"— means they are alien to us in some way. Put another way, according to the document, it is not the job of our parties in Europe to have a transitional program for this sector but only to have "solidarity" with their struggles, as if they were taking place in distant countries. The best proof of this is that the resolution refers to this as part of the international tasks and not as part of our national agenda for each section. It goes together with the solidarity with "anti-imperialist struggles", "workers' struggles in other European countries" and "anti-bureaucratic struggles in Stalinised workers' states".

Immigrant workers are one of the main and perhaps the main area of immediate or short-term work for many of our European sections. This work can be, will be, the basis of many "unity outflanking" manoeuvres with the reformist organisations that ignore them. This will be the sector hardest hit by unemployment and poverty and the hardening of the regime. This process will be parallel to the colonial process, in the attempt by imperialism to escape its crisis using these inequalities. Besides, like colonialism, immigrant workers are a source of super-profits for European capitalism and, to this extent, they are an objective basis for reformism. This is an economic and social problem that neither the European document nor that of its French disciples solves.

The way the European document addresses this issue shows it doesn't consider immigrant workers part of the proletariat of each country when, as the sector most disinherited by capitalism it should be the privileged sector of our work. To the extent that they are an economically, socially and politically discriminated sector of the European proletariat, slogans for immigrant workers should be equal pay, equal political and union rights. To the extent that they come from colonies, semi-colonies or former colonies of European imperialism, we should raise all claims that have to do with national self-determination: the right to lead their neighbourhood communities by appointing their

representatives and to keep their beliefs, their language, culture and customs. We should put forth that we, the Trotskyists, are the only ones who are willing to respect their will, even if they represent only one per cent of the active population.

Let us return to a glorious tradition

Despite making a good and intense work among immigrant workers and that its paper gives importance to this issue, the French section did not take this issue as important in its national document or its election program. Moreover, in the elections, it did not raise the slogan “Down with the Fontanet decree!” For the last congress, they wrote about everything except about immigrants and colonial workers.

However, the French section of the Fourth International has a glorious trajectory and experience in this regard: our work with the Indochinese and Algerian workers. The new Trotskyist generation should study these activities that allowed us to displace the Stalinists in the leadership of the Indochinese and Algerian workers’ movement in France.

CHAPTER IV

Two trajectories

The majority falsifies our history

In the IEC meeting of December 1972, the Majority comrades adopted a resolution on Argentina in which our organisation was seriously questioned. Two of the approved theses contained a few lines as our whole history. Surprisingly, given that no documentation was provided and no attempt was made to prove what was said there, this “history” was voted.

Something similar happened when the European document was approved. By voting for the strategy of entryism *sui generis*, they approved without proof or documentation for the almost 20 year’s trajectory of Comrades Germain, Frank and Maitan.

Guerrillaism within the International

Both ballots are something akin to applying the “guerrilla” method to the inner life of our International. Both were made in surprise; no one was aware they had to vote for or against our party’s history from its origins or for a “strategy” that already belongs to the past of our International. With this method, the Majority comrades have set a dreadful precedent: historical resolutions may be voted on without any kind of preparatory discussion and documentation. They have also violated one of the reunification agreements, which was precisely to deal with issues about our political line but not those that deal with the history of our movement.

Finally, by voting for a historical issue that has nothing to do with our present policy and the current situation of the class struggle, the Majority comrades have broken a tradition of the Trotskyist movement. But although regrettable, these resolutions have already been adopted and we are forced, against our will, to refer to them.

We are punished for not obeying a lunatic

In thesis 13 of the resolution on Argentina, gratuitous statements or insinuations are made against our organisation. We’ll rebut them summarily so as not to transform this issue in one or two books. Let’s look at them.

In 1951, the leadership of the International and the World Congress recognised the Posadas’ group as Argentina official section. Commenting on this recognition, the document says:

“The choice in favour of the Posadas tendency was determined fundamentally on political grounds. The Moreno tendency was characterised at the time by a completely false analysis of the Peronist regime and by a sectarian attitude against the mass movement led by the Peronists.”¹

1 Maitan, Livio: “The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina”, op. cit., p. 19.

There is no written evidence, but this was not the case. The resolution would be right on one aspect if it had said that until 1948 (not until 1951, date of Posadas' recognition), we had a sectarian stance on Peronism. All our works about the history of our party say it. Comrades who have left the movement and who are neutral will sooner or later confirm who is telling the truth.

But for this fact, others must be added and very important ones. First, the Posadas tendency militated in the pro-Yankee social democracy, without working-class members and marginalised from the Peronist mass movement when this emerged. Second, our sectarianism didn't lead us to ignore the Peronist movement of masses; on the contrary, we were the first organisation of the left that went to work, very successfully, within the Peronist unions.² Third, the Posadas tendency, as a result of our successes in our work within the Peronist unions, made a radical shift to the Peronist workers' movement, two years after us. Fourth, this shift was, from its birth, a total ideological capitulation to Peronism, a complete and absolutely opportunistic position, the same as what they have adopted now supporting FREJULI³ and Peron in the elections of March and April.

There is a comprehensive documentation of the policy that the Posadas group had at the date of recognition. But this documentation was not made public by the Majority comrades before voting on the resolution, or afterwards; if they had done so, their claim would have been quite battered. Why? Because while our organisation denounced with all its might the Peronist government for being the first to support Yankee imperialism in its aggression against North Korea, Posadism, meanwhile, supported with all its might the Peronist government, saying that it had liberated the country from imperialism, and waged an intense campaign of agitation for South Korea and against North Korea.

When we took this issue and the corresponding documentation to the World Congress, Pablo, who was the International Secretariat official informant in favour of the Posadas group recognition, said it was not for their political positions that this group was recognised since both those relating to the Peronist government and Korea were wrong but because of its proletarian character. This supposed proletarian character made them disciplined, not pretentious petty-bourgeois as we supposedly were, defending our positions to death, and refusing to recognise our "errors". What was this great example of discipline? That Posadas, after a communication from the International Secretariat against its position on Korea, changed instantly, as if by magic, his position. This acrobatic elasticity and this obsequiousness (called "discipline" by the International Secretariat) to rotate 180° in position on the most important revolutionary struggle at that time in the entire world, was the guarantee to fulfil the true objective of the International Secretariat: the unification of Argentine Trotskyism.

Let's go to the second statement of the Majority comrades:

"During the period of the split, the Moreno group established ties to the International Committee, but on several occasions took positions which were not shared by other components of the IC and which provoked violent polemics, especially in Latin America."⁴

It is true that some of our positions were not shared by the rest of the International Committee, and caused "violent polemics". But this is not a sin. Why don't the Majority comrades say what those positions were and who was right? Why do they hide the problem behind the occult term "violent polemics"? We shall say what those polemics, which are well documented, were about.

1) A discussion with comrade Luis Vitale about whether or not we had to push in Bolivia the slogan "All Power to the COB" and the workers' and peasants' militias and; about if, since the armament of the proletariat and the peasantry existed in the form of militias disciplined to the COB, whether or not dual power existed. Comrade Vitale thought it didn't and we thought it did. After a discussion, and a strong one, comrade Vitale realised he was mistaken.

2 This earned us the accusation of being pro-Nazi by all the Argentine left which, headed by Stalinism, defined Peronism as a fascist movement. (NM)

3 **FREJULI**, acronym for the Justicialist Liberation Front, was an Argentine electoral alliance formed in 1972, made up of the Justicialist (Peronist) Party with other minor parties. It ran for the presidential elections of March 1973 and September 1973, winning both times with the candidacies of aSolano Lima and Peron-Peron, respectively. [Editor]

4 Maitan, Livio: "The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina", op. cit., p.19.

2) A discussion with the tendency headed by Luis Vitale about the Moller group in Bolivia. The Vitale tendency thought it was the most progressive of the Trotskyist groups and we thought they were revisionists of Trotskyism and the worst variant of our movement. Comrades of Luis Vitale's tendency, opposing ours, self-criticised.

3) An infernal discussion with the same comrade and his tendency on the role of Yankee imperialism. Luis Vitale argued that it was neither aggressive nor colonising Latin America, we thought it was. Comrade Vitale self-criticised, accepting our positions.

4) A very harsh discussion with the Lambertists, for being too slow to change their support from the MNA to the FLN in Algeria.

5) A new discussion, the strongest, with comrade Luis Vitale about Castroism and Cuba's role. Comrade Vitale believed that the Cuban revolution had no importance, that it did not change at all the balance of power or opened a new stage in the class struggle in Latin America; we thought otherwise.

6) Parallel to this, another discussion on armed struggle and guerrilla warfare took place. Luis Vitale argued this aspect of the program was not within orthodox Trotskyism, we said it was and that we had to incorporate the guerrilla warfare to the Transitional Program, within the general issue of armed struggle.

7) Discussion about our entryism to the "62 Organisations" of Peronist unions. Luis Vitale argued that this tactic of ours, mainly since we did not have an independent organ, was opportunistic. We argued it was indirect and tactical entryism, for a brief time, in the Peronist workers' movement. We entered the 62 organisations, i.e. a political-union organisation, where the best elements of the working class were found, and which led all the fights against the regime of the "Liberating Revolution" (the pro-imperialist coup d'état which overthrew Peron). There, we did not have to submit to any political discipline to publicly express our positions because the only requirement was to formally accept the discipline of the Supreme Council and take out our jackets at Peronist union meetings.⁵

These were all the great differences, perfectly documented, which appeared within the International Committee. Out of seven discussions, our adversaries self-criticised on three; facts showed we got it right in another three (Algeria, and the two about Cuba), and we argue we were correct on the last discussion about our tactical entryism to the 62 Peronist Organisations. But even if in the latter we had been wrong, as the Majority comrades say, were we wrong in raising these arguments and defending our positions? Were we guilty of the "violent polemics" they unleashed? Do the Majority comrades know of any other "violent polemic" that we have not mentioned? If they do, they should say which one or ones they were, and provide documentation.

In addition to the two accusations that we have seen, they made other charges against us, of theoretical and political type. Some of them are made in the letter by Domingo: "attitude towards the Peronist movement, the eventual role of the middle class, policy of alliances, characterisation of the 1938 Transitional Program, characterisation of the Chinese CP leadership and the Chinese cultural revolution." All we have to say is that we've actually made a lot of theoretical and political mistakes in our party's development, and we have self-criticised for them all. But for the Majority comrades to criticise us for those mistakes, without putting them in the political context within which we developed, is great disloyalty. Above all, because they were responsible for this political context.

We had to form ourselves completely and utterly alone. For years, the doors of our International were hermetically sealed to us for a single and fundamental "sin": for refusing to capitulate to the lunatic the Majority comrades appointed in 1951 as Viceroy of the International in Latin America: Posadas. Not saying that Posadas was an integral part of the leadership of our International, with the unconditional support of comrades Germain, Pablo, Frank and Maitan; not saying this lunatic did what he pleased for years and years; not saying that Posadas made Latin American Trotskyism go crazy raising insane positions and making febrile manoeuvres; not saying that such manoeuvres and

⁵ To take the jacket out was to become a "descamisado" (shirtless), as Peron called his sympathisers. (NM)

positions had the unconditional support of comrades Pablo, Germain and Frank; not saying that by refusing to comply with such raving lunatic we were isolated from the International, not saying all of this is not placing our trajectory within the political context in which it took place.

Moreover, the theoretical and political mistakes for which we self-criticised are not mistakes nearly as severe as stated in the resolution. But, like any theoretical problem, they deserve a more serious and better-placed discussion in the context of the whole of all our contributions.

Who fought against the opportunistic deviations of our organisation?

Finally, there is a permanent accusation against us: that we capitulated to Peronism. It is quite true that, from our entryism, and especially since the publication of *Sui generis* (Workers Word), our organisation suffered severe opportunistic deviations. All these deviations had a common parent: capitulation to Peronism and the union bureaucracy. Moreover, capitulatory tendencies had the leadership of our organisation for long periods. But those who make these charges against us forget to say that there were great tendency and factional struggles against the capitulation to Peronism. Nor do they say that comrades Ernesto González and Nahuel Moreno formed all kinds of fractions and tendencies and that they wrote many internal documents against the tendencies that capitulated to Peronism. Nor do they make it clear that this factional struggle meant for them to be marginalised in the party leadership, being left in decorative positions. To prove it, we have all the documentation that the comrades of the International need. Do the Majority comrades approve of our struggle against opportunist and capitulating to Peronism deviations carried out against the old majority leadership of *Sui generis*? Or do they make us responsible for the errors and deviations of that leadership? Do we Trotskyists approve of Lenin's struggle against the opportunist errors of the old Bolsheviks? Or do we hold him responsible for them?

The answer by the Majority comrades to this question is very important, because of precisely the previous pro-guerrilla tendencies, and the last one (of the PRT(EC)), were nurtured by those old opportunistic sectors. It is even more important because our present party is the result of the deep factional struggles we waged against them. Therefore, we estimate it is impossible, even when we demand it loudly, that the Majority comrades will categorically answer this question. If they answer they do not approve of our fight against the tendencies that capitulated to Peronism they have to support the policy of these tendencies (which they attribute to us). If they reply they approve of our struggle against them, they would vindicate, in general, our trajectory and our current party. Therefore, although they know them perfectly, the Majority comrades hide these tendency struggles and the position we assumed in them.

This document attempts to show all concrete political accusations that are made for our last period are false. We do not go into an extensive discussion of all our theoretical–political mistakes for the reason we gave: a theoretical discussion should be done in a serious and documented manner and cannot be subject to a resolution. But we still have something very important to say.

A merit exclusively ours: to continue being Trotskyists

Despite all the theoretical and political mistakes, our party is the only one in Argentina composed of Trotskyist cadres. The two official recognitions conducted by comrades Germain, Frank, Maitan and Pablo, have proved ill-fated for our movement worldwide. Posadas and PRT(EC) are today, mortal enemies of the Fourth International. And the real story is that the only consistent Trotskyism we've seen in the last 30 years in our country is from our organisation.

If the Majority comrades behaved as such, they should have said, "The Argentine party has committed in its life many theoretical and political mistakes, we have disagreed frequently with it and there are still many concrete political issues on which we disagree, but we defend to the bitter end its trajectory. We defend it because, despite our mistake of recognising Posadas and isolating the comrades from the International (thus providing a fertile ground for them to commit mistakes) until Posadas became an enemy of the International; despite that, we again made another mistake

in recognising the PRT(EC), which was demonstrated when in a short time this group became an enemy of the Fourth International. Despite all this, the comrades of the Argentine party have remained Trotskyists and have defended to the bitter end our World Party, and today, amid tough polemics, they're still defending it. We, the majority of the International, did everything possible to get the Argentine comrades to turn their back on us and our movement. Nevertheless, the Argentine comrades are now more Trotskyist than ever, they are more firmly than ever with the Fourth International, while those who we supported yesterday are our enemies today. For this reason alone, we defend the trajectory of the Argentine comrades."

But the Majority comrades say nothing like this. On the contrary, they have made themselves real censors of our organisation; they are ready to excommunicate us. What is their political right? Do they perhaps have had a spotless political trajectory, full of successes? They must believe so since they have never made any important self-criticism.

Curiously, the December 1972 resolution which we are discussing almost doesn't touch our policy towards the great facts of international class struggle, which is a shame because what best defines an organisation or tendency is precisely its international policy.

Therefore, there is no better way to demonstrate the opportunism of any organisation than to point out its capitulation against major international events. Around most of these major events, the Majority comrades of the International have erred in the analysis, characterisation, forecasts and policy. However, in most cases, we proposed a correct policy. Let's compare.

Two trajectories vis-à-vis major world events

The majority's European document predicts that there will come a period of "four or five years before the decisive battles are fought."⁶ And in the all other documents by the Majority comrades, but especially in those of Comrade Germain, the future is foreseen with comparisons relative to fascism or Nazism. It would seem that if we do not embrace their strategy, we run the danger of fascism to succeed in Latin America or the world and that, conversely, if we accept it, at least we won't fall without a fight. This true mania for predictions which are never fulfilled is a constant in the political trajectory of Comrade Germain and the best-known majority leaders. Let's do a little history.

If we had to point out some of the most important events in the economy and politics of the last 25 years, we are confident we would pick, among others, the following:

- 1) The imperialist post-war economic boom and the colossal resurgence of the German capitalist economy;
- 2) The transformation of Eastern Europe into "deformed" workers' states;
- 3) The Chinese revolution;
- 4) The USSR's permanent policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Imperialism's inability to start a world war in the 1950s;
- 5) The Stalinist trajectory and character of the Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties. The need, therefore, for political revolution and the construction of Trotskyist parties;
- 6) Intensification of the class struggle in the colonial world, to the point of uprisings in many countries (Algeria, Congo, etc.);
- 7) The Cuban revolution and its worldwide repercussions;
- 8) The aggression of Yankee imperialism in Korea and more recently in Vietnam;
- 9) The appearance of an international anti-war movement against Yankee imperialism intervention in Vietnam, with strong support in the United States;
- 10) The radicalisation of youth around the world;

⁶ International Majority Tendency, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", op. cit., p. 11.

11) The rise of the mass movement in Europe since the mid-1960s, with epicentres in France, Ireland, Greece and Spain;

12) Armed struggle, with characteristics of civil war in only two Latin American countries (since Santo Domingo): Bolivia and Chile.

All these facts are better known to the cadres of the International than national tactical problems. The Majority comrades make a “mistake” by not trying to show our opportunism and wrong method through these examples. And it’s unfortunate because on many of these key points we have had profound differences. On others, our whole movement apparently had a common assessment. Lately, some of the majority’s documents make us doubt that it has been so.

Leaving aside these latter documents, we have disagreed or criticised the following analysis of Comrade Germain or his comrades in the majority:

A) The imperialist post-war economic boom and the colossal resurgence of the German capitalist economy

By 1946-1948, most of our movement, with Pablo and Germain at the head, held that Yankee imperialism was going towards its greatest economic crisis and that the European economy would remain in stagnation and decay:

“The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by the war, and in particular continental European countries will be characterised by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economy at levels bordering on stagnation and slump.

“American economy will soon experience a relative boom since it is the only country capable of satisfying the immediate needs of the world market. This fact will facilitate the full functioning of its productive apparatus.

“However, this increased production will in a short while run up against the limited capacities of the domestic and world markets.

“The United States will then head for a new economic crisis which will be more deep-going and widespread than that of 1929-33, with far more devastating repercussions on the world economy.”⁷

Around the same time, Germain and his friends predicted that Germany would remain a backward country and were opposed “to the plans of transforming the industrial heart of Europe into an agricultural half desert.”⁸

Two years later, at the very start of the Marshall Plan, they insisted that:

“It should be noted that the policy desired and consistently applied (from the ‘Morgenthau Plan’ to the Potsdam agreements) by the victors, has been the partial destruction of this potential, the transformation of the German people into a ‘people of shepherds’, and the final disposal of its industrial potential.”⁹

In this same article, so no one would think he limited himself to describe imperialism’s plans for Germany, Comrade Germain launched another of his “famous predictions”:

“Consequently, the tendency of economic change is clearly towards a dissolution of the ‘classical’ capitalist market, and progressive pauperisation. Paralysed by the dismemberment of its very body, and despite the doses of oxygen given by American imperialism, the German economy will not be capable of a noticeable recovery.”¹⁰

7 The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International”, Resolution adopted by the International Conference of April 1946, in *Fourth International*, Vol.7 No.6, June 1946, p.170.

8 Ibid, p. 179.

9 Germain, Ernest, “The Ruin of the German economy,” *Quatrième Internationale*, January 1948, p. 31.

10 Ibid. p.39.

By 1948, nearly a year after the Marshall Plan had begun, Comrade Germain proposed a draft resolution on Germany for the Second World Congress. There he said that Germany was to be reduced to be a backward agricultural country.

Against these fatalistic conceptions of the imperialist economy in our International, a tendency formed between 1946–48, established by the English majority and our party. Among other documents, we quote from the first produced by this tendency:

“All factors on the world and European scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the coming period cannot be characterised as ‘stagnation and decay’ but rather as a period of recuperation and expansion.”¹¹

The resolution that we, as a tendency, proposed to the Second World Congress was rejected and the line of Comrade Germain, which we discussed, was adopted. The same thing didn’t happen with his draft on Germany, which was rejected by the Congress, before a motion against it by Pablo–Roura–Moreno. We mention all these facts because, except for the discussion between defencists and anti-defencists, this polemic over the economic outlook was the most important tendency struggle from the pre-war period to the Second World Congress.

It’s good to know that, despite our agreement with the British majority around this problem, we didn’t form any political tendency with them. Moreover, we voted for the policy of entryism in the Labour party of the British minority who were supporters of Pablo–Germain. And we voted this way for reasons other than those given by these comrades. We did it because we held it was the correct policy towards the stage of stillness that opened in the British workers’ movement, as a result of Labour’s betrayal and the economic reconstruction.

B) The transformation of Eastern Europe into “deformed” workers’ states

In 1946, Germain and his friends argued that the Soviet bureaucracy, because of its “class nature” advocated “private property” and “state capitalism” in Eastern Europe.

In April 1946, they defined the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy thus:

“By the intent inherent in its class nature, to combine in some way the regime of private property with a system of state capitalism, once its control over the state has been assured.”¹²

This is how the leadership of our International (Pablo, Germain, Frank), raised the thesis that there could be no structural change in the countries of Eastern Europe without the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses.

In 1948, without our foreseeing or understanding, the Soviet bureaucracy carried out this change in the structure of the Eastern Europe countries. This change caused a profound shock in our ranks. Pablo, Hansen and we began the theoretical struggle to prove that new “deformed” workers’ states had emerged, mainly in Yugoslavia, and that this was the product of the mass movement. The leader of the other tendency was Comrade Germain, who clung to the characterisation we have summarised above, which held that the states of Eastern Europe were not workers’ states but remained capitalist. Only after an arduous debate, Germain self-criticised and shifted position.

C) The USSR’s permanent policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Imperialism’s inability to start a world war

The Majority comrades held that a world war was inevitable before 1954.

In July 1951, Comrade Germain said: “It is precisely for this reason that imperialism has thrown itself into military preparations for the war, to carry it out as soon as possible after the military apparatus has reached a certain level (at most two or three years from now). No international revolutionary victory, save that of the American Revolution, can stop this march towards war by Wall Street (...) War has again become inevitable precisely because of this peculiar polarisation

11 *Quatrième Internationale*, December 1946, p. 46.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

of forces: the extreme weakness of international capitalism, and the overwhelming potential of American capitalism. The American bourgeoisie has come to understand that if delays any longer after the completion of its present armament program, it runs the risk of introducing a revolutionary crisis into its bastion.”¹³

Against what Comrade Germain said, we argued: “For world imperialism, there isn’t just one possibility: world war in one or two years as hasty Marxists believe. But for imperialism to do this or not depends on many factors, one of the most important is that the leadership of non-capitalist states, especially the Kremlin, is firmly committed to reaching an agreement with imperialism. This possibility will always be open given the counter-revolutionary and opportunistic nature of the bureaucracy that dominates the USSR and China respectively. Faced to the dilemma: either lose privileges for giving concessions to the mass movement or save the privileges agreeing with imperialism, we believe that the bureaucracy has to opt for compromise with imperialism.” “In these general conditions, Yankee imperialism finds it impossible to carry out or declare at this time the world war.”¹⁴

D) The Stalinist trajectory of Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties. The need for political revolution and Trotskyist parties

In 1954, Comrade Germain believed that the Yugoslav and Chinese communist parties were no longer Stalinist and had become centrists “approaching revolutionary Marxism”.

“Spontaneity of masses, empirical leadership, first advances in consciousness towards revolutionary Marxism: these characterise the first phase of the worldwide revolutionary wave. These three characteristics can be summed up in a single formula: the first phase of the world revolution is centrist. The term is imprecise and vague: it joins together, de facto, all the working-class political phenomena that have gone beyond reformism and traditional Stalinism, and are closer to the revolutionary Marxism. In this case, Tito and Mao Tse-tung, Bevan and the leaders of the left currents in the Japanese Socialist Party, the leaders of 17 June 1953 [East Berlin uprising] and the leaders of the Vorkouta [Soviet labour camp] strike, the first leaders of the left oppositional currents in the mass CPs (Marty, Crispin, etc.), find their place in this heterogeneous assemblage of centrists. (...) This is completely different centrism from the centrism of the 1930s, the centrism of tendencies that were moving away from revolutionary Marxism during the downturn in the revolution. This is, on the contrary, the centrism of tendencies approaching revolutionary Marxism under the pressure of the advancing revolution.”¹⁵

This analysis of the Yugoslav and Chinese parties was carried over to their respective states and our policies, with the obvious conclusion: neither the political revolution nor the construction of Trotskyist parties was on the agenda in Yugoslavia and China.

“While the Chinese CP and, to some extent, even the Yugoslav CP, are bureaucratic centrist parties, they are still under the pressure of the revolution in their countries, and we do not call on the proletariat of these countries to build new revolutionary parties or to prepare a political revolution in those countries.”¹⁶

Our characterisations and our policy towards Maoism are, in international politics, like entryism to the 62 Organisations in Argentine politics: the centre of the attacks the majority makes to us. For this, they misrepresent our positions insinuating we capitulate. They will find it impossible to prove, since, unlike them who saw the Chinese evolving towards revolutionary Marxism, we have always maintained that Maoism was a petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic current.

Not to bore our readers with quotes, we will mention only those dealing with the period of our unification with the FRIP led by Santucho, the period most attacked by the Majority comrades. For

13 “Faux Fuyant et confusion: ou de l’art de couvrir la retraite”, in Bulletin of *La Verité*, July 1951, p. 5 and 7.

14 *Frente Proletario*, organ of the Argentine POR, 5 December and 12 December, 1953.

15 *Quatrième Internationale*, July-August 1954, p. 41.

16 *Quatrième Internationale*, special issue, December 1957, p. 54.

this unification, we posed as a *sine qua non* condition the acceptance by these comrades of our 1963 International Thesis. The comrades accepted. Let us now look at these theses:

“Maoism is qualitatively different from Trotskyism because it ignores in its program and its activities the essence of Trotskyism: the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale — a world strategy, a program and an organisation.”¹⁷

One of our positions, taken out of context, as usual, may have confused the Majority comrades about our characterisation of Maoism. We called the Chinese CP, like the Yugoslav and Cuban CPs, “revolutionary”. We did so because we believed that Cuba, Yugoslavia and China fit within Trotsky’s definition that in some countries and exceptional cases an unresolvable objective situation could push petty-bourgeois parties to take power, break with the exploiters and establish workers’ and peasants’ governments. To describe these petty-bourgeois parties that have made a revolution. We used the name of “revolutionary” which the Communist International used to define bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist movements fighting against imperialism. The Communist International called “reformist” those bourgeois nationalist movements who collaborated with imperialism and they called “revolutionary” those who fought against it. But even if we had used the wrong adjective, we never said, as did the Majority comrades, that these parties could evolve towards revolutionary Marxism, but exactly the opposite.

The second issue is whether the political revolution was called for in China and Yugoslavia. We have already seen that the Majority comrades were of the view that it was not. We thought that it was, but we made a distinction between the nature of the governments of these countries and Russia, as well as between some stages of the political revolution that were raised in each of them:

“The Chinese state is not like Russia the product of a socialist economy and state conquered by the masses and whose power and economic control was snatched by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. It isn’t a highly contradictory unity of revolution – counter-revolution, such as Russia, but rather the product of a unique incomplete revolutionary process, which did not give rise to organs of workers’ power and revolutionary Marxist parties and leaders. China, like Indochina, Korea and Cuba, and possibly Yugoslavia and Poland, are revolutionary processes still in transition, dynamic, within a permanent world revolutionary process. Hence our definition as workers’ states in transition with dictatorial revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ governments, i.e., petty-bourgeois.”¹⁸

Concretely, we placed an equal sign between Cuba and China. Insisting on the differences between the latter and the USSR, we said:

“We believe that the diametrically opposite character of both governments and states should lead to a careful adjustment of the program-theory of the political revolution for both countries. First of all, we must point out that the dynamics and the stages of the political revolution must inevitably reflect the profound difference in the structure of both states and governments.”¹⁹

Then we tried to clarify the situation in China and Indochina:

“The character the process of political revolution will assume in China and Indochina has never been clarified. (...) Specifically, these countries live a political stage of transition between the revolutions of February, already accomplished, and the October revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat. This stage arises with very slow dynamics because of the lack of objective and subjective organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat: organs of power, revolutionary Marxist parties and leaders.”²⁰

Finally, we summarised our whole position as follows:

“The political revolution we envisage for Russia is qualitatively different from what we envisage for China. In the first case, we call for the urgent, immediate and massive liquidation of the current governmental regime. In China, we call for the development of the revolution in progress and in

17 “International Theses”, *Palabra Obrera*, 1963.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

this way a differentiation and a development of the workers' power that may allow us to consider, albeit in another stage, the dictatorship of the proletariat, by the means and through the struggle that continue the development of objective and subjective elements to make this dictatorship possible.”²¹

On this matter, too, we fail to see why the majority attacks us. We held that the political revolution in the “deformed” workers' states was needed, for example, China, and they held it wasn't. It is true, we confused the struggle for workers' democracy, i.e., the political revolution, with the term “dictatorship of the proletariat”. What we did argue is that the political revolution in China will take shape in a different way and with different slogans than in Russia.

Finally, we are attacked on a third matter: for having held that the Maoists are great theoretical and practical exponents of rural guerrilla warfare and a few of their military lessons should be incorporated into the transitional program (in the same way that Lenin incorporated the teachings of a petty-bourgeois current, the populists, to his conception of the party).

In these three theoretical issues, the character of the Chinese, Yugoslav and Cuban Communist parties, the problem of the political revolution and its stages in the deformed workers' states, and the matter of guerrilla warfare concerning the Trotskyist program, our International doesn't yet have a fully satisfactory theoretical answer. Many of our statements are debatable. Is it true that a democratic February stage took place in China, Yugoslavia and Cuba? Can the same definition of Cuba be applied to China and Yugoslavia? Should we incorporate rural guerrilla warfare to the Transitional Program? How do we do so?

All these theoretical issues are still raised and there our old contributions are available for the discussion on the development of a scientific and definitive theoretical answer. But, back to history, there are two certain facts. The Majority comrades argued the Chinese and Yugoslav communist parties were approaching revolutionary Marxism and we argued they were bureaucratic petty-bourgeois currents which were prevented from becoming revolutionary for the simple reason of class. The Majority comrades argued the political revolution in China and Yugoslavia was not on the agenda, and we argued it was.

E) The rise of the mass movement in Europe since the mid-1960s, with epicentres in France, Italy, Northern Ireland, Greece and Spain

Comrade Germain and his friends claimed that there would be no important problems in France and Italy during 1968 and 1969.

Let's see how they prepared to participate in the famous French May.

“In capitalist Europe, the most important problems are found on the one hand in the oldest capitalist country, England, and on the other in Spain and Greece, because the aggravation of the economic situation in Europe, where the number of unemployed has presently reached three million, has reduced capitalism's room for manoeuvre in the poorest countries.”²²

Far removed from the arena of the facts, we did not foresee what would happen. It certainly was our failure. But, what can the Majority comrades argue? What name do we give to those who could not foresee the events that, in weeks, dramatically changed the reality they were immersed in? What to say of theoreticians who live making theoretical predictions for four or five years and who don't know how to make them for two or three months? And to think they criticise us for not having foreseen the Argentina situation one or two years in advance!

F) Armed struggle, with characteristics of civil war, in only two Latin American countries (since Santo Domingo): Bolivia and Chile

In 1971, Comrade Germain and his friends said there would be an armed struggle in Latin America, except in Bolivia and Chile.

21 Ibid.

22 Resolution of the IEC of the Fourth International, February 1968.

The majority has insisted, over and over again, that for our entire continent armed struggle was on the agenda. Virtually there was no country where not to tactically implement the strategy of “armed struggle”, so dear to Comrade Germain. But in 1971, there were countries where, according to the Majority comrades, the armed struggle was not “on the agenda”.

Less than two months before the fall of Torres, Comrade Frank stated: “For the time being, but for how long no one can say, the armed struggle is not today on the agenda in Chile or in Bolivia.”²³

At beginning the of Torres government, Comrade Blanco, expressing the opinion of the minority, said the opposite:

“Thus, Leninist work is required not only in Peru, where we are in a holding pattern but also in Bolivia and Chile which are or could be on the verge of armed struggle.”²⁴

G) The bloody end of the reformist experience of Allende in Chile

In 1971, Comrade Germain and his friends held that Allende and imperialism would move in agreement towards a democratic alternative.

To see how the Majority comrades characterised this Latin American bourgeois nationalist governments and their relations with imperialism, nothing better than to refer to an article by Comrade Mandel “Imperialism and the National Bourgeoisie in Latin America”.

“It is in this change of economic interests where we must seek the explanation for the strange complacency that American imperialism has displayed up to now concerning the nationalisations of General Velasco, General Ovando and even those prepared by Allende. ‘Compensation and permission to reinvest in our country’s manufacturing sector of is all we ask.’

“‘Military reformism’, acting as the last barrier to ‘Castroist’ or ‘anarchist subversion’, this is the strategic line that American imperialism seems to have adopted since the Rockefeller report.”²⁵

And in particular, referring to the Allende government, *La Gauche*, an organ closely linked to Comrade Germain, said:

“Nationalisation of the copper mines has been the most spectacular of these measures. But this kind of action is no longer an affront to the imperialists. Given the ever-growing threat of revolution in Latin America, which threatens to definitely overturn their interests, the imperialists have decided, after Rockefeller’s tour, to modernise the forms of penetration in the area.

“Now imperialism is withdrawing from the extraction of raw materials, which was the principal and crudest form of plundering the third world. Such a turn allows an apparent liberalisation of the economy and social life, for limited sectors, of course. That is why the atmosphere seems to be loosening up in Latin America. Imperialism has new perspectives. The military ‘left’ regimes have the wind on their sails. And with this perspective, Allende could very well provide a democratic alternative to go in perfect agreement with the plans that neo-imperialism has for Latin America.”²⁶

While the Majority comrades made this type of characterisation, we argued the exact opposite:

“At the moment the Chilean bourgeoisie is unified behind the Allende government in support of the expropriation of the copper mines, creating a situation of great friction with the United States...”²⁷

“The continuation of the workers’ and peasants’ uprising in Chile and the bourgeoisie’s manoeuvres and pressure against Allende’s populist concessions and of imperialism against the

23 Frank, Pierre, “Letter to the 1971 SWP Convention”, op. cit., p. 16.

24 Blanco, Hugo, “Carta a Livio Maitan” [“Letter to Livio Maitan”], 17 October 1970, in *Boletín de Informaciones Internacionales* of the SWP No. 3, October 1973, p. 110.

25 Mandel, Ernest: “Imperialismo y Burguesía Nacional en América Latina” [“Imperialism and the National Bourgeoisie in Latin America”], *Revista de America*, July-October 1971, p. 33 & 34.

26 *La Gauche*, 8 January 1971.

27 *La Verdad*, 27 October 1971

nationalist measures will be raising the boiler's pressure despite the 'good behaviour' the government may try and the brakes applied by the reformist parties and the trade union bureaucracy."²⁸

"The only path to socialism for the Chilean workers is the revolution. The worker, student and peasant vanguard, without making concessions to the reformism of Unidad Popular, must develop the organisation and mobilisation of the masses for their economic and political demands. On this basis, and with methods of class struggle, they must be at the forefront of the defence of the Allende government against the attacks from the right and the bourgeois imperialist coup, without giving the slightest trust to the Allende leadership. This is the only method that guarantees what has been won: the other, Allende's method, prepares defeats like those of Peron or Torres."²⁹

It's time to make a balance sheet

We have reported the most important points on which there were differences between the majority and us. It would be disloyal of us to deny that, among their blunders, the Majority comrades have had some important successes, like their propaganda and activity in the process of the Algerian liberation struggle, and have supported from the beginning, as soon as the first news of its existence was received, the Castro guerrillas in Cuba, as well as their denunciation of the Yankee aggression in Korea and Vietnam, the recognition of the new youth vanguard, etc. Yet, on these issues, they were not totally correct, either. The policy of entryism *sui generis* was also reflected in them (not so much in Cuba where we had nothing, as in Algeria, where there was a group of our International). In Algeria this policy led to change the axis of entryism, no longer was it Stalinism as it was at a world scale, but into the FLN. The result was political claudication to that petty-bourgeois movement, with our comrades ending up as something like advisers to it. Our participation in the Algerian process failed to achieve, as a minimum, the building of a strong section of our International.

We have been accompanying each of the chapters of this history with the relevant documentation. That is, we have fulfilled a fundamental methodological requirement that the Majority comrades cannot deliver because if they did, they would bring down the false stories about our organisation and their trajectory, which they are circulating throughout the International.

However, despite being documented, and although we can contribute at any time the proofs we may be asked, we will not fall into the same methodological error of the majority, as it would be to propose that an organ of our international vote this history of the trajectory of the majority.

If our International wants to remain the world revolutionary party of the working class, it must return to the tradition of voting only political resolutions to arm all its cadres for the class struggle, never historical balances of the political trajectory of any organisation or tendency.

The aim of this chapter is to show on which points we disagreed, on which side were the successes and on which side were the mistakes in over 25 years of struggle to build the International. The new cadres of our movement are now in position to make that balance sheet. Regrettably, the result is obvious: the bulk of the errors were committed by the comrades who today lead the majority tendency.

The cause of so many mistakes

After many years of studying the positions of the comrades and of polemics with them we can say, without fear of being mistaken, that the source of their errors is impressionism. This impressionism consist in isolating from its context one or more spectacular events —“impressive” ones— and ignoring opposing trends, i.e. by granting them favourable to the maximum dynamics, and from there to draw their conclusions. These events are often the bourgeois analysis or the actions of the vanguard because they occupy the front pages of the newspapers, although the size of

28 *La Verdad*, 11 October 1971.

29 *La Verdad*, 15 December 1971.

the news is unrelated to its importance to the mass movement. We will try to explain how the world events that we have summarised above “impressed” the majority.

A) The journalistic commentary of the years 1946–1948 was that Europe and Germany were exhausted after the war and that there was a Morgenthau plan³⁰ to keep Germany as a backward country. Comrade Germain wrote all the atrocities we saw because he believed devoutly the plans of imperialism, especially the Morgenthau plan would come into operation. He did not think, like we do (and like any good Marxist does), that the “rational”, subjective plans of imperialism in the economic sphere are rarely if ever, fulfilled because the “irrational”, objective laws of capitalism and imperialism prevail instead. On the contrary, Comrade Germain translated into a Marxist language his belief in the plans of imperialism and drew the general conclusion that Europe was doomed to stagnation and decay and Germany to be an agricultural country for eternity.

B) Stalinism, faced with the rise of the mass movement, was making attempts at conciliation with Eastern European imperialism and capitalism. These were its “plans”. But the plans of the bureaucracy could not overcome the objective laws of the class struggle either. Comrade Germain, forgetting the social character of the bureaucracy and revising the Marxist analysis, concluded that conciliation with capitalism and private property was an “eternal quality” of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. This bureaucracy, as a product of a workers’ state (and precisely “for reasons inherent in its social nature”), could not co-live (or combine) with “private property”, much less with capitalism (whether state or private) and imperialism in the countries the Red Army had entered.

C) Then the Cold War came and the US armed itself to the teeth to attack the USSR, while every newspaper in the world was saying that only a miracle could prevent the Third World War. Comrade Germain, in agreement with Pablo’s ideas, forgot one detail (the same one that bourgeois journalists forget in their descriptive and mechanical analyses): the class struggle at a world scale. And he launched the theory that war was inevitable once the United States’ armament plan (again a “plan” appears here) were ready. The class struggle taken as a whole was powerless to influence this “plan” of imperialism. For Comrade Germain, as for the bourgeois press, only a miracle (he said the American Revolution) could prevent a world war in the short term.

D) Tito had broken with the USSR and Mao had led a great revolution, the greatest since the Russian revolution. An explanation of these phenomena was needed. Comrade Germain forgot that, for Trotskyists, when a petty-bourgeois or bureaucratic leadership is forced by circumstances to lead a mobilisation (from a strike to the seizure of power), it doesn’t, therefore, cease to be petty-bourgeois or bureaucratic.

And he took a revisionist position, which is a constant in the Majority comrades (as the SWP comrades have comprehensibly demonstrated) and which can be summarised as: “any reformist or bureaucratic party which leads the masses to power ceases to be such.” Based on this assertion, Pablo, supported by Comrade Germain, concluded that Tito, Mao and their parties had ceased to be bureaucratic and Stalinist and that they approached revolutionary Marxism. Therefore, the political revolution was not called for in Yugoslavia and China. Nowadays, the Majority comrades again raise the same revisionist conception of the years 1951–1956 regarding China.

And thus Pablo and his friends closed the loop of their analyses of the great revolutionary wave of the post-war period without having been correct in a single serious prediction.

E) But the new European uprising, which originated in the 1960s, came and Comrade Germain, avid reader of economic reports and addicted to translating those reports to his conclusions, didn’t fare any better than before. As the worst economic situation took place in England, Spain and Greece, these three countries were facing the “most serious problems”. Thus he repeated his economist error of 1951 when, based on the American armament plan, he made his prediction of the outbreak of war.

30 The **Morgenthau Plan** (proposed by US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau), advocated that the Allied occupation of Germany following the Second World War included measures to eliminate Germany’s ability to wage war by eliminating its armament industry, and the removal or destruction of other key industries basic to military strength. [Editor]

Comrade Germain, instead of taking class struggle as a whole, and the economic factor as an important element to be taken into account, did exactly the opposite: he ignored it.

If he had used the Marxist method, he would have realised that the student movement could blow up at any time; that France was coming from solving serious colonial problems (such as the Algerian War), which combined with the Vietnam War, and that there was a leftist tradition in the student movement; that, ultimately, the new uprising had to retake the old experiences and, finally, that the French and Italian workers' and revolutionary movement had been the most powerful in the immediate post-war period, and logically they had to reconnect. Comrade Germain noticed none of these when he made his prediction for Europe in the resolution of the EIC in February 1968.

F) The rise of the European student movement filled our ranks with enthusiastic admirers of Guevara's guerrilla warfare and Fidel Castro's Cuba and the Guevarist theses began to become fashionable around us. One of these theses holds that the more reactionary a regime is, the better the conditions for armed struggle; and, conversely, the more democratic it is, the more such conditions deteriorate until their practical disappearance. The Majority comrades, continuing their tradition to follow and to make our International follow the fashions that appear on the European intelligentsia and in the student movement, transferred this Guevarist thesis to our ranks. This is how Comrade Frank wrote, on behalf of the majority of the United Secretariat, the letter to the SWP where he stated that the only Latin American countries where there was no possibility of armed struggle were Bolivia and Chile, where there were "coincidentally" at the time, regimes with broad democratic margins. A prediction opposed by the vertex to what happened.

G) Finally, the emergence of bourgeois nationalist regimes also took Comrade Germain and his friends by surprise. They came from saying that there was no perspective of regimes of such characteristics that would make economic and democratic concessions to the mass movement. But when they made their appearance and the bourgeois journalism began to speak of them, they could not but accept their existence.

But, how to explain them? The minority did so based on the friction of the national bourgeoisie with imperialism and the pressure of the mass movement on the rise. The majority could not be satisfied with these simple reasons based on the situation of the class struggle. So they turned, again, to the scholarly study of imperialism's plans, in this case, the "Rockefeller Report". And from there they extracted the new category of "military reformism" and they concluded that a reformist government, in this case of Allende, "may very well offer a democratic variant that would fit perfectly with development plans that neo-imperialism has for Latin America". It is unfortunate for the authors of such forecast, and much more for the Chilean masses and Salvador Allende, that imperialism did not pay as much attention to the "Rockefeller Report" as the Majority comrades did.

Our proposal

The furthest thing from our minds is to want to convince the new comrades that we have not made mistakes, or that we want to vote a resolution justifying all our past policy. Posadas used to always sneer at us because in all oral and written reports in our Party we routinely stopped to recount the mistakes we had made so we could draw a conclusion. At the beginning, we were an isolated, new, and inexperienced leadership, which naturally had to make many mistakes. It was a question of every time committing increasingly fewer mistakes.

But what distinguishes us from the present majority is recognising our mistakes and that these do not have a systematic nature.

That's why we propose a deal to dear Comrade Germain, a comrade of 25 years in this hard struggle to build our International: to sign a joint statement addressed to the new cadres of the International.

In it, we should say: "we, the undersigned advise you to scrupulously study all our past positions, riddled with errors of all kinds. We do this because we want you to avoid repeating them because the only thing we are proud of is of our trajectory and not of this or that position. Our mistakes are

due to a deeper reason: we are a leadership that was built in the middle of the retreat of the mass movement during the Cold War and the capitalist economic boom.”

Comrade Germain, if you agree, we do grant you to add in the postscript that you “clarify that comrade Moreno said in his political life some more stupid things than I did.” And, although we consider it false, we promise not to form a tendency or faction to correct it.

CHAPTER V

Decennial strategies

Theory, strategy and tactics

If anything characterises Comrade Germain and his colleagues of the majority is to give a line, orientation and slogans for future events. The comrades are more concerned with looking at the crystal ball than to give a revolutionary political response to the present facts. This activity has two shortcomings: first, by looking so much at the future they are generally left without an answer (or an incorrect one) to the present; and second, that the answers for the future do not help either because from their wrong predictions arise tactics usually irrelevant or tragic.

Besides, this approach manifests itself in a mania for taking long-term strategies. It's already four years, at least, since they hold the strategy of "armed struggle" for Latin America and they clarify that it will still go for a long while. Before, they had —and kept for 17 years!— the strategy of entryism *sui generis* for the whole world.

A theoretical and strategic history of the workers' movement

To justify his last two decennial strategies, the "armed struggle" for Latin America and the "work on the vanguard" for Europe, Comrade Germain gives us a version of the history of our movement and tries to get it voted by the young cadres of our International at the next Congress. Here is this peculiar history:

"Since 1905, the revolutionary movement in the underdeveloped countries has been split between protagonists of the theory of the permanent revolution and those who defend the thesis of the revolution by stages, a bourgeois-democratic one having to be first completed before the proletarian-socialist one can start. Should we refuse to line up with the first as against the second, under the pretext that there is a 'third strategy', the 'Leninist strategy of party building'? (...) Since 1917, the international labour movement has been debating whether it is necessary to destroy the bourgeois state machine and to build a higher type of democracy, called soviet democracy, as the precondition for the proletariat conquering state power and for capitalism being overthrown, or whether parliamentary bourgeois democracy and its state machine creates the necessary institutional framework for overthrowing capitalism. Should we refuse to line up with the first as against the second, under the pretext that there is a 'third strategy,' the 'Leninist strategy of party building'?"¹

History is an objective science. The most powerful imagination cannot eliminate the historical facts and the times in which they took place. Therefore, Comrade Germain has to tell us which "underdeveloped countries" had, since 1905, this objective, historical division between supporters and foes of the theory of permanent revolution. We don't know any other than Russia and its sphere of influence. In China, Marxism comes only after 1917. In the Far East, there was a similar phenomenon.

¹ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 3.

In Latin America, it had already penetrated but the discussion in the workers' movement was between anarchists and Marxists. But even in Russia, this discussion is not a chapter in its history. Except for Comrade Germain, no one in the world doesn't know that in Russia, between 1905 and 1917, the main division was between Bolsheviks on the one hand and Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries on the other. This is the real, political history of tendencies in Russia. Similarly, the real, political history of tendencies in Germany is the struggle between Kautskyites and Bernsteinians late last century and early this one, and among Luxemburgians, Kautskyites and opportunists at a later time until the war in 1914. In Spain and France, the fight was between socialists and anarcho-syndicalists.

When Comrade Germain takes the theoretical discussions as the axis of the political history of the workers' movement's he becomes a victim, once again, of his intellectual tendencies. The theory is one of the essential elements of all currents and political organisations but it is not everything. What is fundamental is the location of currents and organisations in the process of the class struggle. This is what explains that the development of the theory of imperialism had been started by great opportunist theoreticians and not by Lenin and Trotsky, who could lead the Russian Revolution.

A revolutionary party can have an incorrect or only partially correct theory without ceasing to be revolutionary because the relationship between theory and the organisation is not mechanical but dialectical. Logically, an incorrect or false theory, which certainly will be reflected in its practice, may be overcome by the party, may cause it critical delays or may even take it to catastrophe.

We could formulate the following political theorem: a Bolshevik party may overcome its theoretical errors and lead the masses to take power, but a correct theory is sterile when the revolutionary situation comes if you have not had the previous strategy of building a Bolshevik party. And one of the demonstrations of this truth is that Trotsky, who had the correct theory, could not guarantee the victory of the Russian Revolution because he had not had the strategy of building the party. However, despite its theoretical shortcomings, the Bolshevik Party with Lenin at its head could.

The Bolsheviks were in favour of the revolution by stages but against the class dynamics that the Mensheviks attributed to it. The Mensheviks trusted on the liberal bourgeoisie to do the bourgeois-democratic revolution; the Bolsheviks trusted on the workers and peasants. Where does this fit in Comrade Germain's history? On what side of his schema are they?

Possibly he won't say it because he would have to mention that one of the key differences between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, the one that caused the split between them, had to do with the strategy of party building, a matter that is best left unsaid.

To analyse events after 1917, Comrade Germain proposes a new historical schema: the workers' movement discusses if it has to destroy the bourgeois state to impose Soviet democracy or if it can liquidate capitalism from bourgeois democracy. In Comrade Germain's version of history, where does it fit the discussions between Stalinists and Trotskyites on "socialism in one country"? Does the fight of the Third and Fourth Congress of the Communist International against ultraleft not matters? What about the debate between Stalinists and Trotskyists on the workers' united front only to defeat fascism, during the third period?

The real history of the world workers and revolutionary movement is concrete, it has names and surnames: anarchists and Marxists; revisionists and orthodox Marxists; Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; revolutionaries and opportunists; left communists and Leninists, Stalinists and Trotskyists. Within this real process, we can make a generalisation, which is the one Lenin makes: In "the struggle against which enemies within the working-class movement helped bolshevism develop, gain strength, and become steeled"? "First and foremost (...) against opportunism". But secondly, "little is known in other countries of the fact that Bolshevism took shape, developed and became steeled in the long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionism...*" which "considered itself particularly 'revolutionary', or 'Left', because of its recognition of individual terrorism, assassination— something that we Marxists emphatically rejected."²

² Lenin, VI: "Left wing communism— an infantile disorder", June 1920, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 37, 32, 33.

In short, Bolshevism was not steeled in the struggle for or against the “theory of permanent revolution”, but as in a permanent struggle against two enemies: the opportunists and the ultra-leftists. The history of the Third and Fourth Internationals is, as the history of the Bolsheviks, a constant struggle against these two deviations.

Comrade Germain’s manoeuvre is obvious. He tries to prove that, along the historical process, although with different names, the workers’ movement was always divided into two main schools of thought: supporters of permanent revolution and supporters of the revolution in stages, or those who defended the need for the destruction of the bourgeois apparatus and those proposing a peaceful way to socialism. With this, he wants to place face to face, as irreconcilable enemies, opportunism and ultraleftism, with which he eliminates both one and the other as enemies of Bolshevism. After doing this, he asks us to opt between one side and the other and to not insist on the strategy of party building. That is, he wants to encourage us to join ultraleftism against opportunism.

With this, he wants to theoretically justify his chronic tail-ending of the different positions having an impact on the vanguard in each period of the class struggle. A tail-ending whose most recent expression is the famous “strategy of armed struggle”. As he puts it, between 1905 and 1917, we should have been with Trotsky who defended the Permanent Revolution and against Lenin who defended the revolution by stages but was building the party. After 1917, we should have been with the ultra-leftists who proposed to impose Soviet democracy as the current task for all countries, and against Lenin and Trotsky who, fighting against them, were building the world party, the Third International. And at the present, we have to be with guerrillas of all stripes because the vanguard discusses armed struggle and we have to choose one of the two sides.

We say no, that before 1917 Lenin didn’t choose between ultra-leftists and opportunists; he dedicated himself to building the revolutionary Marxist party. After 1917, Lenin and Trotsky did not choose between opportunists and ultra-leftists but they fought both as part of their strategy of building the revolutionary Marxist party.

Currently, we refuse to choose between ultra-leftists and opportunists. With the modern ultra-leftists, the guerrillas, we can have only a very general theoretical agreement against the opportunists. There is no peaceful way to socialism, the armed struggle between exploiters and exploited is inevitable. And there ends our agreement. We are against both the opportunistic strategy of the peaceful road to socialism and against the guerrilla strategy of armed struggle on behalf of the party.

Against both, we are for building the Trotskyist party with mass influence; capable of leading at all times the struggle against the bourgeoisie, which includes the armed struggle.

Relationship of theory with strategy and tactics

On all these issues, what Comrade Mandel does is to confuse three basic elements of revolutionary politics: theory, strategy and tactics. The strategic objective is long-term; tactics are the means to reach that objective. The theory is neither one nor the other since it has to do with the general laws of the historical process and not with strategic or tactical objectives. Between these three elements there are close connections, yet not mechanical but rather dialectical.

Let’s start with the theory. We may disagree with Mandel’s economic analyses but agree with him on the strategic objective of mobilising the masses and building Bolshevik parties to sweep away imperialism and capitalism and to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat. This strategic agreement does not mean we agree at all times with the different theories that get developed and discarded during the process which culminates with the seizure of power and the construction of socialism.

The relationship of theory with strategy and tactics exists but it does not manifest itself immediately or directly. In its congresses, the party does not vote theories but political lines from which strategies and tactics arise. The party only identifies with a theory when it has been proven by events. Such is the case of the identification of our International and its sections with the theory

of permanent revolution, which is not a strategy or a tactic, but the general law of the revolution and the mass movement in the stage of transition from capitalism to socialism that we are living.

Regarding the issue of strategy and tactics, it is very important to remember they are relative terms. In a stage of retreat in the workers' movement, we may have a strategy to develop defensive trade union struggles. The proper tactic for that strategy may, for example, be the long strike. But the long strike is a strategy in relation to a means, a tactic: organising pickets to ensure it. And the pickets become a strategy in relation to the tactics we use to build them (if we do it publicly, elected in assembly, or clandestine, secretly chosen by the leadership of the strike). The very strategy with which we began, the development of defensive union struggles, becomes a tactic in relation to our strategic objective to achieve important victories that change the stage of retreat into a stage of a rise of the workers' movement.

Trotskyism has only two long-term strategies: To build the party and to make the revolution to take power

As Comrade Germain does not see things this way, he ridicules the fact we have used the word strategy for a short period. But the core of our polemic with Comrade Germain has to do with long-term strategies. If we can be sure of something is that for Trotskyists there are two fundamental long-term strategies at the international and national level: taking power with the workers' movement to begin to build socialism and building the party as the only tool to achieve this. In relation to these strategic objectives, everything else is tactical, albeit we may call it "strategy". To build the party and take power we can and should use the right tactics at all times: entryism, run in elections, promote the revolutionary united front, raise slogans of power, call for the armed struggle, propose defensive and ultra-minimum slogans, and so on. All tactics are valid if they are suited to the specific, present time of the class struggle and if they help to mobilise the masses and build the party. But the tactics are used and discarded as many times as the status of the class struggle changes. The tactics are never voted for long periods; they must never become long-term strategies.

Bolshevism is characterised by using all means and tactics to serve the strategy of building the party, mobilising the workers and taking power. The other currents of the workers' movement are characterised by the opposite: they confuse strategy with tactics and they raise tactics to permanent strategy. The history of Bolshevism is a constant struggle to impose the means and tactics appropriate to each moment of the class struggle. Bolshevism fought the terrorists but knew how to use terror; fought against the unionists but was able to work in the unions; fought against the parliamentarians but knew how to use parliament; fought against anarchists, but knew how to destroy the bourgeois state; fought the guerrillaists but knew how to do guerrilla warfare; fought the spontaneists but knew how to direct the spontaneous mobilisation of the mass movement. And why did it do all this? To build the Bolshevik party and mobilise the masses to take power.

An illustrative example

When Comrade Germain systematically tries to ridicule comrade Hansen, telling him that you cannot tell a worker on strike (who is embarked on picketing), that "our strategy is to build the party" he's telling a platitude which shows he understands nothing of nothing. What Comrade Germain says is something no militant with some experience in the workers' gives it a thought. If someone in a strike tells the picketing workers that our strategy is to build the party, he, in fact, opposes the building of the party to the existence of the picket because he would be saying that only those who agree with the need to build the party can be on the picket. He would be a pedant who dissolves a particular situation, a means, a tactic, into a ten-year strategy. We have never seen this mistake committed that worries Comrade Germain.

On the contrary, it may be easier for those inexperienced militants who want to quickly grasp the strikers' sympathy to commit the mistake of hiding our strategy of party building. Taking it to the extreme, it would be akin to telling those workers who are picketing that our strategy and our

core business for 10, 15 or 20 years will be picketing, whereupon we would be deceiving them and not preparing them to face future changes.

And what should we be doing? First, get to the head of this picket as the best militants, i.e. to win the strike. Second, we explain to these vanguard workers, that just as they are picketing today, tomorrow the class struggle will put forth to them to organise a demonstration, or the defence of an occupied factory or the workers' militia, or to make propaganda, or to be candidates in the elections because the fight against the bosses doesn't start or end in the strike but began over a century ago and will end when the working class takes power and builds socialism. Third, that to get to that we need a party to lead all workers, just as they lead their fellow factory workers and that we are building this party and invite them to join in. If we knew how to be the picket most dedicated militants, if we knew how to explain our policy, we will win these workers on the picket line. And this, what does it mean other than to be building the party?

The most serious mistake

We said that we must not confuse strategy with tactics. But it is far more serious to confuse a means or tactic with a decennial strategy, i.e. historical: transforming the tactics into something more than strategy, almost into a principle. If the workers only see the need to do any of these tasks, and if we do as Comrade Germain does, who turns this task on a decennial strategy, we are tail-ending the consciousness of the masses. So did Comrade Germain with the entryism *sui generis*: by tail-ending the communist parties, indirectly or ultimately he was tail-ending the mass movement. Currently, he is falling into the worst expression of tail-ending— the tail-ending he does to the vanguard.

In his polemic with the minority around the “strategy of armed struggle” voted in the Ninth Congress, Comrade Frank has shown that this is precisely the policy of the majority. In his letter to the Convention of the SWP, he correctly states our conception. For the minority ... “the majority of the International, in accepting the strategy of armed struggle for Latin America, renounces the building of revolutionary parties...”³

This is precisely what we think of the majority. But then, Comrade Frank makes another summary, and not so faithful, of our position:

“The dilemma armed struggle versus building the party does not exist for us. No more, shall we say, as the syndicalist dilemma ‘general strike versus building of the party’.”⁴

Here Comrade Frank “forgot” the most important word: “strategy”. There is no antagonism between armed struggle, the general strike and any other tactic with party-building as long as we take them for what they are, for tactics. The armed struggle, the general strike, or any other tactic oppose the building of the party when they are intended to become permanent strategies for an entire era.

How do they oppose party building? Simply because we can only build the party if we use at all times different and appropriate tactics, which change as much as the class struggle changes. If there are elections we can be electoralists. But if there are not, we must not. If peasants are willing to fight against the landlords in an armed way, we must be rural guerrillas. But if there are not, we must not. If we set on ourselves for five, 10 or 15 years to be electoralists or rural guerrilla, we tie our hands to change as much as needed the various tactics essential to strengthen the party and the mass movement along with it. Thus, repeating the same slogan as stutterers, we can never grow the party. If today a comrade poses as a permanent central strategy the general strike, we—minority and majority— would all accuse him of unionist. If he poses as a permanent core strategy to be involved in the elections, we'd accuse him of electoralist. The Majority comrades feel very indignant because we have accused them of “guerrillaists” when they voted the “rural guerrilla strategy” for an entire period and we have told them that their strategy was opposed to building the party. Now, they tell us they did not vote rural guerrilla warfare but the “armed struggle”. Well, as a central strategy for an

3 Frank, Pierre; “Letter to the 1971 SWP Convention”, in *Internal Information Bulletin*, op. cit., p. 14.

4 Ibid.

entire period, the “strategy of armed struggle” is much more dangerous than the strategy of guerrilla because in it are included terrorism, urban guerrilla and rural guerrilla, all methods of armed struggle but when elevated to strategy they represent deviations that are opposed to building the party.

Comrades Germain, Frank and the rest of the Majority comrades have done several times the same. Before they chose a tactic which tail-ended the backwardness of the masses led by Stalinism and now a tactic that tail-ends the backwardness of the vanguard impacted by Castroist guerrillas. Yesterday it was entryism *sui generis*, today it is “armed struggle” for Latin America and the work essentially towards the “mass vanguard” in Europe. We argue that Trotskyism has only two long-term strategies: building the party and mobilising the masses for taking power.

We say that converting tactics into strategies will, in the long term, go against building the party. The correctness of this assertion is demonstrated by the results had by the concessions to the Guevarists. If the Fourth International persists in making the guerrilla warfare into a strategy, this will end with the liquidation of the sections that apply it—as we have seen in Bolivia and Argentina—and eventually with the liquidation of the Fourth International itself.

The history of entryism *sui generis*

Perhaps the most typical case of Germainist behaviour of adopting a policy for a hypothetical future and of making a tactic into a strategy for the long-term has been entryism *sui generis*. If we are to be guided by the majority’s resolution on Europe, seeking to justify this strategy, it consisted of the following:

“The entryist tactic for building a revolutionary party proceeded from the hypothesis that the process of radicalisation —of forming of a new mass vanguard — was taking place for the most part within the traditional mass organisations. Such a hypothesis was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe in the period that extended from the early fifties until the beginning of 1969...

“The error committed in conceiving this tactic did not, therefore, lie in the objective perspective — which events have by and large confirmed— but in underestimating of the numerical relationship between our own forces and those we could impel to break from the mass parties in a social climate in where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared.”⁵

This new version of the analyses and forecasts that formed the basis for the tactic of entryism (a tactic which was not such, since it lasted no less than 17 years), has nothing to do with the analysis and forecasts they made when it was voted, in the early 1950s. Now it turns out that the error was simply a miscalculation of our “numerical relationship” with the tendencies that we could take to “break from the mass (opportunistic) parties”. Otherwise, “events confirmed the validity” of the “objective perspective” since the “process of radicalisation” and “of forming of a new mass vanguard” would happen “within the traditional mass organisations” for a period in where “no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared”.

It is false that these forecasts and analysis had been made when the tactic of entryism was voted.

First things first. Is it true that a period without “revolutionary tensions” was predicted? Nothing could be falsier; we have already seen that it had been predicted the world war was inevitable in the short term and that it would produce civil war. Just the opposite to the absence of “revolutionary” tensions. In this new version of history, they want to pull the wool over our eyes and it isn’t said that the inevitable world war between the USSR and imperialism was the main objective premise that justified the tactic of entryism.

⁵ International Majority Tendency, “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p.18.

Why was entryism voted?

Let's keep going. Is it true that the tactic of entryism was voted foreseeing that the "forming of a new mass vanguard" would take place "within the traditional mass organisations" and to bring these radicalised sectors to "break from the mass parties"? Again, nothing could be falsier. It is true, the emergence of centrist tendencies was predicted but it is false that entryism was voted to make them "break from the mass parties". Entryism *sui generis* was voted, essentially, based on the characterisation that the opportunist parties, as a whole, would evolve objectively towards revolutionary centrist positions and a revolutionary orientation. This is what was said when the tactic was voted and not what is now invented, 23 years later, to justify it: "It's because this movement (referring to the communist parties) is otherwise placed in such objective conditions by the evolution in the international situation towards the counter-revolutionary war of united imperialism that independently of the plans and the will of its bureaucratic leadership in the service of the Kremlin's policy, it will be forced, compelled, to radicalise (...) to outline practically a revolutionary orientation and act in case of a war, with arms in hand for power."

And, comparing this with the entryism proposed by Trotsky, it was added "... today is not exactly the same type of entryism. We don't enter these parties to exit quickly. We enter to stay in them for a long time, relying on the strong existing possibility to see these parties, placed in new conditions, developing their centrist tendencies that will lead a whole stage of radicalisation of the masses and the objective and revolutionary process in their respective countries."⁶

Where is the line to bring the centrist tendencies to break with the opportunists mass parties? Here it says clearly that these parties will develop "their centrist tendencies" and that they will lead "a whole stage" of the "objective and revolutionary process" and that's why we must enter into them. Moreover, it says that our entryism is not like the one Trotsky advocated for a brief period but "we enter to stay" in the opportunist parties "for a long time". In short, it is not within our plans at all to bring the centrist tendencies to break with them, because, if we do so, we would enter for a short term, just the time needed to define them for our positions and drag them with us in our withdrawal.

What were the leftist tendencies which, according to this new version of entryism *sui generis*, would happen in the opportunistic organisations? According to the European document of the majority, they were: "... the Bevanist left followed by the Cousins tendency in the British Labour Party, Communist Youth and Ingrao tendency in the Italian CP; opposition tendencies and UEC within the French CP, and Social-Democratic left within the SFIO giving rise to the PSA and the PSU, Renard tendency inside the Belgian workers' movement, trade union left and Communist opposition giving rise in Denmark to the SF, etc."⁷

This is a new falsification of what was said at the time when the tactic of entryism was voted. It is true, at that time there was also talk of Bevan, but it is not less true, as we have already quoted in the previous chapter, that also "Tito and Mao Tse-tung find their place" in that "centrism of tendencies approaching revolutionary Marxism". Why aren't the Chinese and Yugoslav CPs now mentioned among those tendencies of the left which, according to the Majority comrades, were forecasted with all correction and "confirmed by events"? Why hiding from the young cadres of the International that, as part of the conception which originated the tactic of entryism, it was argued that Tito and Mao approached revolutionary Marxism and so, as we have already quoted, "we do not call the proletariat of these countries (China and Yugoslavia) to build new revolutionary parties or prepare a political revolution"? Why not say we didn't call the proletariat of the capitalist countries

6 Letter of the International Secretariat to the Central Committee of the French PCI, 14 January 1953.

7 International Majority Tendency, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", op. cit., p.18.

Aneurin Bevan, British Labour Party politician, Minister for Health in the post-war government from 1945 to 1951. **Frank Cousins** British trade union leader and Labour politician. **Pietro Ingrao**, politician, journalist and former partisan, senior figure in the Italian Communist Party. **UEC**, *Union des Étudiants Communistes* (Union of Communist Students). **SFIO**, *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (French Section of the Workers' International). **PSA**, *Parti Socialiste Autonome* (Autonomous Socialist Party). **PSU**, *Parti Socialiste Unifié*, (Unified Socialist Party). **André Renard**, leader of an important tendency in the Walloon trade unionism. **SF**, *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (Socialist People's Party). [Editor]

to build Trotskyist parties either, but for 17 years, we called them to remain within the opportunist parties?

And with the leftist tendencies, what happened? It would be appropriate, after having worked on them for 17 years, to make a balance sheet of our activities. Why isn't an analysis made of the dynamics of these tendencies that we so "correctly" anticipated? Why not say how many of them, under our influence, "approached revolutionary Marxism"? Why are there no reports on the political and organisational developments of the Trotskyists who worked on them? How many cadres did we win? Which sectors of the mass movement we manage to lead or, if nothing else, to link to Trotskyism fruit of our relationship with these tendencies?

Castroism: A significant "omission"

But the worst of the matter is that this new version of entryism *sui generis* does not mention at all the most important and progressive "mass vanguard" of the 1960s: Castroism. This silence is rare since Castroism changed all power relationships regarding the mass vanguard. The reason for this silence is not difficult to discover. What happens is that, according to the majority, one of the "objective perspectives" "that events confirmed in its validity" was that the "formation of a new mass vanguard" "would essentially take place within the traditional organisations of the masses". And Castroism is the "event" that not only doesn't "confirm its validity" but denies any validity to this "objective perspective".

Did this "radicalisation within traditional organisations" happen in Europe after 1960? Where did the new spontaneist vanguard of 1968 incubate? Inside or outside traditional organisations?

Isn't this perhaps a combined process where the external to such organisations dominated? If there was one thing in common in all the manifestations of that time was the portrait of Che Guevara. Where did all those young people who lifted it come from? From traditional organisations? From the Stalinist and social democratic parties?

The Majority comrades point out that "such hypothesis (a massive vanguard that comes from within traditional organisations) was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe"⁸ in the 1950s and 1960s. Apart from Castroism, born essentially outside of the traditional organisations, what other "mass vanguard" can the Majority comrades name, which was born in that period and has been radicalised within traditional organisations, as revolutionary tendencies emerged from them? Absolutely none; this is the reason for their silence on Castroism.

If the Majority comrades had done a real balance sheet of the centre-left tendencies that came from within and without the traditional organisations and if they hadn't "forgotten" Castroism, they would have concluded that even with the policy of working essentially on these tendencies the right thing would have been never to apply the tactics of entryism. Our work should have been on that vanguard and the movements impacted by Castroism which arose primarily in the student movement and the periphery of the opportunist parties, but not within them.

Can entryism be voted for a long period?

However, having finished with this series of brand new justifications for their 17 years of entryism, a question remains. A question which is, ultimately, much more important. Can a tactic of entryism be voted for a long period? Do Leninism and Trotskyism allow staying for 17 years in the opportunist parties? Absolutely not. Even if the conditions that Pablo and his friends posed in 1952, or those the majority poses today, took place you can never vote for a tactic of entryism "for a whole stage", to stay in the opportunist parties "for a long period", as the International Secretariat voted at the time and ran for 17 years.

The first and fundamental reason for not voting a tactic of entryism for the long term is the need to preserve the Trotskyist party as a clearly differentiated current from the others that exist in

⁸ International Majority Tendency, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe", op. cit., p.18.

the workers' movement. This can be summarised by saying that the revolutionary party must never lose its public, political and organisational independence, which enables it to clearly differentiate itself to the masses, from the opportunistic or centrist parties and the ultraleft sects.

The reason for this sacred principle of Leninism and Trotskyism has nothing to do with either a moral approach or with the mania of the sects according to which the essence of revolutionary politics is to differentiate from others. It comes from the firm belief that we will only come to take power if the working class and the masses are led by the Trotskyist party.

And to win the leadership of the masses, the key is to participate at the forefront in each of their struggles as an organisationally independent party, with its policies, answers, slogans and program appropriate to each situation. This constant publicly standing for itself and its program, as a revolutionary alternative to the reformist parties and programs, is the only way the party can be seen by the masses and the vanguard as a potential alternative leadership.

Put another way: in the course of their struggles, the masses deplete their experience with opportunistic organisations but this doesn't lead them, by themselves, to break away from them and adhere to revolutionary Marxism. To do so they must have been accompanied throughout the experience by the revolutionary party. The workers' movement will accept our leadership only if they have seen us for years by their side and were able to learn about our organisation, our politics and our program and compare them in each fight, with other organisations, policies and programs. No worker or student of vanguard will break with his party if he does not know a better organisation to which to adhere, and in which to trust because he has witnessed it in the struggles. He will not, for the simple reason that he will prefer to stay in an organisation than breaking up with it and become disorganised.

What we have been saying could not be ignored by Pablo and his friends. Therefore, to justify the long-term entryism was necessary to review all the scientific foundation of contemporary Marxism which asserts that without a revolutionary party there can be no revolution. That's how they discovered, through the famous World War unavoidable in the short term, that those who would lead the revolution would be Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties transformed into centre-leftist parties. In this way eliminating the need for a Trotskyist party and explaining why we remained for 17 years within the opportunist parties.

A tactic for exceptional situations

This sacred rule requiring us to keep our activity public and independent has, like any rule, its exception. Such is the case of the tactic of entryism. But in this dialectic between the normal and the exceptional, what primes is normal. This is, that the exceptional moment where we lose our public persona as a current of the workers' movement to do entryism, is subject to the rules of the revolutionary party. Specifically: entryism is a tactic that can only be justified when it is used to leave quickly and in better shape as an independent revolutionary party, clearly delimited from other organisations. It's a tactic that helps, in exceptional circumstances, in party building, it never takes another organisation or centrist tendencies towards taking power.

We have already seen the only two long-term strategies we Trotskyists have are mobilising the masses to take power, and building the party. There are rare times when it is particularly difficult to link to the mass movement and gain members for the party working as an independent organisation. Those moments are what make necessary entryism tactics. In this analysis are already designated the only two objectives that such tactics may have: entering into an opportunistic party to win those cadres who are evolving to the left (left-leaning centrist tendencies) or for better linking ourselves to the mass movement.

With any of these objectives, entryism is a tactic that can only be voted for short periods because, if we do it to tie ourselves to the mass movement, entryism ends as soon as we have achieved a minimum insertion in it that allows us to move forward with an independent public activity. But, furthermore, when this is the case, we need to practice entryism in organisations which lead us

to act as a public faction of them in the short term. And this stresses the fact that it is for a short period since there is no opportunistic organisation that can allow acting within it for a long time a Trotskyist faction which sooner or later will be public.

But, what happens if we do entryism to work on the left-leaning centrist tendencies as the Majority comrades now say? In this case, again, entryism is for a short period precisely for the nature of centrism. There is a first type of centrism, which goes to the right, i.e., from Marxism to opportunism. Such is the case of the Stalinist bureaucracy. On this centrism we cannot work because its dynamics is counter-revolutionary, we can take nothing from it. There is a second type of centrism: the one going from opportunism towards Marxism, i.e., the one that goes to the left. It is on this that we can work.

But this dynamic can last only for a short time. Either we win it for the Trotskyist positions quickly, or it stops halfway, sentenced to be permanent centrism, thus constituting a third type: “crystallised” centrism as defined by Trotsky; the POUM case, the Ceylonese LSSP, Lora and so forth.

This dynamic is what explains that also for working on centrist tendencies, our entryism is for the short term.

But, again, this was not the case of entryism *sui generis*. When that tactic was voted, it was not to win the centrist tendencies for Trotskyism but rather to lead them, without them ceasing to be centrist, to force them or help them take power. This is what explains the “long terms” which were voted for entryism and the 17 years during which it was applied.

The entryism advocated by Trotsky in the 1930s

What a profound difference with Trotsky’s entryism in the 1930s! Trotsky never intended to lead centrist tendencies. His only two objectives were to quickly gain Trotskyist cadres and to insert Trotskyism in the mass movement. What he proposed was to get out of entryism having advanced on the road to move from small groups of revolutionary propaganda to real revolutionary parties with many more cadres than before and able to influence, they themselves, without intermediaries, a fraction, however small, of the mass movement.

So Trotsky’s entryism has a profound difference with the entryism of Pablo and his friends. For Trotsky, this period should be necessarily brief, the time required to achieve those goals. For Pablo and his friends, it should be very long, nothing less than the time needed to achieve for Stalinist and reformist parties, while remaining centrists, to make the revolution.

The results of the long strategy of entryism *sui generis* were catastrophic for the Pabloist faction. Most of the militants capitulated to the organisations they did entryism in and the leaders capitulated to opportunism and broke with our movement. They came out of that period much weaker than they had entered, with far fewer cadres and less tied to the mass movement. Most of the cadres of the two most important sections, Ceylon and Bolivia, broke with Trotskyism to the right. Those cadres from first went to work with a bourgeois government and were expelled from our International. The Bolivian comrades were divided into three wings: Moller, who capitulated against the Bolivian MNR, Lora who capitulated to Stalinism, and Gonzalez who remained in the International. Another major section, the Argentine Posadism, also broke with the International to the right and dragged most of its Latin American cadres. The remaining sections came out of entryism virtually destroyed: without cadres, without militants, without party tradition.

This was the result of the decennial strategy of entryism *sui generis*. That’s what today the young European cadres are asked to vote for. They are asked to approve that war was inevitable, that the Stalinist parties were to outline “a revolutionary orientation” and struggle for power “with arms in hand”, that it was right to have entered the Stalinist parties for 17 years and relinquish for that time the building of Trotskyist parties, that it was a great success to destroy all our European sections and push the Ceylonese, Bolivian and Argentine sections towards the arms of the enemy or class reformism. The vote will be a good test to see who has revolutionary mettle in our International.

Was it a mistake to found the Fourth International?

The decennial strategy of entryism *sui generis* was not without its consequences on the analysis and characterisation of Trotskyism regarding the Stalinist parties and the political revolution in the workers' states. We have already seen that, regarding China and Yugoslavia, Pablo and his friends abandoned the task of building Trotskyist parties and carrying out the political revolution for the sake of entryism *sui generis*. But this issue didn't remain there. It worsened with the revision of Trotskyism traditional program regarding the "pure" Stalinist parties (i.e. directly dependent of the Soviet bureaucracy), including the CP of the USSR, and the political revolution in the workers' states of Eastern Europe and Russia itself.

We will begin with the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries. As we have seen, Pablo and his friends predicted an imperialist war against the USSR and thence they deduced that the Communist Parties would "practically outline a revolutionary orientation" to "act in case of a war, with arms in hand for the power" and to lead "a whole stage of the revolutionary process in their respective countries".⁹

In the late 1930s world war started: there were possibilities of a war against the USSR and a rise of the mass movement in some countries. In other words, there was a situation very similar to that envisaged by Pablo and Germain for the 1950s. However, Trotsky took a conclusion opposite to that of Pablo and his friends: we had to work publicly and independently. Who was wrong? Trotsky in the 1930s or Pablo in the 1950s?

Trotsky supported his position as follows: "Bureaucratic centrism, because all its zigzags, has an extremely conservative character corresponding to its social base: the Soviet bureaucracy. After a ten-year experience, we came to the conclusion that does not draw nearer and is incapable of drawing nearer to Marxism, from the ranks of which it emerged. It is precisely because of this that we broke with the Comintern."¹⁰

As we see, the matter is not limited to the historical analogy. If Pablo was right, Trotsky was wrong, "after a ten-year experience", to characterise that Stalinism has an "extremely conservative character" and is "incapable of drawing nearer to Marxism". That is, if Pablo and his friends were right, we must change all Trotskyists characterisations of the Stalinist bureaucracy since, placed in certain objective situations, it can be transformed into a progressive, leftist, centrism able to approach Marxism and fight for the power, leaving its extremely conservative character.

This analysis, ultimately, takes us back to the days before the founding of the Fourth International. During "ten years" Trotskyism did the experience of change from within, as a faction of the communist movement, the bureaucratic characteristics of the International and its national sections. Trotskyism failed. During "ten years" Trotsky left off founding a Fourth International because he thought he could rescue the Third. He failed.

With the victory of fascism in Germany because of the Stalinist policy, Trotsky exhausted his "ten-year experience" and decided to break with the Third and found the Fourth International, because he characterised that the counter-revolutionary process of global Stalinism was irreversible. According to Pablo's analysis, taken to its ultimate conclusion, not only was Trotsky wrong in his characterisation, but he was also wrong to found the Fourth International. It was a hasty attitude, as we come to discover, 13 years later, the revolutionary role that parties of the former Third International can fulfil placed in a favourable objective situation. And these analyses were voted and defended by the current leaders of the majority tendency.

9 Letter of the International Secretariat to the Central Committee of the French PCI, 14 January 1953.

10 Trotsky, Leon: "Principled Considerations on Entry", 16 September 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, p.84-85.

Conditions change but the “strategy” never!

The line of entryism *sui generis* was voted based on these analyses. The facts have shown that both the forecasts and the characterisations were wrong.

There was no world war nor were we close to it. Neither was there a civil war nor fighting for power or a rise of the mass movement. Nor did majority centrist tendencies emerge in the Stalinist parties. Instead of fighting against imperialism, the USSR invaded East Germany first and Hungary later. And for this, it had the support of the communist parties that, according to Pablo and his friends, were going to fight for power in their countries outlining a revolutionary line. However, entryism continued. Conditions changed or were radically different from those imagined by Pablo, secretary of the Fourth International at the time. But the “strategy”, voted for an indefinite time, remained.

The supposed course to the left of the Stalinist parties led Pablo and his friends to not foresee the struggle of the workers in East Germany first and later in Hungary and Poland. It was inevitable. If Stalinism was turning left around the world, what need had the workers in the workers’ states to make the political revolution? But the first feints of the political revolution came and Pablo and his friends, consistent with entryism *sui generis*, elevated their characterisation of Stalinism at a programmatic level.

A reformist program for the political revolution

We are not talking here of the slogans that had to be raised for agitation in the USSR after Stalin’s death. Evidently, this fact opened a period when Russian Trotskyists should be listening carefully to the mass movement to find the precise slogans to mobilise it. But one thing is the slogans we tactically agitate and quite another is the program of political revolution. This program should not have changed because Stalin had died but, on the contrary, it should have been more relevant than ever.

But entryism *sui generis* was still making the rounds. When the political revolution was an incontrovertible fact, demonstrated by the struggles of the German proletariat which augured those of the Hungarian and Polish proletariats, Pablo and his friends were forced to develop a program for that struggle and, if we add the fact of the political revolution to the characterisation that Stalinism was turning to the left, we find the only possible outcome: a reformist program throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR.

“Here is the program of the political revolution that is currently on the agenda in both the USSR and the ‘people’s democracies’:

“– Real organs of dual power, democratically elected by the working masses, exercising effective control over the state, at all levels, including the government;

“– Real democratisation of the communist parties;

“– Legalization of all workers’ parties;

“– Complete autonomy of trade unions regarding the state, including the workers’ state;

“– Development of an economic plan by the workers, for the workers.”¹¹

And the three basic slogans are:

“Down with capitalism and the counter-revolutionary war it’s preparing! Long live the proletarian democracy! Long live the socialist revival of the USSR, the ‘people’s democracies’ and the international workers’ movement.”¹²

This program does not call the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy, nor does it even attack it by name, nor does it fight against their material privileges. Neither does it raise the right

11 International Secretariat Statement of 25 June 1953, in *Quatrième Internationale*, July 1953, p. 19-20.

12 Ibid.

to national self-determination of the countries in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. This program raises the “real democratisation of the communist parties”, which is the same as saying there is no need to build Trotskyist parties. It is a reformist program. We say this not because of the slogans —which may be good or not— but for the system they form, for the way they are interconnected. By not raising the overthrow of the bureaucracy by a revolution of the Soviet masses and the need for the Trotskyist party, they become reformist.

The revolutionary program of orthodox Trotskyism

This reformist program had nothing to do with our *Transitional Program*:

“Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labour! (...) *It is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets.* In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective peasants, peasants and Red Army men.” And then... “*Legalisation of soviet parties.* The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognise as soviet parties.”

It follows a series of slogans on the planned economy, kolkhozes and international politics (“Down with secret diplomacy!”) and ends:

“Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development towards socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection — the party of the Fourth International!

“Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

“Long live Soviet democracy!

“Long live the international socialist revolution!”¹³

One tactic developed by a specific situation (war, which did not break out), but transformed into 10-year strategy, quickly pushed the then International Secretariat to revisionism.

Bolivia 1952-1955: Why we did not fight for power

If a young Trotskyist tries to study the history of our movement with an approach different from the approach taken by Comrade Frank, he will find almost insurmountable difficulties to learn what our policy for Bolivia was. Although our section there was, according to statements by Pablo and his friends, the most important of our International (along with Ceylon), a closely guarded secret kept under wraps for years surrounded its history. It seems that never before had existed in Bolivia an important section.

The reason for this conspiracy of silence is simple: in Bolivia took place the greatest, most perfect and classical workers’ revolution so far this century, with a strong influence of our International. And there, it was expressed in its purest form, the terrible danger that the “strategy” of entryism *sui generis* brought with it.

The failure of bourgeois nationalism

Bolivia is a very poor country. The strongest proletariat is in mining, which is concentrated in Oruro and La Paz, all the factory proletariat and petty-bourgeoisie are substantially based in La Paz.

The attempt to achieve a military Bonapartist government, supported by the workers’ movement, to resist Yankee pressure, as had been achieved in Argentina with Peronism, crashed into the miserable condition of the Bolivian economy. In Argentina, this bourgeois project was smooth sailing for its exceptional commercial and financial location (third in the world in the last post-war

¹³ Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 105-106.

period). Peron could make big economic concessions to the masses, acquiring great prestige among them. In Bolivia, instead, the deplorable economic situation left the bourgeois government with no room for manoeuvre: it could not make major concessions and the growing prestige of Trotskyism was massive and shining.

Trotskyism acquires mass influence

Thus, the Bolivian Trotskyists became leaders of great political prestige in the workers' movement and the Bolivian masses, although it failed to consolidate that influence organisationally. This was recognised, repeatedly, by the official organs of our International, and our influence was reflected in the facts of the class struggle. An example of this was the famous thesis of Pulacayo, programmatic basis of the union-organised movement in Bolivia. In November 1946, in Pulacayo (a mining town), delegates from all Bolivian mines met and unanimously approved the thesis developed by the Trotskyists, voting against the MNR and the Stalinists. These theses, which were called "program of transitional demands", put forward, among other positions, the following: 1) basic living wage and sliding scale of wages, 2) 40-hour week and sliding scale of working hours, 3) occupation of mines, 4) collective contract, 5) union independence; 6) workers' control of the mines; 7) arming of the workers; 8) strike fund; 9) regulation of the abolition of cheap grocery stores; 10) removal of work by contract. This program, especially what went against the army and for the arming of the proletariat, with workers' militias, was massively propagandised by the Trotskyists and the mining union during the years up to the 1952 revolution.

One consequence of the colossal Trotskyist triumph among the miners will be the establishment of workers' bloc or front to stand for elections. Although 90 per cent of the Bolivian population did not vote at the time (there was a qualified vote: only those who could read were allowed to vote), the workers' bloc won the mining districts and scored a senator and five deputies. The highest Trotskyist leader, Guillermo Lora, and other comrades made good use of the bourgeois parliament when from their seats they attacked the army and proclaimed the need to destroy it and impose the workers' militias.

Presidential elections were held in 1951 and the MNR won but it was not given the government since, on the face of this victory the military staged a coup and installed a dictatorial, extremely repressive, regime. On 9 April 1952, the police and an army sector in agreement with the leadership of the MNR attempted a counter-coup but this failed and its military chief sought asylum in an embassy. The police, when seeing it was defeated by the military, gave some weapons to factory workers and the people of La Paz, to resist the military counteroffensive. Meanwhile, the miners, who had already liquidated the army in Oruro and had seized the regiments, began to descend towards La Paz. This shift plus the takeover of a military train heading to La Paz with arms led to the total liquidation of the Bolivian army. In La Paz, for example, workers completely defeated seven regiments (the foundation of the Bolivian army) and took all weapons from them. The dictatorial government fell, and the MNR was given government.

The workers' and peasants' militias were the only armed forces left in Bolivia after 11 April 1952 and were led, for the most part, by the Trotskyists. Only on 24 July, over three months later, the government issued a decree reorganising the army.

Our Trotskyists comrades, relying on the workers' and peasant's armed militia —between 50,000 and 100,000 men (on a day of parade the peasant militias alone had 25,000)— and in trade union organisations, founded and organised the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB), which grouped all militias and all workers and peasant organisations in Bolivia.

Faced with this situation, unique in this century —a revolution which liquidates the bourgeois army and organises its proletarian army, with a Trotskyist leadership and program— what do Pablo and his friends do? They apply one of the 10-year tactics: entryism. This line was imposed globally. Where there was no Stalinist party, it was replaced by socialist parties or bourgeois nationalists

parties, since the centrist tendencies that were going to lead the revolution would arise from them. Here is what Pablo and his friends wrote in 1951:

“On the other hand, in the event of the mobilisation of the masses under the preponderant impulsion or influence of the MNR, our section should support the movement with all its strength, should not abstain but on the contrary intervene energetically in it with the aim of pushing it as far as possible up to the seizure of power by the MNR based on a progressive program of anti-imperialist united front.”¹⁴

Not a single word about the workers’ movement and its class organisations, the trade unions and, for tomorrow, militias or the Soviets! Comrade Pablo proposed this, while at the same time he defined the MNR as a party of the low mining bourgeoisie, i.e. as a bourgeois party. Thus, according to Comrade Pablo, we should not use mobilisations to expose the MNR, to denounce its inevitable role as ultimate agent of imperialism. We should not oppose to it class organisations, unions or future militias or soviets. Instead, we should push it, overall, to “take power”. And Comrade Pablo disguised this capitulation to a bourgeois nationalist party behind the program of anti-imperialist united front.

This policy was directly contrary to the tactics of the anti-imperialist united front. The essence of this tactic consists of proposing joint actions that unmask the vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeois nationalists and it aims to achieve political independence of the workers’ movement concerning these bourgeois leaderships. The other side, even more serious, of this prostitution of the anti-imperialist united front tactic, is giving up the fight for the organisation and political independence of the workers.

This total capitulation is taken to disgust in another paragraph of the resolution:

“On the contrary, if in the course of these mass mobilisations, our section proves to be in a position to share influence over the revolutionary masses with the MNR, it will advance the slogan of a Workers’ and Peasants’ Government of the two parties on the basis, however, of the same program, a government based on committees of workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the urban petty-bourgeoisie.”¹⁵

Put another way, if we start to defeat the MNR at the head of the mass movement, we should not take this task to its conclusion but we must raise a government shared between the MNR and us. This government should not be the government of the workers’ and peasants’ committees, but “lean” on them.

To reach such a policy, Pablo had to revise the Leninist position of workers’ and peasants’ government. Lenin agreed with supporting the capture of government by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (when the revolutionary party still had no strength to do so) but he categorically said we should never share a government with them (and he did not enter the Kerenskyist government of Mensheviks and SRs). The essence of the Leninist position was to keep out of the government, precisely to be the only alternative when reformism becomes exposed to the masses after demonstrating its impotence in power.

If as a political line, that of Pablo and his friends was revisionist and surrendering, as a forecast of events it was catastrophic. The revolution of 1952 did not follow any of the guidelines they predicted in 1951 but rather the opposite: the working class, through class organisations, unions and militias, liquidated the military regime. As always, the reality may be different but Pablo’s strategy continues. And that’s when the leadership of the Bolivian workers’ movement (with the Trotskyists

14 “Latin America: Problems and Task”, Resolution Adopted by the Third Congress of the Fourth International, Paris, April 1951. In *Fourth International*, Vol 12 No.6, November-December 1951, pp.207-12.

The SWP’s delegate (Clark) voted for this resolution. Other resolutions of similar tenor were also voted by the SWP. Leaving aside the fact that Clark broke with the SWP to support Pablo, it is important to note that the SWP supported and helped build the International Committee of the Fourth International. In doing so, the SWP was explicitly or implicitly supporting the battle against the line in Bolivia carried out by our party and the SLATO (Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism), the organisation of the International Committee for Latin America. (NM)

15 Ibid.

in the front row, saying and doing what Pablo commanded) leads to a bourgeois MNR government and gives it critical support.

We insist: Pablo and his friends supported in Bolivia a bourgeois government, which had no army or police to lean on because they had voted this long term “strategy” in the World Congress of 1951.

Proofs at the ready: after April 1952, our Bolivian section, directly controlled by Pablo and his friends told us:

“At present, our tactic consists in grouping our forces, in binding the proletariat and the peasantry in a single block to defend a government that is not ours”. “Far from advancing the slogan of the overthrow of the Paz Estenssoro regime, we propped it to withstand the onslaught of the right”. “This attitude is first manifested as pressure on the government to make the deepest aspirations of the workers and peasants.”¹⁶

While we proposed that the slogan for Bolivia was “All Power to the COB and armed militias” in *Quatrième Internationale*, without dropping their heads in shame, Comrades Germain and Frank, one year after the 1952 revolution, said the following:

“The POR began by justifiably granting critical support to the MNR government. That is, it desisted from issuing the slogan “down with the government”; it gave the government critical support against attacks of imperialism and reaction, and it supported all progressive measures.”¹⁷

As an aside, we don’t know what the failure to raise the immediate slogan “down with the government” has to do with critical support, since we may not raise the slogan without implying support the government either “critically” or in any other way.

In July 1953, *Quatrième Internationale*, the official magazine of our International, in its Spanish edition (but supervised by Pablo and his friends to the millimetre) made the following picture of the Bolivian situation:

“The organisation of workers’ militias was amplified in parallel to that of the peasant masses (...) The regime has indeed evolved into a kind of very advanced ‘Kerenskyism’, much more pronounced than the Mossadegh¹⁸ in Iran, for example.”¹⁹

And in that situation of “advanced Kerenskyism”, we still did not put forward the slogan “All Power to the COB and its militias”.

Another year lapsed —two since the revolution— and the Fourth Congress of the International met. In it, Pablo and his friends continued their decennial strategy; they didn’t lose at all their deep love for non-proletarian organisations and centrist tendencies and continued without calling the COB, the workers’ organisation par excellence, to take power. They had found another centrist organisation worthy of their “critical support”: the left of the MNR.

“In Bolivia, the turn to the right and reactionary of the MNR’s political course, yielding to the pressure of imperialism and the indigenous reaction, makes more urgent than ever a frank denunciation of this turn by the POR, which has to remove all trust on this government, as well as the worker ministers, constantly calling the COB and systematically working within it to implement a genuine class policy independent of the MNR and engaging the COB in the path of the workers’ and peasants’ government; the systematic campaign for this perspective as well as the program for such a government; the general election campaign, with voting for all men and women over 18 years, to

16 “Thesis of the POR’s Tenth Conference”, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Defeated Revolution], Rojas Araújo editor, Cochabamba, 1967, p. 223.

17 *Quatrième Internationale*, April 1953, p. 25. English Translation in “One Year of the Bolivian Revolution”, *Fourth International*, Vol 14 No.1, January-February 1953, pp.13-16.

18 **Mohammad Mosaddegh** (1882–1967) was the leader of an Iranian nationalist movement which forced the Sha Reza Pahlevi to nationalise the oil which was in British hands. He was Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 until 1953 when his government was overthrown in a *coup d’état* orchestrated by the United States’ CIA and the United Kingdom’s MI6. [Editor]

19 *Quatrième Internationale*, July 1953, p. 74.

elect a constituent assembly and presentation of workers' slates of the COB in these elections. It is only such a policy which may result in a differentiation within the MNR and force its very diffuse and disorganised left-wing to break with the right and their bureaucratised 'worker' leaders and engage in the path of workers' and peasants' government."²⁰

The line would have been perfect with an addition: to ensure all this (constituent, elections, etc.), the COB needs to take power. But neither Pablo nor his friends said that. Who would then call this constituent? If it was not the COB in power, it only remained left the Paz Estenssoro government or a supposed government of the MNR's left.

This line confirmed the line given by the Bolivian section a year earlier, expressed in a manifesto released on 23 June 1953, with the blessing of Pablo and his friends. There, it said:

"The threat of right-wing conspiracy has become permanent (...)", therefore we must "(...) defend the current government (...)" with the "...armed defence of the government."²¹

Although it seems incredible, they are referring to the bourgeois —bourgeois!— Government of Paz Estenssoro. Perhaps the danger of "right-wing conspiracy" did not justify momentarily raising the offensive slogan "All Power to the COB" and replacing it with the defensive "Workers Front against the reaction". But the strategy for the COB to take power was still valid and in no case, we should raise the slogan of "defence" of a bourgeois government. However, what is the slogan of power that this manifesto ends with?

"This entire struggle should revolve around the slogan: total control of the state by the left-wing of the MNR."²²

Time passed and the left of the MNR failed. Thus —four years after the revolution!— when the army had managed to restructure when they could no longer trust the MNR —as in the beginning— or the left-wing —as afterwards— Pablo and his Bolivian friends adopted the line that our party had consistently fought for from the start. In a resolution of the Bolivian POR's Executive Committee of May 1956 —finally! (but too late)— it is stated:

"Strengthening and developing all the organs of dual power, against the clashes with the government, with the bourgeoisie, with the oligarchy and imperialism, against the parliament and the attempts by the Siles government to subtract influence to the unions, we will push the desire of the masses proposing: That the COB solve all the problems! And, All Power to the COB!"²³

We say: Finally they realised! It was a belated victory of our preaching and our polemics. The capitulations of Pablo and his friends had been exposed. The terrible dangers lurking behind his famous long term "tactics", based on assumptions for the future and not on reality, had come to light.

Entryism *sui generis* and the Argentine reactionary coups of 1955 and the gorilla governments of 1955–58

Not only in Bolivia did we have dire consequences with the 10-year strategy of entryism *sui generis*. In Argentina, this strategy was not without tragic consequences for Trotskyism. It is no coincidence that the word "gorilla" which has acquired universal predicament has been coined in our country. It is here (along with Guatemala) where the first ultra-reactionary governments, similar to the current Brazilian government, emerged in the early post-war period. With the Argentine military dictatorship appear concentration camps with thousands of prisoners, the illegality of the trade unions, of leftist parties and bourgeois parties opposing it, murder and torture of trade unionists, leftist and opposition militants. Very possibly this was a dictatorship much more brutal than the current Brazilian one. Hence, it is very justified these dictatorships be called as the Argentine

20 "Resolutions of the Fourth World Congress" in *Quatrième Internationale*, June 1954, p. 54.

21 POR's Internal Bulletin, May 1956, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Defeated Revolution], ob. cit., p. 225.

22 Ibid. p. 225.

23 Resolution of the Bolivian POR Executive Committee, May 1956, quoted by Liborio Justo in *Bolivia: la revolución derrotada* [Bolivia: The Defeated Revolution], ob. cit., pp. 232-233.

proletariat called the military government: “gorilla” dictatorship. It’s correct to see what was the policy followed by Pablo at that time and the one we had, against both the coups and the gorilla governments.

In a resolution imposed by the majority, the IEC has called the policy of our party at the time as opportunistic and of capitulation to Peronism. We decided then start with the true exposure of our supposed “opportunism”. What makes this task more necessary is that we have made a severe criticism of our Bolivian section for its policy against the recent reactionary coups. Many new or foreign comrades in our movement and who do not know our true history will wonder, does our track record justify that criticism?

We have repeatedly published in the form of leaflets or books, our work at that time. The Majority comrades have a most abundant and easy to use documentation to prove their allegations, no need to resort to any archive or collection of newspapers.

We anticipated the coup and fought it for the previous 10 months

From this documentation emerge quite clearly the following facts:

1) From November 1954, i.e. seven months before the first coup and 10 before the triumphant coup, we began a campaign of denunciation and opposition to the reactionary coup we considered a sure thing from our newspaper. Milciades Peña,²⁴ a recognised historian made a preface to the collection of our articles where he said the following:

“From the first moment, the Trotskyist socialist revolutionary militants clearly stated what the real meaning of that struggle was and its position in it. And from the first moment, they foresaw the ‘putsch’ and warned the working class against it.”

2) Without placing any trust in the Peronist government, we learned to distinguish the differences it had with the enemy, without minimising the differences for the fact they were bourgeois alternatives. We pointed out the Peron government was bourgeois and unable to stop the coup but also that he had differences with Yankee imperialism and its political agents, the Catholic Church and the opposition parties, who were preparing the reactionary coup.

3) We insisted the main political task that had opened since December 1954 was to address the inevitable coup being prepared by the reaction. We called the Peronist government to a technical agreement, and called for a united front to all the workers’ parties and mainly the CGT to fight against the coup. We took part in all the demonstrations of the workers and mass movement against the coup preparations. We played a role of the first magnitude in the actions with which the workers’ movement crushed the first coup and in the formation of the first workers’ militias which the country has known since the “Tragic Week” of 1919.²⁵

4) We called for the formation of militias and for the armament of the trade unions to fight against the coup. We systematically denounced the Peronist government as a bourgeois government, which was going to yield to the coup and was unable to face it. We systematically emphasised that we had nothing to do with Peronism. That is, we foresaw the coup and fought to stop it, ten months before its victory.

Let’s see some hard evidence. The first article on the subject was published in our newspaper on 3 December 1954. In the banner headline, we said: “The Catholic Church at the service of the coup d’état by Yankee imperialism. Only the working class mobilisation will stop the coup d’état and the colonisation of the country.”

There we pointed out: “At the same time, Peron’s speech, measured in all words and of an explanatory and non-agitative tone, is the best indication the government is not interested in

24 **Peña, Milciades**: “Foreword to the first edition”, 30 August 1957, to Moreno, Nahuel: *The Gorilla Coup of 1955*, CEHuS, Buenos Aires, 2019, p. 32. Available for downloading from www.nahuelmoreno.org. [Editor]

25 **Tragic Week** is the name given to the repression and massacre suffered by the Argentine labour movement is known, in which hundreds of people were murdered in Buenos Aires, from 7–14 January, 1919, under the Radical government of Hipolito Yrigoyen. [Editor]

mobilising the masses beyond the formal rallies it can control. However, only the broad mobilisation of the working class will strengthen the country in the face of the colonising attempts by Yankee imperialism. (...)

“The Peronist government, which is embarked on a policy of class collaboration and is increasingly leaning to the bosses’ side, is not willing to give in to any of the demands the working class could make. (...)

“We, as an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist party, want to clarify our position on this problem, however not an expository position but one affirmative and of struggle.

“Despite all our disagreements with the Peronist government, despite our criticisms, we want to state publicly that, as long as the government does not surrender to Yankee imperialism, given the danger of a coup promoted by Wall Street, we offer the government an agreement of a well-defined technical character, public and without political commitments in order to stop all attempts by imperialism to colonise the country and super-exploit our working class.”²⁶

And in the last newspaper before the successful coup, we said the following:

“We neither had nor have trust in the policies and methods of the current government but we will discipline to the majority. (...)

“The fact we accept the will of the majority of workers does not mean we are Peronists, nor the left-wing of Peronism, not even allies of Peronism. We are an organisation distinct from Peronism. Our party is a workers’ party, Peronism, on the other hand, is a bourgeois party, i.e., it is for the defence of the current order of things (...) What makes us be in some events together with the Peronist government and against the opposition, is that, although we are in favour of replacing the current government by a CGT government of all workers’ and peasants’ organisations, we are against the current government being replaced by a government of the priests, the bosses, and Yankee imperialism.”²⁷

In an official flyer of the same time we did this call:

“Workers:

“The Buenos Aires Socialist Federation (National Revolution), which publishes the newspaper *La Verdad*, launches an urgent call:

“Support the instruction of the CGT leadership; defend the current situation against the reaction that wants to implant a reactionary military government!

“It is not about defending a government, the Peronist, but about preventing an overtly pro-capitalist and anti-worker government from succeeding.

“We, for example, are not in favour of the Peronist policy, nor of the management of union leaders who enrich themselves at the expense of the workers and suppress union democracy. But, in this case, we put in the first place the unity of the working class and the trade union movement against the attack carried out by the reaction to implant its government. If the military coup succeeds, the workers’ movement will lose its union organisations and its unity, and the bosses, imperialism and the clergy will be the complete owners of the country.

“This is why we believe we must support the action of the CGT against the coup. This does not prevent us from fraternally alerting ourselves to the following dangers:

“– if the working class is not mobilised,

“– if the resolution of the CGT on workers’ militias is not put into practice...

“– We can lose EVERYTHING.

26 “The Catholic Church at the service of the coup d’état by Yankee imperialism”, article in *La Verdad*, 3 December 1954, reprinted in *The Gorilla Coup of 1955*, op. cit., pp. 55–56.

27 “Iron fist against the clergy-bosses-imperialist reaction. Free hands to the working class!”, article in *La Verdad*, 5 September 1955, reprinted in *The Gorilla Coup of 1955*, op. cit., p. 55.

“We must not forget that on 14 June the leaders of the trade union movement said nothing was happening and two days later the coup broke out. We should not forget either that until a few days ago we were told nothing would happen and we had to keep calm by going “from work to home and from home to work”. This policy has been revealed as a serious error; if the working class had mobilised, it would not have suffered two coups in three months.

“What we have been saying for a year, we repeat now:

“Only the mobilisation and initiative of the working class can crush once and for all the reactionary coups. This is why, in a disciplined manner, we request and pressure the trade union leaders to put into practice the resolution of the workers’ militias.

“Comrades: All the workers united, without exception, we must fight against the coup d’état of the reaction and we must demand the resolution on the workers’ militias be put into practice, the only way to crush ONCE AND FOR ALL the clerical, bosses, imperialist reaction.

“Buenos Aires Socialist Federation (NR), 17 September 1955. Read *La Verdad*”²⁸

The official section did not say a word against the coup

While we gave this entire struggle, while we were risking our lives in the streets against the reactionary coup, the section led by Posadas and recognised by Pablo, did not say a single word. Not even one. Let’s look at just one example. In the section’s paper for May Day 1955, i.e. one month before the first coup, which took place on 16 June and caused the emergence of workers’ militias, hundreds of dead (it’s never been known) and the confrontation of the workers’ movement with the Navy, there isn’t a single article touching on the problem of the coup, let alone giving a line against it. In the editorial, the official program of the section appears for the coming months.

The first item, it could not be otherwise, is “against the war preparations” (the line put forward by Pablo of the coming world war in the short term). The second, “for the expulsion of imperialism”. The third, “Support for the Bolivian revolution”, etc. And from the fourth point onwards the national type slogans-tasks start, which we quote in full:

“4) Defence of all conquests! Not one step back in the gains made! 5) Defence and strengthening the trade union organisation!, etc. 6) Living and minimum wage and sliding scale of wages! 7) Workers’ control of production! 8) Against any law and repressive measure against the workers’ movement! Freedom to all imprisoned worker activists! 9) For a Congress of Trade Unions against the bourgeois offensive and the shortages! 10) For the formation of a worker’s party based on the unions to fight for the program and the interests of the working class and the masses! 11) For a workers’ and peasants’ government!”²⁹

Not a word of warning about the danger of the coup, not a word of the need for the workers’ militia, or a policy against the reaction.

And the coup succeeded. It unleashed the fiercest repression against the workers and the Peronist movement, the unions were taken over. The official section was forced to recognise that there was a “clergy, oligarchic imperialist” coup. In a flyer after the coup, they recognise there are “killings of workers by tanks, bombs, strafing by aircraft guns, cannons and machine guns. The most criminal and bloodied mass slaughter of workers, in the historical records of the bourgeoisie of the country, has been accomplished and is developing. (...) Without having yet complete reports from around the country, we have seen and know that this peace and freedom they call us to join and promise us, is already leaving a balance of 6,000 workers killed in Mendoza, nearly 20,000 in Cordoba, slaughter of workers and executions of leaders in Mar del Plata and Bahia Blanca (we have no precise data of the bombing of the working-class sectors of Santiago del Estero); in Rosario (according to imprecise reports) the slaughter reached 7,000 workers; CGT protesters carrying signs that read ‘Soldiers do not shoot: We are the people’ were shot from fighter jets; in Cordoba, they

²⁸ Moreno, Nahuel: *The Gorilla Coup of 1955*, ob. cit., p. 57.

²⁹ *Voz Proletaria* [Proletarian Voice], No. 104, 25 April 1955.

threw bombs on working-class neighbourhoods from the windows of commercial aircraft; from radios from abroad we know that in Tucuman (we don't yet have direct evidence) the slaughter has been terrible."³⁰

The true explanation: entryism *sui generis*

Despite this acknowledgement of the characteristics of the coup, neither Posadas nor his intimate friend and staunch defender, Pablo, made any self-criticism of the policy they had in 1955. This policy stemmed from a deeper reason: the entryism *sui generis*. The program quoted above does not mention the rotten policy of the Argentine CP which was playing into the hands of the clergy's reaction. Neither is the rotten world politics of Stalinism mentioned anywhere in the section's newspaper. All the ponderings were about China and its politics. Within this general policy, the main enemy was the Peronist government and the bourgeoisie as a whole, especially the bourgeoisie linked to Peronism. It was a tactical application of entryism, of tail-ending local and international Stalinism, which had always been against Peronism for tactical reasons, to corner the workers' movement and so to have an exchange commodity more appetizing to negotiate with Yankee imperialism. The Pabloist section was the left alternative of local Stalinism.

Afterwards, the fight against the gorilla governments came. Our party raised democratic rights as one of the main points of its struggle against these governments. We started the struggle for the right of General Peron and Peronism to participate in politics, for the legality of this bourgeois party which had the support of almost the entire workers' movement. We denounced the gorilla dictatorship stating that the struggle was to overthrow it. We were among the founders of the "62 Organisations", workers' bodies of resistance to the military government. We were in all the struggles. The gorilla government "honoured" us by viciously haunting us, even more viciously than Peronism. The same happened to all anti-gorilla parties of the left and which were against the coup. Even the CP suffered repression somewhat.

But there was a party which was totally and absolutely legal. The only leftist party whose press was legal, it was sold in all newsstands under police protection, the only one which was allowed to speak in the official gorilla radios (and which took the opportunity and spoke). While anyone fighting against the gorillas went to concentration camps or prison, this party, miracle of miracles, obtained legality. And in its press, it boasted it had obtained it through its intense struggle. That was the party of Posadas, the darling companion of Comrade Pablo, the section shown as a model to the world Trotskyist movement in the stage of entryism *sui generis* and of the whole policy of the majority at the time. This party received on the 24 October 1955, a month after the coup against which it did not fight, and published in January 1956, in its legal paper under the gorilla dictatorship, greetings and congratulations of the International Executive Committee.

Where was the secret of so much love from the gorilla dictatorship to the official section? several important political events. First, the section believed and publicly said that the workers should not fight for the legality of General Peron and Peronism because "they were bourgeois parties". Second, during the entryism *sui generis* the section followed Stalinism like a shadow and this had pretty good relations with the gorilla dictatorship to see if this would let them have a cut in the military occupations of the trade unions (the main enemy for both the section and Stalinism were the Peronist union bosses, not the gorilla governments). Logically, the section had no prisoners, to our knowledge, since its militants were legal.

Today Comrade Germain criticises us for using the legal loopholes which our workers got in their struggles. We believe that before criticising, being right or wrong, he should publicly criticise himself for having supported for years and years, the disastrous policy of the official section of our country.

30 Supplement of *Voz Proletaria*, September 26, 1955.

The strategy of workers' control

Within the period of the strategy of entryism *sui generis*, the Majority comrades began to raise a new ten-year strategy: workers' control. This strategy was born around 1964, remains to date and Comrade Germain threatens us to keep it for a century of centuries.

At its birth, Comrade Germain justified it with his theory on the new structure and laws of neo-capitalism: we no longer were struggling against low wages and unemployment but against the management of the enterprises. Currently, the justification would seem it tends to change, given that the economic situation of the imperialist countries, especially in Europe, has denied Comrade Germain's theory and put back in the agenda the "traditional" economic struggles. But the strategy remains, without further justification elaborated in full ... but it remains.

However, if we follow Trotsky we ascertain that the slogan "workers' control" was put forward for a whole period by the right-wing of communism, the Brandlerites, as opposed to Trotskyism, which denied it. For Trotsky, you can only propagandise it and agitate it on a revolutionary stage, when the dual power, the socialist revolution and the nationalisation of the industry are raised. Opportunists, however, use it permanently.

"[Workers'] control is a transitional measure, under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war, and conceivable only as a bridge to the revolutionary nationalisation of industry."³¹

Trotsky insists that this nationalisation can only be done with the workers' power and the Soviets.

"Generally speaking, control is conceivable only during the indubitable preponderance of the political forces of the proletariat over the forces of capitalism. (...) For us, therefore, the slogan of control is tied up with the period of dual power in industry, which corresponds to the transition from the bourgeois régime to the proletarian. (...) [The Brandlerites] condemn themselves when they cite the fact that they have been repeating for a number of years the slogan which is suitable only for a revolutionary period."³²

Trotsky may say whatever he wants: the Majority comrades, especially Comrade Germain, do not care. The first time they raised the workers' control strategy was in 1964:

"The demand for workers' control is today the strategically central demand of socialists and of the labour movement in general."³³

In the congress of 1965, long before the wave of mass struggles of the European proletariat, whose best expressions were France in May 1968 and Italy in 1969, they said:

"The slogan of workers control appears as the central slogan of this stage of the struggle to which all other transitional demands lead."³⁴

After May 1968, Mandel stated that:

"The demand for workers' control is on the order of the day" and "The French experience of May 1968 shows one of the main reasons why the demand for workers' control holds a prime position in a socialist strategy aimed at overthrowing capitalism in industrialised countries."³⁵

In the European document of the majority, this line of workers' control is given twice as essential. Among the ten core tasks for our sections, it stated:

31 Trotsky, Leon: "What Next? Vital questions for the German proletariat", 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 242.

32 Ibid, p. 243.

33 Mandel, Ernest: *The Economics of Neo-Capitalism*, 1964, Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/1964/xx/neocap.html>.

34 Eighth Congress Fourth International: "The Evolution of Capitalism in Western Europe", in *International Socialist Review*, Vol 27, No. 2, Spring 1966, p. 75.

35 Mandel, Ernest: "The Debate on Workers' Control", in *International Socialist Review*, Vol 30 No. 3, May-June 1969, p. 1 and 3.

“Systematic intervention in all agitation among workers, in all strikes and campaigns around economic demands, striving to link up these actions to the general approach outlined in the transitional program— that is, to propagandise for a series of demands (essentially around the axis of the demand for workers’ control) that objectively lead the workers to challenge the authority of the bosses and of the bourgeois state and create organs of dual power.”³⁶

And at another point it insists:

“Conducting a systematic propaganda campaign in the organised workers’ movement around transitional demands and helping in the regeneration of this movement by getting these demands —especially the demand of workers’ control— adopted by-radicalising factions of the trade-union movement and in the traditional workers.”³⁷

Workers’ control and the issue of power

This position of abstracting a slogan of our program (workers’ control) to turn it into the axis of our entire policy is something typical of the majority. They have been done the same with guerrilla warfare and armed struggle for Latin America. But in this case, it is much more dangerous because by its own logic this line can fulfil the same reformist role as the slogan “socialism” of the Social Democracy in the pre-war period.

Like any wrong position, it goes against the experience of the class struggle. The problem of power, according to the same document, will be raised because:

“The nature of the period not only imparts an objectively political thrust to mass struggles but also carries with it an urgent need to raise the question of political power...”³⁸

Moreover, the same document acknowledges that the detonator of the European mass movement explosions may be varied:

“... economic demands (1919-20, 1925-26); acute economic crisis (1923), abrupt change in the economic situation (1960-61); reaction to a violent move by the far-right (Spain 1936, Greece 1963); hope for fundamental political change (June 1936 in France), student revolt (May 1968); monetary crisis; colonial war; defence of rights y the workers’ movement has won (right to strike, trade-union freedom), etc., etc. It would be futile to attempt to set up a possible timetable in advance.”³⁹

Comrade Germain and the rest of the Majority comrades tell us that there will be different triggers for mobilising the masses; we are told that “the nature of the period... also carries with it an urgent need to raise the question of political power”, and these two statements are very correct. But then they tell us that in all situations our main slogan should be that of workers’ control. This is very dangerous and can make us fall into reformism. In the first place, because workers’ control is not a slogan of power and, secondly, because we delude the masses that workers’ control under the bourgeois regime can solve this whole range of problems (economic crises, violent displacement towards the right, colonial war, etc.).

Can we build socialism without seizing power?

Following the logic of this way of posing workers’ control as the central task for an indefinite time, we may even say that socialism can be built without taking power. That is, our main task is no longer to educate the workers on the need to take power but to educate them on workers’ control and socialist administration within the bourgeois state. Comrade Mandel dangerously approaches this conclusion:

36 International Majority Tendency: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p.17.

37 Ibid. p. 17.

38 Ibid. p. 12.

39 Ibid. p. 14.

“In strike wave sweeping Europe since May 1968, the sections and militants of the Fourth International have pursued basically a threefold objective:

“1) To popularise the experiences of the most advanced workers’ struggles —both in the kinds of demands put forward and the forms of organisation and struggle adopted— and to spread these regionally, nationally, and internationally.

“2) To propagate the idea of challenging the authority of the bosses, the struggle for workers’ control, and get it rooted in the working masses. It is through challenges like this that the workers will acquire the consciousness and practice necessary for them to take control of the factories and socialise production when future general strikes and revolutionary explosions develop.

“3) To encourage setting up organs to lead strikes that are controlled by the mass of the workers, that is, democratically elected strike committees reporting regularly to general assemblies of the strikers. If the workers learn how to run their own strikes, they will learn all the more quickly tomorrow to run their own state and their own economy.”⁴⁰

Fortunately, we do not know of any other theoretical positions of Majority comrades that match this of comrade Mandel. But the “strategy” of workers’ control is there and, in fact, the only theoretical attempt to justify it has been given so far by Mandel-Germain. Following this path, the danger that lurks in our International is clear, start with the “strategy” of workers’ control to finish abandoning the struggle for power.

Two interpretations and two policies for the general strike of May 1968 in France

Just as the incorrectness of the 10-year strategy of entryism *sui generis* manifested in all its tragic consequences, among others, in the cases of Bolivia 1952-55 and Argentina 1955, the 10-year strategy of “workers’ control” is displayed, with all its terrible dangers, in comrade Mandel’s interpretation of the general strike of May 1968, and in the policy which, according to him, should have been applied.

Trotsky and the general strike

There is a phrase of Trotsky which should be the introduction to any analysis of a general strike anywhere in the world. Even more for the strike in 1968 in France, since Trotsky is talking about the French situation on the eve of the general strike of 1936.

“Above all the tasks and partial demands of our epoch there stands the QUESTION OF POWER.”⁴¹

This categorical and definitive assertion by Trotsky is stated in his analysis of the meaning of a general strike:

“The fundamental importance of the general strike, independent of the partial successes which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner...

“Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: *Who will be the master of the house?*

40 Mandel, Ernest: “The Paris Commune Lives in the Fourth International”, Speech of 16 May 1971 in honour of the Paris Commune, in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 9, No. 25, p. 608

41 Trotsky, Leon: “Once Again, Whither France?” In *Whither France?*, ob. cit. p. 71.

“The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers. Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power.”⁴²

And he insists: “The general strike is, by its very essence, a political act. It opposes the working class, as a whole, to the bourgeois state (...) [and] it poses directly the question of the conquest of power by the proletariat.”⁴³

Mandel and the general strike of May 1968

For Mandel, this is not true. He said that in May 1968 the French workers...

“...they used much more radical forms of struggle than in 1936, [or] in 1944-46...”⁴⁴

However, Comrade Mandel has no qualms in holding that:

“Had they been educated during the preceding years and months in the spirit of workers’ control, they would have known what to do: elect a committee in every plant that would begin by opening the company books; calculate for themselves the various companies’ real manufacturing costs and rates of profit; establish a right of veto on hiring and firing and on any changes in the organisation of the work; replace the foremen and overseers chosen by the boss with elected fellow workers (or with members of the crew taking turns at being in charge).”⁴⁵

In a unique situation, just a few days, which once passed nobody knows when it will repeat, when what was raised was the issue of power, when what he had to do was to raise it and denounce opportunistic organisations for not doing so, Mandel advises: “elect a committee in every plant... begin by opening the company books; calculate for themselves the various companies’ real manufacturing costs and rates of profit, etc.” A consistent Trotskyist would have said the opposite: “If they had been educated over the years and months proceeding in the spirit of socialist revolution, of the urgent need for the working class to take power as leader of the exploited people, they would have known what to do; to transform the general strike in a struggle for power.”

Fortunately, neither the comrades of the French section, nor the majority which heads the International, nor even Mandel himself applied this line in May 1968. On the contrary, their policies towards the mass mobilisation were essentially correct. We are not in charge of explaining this contradiction between the theory which is defended and the practice being performed. We just want to highlight the dangers that would result in the consistent application of such a theory. In the largest general strike that the French proletariat made in this century, when raised to take the Elysee, the “strategy” of workers’ control and the theory that goes with it, want to lock the French Trotskyists in the accounting houses of factories to ... “calculate costs and profits”!

The strategy of the Ninth Congress for Latin America

We argue that the Ninth Congress voted for Latin America one of the famous long term “strategies” of Comrade Germain: the rural guerrilla strategy, with the name “strategy of armed struggle”. Comrade Germain argues this is not what they voted for: instead of recognising the error of Comrade Maitan in the Ninth Congress, Comrade Germain becomes his defence attorney and attacks Comrade Hansen, through a cheap accusation, of misinterpreting him.

“Let us add that an objective reading, without preconceptions, of the Ninth Congress document makes it possible to conclude that it by no means advocates ‘a strategy of rural guerrilla warfare’ (to say nothing of ‘a strategy of the *foco guerrillero*’), but the strategy of armed struggle, which is an

42 Ibid. p. 71 and 72.

43 Ibid. p. 73.

44 Mandel, Ernest: “Workers under neo-capitalism”, in *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 29 No. 6, November-December 1968, p. 15.

45 Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers’ Control”, op. cit., p. 3.

entirely different thing. To try to give the opposite impression, Comrade Hansen has been forced to single out *a single sentence* in the document adopted by the Ninth World Congress and polemicize against it instead of analysing the document as a whole and polemicizing against its general line.”⁴⁶

This argument, primarily highlighting “a single sentence”, seeks to confuse to the very end, giving the impression that Comrade Hansen has taken the single sentence in favour of the “rural guerrilla warfare” and uses it, along with the minority, to carry out a false and tendentious polemic. Comrade Hansen quotes this sentence because it best summarises the position of the entire document of the majority. But the document has many similar, the same or in the same sense. Let’s do the “objective reading” Comrade Germain asks of us:

First phrase:

“Even in the case of countries where large mobilisations and class conflict in the cities may occur first, civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the main axis for a whole period will be the rural guerrilla warfare, the term ...”⁴⁷

Second phrase:

“In this sense, armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare.”⁴⁸

We note that this clarifies the previous sentence, so it is implied that the “guerrilla warfare” it talks about is the rural guerrilla, unless the drafter of the document has lost, along with the political orientation, his grammatical orientation.

Third phrase:

“The strict selection of this central axis must be complemented ...”⁴⁹

This is a second complementary sentence of the first where “central axis” is equivalent to “main axis”, i.e., the “rural guerrilla warfare”.

Fourth phrase:

“Under the perspective of a prolonged civil war with rural guerrilla warfare as its principal axis...”⁵⁰

This is the phrase that begins thesis 18 and summarises the previous thesis 17, which is the one Hansen used to gain time. Here the fundamental concept of the entire document is repeated: the rural guerrilla warfare is the central or main axis.

Fifth phrase:

“In a situation of pre-revolutionary crisis such as Latin America is now experiencing on a continental scale, guerrilla warfare can, in fact, stimulate a revolutionary dynamic, even if at the start the attempt may seem to have come from abroad or to be unilateral (which was the case with Che’s Bolivian guerrilla movement).”⁵¹

This is an explanatory phrase of the one quoted in fourth place.

Sixth phrase:

“In fact, in most of the countries, the most probable variant is that for a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle and the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie in considerable measure will provide the cadres of the movement.”⁵²

46 Germain, Ernest and Knoeller, Martine: “The Strategic Orientation of the Revolutionists in Latin America” ob. cit., pp. 13-14.

47 “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 7 No. 26, 14 July 1969, p. 720.

48 Ibid. p. 720.

49 Ibid. p. 720.

50 Ibid. p. 720.

51 Ibid. p. 720.

52 Ibid. p. 719.

While not speaking directly of rural guerrillas as the main axis, this is the most important phrase because it suggests that peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle and the cadres will be provided by the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie. What kind of struggle is this? There is no doubt that it is the rural guerrilla unless the document considered the possibility that the peasants as a class, go down to the city “for an extended period” to bear the main weight of the struggle, led by students (cadres of the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie).

Seventh phrase:

“Take advantage of every opportunity not only to increase the number of rural guerrilla nuclei but also to promote forms of armed struggle especially adapted to certain zones ...”⁵³

According to this quote, the rural guerrilla is (“not only”) the fundamental: and the subsidiary (“but also”) are other forms of struggle. But let’s invert the reasoning: why doesn’t the document say (as *Rouge* proposes for Chile) “to take advantage of every opportunity not only to increase the workers’ militias, peasant, neighbourhood, area, NCOs committees, of united defence from bourgeois gangs, etc...”? The document does not say it because this is not its conception. Its conception is that the “central axis” is the rural guerrilla” and other forms of struggle, adapted to other areas, are subsidiaries, that should be promoted after having guaranteed the rural guerrilla nuclei.

Eighth phrase: Comrade Maitan makes the same interpretation as Hansen.

“If you take account of the geographical facts, the demographical structures of the majority of the population, and the technical and military considerations stressed by Che himself, it follows that the variant of rural guerrilla warfare on a continentwide scale will be the most probable one.”⁵⁴

This is explained to us by Comrade Maitan, author of the document and reporting officer of the Ninth Congress, in his article “Cuba, Military Reformism and Armed Struggle in Latin America”. Do comrades Germain and Knoeller agree in this interpretation by Maitan of the majority’s positions? It is the same interpretation as ours and diametrically opposed to that of Comrade Germain. Why doesn’t Comrade Germain polemicise with Comrade Maitan to show him that’s not what the resolution of the Ninth Congress said? Why does he denounce us for making a false controversy?

The conclusions are obvious. The conclusion first is optical: in politics, four eyes willing to confuse see less than a blind person. The other conclusion is political and categorical: there is not a single sentence, as Comrade Germain insinuates, but many, which specify the meaning of the whole document voted by the Ninth Congress. And its meaning is that the “main axis” “throughout a period” will be the “rural guerrilla”.

This is not the only attempt to confuse the discussion. So let’s clarify the differences that occurred during the Ninth World Congress.

First difference: about the “main axis” of our activity

For the majority, the “civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the main axis for a whole period will be the rural guerrilla warfare” [already quoted] from the perspective of a prolonged civil war.

For the minority, this strategy was false because:

“The key task facing the vanguard in Latin America, as elsewhere, still remains the construction of a revolutionary Marxist party. This takes priority over all questions of tactics and strategy in the sense that these must be directed to achieving this end as a decisive link in the revolutionary process. (...)

53 Ibid. p. 720-721.

54 Maitan, Livio: “Cuba, Military Reformism and Armed Struggle in Latin America”, *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 8 No 15, 20 April 1970, p. 360.

“Construction of the party must be viewed and presented as the central task, the main orientation, the almost exclusive preoccupation of the vanguard. And the explosiveness of the situation in Latin America situation does not lessen the need, it intensifies it.”⁵⁵

Sometime later, the minority insisted:

“What the Fourth International should do by every conceivable means is insist on the fundamental task at the present stage. This is to begin at the beginning —to assemble sufficient cadres to start serious construction of Leninist combat parties.”⁵⁶

Specifically, the minority considered a complete mistake the orientation towards “rural guerrilla warfare”, which led us away from a seemingly more modest task: to recruit Trotskyist cadres and begin the construction of the Trotskyist parties intimately linked to the mass movement. Given the weakness of the Latin American Trotskyist movement, we thought this was the only immediate and viable task. The alternative was suicide, it would lead us to not win anything in the mass movement and destroy the possibility of building the party.

Second difference: about the classes and locations that will be mobilised in the post-Congress period

For the majority categorically:

“In fact, in most of the countries, the most probable variant is that for a rather long period the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle.”⁵⁷

To avoid further discussion, the thesis continues clarifying the role of the proletariat and the urban masses:

“This means that the leading role of the proletariat can be exercised under diverse forms: either directly by the wage workers (industrial workers, miners or agricultural workers) participating at the head of the revolutionary struggles, which will doubtless be the case in only a minority of Latin American countries; or indirectly, the leadership of these struggles being in the hands of organisations, tendencies, or cadres issuing from the workers’ movement; or in the historic sense of the term, by means of the program and theories issuing from Marxism. The completion of the revolution into a socialist revolution is, in any case, inconceivable without wide mobilisation and very broad participation of the proletariat.”⁵⁸

What this means is that in the years to come, immediately, the working class and the urban masses in Latin America will not do anything important; they will not be the axis of the revolutionary process, except for a minority of countries. The proletariat, absent as a class from the revolutionary process, would have to play its role “indirectly” through “organisations, tendencies, or cadres issuing from the workers’ movement” or “by means of the program and theories issuing from Marxism...” This is no more than the modern version of Stalin’s theory, so criticised by Trotsky, of substitutionism of classes for organisations and programs. The anti-proletarian mania of this thesis regarding the more or less immediate perspectives is so great that it doesn’t even attribute the agricultural proletariat a role of some significance. We have to admit, the document is consistent to the end. “For a rather long period, the peasants will have to bear the main weight of the struggle.” Logically, the urban proletariat and masses, as well as the cities, passed into the background.

For the minority, this social orientation of the work was directly criminal, since the struggle was moving to the cities and the working class. Here’s a strict proof:

“So far as the strategy of our movement is concerned, the main characteristics of this thrust of the youth in a revolutionary direction are 1) its occurrence in urban centres, 2) its involvement of

55 Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, *International Information Bulletin*, No. 3, February 1969, p. 9.

56 Hansen, Joseph: “A contribution to the discussion on revolutionary strategy in Latin America,” *International Information Bulletin*, No. 6, July 1970, p. 9.

57 “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit., p. 719.

58 Ibid., p. 719.

considerable masses, 3) its tendency to try to link up with the workers or other sectors of the masses and to draw them into action.”⁵⁹

Third difference: on the immediate and main tasks for our Latin American sections to execute

For the majority:

“This is why the technical preparation cannot be conceived merely as one of the aspects of revolutionary work, but as the fundamental aspect on a continental scale, and one of the fundamental aspects in the countries where the minimum conditions have not yet been met.”⁶⁰

This technical preparation is combined with the “main axis”, “rural guerrilla warfare”, to give us a strict practical conclusion:

“(…) the term [referring to the rural guerrilla warfare] having primarily a geographical-military meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even preponderantly of peasant composition).”⁶¹

In plain speaking: we must prepare the guerrilla in the best place, whether or not we have peasants who support us at first. Just as previously the struggle of the urban masses was liquidated for a whole stage, now the need for peasant support at the beginning of the fight has been left behind. Now, to start rural guerrillas, it’s more than enough with a nucleus of fighters! without any solid contact with any sector of the mass movement.

For the minority the immediate task was to develop a transitional program to penetrate and work on the urban masses, tending to mobilise them. And we said it like this:

“Thus if the concept of rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period is adopted as the principal axis of revolutionary work, then the problem of mobilising the urban masses becomes somewhat irrelevant and along with it most of the *Transitional Program*.”⁶²

Fourth difference: about the organisms of the mass movement where we must work

For the majority, consistent until the end with the “main axis” of the “rural guerrilla”, the traditional, especially workers’, organisations of the mass movement were so worthy of contempt that they’re not even named as mandatory workplaces. Instead, the majority gives precise information about which organisations we have to penetrate at a continental scale:

“Integration into the historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban Revolution and the OLAS, which involves, regardless of the forms, integration into the continental revolutionary front which the OLAS constitutes.”⁶³

For the minority, logically, this was a suicidal policy.

“The impression given by this is that just as the main orientation advanced in the draft resolution on Latin America appears to be an adaptation to the orientation of the Cuban at their present level of development, so the prescription of working as an ‘integral part’ of the OLAS appears to be an adaptation to the organisational level they have reached.”⁶⁴

Indeed, only taking the same line as the Cubans at the time (rural guerrilla warfare on a geographical military basis) our entryism to OLAS could be explained.

From the minority, we argued we should keep independent, and leave the door open to common actions or fronts with the Cubans.

59 Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., p. 11.

60 “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit., p. 720.

61 Ibid. p. 720.

62 Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., p. 11.

63 “Resolution on Latin America,” of the Ninth World Congress, November 1968, op. cit., p. 722.

64 Hansen, Joseph: “Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America”, ob. cit., p. 10.

We've outlined the four basic differences. The militants of our movement must check against reality to seriously decide on who has been right.

1) No section carried out the rural guerrilla: we all dedicated ourselves to “collect cadres” to build the Party.

The majority stated that “the main axis for a long period will be the rural guerrillas”.

The minority argued that we had to “gather enough cadres to seriously start building Leninist parties of combat”.

The reality shows that nowhere did our sections carry out the rural guerrillas. The Bolivian section tried to do so for years without success and with catastrophic results. In all countries—even those who voted for the resolution of the Ninth Congress—no party started the armed struggle, they devoted only to “gather enough cadres”. The only exception was the PRT (Combatiente), which has now broken with our International and whose experience, as we saw, confirmed the positions of the minority.

2) The struggle was carried out by workers in the cities and not the peasants in the countryside.

The minority argued that the weight of the struggle was to manifest “in urban centres” with “considerable mass participation” and the “tendency to try to link workers and other sections of the masses and lead them to action”.

The reality shows that in the last four years there was not a single peasant mobilisation of importance. The only exception was Chile, where, in any case, the working class and urban mobilisation is infinitely more important (as reaffirmed by the *Rouge* article which refers to the need for many more urban than peasant organisms).

3) Our main task was to mobilise the masses and not the “technical preparation”.

The majority stated the “technical preparation” was the “fundamental aspect at continental scale”.

The minority argued the essential task was to “mobilise the urban masses developing a transitional program”.

The reality of the past four years is there to prove who was right. It is in the hands of the majority to explain why the only group which carried out its call to “technical preparation” as a “fundamental aspect” broke with the International.

4) No section entered the OLAS; we remained as independent Trotskyist parties.

The majority stated we had to integrate “into the continental revolutionary front which the OLAS constitute”.

The minority argued that we had to remain independent and leave the door open for united fronts with the Cubans.

Reality shows that not a single section entered the OLAS, among other reasons because the OLAS strategy of “rural guerrilla warfare” failed so miserably because of the rise of the workers' and urban mass movement, that Cubans dissolved the organisation they had built for centralising rural guerrillas.

The differences are there and are categorical. The facts, hard facts of objective reality, are also categorical. There's only missing a statement, no less categorical, from our International.

Our real differences on the armed struggle regarding four examples

As we have seen, the objective facts of the class struggle knocked to the canvas the rural guerrilla strategy advocated by the Majority comrades at the Ninth Congress. This resulted in a quick tactical shift by Comrade Germain, who now denies having sustained such a strategy, and argues instead that it was the “strategy of armed struggle”. What differentiates this new long-term

strategy of Comrade Germain from the one he held four years ago? That it no longer speaks about the peasantry or rural guerrilla, or the entrance into OLAS. What do they agree on? In that, it still argues that the Party must take the initiative in the armed struggle and must have as a fundamental task the technical preparation for it.

To theoretically justify this position, Comrade Germain uses four historical examples. According to him, what Trotsky proposed for China between 1925 and 1927 and for the fight against fascism and what Hugo Blanco did in Peru was to take the initiative of the armed struggle into the hands of the party after being technically prepared. And the victory of the Cuban Revolution was an example of the correction of this line, which can be repeated.

We will show that all this is not true and that Comrade Germain tries to adapt reality to his theories making false interpretations of Trotsky's positions, distorting the Peruvian experience and concealing the truth in the case of Cuba. We will take each of these examples in chronological order.

Trotsky on China

To understand something about the Trotskyist position on China, one has to start by reading the full quote from Trotsky which Comrade Germain gives:

“Neither the workers nor the peasants would have followed the national bourgeoisie if we had not dragged them by a rope. Had the Comintern pursued any sort of correct policy, the outcome of the struggle of the communist party for the masses would have been pre-determined — the Chinese proletariat would have supported the communists, while the peasant war would have supported the revolutionary proletariat.

“If at the beginning of the Northern expedition we had begun to organise Soviets in the ‘liberated’ districts (and the masses were instinctively aspiring for that with all their might and main) we would have secured the necessary basis and a revolutionary running start, we would have rallied around us the agrarian uprisings, we would have built our own army, we would have disintegrated the enemy armies.”⁶⁵

As interpreted by Comrade Germain, Trotsky was talking about a party of only 10–15 thousand members, two-thirds of which were in the cities, immersed in a country of 450 million people. Regarding this party:

“He was, thereby, regretting that a few thousand communists, no more, didn't start to organise a communist-led peasant army.”⁶⁶

Then Comrade Germain suggests that if Trotsky did this, why cannot we recommend our sections, which are as weak as the Chinese CP was at that time, also to begin building an army?

It is no coincidence either that, although he quoted it, Comrade Germain has deleted the first phrase in the paragraph quoted. There Trotsky is not referring at all to the Chinese Communist Party, but the International. Even in the case that he really was recommending to create the army; does Comrade Germain think we can compare the Communist International in 1927 with our International in the present? The Chinese CP might be stronger or weaker than our sections but of what there is no doubt is that the Communist International was infinitely, qualitatively, stronger than ours, from all points of view, including the military.

But let's move on to the matter of the content. Trotsky's policy for China was not to essentially build a peasant army, as Comrade Germain thinks. What Trotsky proposed was to have a correct policy, which was not synthesised in building an army but in achieving political independence of the CP and the Chinese working class regarding the Kuomintang and to raise the slogan of soviets:

“The chief significance of the Soviets was to be that of *opposing the workers and peasants to the Kuomintang bourgeoisie* and its Left Kuomintang agency. The slogan of Soviets in China meant above all the break with the suicidal and infamous ‘bloc of four classes’ and the withdrawal of the communist

65 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1970, pp. 185–186.

66 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 22.

party from the Kuomintang. The centre of gravity consequently lay not in bare organisational forms, but in the class line.”⁶⁷

Now let’s get back to the quote by Comrade Germain. For him, the “most fatal consequence” of the “Chinese CP in 1925-27” was “the refusal to stimulate, organise, coordinate and arm the peasant uprisings, and tie them together with the communist-led urban working class to create a powerful alliance...”⁶⁸

In his entire interpretation, the word “soviets” does not exist.

For Trotsky, there was a wrong political orientation. What was the correct orientation? Start creating the Soviets from the beginning. “If (this is a conditional preposition, isn’t it Comrade Germain?) at the beginning of the Northern expedition we had begun to organise Soviets (...) we would have secured the necessary basis (...) we would have rallied around us the agrarian uprisings, we would have built our own army, we would have disintegrated the enemy armies.”⁶⁹

That is, for Trotsky, the only way to gain the necessary basis, to concentrate around the communists the agrarian insurrections and to create the army, was to start by creating the Soviets. And the orientation of creating soviets is very political, “a line of class behaviour”, which has nothing to do with the famous “party initiatives in the armed struggle” and “technical preparations” of Comrade Germain.

Trotsky and the fight against fascism

We come now to the problem of the fight against fascism. Comrade Germain transfers to Europe his “strategy” of “preparing technically” and “taking the initiative of the armed struggle”. As for the most part Europe has no dictatorial regimes against which to fight, he decides that the goal of our “initiatives” should be the fascist danger. And he argues:

“It is the capacity of our comrades, wherever they have reached a minimum strength, to take the initiatives of open confrontation with the fascists, which the mass organisations still fail to take.”⁷⁰

To endorse this position, he again resorts to the false interpretation of Trotsky. Both in the quote that Comrade Germain cites as in others of the same work, it is crystal clear that what Trotsky thinks is the exact opposite of what Comrade Germain interprets. To arrive at this interpretation, Comrade Germain “forgets” the question Trotsky is answering in the paragraph he quoted.

“Question: *Does the party itself create the defence group with its own members?*

“Trotsky: The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathisers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defence organisation. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions.”⁷¹

Then, Comrade Germain “forgets” the final sentence, because, in it, it is very clear that the defence against fascism is tied to our trade union activity:

“In Minneapolis where we have very skilled powerful comrades we can begin and show the entire country.”⁷²

Finally Germain “forgets” the rest of the article, including Trotsky’s response to the question on how to practically launch defence groups against fascism. Here’s the answer:

67 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 205.

68 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 21.

69 Trotsky, Leon: *The Third International After Lenin*, op. cit., p. 185-186.

70 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 25.

71 “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program” (June 1938), in *Fourth International*, Vol 7 No 2, February 1946, p.57.

72 Ibid.

“**Trotsky**: It is very simple. Do you have a picket line in a strike? When the strike is over we say we must defend our union by making this picket line permanent.”⁷³

In short, the whole of Trotsky’s position is summarised in the following:

“We can become victorious the same way but we must have a small armed body with the support of the big body of workers.”⁷⁴

It is clear that, for Trotsky, the key is always having the support of the population, the working class, from the beginning. We must act in “quarters where we have sympathisers” or with “workers who will defend us”, or “in Minneapolis” (the main centre of trade union work of the Party), to form pickets “in our unions,” and never to create an “independent defence organisation”.

All this has nothing to do and is the opposite of what Comrade Germain proposes. For him, the party has to create an independent defence organisation (the essential task is “technical training”), which must act even without the support of the workers (“take the initiative”) in confronting fascism. Comrade Germain has every right to defend his 10-year tactic of “armed struggle” transferred to Europe but he has no right to falsify Trotsky to make this defence.

The Cuban Revolution

Nor is Comrade Germain entitled to falsify the facts, as he does in the third example we are going to touch on, that of the Cuban Revolution.

In this case, the Comrade Germain tries to destroy Comrade Camejo’s argumentation, who argues correctly that the example of Cuba is practically impossible to repeat.

One of the assertions of Comrade Camejo is that the revolutionary movement in Cuba had the “semi-neutrality” of US imperialism. Germain replies that:

“The formula ‘semi-neutrality of US imperialism’ is simply grotesque. Washington was arming and financing Batista till the very eve of his downfall.”⁷⁵

As usual, not a single word of Comrade Germain is true. Our own International published (*Quatrième Internationale*, 31No. 31, July 1967) Comrade Maitan’s following position:

“Despite their very close ties with the Batista regime, the American imperialists did not display such aggressive hostility towards Castro’s movement in 1956-59 as to deprive it of all margins for political manoeuvre, even in capitalist circles in the United States.”⁷⁶

To avoid a semantic argument between “semi-neutrality” and “did not display such aggressive hostility”, we turn to the facts.

Comrade Germain said that “Washington was arming and financing Batista till the very eve of his downfall”. We say that Washington imposed an embargo on all weapons sent to Batista on 14 March 1958. But we also say that the Catholic Church, the largest representatives of US companies, the Yankee diplomats in Cuba (except for the Ambassador) and the surface organisations of the Yankee Freemasonry as Rotary and Lions Clubs, were fully supporting Fidel Castro.

A CIA agent reported:

“The following night, a representative group of citizens Santiago honored me with a banquet at the Country Club. Besides Pepin Bosh, there were Dr. Manuel Urrutia, who was still a judge, Daniel Bacardi, president of the Chamber of Commerce; the president of the University of Oriente, the Reverend Father Chabebe, head of the Catholic Youth Movement; Fernando Ojeda, a leading coffee exporter; the presidents of the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Medical Association, Bar Association, civic institutions, and other groups. (...) The table was oblong, at the end was an empty chair with a full

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 22.

⁷⁶ Maitan, Livio: “Major Problems of the Latin-American Revolution”, *Quatrième Internationale*, No. 31, July 1967. English translation in *International Socialist Review*, Vol 28 No.5, September-October 1967, p. 6.

place setting, and a placard that had been carefully and intentionally placed there for my benefit. It read: 'Reserved'. The toastmaster, Fernando Ojeda, arose and addressed me. "One of our compatriots had planned to attend this dinner in your honor tonight," he said "but he sent his regrets that he could not make it. We understand that and we accept his excuses because he's busy on an important mission to Cuba. His name is Fidel Castro. I asked Father Chabebe if he considered Fidel Castro a Communist, and he replied with a definitive negative. 'Castro requested chaplains for his rebel army,' Father Chabebe told me. 'The first chaplain, Father Guillermo Sardinias, reached Castro's headquarters last Thursday, and I sent forty boys up into the hills to join Castro the same day. Last week I sent a gross of blessed medals up there.'"77

This book is a definition by itself since it was written by a known agent of the CIA and the US State Department and is strongly in favour of Fidel Castro. We should not be surprised, then, that Dubois follows:

"Father Sardinias had turned over his parish in Nueva Gerona on the Isle of Pines to an assistant and had obtained permission of the Archbishop's Palace in Havana to join the rebel forces. This was in contrast to the army of Batista, which had no chaplain corps and no chaplains."78

This does not mean that imperialism and the church fought against Batista. Yankee imperialism played a double game: the ambassadors were with Batista, the consuls and senior officials, with Castro; they had an embargo of weapons for Batista, but they met the last delivery of rockets agreed before the embargo. Everything indicates an ambivalent, or "semi-neutrality" policy.

Relations between the Castro movement and the State Department existed and were fluid. Yankee imperialism recognised Castro and his movement long before Batista fell. On 26 August 1958, the Civil Revolutionary Front, in agreement with Fidel Castro, sent to Eisenhower a letter of "solidarity" and "congratulating" him for his recent speeches. It requested, on behalf of that solidarity, the withdrawal of the military missions in Cuba. On 13 October, the State Department replies to that note most cordially, although it does not accept the request. That is, it is a *de facto* recognition.

Finally, we will hear from a witness who knows a lot more of the Cuban Revolution than Comrade Germain: "Che" Guevara. In his private letters to Ernesto Sabato (a known Argentine writer), Guevara agrees that Sabato is right when he "points out that the Castro movement is supported in Argentina by the oligarchy", this is, the most reactionary sectors. But he adds something else:

"What never crossed the Americans mind was that what Fidel Castro and our movement say so naively and drastically be the truth of what we thought to do: we constituted for them the great scam of this half-century, we told the truth apparently distorted. Eisenhower says we betrayed our principles; it is part of their truth, we betrayed the image they had of us, as in the story of lying shepherd, but backwards, and we were not believed either."79

And, anticipating objections of the Germans, who would qualify as "grotesque" the support to Fidel Castro by an entire sector of Yankee imperialism (linked to the Jesuits and part of the Freemasonry) and the entire Latin American oligarchy, "Che" explained the reasons for this support with the following definition of Fidel Castro and his movement:

"After all, Fidel Castro had been a candidate to parliament for a bourgeois party, as bourgeois and as respectable as could be the Radical Party in Argentina, which followed on the trail of a missing leader, Eduardo Chibas, of characteristics that we could find resembling those of the same Yrigoyen."80

To this quote, we only have to add the clarification that Yrigoyen was the darling of British imperialism (that dominated Argentina as Yankee imperialism dominated Cuba).

77 Dubois, Jules: *Fidel Castro, Liberator or Dictator*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1959, p.164.

78 Ibid.

79 Guevara, Ernesto "Letter to Ernesto Sabato of 12 April 1960" in in Sabato, Ernesto: *Claves Políticas* [Political Keys], Alonso Editor, Buenos Aires, 1972, p. 90.

80 Ibid. p. 88.

(We argue that the experience of the Cuban Revolution has nothing to do with a handful of militants who prepared technically and took upon themselves the initiative of the armed struggle. They already had, before beginning struggle, a great mass influence through precisely that party which Chibas had led. That it was a bourgeois party is irrelevant because the question is whether the mass support was earned before or after initiating the armed struggle. But this is another topic of discussion).

What remains clear is that even if the Cuban Revolution was the result of the initiative of a handful of revolutionary in the armed struggle, conditions were absolutely exceptional and virtually impossible to repeat. Comrade Germain may tell us if any guerrilla movement after Castro had the tolerance of imperialism and the support of Latin American exploiters. He may tell us if they all did not end in total disaster because they had, from the beginning, the opposition of imperialism and the national bourgeoisie and did not have any kind of mass support, precisely because of taking the initiative of the armed struggle into their own hands, isolated from the masses. Unless Comrade Germain has gotten semi-neutrality guarantees by imperialism and the support from the native oligarchy, his “long-term strategy of armed struggle” will take the sections of our International that apply it to disasters similar to the Castroist guerrillas of our continent.

Hugo Blanco in Peru

Very briefly, we will finish with the fourth example of Comrade Germain: the activity of Hugo Blanco in Peru. We have nothing to add to what Comrade Hansen said in his latest work. We can only say that Comrade Germain is fully aware of this misrepresentation he does. Does Comrade Germain forget that everything Hugo Blanco did, he did it from the peasant unions and not from a “revolutionary army” created by the party on its initiative? Does Comrade Germain forget that the armed struggle emerged as a need of the peasant movement (organised in a union by Hugo Blanco) to defend against the repression unleashed by the regime before the massive land occupation? What does this armed struggle, the result of a moment of the class struggle in Peru, have to do with the “strategy of armed struggle” of the majority for all of Latin America and all moments of the class struggle? Does Comrade Germain forget that the said armed struggle emerged as a need of the peasant mass movement and not as an initiative of a vanguard party?

The four examples of Comrade Germain, interpreted appropriately, clearly illuminate this discussion. Although Comrade Germain insists on it, this is not about defining oneself for or against the armed struggle. It is about the majority intending to enact that the armed struggle, or the preparation for it, is our central task for an entire long period of class struggle. It is about the majority intending that said armed struggle be an initiative taken by the party. It is about the minority understanding that the armed struggle is one more task of the mass movement, which can only be carried forward when the mass movement is willing to it, which will only be raised at the precise moment when the class struggle otherwise requires it, which will only be successful if done from the bodies of the mass movement. Finally, it is about the minority refusing to take the armed struggle as a strategy in itself for every stage of the class struggle, but is willing, in this as in any other task, to get to the head of the mass movement when its struggle drives it to the need to carry it out. The best proof of this is that comrade Hugo Blanco, the most important mass leader of Trotskyism in the last 20 years (at least), who had in his hands the responsibility to take up arms when the situation of the class struggle demanded it, who knew how to fulfil that responsibility, does not belong to the majority but it is in the ranks and in the leadership of our Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency.

CHAPTER VI

Mandelist party or Leninist party?

The new character of our parties

We believe that the origin of the differences we have with the majority in all areas —theoretical, programmatic, strategic and tactical— stems from a fundamental difference, which is our method of building our sections. The Majority comrades, among whom Comrades Germain - Mandel stand out with their theoretical work, pose many definitions and tasks that seek to change the Leninist principles of party building. For them, the key sector on which we must focus our propaganda and agitation, the sector which defines the fundamental features of our policy is the “vanguard of the masses” that exists around the world. These assertions have become an actual principle.¹

To ensure the success of our strategy, which would be to gain hegemony within the vanguard, we must employ two tactics: 1) conducting political campaigns whose axes are determined by the concerns of the vanguard, with the sole condition that these concerns are not opposed to the struggle of the masses,² and 2) concentrate as much as possible on making known the “exemplary” actions of the vanguard.³ Once we have won that vanguard of the masses, we’ll use it for two tasks. First, to aid the advanced workers of the trade unions to fight against the bureaucracy. Second, to propagandise and agitate among these workers the need to organise in factory committees and organs of dual power to be prepared to meet any future wave of generalised mass struggles.⁴

To complete this schema, Mandel elevates this conception, which at first appeared to be specific to the current stage, to the general terrain. It no longer is about how our parties operate at this stage

1 These are some of the quotes which cannot be disputed: “Setting our main goal as winning political hegemony within the mass vanguard...” in “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 14.

“... the central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967-1968 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build revolutionary qualitatively stronger revolutionary organisations in the preceding stage, to make the transition from revolutionary propaganda groups to the status to revolutionary political organisations beginning to sink roots into the proletariat” (Ibid, p. 13).

2 “...organising national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond with the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against current of the mass struggles, and offer a chance of demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections”. (Ibid, p. 24).

3 “Our sections’ ability to centralise their forces on a regional and national level in order to break the wall of silence and indifference surrounding certain exemplary workers struggles, wildcat actions and to start off solidarity movements”. (Ibid, p. 24).

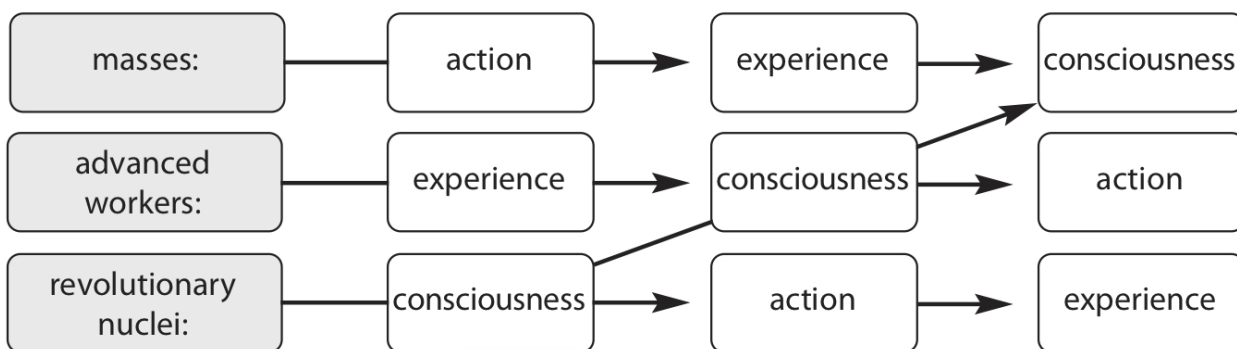
4 “... the fundamental orientation of the European Trotskyists must be to implant themselves in the working class, to use the weight of the mass vanguard to modify the relationship of forces between the bureaucracies and the advanced workers in the unions, the factories, the offices and on the streets, and to concentrate their propaganda and whenever possible, their agitation, on the preparation of these advanced workers for the appearance of factory committees, of organs of dual power, at the height of the next wave of generalised mass struggles massive strikes, general strikes, general strikes with factory occupations (Germain, Ernest: “In Defence of Leninism ,in defence of the Fourth International”, op cit. p 46).

and in a region but rather about their character around the world and throughout all of history.⁵ Not only is this conception opposed to the Leninist-Trotskyist conception of party building, but it is useless: not even to win over the vanguard (at most it would allow the vanguard to win us for their “exemplary” actions).

For Bolsheviks, things are otherwise: the revolutionary party has to win political hegemony in the working class and the mass movement. This is achieved by working with them, with a political line which is set forth for them to take up. Only when this happens can the bureaucracy be defeated. And only this way does the party earn its historic right to be considered the revolutionary party, the vanguard of the working class in the struggle against capitalism.

What is the vanguard?

By how things are posed, it is evident that the starting point for this discussion should be a precise definition of what the vanguard is, what role it fulfils, and what is its relationship with the Bolshevik party. In the work quoted above,⁶ Mandel, anticipating the conclusions of the European document, attempted to give a theoretical interpretation on the new role of the Bolshevik party and of the vanguard. In this diagram, summarising his entire conception, he states that there are three fundamental segments in the formation of class consciousness: the masses, who move from action to experience and from there to consciousness; the advanced workers, who move from experience to consciousness and from consciousness to action, and the revolutionary nucleus who moves from consciousness to action and from there to experience:

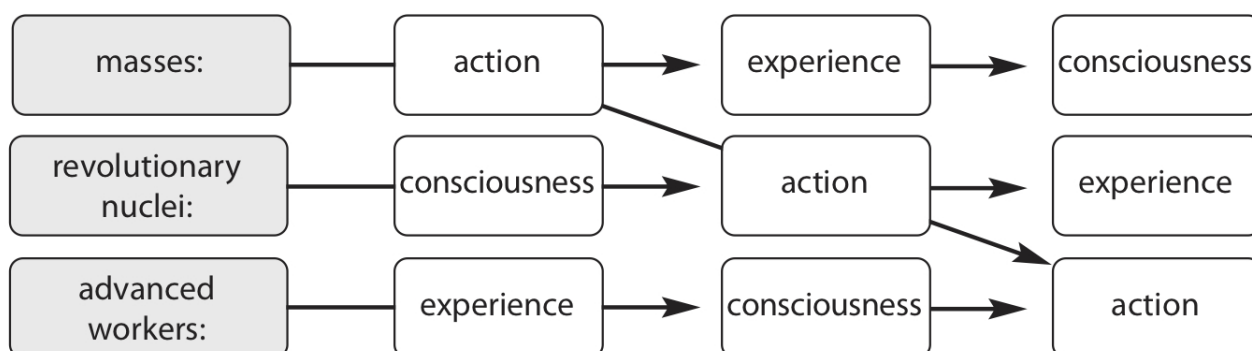


Then Mandel said that inverting this scheme, you get “the next image” (?), from which we can take “practical conclusions” (?). Here it is this revealing picture:

5 “Now, instead of saying that the purpose of the party is to develop the political class consciousness of the working class, the formula becomes much more precise: The function of the revolutionary vanguard consists in developing revolutionary consciousness in the vanguard of the working class.” (Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, in *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 31, No.9, December 1970, reproduced in <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/196x/leninism/index.htm>).

“According to Lenin’s concept of organisation, there is no self-proclaimed vanguard. Rather, the vanguard must win recognition as a vanguard (i.e., the historical right to act as a vanguard) through its attempts to establish revolutionary ties with the advanced part of the class and its actual struggle.” (Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.) Note that in these last two quotes Mandel uses the term “vanguard” as equivalent of “party” and “the most advanced part of the working class”.

6 We refer to the quoted work, “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”. (NM)



We will stop first on the issue of the three sectors: the masses, the advanced workers (vanguard) and the party.

In Marxism as used by Marx, there are structures (the classes) and superstructures (the ideologies and institutions). The masses are in the structure and the revolutionary party in the superstructure. The working class, the masses and society as a whole, have superstructures which are of two types: objective and subjective. Objective superstructures are institutions and subjective superstructures are the ideologies and consciousness. A union, a workers paper, a party, a soviet, a nationalist publication, are objective “institutional superstructures” of the class or the mass movement. The communist and socialist parties as well. The trade unionist and reformist consciousness form part of the ideological, subjective, superstructure of the working class. As they are bourgeois ideologies, they are “false consciousness” of the workers. The Trotskyist ideology is the “true consciousness” of the working class and it is part of the ideological or subjective superstructure. The Trotskyist party is the objective form of this ideology and, therefore, it is part of the institutional superstructure of the working class.

In the struggle to win over the working class and the mass movement, all these institutions and ideologies fight each other fiercely. This is very clear. Summarising, we see that there are two key segments: the structure and the superstructure. Or, put another way, we have the classes on the one hand and the institutions and ideologies on the other. Mandel, who speaks of three segments, starts from a true, obvious fact—the existence of a large vanguard. But within our outline we have nowhere to place it; it is neither a class nor an institution. Do we need then to revise Marxism? Namely, is there a third category? Is the vanguard located in the structure, together with the working class and the mass movement? Or is it located in the superstructure, next to the party?

All of Mandel’s theoretical work debates in this intractable problem. Aware of having to give a definition that fully justifies the discovery of this third “category”, he says: “The category of ‘advanced workers’ stems from the objectively inevitable stratification of the working class. It is a function of their distinct historical origin, as well as their distinct position in the social process of production and their distinct class consciousness.”⁷

But this definition does not solve any problems. If the decisive element is the “inevitable stratification” within the class, the vanguard forms part of it, thus, the structure.

And if it is defined by its “distinct position in the social process of production”, it means that although it is still part of the structure it is another class. Finally, if it is defined by its “distinct class consciousness” it forms part, along with the rest of consciousness, of the superstructure.

This contradiction is exacerbated when Mandel describes the “advanced worker” (or vanguard). Here it turns out that this new category has a frankly surprising “essence”. It’s “that part of the working class that is already engaging in more than sporadic struggles and has already reached a first level of organisation” and “what distinguishes the workers’ vanguard from this mass is the fact that even during a lull in the struggle it does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, ‘by other means’. It attempts to solidify the resistance funds generated in the struggle into ongoing resistance funds — i.e., into unions. By publishing workers

⁷ Ibid.

newspapers and organising educational groups for workers, it attempts to crystallise and heighten the elementary class consciousness generated in the struggle. It thus helps give form to a factor of continuity, as opposed to the necessarily discontinuous action of the mass, and to a factor of consciousness, as opposed to the spontaneity of the mass movement in and of itself.”⁸

What has all this to do with “distinct historical origins” “distinct position in the social process of production” and “stratification of the working class”? A union activist of the British miners fulfils part of Mandel’s requirements to be considered an “advanced worker”: “he has reached a first level of organisation”, “does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle” even “during a lull”, “publishes newspapers”, “attempts to crystallise and heighten consciousness”, he “opposes spontaneity” and “helps” to “form to a factor of continuity”. But he does not meet the other requirements: he has no “distinct historical origin” from the British miners, he is not located in any “class stratification”, or occupies a “distinct position in the process of production”.

Conversely, the proletarianised technicians of the American automotive industry who do meet these last three requirements (they have a different historical origin to the American working class, they occupy a —relatively— distinct role in social production and are particularly stratified within the working class), do not meet the others, at least in Detroit, where the undisputed vanguard (the “advanced workers”) have been the black workers, who practically rose in revolt a few years ago. Currently the same happens with the immigrant workers in the French Renault.

Mandel has no way out of this contradiction, and he inexplicably mixes the quantitative with the qualitative. If the definition is quantitative, the vanguard is made of the “most conscious” workers, the “most determined fighters”, the “smartest” of the working class. That is, they form part of a structure (the working class) where they differ from the rest of their comrades for being “more” in some sense. If the definition is qualitative, i.e., those who “continue the struggle”, those who “publish newspapers”, who “have reached a first level of organisation”, then the vanguard is located in the superstructure. The contradiction is ironclad and cannot be overcome; regardless of how much one wishes to develop a different definition, confirming thus Marxism —there are only two categories, not three.

But then: how to define the vanguard? If we wanted to define it using dialectical logic, we would say the *vanguard is a phenomenon*, not an existence (a being), i.e. that, unlike classes and superstructure it has no permanent existence for an entire era. The sectors that are at the forefront of the struggle are the vanguard. It’s a relative term; its very name indicates the existence of a rear-guard. In a general sense, the party is the vanguard of the working class; the working class is the vanguard of society as a whole. If we look at concrete examples, in France in 1936, the workers’ movement was the vanguard, but in 1968 the student movement was. In Argentina, from 1955 to 1966 the metalworkers were, in 1968 the students, from 1969 on the workers in the automotive industry. In Peru, led by Hugo Blanco, the peasants were the vanguard; during the presidency of Velasco Alvarado, the teachers were.

It is no coincidence that Germain, somewhat contradicting his definitions, refers only to the workers’ vanguard because that is where it becomes most evident that the vanguard is not defined by “stratifications” or by levels of consciousness and organisation but rather by the role it plays in a given struggle. The character of “phenomenon” also may take place within the same struggle: in the Cordobazo, in the beginning, the students played the more advanced role, later the workers’ movement and the auto workers union did. In the struggles of the French proletariat after the Russian Revolution, there was a vanguard like Thorez and Marty who later, in 1936, were in the rear-guard. We could say that each uprising or struggle has its vanguard: there was the IWW or the US Socialist Party and also the vanguard who led the struggles of the CIO; from the first one emerges Cannon, from the second Farrell Dobbs; of that of the students in 1968 which we already discussed, Krivine, Dutschke and Cohn Bendit; of the oppressed nationalities, Malcolm X.

Summarising, we can say the vanguard is unique to each struggle, that in the same struggle different groups can alternate in that role; a sector which today is vanguard not only may tomorrow

8 Ibid.

cease to be so, it may even become rear-guard. The fate of the vanguard is to be absorbed by the class or be assimilated by the superstructure.

For example, if one of them makes its activity permanent, creating an ideology and building an organisation, it becomes part of the superstructure. Sometimes they are absorbed by some of the existing parties or mass organisations. Thorez became Stalinist, Reuther a bureaucrat (as Lechín in Bolivia or Vandor in Argentina); Cohn Bendit dedicated himself to cinema and Krivine to building the Trotskyist party in France. Other large sectors of the vanguard, when giving up the fight, become fused with their class, thus remaining in the structure.

The schema of Comrade Germain, which attempts to imprison the vanguard in a “category” instead of defining it, makes it lost to our understanding. By ignoring the unevenly developed aspects that combine to give rise to this phenomenon, he completely revised historical materialism. But this is not the only flaw of his invention.

Where do reformist organisations fit?

Comrade Germain does not know it. And, indeed, this is another mistake and far more serious than the last. It seems that for Mandel and Germain the Stalinist and Social Democratic organisations have nothing to do with the revolutionary party, nay, it seems they do not exist. This is because Comrade Mandel-Germain thinks our fundamental struggle is against the false and backward consciousness of the working class and the masses, which is correct only in a general sense. Because false consciousness is not simply made up of the wrong ideas that the vast majority of individual members of the working class or the mass movement have in their head, but it is expressed in very strong, objective institutions, the large reformist organisations. They recruit and organise workers, educate them in the false consciousness, print newspapers to propagandise it; and use bureaucratic and gangster methods to defend it. Our struggle against this false consciousness is not a surgical procedure or a session of psychoanalysis to remove misconceptions from the minds of individual workers. It’s a fight to the death against the organisations that support them, against their ideology, against their methods and, fundamentally, against their policies.

Can we ignore these organisations in a schema about the relationship of our parties with the workers’ movement and its vanguard? Does such a pure relationship “party–vanguard–masses” really exist? Not at all, our relationship with the working class is a relationship of the revolutionary superstructure to class structure. And the vanguard is not the only mediator because between us and the working class there are other superstructures, workers’ parties, trade unions and other class organisations, which are generally reformist and sometimes ultra-leftist. This also applies to our relationship with the mass movement. Therefore, our party cannot have politics for the working class and to win its vanguard without politics for the unions, the Communist parties, the Social Democrats, the factory committees. We’re not just saying we cannot ignore the reformist and bureaucratic organisations, they must be destroyed. Trotsky said: “The class itself is not homogeneous. Its different sections arrive at class consciousness by different paths and at different times. The bourgeoisie participates actively in this process. Within the working class, it creates its own institutions, or utilizes those already existing, in order to oppose certain strata of workers to others. Within the proletariat several parties are active at the same time.”⁹

His subjectivist and phenomenological tendencies lead Comrade Mandel–Germain to forget that one of our primary objectives, if not the main one, is to wipe off the leaderships and opportunist parties from the leadership of the workers’ movement. Since he doesn’t see what an obstacle for the development of class consciousness are the counter-revolutionary parties, he discovers something amazing: what “today holds back the working class” from “acquiring political class consciousness” is, above all, “the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification”. And that is why, for Mandel–Germain, “the eye-opening function of critical social

⁹ Trotsky, Leon: “What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 163.

science can play a truly revolutionary role in the new awakening of the class consciousness among the masses.”¹⁰

So now our main struggle is against “the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification” and we must abandon the fight we have always held against the treacherous and reformist leaders of the mass movement? So this is the best way for the masses to achieve class consciousness? We, archeo-Trotskyists, will continue as usual, but additionally, to fight those leaderships instead of opening more eyes “to critical social science” we will use Trotskyist politics, against the Stalinist and Social Democrat politics.

The true relationship between action, experience and consciousness

We have eliminated the vanguard from the Mandelian schema whereby the masses, the vanguard, and the party travel different and difficult paths to reach consciousness, action or experience. Given that the vanguard is a phenomenon, its development cannot follow any predictable sequence. We would need to add that while fulfilling its vanguard role, any sector follows at that time the same laws of development that the mass movement and the party do, albeit in a contradictory way. For Marxists, “spontaneous represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form.”¹¹ Meaning that action, experience and consciousness are parts of a whole that takes part on all levels, from the party to the masses. The decisive factor of this whole is the actions of the mass movement.

We do not see anywhere this action without conscience that Mandel attributed to the working class and the masses. On the contrary, we believe there is no action without prior conscience. The capitalist and imperialist regime, with its infamies, causes changes in the mass consciousness (hatred, rejection, indignation, anger, etc.), which precede any action. If there were a sequence we could say it is: the objective reality of bourgeois society makes an impact on the consciousness of the masses and this causes their actions. But this objective reality has an impact through experience, the experience of suffering exploitation. For example, the boss exploits the worker (the objective reality of the capitalist system), the worker suffers the exploitation (makes the experience of being exploited), feels the desire to change his situation (comes to the realisation that he must fight the boss), he throws himself into the fight (takes action).

Anyway, this sequence is just a scheme because the contemporary worker, for example, before going out to struggle, goes to his union; that is, his experience does not start from zero, since he relies on previous generations of workers and he does not need to repeat exactly their experiences nor to reinvent the union before every struggle. He already knows to some degree what is a strike, an occupation, a demonstration, or a petition and he’s conscious of that experience.

Comrade Mandel could tell us now that the working class learns only through its actions. This is true but it does not contradict the above. It does not mean the working class performs actions without consciousness. The actions of the mass movement connect different levels of consciousness and experience, making each action to always have as a starting point a certain level, which will lead to a higher one, which, in turn, will be the starting point for new actions.

Within the consciousness of the working class and the exploited masses, there is a struggle between true and false conceptions. For example, a Social Democratic worker who hates fascism, he considers it his worst enemy and wants workers unity to fight it but, at the same time, he trusts in his bureaucratic and reformist leadership. Regarding fascism, he has a true conscience, regarding his leadership, and therefore the way to fight the enemy, a false one. Here, as in all knowledge, the role of practice is crucial. Only practice can assert it in his class consciousness or attack his false consciousness. Only practice will enable him to overcome the false and attest what is true to reach a new level of consciousness, which will have new contradictions which can always be

10 Mandel, Ernest: *The Leninist theory of organisation*, op. cit.

11 Lenin, VI: “What is to be done”, 1902, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 374.

overcome through new actions. But to say that practice is the determining factor on the way to class consciousness does not mean the road begins there.

Comrade Mandel might insist that, anyway, we agree with him that only action leads to class consciousness and, therefore, on this point we have no differences. Not true, we have two, fundamental differences. The first difference is that Comrade Mandel speaks of an unknown level of consciousness while we speak of the class consciousness, which we all know what it is. For him, each sector arrives at a different level (e.g., the vanguard at an “empirical and pragmatic” consciousness) and only the revolutionary party arrives at class consciousness (which for Comrade Mandel is scientific and not political). The second difference is that for us class consciousness is achieved precisely through a superstructural factor, the revolutionary party, and not by mere actions and experiences of the workers’ movement.

The masses do not automatically reach class consciousness, universal and historical consciousness. We could say that the mass movement approaches it asymptotically, i.e. at each stage, it is closer to it but never reaches it through its means. The party is the only agent who can make those two lines, increasingly closer to each other, no longer be asymptotes; that the mass movement merges with the political class consciousness.

The Mandelist conception is the typical position of the European anti-conformist existentialist intellectuals and phenomenologists of the post-war period, one of whose classical exponents is Sartre. It means the denial of man, and in this case, of the human nature of the mass movement and the working class because man is distinguished from animals for being conscious, to varying degrees, of his actions.

The party abides by the same laws as the mass movement but at a qualitatively higher level. The consciousness of the revolutionary party is nothing more than the historical experience of the workers’ and mass movement. Instead of starting from a partial and limited consciousness and experience, the party starts from a historical and universal consciousness and experience. To extract them, the party uses a series of sciences combined into one: Marxism; it elevates them to historical, universal and abstract consciousness and transforms them into a political Marxist program.

Scientific or political consciousness?

For Comrade Mandel, “the category of the revolutionary party stems from the fact that Marxian socialism is a *science* which, in the final analysis, can be completely assimilated only in an individual and not in a collective manner.”¹² This is so because “Marxism constitutes the culmination (...) of at least three classical social sciences: classical German philosophy, classical political economy, and classical French political science (French socialism and historiography)”¹³ and “its assimilation presupposes at least an understanding of the materialist dialectic, historical materialism, Marxian economic theory and the critical history of modern revolution and of the modern labour movement.”¹⁴

This means that achieving class consciousness is reaching the theoretical, scientific and comprehensive understanding of Marxism as a science; handling dialectics, sociology, economics and Marxist history. So it can only be assimilated in “an individual and not in a collective manner”, that is, only a tiny scientific minority can reach it. This is the most defeatist concept we can imagine; it is an impossible task to fulfil for the workers’ movement. If we intend to expel from the consciousness of the workers all the ideological rubbish accumulated by the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy and replace it with “Marxist science” (the “critical social science”) we should not build a party but we should ask imperialism to subsidise a university with capacity for hundreds of millions of workers worldwide, with scholarships for all to attend. As Comrade Mandel sees that this is impossible, he’s happy to say that only a small minority of individuals can rise to class consciousness.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

This creates the problem of what to do with the masses which are unable to acquire class consciousness. Comrade Mandel–Germain “solves” this problem by liquidating the party as a revolutionary political party and attaching great importance, instead, to a specific social sector, the “technical intelligentsia”. The latter would have, according to Comrade Germain, “the possibility of its massive participation in the revolutionary process and in the reorganisation of society” which will bring to the “critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientific knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognise the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is.”¹⁵ In other words, this intelligentsia, which becomes revolutionary as a social sector, not as part of the membership of the party, has in its hands the task of awakening class consciousness. And the main task of the revolutionary party, since the key was left in the hands of intellectuals, will be to theoretically advise that technical intelligentsia, giving them courses in Mandelian “critical social science”. After which the role of this “critical social science” is to decree the death of the Bolshevik party. With this Comrade Mandel, among other things, gives arguments to the accusation the bourgeoisie permanently makes to the revolutionary mass movement: it is an unconscious mass dragged along and deceived by a handful of agitators who hide their political aims.

For Comrade Mandel, the working class cannot reproduce any knowledge in mass form and this amounts to saying that society as a whole does not advance in knowledge. He believes that, just as only individuals can assimilate scientific socialism, only individuals are capable to assimilate and reproduce the knowledge accumulated by humanity from prehistoric times to present day. What Comrade Mandel is doing is confusing the concrete part of knowledge (i.e., the results) with its processing. But society (or the working class or any segment thereof) advances incorporating scientific results not the methods of research that led to these results. To deny this would be akin to saying that an individual who has not studied medicine and pharmacology would not know how to use aspirin. However, for many years mankind has made use of aspirin to get rid of headaches with good results.

What Comrade Mandel does is to develop two types of consciousness: consciousness of the vanguard, which is “empirical” and “pragmatic” and class consciousness which is “global scientific”, i.e. of “theoretical understanding”. This means that political consciousness and the program do not exist in this modern phenomenology of the working class. For Comrade Mandel whether the worker agrees or disagrees with the program of the revolutionary party has nothing to do with his level of consciousness; it does not mean he has attained class consciousness. For Trotsky, however, “The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party.

“The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious (...)

“The progress of a class towards class consciousness, that is, the building of a revolutionary party which leads the proletariat, is a complex and a contradictory process.”¹⁶

As we see, for Trotsky the “progress of a class towards class consciousness” is an objective process.

The category of revolutionary party emerges from the fact that Marxism, as a party, is a program. Imagine a supposed party composed of great intellectuals who manage to perfection the science of Marxism but who are not concerned with formulating a political program or with working with it in the mass movement. Is this a revolutionary party? No. A revolutionary party is obviously one in which some comrades thoroughly understand Marxism and collaborate with the immense majority of workers who militate in it, to formulate a correct political program and put it into practice.

15 Ibid.

16 Trotsky, Leon: “What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 163.

There is a dialectical relationship between the program of the party and Marxist science: without Marxist theory (science) a revolutionary program cannot be developed. There is also a dialectical relationship between the program and the actions of the masses: if the program doesn't start from the actions of the masses, it cannot be revolutionary. And there is, as well, a dialectical relationship with the party activity: without a party putting it into practice no program is, in itself, revolutionary. All these elements come together to achieve this specific reality that is the revolutionary party with its program. And this party is "the highest degree of development of proletarian class consciousness" as Comrade Mandel would say. This is why we say that Comrade Mandel, by having magnified an essential part of the revolutionary party, the Marxist science, falls in an intellectual scientific deviation about the role of the party and class consciousness. According to Trotsky, class consciousness is the transformation of the "social class in itself" into "political class for itself". For Comrade Mandel, following his reasoning, class consciousness should be the transformation of the working class in scientific consciousness and not in political consciousness, as for Trotsky. And this is outrageous. It is enough for mass sectors of the working class to politically support the Marxist party for them to have attained class consciousness. It is enough that individuals or sectors of the class join the party and accept its program and statutes, for them to be the epitome of class consciousness. This is true even if the masses that politically support the party and individuals or sectors who join it accepting his statutes and program, do not know a single word of Marxist philosophy, economics or sociology, that is, they have not "completely" assimilated Marxism as "science". This was the classic criterion of Lenin and Trotsky. As we see, much less demanding than Mandel's.

Class consciousness means the workers know that society suffers from cancer, the capitalist and imperialist system, and the only remedy for this cancer is our program and our party. This knowledge, as Trotsky pointed out, can and must be acquired in bulk rather than individually by the workers' and mass movement. And the workers' and mass movement acquires this knowledge by confronting different policies put forth by the various parties that exist within it. If there is a revolutionary party that puts forward the correct political line (i.e., which responds to the historical and immediate interests of the working class) in each of the struggles, the workers' and mass movement will recognise it as their Party and will have acquired political class consciousness. If this party does not exist, it cannot be done. The role of Marxism "as a science" is to transform the historical and immediate interests of the working class into a program of mobilisation, that is, into a political answer for each actual struggle of the mass movement and which tends to raise the struggle towards the taking of power. And in this way, to win the masses for our program and our party, liquidating their treacherous and opportunistic leadership.

A vanguardist and strategist analysis

Analysis, reality and politics

If for Comrade Mandel "critical social science" fulfilled the role of awakening class consciousness, for his disciple Comrade Germain, analysis meets an even more revolutionary role, since "the goal of the analysis is always to *change* existing conditions in favour of the proletarian revolution, not to adapt to the given situation."¹⁷

This dangerous assertion confuses analysis with Marxist policy, (in the same way as previously Comrade Mandel confused Marxist science with a revolutionary program and party). A slight difference with the view of Lenin, for whom: "Marxism requires of us a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of the relations of classes and of the concrete features peculiar to each historical situation."¹⁸

That is, to carefully study reality to uncover the trends towards proletarian revolution and those which oppose it and the relations between them. This is nothing less than the characterisation

¹⁷ Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁸ Lenin, V. I. "Letters on Tactics", 8-13 April 1917, in *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Vol 24, p. 43.

of the given “historical moment”. And it is the “scientific basis” that Lenin speaks of —not necessarily as Comrade Mandel believes “to wield against reality and change it”— but only to forge the tool with which we will change it. That tool “is political”, said Lenin. And in particular, we refer to the politics of the party towards the masses to impose a revolutionary change.

The aim of the analysis is to deepen, once and again, the study of a particular situation, to develop correct slogans that can strengthen the revolutionary trends and those slogans which will try to destroy the counter-revolutionary ones.

But the analysis does not meet at all the objective of “changing the existing conditions in favour of the proletarian revolution”. Politics serves that objective. Analysis and politics are therefore closely linked but are not the same. We cannot put forth a revolutionary policy if we do not start from a scientific analysis and characterisation of reality. At the same time, our analysis is useless if it does not become a policy for changing that reality.

Here’s an example. *Analysis*: the workers’ movement is on the uprise; it is headed by the Social Democrats and Stalinists; the bourgeoisie is in crisis; there is a weak government that is forced to give democratic rights and to grant concessions to the workers’ movement; a sector of the bourgeoisie prepares a fascist *coup d’état*; the middle class is divided, one sector tends to be dragged by fascism and another by the workers’ movement; our party has no mass influence but it is recognised by sectors of the vanguard. *Characterisation*: we are in a pre-revolutionary situation that will result in either the workers’ revolution or the fascist counter-revolution; the rise of the class, the radicalisation of a section of the petty-bourgeoisie and the existence of our party push towards the workers’ revolution; the bourgeoisie and imperialism, the right-wing middle class and the treacherous politics of the opportunistic leadership of the mass movement push towards the counter-revolution; only if we displace these leaderships and win the leadership of the mass movement will the situation result in the workers’ revolution. *Policy*: we have to unify the workers’ movement in a front against fascism and begin to raise the armament of the mass organisations, denouncing the vacillations and betrayals of the reformist leaderships; in this task, we have to win over the mass movement; we have to work on the army ranks; we have to propose a program that also addresses the needs of the petty-bourgeoisie to drag it towards the workers’ revolution; we must work in the organisations of the workers’ and mass movement raising slogans emerging from the previous points: “Unity of all workers’ organisations and workers’ and popular parties against fascism”; “armed detachments from unions and soviets (if they exist)”; “democratic rights for soldiers and NCOs”, etc.

The Marxist analysis of the stages

To formulate our political line, the first thing we do is to carefully define the stage of the class struggle which a country, a continent, the world, a guild, a factory, or even a school or university is going through. The basis for the Marxist analysis and characterisation is the situation of the class struggle. It is a matter, above all, of a structural analysis which should answer the following question: What is the relationship of forces between the classes in the situation we want to characterise? Upon this basis, we incorporate the superstructural elements: the situation of the political parties, trade unions and other mass organisations, of the different tendencies within them, etc. The general relationship of forces between the classes is expressed in the type of regime which exists at each stage. A general shift in the balance of power (i.e. of the stage) becomes in a short-time a regime change.

Within these stages there are times when a class takes the offensive and times when another class takes it; within the same class different sectors can be on the offensive at each moment; sectors of the same class can sometimes fight each other. Additionally, there are the superstructures of the different classes, and the State, which have some independence from the movement of the classes, leading to contradictory situations between the ranks and the superstructure (such as when the workers’ movement is oriented towards the revolution and the workers’ parties are oriented increasingly to the right). All these fluctuations which take place within a stage can determine sub-stages, which we must carefully specify.

Trotsky has said that there are generally four types of stages, which reflect four states in the process of class struggle: counter-revolutionary, non-revolutionary, pre-revolutionary and revolutionary. Governments reflect in a non-mechanical way the characteristics of the stage, and all the contradictions are summarised in them. Governments may be fascist, Bonapartist, semi-Bonapartist, bourgeois-democratic, Kerenskists, or Kornilovists. In the backward countries, according to Trotsky, there may be Bonapartist *sui generis* governments, which are those that, while being bourgeois, confront or resist some imperialist power and for this they tend to rely on the mass or workers' movement or, on the contrary, they crush the workers as servants of imperialism.

The existence of these different types of government, sometimes even within the same stage, is because, like all superstructures, they reflect not only the fundamental relation exploiter–exploited but also all the other contradictions and combinations of classes or class sectors. They all remain bourgeois governments, but some are supported by the middle class in the cities, others are forced to rely on the peasantry or the working-class parties, in some the military-bureaucratic apparatus of state has more weight than in others, and so on. From these different combinations emerge different types of government which reflect individual situations of the class struggle. But all these governments are determined by the specific characteristics of the stage and by the regime. In a pre-revolutionary stage, there can be a democratic–bourgeois or a Kerenskyist government, but there cannot be a fascist government; in a counter-revolutionary stage there can be a fascist or a Bonapartist government, but there cannot be a bourgeois-democratic government.

This method, which consists in defining the stages and regimes by the situation of the class struggle and the governments by the particular combination of social sectors and superstructures they express, was the method of our International in the good times of “archo-Trotskyism”. Our policy began with the serious, tenacious, thorough and scientific attempt to define the stage which we were going through and the government we were under at any given time. But, since the majority is prevalent in the leadership of our International, this method has been abandoned. Our analyses are now based solely on existing relationships within the workers' movement and very especially, almost exclusively, in the situation of the vanguard. As a result of such analyses, a policy emerges whose objective is no longer correctly leading the masses in the situations they must face but rather to impact the vanguard. Hence the contempt for the scientific method that Trotskyism has produced.

Previously, we would have discussed for whole months whether comrade González Moscoso's definition of the Banzer government as “fascist” was correct or not. Why? Because only by agreeing on that, we could agree on the policy to follow. Currently, the Majority comrades agree on the POR(C)'s policy and strategy for Bolivia, without agreeing, apparently, in the definition of the government, as Comrade González says it is “fascist” and Comrade Germain calls it “reactionary”. This might be a fluke but, unfortunately, it is the rule. The Majority comrades said the policy of the ERP and the PRT(EC) was an example (i.e., they approved it with praise), although the PRT(EC) had defined the Argentine situation as “civil war” and the comrades of the United Secretariat as pre-revolutionary.

The “analysis-justification” of the majority

It seems impossible to agree on a policy starting from diametrically opposed characterisations of the actual situation. And indeed it is. But what happens is that the Majority comrades do not start from the analysis of the situation of the class struggle. Instead, they do almost the opposite: they formulate a strategy according to the internal phenomena of the workers' and mass movement and then they concoct an analysis of reality that fits and justifies their strategy.

In the past, the sector to which they gave fundamental importance was the bureaucratic organisations of the workers' movement, especially the communist parties. At that time, they formulated a strategy for this sector: entryism *sui generis*. To justify it, they began by asserting world war was inevitable and the communist parties would be forced to lead the struggle of the masses, with the consequent emergence of centrist tendencies which would lead an entire stage of the revolution.

There was no world war nor centrist tendencies emerged but they kept inventing new analysis of reality to continue justifying this 10-year strategy. We have already seen the last of them, which tells us that the strategy of entryism *sui generis* was adopted because it was anticipated that the “(...) radicalisation process (...) would essentially happen within the traditional mass organisations.”¹⁹ And we have also seen that, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of Castro and Guevara phenomenon, it was not so.

The Ninth Congress’s policy for Latin America is another good example of this method. The Majority comrades did not take into account at all the Marxist analysis of the class struggle to define their strategy. They gave no importance to the stages each Latin American country was living. They took as reference point what the “vanguard” was discussing: rural warfare or not, armed struggle or not. From there they took out their strategy. First it was the rural guerrilla, later —when it became hot potatoes as all the rural guerrillas had come to nothing— they distilled it and extracted the quintessence, the “strategy of armed struggle”. The Majority comrades did not care that in Brazil there was a semi-fascist or ultra-reactionary regime, in Peru a Bonapartism *sui generis* regime, a certain nationalist shift in other Latin American countries and different stages of the class struggle in each country. They lumped them all together in one analysis for which they needed a common strategy.

The first analysis-justification for the strategy of armed struggle was to invent a kind of common regime to all of Latin America, a regime of monolithic agreement between imperialism, the national bourgeoisie and the armed forces. After the World Congress, however, emerged governments like Torres and Allende and Onganía fell in Argentina, events that collapsed this analysis. As they had to hold the strategy, they invented a new type of regime: “military reformism”. The only thing new about those encompassed by this name was precisely the name itself. It was Rockefeller who invented it. When he visited Latin America, he wrote a report recommending a new policy for imperialism, the “military reformism” with which imperialism, the national bourgeoisie and the military agreed. For obvious reasons, this characterisation also collapsed when the bloody pro-imperialist coups of Banzer and the Chilean military junta came.

Much of Torres’ government and the last part of Allende’s had the characteristics of “Kerenskyist” governments. The only approximate definition is what Comrade Germain gives us in the negative when he qualifies Banzer as “Kornilovian” but much in passing. Why were the Majority comrades unable to foresee these governments and adopt a policy against them? Because the correct analysis meant, for example in the case of Kerenskyist governments, to propose the workers’ united front against the reactionary coup and the formation of militias as part of the natural organisations of the mass movement. In other words, it meant there was no need for guerrillas. The correct analysis did not serve to justify their strategy.

How did we characterise the Latin American regimes? Let’s see: “The defeat or the need to confront the mass movement, as well as the economic situation, facilitated the unity of the national bourgeoisie and imperialism and this unity allowed the emergence of dictatorial Bonapartist governments, supported by the army or directly military, and in some cases semi-fascist, as in Brazil.

“This brings up an important theoretical problem: the monolithic united front between Yankee imperialism and the national bourgeoisie... will it be within a historical period of five, 10 or more years? Or, on the contrary, is it a temporary phenomenon as seen in all other Latin American periods of strong governments that were followed by weak governments when there was an upsurge of the mass movement? In principle, we believe that the Castroist and Guevarist solution of the problem, that these governments will remain to be like this, is false.

“The growing current crisis between national bourgeois sectors and between some of these with imperialism, combined with a much more important and decisive factor, the uprising of the mass movement, is causing a crisis in all these governments. That is, they are not a monolithic and eternal

¹⁹ International Majority Tendency: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 28.

phenomenon; on the contrary, it is very temporary, as long as the regression of the mass movement lasts.”²⁰

Two years later we said: “Defining the Latin American governments and regimes is not an idle concern, but one of the most urgent revolutionary needs. (...) The attempt to ignore the serious theoretical problem of defining the current Latin American regimes with witty journalistic phrases such as, for example, ‘military reformism’ does nothing but obscures the problem and moves us away from a Marxist analysis of class. The pincers of Yankee colonisation on the one hand, and workers mobilisation, on the other, cause violent and dramatic changes in the character of the bourgeois regimes. Some are semi-fascist, like in Brazil, or directly reactionary upon the basis of bourgeois legalities, such as in Uruguay. Others, according to the teachings of Trotsky, are bourgeois nationalists who tend to turn or become Bonapartist *sui generis*.”

“The spectacular upsurge of the mass movement originates situations of institutionalised or atomised dual power, giving rise to another type of government and regime, the Kerenskyist. This is typical of revolutionary situations when the workers’ power is so strong that the government is suspended in the vacuum between the two powers.

“[Kerenskyism is] ... highly unstable, Bonapartism or semi-Bonapartism between the exploiters and the mass movement and not as the [Bonapartism] *sui generis* between imperialism and the mass movement. (...) The current revolutionary upswing tends to transform Bonapartism *sui generis* in Kerenskyist Bonapartism or reactionary. (...) We believe the Velasco regime has Bonapartist *sui generis* elements. Allende is halfway.

“The three types of Government that we have defined have taken place in Bolivia: the reactionary or semi-fascist of Barrientos; tending to Bonapartist *sui generis* of Ovando; Kerenskyist of Torres.”²¹

For us, each type of regime, since it expressed a distinct situation of the class struggle, had to be confronted with a different strategy. For the Majority comrades, the analysis was limited to explain why the same strategy was applied to any type of stage, regime and country. The explanation is very simple: because this was the strategy most sympathetic to the vanguard. This vanguardist character was proclaimed openly by Comrade Mandel when he told us we had to make “... national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard...”²²

All this denial of Marxism navigates with open sails in the European document of the majority. No distinctions of any kind are made there among the stages that the different European countries live in. However, some live in a counter-revolutionary situation (such as Greece, Spain and Portugal) which evolves towards pre-revolutionary (like Spain) or is combined with a civil war within its empire (as in Portugal); others live in a non-revolutionary situation but evolving towards pre-revolutionary (like Italy, France and, perhaps, Britain, which is experiencing a *de facto* war in Ireland) or revolutionary (like Northern Ireland). The other countries live a non-revolutionary situation, without possibilities of transforming into pre-revolutionary in the short-term.

Our characterisation is summary and possibly wrong; we would like it to be taken only as a methodological example.

What we want to emphasise is that from different situations emerge, obviously, different tasks, sometimes opposed.

In Greece, Spain and Portugal —with similar situations— the major tasks raised are democratic, and in the last two countries urgently because in Spain the workers’ movement is in continuous raise and Portugal confronts the guerrillas in its colonies. In Britain, where there is a situation opposite to the above, the essential task is to get the British troops out of Northern Ireland and, further, to develop a transitional program to face the growing destitution of the workers’ movement. In Italy

20 “Draft Thesis on the Latin American Situation,” presented to the Central Committee of the PRT (*La Verdad*).

21 Fifth Congress of the PRT (*La Verdad*): “Latin American governments and the revolutionary struggle”, *Revista de America*, No. 8/9, p. 10-11.

22 IMT: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., p. 24.

and France, we contend with objective problems different from the rest of the European countries because the class struggle is at a higher level. The Majority comrades say workers' control and work on the vanguard, not because they believe the situations of all countries are the same but because they travel in a reverse direction: instead of saying for this situation this is the task, they say "since we will apply the same strategy, all countries are the same".

Why did the Second and Third International degenerate?

The Majority comrades' shift to a vanguardist conception is not only expressed in the field of concrete analysis but also general theoretical issues. There are two of them in which the size of the aberrations reaches the limit on revisionism: the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals and the characterisation of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations.

In both cases, Comrade Mandel–Germain bases his entire explanation on the internal relations of the working class and, within this, on the role of the vanguard. For Mandel "the root of the degeneration of both the Second and the Third Internationals, i.e., the subordination of the mass social-democratic as well as the Communist parties of Western Europe to conservative, reformist bureaucracies which, in their day-to-day practice, have become part of the status quo"²³ responds to a general law of degeneration.

Let's take a look at this law: "The outcome of these contradictory tendencies depends on *the struggle between them*, which, in turn, is ultimately determined by *two social factors*: on the one hand, the degree of *special social interest* set loose by the 'autonomous organisation', and on the other hand, the extent of the *political activity* of the vanguard of the working class."²⁴

We Trotskyists have always taken the general process of the class struggle worldwide as the fundamental element in analysing the causes of the Second and Third Internationals degeneration. We believe the Second International degenerated because of the existence and rise of imperialism, which granted large concessions to important sectors of the working class thanks to the exploitation of its colonies. This led to the birth of a labour aristocracy intimately tied to the awarding of concessions by capitalism. Comrade Mandel now discovers that the "apparatus becoming autonomous" and the "self-preservation of the apparatus"²⁵ in itself are explained by the need to preserve the specific social interests of the apparatus itself and not as part of the overall formation of the labour aristocracy. The Third International degenerated because of the defeats and retreat of the workers' movement worldwide and through the refraction of this same retreat in the first workers' state, the USSR, a rural and backward nation. Hence the importance that again had the preservation of the "apparatus itself".

However, Comrade Mandel now abandons this classic analysis and so the bureaucratic degeneration is the result of the relationship between a bureaucracy that defends its apparatus and the "extent of the political activity of the vanguard". The masses with their struggles count for nothing. With this method, it can be deduced that the bureaucracy can be liquidated by the mere "activity of the vanguard", that is, without resorting to mobilisation.

Pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations

A revision of the theory regarding the qualification of the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations constitutes an entire chapter of the "new Mandelian methodology".

Always starting from the internal relations of the workers' movement and the vanguard with the party, Comrade Mandel states: "The ripening of a pre-revolutionary situation (of potentially revolutionary explosion) is the merging of action by the broad masses with that of the advanced workers. A revolutionary situation —i.e., the possibility of a revolutionary conquest of power— arises

23 Mandel, Ernest: *The Leninist theory of organisation*, op. cit.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

when a merging of *actions* by the vanguard and the masses with the *consciousness* of the vanguard and revolutionary layers has been accomplished.”²⁶

In short, the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie do not fit into this schema. We have the right to think that Comrade Mandel considers the situation of these classes and their relationship with the mass movement of no importance. Instead, Trotsky thought that: “*The discontent, the nervousness, the instability, the fluidity of the petty-bourgeoisie* are extremely important characteristics of a pre-revolutionary situation.”²⁷ And he defined a situation with the “basic conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution” as one in which the following conditions were met: “(1) the bourgeois impasse and the resulting confusion of the ruling class; (2) the sharp dissatisfaction and the striving towards decisive changes in the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie, without whose support the big bourgeoisie cannot maintain itself; (3) the consciousness of the intolerable situation and readiness for revolutionary actions in the ranks of the proletariat; (4) a clear program and firm leadership of the proletarian vanguard.”²⁸

This ordering, that Trotsky systematically repeated during the 1930s, is instructive: first, the situation of the bourgeoisie; second, the petty-bourgeoisie; third, that of the working class; and, finally, the existence of a revolutionary party. As a good Marxist, he begins with the objective and ends with the subjective. For the pre-revolutionary situation, Trotsky has not given us such a precise definition. He noted that it is an intermediate situation between a non-revolutionary and a revolutionary situation. He has hinted that it is characterised by the existence of the first three conditions and the absence of the last one, the party.

Moreover, this is not just a matter of Trotskyist orthodoxy but simply common sense: if the bourgeoisie is united in a solid front, enjoys a good economic situation, keeps the petty-bourgeoisie satisfied and has its sympathy, then Comrade Mandel’s famous “integrations” cannot lead to the revolution even by chance. The most advanced case we could imagine —mass, vanguard and party integrated into their actions and conscience— would end with a brutal and bloody crushing of the working class at the hands of the united bourgeoisie, supported by the petty-bourgeoisie and defended by an army without any kind of cracks. Luckily, there is no real possibility for such Mandelist “integration” to take place in the class struggle as we know it so far.

The Germainist concept of normality

Now, this incomprehension by the Majority comrades, especially by Comrade Germain’, of what is a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation has caused an entire vicious discussion around the word “normal”. This discussion began for Latin America but it has critical importance to the Marxist analysis of the world situation. The Majority comrades argue we will not see in Latin America “normal” processes of development of the mass movement because there will not be long periods with conditions of bourgeois democracy. With this, they attempt to show that the minority’s forecast that Latin America is ever closer to the classic rules of the proletarian revolution is false.

The question of whether or not the revolution tends to be “normal” has nothing to do with the longer or shorter duration of the regimes of bourgeois legality. It has to do with whether or not the revolutionary processes around the world tend towards the situations described by Lenin and Trotsky, in other words, whether situations similar to the Russian Revolution are generalised or not. “Normal” means the revolutions have the industrial proletariat at their centre, cities as their geographical environment and urban insurrection as the axis of armed struggle. “Normal” also means these revolutions only succeed if they have at their head a Bolshevik party.

This concept of “normality” was born in opposition to the “abnormality” which we have witnessed in this post-war period where petty-bourgeois or bureaucratic parties, from Stalinism to

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit., p.46.

²⁸ Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution”, adopted by the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International, 14 May, 1940, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939–40)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 216–217.

Castroism, were forced to head workers' and peasants' governments. This abnormality was the result of a combination of several factors. The first factor was that two of the conditions of a revolutionary situation (the impasse of the bourgeoisie and the radicalisation of the petty-bourgeoisie) were transformed from conjunctural into chronic. The financial crash, the chronic crisis of the economy, reflected in an endless crisis of the bourgeoisie over the years and a permanent leftward shift of the petty-bourgeoisie which could not find any possibility of relying on a slight recovery of the bourgeois economy.

These factors combined with the crisis of Yankee imperialism in the post-war period and its division before Castro and with the lack of two fundamental revolutionary elements: the workers' movement and its leadership. The peasantry began to play a predominant role and the objective conditions ended up taking the petty-bourgeois parties to government and the rupture with the imperialist, landowning, and, finally, bourgeois regime.

The abnormality consisted, in short, that because of the absence of the workers' movement and the revolutionary party the first two conditions of the revolutionary situation acquired a colossal weight and the role of the revolutionary party was fulfilled by petty-bourgeois parties with mass influence. This unusual combination was foreseen by Trotsky in the *Transitional Program*.

The current return to "normality" does not mean a plain and simple return to the situation prior to the Second World War but that the workers' movement joins the revolutionary situation and our parties, the only workers' and revolutionary parties existing in the world today, grow.

Not only will the other conditions not regress but they will continue to advance. The chronic nature of the crisis will spread to capitalist countries with a much more solid structure than the backward countries and this will increase the weight of the participation of the industrial working class.

The combination will be much more explosive than at any stage we have previously known: a deeper chronic crisis of the bourgeois economy, a greater leftward shift of the petty-bourgeoisie, stronger revolutionary feelings and activity of the working class, phenomenal growth and influence in the mass movement of our parties and our International. In short, the revolution increasingly returns to "normal" because it becomes objectively easier and, above all, because the working class and our parties come into the picture. "Abnormal" revolutionary situations can happen again, but they will be subordinate to (and assist in) a normalisation at a global scale.

What has all this to do with the shorter or longer periods of bourgeois legality? The Russian Revolution, the most "normal" of all triumphant revolutions, took place in Tsarist Russia, with centuries of despotism, a year of legality in 1905 and a few months in 1917, plus a few years of legal openings. This is our "normality"— a clandestine revolutionary movement and confrontation with reactionary governments of different colours most of the time. We do not understand "normality" as the situation in Western Europe, with a century or more of bourgeois legality, briefly interrupted by phenomena such as fascism.

We do believe, indeed, that the clandestine stages will be far shorter than in Russia because the conditions are much more favourable to the mass movement. And we firmly assert that, as in Russia, the legal openings and democratic stages will be achieved only by the action of the mass movement. And we assert that the stronger the blows the mass movement strikes to the bourgeoisie, the weaker will be the regimes emerging. The trend to Kerenskyist governments will become increasingly stronger, to the extent that the rise continues and only a revolutionary opportunity squandered by the lack of a Bolshevik Party and a Trotskyist policy will explain the partial setbacks to semi-fascist regimes.

These have been the experiences of Bolivia and Chile, which our Marxist method of analysis could foresee and the strategist and vanguardist method of the Majority comrades most completely ignored. Comrade Germain, by calling the Banzer government "Kornilovian", recognises the Torres government as Kerenskyist. Doesn't he realise that recognising the existence of Kerenskyist governments means recognising the "normal" patterns of the Russian Revolution? Obviously, he

does not. The Majority comrades believe the coups of Banzer and the Chilean military prove they are right because they show the “exceptionality” of periods of bourgeois democracy. However, Bolivia and Chile have had more time of bourgeois democracy in the last five years than revolutionary Russia in a whole century! Absolute silence—the Majority comrades still compare the situation in Latin America with a Europe dominated by fascism.

Several countries—including Bolivia and Chile—have entered the classic pre-revolutionary situation, which did not become revolutionary for the lack of the party. This does not mean that all Latin American countries have entered this stage. Quite the contrary, it is a minority of countries which are heading towards it in an overall uneven process. But these Latin American Russias will point the way to the other countries of the continent and, dare we say, at least, to the entire Western world.

For us, the Latin American and world process confirms this trend and it turns the teachings of the Russian Revolution into fundamental tools of our analysis against the majority’s strategies of “armed struggle”, “work on the vanguard” and “workers’ control”. The Bolsheviks did not approach any other forms of armed struggle which were not marked by the rise of the mass movement. With or without armed struggle, with or without a “workers’ control”, they kept building the party at all times. Why change? We have not yet been defeated, nor do we see the danger of the Nazi occupation of our countries that makes the majority tremble. When and if such perspective exists, something which we do not believe will happen, we can discuss the new forms of armed struggle. Meanwhile, we remain proud of our analysis and policy.

The Majority comrades, Comrade Germain included, have to stop playing in “made in Italy” Western films and return to the traditional method and program of our movement. This is more necessary than ever. We have to start from reality and not from *The Hour of the Furnaces* or the films of Costa-Gavras,²⁹ or the “concerns of the vanguard” which, in many cases, are inspired by them. We have just seen the rapid development of another Kerenskyist regime: that of Allende. We have just seen how the momentary victory of the Chilean Kornilovs was facilitated by the absence of Bolshevik politics and party. Therefore, such politics and such parties are needed more than ever. Let’s dust off the Lenin’s three volumes from 1917, and Trotsky’s analysis of the Russian Revolution!

Lenin and Trotsky on the orientation of the communist and Trotskyist parties

Comrade Mandel has noted in passing that his interpretation of the new role of the Leninist party was anticipated by Lenin, in *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*. We assume that the paragraphs he took are the following: “While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism (...).”³⁰ And “The chief thing has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over. (...). The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing.”³¹

Lenin said this at a specific historical moment: when he was fighting against opportunism to win the left socialists and anarcho-syndicalist workers to the Third International. And he also referred to a specific vanguard: a labour vanguard, which was the most advanced of its class which

29 *The Hour of the Furnaces*: Argentine movie made in 1967, which records the history of popular struggles in Argentina since the fall of the Peronist government in 1955. Its filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, were living in exile. The film had been banned in Argentina.

Costa-Gavras: Greek filmmaker, who lived in France, producer of “protest” films as *Zeta*, *The Confession and State of Siege*. Here, the reference is to the latter film, whose plot unfolds in Uruguay before the coup of 1973 and recounts the kidnapping of a US diplomat by a Tupamaro commando. [Editor]

30 Lenin, V. I.: “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, p. 93.

31 *Ibid*, p. 92.

had a strong influence and was widely recognised by large sectors of the working class. The whole chapter containing these quotes begins by noting this fact, which sets up a different situation to the current one, where the extensive existing vanguard is not recognised by the working class and in which the non-proletarian elements dominate. For Lenin, it was about winning this vanguard to concretise the victory of the Russian workers at an organisational level and of the world vanguard. But this central task on the vanguard did not lead him to modify the central characteristics of the communist parties; he continued considering them an organ for leading the masses to the proletarian revolution. Lenin's effort was directed precisely to convince said vanguard that it should organise Bolshevik parties, with a revolutionary Marxist policy for the masses and not for the vanguard in each of their countries.

Placed these quotes in context, one wonders why Comrade Mandel used them instead of the resolutions of the Third International. We know why: because the first four congresses of the Communist International have said the opposite of what Comrade Mandel-Germain says: "... a minority that is Communist, that wishes to act, that has a programme and wishes to organise the struggle of the masses, is *precisely the Communist Party*. (...) The Communist Party differs from the whole working class because it has an overall view of the whole historical road of the working class in its totality and because at every turn in this road it strives to defend not just the interests of a single group or a single trade, but the interests of the working class in its totality."³²

"The Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class (...) if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited (...)." ³³

As we see, the Communist International clearly stated that the objective of the revolutionary parties must be "to organise the struggle of the masses" (not of the vanguard), to always defend ("at every turn") the interests of "the working class in its totality" not of some groups (which is the vanguard but a "group" within the workers' movement?) and for all this the party must know how to "link itself inseparably with the whole life of its class" (not to the partial existence of a sector, even if it is of "vanguard").

Trotsky vs Germain

Comrade Germain argues that the position of the majority's European document regarding the mass organisations is similar to the position of Trotsky between the years 1934-36 for Belgium, France and Spain, despite that our organisations were weaker. It is a pity that Comrade Germain does not go ahead with his comparison and explain to us what Trotsky's position was on the role of our parties for the same period. Trotsky never proposed anything of what the Majority comrades say. He never said there was no immediate prospect of achieving parties with mass influence. He never said our central tactic for the coming period is to work on the vanguard of the masses. And even less did he say that what characterised the Bolshevik party was the work on this vanguard.

What Trotsky pointed out was the opposite. He considered that the pre-revolutionary situation in these countries made possible an extensive work on the masses as well as a rapid growth for our sections: "We have few forces. But the advantage of a revolutionary situation consists precisely in the fact that even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time, providing that it gives a correct prognosis and that it issues correct slogans in time."³⁴ "To be sure, during a revolution, i.e., when events move swiftly, a weak party can quickly grow into a mighty one provided it lucidly understands the course of the revolution and possesses staunch cadres that do not become intoxicated

³² "Theses on the role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution", Second Congress of the Communist International, MIA, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch03a.htm.

³³ Lenin, V.I.: "Theses on Fundamental Tasks of The Second Congress Of The Communist International", *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, p. 187.

³⁴ Trotsky, Leon: "The Character of the Revolution", 18 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 155.

with phrases and are not terrorised by persecution.”³⁵ “Ten thousand, with a firm and perceptive leadership, can find the road to the masses; break them away from the influence of Stalinists and social democrats, the charlatans and loudmouths.”³⁶ “We must go to the masses, to its lowest and most exploited layers.”³⁷ “But 20,000 or even 10,000 with a clear, decisive, aggressive policy, can win the masses in a short term, in the same way that the Bolsheviks won the masses in eight months.”³⁸ “We must turn our faces towards the great masses, make inroads into the mass organisations at any price, by any means, without allowing ourselves to be influenced or paralysed by a conservative intransigence.”³⁹ “To have an ear for the average worker in the factory, on the street, in the streetcar, in the café, in the family in order to know how he sees the situation, what hopes he cherishes, what he believes in – to listen attentively to such a worker – that is the first duty of a revolutionary organisation, above all in a critical period such as the present when the consciousness of the masses literally changes every day.”⁴⁰

The European situation at the time when Trotsky wrote these lines was similar to the current one: it was entering a pre-revolutionary period. But, in the same way, as it happens with the writings of Lenin and the resolutions of the Third International, everything Trotsky said is the opposite of what the Majority comrades say. The majority tells us there is no chance of achieving parties with mass influence, Trotsky never tires of repeating that “even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time”, “a weak party can quickly grow into a mighty one”, “with strong and perceptive leadership, can find their way to the masses with a clear, decisive, aggressive policy, can win the masses in a short term”, and so on. The majority tells us we must focus our activity on the vanguard; Trotsky stresses that “we must go to the masses, to its lowest and most exploited layers”, “we must turn to the wide masses”, and so on. The majority tells us our political campaigns should revolve around “carefully chosen problems that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard”; Trotsky asserts that “keeping ears open” to the “common worker is the first duty of every revolutionary organisation”.

Trotsky does not depart even a millimetre from this conception when he advises, for the same period, the entryist work. This entryism primary purpose was not winning any vanguard; it was a tactic to approach the mass movement. Trotsky said: “It is necessary to go to the masses. It is necessary to find a place for oneself within the framework of the united front, i.e., within the framework of one of the two parties of which it is composed. In actual practice, that means within the framework of the SFIO.”⁴¹

For Trotsky, the role of the party is always to be fully involved in the struggles of the masses, contending for their leadership and raising the most appropriate slogans for these struggles. For Trotsky, it is always possible to transform our parties, however small, in mass parties in a pre-revolutionary stage. In short, Trotsky always had positions contrary to those of Comrade Germain. The new type of Leninist party, whose fundamental mission is to work on the vanguard, is nowhere to be found in his writings of that time. But, perhaps anticipating that some Germans could appear in the Trotskyist movement in the future, he also said something about the vanguard: “If the proletariat were not to feel in the process of the struggle during the coming months that its tasks and methods are becoming clearer to itself, that its ranks are becoming consolidated and strengthened, then a decomposition would set within its own ranks. The broad layers aroused by the present movement for the first time, would once more fall into passivity. In the vanguard, to the extent to which the

35 Trotsky, Leon: “The Class, the Party and the Leadership. Why Was the Spanish Proletariat Defeated?” 20 August 1940, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., pp. 410-426.

36 Trotsky, Leon: “Is victory possible in Spain?” 23 April 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., pp. 296-304.

37 Ibid.

38 Trotsky, Leon: “A strategy for victory”, 25 February 1937 in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p 282.

39 Trotsky, Leon: “Letter to the International Secretariat”, 27 July 1936, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 267.

40 Trotsky, Leon: “The League faced with a decisive turn”, June 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35)*, Pathfinder Press New York, p. 48.

41 Ibid, p.41.

ground slipped out from under its feet, moods of partisan acts and adventurism in general would begin to revive.”⁴²

Summing up, only the mass movement, guided by the party, can save the vanguard from falling into adventurism and guerrillaist despair.

Our political work among the masses and the vanguard: Propaganda and agitation

From what we have said so far, it would seem that we believe the party should ignore the existence of the vanguard which appears at every moment of the class struggle and not to take up any activity towards it. This is not the case, we recognise that the vanguard of the workers’ and the mass movement is a sector to which we must give importance and on which we must work. What we have said so far is that these vanguards do not define the party political line or its slogans, or its organisation, or its analysis.

There is a large section of party politics which is addressed to the vanguard: the propaganda. Thus Lenin defined it when he says: “As long as it was (and inasmuch as it still is) a question of winning the proletariat’s vanguard over to the side of communism, priority went and still goes to propaganda work...”⁴³

The problem is that for Comrade Mandel-Germain, our work on the vanguard should be much more ambitious than what Lenin proposed to us: It is a matter of “...organising national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of the mass struggle and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections.”⁴⁴ And “to concentrate their propaganda and whenever possible, their agitation, on the preparation of these advanced workers.”⁴⁵

Comrade Germain’s document further clarifies this position. According to him, what was projected at the Ninth Congress “... was a turn towards the transformation of Trotskyist organisations from propaganda groups into organisations already capable of those political initiatives of a mass vanguard level which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself.”⁴⁶

For the Majority, we should aim to agitation and actions (“political initiatives”) “at a level of the vanguard of the masses”. Even if it were correct that the efforts of our sections should focus on the vanguard, merely proposing agitation and action on it is already in contradiction with Leninism (“priority goes to propaganda”).

The definitions of propaganda as “the activity of giving many ideas, to a few” and of agitation as “giving a few ideas to many” should be widely known. Propaganda ranges from a course on Marxist economics or dialectical logic to an individual talk with a worker activist to whom we explain the national and international situation, our program and the differences between ours and other workers’ organisations. Agitation, however, consists of raising a few slogans (sometimes just one) to provide an outcome for the struggle waged at any time by the workers’ or mass movement (higher wages, democratic freedoms, constituent assembly, all power to the soviets, etc.).

What characterises a Leninist Trotskyist party is that its main activity is the agitation on the whole of all the exploited population, not on just a sector of it, although this sector may be the working class. What characterises a Mandelist party is that its main activity is agitation and political campaigns primarily on the vanguard.

42 Trotsky, Leon: “The Revolution in Spain”, 24 January 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., pp. 71-94.

43 Lenin, V I: “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, op. cit. Vol 31, pp. 93-94.

44 International Majority Tendency: “The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe”, op. cit., pp. 24.

45 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 45.

46 Ibid. p. 41.

The art of finding the slogans

A Bolshevik party begins with an analysis of the stage of the class struggle; from this analysis emerge one, two or three essential tasks for the mass movement, which we define in slogans. This is the concrete aspect of our politics; this is why it is fundamental. The theory and propaganda serve to clarify this aspect. All our activity, including theory and propaganda, is subject to this final objective of defining what the general tasks are that the masses face in a specific stage but posed in the form of slogans.

Let's look at an example: a new government assumes power. The bulk of the party's theoretical effort will concentrate on defining it precisely, in carefully analysing the relationship of forces between the classes, what sectors make up the new government and those in opposition, and the relations of both with imperialism, the role played in it by the armed forces, and so on. If from there follows, for example, that it is a counter-revolutionary Bonapartist government, we will define a few agitational slogans which respond to the needs this government poses to the mass movement (defence of the economic gains; democratic rights; defence of the workers' organisations). However, we will find this characterisation and these tasks are different from those proposed by reformist and bureaucratic leaderships and the far left and these tasks also collide with the spontaneist tendencies of the vanguard. This will force us to also focus our propaganda around the constant explanation of the characteristics of this regime, the polemics with our enemies within the workers' movement about such characterisation and why the tasks we propose the mass movement are correct. In short, our theory will focus on discovering what slogans we must agitate; our propaganda will focus on explaining to the vanguard why we should agitate these slogans and not others. This does not mean they are our only theoretical and propaganda activities, but they are the main ones.

Schematising, we can say that the whole science and art of Trotskyism comes together in the capacity to formulate the appropriate slogans at each moment of the class struggle. It is the same thing that Lenin said: "For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organisation, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses."⁴⁷

Lenin based this political line on blind trust in the capacity of organisation and mobilisation of the backward worker or the average worker and not in the special capacity of the vanguard or "advanced" workers. Regarding the mass movement, he never dwells in the workers' vanguard or in the need for the party to take its own action initiatives but he only dwells in the organisation of agitational campaigns. For Lenin, if we impact the masses with one of these campaigns, the workers are capable of anything. The role of the party is to start those campaigns, to accompany and lead the mass movement. Thus he criticised the intellectuals "who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole."⁴⁸ "We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand or *will feel*, that the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life. Feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to react, and he will know how to hoot the censors one day, on another day to demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, on still another day to teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc."⁴⁹

We have already seen how Trotsky recalled about Spain (a country so dear to Comrade Mandel-Germain that he uses it as an analogy for the current European situation): "We have few forces. But

47 Lenin, V. I: "What Is To Be Done?" in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 514.

48 Ibid., p. 418.

49 Ibid., p. 413–414.

the advantage of a revolutionary situation consists precisely in the fact that even a small group can become a great force in a brief space of time, providing that it gives a correct prognosis and that it issues correct slogans in time.”⁵⁰

Trotsky summarised his position by saying: “Agitation is not only the means of communicating to the masses this or that slogan, calling the masses to action, etc. For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results.”⁵¹ And he tired of saying the same for the United States: “When we start the fight we cannot be sure of victory. We can only say that our slogan fits the objective situation and the best elements will understand it and the most backward that do not understand it will not be opposed.”⁵² “What is important, when the program is definitely established, is to know the slogans very well and to manoeuvre them skillfully so that in every part of the country everyone uses the same slogans at the same time. Three thousand can make the impression of 15,000 or 50,000.”⁵³

The specific nature of slogans

These extremely well-known truths have been forgotten —or were never known— by the Majority comrades. They support the work on the vanguard while Lenin and Trotsky support agitation amongst the masses. This difference between those of us who follow the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky and those who follow the Majority comrades is most clearly manifested in the militant activity of our sections. As much as we strive to discover them, we do not know, for example, which the general and important slogans for the action of our French section are. If anything characterises the French section, it is the lack of general slogans for the workers’ and mass movement.

We’re not talking about the program, but one, two or three slogans that characterise and respond to the needs of the mass movement in the current situation of France. The American comrades have had one fundamental slogan in recent years: “Troops out of Vietnam, now”. We, for the election campaign, had another: “Do not vote for bosses, the military or sold out leaders, vote for your comrade workers”. What were the central slogans of the electoral campaign of the French comrades? It is impossible to know.

Let’s go to the slogans for the French workers’ and mass movement. If we review the collection of *Rouge* from June to August 1973, we will see that there are only three campaigns constantly put forward: solidarity with the workers of the LIP watch factory, solidarity with immigrant workers and the struggle against fascist groups.

The only slogan which might have something to do with the whole of the French mass movement is the campaign against fascist groups, but the slogan “let’s halt or smash *Ordre Nouveau* and fascism” is not raised in it. The other two are partial campaigns for specific sectors. We ask: which are the general slogans giving solutions to the problems most felt by the workers’ movement? Except for the fascist groups, doesn’t the regime create any kind of trouble to the workers’ movement? Doesn’t the slogan “halt the bosses’ offensive against our standards of living and working” respond to a need of the masses? If the only problem is fascism, why do we not raise a slogan to mobilise the masses against it? And for the record, we are neither defending nor attacking this or that slogan here, we are proposing something much more elementary: our obligation to put forth slogans for the action of the mass movement. That is to say: our obligation to do agitation.

We insist we are not saying that we should not give great importance to the work on the workers’ or mass vanguard. On the contrary, there are periods in the class struggle when it becomes our fundamental work. When there has been a serious historic defeat of the workers’ movement, our essential activity is propaganda amongst the vanguard until the workers’ movement recovers.

50 Trotsky, Leon: “The Character of the Revolution”, 18 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 155.

51 Trotsky, Leon: “Once Again, Whither France?” in *Whither France?*, op. cit., p. 67.

52 “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program”, op. cit.

53 Ibid

There has also been an exceptional situation that transformed the vanguard work on the axis of revolutionary activity over a time of upsurge. It was the situation we witnessed of building the Third International, based on the victory of the Russian Revolution and the appearance of the first workers' state. In this latter case, it was raised for one or two years, to win in a single hit all or most of the world vanguard riding on the example and enthusiasm aroused by the spectacular success of the mass movement with a Bolshevik leadership. This enthusiasm expanded globally through the vanguard because they assimilated the victory of the mass movement. This situation is determined by the law of uneven and combined development of the world revolutionary movement: a colossal victory with a revolutionary Marxist leadership of the mass movement in a given country goes parallel and is interconnected with the reflection of this victory on a worldwide scale at the level of the vanguard. But here again, the decisive element is the mass movement.

The same will happen on a national scale as soon as we get some very important victory at the level of the national class struggle. A decisive victory in a major sector of the French workers' movement, such as metalworkers, automotive workers or teachers, led by our party, will cause an immediate impact and in one fell swoop on the whole vanguard of the French workers' movement. The workers' vanguard will approach our party by the thousands and our central task, for a time, will be to win it in one single hit to Trotskyism. But we should not delude ourselves. This turnaround will happen based on a victory of the mass movement, and for no other reason.

How to win the vanguard

Both a "normal" situation, in which the task is agitation in the mass movement, and these temporary and exceptional situations which we have described present us with a question. How do we work on the vanguard? How do we win it? Perhaps, with a specific policy? The majority think that yes, the vanguard is won by developing national campaigns on issues that relate to "concerns of the vanguard" and by taking "effective initiatives" on these issues. Our view is the opposite: we must win the vanguard by patiently explaining to it (carrying out propaganda on it) our policy for the workers' and mass movement and not with a specific policy for them. This matter is very important because herein lies the origin of the bulk of the concrete political differences between the majority and the minority.

The vanguard never emerges with trends towards Trotskyist or Bolshevik politics. It emerges expressing the spontaneous tendencies of the struggle of the mass movement at the time and it receives its first lesson in politics from the reformist parties with mass influence, from the trade union bureaucracy, and the global phenomena of the revolution. These are the ideas that it knows first; previously it only knew the poison spewing daily from the propaganda organs of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary party has no chance of competing with the propaganda of the bourgeoisie and its agents within the workers' movement. Thus, we start from a position of inferiority. The contemporary vanguard, for example, was born to political life under the pressure of Stalinist propaganda on one pole, and Castroist propaganda on the other. This explains why for a while it mainly discussed the problems of armed struggle.

If we take these "concerns" as a starting point, we will have to choose (as it happened to the Majority comrades) between one pole or the other. Maybe, by adapting ourselves to this situation, we will succeed in recruiting a sector of this vanguard but only at the cost of sacrificing our own political line.

However: either to recruit the pro-guerrilla vanguard by transforming ourselves into pro-guerrilla or to recruit the Stalinist vanguard by transforming ourselves into pro-Stalinists, what is it good for? For nothing. It is a brutal blow to the possibility of leading the revolution. As we will play into the hands of some incorrect politics expressed much stronger than ours in the vanguard. As soon as the Castroist or Stalinist strategy fails, our party will sink with it.

As Trotskyists, we trust the mass movement; we think it will make the revolution if we build a party that leads it with correct politics. This party will be built fundamentally by winning the

vanguard for this Trotskyist politics, not for any politics or its deviation of the day. This task is much more difficult and harder than what the majority proposes. But it's the only correct one.

Recruiting the vanguard is a step ahead for the revolutionary process only if it is recruited for revolutionary politics. Stalinism recruited large sections of the vanguard for its politics and sterilised them to lead the revolution, liquidating them as a vanguard. Nowadays, Castroism also recruited almost the entire world vanguard and led it to disaster; it politically demoralised a sector and led another, a large part of the Latin American vanguard of the 1960s, to physical liquidation.

What does it mean to win the vanguard for Trotskyist politics? Something very simple: to win them for agitation in the mass movement of the slogans our party scientifically formulates at each stage; to win them for the strategy of building a Bolshevik party and for the party program. It means to fight very hard, day after day, against the bureaucratic and reformist leaders first and against the ultraleft tendencies second. It is saying, at every problem of the class struggle: "Comrade of the vanguard, facing this situation, Stalinism raises such a slogan for the mass movement, this slogan is wrong because it leads us to place trust in some sector of the bourgeoisie which will end leading us to slaughter. Ultraleftism proposes you take action on your own, isolating yourself from the mass movement, from your everyday co-workers; when you do that we also end up being defeated by the bourgeoisie. We propose that you do not budge even a millimetre from your co-workers, that you stay connected to the mass movement, to become its leadership; that you carefully detect for which problems your co-workers are willing to mobilise, and then you find the precise slogan required to carry out this mobilisation. And that this you do this in your job you also do at the national and global level. To perform this task you must take a step beyond your workplace, you need to get organised in a party of militants like yourself. In this party, which is what we are building, we do the same thing you do in your workplace: we seek the right slogan to mobilise at each time the exploited masses. But we also know the mass mobilisation will either end in the seizure of power or be defeated, and we have a program, the transitional program, which is the chaining of slogans to lead the masses to take power. We invite you to build this party with us and adhere to our program."

The task on the vanguard is that simple: start from the slogans that we agitate in the mass movement, and win the vanguard for the party and the program from where such slogans come. And all this we have to say to the vanguard, what is it but propaganda (many ideas for a few)? But, how can we do this propaganda if we are not the champions of the agitation of these slogans?

Moreover, in the "exceptional" cases we brought up, our propaganda has the same meaning. After a historic crushing of the mass movement, we will keep doing propaganda amongst the vanguard. And what shall we say? "Comrade: the workers' movement is defeated but we trust unconditionally that it will fight again. Do not launch into action on your own: study and learn all the experience accumulated by workers in more than a century of struggle; train yourself as the leadership of these new struggles that will inevitably come. Carefully probe your work-mates and, as soon as you see them willing to restart the struggle, even for a very small and narrow issue, find and raise the appropriate slogan for this struggle. The only place where you can study and learn all this experience, the only place where you can develop such a slogan, is our party."

Let's look at the other the exceptional case, that of the Third International. Did Lenin perhaps define a specific policy for winning over the world vanguard? Did he carry out "national political campaigns" around the "concerns" of the vanguard? Did he put himself in favour of the socialist left and the anarcho-syndicalists, whom he wanted to win, against the opportunism and social chauvinism of the social democratic parties? None of that, to win the vanguard meant to have a unified "work of political agitation (...) that is directed to the masses"; to win it politically for the Russian Bolshevik party. And this meant to make them break with the social democratic parties and the anarchist tendencies to build in each of their countries Bolshevik parties in the style of the Russian.

Why was this the only time that Lenin argued that the central task was to win over the vanguard? Because the impact of the great victory of the mass movement that was the Russian Revolution, made for the first (and so far only) time in history. Only then, the propaganda of revolutionary Marxism could compete successfully with the bourgeois and reformist propaganda, because for the first (and

so far only) time in history, the vanguard worldwide was focused massively towards revolutionary Marxism, fascinated by the example of the Soviet proletariat and their Bolshevik party.

The masses-vanguard dialectic

Both Marxist theory and historical examples show there is a dialectical relationship between the masses and the vanguard and, therefore, it is false the mechanical view of the Majority comrades, according to which by the mere fact of winning the vanguard we have advanced on the road to lead the masses. If we win the vanguard for a policy that is not the Leninist-Trotskyist policy of working on the mass movement, we move away from our party from revolutionary politics, we separate the vanguard from the masses and end up liquidating both the party and the vanguard, abandoning the mass movement to their fate and closing off the road to the victory of the revolution. If we win the vanguard for Leninist-Trotskyist politics, we will have taken a huge step towards building a party with mass influence, which can lead to the victory of the revolution.

In this dialectic, there is also the possibility of vanguards, or sections of them, which, for specific historical and social problems cannot be won to revolutionary Marxist politics. In a general sense, this is the case of an important sector of the student vanguard, which is condemned by the inflexible logic of the class struggle to leave sooner or later the trenches of the mass movement to move to those of the bourgeoisie. Precisely this dialectic is what explains all we revolutionary Marxists win or lose, at all levels of the class struggle (mass movement, working-class or vanguard) is determined by the class struggle itself, with its ups and downs; never because of a specific policy, more or less correct, for the vanguard. Viewed from another angle, the only way to win the vanguard is to have the right policy for the mass movement. But this is not enough: the most important thing is for this policy to have important victories which take us to the leadership of the mass movement at the national or international level. This is what happened in France in May 1968: A correct policy for the entire student body and workers' movement led us to impact the vanguard but we could not win it in mass because the mass movement, in its first major mobilisation as a whole of the past 35 years, did not achieve a complete and resounding victory over the bourgeoisie. The measure of success was such that we continued influencing the vanguard when the mobilisation declined.

This dialectic is what exposes the basic error of reasoning by the Majority comrades. They point to two certain facts: that there is a large vanguard and that "we cannot shelter the hope to win the general political sympathy among the working class in one fell swoop."⁵⁴ But from these two facts, they draw the wrong conclusion that we have to work primarily on the "mass vanguard", with a specific policy for it, which starts from its "concerns". Although the Majority comrades do not say it, the logic of this reasoning leads to the conclusion that this "mass vanguard" can indeed be won in "one fell swoop" unlike what happens with the working class.

We agree that we cannot win the working class "in one fell swoop". But what does prevent us from winning them through a process? If at each moment of the struggle of the mass movement or sectors of it we have the correct slogans, we will be winning their "sympathies", gradually or by leaps. And as soon as important struggles are triggered, the "political sympathy" of the mass movement or important sectors of it for our parties and our politics will grow geometrically.

Nor do we understand what it is that may allow us to win the "general political sympathy" of "the mass vanguard" in one fell swoop. The "mass vanguard" does not need our party or our politics. In the lulls in the class struggle, it will tend to perform actions separate of the mass movement to which we must be opposed. This will result in only a minority of it approaching our positions, the rest will continue with its spontaneist trends. There is no way to avoid it. Orienting the party around those concerns may produce a momentary success. But it is also very likely that, unless we break completely and utterly with Trotskyism, there will be non-Trotskyist tendencies in the vanguard far more skilled and able than us to follow to the letter the deviation (or concern) of the day of that vanguard.

⁵⁴ See final Spanish version on p. 176]

But the panorama will change as soon as the mass movement comes into the arena. At this time, the vanguard sectors will be much more concerned about giving proper guidance to the struggle of the masses than of making actions separate from them. Then they will remember our patient but uncompromising propaganda work, and say, “the Trotskyists were right when they told us to trust the mass movement and not budge from its side; let us go and discuss with them what the right policy for this mobilisation is”. Other sectors, guerrillas, for example, will continue with their actions isolated from the struggle of the masses, will separate more and more from them, and they will be disowned by them as an alternative leadership to reformism and bureaucracy. The party will establish a broad and fraternal dialogue with the first sector, trying to win it for its policy towards the mass movement. Regarding the guerrillaists, all the party will be able to do is a characterisation, “for the time being, these comrades are unrecoverable to revolutionary Marxism; let’s defend them from the attacks of the bourgeoisie, but let them politically stew in their own juice.”

Through this process and not in “one fell swoop”, we will win daily more influence in the vanguard of the mass movement. The dialectic of the vanguard–mass relationship is inflexible: we can only win the vanguard in “one fell swoop” at the time of this process when our party has led the mass movement to achieve a colossal victory. Only at this time, and at no other, the task (which is still propaganda) to win them will be the central one. And never for an indefinite stage, as soon as we have exhausted the possibilities of this work, will we be back (with our forces multiplied by one hundred) to our central task of agitation of the right slogans for each moment of the struggle of the masses.

Many times our agitational slogans do not mobilise the masses and are only taken by sectors of the vanguard as when, for example, the vanguard carries out a demonstration in support of Vietnam or a workers’ strike. The majority here could draw the conclusion the vanguard performs actions and from this fact alone makes necessary a policy for them.

In this there is some truth: the vanguard performs actions but not all of them are positive. The condition posed by the Majority comrades for such actions of “not going against the tide of the masses struggle” is not enough. One can perform an action which, in a general sense, matches the struggle of the masses but which at that particular moment only serves to unleash repression or to distract the masses attention from their central problems. For example, if in the middle of a mass mobilisation for wages, a sector of the vanguard does a demonstration with the single slogan “down with the union bureaucracy”, this diverts the attention of the masses since the central problem for them are salaries and the fight against bureaucracy will only be raised as an aspect (at the beginning secondary) of this struggle against the bosses. If this demonstration of the vanguard ends with the death of 10 police officers, it will cause the regime’s repression on a mass movement which is not yet ready to confront it. Therefore, it is not enough that the actions of the vanguard do not go “against the tide of the masses struggle”, but it is necessary to respond to the millimetre to the present needs of the mass struggle. Any other possibility should be strongly condemned by the party.

Now, what is the meaning of the actions of the vanguard, from the point of view of the class struggle as a whole? What for the vanguard is an action (a demonstration, a lightning rally, etc.) from the point of view of the class struggle is an agitational task that said vanguard does on the mass movement. It fulfils the same role as talking on the radio or throwing a flier trying to reach the masses with our slogans; it is an agitational action of the party and the vanguard. It is not a direct action of the mass movement, or confrontation with the exploiters but a technique, among others, for agitating slogans. If the bureaucracy, reformism, the ultraleft or us (because we were wrong) hand out a flyer or raise the wrong slogan, we do a disservice to the struggle of the mass movement. The same applies to the actions of the vanguard: if the axis of these actions is correct, the agitation they cause in the mass movement is positive, otherwise, it is negative. And what are the right actions of the vanguard but those having as axis the slogans we agitate in the mass movement?

Let us summarise this entire problem. The Majority comrades hold that our central task is to work on the “mass vanguard”. We hold that such central task is justified only in a period of historical crush of the mass movement or when a important victory of the mass movement under

our leadership pushes the whole vanguard towards our positions, and that in the current situation, which tends to be pre-revolutionary worldwide, our central task lies in the mass movement in most countries.

The Majority comrades hold that our central task is to agitate in the vanguard the slogans, based on their concerns that lead them to action. We hold that our agitation is reserved for the mass movement to take action, with correct slogans, and that our task on the vanguard is propaganda and should revolve, fundamentally, around the explanation of those slogans.

The Majority comrades take as an almost absolute criterion for the tasks of the party the actions of the vanguard; they put forth that our central task is to launch political campaigns that address the vanguard's concerns, i.e. the spontaneous goals of their actions. They hold something still much more serious (to be discussed later): that our sections take actions on their own based on those concerns, to set an example and win the sympathy of the vanguard.

We are fully in favour of the vanguard being unified, growing, strengthening and taking initiative. But we do not get tired of telling them: "Comrades, tie yourself to the mass movement; trust it, undertake propaganda and agitational actions that serve to agitate the precise slogan required for each of their struggles; we will be with you in each and every one of those actions. But we will not be with you if you perform physical actions which attempt to replace those of the masses, even having good intentions. Moreover, we will be against you if these actions are detrimental to the masses. If this happens, we will relentlessly denounce that you are mistaken, that your actions are harmful, and we will try to divide you to win the sector of you that you can be recovered for the ranks of revolutionary Marxism and to permanently discredit to the masses the other sector, which despises them and performs actions that are objectively against their struggles."

Program and slogans: their relation to the present needs and consciousness of the mass movement

This series of substitutions that we discover in Comrade Germain —scientific knowledge instead of political consciousness; political objectives instead of objective Marxist analysis; propaganda for agitation; work on the vanguard instead of work on the masses, and so on— are the "theoretical" basis underpinning his "serious" criticism of Comrade Camejo on his conception of the Bolshevik party at this stage.

According to Comrade Germain, while Comrade Cannon speaks of "proletarian revolution" Comrade Camejo names it only once, and regarding the program: "The party seeks to lead the working class and its allies to state power as its fundamental goal, but does not try to substitute itself for the masses."⁵⁵

We would ask Comrade Germain whether or not he agrees with the definition of "proletarian revolution" made in our *Transitional Program*: the seizure of power by the working class and its allies. And the fact that the "seizure of power" is for Comrade Camejo the "fundamental purpose" of the party, does it not satisfy you, Comrade Germain?

The first serious objection Comrade Germain makes is that Comrade Camejo presents "the relationship between the vanguard —the party— and the working class (...) unilaterally and mechanically. The party 'Tries to promote mass struggles (...) by mobilising the masses' around demands 'related to their present level of consciousness'."⁵⁶

To show that this is a mistake, he tries to support himself on Trotsky, bringing this quote: "What can a revolutionary party do in this situation? In the first place give a clear honest picture of the objective situation, of the historic tasks which flow from this situation, irrespective as to whether

55 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p, 37.

56 Ibid. p. 38.

or not the workers are today ripe for this. *Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the worker.... We must tell the workers the truth, then we will win the best elements.*"⁵⁷

As always, Comrade Germain has taken a quote out of context. These phrases are Trotsky's response to some American comrades who question whether the transitional program was appropriate for the mentality of the workers in their country. This answer is most correct because Trotsky is talking about the "historical tasks" of the general historical program for the whole epoch, that is, the transitional program. He is not at all referring to the specific tasks the American comrades were facing at that time. And what Trotsky said is that we do not hide our program but, on the contrary, we propagandise it with all our might, even if the average worker does not understand it, to win the vanguard elements ("the best elements"). This has nothing to do with Germain assumption that this is a governing rule of the political activities of the entire party at any particular time.

Comrade Germain repeats, revised and expanded, his earlier confusion between propaganda and agitation. Comrade Camejo never says you have to take into account the level of mass consciousness to formulate the general, historical, program of the party. This would be a totally and absolutely reformist and economist position. What Comrade Camejo says is that you have to start from the "present level of consciousness of the masses" to formulate the "demands" that serve to "mobilise the masses". This means that Comrade Camejo refers to our concrete policy, the slogans we agitate for the action of the mass movement, not to the propaganda or the program. Trotsky's quote is correct, precisely because he does not refer at all to the slogans but the program.

A Trotskyist program which does not to speak of armed pickets, soviets, insurrection, workers' and peasants' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat does not deserve such a name. But a party leadership which raises all these slogans, or some of them, permanently for all stages and times of the class struggle, should be committed to an asylum.

Trotsky, in the *Transitional Program*, says exactly what Comrade Camejo says, with the only difference that instead of "present" he says "today's": "It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."⁵⁸ For Spain he raised the same: "The participation of the communists in these fights, and especially a leading participation, demands from them not only a clear understanding of the development of the revolution as a whole, but also the capacity to put forward at the right moment such partial, sharp, fighting slogans that by themselves don't derive from the 'program', but are dictated by the circumstances of the day and lead the masses forward."⁵⁹

The purpose of these slogans is to "lead the masses forward". In the same conversation of Trotsky quoted by Comrade Germain, he states: "The whole question is how to mobilise the masses for struggle."⁶⁰ Exactly what comrade Camejo raises: these slogans, "related to the present level consciousness (of the masses)" are used by the party to mobilise the masses.

What is hidden behind Comrade Germain's attack to this definition by Comrade Camejo? A typical ultra-leftist position: not having a policy to for the present needs and consciousness of the masses but for their alleged future needs and consciousness: "What is this 'present level of consciousness' of the masses? Is it always the same? Can it change rapidly? If so, must the combat party wait until it has shifted before it 'adapts' its demands? Or can it foresee these changes and act accordingly? In the function of what factors can it foresee these shifts? Will the 'present level of consciousness' itself not be to a certain degree a function of the role of the 'combat party' inside the mass movement? But if one of the main purposes of the 'combat party' is to *raise* the level of class

57 Ibid. p. 38. Quote reproduced from Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 126.

58 Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 75.

59 Trotsky, Leon: "Down with Zamora-Maura", 24 June 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 160.

60 Trotsky, Leon: "Discussions with Trotsky", in *The transitional program for socialist revolution*, op cit., p. 194.

consciousness of the working class, how then can the ‘present level of consciousness’ in itself be a decisive criterion for determining what kind of demands the party should raise before the masses?⁶¹

These questions imply their respective answers, namely: Comrade Germain believes that the level of consciousness is not always the same; that it can change quickly; that the combat party should not wait until it has changed before adapting its slogans; that the party can foresee these changes and should act according to them, this means, it should raise its slogans appropriate to the future level of consciousness; that the present level of consciousness of the masses is, to some degree, a function of the role of the party; that one of the main goals of the revolutionary party is to raise the level of class consciousness of the working class and, therefore, the present level of consciousness cannot be a decisive criterion for determining what kind of slogans the party should raise for the masses.

Here is synthesised one of the most important differences between the majority and the minority. We will answer each of these assertions by Comrade Germain but we will take the liberty of changing the order of presentation.

First assertion: “the level of consciousness of the masses is not always the same”. He is absolutely right. Moreover, within the masses, there is an uneven development of consciousness, which results that at any one time there are sectors with different levels of consciousness.

Second assertion: the level of consciousness of the masses can change quickly. Again, Comrade Germain is correct but he doesn’t note this happens only in some periods of high activity of the mass movement. In periods of calm, the mass movement consciousness changes very slowly.

Third assertion: the immediate (“present”) level of consciousness of the masses is, to some degree, the function of the role of the revolutionary party. False. The present level of consciousness is an objective factor for the revolutionary party and much more so for our small groups. It is the most dynamic factor of the objective situation but, nonetheless, it is objective. This means it is a fact, a fact of reality that we can help in changing in the future but at present, it is as it is, the opposite of our party, which is a subjective factor.

As with any present fact, it is a consequence of the past, of history. If our party had something to do in this history, then and only then, “to some degree”, this present consciousness is “function of the party”. But if we neither were nor are an objective factor, i.e. if sectors of the mass movement neither follow us nor have we educated them before now, we have nothing to do with their present level of consciousness.

Unfortunately, this is the current situation. Argentine workers are Peronist and trade unionists; French workers are Stalinists and Socialists and trade unionists, British workers Labourite and German workers trade unionists and Social Democrats. This present level is not a function of our party in “any degree” whatsoever.

We have said that this present level of consciousness is a historical consequence. We must complete this concept. It is a direct consequence of two combined factors— the objective changes of the regime and the development of mass struggles. The role of the party can be important, and sometimes decisive, but indirectly, as an agitator, organiser and director of these struggles.

Trotsky said the same thing. “For us as a small minority, this whole thing is objective, including the mood of the workers.”⁶² “The mentality of the class of the proletariat is backward but the mentality is not such a substance as the factories, the mines, the railroads, but is more mobile and under the blows of the objective crisis, the millions of unemployed, it can change rapidly.”⁶³

There is a conception very typical of the radicalised petty-bourgeois intelligentsia which consists in attributing to the masses the same feelings they have. There are thousands of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who “love” the struggle and think, somewhat romantically, that with the masses it is the same. Unfortunately not, and every time one of these intellectuals speaks to workers to encourage them to struggle for the simple emotional reason that “one has to struggle”, he suffers a

61 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 38.

62 Trotsky, Leon: “Discussions with Trotsky”, in *The Transitional Program*, op. cit., p. 145.

63 Ibid., p. 127.

tremendous disappointment: workers do not understand him; they believe that he's crazy; they turn their backs on him. The common worker, the exploited in general, feels no pleasure in going out to struggle. He is a normal human being, who has no interest in losing a portion of his meagre salary going out on strike or in risking his safety by going to a demonstration, or in risking his life taking arms against capitalism. The working masses come to fight because the capitalist system sinks them into misery. After all, it leaves them no other choice than struggling to survive. The worker does not "love" to strike, but he risks losing his wages or his job because if he doesn't struggle, he starves. He doesn't "love" violence, but he is forced to use violence to defend himself from the capitalists. He doesn't "love" guns, but is forced to use them when capitalism uses them against him.

This is the first factor that determines the present level of consciousness: the most serious and deeply felt problems which the masses suffer to the point they are willing to mobilise to wrest a solution from the capitalist system.

The second factor is the development of the mobilisation of the masses itself. It's not enough for the objective problem to exist for the masses to go, automatically, on the struggle. Workers may be suffering from pitifully low wages but their attitude to this problem depends on the situation of their struggles with the bourgeoisie at that time. If the problem of wages happens immediately after a fascist crushing of the mass movement, probably no mobilisation will happen. Workers will be conscious they are in an unfavourable situation with their leaders killed or imprisoned; with their organisations destroyed; with the full weight of repression on their backs, and they will not mobilise until they have reorganised their forces. If, however, this situation takes place at the other pole of the development of the struggle, with the masses on the offensive, in a revolutionary situation, they can reach to the verge of taking power, driven by the need to solve this objective problem. This explains why the slogan of "bread" was one of those which brought the Russian proletariat to power.

Thus, these two objective factors combine: the infamy of the day of the capitalist system is what creates the need to struggle and sets the immediate objective of this struggle of the masses; the degree of development of the mass movement is what determines whether such mobilisation breaks out or not, the magnitude it may have, the methods it uses, and its concrete results, which may be from the reorganisation of a union to almost taking power.

The immediate, present, consciousness of the masses is determined by these two factors; it is the consciousness of the needs they suffer from and of the conditions in which they find themselves to confront the exploiters.

The party has nothing to do with this immediate consciousness of the masses. But comrade Germain, arguing that the party's role is "to some degree" (he does not define what this degree is) a determining factor in the immediate consciousness of the masses, falls in a typical ultra-leftist error: he confuses his own level of consciousness, or the party, with the level of the masses. It is the other face, the "rational" one, of that romantic intelligentsia we mentioned: the one that confuses not its feelings but rather its political level with that of the masses.

Fourth assertion: the party can foresee the changes in the level of consciousness of the masses. This is true only in a general and historical sense. We know the capitalist system is in decay, the imperialist system will push more and more misery and exploitation on the backs of workers. Therefore, it will create increasing needs for them, which will make the masses more conscious that their problems can be solved only through struggle. The struggles of the masses will develop increasingly deeper and more violent. Their relationship of forces with the bourgeoisie will become increasingly favourable; it will make them increasingly conscious of their own forces, they will be increasingly willing to embark on new demonstrations. This process will lead them to the very edge of class, revolutionary politics, of what they are capable and of power. But there, they will stop and then they will retreat if there is no revolutionary party that makes them fully conscious of the situation, which organises them and guides them to move ahead.

But this is in general and for the entire historical period. In a concrete, immediate sense, the party has very limited possibilities of anticipating these changes in the masses consciousness. Not so much for the economic factor (the needs the capitalist system creates for them), as this does not

change very quickly, but for the development of their own struggles. Whenever the masses launch into combat, we do not know whether they will triumph or be defeated and this will be crucial to know what the level of consciousness later struggles will start from. Suppose a general strike, which is held for two or three days. It may happen the masses end defeated, with their leaders dismissed and without having achieved absolutely anything. It may happen they return to work without achieving all their goals but having won important partial victories (higher wages, reduced working hours, etc.). Finally, it may happen the strike would lead to an insurrection that leaves the political power in their hands. Obviously, their level of consciousness the day after the strike will not be the same in all three cases. In brief, in the first case, they will begin to consider the need for reorganisation for future movements. In the last case, they will try to organise the defence of the Workers' state and will be considering beginning the construction of socialism.

The most the party can achieve is to manage some hypotheses, point out the most likely, and theoretically prepare itself to face this new situation. This will be relatively easy in periods of calm in the class struggle and very difficult in critical periods, where the struggles, and the consequent changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses, happen day after day. So difficult is the task in the latter situation, that the hypotheses of the Bolshevik party itself lagged with respect to reality as it approached October 1917.

But this is an internal work of the party, of theoretical preparation to face new situations. Nothing to do, as we shall see, with the policy towards the masses because as soon as reality proves that our most likely hypothesis is not taking place, we will be forced to improvise a new policy according to the new situation. Marxists have been saying for a long time since that reality is richer than any schema.

Let us be clear, we continue talking about the immediate consciousness of the masses. The party can make general predictions based on the general laws of class struggle discovered by Marxism and for certain periods. For example the rise of the mass movement = trend to Kerenskiist governments; economic crisis = division of the bourgeoisie, and so on. Comrade Germain, who believes himself able of foreseeing changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses, has proved totally incapable of doing this other type of simpler forecasts.

Fifth, sixth and seventh assertions: one of the main goals of the party is to raise the level of consciousness of the working class, therefore, it should not wait until changes in the immediate consciousness of the masses take place to adapt its slogans to them, but rather (as it can foresee such changes) it must act in accordance with these, not taking as decisive criterion for launching its slogans the present level of consciousness of the masses.

These assertions are self-destructing because the party, as we have already shown, is unable to foresee the changes in the immediate (present) consciousness of the masses. But let's give Comrade Germain the benefit of the doubt. Suppose the party were able to foresee them. Eliminated this difficulty, Comrade Germain's syllogism unfurls neatly. The party aims to raise the consciousness of the masses towards the (correct) political class consciousness. Therefore, its slogans should not start from the present level of consciousness but the level that the party foresees to come in the future (false, thousand times false).

If Comrade Germain talks about future levels of consciousness and proposes that our slogans be subjected to them, we wonder why he does not propose that our sole slogan be to take power, the proletarian revolution on a worldwide scale. We see no difference between raising a slogan for a future level of consciousness that will happen within a month or a year and a slogan for 10 or 20 years. Why should we deal with trifles? Let's only raise taking power worldwide. It is a slogan for future levels of consciousness as good as any other. And if the masses are willing to listen and mobilise with a slogan for the near future, we do not see why they will not be willing to do it with a slogan for the distant future. In the terms raised by Comrade Germain, the problem is quantitative, not qualitative. And a quantitative problem (amount of time) cannot define the character of a slogan. So, future for future, we keep the one we like best: the seizure of power worldwide.

Actually, the problem (slogans for the present or slogans for the future) is qualitative. We are totally in favour of using all the slogans that start at the level of consciousness and the needs of each moment (present) of the mass movement and we are dead set against using any slogan that starts from an assumed (or forecasted) future level of consciousness and need of the mass movement.

One may argue that when we raised in the United States for the first time “Troops out of Vietnam now!”, the mass movement had no immediate consciousness of the need for that slogan, it didn’t feel it was their own.

This happens because between the immediate need and immediate consciousness of the masses exists the same contradiction and dialectic as exists between the objective and the subjective: the fact that an objective need exists does not mechanically determine the masses are aware of the need. Moreover, the immediate consciousness is always lagging behind the immediate need. That’s exactly why our agitational slogans should be a bridge between these two factors unevenly developed. Of these two elements, the decisive one as always is the objective: the present need. This is what Comrade Germain does not even bring up since for him the determinant factor of our slogans is not this immediate objective need but the likely future consciousness.

If we manage to build this bridge, elaborating the precise slogan that synthesises the immediate need of the masses with their immediate consciousness, will we have managed to become up to “a certain degree” a determining factor in their level of consciousness? This depends on whether the masses or some part of them take up our slogan. Because, even though our slogan has been scientifically prepared and may be perfect, there are myriad of historical and immediate objective reasons that may prevent the masses from crossing this bridge we tend, which is the same as mobilising for our slogan. This does not depend on us, other than in the sense that we put forth the correct slogan. The rest, and the truly decisive factor, as always, is the objective factor. If the masses take up our slogan and mobilise for it, we will have effectively been, to a certain degree, a determinant factor of their consciousness. Else, we will not be.

Trotsky did not reason as Comrade Germain does but as we do. He saw that, due to unemployment, the immediate need for the American working class after the great crisis was to get a job. “Theoretically”, the appropriate slogan was “sliding scale of working hours”. But Trotsky did not apply this slogan. He took into account, in addition to the immediate need, the immediate consciousness of the American working class which trusted in Roosevelt and proposed: “... we ask that Mr. Roosevelt with his brains trust propose such a program of public works that everyone capable of working can work at decent wages.”⁶⁴

With the slogan of asking Roosevelt, we have bridged the gap between the immediate need (unemployment) and immediate consciousness (the workers believe in Roosevelt) to achieve the mobilisation of the working class. If Trotsky had taken only the immediate need (“unemployment”) to formulate his policy, this would not have been appropriate to mobilise the working class since it did not take into account what its immediate consciousness was (the workers trusted Roosevelt).

From the time of the Yankee escalation in Vietnam, it was raised as an immediate need the withdrawal of troops, whether or not this was appropriate to the level of consciousness of the time. The bridge we had to tender could not reduce this need to adapt to the immediate consciousness other than in form or language, never to the extent of ignoring the need that originated our slogan. Any attempt to base our slogans only in the level of consciousness of each moment, that does not take the immediate need of the mass movement as the decisive element and as the point from which to mobilise to overcome it, is adventurism since our politics is a whole. Our politics include an analysis, a program (historical needs and consciousness), propaganda, agitation (immediate needs and consciousness) and aims at the permanent mobilisation of the masses towards the seizure of power by the working class. That is, everything is closely related and the factors depend on each other, with the slogans to mobilise the masses being the decisive factor.

64 Trotsky, Leon: “The Political Backwardness of the American Workers”, 19 May 1938, in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 128.

Trotsky, criticising this habit of taking tasks based on predictions, told us over 30 years ago: “But our task consists not in making predictions on a calendar but in mobilising the workers around the slogans that flow from the political situation. Our strategy is a strategy of revolutionary action, not abstract speculations.”⁶⁵

“After all, the task consists not in making prognostications from the calendar but in mobilising the workers around the slogans flowing from the political situation. Our strategy is a strategy of revolutionary action and not of abstract

Any attempt to put forward for an immediate stage of the class struggle slogans and demands for a level of consciousness which is not the level of consciousness of the stage is an ultra-leftist mistake. Even a greater mistake when in addition to slogans and demands a comprehensive strategy is developed, as it was the case with entryism *sui generis*. While Stalinism had an ultra-opportunist policy and engaged in raising signatures for peace, Comrade Germain and the Majority comrades argued that there would be war, that Stalinism would change its policy and mindset forced by circumstances. From there, they took the strategy of entering Stalinism waiting for those changes (which never took place) to happen.

The same goes for our slogans. We cannot develop them for a future stage of the class struggle or the consciousness and needs the masses will have in an uncertain future. We cannot, firstly, because we do not know them. But even if we were able to predict the future (“foresee” as Comrade Germain would say) we cannot use these slogans because of another much more important reason: because the slogans have only one goal, which is to mobilise the workers. And if the slogans reflect future needs and level of consciousness, they would be incomprehensible to the masses. An example: if instead of the slogan of peace, the Bolshevik Party, because of the imperialist war had posed the slogan to yield to the Germans, as it did in Brest-Litovsk, it would not have made the Russian Revolution.

That the party has as a goal to raise the consciousness of the masses towards the political consciousness of class does not mean it can do it by itself. Comrade Germain is the first to insist that the masses only learn through their actions. Thus, our goal is to mobilise the masses so that, through this mobilisation, they gain political class consciousness. So far we all agree. What we do not agree on is how we mobilise them. Comrade Germain says we mobilise the masses agitating slogans for the consciousness they will have later on. We say that we mobilise the masses raising slogans for the needs and level of consciousness they have in the present.

Germain and us in a general strike

Suppose there are conflicts over wages, in isolation, in 30 to 40 per cent of industrial enterprises. What is the need of the masses at this time? To unify all these conflicts into a general strike. What should our slogan be? General strike for general wages increase! What slogan would Comrade Germain pose? He would reason as follows: since the general strike will bring up the problem of power, our slogan should be “general strike to take power!” But this would be a catastrophic mistake. The masses need to hold a general strike to get higher wages and they are or should become conscious of it but they are not conscious they need to take power. Our slogan of “general strike for wages increase!” would fall on fertile ground, it would spread across the length and breadth of the mass movement and the general strike would be a fact. Comrade Germain’s slogan would fall in a vacuum and would only be followed by a small sector of the vanguard; it would liquidate the possibility of a massive general strike.

However, like Comrade Germain, we are conscious that the general strike raises the issue of power. But it raises it when the strike is already a fact. To be able to raise the seizure of power, we must first ensure the general strike is done. If we succeed in getting the masses to go out on strike and in paralysing the country, making the bourgeoisie despair and see their entire system in jeopardy

⁶⁵ Trotsky, Leon: “For a Strategy of Action, Not Speculation”, Letter to Friends in Peking, 3 October 1932, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 214.

and it begins to organise repression, only then will the masses be able to clearly see that the only way out for the general strike is taking power. This will be the most immediate need of the masses; this will be its only way out. At this time, if the party continues to raise the slogan of a general strike for higher wages, it will commit a crime and a betrayal. The time has come to change the slogan! The mobilisation of the masses has reached the point where they can understand the need to take power. The slogan for that stage must match the need. “All Power to the Soviets (or the committee leading the strike)!” is the slogan of the moment.

If we do not succeed in getting the masses to hold a general strike because we have raised for this strike a different goal from what the masses feel and want (power instead of wages), we can spend centuries shouting “general strike for taking power!” but we will achieve nothing. Perhaps the general strike takes place despite us but, certainly, the masses will not take power.

Here Comrade Germain could reply to us with the following reasoning: if we, before the general strike, have already been proposing that the only way out is to take power, then at the time when the masses face this situation they will acknowledge it and consider us good leaders who knew how to foresee events. This is an intellectual, false reasoning. This is how the vanguard moves but not the masses. To the vanguard, indeed, we have to explain patiently on the eve of a general strike that this will pose the problem of power and we have to be prepared to take it. All our propaganda on the vanguard should have that one and only axis. And the vanguard will recognise that our forecast was correct and will enter the party massively.

If the masses behaved this way, to make the revolution would be easy: we spend five, 10 or 20 years agitating the slogan of taking power. When the revolutionary crisis takes place (general strike, for example) —which can take place even if we do not exist because it is an inevitable moment of class struggle— the masses will remember our many years of agitation, will recognise us as their leadership and take power. But the masses do not move this way: they recognise as leadership those who knew how to mobilise them, giving appropriate slogans for each of the struggles they undertook. And those who put forth a slogan that had nothing to do with their needs or their consciousness, not only will they be neglected as leadership but they also will be considered as element alien to the mass movement.

Thus, there are two reasons why the party must agitate to the masses the slogan that meets their level of consciousness and their present needs. The first reason is that it is the only way to mobilise the masses and the mobilisation of the masses is the only way for them to raise their consciousness level. Thus, the important thing is to get the general strike because only during the general strike will the masses be able to raise their consciousness to understand they must take power. The second reason to agitate these slogans is that it is the only way to be recognised as leaders and gain prestige, influence and trust among the masses. What the masses remember, and for this, they have a good memory, is who told them they had to make a united front against fascism when they needed to do so, who proposed them the fight for wages when they needed to fight for wages, who raised to them (why not?) to back off when they needed to retreat and not be crushed.

Only in this way, by agitating these slogans, can a party earn the right to be leadership. Only in this way, it will be recognised as a leader before the revolutionary crisis. Because if this does not happen, at the time of the revolutionary crisis there will be no one with authority and who is listened to by the masses to raise the only slogan, the only task which the mass movement can never be fully aware of by its own means: the slogan and the task of taking power.

This is nothing new. Trotsky undertook a long fight against ultraleftism with this same axis. He was against launching the slogan of soviets in Germany, of armament in Spain, of workers’ control in Germany when the conditions and the level of consciousness of the mass movement did not demand it.

The whole secret of the Trotskyist politics consists precisely in measuring to the millimetre the needs and consciousness level of the masses at each time and finding the correct slogans for them. Trotskyist politics is concrete— present at the level of its slogans; historical at the level of its program. This is merely the expression of the old contradiction between the immediate and the

mediate, between the concrete and the abstract which, at this level, is expressed in the contradiction between the slogans and the program, between agitation and propaganda.

This explains why the Bolshevik Party kept changing slogans in the short span of a few months: All Power to the Soviets! Out with the bourgeois ministers! All against Kornilov! Constituent Assembly! Once again: All Power to the Soviets!

The whole art and science of our parties and leaderships is about how to detect changes in the needs and consciousness level of the mass movement. But to detect these changes in the mass consciousness we are forced to use two tools. The first is agitational slogans. “For a party, agitation is also a means of lending an ear to the masses, of sounding out its moods and thoughts, and reaching this or another decision in accordance with the results.”⁶⁶

The second tool is what allows us to evaluate “the results” of our agitation and to “reach this or another decision”. This tool is our method of analysis and our historical program, which, in turn, summarises the historical and of the class struggle of the workers’ movement and the whole history of the class struggle.

This dialectic between the mediate and the immediate, the historical and the present, the abstract and the concrete, is synthesised or unified when the revolutionary party succeeds in leading the workers’ movement towards the conquest of power. But to overcome the contradiction, we must go through different stages of the class struggle; stages which are always concrete, immediate and present, until they become historical. In short, until the immediate struggle of the mass movement is the seizure of power, the great historical task.

The immediate, the concrete struggles of the workers’ movement, become a historical task through the party. This synthesis is manifested when the unity between our party and its program—both expressions of the historical interests of the proletariat—and the working class and between this with the large masses, takes place. There the contradictions between party and mass movement, between program and slogans, between propaganda and agitation, between tasks of the party and tasks of the mass movement are synthesised. During the insurrection, the masses, the working class and the party have one and only task, one and only slogan, one and only program, and perform one and only action, immediate and historical at the same time: to seize power.

Party “revolutionary initiatives”?

The third criticism of Comrade Germain to Comrade Camejo’s six points is: “Third: Another essential dimension of the Leninist concept of the revolutionary party is missing from Comrade Camejo’s ‘essence’: the dimension of *revolutionary initiative*. (...) ‘Promoting’ mass struggles in different ways, starting from being good trade unionists and having cadres who are accepted by workers on the shops is one thing. Taking the initiative to organise and being capable of leading anti-capitalist mass struggles as a *revolutionary party* is something quite different. (...) One of the ‘essential’ characteristics of the classical centrism of the Kautsky-Bauer school was precisely this inability of perceiving the need of revolutionary initiatives by the party, ‘relationship of forces,’ ‘objective conditions,’ ‘the mood of the masses’ deciding everything always in a fatalistically predetermined way. Leninism separates itself from that type of centrism precisely by its capacity to understand how revolutionary initiatives can *modify* the relationship of forces.”⁶⁷

The disaster of the guerrilla (a “revolutionary party initiative” par excellence) in Latin America makes Comrade Germain very cautious and elusive in his definition of “revolutionary initiative”. First, he tells us that there is a difference between doing unionism and “to organise and being capable of leading anti-capitalist mass struggles”. Nobody can oppose this statement: clearly, the party should take the initiative, with all boldness, trying to “organise and being capable of leading the anti-capitalist mass struggles”, and not be limited to trade unionism. On the other hand, we don’t

66 Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit., p. 67.

67 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p, 38 and 39.

see the point of this digression by Comrade Germain, unless he believes that there is some section of our International which is proposing to do (or does) exclusively unionism. If he thinks this, he should give more importance to the problem because it would be a serious deviation.

But then, he begins to clarify the picture a little more. He says that Kautsky-Bauer centrism states that everything is fatally determined by the “relationship of forces”, the “objective conditions”, the “mood of the masses”; that Leninism instead, differs from Kautsky-Bauer centrism because it understands how “revolutionary initiatives (of the party) can modify the relationship of forces”.

The relationship of forces measures, as the term implies, the relative strength at each time of the two main antagonists in the ongoing class struggle. When we say we are stronger, we mean, therefore, stronger than the bourgeoisie. At a given moment, the mass movement may be on the offensive (rising) and the bourgeoisie on the defensive; it may be the reverse, and even there may be periods of relative stability. But in general terms, we can say that an abatement of the mass movement corresponds to an advance of the bourgeoisie. This relationship of forces between the classes, as we have seen, gives place, according to Trotsky, to four general situations, four regimes: counter-revolutionary, non-revolutionary, pre-revolutionary and revolutionary.

And if we return to Comrade Germain’s assertion that “the revolutionary initiative of the party” can “modify the relationship of forces”, this means the initiative of the party can transform a counter-revolutionary regime into a non-revolutionary one, this one into pre-revolutionary and this into a revolutionary one. In contrast to his manifest tendency to overwhelm us with quotes and historical examples, Comrade Germain offers not a single one to illustrate this statement. It is no coincidence: there are none.

For serious Marxists, the superstructures (and the revolutionary party is one of them) are determined by the structures (the classes) and not the reverse. It is absolutely impossible for a superstructure to modify, by its own “initiative”, the relations between classes. In this also, a dialectic relationship exists: the superstructures take colossal weight in times of great instability and crises in the structure, for example in a revolutionary situation, and only at those times. But reaching this situation of crisis does not depend at all on the superstructures but rather on the laws governing the struggle between classes.

What makes possible for the confrontation between the classes to reach the point of complete and utter crisis of the structure (revolutionary crisis) is that the existence of capitalism is ruled by a law according to which it will have an ever deeper economic crisis and the mass movement will always react against the hardships these crises cause. When the revolutionary crisis arrives, and only then, the superstructures define the way out of the crisis: the bourgeois state and the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties with influence in the mass movement, push towards a reactionary, bourgeois outcome of the crisis; the revolutionary party pushes towards a revolutionary, workers’ outcome. Which of these two sides wins the leadership of the mass movement, will determine what the outcome of the crisis will be. That is, if the revolutionary party manages to win over the working class if the working class firmly takes the leadership of the mass movement and the vast majority of the petty-bourgeois masses support or remain neutral in the struggle, the crisis will be defined towards the proletarian revolution. If the party does not manage this, and the bourgeois superstructure drags the petty-bourgeoisie and succeed in confusing large segments of the mass movement and the working class, the outcome of the crisis will be a bourgeois, counter-revolutionary outcome.

But even in this case, the role of the superstructure is not directly a determinant. The superstructure “revolutionary party” does not take “the initiative” of taking power: it tries to win the mass movement for it to take the “revolutionary initiative” of taking charge of the state. And this “winning the mass movement for the revolutionary initiative” is simply a political task of the party.

In periods of stability of the structure, this dialectic between the party and the relationship of forces between the classes takes place in a qualitatively inferior way. The lower the momentum of the mass struggles, the smaller the influence of the party. When the struggles grow, so does the party’s influence. The party can only accelerate (and within very precise limits) the development of the mass movement but never cause a change in the relationship of forces by its own initiative.

Whether a strike wins or is defeated will not result in the same relationship of forces between the classes.

The party can play a role in this situation, provided it is the leadership of the strike or gets to be it at some point in its development. If the party leads the strike to victory, this speeds up the development of the mass movement, changing the relationship of forces in favour of the workers' movement. If the strike was very important, it may even mean a regime change; such as moving from a non-revolutionary to a pre-revolutionary situation. But again, what produces the change in the relationship of forces is not the party directly but this victory of the mass movement. The party, correctly leading the mass movement in the strike, has accelerated the change from one regime to another, has helped the mass movement to change its relationship of forces with the bourgeoisie; but in no way, it has changed the relationship of forces because of its initiative. If the masses had not been willing to go on strike or if the strike was lost (and this can happen because of objective factors, even with our leadership), the party could not have done anything.

This is the ABC of Marxism and it is what the historical and current reality shows us. Thus, it is no coincidence that Comrade Germain was unable to substantiate with any quotes his famous "revolutionary initiatives" which are capable of "modifying the relationship of forces" or to provide examples in this regard.

Or is it not so? Is there any revolutionary party initiative which has aided to change the relationship of forces between the classes? Could you mention some Comrade Germain? May it be the guerrilla of Inti Peredo in Bolivia? Or perhaps, the POR(C)'s long years of "preparing for armed struggle"? Maybe the actions of the Tupamaros in Uruguay? Or those of the PRT(EC)-ERP in Argentina? None of these examples supports Comrade Germain's conception. In all these countries the only thing that has changed the relationship of forces was the mobilisation of the masses: the general strike against Miranda's coup in Bolivia; large general strikes, such as in banking and the meat workers in Uruguay; the Cordobazo in Argentina, and so on. And in these facts of class struggle which really changed the relationship of forces, neither the POR(C), nor the Inti Peredo, nor the Tupamaros, nor the PRT(EC)-ERP, had anything to do with. All they had to do with was in giving excuses for the regime to increase the repression which the workers' movement paid dearly for.

With the "revolutionary initiatives" or with the mass movement?

As with any theoretical question, this matter is not exhausted in the theoretical discussion but rather it manifests itself, much more clearly, in practical politics. So far, we had polemised with Comrade Germain about whether or not the slogans we use should respond to the immediate needs and consciousness of the masses; about whether such agitation should be done on the mass movement or the vanguard.

It would seem we agree on the fact that the slogans (or demands) are the essential tool for developing our policy. But now the disagreement begins to widen.

For Comrade Germain, the "revolutionary initiatives" are an "essential dimension of the Leninist concept of the revolutionary party" which is the same as saying that, to be Leninist, the party must have as a central task to take "revolutionary initiatives", on its own account and risk. The role of these revolutionary initiatives of the party is not very clear in the paragraph where Comrade Germain criticises Comrade Camejo but from his entire conception and the politics that some sections oriented by the majority have applied by, it is clear these initiatives have the function to provide an example to the masses and show them the way by which they should mobilise. Examples: the POR(C) took the "initiative" of armed struggle (or the preparation for it) for the Bolivian masses to follow, launching armed struggle (or preparing for it); the Communist League took the initiative of physically fighting against fascism and broke up a rally of *Ordre Nouveau* for the French masses to follow suit and destroy fascism throughout France, and so on and so forth. If our parties do not take such initiatives they are unworthy, according to Comrade Germain, of the name of Leninist or Trotskyist parties.

How would Comrade Germain qualify the Russian Bolshevik Party? We don't want to even imagine it! Consider that only weeks before the October Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky discussed whether to take power on behalf of the Soviets or the party. Not even the Bolshevik Party itself at the height of its influence in the mass movement could venture to take the "revolutionary initiative" of taking power! Obviously, this party lacked the "critical dimension" that so worries Comrade Germain.

We are not against the party taking any kind of initiatives but we are opposed to those with which it intends to replace the mass movement in tasks that are their own. That is, when it aims to confront on their own the bourgeois regime, or some sector of the proletariat's class enemy, or an organisation that responds to such class sector (as in the case of fascist organisations). We are in favour of the party politically opposing all classes, sectors or enemy organisations of the mass movement, denouncing them in its propaganda, agitating slogans in the mass movement to try to mobilise them against these enemies, but not for the party to physically confront them of its own accord and at its own risk, without the active support of the mass movement or a section of it.

This does not mean we should sit back and wait to convince the majority of the mass movement and its organisations to launch our slogans and try to mobilise the sectors which are already objectively facing the need to do so. This is where we should deploy our greatest initiatives, but these have the one and only purpose: to create or discover the slogans which will lead to the mobilisation and revolutionary organisation of the mass movement, or some part of it. Interestingly, those who are in favour of the party taking initiatives on their own are not particularly imaginative or bold in the task of taking these true revolutionary party initiatives. That's how the POR(C) in Bolivia displayed their full imagination to invent a Revolutionary Army but lacked enough initiative and daring to raise the slogans that would effectively lead to the arming of the Bolivian masses: the arming of the mass organisations to face the reactionary coups d'état. And in Europe, they have had no initiative to support and defend the guerrillas of the Portuguese colonies.

Neither are we suggesting that only when all or most of the mass movement take up our slogans will be the time to take action. Precisely we make a polemic with Comrade Germain because he considers the vanguard as a sector formed by individuals of the mass movement while we believe there is in the mass movement an uneven development which causes at every moment of the class struggle a sector to be in the vanguard with respect to others. As a general rule, we have to focus our work on those sectors that suggest the possibility of mobilisation. The capitalist regime permanently promotes or demands different layers of the working class and the exploited mobilise to defend themselves against the attacks of the exploiters. We must be fully involved in these objective processes to advance the slogans to mobilise and organise these sectors permanently. Every mobilisation and victory of these sectors of the mass movement will serve as a spur to mobilise and get others ready to struggle.

It will not be as Comrade Germain believes that through the current vanguard or the party we will get to overcome the bureaucracy or provide a permanent example to the mass movement. We will succeed only through sectors of the mass movement impacting with their struggles with other sectors. The entire science of our parties consists, precisely, in knowing how to determine which sectors of the mass movement, because of their objective situation and their current level of consciousness, are more prone to mobilisation. The whole secret of Bolshevik policy resides in this dialectic. It would have been a crime not to take as an axis the American youth, with a slogan expressing their immediate need and level of consciousness ("withdraw troops from Vietnam, now!"), waiting for the whole American mass movement to be in conditions to mobilise. And this was a truly excellent and exemplary "initiative" of the SWP! But it has nothing to do with the "revolutionary initiatives".

Everything in France forces us, for example, to focus on immigrant workers with their two specific problems, the national issue and being part of the most exploited sector of the working-class. We should attempt to mobilise them against the attack of fascist outbreaks and of French capitalism which wants to keep them in the condition of second-class workers and citizens. But our obligation

arises from the fact this sector is giving indications it is ready to mobilise, the fact it is a sector unevenly developed of the mass movement that may, for a period, be at the vanguard of the French working class and masses. This is why one of our most urgent tasks in France is to search the slogans which can mobilise immigrant workers but in no way for us, our party, to take the “revolutionary initiative” to fight fascism on our own, without immigrant workers involved in that fight.

This issue of the revolutionary initiatives by the party is dangerous for several reasons. The first reason is that the revolutionary initiative educates badly the mass movement and delays the development of their mobilisation and consciousness. The Majority comrades, for example, congratulated the PRT(EC)-ERP for kidnapping Sylvester, the British consul in the city of Rosario; in exchange for his release they demanded (and got) a series of improvements for workers at the Swift meatpacking plant. Did this “revolutionary initiative” educate the Swift workers? According to the Majority comrades, yes, it did provide the example that through armed struggle they could achieve the improvements needed. According to us, no, because it showed the workers that the mere action of a group of well-meaning and courageous people could replace their active mobilisation to defend their interests and rights. The harsh reality of the class struggle denied the majority: shortly after, the union elections were won again by the Peronist bureaucracy and working conditions became, again, as bad as or worse than before the “revolutionary initiative” of the ERP.

We could say the same about the Communist League’s action against *Ordre Nouveau*. And here we can show something else: how the greater relative success these “initiatives” have, the more harmful to the development of the mass movement they are. If we keep taking actions against the fascist outbreaks and we keep having technical successes, with what argument will we try to mobilise the immigrant workers? When we attempt to do it, they will answer us: “What are we going to mobilise for if those good guys of the Communist League will be already in charge of liquidating the fascists?” However, to the extent that the French immigrant workers and mass movement do not mobilise against the fascist outbreaks, these will become increasingly larger (because this is a question of the relationship of forces between the classes), and the time will come when only the mass movement can defeat them. At this time, our “revolutionary initiatives” will show their negative face: for hitherto trusting that the problem of fascism can be solved by the Communist League, there will be no mass movement sector politically prepared to mobilise against them. The consequences cannot but be dire. Luckily, there is no great danger of this happening, because just as fascism grows, our section, and its “revolutionary initiatives” of facing it by itself, will be swept away by the mass movement.

The second danger of these “revolutionary initiatives” of the party is that they will lead us to forget or ignore the revolutionary initiative of the masses themselves and the obligation of the party and its cadres to take part in them. We believe the process which Europe has entered into, as with our continent before, will be characterised by thousands and thousands of mobilisations of all kinds made by the masses. For these thousands and thousands of mass mobilisations, our parties have few cadres to attend to them, to provide them with appropriate political and organisational orientation. We lack time, militants and leadership capacity for it.

Therefore, it is a crime to extract cadres out of the mobilisations the masses do, to separate them towards the achievement of independent actions of their own removed from those the masses take.

The proposition that the essential dimension of the party at this stage is its own revolutionary initiative tends to move us away from the resolution of the most serious contradiction facing our sections: their tremendous weakness in the face of the initiatives and mobilisations of the mass movement. This contradiction threatens to worsen or, at least, to become a sharp contradiction throughout an extensive stage, as our growth and the raising of our political level will be accompanied by greater revolutionary initiatives of the mass movement in both continents, if not all the world.

Unfortunately, we have not had the opportunity to chat with comrades of the European majority. But we have done so with the new Latin American vanguard and with representatives of the majority in our continent. Also, for a while, we have been having a dialogue with the comrades

of the SWP leadership. In these conversations, it has always attracted our attention a profound difference between the language of the Latin American Majority comrades in the one hand, and the Americans and our comrades on the other. The first have a mania for the words “create” and “revolutionary initiative”. We use “discovering opportunities” and “to develop with all boldness a policy for these opportunities”. We could say, very schematically, that in this difference in language is currently expressed one of the fundamental differences between the majority and the minority. For the majority, it is necessary to “create” through “revolutionary initiative” lessons, examples for the mass movement. For the minority, the mass movement does not need any kind of examples, or any “revolutionary initiative” on our part but rather we need to know how “to discover the mobilisations the masses do or can do, led by their needs and immediate consciousness”. These mobilisations, present or for the immediate future, we call them opportunities and all our politics should be directed towards using them through our slogans, to avoid halting them and to win them for our leadership.

As noted above, in addition to theoretical, this is a practical matter. Why split our head thinking about how to attack *Ordre Nouveau*? If indeed *Ordre Nouveau* has begun attacking the Algerians and other nationalities oppressed by French imperialism, we must begin immediately a deep agitational work among the nationalities which are preferentially targeted by these fascist goons. Only this kind of work will enable us to know their mentality, their reactions, and whether they are willing to defend themselves against such attacks. If our slogans do not catch on, this will show that the party must abandon momentarily the task. If the opposite happens, if our slogans are well received by the immigrant workers, if we succeed in organising them, then and only then, closely linked to the Algerians neighbourhoods attacked by *Ordre Nouveau*, we’ll give exemplary punishment to these fascists. The condition for this task, as for every truly revolutionary policy is, then, that it responds to a pressing need for mass movement (defend against fascist attacks that occur repeatedly) and to the initiative of the movement itself (that it mobilises itself against this danger).

Our role is to work within these already existing or potential mobilisations, raising the correct slogans that reflect the needs and consciousness of this sector of the mass movement, organising them, presenting ourselves as alternative leadership if they have opportunistic leaderships at their head, and to lead them if we have no rivals. (This last can happen if we work within the most exploited sectors of the working class and the mass movement). It is not a matter, then, of “creating” but rather of “discovering” within the mass movement where possibilities are opening up to impose our transitional slogans.

The third danger of these “revolutionary initiatives” is that they transform the relations of the party with the mass movement from objective into subjective. For the Majority comrades, initiatives are useful if they awaken sympathy within the mass movement. Comrade Maitan has praised the ERP actions for this reason; so has Comrade Frank.

Our relationship with the mass movement has to be essentially organic and political, not emotional and based on propaganda. We want party groups in the organisms and the concrete and objective struggles of the mass movement. We want these party groups and their militants to contest the leadership of the mass organisations and the struggles on behalf of the party. It is a precise and objective relationship: struggles and organisations of the workers’ and mass movement, on the one hand, party organisms within them, disputing the leadership of these organisations and struggles on the other hand.

The Majority comrades are not consistent in their policy of “revolutionary initiatives”. In Argentina, for example, there was no difference between the “initiatives” of the PRT(EC) and those of the Peronist armed groups. Both were carried out outside the mass movement, both produced “exemplary” actions of a vanguard; both were characterised by trying to solve through their own initiative tasks that can only be solved by mass mobilisations. However, those who captured the largest share of “sympathy” were the armed Peronist organisations and not the PRT(EC). This was shown in all subsequent street demonstrations after the assumption of the Peronist government of Campora; the columns of FAR and Montoneros (Peronist armed organisations) came to mobilise up

to 40,000 youth, the ERP never passed 500, those of our party reached a maximum of 4,000. Who caught more “sympathy”? Undoubtedly in the first place, the Peronist left, based on a permanent submission policy to the trust the masses still have in Peron (i.e., based on an “armed submission” to Peronism). In second place, our party, but not based on any “revolutionary initiative” but for having been present in each and every one of the struggles of the mass movement and by differentiating itself very clearly from Peronist politics. Last, the PRT(EC), which also differentiated from Peronism but was absent from the demonstrations because it was too busy meditating, organising and taking their “revolutionary initiatives”.

The conclusions are obvious. The Majority comrades should not sit on the fence: either you are with the “revolutionary initiatives” (and, consequently, abandon the political work amongst the mass movement) or you are with Trotskyist politics. And Europe will be no exception: as the economic crisis deepens, there will be sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie desperate for “revolutionary initiatives” infinitely superior to those of our sections. At this time, our sections will have done very well if they have already defined their attitude. They can politically yield and achieve the momentary successes and “sympathies” that once upon a time the Peronist armed organisations of Argentina had, or they can abandon these famous “revolutionary initiatives” and achieve the much more modest, but much more important, successes and sympathies of our party. What would be tragic is that they fulfil the same sad role of the PRT(EC).

A superstructural and subjective conception of the united front

This polemic we have just seen on “revolutionary initiative” is expressed tacitly in another polemic that exists between the majority and the minority around the workers’ united front. Thanks to the gracious visit of two members of the French section to our party, we had the opportunity to hear the clearest exposition of this conception: “We think that we don’t have the strength as a political organisation to impose, by ourselves, the united front with the reformist parties. We can polemise with them, and we do, but it’s not enough. Trotsky posed the problem very well when he said that the correlation of forces was between one-third and one-seventh of the workers’ forces. When you do not have even one-seventh of the workers’ forces, the united front tactic is not enough, it cannot be applied. When you have more than a third, the revolutionary party can assume its responsibilities.”⁶⁸

Comrade Germain, without as much clarity, holds the same conception. We disagree with this way of approaching the united front; it is a subjective deviation, the same as the remaining deviations of the majority. By its content, this interpretation is superstructural and subjective, adventurist and sectarian. It considers the united front to be essentially a question of the relationship between parties.

For our French section, the possibility of proposing a united front to the reformist parties depends on which numerical relationship we have with them within the workers’ movement: if we have less than a seventh, we cannot bring it up, if we have between a seventh and a third, yes we can, and if we have more than a third we do not need to do it because we can manage by ourselves.

The united front is a tactic

The comrades of the Communist League are mistaken. First, the united front is not a principle or a strategy of our party but rather a political tactic for specific situations of the class struggle. Second, as any policy of ours, it should respond to deep needs in a stage of the mass movement and not to the internal relations between the different sectors of the mass movement. Put another way: the united front is a tactic that we apply when the situation of the class struggle objectively requires the workers’ movement to unify all its forces to confront the bourgeoisie; it depends on the relationship between the mass movement and the exploiters, not on the relationships between

⁶⁸ Statement by a comrade of the French Communist League (LCR) leadership in a meeting at our headquarters, in *Proceedings*, Archives of the PST (A).

the different parties of the mass movement. That is, what determines our policy of the united front is the structural factor (relations between the classes) and not the superstructural factor (relations between the workers' parties).

However, this policy has a major superstructural aspect, which is the way to propose the united front.

Contrary to opportunistic politics which propose the united front only to the leaderships and not to the rank and file to avoid friction with the former; and contrary to ultraleft politics, which only propose it to the rank and file and ignore the leaderships; Trotskyist politics consist of proposing a united front to the rank and file and the leadership. We propose the united front with three goals: first, not to break with the rank and file of the reformist parties by ignoring the leaderships that they recognise; second, to promote rank and file pressure on them to force the leadership to accept a united front; third, to exhaust the experience of the rank and file with the reformist leaderships, unmasking them for their vacillations and betrayals to the tasks of the united front, and to stand as alternative revolutionary leadership.

But this superstructural aspect, this way of proposing the united front, without which there is no real united front policy, is just that: a way, a superstructural aspect but not the determinant one. What is crucial is that there are very compelling needs for the entire workers' movement that force us to raise this policy.

Precisely because the workers' united front responds to an objective need of the mass movement at a precise stage of the class struggle, it is usually defensive. If for years the united front was not posed for Europe, it was not for numerical reasons, but a deep objective reason: there was not a brutal offensive by the exploiters which raised the need for a defensive policy of all the exploited. The relative poverty (or absolute wealth) of European workers explains why the united front was not raised there in an immediate, agitational way. It could not be so, it cannot be so, while the entire working class objectively does not face, does not feel a serious threat that affects them immediately: fascism, reaction, high cost of living, unemployment, racism, etc.

How do we implement the policy of the united front? This is a very delicate problem: how do we distribute our militants, on which sectors of the mass movement we preferably hit and with what slogans we do it? This is something that will be resolved correctly according to the ability of our leaderships and parties to evaluate the objective situation and our own forces, and their capacity for distributing and arming them with correct slogans. There is no general answer to this problem because every situation is specific. The most we can say is that we will have to hit on the sectors of the mass movement where the objective problems are most intense (if we are dealing with partial economic or democratic issues, such as national problems) or on those which have demonstrated greater sensitivity and willingness to mobilise in the case of general political problems (risk of a reactionary coup, for example). We must assign into those sectors the biggest and best part of our forces and we must look for the specific slogan that reflects the general problem which the mass movement is facing as a whole. Like any other policy of ours, its chance of success depends on the objective process of the class struggle and secondarily on our numerical relationship with other workers' parties.

The united front in France

For example, if today we raise a program and a slogan for the defence of the living and working standards of the whole of the French workers' movement and we call for the unity of the two or three trade union confederations with this axis, we may have a partial or complete success after a certain time if the objective conditions help and we know how to properly implement our policy. If the bosses' offensive against that standard of living continues to intensify, if we know how to tactically implement this defence strategy of living and working standards in the various guilds, concentrating on those where there are greater chances of a united struggle in the short term, there will be chances for these partial, united struggles, of a united front, to succeed. If any of these struggles wins, it will

impact the whole of the French workers' movement and will take it to an overall struggle to curb the bosses' offensive. Then our united front policy will have triumphed.

In France, we have already an experience of what it means an incorrect, subjective and superstructural conception of the united front. On 21 June 1973, the French fascist organisation *Ordre Nouveau* made a demonstration against Algerian immigrants. Our section, the Communist League, had called for a counter-demonstration by the left. Finding no echo, it performed it alone, and there was a violent confrontation with the fascists. The French government took advantage of this event to outlaw the League and imprison Alain Krivine and Pierre Rousset, two of its most prominent spokesmen. Some days later, the Committee for Freedom, an organisation of the Socialist Party called a rally where the whole of the left and some 15,000 people attended. A *de facto* united front had been formed, of all the left parties, including the CP, against the government and in favour of democratic rights. But although the motive of the rally was to demand the revocation of the decree illegalising the League, our comrades could not speak.

It would have been a different situation if they had put in practice, correctly and consequently, a united front policy. If the Communist League had transformed its campaign against the fascist outbreaks and the reactionary trends of the government in an ongoing campaign of united front addressed to the CP and SP and systematically maintained since a year ago, the rally would have been a spectacular success of our united front policy. All attendees would have said or thought: "The league was right: we had to make a united front, and this has begun to be structured."

Perhaps the comrades of the League would not have been able to speak anyway, but in the face of the manoeuvres of the CP leadership to try to stop them, the rank and file of the rally would have wondered: why are they not accepted if they are the only ones who for over one year have stressed the need for concrete action, not just a rally, against the reactionary course of the government and the fascist outbreaks?" And this fact alone would have allowed the CP rank and file to begin to press on their leadership and even to question it.

But the most important thing would have been to raise the united front among immigrant workers. We still have time to do so. Together with our patient work on these nationalities, the policy of united front of all tendencies to defend themselves from racist attacks would make its way, sooner or later, if the attacks continued.

But if the comrades of the Communist League keep waiting for a certain numerical proportion to happen before raising the united front policy as the central tactic of the party for defensive tasks, it will happen again what has already happened in the rally in defence of the League and the Bolivian People's Assembly: the united front happened *de facto* and neither the Communist League nor the POR(C), respectively, could show to the masses the proletarian and revolutionary merit of being their highest agitators and organisers. Those who took the prestige of doing so were the Stalinists in one case and the Lechin bureaucracy on the other. It can also happen that the united front does not take place and, therefore, the defeat of the mass movement is inevitable. This defeat will have as theoretical origin the superstructural and subjective conception of the united front and as politically responsible the comrades who have not taken as a central task the agitation of the slogan of a united front in the mass movement, in addition to the opportunistic leaderships.

Two omissions: professional militants and democratic centralism

Remarkably, the furious attack of Comrade Germain to Comrade Camejo about his conception of the party is not supplemented with another to Comrade Mandel, who missed two of the pillars of the Leninist conception of the Bolshevik Party: professional militants and democratic centralism. These two oversights by Comrade Mandel have an explanation. We have already seen that for him the overcoming of the consciousness of the advanced workers happens intellectually and is carried out by intellectuals: it is a subjective process of learning Marxist philosophy, sociology, economy and history. That is, of "Marxism as science". This process, which can only be met individually has its executors —always according to Comrade Mandel— in the intelligentsia, whose role as a class sector,

is “to bring the awakened and critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientific knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognise the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is.”⁶⁹

On what objective basis does this learning of the “awakened and critical layers of the working class”, i.e. the workers’ vanguard, happen? Or, put otherwise, how does the vanguard worker have to organise his life to become a revolutionary militant? Comrade Mandel answers us, in another of his works, saying that one of the political privileges of revolutionary militants is that of... “dedicating to the social activity a fraction of their lives much larger than that of other workers.”

Here Comrade Mandel is telling us (through what he does not say) that the vanguard worker should stay in the same objective situation as before, only with far more sacrifice. This means, he should organise his life as follows: meets his everyday schedule at the factory, then he receives at home an intellectual who teaches him and makes him study Marxist and Trotskyist socialism, and then he has to go and visit other workers, or the union where he will fight for his workmates and the party. In short: in the transformation of vanguard worker into revolutionary militant, the party has nothing to do, the task of education in Marxism is met by the intellectuals, the task of coping with life is met by the worker himself continuing his factory work, and if intellectuals do their job and the worker his, the worker will have achieved the “scientific knowledge” and, therefore, “consciousness”. This is neither Marxism nor the Leninist theory of organisation.

The professional militants

Marxism is materialistic, Lenin was too. For Lenin, overcoming the fragmented consciousness of the advanced worker was essentially a material rather than an intellectual process: it was giving the worker free time to be trained in all aspects (both theoretical and practical) as a professional revolutionary. It was not an arduous and dreadful obligation which was added to the already arduous and dreadful obligations the worker had by the mere fact of being a worker. It was a task that began by giving time to the advanced worker so he could cease to be a fragmented worker in real life and begin to be a revolutionary worker also in real life.

Because Lenin was materialist and dialectical, he could not conceive that a consciousness derived from a material situation (the alienation of lot work for 8, 11 or 14 hours per day) could be overcome through courses. While the worker devoted so many hours of his life to do a job to which he was indifferent, within a production chain whose mechanism he was unaware of, developing a product whose final destination he did not care about, his consciousness should reflect these characteristics of his activity, should be a fragmented, partial, consciousness. The courses the party might offer (and not the intellectuals as a social sector, Comrade Mandel!) could alleviate the problem but could not solve it. The only way to fix it was starting from modifying his material living conditions.

The Marxist to the core solution that Lenin offers to this problem is his theory of professional revolutionaries. This theory is almost an obsession for him: “And we must see to it, not only that the masses ‘advance’ concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers ‘advance’ an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries. Thus, we have reached the question of the relation between an organisation of professional revolutionaries and the workers’ movement pure and simple. (...) A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and ‘promising’ *must not be left* to work eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party. (...) *And we will succeed in doing this*, because the spontaneously awakening masses will *also produce* increasing numbers of ‘professional revolutionaries’. (...) We do not recognise our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator. (...) To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary.”⁷⁰

69 Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.

70 Lenin, VI: “What Is To Be Done?” in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 5, pp. 450, 472, 451, 472, 472 respectively.

This “forgetting” by Comrade Mandel of the party’s transformation of workers into professional vanguard militants is not limited to the theoretical plane. There is a very exemplary statistic about it, which is linked to an underlying polemic, not yet formulated, among the Majority comrades and the SWP and our party. The statistics are as follows: of all professional militants that our International has, between 70 and 80 per cent at least belong to the minority. Moreover, if we take the leadership of the two numerically strongest sections of the Fourth International —the French section and our Argentine party— we see that the proportion of comrades who live or have lived off a liberal profession in the Communist League is 20 or 30 to 1 in relation to the comrades of the PST. This means, taking the 100 most important leaders of the French section and the PST, for every 20 or 30 doctors and professors in the French section, there is one in our Argentine party. Specifically, in our Central Committee of 120 members, there are only three members with liberal professions, with nearly 100 being professionals of the party, of which 80 per cent have been leaders of the workers’ movement. In the Executive Committee, the highest leadership of our party, except for four comrades, it is entirely made up of professional militants who have been important leaders of the workers’ movement. Finally, there is a tradition in our party, that the current dizzy growth prevents us from applying to the letter, which stipulates that no one can reach leadership without having served two years of outstanding professional militant activity within the workers’ movement. If we compare other sections of the majority with the SWP, there are similar relations and situations.

There is one final aspect of the problem of the professional militants: they should be the support base of the party. That’s because revolutionary activity demands total, not partial, attention and learning. A true in every respect revolutionary militant, a cadre of the party leadership, of a branch or a major sector of work is one who can resolve on his own the political (not the “scientific”) issues referred to him by any situation of the class struggle. He must know how to analyse a situation, formulate precise slogans that match it, define the appropriate organisational forms, distribute the forces of the party in general or in his branch or sector, define the key areas of work, orient the axes of propaganda on the vanguard, give training courses in elementary Marxist education, recruit for the party and suitably organise the new sectors entering the party. It would be absurd to require one party cadre to be the highest expression in all these tasks since the work of leadership is a team effort where unevenly developed skills and experiences of those who compose it are combined. But a leadership cadre must be able to provide an initial response, however elementary, to these tasks.

The specialisation as a true Marxist revolutionary can’t be achieved other than by taking this activity as a full-fledged profession. For that, we need a professional militant, a “full-time” revolutionary. And these professional militants are, we emphasise, the foundation stone on which the party rests. Hence, it is all the more unforgivable that Comrade Mandel has “forgotten” them.

Democratic Centralism

In his definition of the Leninist combat party, Comrade Mandel commits another equally dangerous omission: democratic centralism, which is an organisational form that makes to the essence of the Bolshevik party. It means that, along with an internal democratic life, our organisation needs centralised leadership endowed with executive power and strict internal discipline.

The need for strict and centralised discipline has two objective reasons imposed by the class struggle. The first is that our ultimate goal as a party is to lead or postulate ourselves to lead the struggles of the masses permanently until taking power and then until socialism is built. And we can only carry out this mortal struggle as a tightly organised army. We cannot afford the luxury of offering the enemy the smallest flaw in concentration or the lack of coordination of our forces. The second reason is the existence of counter-revolutionary parties and bureaucracies within the workers’ movement, which also form part of the enemy. To the enemy’s organisation, we cannot oppose a mess even in the name of democracy. Faced with a fascist attack on branch premises, we will not consult by telephone the whole party about what we do. In an assembly where the bureaucracy attempts to divide us, we will not outline different positions although within the party the discussion may not yet be finished.

The need for democratic internal life has to do with the objective relationship the party has with the mass movement and with the dialectics of this relationship. First, the party needs democracy because the development of its political line is collective. It is not the work of some particularly intelligent or educated individuals but of the impact of the views of all those who make up the party, of all those militants expressing the sector of the mass movement where they develop their activity. But once elaborated, this line must be confronted with reality, which is done through the militant activity of each of the teams and individuals and the party as a whole. This practical activity is the only thing that shows us the correct and incorrect aspects of the line voted and the democratic discussion of this evaluation is what allows the necessary corrections of the policy.

Summarising, democracy is what establishes the relationship of the subject (revolutionary party) with its object (mass movement) and, therefore, the only guarantee of an objective (scientific) development of the political line and its objective (scientific) confrontation with the reality of the class struggle. But the phrase “democratic centralism” is split up into two poles which, at their limits, are antagonistic. Absolute centralism means the leadership solves all problems, from theory and characterisations to the smallest tactical details, through the general political line. When this happens, democracy disappears. At the same time, absolute democracy means all these problems are solved through discussions that can only function in a permanent deliberative state of the whole party and this is where centralisation disappears. The proportion in which these two elements are combined at a particular time cannot be fixed in advance; it is neither a recipe nor an arithmetical formula. No one can say, for example, the party should be at all times 50 per cent centralist and 50 per cent democratic or something similar. Our parties are a living reality, a process of permanent construction, so democratic centralism is an algebraic formula. The specific combination of the centralist and democratic elements is different in every moment of its construction and must be worked out each time.

But, what do we do to always find this right proportion? Currently, there is in our International a pending discussion with Comrades Frank and Krivine. They believe we have to strengthen in our world party the centralist pole of the formula; we say we need to strengthen the democratic pole. We will take the first step in this discussion.

One of the great virtues of this formula is precisely that it is algebraic. It leaves open to the circumstances of the class struggles and of party development its “quantitative”, “arithmetical” precision. To achieve this precision, we must bear in mind, as one of the essential elements, the political prestige earned by the party leadership with the rank and file. Schematically, we can say: the greater prestige, the greater centralisation.

We say this because the higher the leadership’s political successes, the greater will be the trust of the rank and file on it, and the higher the trust, the stronger will be the discipline and centralisation. Conversely, fewer successes cause distrust and this distrust works against, like it or not, discipline and centralisation. Ultimately, the formula of democratic centralism is a political–moral–organisational expression, not just moral–organisational. It is not a formula apart from the class struggle and the development of the party but intimately related to them. It is not confused with these two factors because even in a leadership’s worst moments we must consciously strive to maintain centralism as much as possible just as in the best of times we must closely monitor the continued existence of democracy. But, although not confused with the vagaries of the class struggle and the process of party building, the pinning down of the democratic centralist formula is, we insist, strongly influenced by them.

We are building the most formidable revolutionary organisational weapon known in history: the Bolshevik world party. Precisely for this reason, the task is so difficult and takes so long. In this process of party building, it is necessary, for this stage, to strengthen the democratic rather than the centralist pole, precisely because our leaderships, both national and international, have not yet earned great political prestige with the rank and file of our sections for their successes in the leadership of the mass movement. Only this prestige could strengthen the centralist and disciplinary pole; meantime, the democratic aspect should prevail.

This does not mean we abandon all centralism and all discipline; we remain centralised and democratic but giving predominance to the democratic factor. The current struggle between two tendencies, incorporated into clearly delineated factions, shows this analysis of ours fits the reality and needs of the Fourth International. Trying to impose now strong centralism, having two factions disagreeing in key aspects of the policy we should follow, would fatally break the International, whatever faction wins the leadership in the next congress.

Let's return to the Leninist-Trotskyist party

Comrade Germain's most original attack is the one he makes when he says that Comrade Camejo's definition of the revolutionary party attributes to this the same characteristics of the Social Democratic parties of the first pre-war period. Let's recall that, for Comrade Camejo, the revolutionary party "tries to promote mass struggles and give the masses confidence in their strength by mobilising them around transitional, democratic, or immediate demands related to their present level of consciousness" and "promotes whatever forms of struggle are appropriate, using tactics ranging from peaceful marches to armed struggle (including guerilla warfare)."⁷¹ Thus, these would be for Comrade Germain the characteristics of a social democratic party.

However, Comrade Mandel, Comrade Germain's teacher, asserts that what characterised pre-war Social Democracy was, on the one hand, that it performed "electoral and parliamentary activity, and on the other to a struggle for immediate reforms of an economic and trade union nature."⁷² Do Comrades Mandel and Germain agree that "immediate reforms" and "electoral and parliamentary activity" are the opposite of "mass struggles" and of mobilisation "around transitional demands, democratic and immediate"? Which of these types of activity did Social Democracy really perform? It would be desirable for Comrade Mandel and Comrade Germain to meet soon and come to an agreement on this issue. Although they will not find it easy since their differences do not end there. Comrade Mandel, in his *Leninist Theory of Organisation*, asserts that Stalinism's current politics is similar to that of the Social Democracy. Comrade Germain, as we have seen, asserts that Comrade Camejo's definition also matches with the definition of Social Democracy. By transitive condition, if Comrade Germain equals Comrade Mandel, Comrade Camejo's definition equals Stalinism. Conclusion: for Comrades Mandel–Germain, contemporary Stalinist parties... "(are) built around a revolutionary programme (...) try to promote mass struggles and give the masses confidence in their own strength by mobilising them around transitional, democratic, or immediate demands related to their present level of consciousness (...) the party promotes whatever forms of struggle are appropriate, using tactics ranging from peaceful marches to armed struggle (including guerilla warfare) (...) seeks to lead the working class and its allies to state power as its fundamental goal, but does not try to substitute itself for the masses. Each national party is part of a single international party of the world proletariat."⁷³

If Comrade Germain had said all this clearly, our movement would have exploded in unanimous roar of laughter and would have understood that Comrade Camejo's description is indeed the description of a revolutionary Trotskyist party opposite by the vertex to the Stalinist and reformist parties. To avoid this, Comrade Germain tried to confuse the young comrades by assuring us that Comrade Camejo's description matched what the pre-war Social Democrats (which the young comrades do not know directly as they know the Stalinists) did and said. But the move backfired when he forgot (as it happens very frequently) that his teacher, Comrade Mandel, had asserted that Stalinism currently has the same policy as the Social Democrats had. We have done no more than joining a statement of the disciple to a statement of the teacher and thus we have uncovered all the falseness of his attack on Comrade Camejo.

71 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 37.

72 Mandel, Ernest: "The Leninist Theory of Organisation", op. cit.

73 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 37.

There is only one revolutionary program

Comrade Camejo said, as quoted by Comrade Germain: “The party is built around a revolutionary program.” Comrade Germain replied: “A revolutionary party program? After all, wasn’t the Erfurt programme of German social-democracy corrected and accepted by Engels himself?”⁷⁴

Specifically, Comrade Germain does not believe the revolutionary party is essentially characterised by the revolutionary program; he does not believe this is the first characteristic of a revolutionary party. However, Trotsky says, categorically, as Comrade Camejo does: “The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party.”⁷⁵

We do not know whether Comrade Germain is for or against this statement but we do know that in the contempt he feels for the revolutionary program as a support base for the party there is a typical idealist mistake: believing that the program is always the same, above the stages of the class struggle. Thus he makes his analogy with the Erfurt program. But he does not take it to the end.

What happens is that the program is not above the stages; it changes with them and is surpassed at the beat of the working class struggles and the changes in the objective situation. The Erfurt program was revolutionary for a stage of capitalism and the class struggle; it began to cease being so later and ended up being surpassed by another, which was logically imposed by the new stage. Suffice to say that this program did not define imperialism.

The same happened with the minimum programs of social democratic parties: they were useful, “revolutionary” for the period of political and trade union organisation of the working class. This organisation took place during the first phase of the imperialist era, which enabled the improvement of living standards of the working class in the metropolitan countries. At that time, and around the task of the political organisation of the class, the socialist programs were useful and “revolutionary” but only at that time and in that regard.

The great leaders and intellectuals who carried out this progressive task, the Bebels, Kautskys, Jaurèses, underwent the same process as the socialist programs: from progressive to centrist and from centrist to opportunist. Programs and leaders followed a slope reflecting the survival, by weight of inertia and the existence of a labour aristocracy agent of imperialism, of a program and leaderships which had ceased to be progressive and revolutionary once the independent political organisation of the working class had been achieved.

From his idealistic and static conception of the program, Comrade Germain counter poses, as something much more important, “the revolutionary perspectives and struggles”. This opposition is incomprehensible: there cannot be a revolutionary program which is not precisely the synthesis of the tasks posed, at a certain period of the class struggle, by the perspectives and the revolutionary struggles of such period. When these struggles and these perspectives are not included in a program, that program is no longer revolutionary, or never was (as Bernstein’s).

In this transitional epoch from capitalism to socialism and of the decadence of the world capitalist system, there is a single program that poses the general tasks of the working class and the mass movement, emerging from the “revolutionary perspectives and struggles”: our transitional program. Whatever Comrade Germain might say, this program is the basis of all contemporary revolutionary parties: without it, there can be no revolutionary party.

74 Ibid., p. 37.

75 Trotsky, Leon: “What next? Vital questions for the German proletariat”, 27 January 1932, in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, op. cit., p. 217.

What is the Fourth International for Comrade Germain?

Comrade Camejo said that “each national party is part of a single international party of the world proletariat”. Comrade Germain replies: “The need to be part of an ‘international party of world proletariat’: wasn’t German social-democracy the mainstay of the Second International?”⁷⁶

What does Comrade Germain mean by this? That the condition Comrade Camejo poses is false because the German Social Democracy was the mainstay of the Second International? The only thing this proves is that there was a Second International whose strongest party, the one which held the leading role, was the German party but this does not prove that Comrade Camejo is wrong. Or maybe Comrade Germain is making an analogy because he conceives the Second International as an “international party of world proletariat” of which the national social democratic parties were a “part”?

The latter is the only rational explanation. We can say that the syllogism is as follows: there was an “international party of the world proletariat”, which was the Second International; the German Social Democracy was part and was the mainstay of such world party; the German Social Democracy was not revolutionary but opportunistic— therefore, the requirement of Comrade Camejo that a revolutionary party be part of an international party of the world proletariat is not so important, as the German social democracy fulfilled it and did not thereby transform itself into the revolutionary party.

Unfortunately, this syllogism fails at the base. So far, the whole of the Trotskyist movement, following Trotsky, thought that the Second International was a “sum of national parties” and never an “international party of world proletariat” of which national sections are a “part”, as Comrade Germain interprets. In reality (and Comrade Camejo is right again!), at present being part of a “single international party of the world proletariat” is a prerequisite for any national party to be a Leninist combat party. And the only “world party” that exists, the only one that can be called so because it is not a federation of national parties is our Fourth International.

The essential features of the Leninist-Trotskyist parties

All this discussion about the characteristics and role of our parties forces us to ratify the six characteristics that Comrade Camejo gives and that we will not repeat and to amplify them by adding four more essential characteristics of the Leninist–Trotskyist parties, which are the following:

First: The party uses a Marxist–scientific analysis of the relationship between all classes and their likely dynamics before adopting a line for a stage, with its strategy and tactics, its propaganda and agitation, its program and its slogans. This analysis must be synthesised in precise definitions of the character of the stage that it refers to. The party rejects the workerist analysis that takes into account mainly the internal relations of the mass movement to define the stages. It also rejects the economicist analysis which aims to extract the characteristics of the stage essentially from processes taking place within the bourgeois economy. And finally, it rejects the lack of analysis that comes from reversing this process, setting first a strategy or defining it by what the vanguard thinks or wants, and then imagining a pseudo analysis to justify this strategy.

To carry out this Marxist analysis, the party uses the conceptual tool most perfected by Marxism, the law of uneven and combined development.

Second: Party politics is directed towards the whole mass movement, with all its sectors, although reflecting the interests of the working class and promoting it as the leader of the revolution. The party activity focuses on the mass movement and not in the vanguard. It aims to mobilise the masses and not the vanguard. (Comrade Camejo points out this feature but he does not stress enough that the party intends to raise the working class to the role of leader of the revolution).

These party politics has a theory-program, that of the permanent revolution, which is synthesised in one sentence: the party’s objective is to mobilise the working class and the masses permanently

⁷⁶ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 37.

until the socialist society is achieved. And it has a program and a method, the transitional program, which is also synthesised in one sentence: the party must launch those slogans that mobilise the masses against the exploiters, starting from their immediate needs and consciousness and to keep raising such slogans inasmuch as the mobilisation itself raise the consciousness of the masses and create new needs for them, culminating in the slogan and the struggle for the seizure of power.

Third: The goal of the party within the workers' and mass movement is to convert the vanguard elements into professional militants, as the only way to convert them in true and total Trotskyist revolutionists since alienating work prevents them from achieving this level.

This goal for the vanguard responds to another much broader objective: the party must have a backbone of professional militants since to make the revolution must be, and is, a total activity, not a hobby, a charity or intellectual activity.

There is no Leninist–Trotskyist party made up of dilettantes, amateurs, members of the liberal professions but rather with professional party militants, most of whom rose from the mass movement, mainly the workers' movement.

Fourth: The building of each party is part of the building of the world party of the socialist revolution. Both the national party and the world party are built under the rules of democratic centralism. The strictest discipline within the party is mandatory, first because it aspires to lead the masses in their struggle against the exploiters requires the party to act like a single man, without the smallest hesitation; second, for the fierce struggle that it must develop against the bureaucratic apparatuses, which also makes centralism a necessity. But this centralisation should be joined to the biggest democratic guarantees because the democratic development of the political line is the only guarantee that this expresses the needs and level of consciousness of the mass movement and because the democratic discussion of the results of its application is the only guarantee that it be ratified in whole or in part with the same objectivity.

Centralisation must also be tied to the highest guarantees of militant morals and loyalty. It is also tied to the political prestige which the leadership applying centralism has earned since this is not merely an oath or a moral commitment but a political consequence. Therefore, to less prestige of the leadership the more democratic safeguards within this formula which must be filled with different contents depending on the stages of building the national or world Leninist-Trotskyist party and of solidification of their leaderships.

These ten characteristics of the Leninist-Trotskyist party are synthesised into just one: the relationship between the mobilisation of the masses and the working class with the revolutionary party. Workers' and mass movement on one end and the party on the other end are the two essential poles of the revolutionary movement. They are the two poles which divided the European left at the beginning of the century: Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky believed the mobilisation of the masses was omnipotent; Lenin did not come to believe the party was omnipotent but some of his disciples did. Lenin's merit was to understand that a single pole, the mobilisation of the working class and the masses, was not enough; rather, it was completely and utterly inadequate if the other pole, the party, did not exist.

When the ebb of the workers' movement in the industrially developed countries and the post-war economic boom made utterly difficult the revolutionary work on the mass movement, tendencies tail-ending the bureaucratic organisations of the workers' movement emerged in our ranks arguing we should abandon for a long period the task of building the revolutionary party. Back then, we fought hard against them, vindicating the need to continue in the central task of building the Leninist–Trotskyist party.

Currently, in the first steps of the greatest revolutionary upsurge that history has known, petty-bourgeois, subjective conceptions arise, which tend towards proposing the fundamental role is that of the vanguard, the armed organisation, the heroism of those willing to fight. Against these subjective conceptions of the revolution, we need to reaffirm again that the decisive factor is the mobilisation of the masses and that these mobilisations take place because of deep objective needs,

regardless of our will. But we also reaffirm that there is a dialectical, dynamic, relationship between the mass movement and the revolutionary party that conditions our entire politics. This relationship determines that the decisive factor, the mobilisation of the masses to be insufficient by itself, it desperately needs a revolutionary party to lead these mobilisations. Therefore, before as now, we keep the only strategy that remains even when conditions of the class struggle change: mobilising the masses and building the Bolshevik, Leninist–Trotskyist party.

CHAPTER VII

Revisionist Elements in Germain's conceptions

Mandel and Germain transform in subjective the objective prerequisites of the socialist revolution

Comrade Mandel asserts that in the current stage capitalism and imperialism are making significant progress in the development of the productive forces. Although he does not explicitly link this statement to the rest of his economic thinking, this is obviously the necessary premise from which both he and Comrade Germain started to get to the central idea: there is currently a trend to an absolute increase in the wealth the masses in the world consume; therefore their struggle is not directed towards solving a situation of unbearable misery (low wages, unemployment) but against those conducting business and against the alienating nature of this mass consumption of the wealth produced.

Comrade Mandel repeatedly insists that “the phenomenon of *relative de-improvement* is most typical of the capitalist mode of production.”¹ In other words, regarding the increase of the wealth of society, the working class is becoming poorer, but regarding their standard of living in the past, it is getting better. His demonstration that this was Marx's position is convincing. But Marx formulated his law when capitalism was in full development and its crises happened every ten years and for a short time. We notice, then, that for Germain the new capitalist stage does not change that law. It seems, on the contrary, that strengthens it.

In *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*, Mandel, meanwhile, argues that “one of the three fundamental characteristics” of that theory is “the present relevance of revolution for the underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch.”² Whereupon he clarifies that he is talking about all countries of the world, even the underdeveloped. Then he states that “... neo-capitalism seeks to win a new lease on life by raising the working class's level of consumption...”³

“As the decisive barrier which today holds back the working class from acquiring political class consciousness is found to reside less in the misery of the masses or the extreme narrowness of their surroundings than in the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification...”⁴

This law is raised to its maximum power in developed countries: “... because capitalism is not definitively characterised by low salaries nor even by a large number of unemployed workers...”⁵

1 Mandel, Ernest: *Marxist Economic Theory*, Vol 1, Aakar Books, Delhi, 2008, p. 152.

2 Mandel, Ernest: “The Leninist Theory of Organisation”, op. cit.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

La Gauche, that with so much honesty usually takes Comrade Germain's theoretical positions to their last consequences, took the obligatory conclusions of this theory: that "imperialism has new perspectives", an "apparent liberalisation" and a "democratic alternative" for Latin America.

This position of Comrade Germain followers is an underhanded attack to Lenin and Trotsky's conception about the objective conditions of the socialist revolution in the imperialist era. That is, it is a complete revision of our thesis, which Comrade Germain has every right to hold, but he should clarify that he questions the support base of the founding of the Third and Fourth Internationals.

"The productive forces have ceased growing"

For our teachers, there are a series of laws of emerging capitalism, in its free trade stage, which change with the imperialist stage, mainly since the First World War. The first and fundamental change is that for humanity, capitalism ceases to be progressive and becomes degenerative, barbarian, in an absolute obstacle to humanity's development. This new general law of the capitalist regime maintains and accentuates its exploitative essence and modifies all its other subordinated characteristics or laws. For example, the law of misery, that from relative (the masses consume increasingly more) becomes absolute (they consume increasingly less).

Not to dwell on quotes, we give three which show this was the criterion of both the Third and the Fourth International: "The Communist Parties should be concerned not with the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist industry or the stability of the capitalist economy, but with proletarian poverty, which cannot and must not be endured any longer."⁶

"Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system afflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses."⁷

"The fundamental contradiction is between the productive forces of capitalism and the level of consumption of the masses."⁸

Referring to a possible improvement in the US economy, Trotsky says: "It is absolutely not contradictory to our general analysis of a sick, declining capitalism causing greater and greater misery."⁹

Add new statements and writings of Trotsky which are thus transformed into a real campaign:

"Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class."¹⁰

"Dying capitalism is bankrupt. And the ruling class has only one plan for trying to get out of this historical bankruptcy: still more misery for the labouring masses! Suppression of all reforms, even the most trifling! Suppression of the democratic regime!"¹¹

And the current reality does nothing but showing he was absolutely right: The Food and Agriculture Organisation's [FAO] Yearbook 1971 reports that 60 per cent of humanity does not reach 2,200 calories (i.e., it is suffering from chronic hunger, as at least 2,700 are needed); and 13 per cent consumes between 2,200 and 2,700, which means they are in a pre-starving state. Regarding proteins, according to Josue de Castro the most important element in food, the picture is even bleaker. Except for the US, UK, Oceania, Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria and Finland, the rest of the capitalist world (i.e., two-thirds of the population) is below 25 grams of protein per day, which is

6 "Thesis on Tactics", in *Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congress of the Third International*, MIA, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/tactics.htm.

7 Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for the Socialist Revolution*, op. cit.

8 Trotsky, Leon: "On the SAP's Proposals", December 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-1935)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971, p. 171.

9 "Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program", op. cit.

10 Trotsky, Leon: "The ILP and the new International", 4 September 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-1934)*, op. cit., p. 74.

11 Trotsky, Leon: "A Program of Action for France", June 1934, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-1935)*, op. cit., p. 24.

well below the 40-gram minimum needed for normal development of life. This outlook darkens even more when we consider that India, Indonesia and Pakistan are below 7 grams, which is six times less than what is needed to live.

This dire situation does not tend to improve, figures show otherwise. And they also show that Trotsky and Lenin were right. FAO reports that calorie consumption in the backward regions of the world —Asia, Africa and Latin America (1.8 billion inhabitants, excluding China)— was 2,130 in the pre-war period, 1,960 in the post-war period, and 2,150 in 1960. Concerning proteins, the figures are 10, 8 and 9 grams. In the latter case, it is clear that there was an absolute lowering in relation to the pre-war period. As for the calories, although the figures seem to show otherwise, FAO itself acknowledges that because of the fabulous increase in the rate of vegetative growth many more calories are required because children need a lot more than adults. This average has not been done but obviously would result that increasingly fewer calories and protein are consumed than humanity needs.

All we need to add is that, between 1960 and 1970, apparently the situation has worsened, as indicated by production statistics, very difficult to assess. For example, in India, the food production in relation to the inhabitants has dropped 3 per cent, and in Indonesia 2 per cent, for the five-year periods between 1961–1965 and 1966–1970. There are similar figures for most backward countries of the world. But this situation is not unique to the backward countries.

We must acknowledge that in the developed countries there was an increased standard of living of the working masses in the last 15 years because of the post-war economic boom. But shortly after Comrade Mandel wrote the pages we quoted, the law of absolute misery began to also manifest in these countries. Already in 1969, Comrade Mandel himself was forced to admit: “But it should be emphasised that the result of these inflationary tendencies, combined with the Vietnam war, has been that, for the first time for over three decades the growth of the real disposable income of the American working class has stopped.”¹² And the Communist League painted a picture of the capitalist world diametrically opposed to the cheerful Mandelian picture, in which the United States is included.

“This world where the hungry and the exploited are slaughtered to save them from communism. The rich United States, having its 50 million poor in the ghettos, in unhealthy neighbourhoods — this country, where 1.6 per cent of the population has 80 per cent of the share stocks, and where the income of fortune, i.e. the premiums for idleness, represent a quarter of national income— this modern country, where the degradation of the conditions of life and work has regressed in 10 years from 10th to 24th place in hygiene and public health. This peaceful country, where every year two million workers are killed or injured in work accidents because of the infernal acceleration of rhythms. This large advanced country with six million unemployed, in which the increase in the number of unemployed exceeds, some months, 200,000, where 47 per cent of workers are high school graduates, where hundreds of thousands of graduates cannot find anywhere where to employ their capabilities.”¹³

As much as Comrade Mandel says that capitalism is essentially characterised by “the constant influence of consumption” in relation to the masses of the world, we must recognise that the figures say the exact opposite. In the capitalist world, there is increased hunger and unemployment.

As for Comrade Mandel, all these data have no value, he maintains his theory of relative impoverishment as a basis for minimising the struggle against poverty and unemployment. Thus he leaves up in the air, without concrete support, the fundamental task of struggling against capitalist corporate management and for workers’ control. Because this struggle has precisely its reason for being in the poverty and unemployment caused by the capitalist management of enterprises. Neither we, much less the working class, question the management of companies “in itself” but rather for their attacks on the living and working standards of the workers. Moreover, the classics of Marxism held that, while they brought total anarchy in the whole production, the capitalists were

12 Mandel, Ernest: “Where Is America Going?”, in *New Left Review*, No. 54, March–April 1969.

13 *Ce que veut la Ligue Communiste*, Publication of the French LCR, pp. 14-15.

the epitome of efficiency within each of their factories. Perhaps this situation has changed, as argued by Comrade Guerin, but we also doubt that the majority of workers are concerned about the degree of efficiency of capitalism in the management of companies. This may worry, at most, the salaried technical sectors and part of highly specialised operators. But let's see what Comrade Mandel says:

“Capitalism is not definitively characterised by low salaries nor even by a large number of unemployed workers (...). It is characterised by the fact that capital, that capitalists, rule men and machines.”¹⁴

So, while “classical capitalism educated the worker to struggle for higher wages and shorter working hours in his factory. Neo-capitalism educates the worker to challenge the division of national income and orientation of investment at the superior level of the economy as a whole.”¹⁵

And: “Questions of wages and shorter working hours are important; but what is much more important than problems of the distribution of income is to decide who should command the machines and who should determine investments, who should decide what to produce and how to produce it.”¹⁶

Translated into the language of our everyday militancy, this means that the fight against increasing poverty and unemployment—which, on the other hand, according to Comrade Mandel does not exist—is of secondary importance. “Much more important” is questioning the capitalist management itself, as the leadership (and also, as it says in another part, questioning the alienating nature of consumption).

In the first pre-war period, there was a never seen rise in the standard of living of the working masses. But no Marxist at the time (and among them were Lenin and Trotsky) thought this phenomenon changed all the laws of the class struggle. They kept thinking the masses would still mobilise from the immediate needs the capitalist system created for them. And the masses responded to those expectations, or at least they didn't mobilise questioning whether or not company management was efficient, or if the increased consumption that allowed them their higher standard of living had alienating features. Of course, all this may have happened because neither the masses nor the Marxists had a Comrade Germain to point out the right way.

Seriously speaking, we don't have to look far in our theoretical arsenal to find the reply to this Mendelian orientation. Consider the *Transitional Program*. Is it a coincidence that the first slogan it raises is the sliding scale sliding scale of wages and hours of work? No way, in the substantiation of this slogan, our program says:

“Under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the meagerized life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism. They must defend their mouthful of bread if they cannot increase or better it. There is neither the need nor the opportunity to enumerate here those separate, partial demands which time and again arise on the basis of concrete circumstances—national, local, trade union. But two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarised the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalised slogans and methods of struggle.”¹⁷

But let's again leave the field of quotes and let us cast an eye at the facts. Have the working masses of the world mobilised questioning the capitalist management of enterprises and the alienating nature of consumption? Our Argentine and Latin American experience suggests not. Moreover, it shows us that even the large demonstrations and urban semi-insurrections that became open political struggles for democratic tasks, were either born as such (occupations in Uruguay after the coup, demonstrations in Chile to confront the right) or were developed from issues that had nothing to do with the Mandelist arguments and but much with our *Transitional Program*. Thus it happened in the

14 Mandel, Ernest: “The Debate on Workers' Control”, op. cit.

15 Mandel, Ernest: “Workers under neo-capitalism”, in *International Socialist Review*, November-December 1968, p. 12.

16 Ibid. p.12.

17 Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit.

Cordobazo, originated by the half journey on Saturdays; in the rebellion of Mendoza, triggered by increases in electricity; in the large teacher strikes over wages that shook Colombia and Peru; in the strike, also for wages, of Venezuelan oil workers, and countless struggles throughout the continent.

In developed countries, this thesis by Comrade Mandel does not do any better. It seems that there has been some or other struggle questioning company management. We are uncertain because of lack of information that they didn't have as a goal decreasing the rhythms of exploitation, or against disciplinary action.

But let's see the most important workers mobilisations of this year, 1973. In Belgium port workers fought for the collective agreement, workers at Cockerill for wage increases, those of the National Factory for wage increases, those of AKZO in defence of jobs (including plants in Germany and the Netherlands), while the workers General Motors for wage increases, bonuses and reduced working hours. In France, the workers fought in LIP in defence of their jobs, in Peugeot for wage increases and bonuses, those in Social Security for wage increases, in Renault for categories, in Citroen for categories. In England, truck drivers mobilised against unemployment. In Italy, workers of Alfa Romeo fought for the collective agreement, and so on.

Need we add more? Whatever Comrade Mandel may say, the working masses mobilise for the objective problems the capitalist system creates for them: low wages and unemployment, growing poverty. If he still does not believe it, allow us to suggest for him to go to the gate of a factory to tell the workers they are wrong because poverty and unemployment do not exist in this "neo-imperialist" world. Tell the workers they must fight against management but not because it pays low wages but because it is to blame for the alienation of consumption.

The only ones who will follow him, if they work as workers in that factory, are Erich Fromm and Marcuse, but we doubt very much that the rest of the other workers would listen to him.

How does Comrade Mandel arrive at the formulation of these two theses, which are nothing more than one; namely that under imperialism the wealth of the masses grows in absolute form and, therefore, the increasing misery should not be the starting point of our policy towards them? What happens is that Comrade Mandel has failed to understand the uneven and combined development of the law of absolute misery under imperialism. Mainly, he has been confused with the observation of the particular manifestation of this law in the imperialist countries during this post-war period.

An economic system for the world counter-revolution

We believe that the European and American economies have been able to have this splendour for 25 years for the combination of three main reasons. The first is the shocking destruction of productive forces (machinery and men) which meant the Second World War; the second is the betrayal of Stalinism, which allowed the survival and recovery of capitalism in Western Europe; and the third reason is the exploitation of colonial peoples.

During these 25 years, decaying imperialism has mounted a state capitalist economy for the world counter-revolution. There is no other serious Marxist economic definition for the stage we have lived since the war. This counter-revolutionary economy based on the production of weapons to crush the revolution, combined with the three factors noted above, allowed the development of the trends highlighted by Comrades Mandel-Germain: technological development as part of the third industrial revolution, relative impoverishment of Western workers (higher consumption).

But these two trends clashed with all the other trends arising from the very essence of the imperialist stage, which are identified by Trotsky and Lenin. However, they subsisted for 25 years because of the three factors that we already saw and the enormous wealth (intellectual and material) accumulated by the capitalist world during several centuries of domination.

Currently, this struggle between the opposing trends, which are synthesised in increased consumption of the Western masses and lower consumption of the colonies, is coming to an end as a result of the counter-revolutionary economy and the depletion of reserves and the capacity

for economic manoeuvres of imperialism. The stage of absolute impoverishment of the Western masses begins. Symptoms of absolute impoverishment existed for many years (sanitation, housing, health, accidents, etc.), but now they crystallise changing the stage of class struggle in the imperialist countries.

Comrade Mandel did not understand these particular conditions we describe and which caused the law of increasing misery to manifest in the backward countries in absolute form and relative form in developed countries. Nor could he then understand that taken as a whole phenomenon, the law remained the one that Lenin and Trotsky pointed out. Comrade Mandel's reasoning was the opposite: from the particular and temporary refraction of the law in Europe and the US, he arrived at a new general law for everywhere and forever; for the whole future of capitalism. A law that embellished imperialist capitalism; he even changed its name for of neo-capitalism or neo-imperialism, and according to which mass consumption increased, making its misery something relative.

In formulating his new revisionist law, Comrade Mandel left us without objective explanation for the victorious revolutions that occurred in colonial and semi-colonial countries in this post-war period. Because, as comrade Chen Pi-Lan rightly points in her work *The real lesson of China on Guerrilla Warfare*, the ultimate explanation of the Chinese revolution has to do with the objective situation of imperialism. It is precisely the law of increasing absolute misery which explains the defeat of Chiang and Mao's victory, despite the rotten Stalinist, Menshevik policy of the latter. Without this law, Trotsky's prediction on the possibility of workers' and peasants' government caused by the permanent crisis of some bourgeois regimes cannot be understood either.

But the consequences of this blatant revisionism of Trotskyism are not confined to the backward countries. With this law of relative poverty, Comrade Mandel disarms us to understand what is happening today, in nascent form, in Europe and the United States. And what is far more serious, he disarms us to adopt a correct line of work on the masses in the future when more and more mass demonstrations burst out because of the objective problems the imperialist capitalist system creates to the working class

If in this new phase, that has already started, we don't know how to see reality and continue chatting on subjective issues such as the management of business and consumer alienation, we will be digging the grave of the Fourth International.

The third industrial revolution and its limits

At the beginning of this chapter, we said that a premise was needed from which to develop all this revisionism of Trotskyist conceptions: that we are experiencing a stage of development of the productive forces under imperialism. And Comrade Mandel is indeed a tireless defender of this premise, although he does not take it as such since he does not link it to its inevitable economic and political consequences which he also raises and defends.

Also in this area, the Mandelist conception is a revision of Trotskyism and Leninism. Not to dwell on quotes, we will only recall these phrases from our *Transitional Program*:

"Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth."

This does not mean ignoring there is a third industrial revolution. Comrade Mandel has the intellectual merit of being one of the best exponents of the existence and influence of the third industrial revolution. But he has biased this fact to change the basic laws of the current stage, without understanding its contradictions; he has not really grasped what the development of the productive forces actually means and has meant.

The productive forces, taken together, are composed of three elements: the means of work (whose essential source is nature), the tools and technology, and man. For Marx, the most important factor is man, so he called him the main productive force. We may say that nature and man are two

essential poles of development of the productive forces, and technology and tools the means relating the two.

Capitalism, in its time of ascent, caused a colossal development of the productive forces, precisely because it meant a total enrichment of them: greater mastery of nature, the tremendous development of machines and techniques, increased consumption and overall enrichment of man and society. Imperialism has caused a sharp contradiction within the system of productive forces: the systematic destruction of nature and man counterposed to the third industrial revolution. The ecological problem (which worries so much the scientists who see the destruction of nature), on the one hand, chronic hunger and war on the other, lead to the systematic destruction of both nature and man.

This is what Comrade Mandel does not take into account and where the theoretical source of his entire revisionism lies. But the methodological reason is the same one we discovered in the previous chapter as an explanation of his systematically wrong predictions. By giving so much emphasis to the increased consumption of the Western masses and the third industrial revolution, without noting the more negative aspects of its dynamics, he does nothing more than to bring into our movement the conception and the terminology of the theoreticians of capitalism in the current stage, the theoreticians of the consumer society. They are those who speak, like Comrade Mandel, of neo-capitalism and neo-imperialism.

Comrade Mandel indeed combats these theoretical trends on behalf of the socialist revolution and our movement but he does so by accepting its theoretical premises, which he tries to turn against them. Capitalism theoreticians say: “The productive forces continue on their march, the masses consume more than before, therefore there will be no revolution.” Comrade Mandel says: “The productive forces continue on their march, the masses consume more than before, let’s make the revolution focusing our action on the subjective problems created by capitalism.” We say: “The productive forces are no longer developing; the masses are at or are moving towards complete and utter misery, these are the objective bases for the revolution!”

A phenomenological interpretation of the Transitional Program

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, his first major book, old man Hegel constructed the world through the development of consciousness. It was not the development of the world what originated the various stages of consciousness, but in reverse: these originated the world. Comrade Germain brings us a similar interpretation of our transitional program. For him, our slogans do not arise from the deepest needs of the masses, they are not classified according to the type of needs of the mass movement they solve, nor are they used according to the objective mobilisation they cause. According to Comrade Germain, the slogans are defined and used based on whether or not to raise the level of consciousness of the masses.

“In other words: the function of the *Transitional Programme* is not limited to raising demands ‘related to the present level of consciousness’ of the masses, *but to change that level of consciousness in function of the objective needs of the class struggle*. That is the key difference between transitional demands on the one hand, and democratic and immediate demands on the other hand (which of course should not be neglected or abandoned by a revolutionary party).”¹⁸

Continuing on the subject, Comrade Germain says:

“What is *transitional* about transitional demands is precisely the *movement from* the given level of consciousness to a *higher level*, and not a simple adaptation to the given level.”¹⁹

In short, according to Comrade Germain, what characterises the transitional slogans is that they raise the level of consciousness of the masses. And this characteristic is what distinguishes them from democratic and minimum slogans (which he calls “immediate”).

18 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 38.

19 Ibid., p. 38.

How does Comrade Germain arrive at this interpretation? Let us recall that, as we saw earlier, according to Comrade Germain imperialism does not bring increasing misery, lower wages and unemployment for the working masses, and even tends to “liberalise” itself. Therefore, imperialism does not create for the masses objective causes —or, more simply, material or democratic type needs— to mobilise for. For a Marxist, this situation (if true) would mean the end of the possibilities of revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. But as Comrade Germain wants to remain a revolutionist, even at the cost of ceasing to be a Marxist, he must seek another kind of motives for the revolution. And thus, he discovers subjective causes, i.e. something like the psychological conflicts that result in the worker because of the inefficiency of capitalist management of business and the alienating character of consumption. Clearly, these issues are problems “of consciousness”.

This conception of Comrade Germain takes him to his peculiar interpretation of the transitional program. Because what Comrade Germain needs is, precisely, a program that revolves around the different “consciousness”. But unfortunately, he finds that the Trotskyist program has to do with the needs of the masses, it starts from those needs and the present level of the mass movement, aiming to achieve, from there, its revolutionary mobilisation.

As Comrade Germain also want to remain a Trotskyist, he has no choice but to make the most absolute revisionism of our program. And thus, he makes his phenomenological interpretation of it: he gives birth to, classifies and proposes to be used, slogans according to the “level of consciousness” and not according to the objective needs of the mass movement, or the objective mobilisation they cause.

This Germainist interpretation of the slogans and program bogs us down in insoluble contradictions. (This is not accidental because revisionism is characterised for deforming a theory, without daring to break with it and, left halfway, it writhes in a multitude of contradictions and inconsistencies). Here are some examples:

Comrade Germain says that transitional slogans are those which elevate the level of consciousness, but one of the main slogans that brought the Bolsheviks to power was the democratic slogan of nationalisation and land redistribution. If this slogan was democratic, didn't it “change the level of consciousness”? If it changed the level of consciousness, was it not democratic?

Let's continue. Trotsky raised the need to strive for the formation of a labour party in the United States. Obviously, if we achieved that the American workers break with a bourgeois workers' party like the Democrats, this would have meant a change in their “level of consciousness”. According to Comrade Germain, “labour party” would be a transitional slogan, but Trotsky took care of clarifying that it was a democratic, non-transitional slogan.

An initial classification of slogans

To get out of this confusion, we have to clarify what criteria we follow to define the slogans that combine with our transitional program.

As opposed to Comrade Germain, who defines the slogans based on the “level of consciousness”, Trotskyism defines them for the role they have fulfilled and fulfil in the development of the mass movement. The mobilisation of the masses has always had a specific goal: to solve a need caused by society. This permanent mobilisation of the masses, confronting at each stage new needs arising from the class society, is what gives birth to more and more slogans, which alternate in the front lines of the mobilisation and combine among them.

This is not complicated. A slogan is a written or spoken sentence expressing the need for which the masses mobilise at any given time. Workers suffer hunger: the slogan is “higher wages!” Only a qualified minority can act in politics: the slogan is “universal suffrage!” Kerensky is incapable of solving the problems of peace, bread and land: the slogan is “all power to the Soviets!”

Each historical epoch has raised new needs to the mass movement which were addressed with new slogans: that is, fighting for new solutions to the new problems. Therefore, contrary to

the phenomenological definition, for “levels of consciousness” which Comrade Germain makes, Trotskyism classifies the slogans according to the needs of the mass movement to which they responded. Our classification of the slogans is, therefore, objective and historical.

Democratic slogans are those that people achieved during the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions: elections, universal suffrage, education in and right to the national language, school for all, freedom of the press, assembly and association, the formation of political parties and fundamentally, national independence and agrarian revolution.

This historical epoch was followed by the beginning of the imperialist epoch, where the working class began, from 1890, to organise trade unions and workers’ parties, and won the eight hours, the legality of their organisations, the limitation of night work and other partial demands. These are precisely the minimum or partial demands. This is how Trotsky defined them:

“... the struggle for immediate demands has for its task the *alleviation* of the condition of the workers.”²⁰

Then came the epoch we live in today, of the socialist revolution, of the transition from capitalism to socialism. During this transitional stage, the working class in power will impose a set of measures to ensure the standard of living and working conditions of the working class and the exploited: sliding scale of wages and hours of work, workers’ control of production, total nationalisation of industry, foreign trade and banking, economic planning, and so on. These are demands superior to capitalism, they are already socialist demands. This is how Trotsky puts it:

“I think in the beginning this slogan (Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours) will be adopted. What is this slogan? In reality it is the system of work in socialist society. The total number of workers divided into the total number of hours. But if we present the whole socialist system it will appear to the average American as utopian, as something from Europe. We present it as a solution to this crisis which must assure their right to eat, drink, and live in decent apartments. It is the program of socialism, but in very popular and simple form.”²¹

In summary, we can say that our program traditionally covers three types of slogans: democratic (drawn by and for all the people in the time of the rise of capitalism), minimum or partial (drawn by and for the working class in the early imperialist era) and the transitional (which respond to the changing needs of the mass movement at this stage of imperialist decay and transition to socialism).

In 1958, our party formulated in Leeds the thesis that there is a fourth set of slogans, which are also an essential part of the transitional program: the slogans internal to the workers’ organisations. These slogans also have an objective historical origin: they are a distorted result of imperialist decay, manifested within the organised workers’ movement and within the first workers’ state as a bureaucratic degeneration, and it has created in the working class the need to combat this degeneration.

The struggle of the masses against the bureaucratic caste is a struggle within the workers’ and mass movement; it has nothing to do with the structure of the capitalist and imperialist system rather but with the organisational structure of the workers’ movement. The slogans for this struggle may be included in the summary form under the generic term of political revolution, as the most striking expression of this set are the slogans of the political revolution in the USSR. Out the bureaucracy of the organisations of the mass movement and the Soviets! Down with the Bonapartist clique! Long live Soviet democracy! These are some of the slogans of the political revolution. And not only are they expressed in the USSR and the deformed workers’ states but also in the capitalist states as particular refraction of this degeneration in the organisms of the workers’ movement of the capitalist world and the need to fight it through general and specific slogans.

20 Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

21 “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program”, op. cit.

The problem of the immediate and the mediate

With this classification of slogans in democratic, minimal or partial, transitional, and of the political revolution, we have unravelled the confusion created by Comrade Germain with its phenomenological classification according to “levels of consciousness”. Now we dive into another tangle: the immediate and mediate slogans.

Comrade Germain and other comrades put an equal sign between minimal or partial slogans and immediate slogans. But what does it mean “immediate”? Immediate means current, present: its opposite is mediate, which is not raised for the present but an indefinite future. That is, immediate slogans are those the party can raise right now for the mobilisation of the masses, and mediate would be those which would only be raised in another future historical stage, more advanced, of the mass movement.

Assimilating minimum slogans into the immediate ones is a misinterpretation of some of Trotsky’s quotes taken out of context. For example, when Trotsky says “the struggle for immediate demands has for its task the *alleviation* of the condition of the workers”, he is referring, to criticise it, to the immediate program of French Stalinism at that time. Therefore, there is no contradiction with what he raised a few lines before:

“... the most immediate of all demands must be for the expropriation of the capitalists and the nationalisation (socialisation) of the means of production.”²²

Trotsky speaks only of immediate slogans in the same sense as minimal when referring to the programs of the Stalinist bureaucracy or socialism. Normally, he uses the classification we discussed before:

“Insofar as the old, partial, ‘minimal’ demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism —and this occurs at each step— the Fourth International advances a system of *transitional demands*, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime.”²³

Reading Trotsky carefully (and in good faith) there is no doubt about it. However, Comrade Germain insists that “on the one hand are the transitional demands” and on the other are the “democratic and immediate”. And in Comrade Germain this is not a simple confusion in reading Trotsky, it is a result of his phenomenological interpretation of the transitional program. As for him, slogans are divided between those which raise the level of consciousness and those which do not, all the slogans of the past (democratic and minimum or partial) do not raise the level of consciousness because they were already incorporated into the consciousness of the masses when they fought for them in the past. According to Comrade Germain, talking to a worker about the eight-hour day, trade unions, democratic freedoms, does not raise his level of consciousness because that is known by everyone already.

Instead, the transitional slogans that speak of a socialist future which the working class is not yet living, which they do not know, do raise the level of consciousness. Therefore, for the intellectual and professorial conception that Comrade Germain has of the class struggle, the minimum slogans are immediate because there is no need to explain to them as they are already known. And those that are not yet known, those of socialism, those you have to explain for the workers to take them and fight for them, those are not immediate, they are transitional.

According to Comrade Germain, if we do not have to waste time explaining (raising the “level of consciousness”), the slogan is immediate. If we have to explain it (raise the “level of consciousness”), it is transitional. Once again, the specific needs of the mass movement have nothing to do with these definitions.

If Comrade Germain had acted as a Marxist (and not as a phenomenologist), instead of creating so much confusion he would have gone to search for the origin of this classification of slogans in the

22 Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

23 Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit.

history of the mass movement. And there, he would have found that the development of the mass movement itself was what has eliminated this division.

During the era of social democracy, the direct socialist slogans were not posed by the objective reality because capitalism had not gone into decline and decay. Hence, there were two programs, the minimum, the partial and the maximum, the socialist. The first was the program of the present, current, “immediate” struggles; the second was the program for the distant future. In that sense (and thus Trotsky used it), during that time you could talk about immediate slogans, which the party put forward to achieve—and consisting essentially of democratic and minimum demands—and slogans for the future, mediate, which were not posed for the present—the slogans of socialism.

But the transitional program was born precisely because the socialist slogans, fundamentally the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat became the most urgent and immediate slogans when capitalism entered into decay, in its imperialist stage. This causes the old maximum program to become immediate, without the old democratic and minimum slogans losing currency. There takes place then a combination of slogans from different historical eras of humanity, which answer, all of them, the current objective and subjective needs of the mobilisation of the masses.

Trotsky said this, which is the essence of permanent revolution and the transitional program, on multiple occasions:

“Between the minimum and the maximum programme (of the Social Democrats) a revolutionary continuity is established. It is not a question of a single ‘blow’, or of a single day or month, but of a whole historical epoch.”²⁴

Here’s another quote:

“The Marxist political thesis must be the following: ‘While explaining constantly to the masses that rotting capitalism has no place either for the alleviation of their situation or even for the maintenance of their customary level of misery while putting openly before the masses the tasks of the socialist revolution as the immediate task of our day while mobilising the workers for the conquest of power, while defending the workers’ organisations with the help of the workers’ militia—the Communists (or the Socialists) will at the same time lose no opportunity to snatch this or that partial concession from the enemy, or at least to prevent the further lowering of the living standard of the workers’.”²⁵

And, to finish with the quotes, let’s see this one, where Trotsky, referring to the revolution in backward countries, says:

“Entering the government not as impotent hostages but as a ruling power, the representatives of the proletariat will by this very act destroy the boundary between minimum and maximum program, i.e., *place collectivism on the order of the day*.”²⁶

It is clear, then, that all these slogans are, in our present days, “immediate”. Precisely what all the slogans of our transitional program (democratic, minimum or partial, transitional and political revolution) have in common is their immediate character.

As we see, the fact that the four types of slogans are raised immediately is not determined by phenomena “of conscience” but by the objective situation of society and the development of the mass movement. This means that decaying imperialism brings more misery to the working masses and creates the need to combat this misery, putting in the agenda (making “immediate”) the minimum and partial slogans. That imperialism pushes back the democratic gains that were obtained in earlier times, which also uses fascist or Bonapartist dictatorships, and places in the agenda (makes “immediate”) democratic slogans. That imperialism is capitalism in decay and it is completely powerless to continue advancing humanity and puts in the agenda (makes “immediate”) the socialist slogans (transitional), fundamentally the taking of power by the working class. That the

24 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, Red Letter Press, Seattle, 2010, p. 236.

25 Trotsky, Leon: “Once again, whither France?”, in *Whither France?*, op. cit.

26 Trotsky, Leon: “Three conceptions of the Russian Revolution”, August 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., p.70.

imperialist decay causes the phenomenon of the bureaucratic degeneration of the organisms of the mass movement and the workers' states and puts in the agenda (makes "immediate") the slogans of the political revolution.

The transitional program is precisely the program that combines all these slogans for the immediate mobilisation of the masses because it is a need of the mass movement to fight for all these slogans at the same time while combining them according to the particular situation and directing, all of them, towards the seizure of power by the working class.

Searching for the slogans that mobilise

But the fact that the four types of slogans are combined in our programs and that they are all posed immediately does not mean any combination of slogans is correct. To find the combination appropriate to each specific situation of the class struggle, we must take into account two factors: the country in question (its economic and political situation) and the actual mobilisation on which we will act. In the backward countries, democratic and minimum slogans gravitate more and in the developed countries have more weight the transitional slogans (except for those countries which have Bonapartist or fascist forms of government, in whose case the minimum and democratic slogans also come to the fore). Now, let's see what our program and our slogans have to do with specific mobilisations on which we must act every day.

According to phenomenologist Comrade Germain, we have to give utmost importance to the transitional slogans because they "raise the level of consciousness". According to Trotskyism, we need to use the slogan or combination of slogans appropriate to the specific mobilisation in question, to develop it towards the seizure of power by the working class. Because the slogans come alive only placed in the context of the class struggle and then each slogan may have different consequences than those which would accrue from its historic location. In the live development of mass mobilisation, minimal slogans can have transitional consequences and transitional slogans can have minimal consequences. That is, from their historical character, from their definition (i.e. from the need of the mass movement they expressed at the time they were born), the slogans do not sprout superior properties over the class struggle.

The permanent mobilisation of the working class and the working masses is the only thing that gives meaning to the slogans and many examples exist of this contradiction between the historical character of the slogans and their consequences when applied to a specific mobilisation. Here are some:

The slogan of peace (or that of bread) in the Russian revolution had transitional consequences, i.e., served to mobilise the masses to take power and the socialist revolution because imperialism in crisis could not grant these concessions. But these slogans, "by themselves", were minimal.

The same goes for Comrade Germain's favourite slogan, the "workers' control". Trotsky noted how, if this is exercised through the bureaucratic leaderships, it becomes a tool of the capitalist system and not a slogan with transitional effects. If there is a general strike, as the French May, and we raise workers' control as the central slogan of the strike this becomes a slogan of bourgeois counter-revolution or bureaucratic reformism. And this is so because it diverts the masses from what the general strike objectively poses, which is the problem of power, something far above workers' control.

Both the slogan of workers' control as any suitable tactical combination of slogans of power (workers' and peasants' government, all power to the COB, etc.) are transitional demands. But the result of applying one or the other, in a case like this, could not be more opposite. Comrade Germain understands neither the classification of slogans based on objective criteria nor he perceives that all slogans are immediate because of the objective requirements posed to the mass movement by imperialist decay, and even less, that the same objective criterion is to prevail in its application. He continues with his famous "levels of consciousness".

If the slogans serve to mobilise the masses, bringing them closer to seizing power, they are the best, whatever their “historical content”, since they combine with the fundamental transitional slogan: the seizure of power by the proletariat. If they serve to distract the masses from this immediate task, they are bad, even if they are “transitional” to its nth degree.

We can now move to the great problem that worries Comrade Germain: the role of the slogans in the development of the “level of consciousness”. The problem of consciousness, it is true, has enormous importance. We believe that raising the consciousness level of the workers’ movement is an essential task of our activity. What we question is the location of consciousness regarding the definition of slogans and their use.

What is this relationship? Very simple: it’s that our slogans have to start from the level of mobilisation of the masses (which expresses their immediate consciousness of their need) to try to raise it to a higher level of mobilisation (which will be expressed in a level higher consciousness). For example, if there are struggles for wages in many factories, we must start from that level of mobilisation and that immediate consciousness: “we need more wages”, to try to raise it to the general strike for a general increase. If we can get the general strike to happen, this will carry the masses to set a confrontation with the capitalist system (if this cannot grant such increase) and will create in the mass movement the need for a political response (inevitably transitional), which we must fill with a slogan of power, transitional.

This is a linear scheme, which will never happen as such in the class struggle but it helps us to pedagogically explain to Comrade Germain the direct relationship of slogans with the level of mobilisation of the masses and indirectly, with their immediate level of consciousness.

Mass consciousness develops this way, learning from their own mobilisation starting from the needs they are already conscious of. The stage of imperialist decay and transition to socialism poses the socialist revolution as an immediate need for the mass movement. But it poses it in a historical sense, for this entire period, which goes from the Russian Revolution to the final victory of the world revolution. It does not pose it for the start of any mobilisation anywhere in the world: it poses it as a necessity for this mobilisation as long as it becomes permanent. Our efforts must be focused precisely on giving a permanent character to the mobilisation of the masses because only in this way they will rise to the higher consciousness that we must take power through the socialist revolution.

Summarising: our slogans must serve to raise any mobilisation to a higher level because the only thing that raises the consciousness of the masses is the mobilisation. This development will create the need for new slogans, more advanced, until, in an ongoing process, the need (and the slogan) of the seizure of power and the socialist revolution.

Trying to replace this objective process (through permanent mobilisation) of raising the level of mass consciousness towards the higher consciousness that the masses must take power, with propaganda (spoken, written or by “exemplary actions”) of the party around slogans that, by themselves, miraculously, “raise awareness” is a crime against Trotskyism.

Trotsky himself says:

“Every attempt to skip over real, that is, objectively conditioned stages in the development of the masses, is political adventurism.”²⁷

And this attempt (which in Comrade Germain effectively becomes political adventurism) is done from the theoretical point of view, revising our transitional program. This revisionism has its roots in Comrade Germain’s permanent mania of separating the objective from the subjective and prioritising this last element. Thus, we saw him blindly believing the “subjective” plans of imperialism or the Soviet bureaucracy and churning a series of wrong predictions. Thus, we saw him discovering the goodness of imperialism that develops the productive forces and increasingly meets the needs of the masses. Thus, we saw him deducting that the masses will no longer mobilise because of their misery but by subjective conflicts that capitalism creates for them. And thus, we see him now, fatally following the dictates of logic, which is inflexible, arguing that our program, our slogans, and the use

²⁷ Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 272.

we make of them have nothing to do with the misery and the needs of the masses or the concrete development of the mobilisation, but with issues “of consciousness”, that is, once again! “subjective”.

This is not just the revisionism of some partial aspects of Marxism; it is revisionism of the very foundations of historical materialism.

Comrade Germain questions the permanent revolution in the advanced countries

The theory–program of permanent revolution is the axis of the *Transitional Program*. It involves the mobilisation of the mass movement and our revolutionary Marxists objectives for it. We can formulate this theory–program very simply: permanently mobilising the masses until achieving, at least, the international socialist society and definitely uprooting all vestiges of class society in all spheres of social life. It is the ultimate expression of our politics.

For Comrade Germain this definition, although so simple, has a “defect”: it takes as its point of reference the class struggle and the role of our parties. That is, it brings up how our parties should act in the class struggle to direct the uninterrupted mobilisation of the masses until the final victory of the socialist revolution. Comrade Germain has a more “scientific”, “professional” definition. First, he renamed it: instead of theory, thesis or program—as we usually call it in the Trotskyist movement—he calls it “formula”. He does this for deep reasons, and he does well because for Germain the permanent revolution is an intellectual, almost chemical, formula, not a scientific, political law of the mobilisation of the mass movement in the world.

For Comrade Germain, the permanent revolution is applied in backward countries and not in developed countries.

“The whole notion of applying the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases. It can only be done with the utmost circumspection, and in the form of an analogy.”²⁸

The reason given by Comrade Germain to explain such a statement is very simple. Democratic and transitional tasks occur in all countries of the world but combined differently. Where the weight of democratic tasks is larger than the transitional tasks, i.e. in the backward countries, permanent revolution applies. Where transitional tasks weight is greater, i.e. in the imperialist countries, it does not apply.

Comrade Germain created a real Mendeleev table for the different types of formulas to be applied in different countries, but it is an incomplete table: the greater weight of democratic tasks, permanent revolution; the greater weight of transitional tasks, mystery (we only know that “the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases”).

Now, if the revolution in the advanced countries is not governed by the formula of permanent revolution, by what other formula is it governed? Which one does Comrade Germain apply? The formula of socialist revolution, perhaps? But this formula of the international socialist revolution is the formula of permanent revolution; or is there another? Has Comrade Germain found a new formula and is so modest he does not want to publish it? The combination of democratic and transitional tasks (socialist) in mobilising the masses in the imperialist countries, what formula does it fall under, Comrade Germain? Can you tell us its name? Or, if it is a recent discovery, without a name yet, would you kindly explain to all your comrades of the International, what does it consist of?

Comrade Germain explains his conception in a rather curious way:

“But it would be pure sophistry to draw the conclusion that no qualitative difference exists between the combined tasks facing the revolution in imperialists, and those facing it in colonial or semi-colonial countries, simply because of the undeniable fact that some tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remain unsolved in the most advanced imperialist nations, or rise up again

²⁸ Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 34.

there, whereas all the basic tasks of that revolution remain unsolved (or solved only in a miserably uncomplete way) in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Trotsky pointed out in the *Transitional Programme* that: ‘the relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat’s struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent — by the degree of its backwardness’.”²⁹

No one denies there are “qualitative differences” in the mutual relations and the order of presentation —i.e., in the particular combination— of the democratic and transitional demands between different countries. We can even say that the democratic tasks have more weight in a backward country and transitional tasks generally in one advanced. We can, furthermore, define the qualitative difference by saying that in the backward country it is essentially raised a bourgeois-democratic revolution which becomes socialist, and in the developed country it is raised a socialist revolution that carries out important or fundamental democratic tasks. But to say the latter is already dangerous because the truth is that, by its class dynamic (i.e. the class that will carry it out taking power), what is raised in the advanced and backward countries is the socialist revolution, which performs important bourgeois democratic tasks.

What we cannot do is to reach from here the conclusion drawn by Comrade Germain: that this shows that in developed countries the formula of permanent revolution does not apply. We cannot say it, because this formula does not revolve around the varying weight of democratic slogans in the revolutionary process in a given country but about something much simpler: the character the mass mobilisation must have in this stage of transition to socialism. Proponents of the permanent revolution argue the revolution is international and permanent, those who do not defend it, argue the revolution is national or regional and by stages. Period.

In other words, from the qualitative difference appearing between the combinations of slogans according to country, Comrade Germain concludes this qualitative difference is the essence of the permanent revolution. What he’s doing, in fact, is dismembering the law of permanent revolution in national or regional parts because not only are there qualitative differences in the combination of tasks between backward and advanced countries; there are also differences among different imperialist countries and different backward countries. There are qualitative differences between the combination of tasks in Uruguay and that of the Portuguese colonies (two backward countries); there are qualitative differences between Germany and the United States (two developed countries).

A pause to recall Trotsky

Ultimately Comrade Germain considers the permanent revolution as the program for the national democratic revolution in backward countries. He does not consider it the program and the law of the world revolution until the establishment of socialism worldwide, of which a nation is only a contingent part. So it is no coincidence he thinks there are countries where it does not apply.

Trotsky argued exactly the opposite:

“The theory of the permanent revolution now demands the greatest attention from every Marxist, for the course of the class and ideological struggle has fully and finally raised this question from the realm of reminiscences over old differences of opinion among Russian Marxists, and converted it into a question of the character, the inner connexions and methods of the international revolution in general.

“The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion, only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.”³⁰

29 Ibid.

30 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 313.

As the confusion with the theory of permanent revolution does not begin or end with Comrade Germain, Trotsky himself took care to clarify it:

“To dispel the chaos that has been created around the theory of the permanent revolution, it is necessary to distinguish three lines of thought that are united in this theory.

“First, it embraces the problem of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist. This is in essence the historical origin of the theory.

“Vulgar ‘Marxism’ has worked out a pattern of historical development according to which every bourgeois society sooner or later secures a democratic regime, after which the proletariat, under conditions of democracy, is gradually organised and educated for socialism.

“The theory of the permanent revolution, which originated in 1905, declared war upon these ideas and moods. It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat led through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other by an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary development.

“The second aspect of the ‘permanent’ theory has to do with the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. Society keeps on changing its skin. Each stage of transformation stems directly from the preceding. This process necessarily retains a political character, that is, it develops through collisions between various groups in the society which is in transformation. Outbreaks of civil war and foreign wars alternate with periods of ‘peaceful’ reform. Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such.

“The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle.

“The struggle of the epigones is directed, even if not always with the same clarity, against all three aspects of the theory of the permanent revolution. And how could it be otherwise, when it is a question of three inseparably connected parts of a whole? The epigones mechanically separate the democratic and the socialist dictatorships. They separate the national socialist revolution from the international.”³¹

It is abundantly clear: for Trotsky, the permanent revolution is valid from backward countries to those that are building socialism. For Comrade Germain, it applies only in the backward countries. But let’s continue with Trotsky:

“The Fourth International does not draw watertight distinctions between the backward and the advanced countries, the democratic and the socialist revolutions. It combines them and subordinates them to the world struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors. Just as the only genuinely revolutionary force of our era is the international proletariat, so the only real program to liquidate all oppression, social and national, is the program of the permanent revolution.”³²

31 Ibid., pp. 143, 144, 145, 145–146.

32 Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on imperialist war and the proletarian world revolution”, May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., p. 203.

Trotsky alerts that there are “three lines of thought that are united in this theory”, “does not draw watertight distinctions between the backward and the advanced countries” and argues that the only program is “the program of permanent revolution”. Comrade Germain separates one part of the theory (the one referring to the backward countries), makes no distinction between advanced and backward countries, and argues that the program of permanent revolution applies only to the latter. Hence it was necessary to return to Trotsky.

Imperialism and national self-determination

Let us continue with Comrade Germain’s argument that the different combination of democratic and transitional tasks defines what is and what is not within the formula of permanent revolution. To continue, Comrade Germain resorted to heavy artillery: the democratic demands are revolutionary, “transitional for their weight”, in backward countries and they are not revolutionary (they are, in fact, reformist and minimum) in developed countries because in these countries imperialism has no fundamental class reasons that prevent it from granting them. In his words:

“In semi-colonial and colonial countries, democratic demands have generally the weight of transitional demands. It is impossible to realise them under capitalism, at least in their collective essence. In imperialist countries, this is not true. Democratic demands will normally not be granted by the decaying imperialist bourgeoisie. But nothing organically, economically, socially, (i.e. in terms of basic class relations), prevents the bourgeoisie from granting them as a “lesser evil” in order to avoid a mass movement approaching a victorious socialist revolution. Organically, the “national bourgeoisie” of the colonial world cannot solve the agrarian question without to a large extent expropriating itself. There is no fundamental obstacle of the same kind to prevent the realisation of free abortion on demand, or freedom of the press, or even a democratic electoral law in an imperialist country. Given a powerful mass upsurge with a revolutionary potential, the imperial bourgeoisie can grant these concessions precisely in order to avoid expropriation.

“In normal circumstances, imperialism was in the past never willing to grant national independence to Poland or Finland; nor is it prepared to do so even today to Quebec or Ireland. But given a pre-revolutionary situation, a powerful upsurge of the workers’ struggle, a concrete danger of a “workers’ republic” being set up, there is no fundamental class interest which would prevent imperialism from transforming any such nationality into independent puppet states.

“For these reasons the danger of a mass struggle in an imperialist country based solely on demands for national self-determination being absorbed by the bourgeoisie is very real.”³³

These paragraphs of Comrade Germain are full of unacceptable confusion. First, he attacks a non-existent enemy: a supposed revolutionary party which limits itself to only raising the demand for national self-determination in an imperialist country. Nobody raises such barbarity in our International and if it is not so Comrade Germain should say who does. What is being discussed is whether democratic slogans, in their combination with transitional slogans, have a large weight in the imperialist countries. Comrade Germain says no, we say yes.

The second confusion is regarding formal and substantive changes. Comrade Germain tells us that if there are large mass mobilisations, the imperialist country can grant the backward country formal independence. This is totally true but the issue is, precisely, to achieve a true national liberation, of substance not formal. In other words, it is a question of trying to achieve independence as a sovereign state economically and politically and not of turning from a colony into an independent “puppet” state. The point is how to achieve it. We see no other possibility than the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward country through a workers’ revolution that has the support of the working class of the imperialist country. Is it so, or not, Comrade Germain?

But there is third confusion, which is the most serious. For Comrade Germain, imperialism can grant democratic demands, since there are no “organic” reasons in the structure of the imperialist country that prevent it from making minimal concessions of democratic type (abortion, freedom

33 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 35.

of the press, etc.). In contrast, in backward countries, the national bourgeoisie cannot make such concessions “in their collective essence”, for example, it cannot support the agrarian revolution. This is true but Comrade Germain forgets that the national bourgeoisie can also make minimum democratic concessions to the mass movement (abortion, freedom of the press, etc.) Because they have no “organic” reason to prevent them from doing so. And he also forgets (and this is serious) that imperialism cannot do, “in its collective essence”, the democratic concession of economically liberating all its colonies. If the national bourgeoisie cannot do the agrarian revolution because it would be “largely expropriating itself”; imperialism cannot grant dependent countries complete national independence because it would also be “expropriating itself” and no longer “largely” but entirely. It would mean it ceases to be imperialism.

From this monumental theoretical “oversight” of Comrade Germain derives an equally monumental and extremely dangerous political “oversight”. He supports the demand for national self-determination applied to any colonial country in particular but he “forgets” that demand applied to the whole empire. And from there, he deduces that a mass movement in the imperialist country based on the struggle for national self-determination is in danger of “being absorbed by the imperialist bourgeoisie”. Do you think, Comrade Germain, that a mass movement that proposes the release of all the countries exploited by imperialism can be “absorbed” by the imperialist bourgeoisie?

The demand for national self-determination throughout the empire touches directly the structure of the imperialist regime: it is not a partial or formal but a structural demand. No imperialist country can grant the right to national, economic and political self-determination to all countries of the empire while still being imperialist. There is a qualitative difference between this democratic demand and the others quoted by Comrade Germain. This essential democratic demand is as important as the nationalisation of all foreign trade, land and industry of the own imperialist country. These are not demands that can be absorbed by the capitalist system, nor can it be the national self-determination for the entire empire from the rule of the imperialist regime.

This simple problem is not even raised by Comrade Germain: he minimises and fragments the demand for national self-determination to the country that fights for it and he does not generalise it as a structural and fundamental democratic task for the proletariat of the imperialist country.

He recognises that the workers of the metropolitan country should support the struggle for national self-determination but he does not say that they should not only support it but should raise this task for the whole empire, nor he says that precisely the only ones who can generalise it absolutely are the workers of the imperialist countries.

However, Lenin wrote entire volumes explaining that one of the main democratic tasks of the Russian proletariat was to release the nationalities who suffered the imperialist yoke of Tsarism. And it is the same posed by the Communist International when it said:

“All the parties of the Communist International must continue to explain to the broad working masses the vital importance of the struggle against imperialist domination in the backward countries. The Communist Parties working in the Great-Power countries must set up permanent colonial commissions, consisting of Central Committee members, to work on these lines. (...) The Communist Parties in the Great-Power countries must not miss a single opportunity to expose the predatory nature of the colonial policies adopted by their respective governments and by the opportunist bourgeois parties.”³⁴

And not only did Trotsky agree with that policy, but he outlined a course of action for the future:

“A Socialist Europe will proclaim the full independence of the colonies, establish friendly economic relations with them and, step by step, without the slightest violence, by means of example and collaboration, introduce them into a World Socialist Federation.”³⁵

34 “Theses on the Eastern Question”, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm.

35 Trotsky, Leon: “On the eve of World War II”, 23 July 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., p. 153.

Comrade Germain agrees, without a doubt, with the Bolshevik policy towards the oppressed nationalities. But his conception of imperialism does not extend beyond territorial, border imperialism. It's enough a sea or an ocean standing between the imperialist country and the colony or semi-colony, for Comrade Germain to think the democratic task of national liberation is almost exclusively in the hands of the proletariat of the dependent country, which, we acknowledge, he proposes that it must be supported. Not even the fact that the largest mass mobilisation in recent times in the United States has been objectively caused by the defence of national independence of Vietnam, makes him change his position.

Comrade Germain doesn't realise that, if in backward countries the democratic revolution becomes socialist, in the capitalist empires the socialist revolution becomes, in a sense, democratic because it releases not only the metropolitan workers but also peoples and nations colonised by that imperialism, which is a democratic task of the first magnitude.

This issue has not been raised in-depth about the imperialist countries and, therefore, we have not developed it programmatically although, as we have seen, we have clear indications for how to fix it. The solution will come from answering these questions: How do we specifically apply in an imperialist country the democratic slogan of national self-determination for all colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries? How do we perform this task before the seizure of power by the proletariat, and after? Specifically: what do we do in the United States in favour of Latin American semi-colonies and France for their colonies and semi-colonies before and after taking power? One slogan is the breaking of all colonising agreements (OAS for the US, Commonwealth for Britain, OCAM and Yaounde I and II for France and the ECM respectively) and the granting of the total and absolute independence.

What do we do with imperialist investments and loans? We have to be for the expropriation in favour of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. But how? We cannot give them to the bourgeoisie and landlords to continue exploiting workers. This raises, within the imperialist country, a democratic program which has to have transitional effects. Because to avoid that national independence be transformed into new chains for the exploited in the colonies, we have to combine it with the slogan of the Federation of Socialist Countries of the former Empire, stating that businesses in colonial countries owned by imperialist companies expropriated by the metropolitan proletariat are to be administered by the colonial working class. That is, we have to impose the workers' control as a fundamental condition; so it doesn't become a new vehicle of exploitation. If it isn't this, it will have to be a similar transitional alternative.

But the point of this discussion is not this but the revisionism Comrade Germain, who does not raise this fundamental democratic slogan of national self-determination of the colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries, for the whole empire, including, in the first place, the proletariat of the imperialist country. And he does not raise it because he only sees it from the point of view of a country, whose proletariat, isolated, fight for it. But the great democratic task of destroying the Empire, of freeing all the oppressed countries, can it normally be granted by imperialism? Is this what Comrade Germain thinks? Or does he think that it will only be achieved with the workers' revolution, and by no other means? And if he believes the latter, doesn't he think the democratic tasks of the socialist revolution in the imperialist countries are huge and impossible to achieve if the proletariat does not take power?

Democratic slogans and the permanent revolution

Let us continue now with the permanent revolution from the "internal" point of view (to call it that) of the developed countries.

Trotsky has often stressed the importance of democratic demands in developed countries. Referring to fascist Italy and Spain, same as Germany, not only did he highlight the importance of these slogans but he even said there can be a democratic stage in the revolution process in these countries (in Spain he took it for granted):

“But in the revolutionary awakening of the masses, democratic slogans will inevitably constitute the first chapter. Even if the further progress of the struggle should in general not permit, even for a single day, the regeneration of a democratic state —and this is very possible— the struggle itself cannot develop by the circumvention of democratic slogans! A revolutionary party that would attempt to jump over this stage would break its neck.”³⁶

Trotsky draws this conclusion based on the analysis that the existence of imperialism pushes back humanity. “In Germany, there has not been and there is no proletarian dictatorship, but there is a dictatorship of fascism; Germany has been thrown back even from bourgeois democracy. Under these conditions, to renounce beforehand the use of democratic slogans and of bourgeois parliamentarism means to clear the field for of a new formation of the social-democracy.”³⁷

But this approach by Trotsky is not exclusively for fascist countries. He poses something very similar for the United States, comparing it with Fascist Italy and the democratic stage of the Russian Revolution:

“Must America pass through an epoch of social reformism? This question is touched on in the draft and answered in the sense that it cannot yet be definitely decided but that it to a large extent depends upon the Communist Party. By and large, that is correct but not sufficient. Here we come once more to the laws of uneven and combined development. In Russia, the fact that the proletariat had not yet gone through the democratic school which could finally lead to the seizure of power was advanced in rebuttal to the permanent revolution and the proletarian seizure of power. But the Russian proletariat passed through the democratic period in the course of eight months; if we count from the time of the Duma, in a period of eleven to twelve years. In England it is centuries and in America also the dirty mess lasts quite long. The unevenness expresses itself also in the fact that different stages are not just jumped over but are experienced in very rapid tempo, as the democratic stage in Russia.

“We can assume that when Fascism in Italy expires, the first wave to follow will be a democratic one. But that condition could only last months; it will not remain for years.

“Since the American proletariat as a proletariat has not made any great democratic struggles, since it has not gained or fought for social legislation, and as it remains under growing economic and political pressure, it is to be assumed that the democratic phase of the struggle will require a certain period of time. But it will not be as it was in Europe, an epoch of decades; rather, perhaps, a period only of years or, by feverish developments, of months. The question of tempo must be clarified, and we must also admit that the democratic stage is not inevitable. We cannot predict whether the new working-class stage will begin next year, within three years, five years, or perhaps not until after ten years. But we can say with certainty that the moment the American proletariat constitutes itself as an independent party, even if at first under a democratic-reformist banner, it will pass quite rapidly through this stage.”³⁸

All this was summed up by Trotsky in “The International Left Opposition, its tasks and methods” (December 1932), where he codified the essence of contemporary Marxism:

“Recognition of the necessity to mobilise the masses under *transitional slogans* corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under *democratic slogans* insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialistic dictatorship (Fascism, Bonapartism, etc.).”³⁹

In short, for Trotsky democratic slogans put an equal sign between almost all imperialist countries (those with “openly imperialistic dictatorship (Fascism, Bonapartism, etc.)) and the backward countries (those with “feudal relations” or “national oppression”).

36 Trotsky, Leon: “Fascism and democratic slogans”, 14 July 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit., p. 298.

37 Ibid., p. 301.

38 Trotsky, Leon: “Uneven and combined development and the role of American imperialism”, 4 March 1933, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit., p. 118-119.

39 Trotsky, Leon: “The International Left Opposition, its tasks and methods”, December 1932, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)*, op. cit., p. 53.

The Majority comrades contend that Europe is reaching, or has reached, strong regimes, Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist. According to Trotsky, that means the need to fight “particularly under democratic slogans”. But Comrade Germain, by dividing countries as he does, removes the fundamental importance this type of slogans has in the developed countries.

The combination of stages and tasks also takes place in the USSR, and in there the minimum and democratic slogans are also very important. The struggle for self-determination of Ukraine, under the slogan “For an independent Soviet Ukraine”, which we can expand with tactical adjustments to all the countries of Eastern Europe, deals with the relationship between this fundamental democratic task and slogan and the political revolution. But even if we had a “normal” workers’ state, the combinations of tasks, one of the main features of the permanent revolution, will be raised. And more importantly, the formula of permanent revolution would occur in all its glory, since we would be on the verge of achieving the central goal of our program: the mobilisation of workers in permanency.

This theoretical discussion against Comrade Germain’s revisionism has profound and decisive practical consequences for the lives of all our sections. It is no coincidence that the majority’s European document does not propose as one of our basic tasks in Europe the bourgeois-democratic task of German unity; perhaps the most important that our German section, our European sections and the European proletariat in its entirety must face. This task presents us with imperialist decadence because the German bourgeoisie had achieved unity. Without Austria, but it had achieved it. Imperialism, along with the bureaucracy, has pushed Germany back by over a century in this gigantic historical task. But Comrade Germain does not pose the need for this task because they probably think that, as it is democratic, imperialism may resolve without any “organic, economic and social” impediment. If for this Germany must be on the verge of “becoming a workers’ republic” riding a “mass mobilisation” behind the democratic slogan of German unity, and we have not raised this slogan, we will measure firsthand the catastrophic results of Germain’s revisionism. Because this task combines the political revolution of the East and the socialist revolution in the West.

One way or another, Germany exemplifies the increasing validity of the formula of permanent revolution in all countries of the world including the imperialist ones. But the unity of Germany is not the only democratic task raised in Europe. Without much effort we can list others that are fundamental to the policy of our sections: the struggles for democratic freedoms in Spain, Portugal and Greece, and national independence of Northern Ireland are democratic tasks that are on the agenda. The validity of this aspect of the theory of permanent revolution for Europe is expressed even around secondary issues; how to fight to liquidate the privileges of the monarchy and the nobility of England, Holland, Sweden and Belgium.

It is evident, and Comrade Germain does not deny it, that there are democratic tasks and slogans raised for Europe as a whole and for each of its countries. And we all agree there are also transitional tasks and slogans. Without going, for the time being, into the discussion about which are most important and which are minor, the fact is that the two types of tasks and slogans are there. What do we do with them?

Trotsky is categorical in this regard when he says (as already quoted) that we “destroy the boundary between the minimum and maximum program.”⁴⁰ We hold, like Trotsky, that the minimum and democratic slogans (old minimum program) and transitional (old maximum program), have to be combined according to the formula of permanent revolution.

Comrade Germain says that applying the formula of permanent revolution to the imperialist countries, is “extremely dubious in the best of cases”. “Extreme doubts” apart, Comrade Germain is telling us that we should not apply it.

40 Trotsky, Leon: “Three conceptions of the Russian Revolution”, August 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., p. 68.

Germain revises the theory of permanent revolution for the colonial and semi-colonial countries

As we have seen repeatedly, Comrade Germain believes that imperialism does not cause growing misery for the masses worldwide. This view has serious consequences when he moves it to the part of the theory of permanent revolution most elaborated by Trotskyism, i.e. the part referring to the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Without considering the practical consequences, Comrade Germain throws overboard all the Trotskyist conception of the role of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries, when he ascribes to them revolutionary potential in the struggle against imperialism. The flipside of this error is to ascribe to imperialism a relatively progressive role, as when he holds that imperialism is capable of letting countries free themselves from it without much trouble.

He asks, “Is it true that, because the national bourgeoisie is dependent upon imperialism, it is unable to *break all ties with imperialism and therefore* cannot lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression?” He answers: “This is completely wrong.”⁴¹

Comrade Germain usually hides his thought through negative statements, made as questions which have negative answers. But loose lips sink ships since this results in much stronger affirmations. So we will convert this phrase to its positive sense to know well what he is saying and avoid shyster arguments. The phrase, in plain language, is as follows:

“It is completely true that the national bourgeoisie, despite being dependent on imperialism, can break all ties with imperialism and may, therefore, lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression.”

This assertion by Comrade Germain is the complete and utter denial of the whole Trotskyist conception of revolution in backward countries. For us, the real Trotskyists, the thesis of the permanent revolution has this sole meaning: in countries where the bourgeois-democratic revolution is in the agenda, the national bourgeoisie is completely and utterly unable to break its ties with imperialism and, therefore, cannot lead a successful struggle against foreign oppression.

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”⁴²

Trotsky is categorical in pointing out the role of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries. His opinion on one of the strongest and most powerful, the Latin American bourgeoisie, is very instructive:

“The rising national bourgeoisie in many of the Latin American countries, seeking a greater share in the booty and even striving for an increased measure of independence i.e., towards the dominant position in the exploitation of its own country — does, it is true, try to utilize the rivalries and conflicts of the foreign imperialists to this end. But its general weakness and its belated appearance prevent it from attaining a higher level of development than that of serving one imperialist master as against another. It cannot launch a serious struggle against all imperialist domination and for genuine national independence for fear of unleashing a mass movement of the toilers of the country which would, in turn, threaten its social existence.”⁴³

Comrade Germain may reply this was Trotsky’s position about the Latin American bourgeoisie but not about those of other backward areas of the world. But we hold these positions

41 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 30.

42 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 310.

43 “Thesis On the World Role of American Imperialism”, Founding Conference of the Fourth International, September 1938, Marxist Internet Archive: <http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/etol/document/fi/1938-1949/fi-1stcongress/ch09.htm>.

are the application to Latin America of the general law of permanent revolution, and Trotsky, in the Emergency Manifesto of 1940, told us, referring to all the backward countries of the world:

“Surrounded by decaying capitalism and enmeshed in the imperialist contradictions, the independence of a backward state inevitably will be semi-fictitious” and, later on, he clarified that it was “(...) the régime of the ‘People’s’ party in Turkey, the Kuomintang in China; Gandhi’s regime will be similar tomorrow in India.”⁴⁴

And speaking in general of all the backward countries, he has not been less categorical: “Not a single one of the tasks of the ‘bourgeois’ revolution can be solved in these backward countries under the leadership of the ‘national’ bourgeoisie because the latter emerges at once with foreign support as a class alien or hostile to the people. Every stage in its development binds it only the more closely to the foreign finance capital of which it is essentially the agency.”⁴⁵

And once again: “Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people. And if this is not yet the case? Then the struggle for national liberation will produce only very partial results, results directed entirely against the working masses.”⁴⁶

All this does not mean the national bourgeoisie has no deep friction with imperialism at certain times. But it does mean these frictions are never so serious as to take it to “break all ties” with it or “lead a victorious struggle” against it.

Seeing that from the point of view of Trotskyism, Comrade Germain does not do very well; it has come the time to confront his conception to reality. Where is this national bourgeoisie able “to break all ties with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression”? Perhaps in Bolivia or Chile? Maybe in Pakistan or India? Or in the Arab countries? This bourgeoisie, dear Comrade Germain, does not exist anywhere except in the Stalinist and ... Germainist positions.

The struggle against imperialism is a socialist task

As already mentioned, Comrade Germain believes that imperialism is not opposed in a brutal, “absolute” way to the national independence of the backward countries. Said so himself: “The struggle against national oppression is not an anti-capitalist struggle. It is a struggle for a bourgeois-democratic demand. The existence of the world capitalist system is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression, under conditions of imperialism.”⁴⁷

In fact, here are two statements, equally incorrect. First: the struggle for national liberation is not anti-capitalist; second: imperialism is not opposed in “absolute” form to the liquidation of national oppression. Let’s start with the first.

From the bourgeois-democratic nature of the task of national liberation, Comrade Germain concludes that it is not an anti-capitalist struggle. He has forgotten, if he ever knew, the essence of the transitional program and the theory of permanent revolution.

The task of the national independence of backward countries is bourgeois-democratic and at the same time, socialist. It is the combination, in a single slogan, of two tasks: the historically bourgeois democratic task of conquering national independence which, at present, is a socialist task.

“In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism.”⁴⁸

44 Trotsky, Leon: “Manifesto of the Fourth International on imperialist war and the proletarian revolution”, May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, op. cit., p. 202.

45 Trotsky, Leon: *The Chinese Revolution*, in MIA, www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/xx/china.htm.

46 Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 288.

47 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 30.

48 Trotsky, Leon: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, op. cit.

Put another way more accessible to the Trotskyist knowledge of Comrade Germain: the struggle for full national independence of the backward countries is a bourgeois-democratic task because it corresponds to the historical era of the rise of capitalism and the formation of nationalities and, at present, it is a socialist task because the main enemy is imperialism, i.e., the highest expression of the capitalist regime.

And there's something else. The world capitalist system is unique, it is a totality formed by national parts, which are determined (and this should not be news to someone who prides himself to handle dialectics) by the whole, which is the world capitalist system. Backward countries are no exception: because of their relationships in domestic production and their close links with world capitalism they are capitalist countries. Therefore, any substantive struggle for national independence not only collides with an external factor —imperialism— but also with the domestic capitalist structure, dependent and part of the global system.

This explains why the countries which eliminated capitalist exploitation within their borders were the only ones able to fully liberate themselves from imperialism. This is the internal refraction of the fact the struggle against imperialism is the struggle against the capitalist system as a whole and, therefore, against the capitalist system of the country which is liberated.

To conclude this point, we point out that here the phenomenological conception, not tied to the specific development of the mass movement that Comrade Germain has of our slogans and tasks, is repeated. For him, there is a logical sequence, which is: national independence – democratic task – democratic slogan – democratic consequences (not “anti-capitalist”). For us, who have already seen the slogans are defined by their historical character but whose results depend on the specific situation of the class struggle, the sequence is different: national independence – democratic task – democratic slogan (taken up by the proletariat because the bourgeoisie is unable to do so) – transitional consequences (dictatorship of the proletariat destroying the capitalist system in the country and attacking imperialism, i.e. the world capitalist system). Trotsky said it clearly when noting that: “Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people.”⁴⁹

If this is not so, where is there currently a backward country led by the national bourgeoisie who has managed to break “all ties with imperialism”, after a “successful struggle against foreign oppression”? Nowhere in the world, whether or not Comrade Germain likes it.

Let us now turn to his second statement: the capitalist, imperialist world system “is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression”. We do not know what he means by “absolute obstacle”. If he refers to the fact world imperialism does not disappear or suffer a decisive defeat by the fact a country becomes entirely independent from it, he is telling us a platitude since the same happens when the working class takes power in an imperialist country, as happened in Russia and it may happen tomorrow in Italy or France. That is, we need not destroy the world capitalist system to make the workers’ revolution in a given country. The truth is that Comrade Germain tries to impress us with the word “absolute”. And he does not understand the dialectical relationship between “absolute” and its opposite “relative”; he does not understand how one becomes the other. At one point in the class struggle, what is absolute in one country is relative at a world scale. But at a historical scale (for all this stage) the world relativity becomes absolute. Let’s look at this issue a little more closely.

We can say that in a developed country, the existence of the capitalist system within its borders is an “absolute obstacle” to the victory of the proletarian revolution.

If the bourgeoisie continues dominating the economy, there will be no victory of the revolution; and to make the revolution we have to “absolutely” liquidate this obstacle. But the existence of the world capitalist system is a “relative only” obstacle to the victory of the national workers’ revolution. Although we do not destroy the world system, we can make the revolution and, despite it, the world capitalist system still works.

⁴⁹ Trotsky, Leon: *The Permanent Revolution*, op. cit., p. 288.

At a world scale, the workers' revolution in a country, whether advanced or backward, does not liquidate the world capitalist system; it is only a relative victory over it. And this is because the world capitalist system has only one "absolute" limit: its own existence as a worldwide regime. All victories of the workers' revolution, in both developed and backward countries, are relative victories while the world capitalist system still survives. But from this, we cannot minimise the workers' victories in any country, nor the national liberation from the imperialist yoke because they are the most important victories that the global workers' movement currently achieves. On the contrary, they are the ones who bring us closer to the absolute limit, which is the liquidation of the world capitalist system.

Now, the relativity of all victories or defeats of the workers' movement nationwide is part of the worldwide struggle between the exploited and imperialism for a whole historical epoch. Precisely because this struggle is global and historical, the national and momentary victories or defeats of either of the two sides are relative. But at a world-historical scale, the struggle is total, absolute, to death; there is no relativity of any kind in it: it ends in socialism or barbarism.

From these considerations arises the law of imperialism at a world-historical scale: decomposing capitalism is an "absolute obstacle" to the independence of the backward countries and to the socialist revolution in the advanced countries. While imperialism persists all victories are relative because imperialism, sooner or later (if still alive), will enslave the workers of the whole world even worse than before.

Backward peoples or the working class that achieve a victory will need to know —and we have to tell them— that as long as imperialism subsists this victory is relative, temporary and tactical; it will be questioned, compromised and threatened. They will have to know that imperialism cannot survive without re-enslaving them, because imperialism is capitalism in decay, whose absolute (i.e. historical) law is to bring more misery and exploitation for all the exploited of all countries of the world. And instead of telling them all of this, Comrade Germain tells the masses of the backward countries not to worry because imperialism is not an "absolute obstacle" to the liquidation of national oppression!

"Trotskyist Politics" with theoretical revisionism?

This liquidation of the theory of permanent revolution for the backward countries is also the liquidation of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat in said countries. But Comrade Germain is reluctant to draw this conclusion; he attempts to reconcile his theoretical revisionism with Trotskyist politics and says that the proletariat of backward countries must take power to solve the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

But if the dictatorship of the proletariat is not required to finish with national oppression (because the national bourgeoisie can lead this victorious struggle and imperialism is not an absolute obstacle to it), on what grounds should the proletariat take power? Comrade Germain replies to us with three arguments: first, because "national oppression" has nothing to do with "economic exploitation of the nation" (the first is finished but the second remains); second because the agrarian revolution (he implies this is the fundamental bourgeois democratic task) is still raised; and third because we Marxists refuse (!!) to delay the peasants and workers uprisings for another stage. Let's consider these three arguments in order.

First argument; Comrade Germain speaks:

"... it is not necessary to 'break all ties with imperialism' in order to eliminate foreign national oppression. (...)

"Where foreign *national oppression* is eliminated, foreign *economic exploitation* remains and increases."⁵⁰

50 Germain, Ernest, "In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International", op. cit., p. 30.

But it is necessary to distinguish the formal aspects of any exploitation from the real aspects. Under capitalist imperialism, the essence of colonial exploitation is not political but economic. This difference between national oppression and foreign economic exploitation is a play on words. National oppression is nothing but the expression of economic exploitation and economic exploitation acquires different political forms (colonial, semi-colonial and dependent).

For Comrade Germain, national oppression is synonymous with colony. For us, it is not because a semi-colony or a dependent country remains a nationality oppressed by imperialism, even if it has formal political independence. There is no economic exploitation without national oppression or vice versa. The exploitation of one country by another, under any of its forms, remains national oppression and economic exploitation at the same time.

Second argument; Comrade Germain speaks:

“It is because the agrarian question is not solved today in any of the semi-colonial countries which conquered national independence after World War 2 that in spite of the minority situation of the proletariat, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat allied to the poor peasantry remains a realistic perspective.”⁵¹

Comrade Germain says the dictatorship of the proletariat is possible in semi-colonial countries because they have not yet solved the agrarian revolution. The fact they continue to be semi-colonial has nothing to do with the workers’ revolution? If semi-colonial means they have not yet managed to get free from imperialism, isn’t achieving an effective national liberation also a realistic perspective for the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why does he not give importance (from the point of view of the workers’ revolution) to the fact that these countries remain semi-colonial? The task of national liberation, is it not perhaps as realistic as the agrarian revolution for the proletariat of backward countries? We believe that in backward countries the two most important tasks faced by the masses are national liberation and agrarian revolution, intimately linked and combined. (Comrade Germain recognises this in his work). These two tasks are closely combined for objective reasons, for the conjunction of imperialist penetration with large landed property in the economic structure of a backward country. Imperialism, when penetrating, builds capitalist relations of production dominated by foreign capital in the backward country. And the landed property is subordinated to these relationships.

Moreover, through the world market, also controlled by imperialism, a close link is established between the landlord class and buying imperialism.

All these economic relationships result in the two historic tasks posed for the backward countries (national liberation and agrarian revolution) being closely linked. And, despite Comrade Germain’s protests, the more difficult of the two tasks (if you could separate them) is the struggle against imperialism, as this is much stronger than the landowning class.

Third argument, or Comrade Germain’s last trench and true conception: “Revolutionary Marxists do not reject this Menshevik theory of stages only or mainly because they stress the inability of the national bourgeoisie to actually conquer national independence from imperialism, regardless of concrete circumstances. They reject it because they refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings for their own class interests, which will inevitably rise spontaneously alongside the national struggle as it unfolds, and very quickly combine themselves into a common inseparable programme in the consciousness of the masses.”⁵²

First of all, we should clarify the “Menshevik theory” was a theory developed about the feudal absolutist oppression, that is, about the classical bourgeois revolution, anti-feudal and anti-absolutist; not, as it would seem to spring from this assertion by Comrade Germain, in response to imperialist national oppression. (It was Stalinism who moved this Menshevik conception to countries dominated by imperialism.) For the Mensheviks, the peasant and feudal democratic revolution could be carried out under the direction of the national bourgeoisie. For Lenin and Trotsky, it could not. For the

51 Ibid., p. 31.

52 Ibid., p. 31.

Stalinists, the national and anti-imperialist revolution can be carried out under the direction of the national bourgeoisie. For Trotsky, it cannot. For Mensheviks and Stalinists, there is no “absolute” contradiction between the national bourgeoisie, the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the agrarian revolution. For us, the Trotskyists, there is. And only from the perspective of the Mensheviks and the Stalinists, there is a national bourgeoisie capable of meeting these historic tasks and, therefore, of reconciling with the workers’ and peasants uprisings. For Trotskyists, the national bourgeoisies are aligned with imperialism and landowners against the workers’ and peasants’ uprisings.

But in this quote there is an assertion as much or more serious than the previous one: the Trotskyists do not “mainly” reject the theory of revolution by stages in backward countries because we believe the national bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying the democratic revolution: we reject it because we “refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings”. In other words, we reject the theory of revolution by stages because we feel like making the socialist revolution now.

First of all, (and we regret to pull Comrade Germain off his pedestal) who decide whether or not to postpone the workers’ and peasants’ uprisings are the workers and peasants themselves. The most we can decide is what orientation we give to these uprisings: whether or not we orient them towards the seizure of power. But the fact is that, without asking permission to Comrade Germain, the workers’ and peasant’s uprisings in backward countries in the world exist.

Secondly, then, we all agree, Comrade Germain and us, to guide these uprisings to seize power but for different reasons. Comrade Germain’s reason is that the Trotskyists have cravings now to make the socialist revolution and we refuse to postpone it. We do it because we believe that the socialist character of the revolution in backward countries arises from the structure of society. And this structure means, first of all, that the only class that can carry the democratic revolution is a socialist class, the working class. It also arises from the fact that under the capitalism regime (backward or not), any backwardness is a structural part of this regime, of this structure both nationally and globally. To combat the peasant or national backwardness, i.e. to struggle against national or peasant oppression, means attacking for structural, objective reasons national and international capitalism. That is, it means attacking imperialism, the base of support of all existing exploitation because they are all combined and subject to imperialist exploitation.

This is not an academic difference because in the backward countries Trotskyism will not be the only one trying to lead the workers’ and peasants’ uprisings and the democratic revolution. There will be the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, with its Stalinist agents in the workers’ movement, trying to take the leadership to betray the masses later, as it has happened with tragic results in Bolivia, Chile and Indonesia, to name but a few examples. And in the backward countries, the working class will lead the proletarian revolution only if it disputes the leadership of the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie.

For the proletariat to fight for and earn the leadership, revolutionary Marxists have to denounce that the betrayal of the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois to the bourgeois-democratic revolution is inevitable, although at some point they may be involved, for being filled with fear, in some phase of the revolutionary process. We have to tirelessly explain to the workers that the only way to take the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its end is for them to take its leadership and impose their dictatorship.

If instead of doing this, we go and explain to the workers that imperialism is not an “absolute obstacle” to national liberation, that the national bourgeoisie can break all ties with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression and that they must take power for the simple reason that we Trotskyists refuse to postpone the socialist revolution, the leadership of the bourgeois-democratic revolution will no doubt be in the hands of the bourgeoisie and defeat will be inevitable. And Comrade Germain will be politically responsible for the defeat, and his revisionism of the theory of permanent revolution will be theoretically responsible.

Any attempt to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the backward countries upon the socialist tasks of the revolution, getting out of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, will liquidate any possible victory of the working class.

Comrade Germain revises the Marxist conception of the nationalist movements of the oppressed nationalities

We have already seen that for Comrade Germain national bourgeoisie and imperialism play a relatively progressive role in the struggle against “foreign oppression”; the first is capable of liberating the backward country; the second is capable of allowing it. As very often happens to those who hold opportunistic positions, Comrade Germain (which came to them through the crudest revisionism) moves to a sectarian (and equally revisionist) position regarding nationalist movements of oppressed nationalities. He assumes these movements are generally reactionary, not progressive. The political conclusion is obvious: with few exceptions, do not support them. To prove his thesis, he uses three arguments and a series of quotes.

First argument: nationalism is no longer a progressive ideology; it has become reactionary and the only progressive ideology in the imperialist epoch is proletarian internationalism. To reach this conclusion, he starts by explaining that nationalism was progressive in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

“... in the classical period of bourgeois-democratic revolution of the pre-industrial era, when the bourgeoisie was historically a revolutionary class. It was a powerful ideological and political weapon against two reactionary social forces: particularistic feudal or semi-feudal regional forces, which resisted their integration into modern nations; native or foreign absolute monarchs (...)

“With the epoch of imperialism, nationalism, as a rule, becomes reactionary, whether it is ‘purely’ bourgeois or petty-bourgeois in character. The universal idea of *independent* organisation of the working class, of the autonomous class goals followed by the proletariat and the poor peasantry in the class struggle, of *international class solidarity of the workers of all countries* and all nationalities, is opposed to the idea of national solidarity or national community of interests.”⁵³

We believe that here is the explanation why the Majority comrades, in their document for Europe, did not raise the support for the struggle of the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies. Their reasoning must have been that, although it was an anti-imperialist struggle, its ideology was reactionary for being nationalist. However, Majority comrades have given their warmest applause to the Tupamaros in Uruguay, and the July 26 Movement of Castro. Perhaps they had not had a nationalist ideology?

The comrades, if they were consistent, should say that Fidel Castro and the Tupamaros had a reactionary ideology. This flagrant theoretical contradiction comes from the lack of criteria for judging the movements. If they did what we do —judge them for the objective role they play in the class struggle at national and international level at a given time— they could have a consistent policy and a correct theoretical analysis.

For the Marxist analysis, the nationalism which became reactionary is the nationalism of developed countries because it is an imperialist nationalism. Instead, the nationalism of the backward countries still has but increased, the virtues of European nationalism of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Comrade Germain believes there is an absolute contradiction between proletarian internationalism and nationalism in general, including nationalism of the backward countries dominated by imperialism. And, as the phenomenologist he is, he raises the issue as an “ideological” problem. But nationalism, like every ideology, has class content and follows the ups and downs of the class struggle. Marxists define it as the ideology of such movement or social sector in such stage of the class struggle and not as ideology “by itself”. The nationalism of the major imperialist countries is reactionary because it promotes the exploitation of backward countries. But it is precisely against imperialism (and imperialist nationalism) that in backward countries movements arise with nationalist or democratic ideologies. Is it true that these movements and their ideologies are reactionary in general? Can the ideology be reactionary and the movement progressive? Is

⁵³ Ibid. p. 32.

equally reactionary the nationalist ideology of a nationalist movement in a backward country and the nationalist ideology of imperialism?

To Comrade Germain, it must be so because he makes absolutely no distinction between the anti-imperialist nationalism in a backward country and pro-imperialist nationalism in an advanced country. However, the nationalist movements of the oppressed nationalities are progressive to the extent that they go against imperialism and their nationalist ideologies are contradictory, i.e. they are progressive to the same extent.

The relationship between nationalist ideology and proletarian internationalism is the same and is determined by the relationship between the nationalist movement and the revolutionary party. Once again, ideologies do not establish relationships with each other, as ideologies “in itself”, but their relations are based on objective relations, i.e. relations between the social movements they reflect.

Under imperialism emerge, in addition to the workers’ movement, all kinds of movements and social sectors which are objectively and momentarily progressive, revolutionary (they struggle against repressive legislation, for the release of prisoners, against imperialist domination, for the right to vote or to abortion, for the agrarian revolution). These non-proletarian movements have, logically, non-proletarian ideologies but they are still progressive. Their ideologies reflect the character of the movement that supports them.

The determining factor is always the social factor of the class struggle, not the ideological. The peasant movement, for example, is often in favour of land distribution. This is a petty-bourgeois ideology but, to the extent that it goes against the landlords, it is progressive. However, when the peasant movement sticks to the distribution of lands, opposing it to the socialist nationalisation, the movement will become reactionary and this character will move to its ideology. A similar situation may occur in the case of a feminist movement: having a false feminist ideology does not mean it is not progressive to the extent that it mobilises large sections of women against capitalism. And so it is with the movements of oppressed nationalities, whose ideology is progressive at some point, although it is not a proletarian ideology.

Our world party and our national sections, as representatives of the historical interests of the working class, have a policy about nationalist movements: to link intimately to them, to form fronts with them but without losing political independence for a single moment. We have this policy precisely because we are representatives of the historical interests of the working class, which at this stage are synthesised into one: the destruction of the world imperialist system. To destroy it, we hit together with any movement or social sector which is willing to do so.

This relationship of our party and our class with the nationalist movements is what determines the relationship of our ideology with the ideology of these movements: they go together in all aspects of the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist ideology that faces the nationalist ideology of imperialism. However, proletarian internationalism, as an ideology, does not allow itself to be penetrated; it stays strictly independent from the reactionary aspects of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalism.

Seen in this objective way, based on the class struggle, and not in ideologies “in itself”, Comrade Germain’s assertion that “the autonomous class goals followed by the proletariat and the poor peasantry” oppose the “national solidarity or national community of interests” in the backward countries, means the same as saying there is an insoluble antagonism between the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the backward countries and the international socialist revolution when what actually happens is that there is an intimate relationship between the two tasks.

The same happens between proletarian internationalism and nationalism of the oppressed nations. Proletarian internationalism has an objective reason for its existence: it was born as a necessary response of the workers’ movement to the existence of the world capitalist system. Nowadays, this world capitalist system has its highest expression in the imperialist system and this is the current objective basis of proletarian internationalism.

The nationalism of oppressed nations fights against the same enemy. Hence, we do not understand why nationalism was progressive in the eighteenth century when it confronted feudal lords and absolute monarchies and has ceased to be progressive now; when in the backward countries confronts a much stronger and more dangerous enemy, the main enemy of the international proletariat which is imperialism. By the same token, all progressive movements of the democratic type of previous centuries are no longer progressive. We see already Comrade Germain saying that, as imperialism turned ultra-montane and wants to impose religious instruction in schools, the movement for secular education has ceased to be progressive. For us, however, a movement for secular education, in countries where there is religious education, is progressive; whoever it may lead it and whoever it may confront. If a century ago it confronted the landowners' reaction and now confronts imperialist reaction, today it is as much or more progressive than before.

Movements are defined by their historical objectives and the enemies they confront. Nationalist movements of oppressed nationalities are progressive because they seek a progressive historical objective—national liberation—and they confront the most reactionary of enemies: imperialism.

Second argument: we can support, as an exception, the nationalist movements that have no bourgeois or petty-bourgeois elements in their leadership; those who do have them we should not give them any support.

Comrade Germain tells us: "This Leninist opposition to nationalism is not an abstract and formal principle, but starts, as Lenin indicates, from a 'clear notion of the historical and economic circumstances'. That is why there can be some exceptions to the rule, based upon exceptional 'historical and economic circumstances,' i.e. those of oppressed nationalities which do not yet possess their own ruling class, or which have only such a miserable embryo of a bourgeois that, in the given and foreseeable situation, it is excluded that this embryo could actually become a ruling class without a complete disintegration of the imperialist structure. The best example of such exceptions are of the black and Chicano nationalities inside the United States. (...)

"But it is clear that neither Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque country, India, Ceylon nor the Arab nation, can be classified as exceptional. All these nations have their own bourgeois class. Many of them even have their own semi-colonial bourgeois state. To support nationalism within these nationalities, under the pretext of supporting anti-imperialist liberation struggles, or even to defend the doctrine that 'consistent nationalism' would automatically lead to a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, is to lose the 'clear notion of the historical and economic circumstances', to lose sight of the class structure, the class decisions and the irreconcilable class conflicts inside these nations, which national oppression or economic exploitation by imperialism in no way eliminates but, in a certain sense, even exacerbates when compared to what occurs in non-oppressed nations."⁵⁴

Thus, Comrade Germain classifies movements by the greater or lesser importance of the participation of bourgeois elements in them and not by their mass character and the struggle they conduct against imperialism at a given time. Likewise, he might classify any other struggle of the mass movement and conclude, for example, that we should support only unions or workers' parties that have revolutionary leaderships or democratic movements that have workers' leadership.

Instead, we believe that, while criticising and differentiating ourselves from their leaderships, we must support any democratic workers' struggle that objectively goes against the bourgeoisie and which is progressive, whatever its leadership.

We must follow the same criteria for any nationalist movement. If it objectively goes against imperialism, we should support it; whoever it may lead it, attacking and differentiating ourselves from the inevitable vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. And we should do the same with any movement that raises progressive claims (for the release of political prisoners, abortion, women's equality), whoever may be part of it, and whatever sector may lead it at the time.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

Third argument: the struggle for national self-determination and the nationalist movements are not the same. We need to make a clear distinction between the two. Comrade Germain says: “Sectarians and opportunists alike fail to make this basic distinction between the struggle for national self-determination and nationalist ideology. Sectarians refuse to support national self-determination struggles under the pretext that their leaders — or the still prevalent ideology among their fighters — is nationalism. Opportunists refuse to combat bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist ideologies, under the pretext that the national-self-determination struggle, in which this ideology is predominant, is progressive. The correct Marxist-Leninist position is to combine full support for the national self-determination struggle of the masses including all the concrete demands which express this right on the political, cultural, linguistic field, with the struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.”⁵⁵

There are several incomprehensible matters in this argument. The first is, why does Comrade Germain limit himself to merely “the political, cultural, linguistic field” demands? Perhaps there is no economic arena of struggle for national self-determination? Isn’t the expropriation without compensation of the imperialist enterprises the highest expression of the struggle for national self-determination (as taught by Trotsky in relation to Mexican oil)? The second matter is the assertion that the “prevalent ideology among the fighters” for “national self-determination” is the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism. If with this Comrade Germain wants to tell us the masses are mobilised after a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership and we must strive to get the working class to take the lead, we fully agree. But if from there he concludes that its nationalist sentiment is reactionary and we have to frontally clash with it, opposing to it proletarian internationalism, then we totally disagree.

The nationalist sentiment of the masses is contradictory: in so far as it is nationalist, it is progressive; in so far as it places trust in the national exploiters, it is reactionary. And besides being reactionary, it is not consistently nationalist because the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie are unable to carry to the end the national liberation from imperialism of a backward country.

Why do we have to reject outright this contradictory sentiment? If we develop the positive aspect of this sentiment (nationalism) to the end, to consistent nationalism, wouldn’t the vacillations and betrayals of the bourgeois leadership be laid bare? What is reactionary about the nationalist sentiment consistently anti-imperialist? How else does Comrade Germain propose to liquidate the bourgeois ideological influence and leadership of nationalist movements? Perhaps with general propaganda about proletarian internationalism and the reactionary content of bourgeois nationalist ideology?

All these questions remain unanswered because Comrade Germain makes an absolute separation between anti-imperialist struggles and nationalism when in reality they are intimately linked: nationalism is the ideological expression of the anti-imperialist struggles.

To avoid creating another axis of discussion, we set aside the problem that ultimately Comrade Germain proposes we use mainly negative slogans. That is, that we fall into the famous “anti” which, according to Trotsky, characterise the opportunists. We are for the positive slogans (nationalism instead of anti-imperialism) that characterised Bolshevism.

A scandalous falsification

Comrade Germain appeals to the authority of Lenin and Trotsky to support his arguments and his conclusion that, with few exceptions, we should not support the nationalism of oppressed nations. He says that “Lenin fully maintains the same position [as Germain]”. And he adds: “And in his final major contribution to the question, which has programmatic value, his *Thesis on the National and Colonial Question*, written for the 2nd Congress of the Comintern, we read the following illuminating

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

passage.”⁵⁶ This “illuminating passage” that Germain mentions, is one of the most scandalous frauds in living memory.

At the Second Congress of the Third International, there was a discussion on the national and colonial question between Lenin and India’s delegate, Roy, culminating in the vote of a document “Supplementary Theses On The National And Colonial Question” which included both some of the initial positions of Lenin as those of Roy. The *Collected Works of Lenin* contains a document with the specific positions of Lenin, quite different from those of Roy. Here is the quote that Germain transcribes:

“... the Communist Party, as the avowed champion of the proletarian struggle to overthrow the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions; second, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; third, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations, in order to counter the bourgeois-democratic lies that play down this colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world’s population by an insignificant minority of the richest and advanced capitalist countries, a feature characteristic of the era of finance capital and imperialism.

“... (it) is very common, not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from it, and often even among parties which now call themselves communist ... Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact ...

“Two movements can be discerned which are growing further and further apart with every day that passes. One of them is the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, which pursues the programme of political liberation with the conservation of the capitalist order; the other is the struggle of the property-less peasants for their liberation from every kind of exploitation.

“The first movement attempts, often with success, to control the second; the Communist International must however fight against any such control, and the development of the class consciousness of the working masses of the colonies must consequently be directed towards the overthrow of foreign capitalism.”⁵⁷

Comrade Germain’s lie consists of the following: the first two paragraphs quoted are by Lenin, the last two (which appear as Lenin’s) are by Roy, the delegate of India. Besides, the two by Lenin are from “Theses on National and Colonial Questions” but those by Roy are from another resolution —“Supplementary Theses”— which Lenin did not write. As if this were not enough, to get his “illuminating passage” Comrade Germain jumps from Thesis No.2 to No.10, without clarifying that the subject had completely changed and that the latter was speaking of parties and currents that broke with social democracy, mainly in the imperialist countries.

Let’s see, now, what Lenin says:

“First, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

Germain makes his quotes for the English version of his document in French. For this work and for the first two paragraphs we quoted from Lenin, VI: “Theses on National and Colonial Questions”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, pp. 145 and 148 respectively. For the last two paragraphs, we have quoted from “Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question”, MIA, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch04.htm#v1-p115>. [Translator]

⁵⁸ Lenin, V. I.: “Theses on National and Colonial Questions”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, p. 149.

Comrade Germain not only changes the quotes but he forgets to note that there was an entire discussion between Roy and Lenin. In it, Roy was the one who had the most ultraleft position and Lenin the most favourable to the national bourgeoisie. Here's how Lenin summarises these discussions in his *Collected Works* saying:

“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ movement.”⁵⁹

This change in the definition of nationalist movements has to do with the character of these movements (reformist or revolutionary), and not, as Comrade Germain seems to interpret, with which class leads them. Moreover, it was a conciliatory outcome, a concession from Lenin to Roy. And this is demonstrated in the fact that Lenin said, in the same document, that the two great world movements confronting imperialism were “the soviet movements among the advanced workers in all countries, and all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed peoples.”⁶⁰

This position Lenin was developed further for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in the famous *Theses on the Eastern Question*.

There, he categorically says: “The Communist International, though well aware that in different historical circumstances fighters for national political independence can be very different kinds of people, gives its support to any national revolutionary movement against imperialism (...) As far as possible must force the bourgeois-national parties to adopt this revolutionary agrarian programme (...) The refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the fight against imperialist tyranny, on the pretext of their supposed ‘defence’ of independent class interests, is the worst kind of opportunism and can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East.”⁶¹

Clearly, for Lenin, who leads the movement is secondary, what matters is whether it fights against imperialism. If this is the case, the Communist International “gives its support to any national revolutionary movement”, even if led by feudal lords, not just the national bourgeoisie. We agree with Lenin in supporting any movement that fights against imperialism; and we do not support the nationalist movements that rely on it, as Zionism. For Comrade Germain, we should not act so; we should support nationalist movements in the exceptional case that the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie are not involved in them. If they are involved, we do not support them! And the excuse he gives to hold this policy is “autonomous class objectives”, much like the “exclusive defence of class interests” which Lenin denounced as “opportunism of the worst kind”.

Trotsky, the heir to the teachings of Lenin, further clarifies the Leninist criteria by supporting the nationalist movement, whatever its leadership; he directly removes from his political line the addition of “revolutionaries” made by Roy to the nationalist movements and considered the ideology of Sun Yat-sen progressive because it was nationalist. Let's see what Trotsky said:

“(...) the national movement in the East is a progressive factor in history. The struggle for the independence of India is a profoundly progressive movement, but you and I know that at the same time this struggle is confined to national-bourgeois tasks. The struggle for the liberation of China, the ideology of Sun Yat-sen, is a democratic struggle and a progressive ideology, but bourgeois. We stand for the communists supporting the Kuomintang in China by driving it forward.”⁶²

“We can see how Turkey abolished the Caliphate and MacDonald resurrects it. Is this not a striking example which sharply contrasts in deed the counter-revolutionary Menshevism of

59 Lenin, V.I.: “The Second Congress Of The Communist International”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, p. 241.

60 Lenin, V. I.: “Theses on National and Colonial Questions”, in *Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 31, p. 141.

61 “Theses on the Eastern Question”, 5 December 1922, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, MIA: www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm.

62 Trotsky, Leon: “Perspectives and Tasks in the East”, 21 April 1924, in Marxist Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/04/perspectives.htm.

the West to the progressive national-bourgeois democracy of the East? Taking place at present in Afghanistan are truly dramatic events: MacDonald's Britain is toppling the left national bourgeois wing which is striving to Europeanise independent Afghanistan and is attempting there to restore to power the darkest and most reactionary elements imbued with the worst prejudices of pan-Islamism, the Caliphate and so forth. If you weigh up these two forces in their living conflict, it will at once become clear why the East will more and more gravitate towards us, the Soviet Union and the Third International."⁶³

Trotsky's position about Latin American national bourgeois and petty-bourgeois movements reaffirms this. It is of sympathy towards Cardenas and the Peruvian APRA. This position is specified in the following resolution of our International:

"In the struggle against foreign imperialism in Mexico, the leadership of the LCI (Galicia group), instead of emphasising above all in its agitation the struggle against the American and British bandits, emphasised rather the bourgeois nationalist Cardenas regime, attacking it in a way that was one-sided, sectarian, and, in the given circumstances, objectively reactionary."⁶⁴

Comrade Germain revises Trotsky and Marxism not only in the field of general conception but he also does so in the specific cases he uses as examples. According to Comrade Germain, Trotskyism is against Catalan nationalism because it is a movement where the bourgeoisie involved. Let's see what Trotsky said about the Catalan nationalist movement.

"I have already written that Catalan petty-bourgeois nationalism at the present stage is progressive — but only on one condition: that it develops its activity outside the ranks of Communism and that it is always under the blows of Communist criticism. (...) At the present stage of developments, with the given combination of class forces, Catalan nationalism is a progressive revolutionary factor; Spanish nationalism is a reactionary imperialist factor. The Spanish Communist who does not understand this difference, ignores it, does not advance it to the front rank, but on the contrary covers up its significance, risks becoming an unconscious agent of the Spanish bourgeoisie and being lost to the cause of the proletarian revolution. (...) Any other policy would be tantamount to supporting the reactionary nationalism of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nation against the revolutionary democratic nationalism of the petty-bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation."⁶⁵

Let us now continue with the black problem in the United States. For Comrade Germain, it is an exception since it is a nationalism which should be supported because it comes from an oppressed nationality where there is no bourgeoisie. The Communist International, instead, considers the problem of the blacks in America as part of the worldwide black movement and not as an exception limited to this country. For the Communist International, American blacks should be the vanguard of the global struggle of blacks in Africa and Central America.

"Therefore the Fourth Congress gives Communists the special responsibility of closely applying the 'Theses on the Colonial Question' to the situation of the blacks.

"6 i) The Fourth Congress considers it essential to support all forms of the black movement which aim either to undermine or weaken capitalism and imperialism or to prevent their further expansion."⁶⁶

As we see, for the Communist International the black movement is just one all over the world and we have to support it everywhere, not just in the US, regardless of who leads it provided it aims "either to undermine or weaken capitalism and imperialism or to prevent their further expansion". Therefore, when Germain says that we only support the exception that is the black movement in the United States he is making a mistake; he tries to divide the worldwide Black Nationalist movement, splitting from it the American.

63 Ibid.

64 "On the Mexican question", in *Documents of the Fourth International*, Pathfinder Press, Nueva York, 1973, p. 273.

65 Trotsky, Leon: "The national question in Catalonia", 13 July 1931, and "The Progressive character of Catalan nationalism", 17 May 1931 in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., pp.154 and 110 respectively.

66 "The Black Question", Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 30 November 1922, in Marxist Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/blacks.htm.

This discussion is very important concerning immigrant workers as they are, in many cases, a part of the colonial revolution entrenched in the imperialist countries themselves. In other cases, they are the expression of an oppressed nationality. This last issue is not even suspected by the authors of the European document of the majority. On the contrary, they confuse oppressed nationality with the nation.

Class independence

Only now, once we have objectively defined our policy towards nationalist movements, we can get into the subjective problem, i.e. the problem of leadership. That we support nationalist movements, whatever their leadership, with the sole condition they are against imperialism, does not mean we get confused with the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership of these movements. Just like when we support a union movement fighting against the bourgeoisie, we do not get confused with its bureaucratic leadership, nor do we dilute our party in the unions. We keep our class independence, which means that we impose a sharp separation between those leaderships and us and between our class and our party and those movements. This allows us to support the nationalist movement when it goes against imperialism and at the same time, to bring a relentless criticism of their leaderships and their limitations.

How do we make this distinction? On the one hand, keeping to the bitter end our defence and promotion of workers struggles' for their specific interests and denouncing the bourgeois leaderships because they intend to use the workers' movement to confront imperialism but, simultaneously, they continue to exploit it. Furthermore, and this is fundamental, proposing to the workers' movement to demand from those leaderships a consistent anti-imperialist struggle and measures (which we know they are unable to carry out) as a way of discrediting them with workers and raising the need for the working class itself to take the leadership of the nationalist movement. Finally, by opposing categorically that the workers' movement put its organisations (union and political) under the discipline of bourgeois leadership and insisting *ad nauseum* on the need for an independent political organisation of the workers.

But all this is nothing new: it is the same thing we do in the face of every progressive movement, for example, the movement against the Vietnam War in the United States. We support the movement against the war, without losing the independence of our party and without ceasing to attack for a single minute the opportunistic or liberal-bourgeois leaderships. The only thing we cannot do is to say we do not support it because it is a democratic movement where the bourgeois liberals and reformists are involved (and at one point they led it).

Support for the progressive movements, with total independence to criticise the movement and their leaderships, yes; confusion and loss of our party within the movement, no. This is the essence of Leninist and Trotskyist politics.

Comrade Germain proposes something else: although they confront imperialism, we should not support nationalist movements if bourgeois or petty-bourgeois sectors are involved in them. And this revisionism of Comrade Germain leads us to a very serious danger: that we become confused, for our politics, with our own imperialist bourgeoisie. They will take good care of not supporting nationalist movements which go against it, on the contrary, it will attack them. And Comrade Germain ... will not give them his support. To the masses, what is the difference?

CHAPTER VIII

The biggest danger is the majoritary tendency

We know beforehand Comrade Germain's reply

Many years ago Trotsky described the form of reasoning of opportunistic and sectarian thinking. That description achieves currency in this polemic because this form of reasoning is the same used by the Majority comrades, especially Comrade Germain:

“Marxist thought is concrete, that is, it looks upon all the decisive or important factors in any given question, not only from the point of view of their reciprocal relations, but also from that of their development. It never dissolves the momentary situation within the general perspective, but by means of the general perspective makes possible an analysis of the momentary situation in all its peculiarities. Politics has its point of departure in precisely this sort of concrete analysis. Opportunist thought and sectarian thought have this feature in common: they extract from the complexity of circumstances and forces one or two factors that appear to them to be the most important (and sometimes are, to be sure), isolate them from the complex reality, and attribute to them unlimited and unrestricted powers.”¹

Similarly, the Majority comrades isolate the trend and the general law that without armed struggle there will be no revolution and they transform it into the only law of our policy for Latin America. They separate the trend towards workers' control of all other circumstances which may make it feasible at any particular time and only at that particular time of the class struggle, and they transform it into a strategy and tactics nearly permanent for Europe. They abstract an element of the current rise of the mass movement in Europe — the existence of a large vanguard which does not follow the reformist apparatuses— and they transform it into a social category and convert it into the strategic focus of our activity. Always, in every analysis and policy of the majority, we find the same error.

This fundamental error is combined with others to make even more wrong their way of reasoning and arguing. In almost all the works of the Majority comrades, there is a very manifest tendency to impressionism, subjectivism (giving primary importance to ideological issues —or of consciousness—above the objective situation of the class struggle), economicism (overestimating the economic factor and mechanically moving it into the political analysis), and erudition (using a flood of quotes taken literally and out of context to support a position). All of this is transformed, in the polemics, in strokes of spectacular effect, in emotional intellectual manoeuvres to impress the audience.

Comrade Germain always acts as defence counsel; he cares much less about going straight to the point, clearly stating what he thinks and categorically proposing what to do, than to defend himself in advance of all possible attacks which can be made from every conceivable angle. From

¹ Trotsky, Leon: “Ultralefts in general and incurable ultralefts in particular (A Few Theoretical Considerations)”, 21 September 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p.338.

here come Comrade Germain's high peaks, but also the deep abysses; when the cause he defends is just, it shines in all its splendour, solidly protected by that defensive shell around it. But when the cause is unjust, the true position he proposes stays hidden and confused behind the same shell, now an inextricable tangle where completely opposing statements are added and subtracted, which serve to demonstrate he has always said something right. If attacked because he said "white", he can always prove that elsewhere he said "black", if attacked because he said "yes", he can always show that some lines above or below he said "no".

Unfortunately, Comrade Germain has not always defended just causes. And, as always, what is most important is to establish what policy is serviced by a particular form of reasoning or arguing. Comrade Germain's career, in this sense, is very contradictory because it has two constants: to defend Trotskyism (a just cause) and to defend his prestige as a leader (an unjust cause, even if he really were a leader without blemish). Hence his documents, especially when referring to an internal controversy of the Trotskyist movement where his reputation as a leader is at stake, serve for anything but to arm our cadres for militant activity.

Hence the title of this heading. We are confident that Comrade Germain, like the other Majority comrades, will answer us by opposing three or four quotations from their writings, (where they say the exact opposite), for each of the quotes that we have employed. To the quote where he asserts the national bourgeoisie are able to completely and utterly break with imperialism and lead a victorious struggle against national oppression, he will oppose many others where he says, with the best Trotskyist orthodoxy, they cannot do so (to avoid them the work of looking for them we can tell them where to find one: in the last letter from Germain to Horowitz). We are sure that there are (and they will be brought to light) quotes exactly opposite to what we use for each and every one of the theoretical problems we have touched in this polemic. Moreover, we are convinced that after this flood of quotes, Comrade Germain will accuse us of having falsified his thought. What we will never achieve is for a comrade of the majority to discuss about the quote we use, or recognise that there he made a mistake and accept our criticism. And here is where all possibility of a continuing polemic is over because if we accept the method of addition and subtraction using statements that Comrade Germain uses, the debate between Marxists would cease to be a militant task to become a job using scissors, pasting cuttings and weighing them on a scale. Because cutting and gathering the correct theoretical statements of Comrade Germain could make one of the largest volumes of orthodox Trotskyist theory. But doing the same with the incorrect statements could also make another volume, as large as or larger than the last, of Trotskyist revisionism. According to the method of addition and subtraction, it would suffice to put each of these volumes in the pans of a balance and, depending which is heavier, to prove who is right. But this is far from the Marxist method. The theory is also dialectical and a wrong theoretical statement can knock down hundreds of correct statements depending on the context of the specific problem being discussed when the statement was made.

This as far as theory but what will happen to the concrete policies discussed in this and other documents of the minority will be much more serious. Policies are confronted with the facts and the facts are thoroughly known by the young cadres of our International, which is not yet the case with theoretical issues. No one can deny for example that, since the Ninth Congress to date, Latin America was the scene of large workers' and urban demonstrations and virtually no peasant armed struggle (i.e., it happened the opposite to what was foreseen in the resolutions). This is a fact as impossible to misrepresent as any other contemporary fact. And even past facts are much more difficult to distort than theoretical issues. This great virtue that concrete facts and concrete policies (expressed in newspapers, flyers and other documents of agitational type) have is what will determine the course of action of the Majority comrades. They will directly ignore the hints regarding our documented claims that the policies of the majority did not respond to the specific facts of the class struggle. For 20 years we have been asking them to explain their policy of critical support to MNR that led to the defeat of the Bolivian revolution of 1952 and they do not respond. Are they not doing the same when we insist on being told on what date the POR(C)'s paper began its political campaign against

the coups in Bolivia? Perhaps, have they have answered our question about whether or not we had to participate in the elections in Argentina?

The responses of the comrades were always the same: silence, silence and more silence. Actually, a silence fraught with screams, smokescreens, and endless arguments but a silence in the end since it never was broken by a categorical answer. The day the comrades tell us: “actually, we supported critically the government of MNR in Bolivia between 1952 and 1956, although the workers’ and peasants’ movement had liquidated the bourgeois army and had been organised in workers’ militias and now we think it was a tragic mistake (or, instead, that it was very correct) for such and such reasons; indeed the paper of the POR(C) developed a campaign of political struggle against the coups, from the issue as of such a date, and held it for so many issues consistently (or it never did and we self-criticise for lying); actually, we had to participate in elections in Argentina (or didn’t have to do so)”: the day that the comrades say these things so simple, we will recognise that their method has changed.

But for now, there is no sign of this. So we think that our claim the majority has committed in its European document one of the greatest crimes of history by forgetting the Vietnam of European imperialism, the guerrillas in the Portuguese colonies will suffer the same fate as all the others on their previous political mistakes. Once again, we believe, the answer will be silence.

But if it isn’t, of something we are sure: their answer will never be one of the real proletarian leaders who, when they are wrong or forget fundamental positions, simply say: “We were wrong, let us study together the reasons for this mistake”.

The crisis of our International is the crisis of its leadership

For Comrade Germain, the main danger now facing our International is not ultraleftism but “opportunistic tail-ending”. As always, to substantiate this assertion he does not part from concrete reality but a quote and a series of very partial, very small and counterfeit examples.

The most serious setback suffered by our International over the past four years —to make Argentina’s official selection a group soon to defect from Trotskyism— is not the base for their analysis; they do not even mention it. Yet it is the best example of which is the gravest danger threatening us. Our tendency had warned this breaking of the PRT(EC) with the International was inevitable. The split took place but Comrade Germain, despite his alleged clarity about the dangers threatening us, was unable to foresee it. Instead, we did foresee it, as stated in our documents. This goes to show that the criterion we should have had to anticipate the dangers threatening our organisation should have been ours and not of “scholar” Germain.

A revolutionary party is always exposed to deviations of two types: from the right, opportunistic, and the ultraleft and sectarian. Right deviations are caused by pressure on the party of privileged strata or the retreat of the mass movement or, according to Comrade Mandel’s theory, the existence of apparatuses in the mass parties. Left deviations are caused by the influence within the party of radicalised sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie who tend to desperate and individualistic outputs.

In what situation are our parties today? Are they, even minimally, surrounded by the mass movement in decline or by privileged sectors of it? Or have they costly and colossal bureaucracies? Or, rather, are they in the other situation, without penetration into the mass movement, even less in sectors in retreat, while their ranks are fed by thousands of youth activists from, mostly, the radicalised petty-bourgeoisie, especially student?

Obviously, we are in this latter situation. Nowhere do these situations exist that explain and cause the “tail-ending and opportunistic” deviations. On the contrary, our eminently student sections must confront sometimes pre-revolutionary situations or close to them. For Trotsky, in those situations, “... the mighty pressure of the masses welds the party together.”²

² Trotsky, Leon: “The Spanish revolution and the dangers threatening it”, 28 May 1931, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, op. cit., p. 133.

For all this, we accuse Comrade Germain of using a scholar's method. He extracted a quote from Comrade Cannon and slammed it on his argumentation, without explaining the SWP situation concerning the mass movement at the time when it was written. He forgot then, that the SWP during the war was an influential party, albeit minimal, in the workers' movement.

What is the relationship between these two deviations and the need to combat in the real life of a revolutionary party? Lenin defined it as follows:

“While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the masses to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors.”³

As we see, there is a dialectic: from outside the movement, the enemy is opportunism; from inside it is ultraleftism. Put another way, we are going to win the workers vanguard ideologically and politically by liquidating Stalinism, the bureaucracies in general and the reformist parties and we will only lead them to success if we liquidate ultraleftism.

This is relatively true since outside the revolutionary movement there may be right-wing variants because of the pressures of class, and within the mass movement itself (as with the hasty demonstrations of 17 July in the Bolshevik Revolution) the tendencies of the opposite sign can gain strength. But these are only exceptions to the general rule.

Passing over this, Comrade Mandel/Germain stated that: “The large influx of new members into the Comintern after its first year of existence did not create exclusively or even mainly ultraleft, but rather opportunist deviations.”⁴

And he is talking about the same period that the whole struggle against ultraleftism was developed within the Communist International, the same period when Lenin had to write “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, one of whose paragraphs we have quoted!

Returning to the situation of our International, Comrade Germain's position that the main danger today is opportunism has not even precedents in the own positions of the majority. What did the Majority comrades predict in 1969? Let's see:

“It is evident that *in this vanguard* the main present danger, owing to its lack of experience and social composition, is to be found in the ultraleft currents. One of the first conditions for an effective fight against such currents, and more particularly against their refraction in our own ranks...”⁵

There's more: “Until a vanguard of some numerical and social substance emerges from the mass of workers, we will have considerable difficulty with sectarian manifestations. These manifestations will take the form primarily of ultraleftism, but in this, we will see strange combinations with opportunistic, spontaneists, etc. features.”⁶

Finally, thesis 13 of the last European document points out how the ultraleft has been refined and organised into five currents, and in the following thesis, we are given the task of working on this ultraleft vanguard. But here is the unforgivable oversight from the Marxist point of view: it does not point out that the greatest danger is always to yield to the pressure of the sector on which we work. Thus, it does not say that the greatest danger in Europe is giving in to ultraleftism and its flip side, workerist opportunism.

What has changed in these four years so that the most important danger is no longer ultraleftism and now is opportunism? The only thing that has changed is that our sections, mainly the Europeans,

3 Lenin, VI: “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, op. cit. Vol 31, p. 93.

4 Germain, Ernest, “In defence of Leninism, in defence of the Fourth International”, op. cit., p. 26.

5 United Secretariat, “Draft Resolution on our tactics in Europe”, in *International Information Bulletin*, No 7, May 1969, p. 9.

6 Frank, Pierre: “Report on tactics in Europe”, in *International Information Bulletin*, No 10, July 1969, p.4.

have nurtured their ranks with this ultraleft vanguard and, despite warnings that they made, the Majority comrades have ended up unconditionally yielding to their pressures.

How is it possible that old Trotskyist militants who were able to foresee the danger have capitulated to the new cadres coming from the new vanguard? Who is to blame? We do not believe the fault lies with those new inexperienced cadres without any Marxist tradition but in the limitations of our European leadership, mainly of Comrades Germain, Frank and Livio. This assertion has a historical explanation, which is what will reveal the secret of the current crisis in our International.

The European leadership headed by the comrades we name is part of the history of European Trotskyist movement and its leadership, who lived in the past exceptional circumstances that explain their present. Three reasons are fundamental and that indelibly marked European Trotskyism.

The first of them is the desertion from our ranks of the leadership of the Spanish Trotskyist opposition (Nin) and the inability of the French Trotskyist leadership (Naville Rosmer first; Molinier and Frank later) to form a proletarian leadership. With the defection of some and the inability of others, we were without strong and serious leaders or cadres in the two sections that, at the time, were the most important in Europe.

The second reason was the Nazi occupation, which we had to face without a proletarian tradition of cadres and leadership and which exacerbated to the maximum the other ills.

The third reason was that the rise of European mass movement did not last long; the three years from 1944 to about 1947. This meant that our cadres and leaderships had no chance to forge themselves in the class struggle.

The long retreat of the mass movement prevented for approximately 20 years the emergence of a leadership minimally tested in the class struggle and tied to the workers' movement. The defence of Trotskyism could not be, for these circumstances, the daily confrontation of Trotskyist politics with other policies that exist in the mass movement; it became an essentially intellectual, theoretical exercise.

This was compounded when the leaders of the majority did not understand the process that had opened and did not realise that the only way the party would survive the retreat was insisting on independently linking our groups and militants with the workers' and mass movement. There, even in the participation in the meanest struggles for the smallest claims, or even if they did not exist in the propaganda of our positions on small sections of the movement who were willing to listen, was the key for our sections keeping or recovering their proletarian character. But the comrades yielded to the retreat, taking a strategy of entryism in Stalinism and other opportunistic parties for a very long time.

This policy led to a sharp division between our European members and the leadership. Militants had to hide, for nearly 20 years, their condition of Trotskyists; if they did not, they would be expelled from the opportunistic organisations where they worked. All their art and science was reduced to give our program in easy instalments, digestible by the discipline of the Stalinist parties.

The leaders, meanwhile, were devoted to waiting for the "objective process" to take Stalinism, or its left currents, to the struggle for power. What else could they do without public militants and an independent party? Only comments and more comments; there was no possibility of other policy which was not to comment on the events, comment on the political mistakes of others and comment on what should be the correct policy. Why formulate a concrete policy if no party or militants could carry it out? This accentuated the commentator, "journalist" character of the European leadership.

Life is what creates consciousness. And this double life, one for the militants and one for the leaders of the entryism *sui generis* stage, left indelible consequences in both sectors. We were left with almost no militants or leaders. Most of the militants ended up capitulating to opportunistic organisations within which they operated. About 70 per cent of the great Trotskyist leaders who defended and practised entryism *sui generis* left our movement. Where are the old comrades in the leadership, which Comrade Germain was part of? There are only four left: Germain, Frank, Livio and Gonzalez. Where are Pablo, Posadas, Arroyo, Frias, Ortiz, Michele Mestre, Rivas, Levingston,

Colwin da Silva...? These former comrades have nothing to do with Trotskyism. Their claudication was to the right, towards the class enemy, towards opportunism: Pablo became the left partner of Stalinism, Posadas the left partner of the national bourgeoisie. Overall, they all became hopelessly opportunistic.

In contrast to this process, the most important leaders who were against entryism *sui generis* remain Trotskyists. Where are Cannon, Dobbs, Hansen, Moreno, Vitale, Humbergert, Healy, Lambert? In Trotskyism. Some of these comrades have moved to sectarian positions, ultraleft (if they did not have them already). But even so, they have caved to the pressures of the radicalised petty-bourgeoisie or intelligentsia, not to our biggest of enemies, the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy, as did those who supported entryism *sui generis*.

This phenomenon has a Marxist explanation, not merely psychological. We believe to have discovered it.

The SWP managed to establish itself as a proletarian party for its cadres and leadership. For this, very important special circumstances were combined: their proximity and agreement with Trotsky, the formation and proletarian tradition of its leadership, the rise of the workers' movement and its distance from intellectual and petty-bourgeois trends through the break of 1940. Our party was also lucky because the objective circumstances helped: the struggle of the working class of our country and Bolivia, on our borders, were the most intense in the world in the last 30 years. The subjective circumstances did not help: our isolation and our independent formation were the cause of all our vices. But precisely because of those struggles, we could overcome our countless mistakes, learn from them, and link to our International to improve ourselves, without succumbing. We were lucky we never had to wait to link ourselves to the workers' and mass movement because, year after year, waves of massive struggles happened in succession.

Noting the number of mistakes we have made, our independent training, our march as a pilgrim, as Trotsky said, two steps forward and one back, we baptized our party as "barbaric Trotskyism". What saved us from barbarism was our intimate bond with our class and their struggles in the first place and our attachment to the International, second. And we put the factors in this order because if not for that intimate bond with the workers and their struggles, we would have never integrated the International in the conscious and thorough way we have. This only serves to show that the World Party of Revolution is not the result of the mere effort of Trotskyist militants but the expression of a profound objective need, of the most urgent need of workers anywhere in the world.

These two distinct formations —of European Trotskyism, on the one hand; of American and Argentine Trotskyism, on the other— explain an important phenomenon, which sometimes goes unnoticed: the "tradition".

The true tradition of the party is given by its struggles, which intimately join the rank and file to the leadership and leave a lasting memory which is passed from party generation to generation. The SWP and our party have a tradition of great weight, which is the synthesis of years and years, of decades of struggle as an independent party to enforce the Trotskyist program and impose ourselves as parties in the workers' and mass movement.

European Trotskyism has no tradition; it has been lost due to entryism *sui generis*. If the ranks of European Trotskyism spent 20 years within Stalinism or some reformist party, adapting to the environment to not be outcasted, what common struggle with its leadership could they develop within the workers' and mass movement? None. When did it defend the Trotskyist program and party, confronting them with all the other programs and parties of the mass movement, and proposed itself as leadership? Never, ever. This lack of tradition had its symbolic expression in the founding act of the French Communist League at its first congress; the new youth leadership of the League forbade Comrade Pierre Frank to speak. Today they can give us any explanation of such a monstrosity. For example, Comrade Frank did not want to talk or it was tactically more convenient not to talk. But for us this has a single political explanation: Pierre Frank was not the nexus between the old and new cadres incorporated to Trotskyism in France. If he had been, the young and the old would have loudly demanded for Frank's speech to be the central one.

Comrade Pierre Frank could not be this nexus because this nexus did not exist. Thanks to entryism *sui generis*, new cadres did not enter a party proud of its tradition; for them it was like they were founding Trotskyism in France. And, in a sense, they were right: as a result of entryism *sui generis*, the Trotskyism of Pierre Frank had virtually disappeared from the French political scene.

The combination of this old leadership, without tradition and firm Trotskyist policies for 20 years, with the new cadres, inexperienced and bound by their origin and social relations to the new ultra-leftist and opportunistic vanguard, gave rise to the present majority tendency. Hence its centrist character, of unprincipled united front, where all kinds of tendencies, methods and programs coexist, from the PRT(EC) to the various English factions. Whoever writes one day the history of our International will not be able to blame the formation of this centrist tendency, this unprincipled front, on the new comrades of the European vanguard born in 1968. The main culprits are the comrades who have gone from surrendering as commentators to the large mass organisations to surrendering as advisors to the new vanguard. The method of both surrenders is the same; the abandonment of tradition, as well.

Comrades Germain, Frank, Livio and Gonzalez had a great historical merit: to make up the 30 per cent of great leaders who, despite having practiced entryism *sui generis*, have not succumbed to our enemies, the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy. These comrades have the great merit of not having followed the liquidationist course of Pablo; they did not break with Trotskyism. But they stood halfway since they were not able to resume the proletarian tradition of our movement.

Thus, the majority tendency is shaping its trajectory: from ultra-leftist to centrist, from centrism to increasingly approaching liquidationism. It is no coincidence that one of their workhorses is fighting “archeo-Trotskyism”, the same word used by Pablo. It’s time to stop before it is too late.

In the previous World Congress of 1969, we made a prediction. We said that in 1951 the recognition of Posadas could last a long time until the movement found out who was who. The mass movement was in retreat and the only test for everything, in terms of revolutionary politics, is the revolution. But now, with the new rise of the masses, the analysis and policy will be tested in a short time. When the PRT(EC) broke with our International, less than four years after being recognised as the official Argentine section, our prediction was fulfilled.

If the majority, or rather, if their older leaders, those who have devoted a lifetime to the defence of Trotskyism, do not stop and begin a retreat to our principles and our methods if they continue yielding to the pressures and irresponsibility of an inexperienced and non-proletarian vanguard, something they denounced four years ago as the greatest danger, they are at risk of ending up like Pablo, or as the old Trotskyists who joined the PRT(EC). Of these, not a single one survives alongside the guerrilla vanguard of Santucho: they were used as theorists and writers for the polemic with us, only to be left aside, just as the break occurred.

For our part, we have an assured future: the same as the world mass movement, to the beat of whose struggles we will be making the international party of the working class. Never a tendency had greater security.

We’re done. We just have to clarify something. Building a world revolutionary workers’ party is, as we have said, the greatest task that has ever been posed to human beings. For its vastness and for the very powerful enemies it faces, it is a very long and very arduous task. We are a handful of militants, who face, with the only moral weapon of our unconditional and blind faith in the mass movement and the working class, imperialism and the bureaucracy: a class and a caste who have concentrated in their hands the largest power ever known to humanity.

The new comrades who just now learn, amid a tough and violent argument between two factions, of all the previous fights, as much or more harsh and violent, the new comrades who see we are facing a new crisis, the new comrades who see the tremendous amount of mistakes made by the Fourth International in the last 25 years, these new comrades have every right to ask, and many do, why to stay in this International. We want to answer the following: what we have experienced so far is the prehistory of the World Revolutionary Workers’ Party. Despite all its mistakes, this

International has had a huge merit: in the midst of the fiercest persecution of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy, it has preserved for the workers' and mass movement all the experience gained in over a century of struggles. An experience whose loss would have delayed the development of the socialist revolution by several decades. An experience that is synthesised in a theory, the theory of the permanent revolution, in a program, the transitional program and an organisation, the Leninist–Trotskyist party. By the mere fact of having preserved these tools of the struggle of the workers' and mass movement, even this prehistoric stage is in the history of humankind.

But now we are leaving prehistory and entering into the history of the Fourth International. The mass movement has entered the most colossal rise ever known; the world capitalist system, imperialism, is still struggling in one dramatic ever-deepening crisis, which expresses its decay and eventual putrefaction; decades of experience of the masses with Stalinism and reformism gets them increasingly closer to breaking with them. No longer is there a historical obstacle between the Fourth International and the masses: since 1968 we are in a position to start building Trotskyist parties with mass influence anywhere in the world. No longer is the World Revolutionary Workers' Party only a historical need of this transitional stage: the objective bases already exist to build it. And all those errors, divisions and bitter arguments of the past and present, are but the birth pains of this world party with mass influence. The Fourth International we know is, at once, the embryo and the midwife of that party. Therefore, we are in it and we will continue in it.

Biographical Appendix

BLANCO, HUGO (b. 1934) is a native of Cuzco (Peru), son of a peasants advocate. He grew up among them, learning Quechua listening to their stories of struggle. At age 20, in 1954, he travelled to Argentina to study at the National University of La Plata. In 1957 became active in *Palabra Obrera*, the Trotskyist organisation headed by Nahuel Moreno. He went to work at the Swift meatpacking plant. In 1958 he returned to Lima and joined the POR (*Partido Obrero Revolucionario* [Revolutionary Workers Party]), a sister organisation to *Palabra Obrera*, and began to work again in a factory. That year he took part in the demonstrations protesting the visit of US President Richard Nixon and had to take refuge in the Cuzco to escape the repression that fell on the POR. Working as a newspaper boy became delegate and entered the Workers Federation of Cuzco. He started linking to the many peasant delegates and their struggles. From Chaupimayo he was driving peasant unionisation, which became massive, and he led an agrarian revolution in the valleys of Cuzco and the Central Andes, with land seizures and armed militias and a strike that lasted nine months. They managed a series of conquests which posed a *de facto* agrarian reform.

In May 1963, when the movement had already started to decline after the victory, he was arrested and sentenced to death. A vigorous campaign in Peru and worldwide, led by Morenoism and all the Fourth International, saved his life. He was released and exiled in 1970. Later on, he was a Constituent delegate, Senator, always a fighter. Today he still vindicates Leon Trotsky and is an honorary member of the Peasant Federation of Peru. He is editor of *Lucha Indígena* [Indigenous Struggle] newspaper.

BENSAÏD, DANIEL (pseudonym Jebrac, 1946–2010). He was expelled from the CP in 1966. Leader of French May 68. He was one of the founders, along with the Krivine brothers, of the JCR, later LCR. Since 1969 he joined the international Mandelist leadership. In 1973 he was in Buenos Aires to present the positions of the majority of the United Secretariat for the Tenth World Congress. In a plenary of the militancy that filled the Box Federation stadium to the rafters, he recognised in all honesty that *Avanzada Socialista* did not say what Mandel supposedly quoted. He became a leading theorist, publishing numerous books. After Mandel's death he was the main reference for his current. His main books are *Change the World* (2002), *Marx For our times* (2003), *Classes, plebes, crowds* (2005), *Resistance* (2006), *Trotskyism* (2006), *In Praise of secular politics* (2009), *Fragments disbelievers* (2010), *Marx is back* (2012), *The smiling ghost* (2012).

BURHAM, JAMES (1905–1987). He was one of the leaders of the “antidefencist” minority which polemised against Trotsky and his definitions on the USSR. Broke with the SWP (Socialist Workers Party of the United States) in 1940 and went to the right. During the Cold War, he was a supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy and helped his anti-Communist campaign (the so-called “McCarthyism”).

CAMEJO, PETER (1939–2008). Leader of the SWP, in the early 1970s he became quite well known as a presidential candidate and leading public figure. He had driven solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and was part of the new youth leadership which along with Joseph Hansen was leading the SWP to abandon Trotskyism and become a propaganda agency of Castroism. He joined the Green Party and in 2004 he ran for US vice president accompanying Joseph Nader, of the Reform Party.

CANNON, JAMES P. (1890–1974). He was a founding member of the US CP and delegate to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. There he met Trotsky's work (already expelled) against the policies of Stalin and the Comintern and joined the struggle against Stalinism. Expelled, together with Shachtman, from the CP in 1928, he was founder and leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the US and the Fourth International. In 1963 he headed the reunification with Mandel.

Clark, George (1913–1964). Leader of the Sailors Union, he entered the US SWP in 1929 and was elected to the national leadership in 1934. He was editor of the journal *Fourth International* and delegate of the SWP in the leadership of the Fourth International. Together with Bert Cochran, he formed a secret Pabloist fraction in 1953 and then broke with the SWP.

Da Silva, Colwin (1907–1987). He was one of the main leaders of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, a left-wing nationalist anti-imperialist party in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). When the Stalinist leaders argued that the British were no longer enemies, a sector of the leadership headed by da Silva fought them and led the party to Trotskyism. The LSSP was outlawed in 1942; da Silva was arrested and then escaped to India.

In the 1950s, LSSP was the largest section of the Fourth International and came to win elections in the capital, Colombo and lead the workers union centre. In 1951–1952 they lined with revisionist sector of Pablo and Mandel. Its course was increasingly opportunistic. They integrated the reunited Fourth International in 1963 but were expelled in 1964 because they joined a bourgeois coalition government of Social Democracy. A small section broke with the LSSP and remained in the Fourth International. Colwin da Silva was Minister of Industrial Plantations and Constitutional Affairs in the government of Simiravo Bandaranaike.

DOBBS, FARRELL (1907–1983). He was a leader of the Teamsters (truck drivers) in the 1930s with the great strike (“teamsters rebellion”) taking place in 1934. He participated in the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948. He was elected general secretary of the SWP in 1953. He participated in the 1958 Conference of Leeds (England) of orthodox Trotskyism.

DOMINGO. A pseudonym used by **LIVIO MAITAN** in the “Letter from Domingo”.

FRANK, PIERRE (1905–1984). He was a leader of French Trotskyism and Trotsky's secretary in 1932–1933. In 1935 he was expelled, together with Raymond Molinier, for forming a public faction with its own newspaper, which had a policy of capitulation to the “left” of the Popular Front, led by social democrat Marceau Pivert. Both later returned to the Trotskyist movement. He co-led with Pablo and Mandel the revisionist sector. Since the 1950s he drove the entryism to the French CP. He accompanied Mandel in the reunification of 1963. As of May 1968, when Trotskyism resurfaced in France, Frank was practically the only remaining historic leader after the experience of 18 years of entryism in the CP which resulted in the almost extinction of Trotskyism.

GERMAIN, ERNEST. See **MANDEL, ERNEST.**

GONZALEZ, ERNESTO (1924–2007). In 1952 he joined Moreno's current while studying history in La Plata. Then he proletarianised in the meatworkers union and started to become one of the main leaders of *Palabra Obrera*, the PRT, the PST and the MAS. In 1967–1968 he headed with Moreno the polemic against the guerrilla faction of Santucho. He militated not only in Argentina but also in Uruguay, Peru, Colombia and Spain and participated in numerous international meetings. He led *Revista de America* magazine, where he wrote numerous articles. He co-authored *Argentina and Bolivia— a balance sheet* (under the pseudonym Anibal Lorenzo,

along with Moreno, Hugo Blanco and others), *What is and what was Peronism?* among other papers. From 1995 he began to publish, as coordinator, *Workers and internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina*, which covered in three-volumes the history of the Morenoist current between 1943 and 1969. Only volume 4 was left unfinished. At 83, shortly before his death, he had been a candidate to legislator in the City of Buenos Aires on a front of *Izquierda Socialista* [Socialist Left] with Socialist Workers Unity (UST, which later on unified with *Izquierda Socialista*) and other groups.

GONZALEZ MOSCOSO, HUGO (1922–2010). He was part of Bolivian Trotskyism since the 1940s, always following the lines of Pablo-Mandel, particularly in the 1952 revolution and supporting the MNR of Paz Estenssoro. In 1956, when Pabloism-Mandelism had begun to differentiate from the MNR, he was a presidential candidate and took very few votes. He kept the POR in the International Secretariat when Guillermo Lora broke away and formed the POR (Masses) aligned with the International Committee. Then in 1962, he underwent the split of the Jorge Posadas supporters, who formed the POR (Trotskyist). His small group entered the 1963 reunification. In 1967, without participating directly, he supported the guerrilla focus of Che Guevara. Since 1969 he consequently applied the guerrilla deviation of the Ninth Congress. Under the government of Ovando, he converged with Castroists, the Peredo brothers, to form the ELN [National Liberation Army]. While mass demonstrations in the streets were growing, in June 1969, the group of Osvaldo Chato Peredo, with 70 followers, initiated military action (blowing up an American-owned gold processing plant) in Teoponte, 100 km from La Paz. The Bolivian army launched an operation immediately which decimated them in a few months. When in October 1969 the first mass uprising that would lead General Torres to power happened, there were only six guerrillas left, who were exiled to Chile by Torres. The POR (Gonzalez) continued to vindicate the armed struggle and while the People's Assembly was unfolding, it insisted on the guerrilla focus. After the victory of Banzer in August 1971, POR (Gonzalez) signed the founding manifesto of the FRA, led by General Torres. In March 1985, when again there was an insurrectional rise, Gonzalez Moscoso, heading the POR (Unified), the section of the United Secretariat at the time, agreed with the proposals of Lora and POR (Masas) not to call for the fall of President Siles, rejecting the call for the COB to take power.

HEALY, GERRY (1913–1989). He was Irish but settled in England where he entered the CP. In 1937, he joined Trotskyism. In the early 1950s, he joined the International Committee, sector led by the US SWP. In 1963, along with Frenchman Pierre Lambert, he remained outside the reunification. Since 1966 he promoted the Socialist Labour League, and in 1973 the Workers Revolutionary Party. He was closely linked to the Labour left and could get grants and financial agreements to develop a major apparatus. Later he started linking to the governments of Gaddafi in Libya and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. In 1985, the WRP, with forces already quite small, split amidst confusing political discussions and accusations against Healy of sexual abuse of militant WRP women. Since the 1940s his leadership became associated with increasingly brutal bureaucratic methods of leadership, a sickly hyper-activism in militancy and smear campaigns against other leaders of Trotskyism. In his later years, he explained his group break because of the action of the British intelligence services, the MI5, and he defined Gorbachev as the expression of political revolution in the USSR.

HANSEN, JOSEPH (1910–1979). He joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934 and was an international leader of it until his death. Between 1937 and 1940 he was secretary of Trotsky in Mexico. He is the author of the reunification document in 1963. He founded the magazine *Intercontinental Press* and was its editor for 10 years. After the death of Cannon, he led the SWP and its international work. In the early 1970s, he formed with Nahuel Moreno an international tendency to reject the guerrilla deviation of Mandel and Maitan. Hansen and Moreno started to distance again in 1974-75 because of disagreements about the revolution in Portugal and the liberation struggle in Angola. The SWP was increasingly leaning towards direct capitulation to Castroism. In 1979, shortly after the death of Hansen, it supported the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade in Nicaragua.

JEBRAC, DANIEL. See **BENSAÏD, DANIEL.**

JUSTO, LIBORIO (1902–2003). He used the pseudonyms “Bernal”, “Quebracho” and “Lobodon Garra”. He was the son of General Agustin P. Justo, the president of Argentina in 1932–1938. In 1933, when President Roosevelt visited Argentina, he yelled within the precincts of the House of Representatives and in the presence of his father “Down with imperialism!” And he was imprisoned. He linked to the CP but turned away when they voted the line of unity with the bourgeoisie in 1935. He proclaimed himself Trotskyist and developed an intense propaganda and organisation campaign in the early years of Trotskyism. In 1942, he broke away with the Fourth International and wrote virulent texts slandering Leon Trotsky, who had been assassinated in August 1940. In 1943, the young Nahuel Moreno wrote the pamphlet *El Partido* (The Party) —available at www.nahuelmoreno.org— polemicising against *Quebracho* (Liborio Justo). In this founding text of the Marxist Workers Group (GOM), Moreno proposes to move away from the circles and debates of intellectuals that predominated in Trotskyism. Its central axis is to join the workers’ movement and its struggles to begin to take the first steps in building a revolutionary party, following Lenin’s guidance in his book *What is to be done?*

KNOELLER, MARTINE (1935–1982). Pseudonym of Gisele Scholtz, the first wife of Ernest Mandel. They married in 1966. She was accompanying him in his activities and since 1968 took tasks in leading the United Secretariat. She had health problems and died at age 47 while living in Paris with Mandel.

KRIVINE, ALAIN (b. 1941). After being expelled from the French Communist Party, he promoted the founding of the Revolutionary Communist Youth in 1965 —together with his brother Jean-Michel (1932–2013)— and was one of the main youth leaders in the French May 1968. He founded in 1969, the LCR and was its presidential candidate. He was MEP in 1999–2004 on the joint slate of the LCR with *Lutte Ouvrière*. He is one of the main leaders of the NPA, founded in 2009 after the self-dissolution of the LCR.

LAMBERT, PIERRE (1920–2008). He was French and started militancy in the Trotskyist group led by Raymond Miller before the war. From 1953, he led the group that confronted Pablo in France and joined the International Committee. Since 1963, he remained apart from the reunification, along with Gerry Healy from England, with sectarian positions on the Cuban revolution. In 1979–1980, a process of unification between the Morenoist current and Lambertism began when the latter took a principled stand against the repression of the Simon Bolivar Brigade by the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (which was supported by Mandelism and the SWP). The unification attempt was thwarted in 1981 for differences about the government of Mitterrand and the SP in France.

LORA, GUILLERMO (1922–2009). He was one of the main leaders of the Bolivian POR from the 1940s. When in January 1947 the Workers Bloc won a seat in the Senate and three seats in parliament, Lora was one of them. He had little involvement in the events of 1952, because he was abroad, but joined the Mandelist–Pabloist policy of the POR leadership supporting the MNR government. In 1953–1954, after the breakup of the Fourth International, he began to distance himself from the positions of Pablo and Mandel. Within the POR two tendencies were formed, and Lora’s began publishing the newspaper *Masas* (the other tendency was the POR (*Combate*) of Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso). He was approaching the positions of the International Committee sector led the US SWP. At the time of the reunification of 1963, he rejected it and, along with Pierre Lambert and Gerry Healy, he headed the sectarian wing which kept the International Committee. Then he withdrew from them. For some years he had contacts with *Politica Obrera* [Workers Policy] and Jorge Altamira, from Argentina. Moreno polemised numerous times against Lora’s policies such as when he supported the formation of the FRA with General Torres after the victory of the Banzer coup. His organisation, POR (Masses), kept suffering periodic splits and expulsions but remained until his death the best-known group of Bolivian Trotskyism.

- MAITAN, LIVIO** (1923–2004). He was the most important Italian Trotskyist leader. He was part of the leadership of the Pabloist–Mandelist current since 1951 and led his group to entryism in the Italian CP. In 1967 he visited Argentina to push the Santucho guerrilla faction in the PRT. In 1969 he promoted the formation of the Italian LCR, which years later joined the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC). In 2007, after Maitan’s death, when the PRC supported the government, the group withdrew and formed *Sinistra Critica* (Critical Left). It dissolved itself in September 2013.
- MANDEL, ERNEST** (1923–1995). He used the pseudonym, Germain. Born in Belgium, in the Flanders region and very young, before the war, he joined the Trotskyist movement where his father was active. In 1942, the Nazi occupiers detected during a control his Jewish origin and he was imprisoned. He escaped and fled to France, where he became acquainted with Michel Pablo. Both headed the reorganisation of Trotskyism in the post-war period and formed the International Secretariat when the division started in 1951. Mandel, with the American Cannon, drove the 1963 reunification which led to the formation of the United Secretariat. Morenoism joined the reunited Fourth International in 1964. Since the 1970s, he was also becoming widely known for his work as a Marxist economist and published numerous books on various subjects. In 1979, he supported the Sandinista government in its repression of the Trotskyists of the Simon Bolivar Brigade and this resulted in the final withdrawal of Morenoism from the ranks of the United Secretariat. Since the formation of the Forum of Sao Paulo in 1990 (a grouping of Latin American parties driven by the Cuban CP and the Brazilian PT, which involved the *Frente Amplio* [Broad Front] of Uruguay, the PRD and the PRI of Mexico, among others), Mandel was one of the most recognised leaders in their annual meetings. After his death, when Lula won the presidency for the first time in Brazil, his followers led the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003. He was the author of countless articles and documents, as well as many books. In addition to his writings on economics, we can mention *The meaning of the Second World War*, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story*, *Beyond Perestroika: The Future of Gorbachev’s USSR*, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, *Trotsky as alternative*, among others.
- MILESI, PEDRO** (1888–1981). He used the pseudonyms “Maciel” and “Islas”. He was a municipal union leader who started in anarchism and then joined the CP, from where he was expelled. He founded a group in 1933 and was linked to Guinney, the first followers of Trotsky. It was called *Liga Comunista Internacional* [International Communist League] and published *Tribuna Leninista* [Leninist Tribune]. In various groupings he kept to the line of rejection of the of national liberation tasks, contrasting them to the socialist revolution, coinciding with Antonio Gallo, who formed the *Liga Obrera Socialista* [Socialist Workers League], publishing the magazine *Inicial*. Milesi remained always tied to union activity. In the 1970s he had settled in Córdoba, collaborating giving courses and lectures in the power workers union, and participated in the plenary sessions of Sitrac-Sitram. In 1972–1973 he supported the policy of worker candidates promoted by the PST.
- MOLINIER, RAYMOND** (1904–1994). He joined French Trotskyism in the 1930s and was expelled along with Pierre Frank in 1935 when they launched a public faction with own newspaper to defend a policy of capitulation to the “left” of the Popular Front, led by Marceau Pivert. Both were later reinstated. Molinier was always linked to organisational and financial activities and remained in the ranks of Mandelism.
- MOLLER, EDWIN**. He was a Bolivian Trotskyist who broke with the POR in 1954 and joined the MNR. He continued working closely linked to the COB leader Juan Lechín. When Lechín in 1963 broke with the MNR, Moller followed and participated in the founding of PRIN.
- MORENO, NAHUEL** (1924–1987). He was the most important Latin American Trotskyist leader. In the 1940s began the first group of Argentine Trotskyism to be linked to the working class and its struggles, at a time when Peronism emerged. The GOM (Marxist Workers Group) was later called POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), Buenos Aires Federation of the Socialist Party for the National Revolution, *Palabra Obrera*, PRT, PRT (*La Verdad*), PST, and when he died he

was leading the MAS. In addition to his dedication to party building in Argentina and other Latin American countries and its international current, he left a comprehensive written work on political theory, history and Marxist logic. A good share of his written work is available in www.nahuelmoreno.org, sponsored by the International Workers Unity–Fourth International (www.uit-ci.org) and by *Izquierda Socialista* of Argentina (www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar).

NAVILLE, PIERRE (1903–1993). He founded the first French Trotskyist organisation, the Communist League. In 1934 he opposed entryism to the Socialist Party. He participated in the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 and at the beginning of the Second World War, he abandoned the Fourth International. He was a prominent Marxist sociologist and researcher, author of numerous books. Among them, *Traité de Sociologie du Travail* (with Georges Friedmann), *Le Nouveau Leviathan Gorbachev et la réforme de l'URSS*. In 1962 he published the biography *Trotsky Vivant*.

NIN, ANDREU (1892–1937). He was Catalan and founder of the Spanish CP, expelled in 1927 for supporting the Left Opposition of Trotsky in the USSR. He founded the same year the Spanish section but in the 1930s he was having increasing differences with the positions of Trotsky. He totally opposed entryism to the Socialist Party when its youth paraded with posters of Lenin and Trotsky, and Largo Caballero proposed forming the Fourth International. In 1935, he broke because of his differences over policy towards the Popular Front. He joined the Workers and Peasants Bloc and formed the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification), which had a policy of surrender to republican popular front strongly criticised by Trotsky. In 1936 he was Justice Minister for a few months in the Republican bourgeois government of Catalonia. He was murdered by the Stalinists soon after.

PABLO, MICHEL (1911–1996). His real name was Michel Raptis, a Greek resident in France. Along with Mandel, he promoted the reorganisation of the Fourth International at the end of the Second World War and later the opportunist-revisionist deviation which resulted in the split and crisis of the Fourth International. In the early 1960s, he was dedicated to the work of solidarity with the Algerian FLN and edited a magazine voice of the same *Sous le Drapeau du Socialism*. When the reunification came in 1963, was already practically separated from the Fourth International, with which he definitely broke in 1965 when he was an advisor to Algerian President Ben Bella. He raised the priority of the colonial revolution above the proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. He capitulated to Khrushchev, supporting the USSR in the Sino-Soviet split.

POSADAS, JORGE (1912–1981). His name was Homer Cristalli. He was a football player in the team Estudiantes of La Plata and set up a travel agency. He became active in politics in a break from the old SP. In the 1940s he founded the GCI group (Fourth International Group), which defined Peronism as the government of the industrial bourgeoisie, imperialism and almost revolutionary. Since 1948 he started to unconditionally align himself to the positions of Pablo and Mandel, who named his little group the Argentine “official section” and allowed him to act as a “viceroy” in Latin America. His opportunism was mixing with sectarian and increasingly delusional positions, making up the extreme right-wing of Pabloism. Announcing the imminence of nuclear war, he called for building underground shelters. In 1962 he broke with Pablo-Mandel, to found a “Posadist international” that dragged most of Latin American Pabloism. He came to have some weight in Brazil, Uruguay, Guatemala (in the guerrilla of Yon Sosa), among other countries. In his later years he gave guidelines to implement at an interplanetary scale. After his death, the Posadist groups gradually disappeared.

ROSMER, ALFRED (1877–1964). During the First World War, he was a revolutionary trade unionist, later on, he joined the Third International and was elected in 1920 to its leadership. He was expelled from the French CP in 1924 and then he was one of the founders of the Left Opposition. He broke in 1930 but continued to be a personal friend of Trotsky and Natalia Sedova. With his wife, he visited them in Coyoacan a few months before an agent of Stalin murdered Trotsky in 1940.

- ROUSSET, PIERRE** (b. 1946). Student leader in May 1968, he was one of the founders of the French LCR in 1969 with Bensaid and the Krivine brothers. From the leadership of the United Secretariat of Fourth International, he was dedicated to tracking the revolutionary processes in Asian countries. He was in charge of the work of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution between 1969 and 1975.
- SANTUCHO, MARIO ROBERTO** (1936–1976). He was a native of Santiago del Estero. He moved to Tucuman and being an accountant at San José Sugar Mill he linked to the struggles of the sugarcane workers. He founded the *Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano y Popular* [Amerindian and Revolutionary People's Front] which had positions aimed at indigenous people and sympathised with the Cuban Revolution. Under the heat of the sugar-mill workers' struggles they began to prioritise the role of the working class and get closer to Trotskyism and the conceptions of the permanent revolution. In March 1965, after a programmatic discussion and common activities, *Palabra Obrera*, led by Moreno, and the FRIP unified to form the PRT. In 1967 a factional struggle began, in which Santucho prompted a guerrillaist orientation towards the building of the party-army, encouraged by Mandel and Maitan. The division took place in the summer of 1967–1968. Moreno kept the programmatic foundations of unification and continued with the PRT–*La Verdad*. Santucho founded the PRT–*Combatiente* and in 1970 the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army). He broke with the Fourth International in 1972 to form a “new international” with the Cuban, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Albanian parties. He was killed in a repressive operation by the military dictatorship in 1976. His body was never found. See the document *Argentina and Bolivia– the balance sheet* (available in www.nahuelmoreno.org) to learn about the polemic against the PRT-ERP between 1968 and 1973.
- SHACHTMAN, MAX** (1903–1972). He was a leader of the United States CP and later, along with Cannon, was a founder with Trotsky of the Left Opposition in 1928. Shachtman was an important intellectual, who promoted the revisionist faction, “anti-defencist” of the USSR against which Trotsky polemised in 1939–1940, in his paper *In Defence of Marxism*. After his break with the SWP in 1940, Shachtman founded the Workers Party. In 1958 he joined the Socialist Party.
- VITALE, LUIS** (1927–2010). He joined the POR, headed by Nahuel Moreno, while a student at La Plata. In 1955 he travelled to Chile to make contact with those who opposed the policies of Pablo and Mandel. The Chilean POR was a small group but with leaders of weight, as Humberto Valenzuela (“Old man”), leader of the municipal and provincial CUT of Santiago. In 1958, Vitale accompanied Moreno to England and both participated in the conference in Leeds. They had systematically polemised on various topics and Vitale, years later, linked to Mandelism. In 1965 he participated in the founding of the Chilean MIR and then was expelled along with other Trotskyists in 1969. When the Pinochet coup took place he was arrested and tortured. He managed to take asylum in 1974. He was the author of numerous books, notably on the history of Chile and its workers' movement. In *From Martí to Chiapas. A balance sheet of a century* (Editorial Síntesis, 1995), he, unfortunately, speaks of the Latin American Trotskyist movement without respecting the facts and falling into slanders against the current driven by Nahuel Moreno.
- WATERS, MARY ALICE** (b. 1942)). She was part of the youth leadership of the SWP that had entered the party in the heat of solidarity with the Cuban revolution in the 1960s. Journalist and author, she was part of the international work and promoted from feminism the SWP line of large multiclass unity movements with the mistaken conception that they would advance unified towards socialism against which Moreno and his current polemised. She remained part of the leadership when the SWP went away from Trotskyism to become spokespersons of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party, writing articles and books in that regard.