

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

No. 2 in 1972

June 1972

	CONTENTS	PAGE
A LETTER ON BOLIVIA,	Raimond	3
COMMENTS ON ALAIN KRIVINE AND PIERRE FRANK'S DOCUMENT "AGAIN, AND ALWAYS, THE QUESTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL,"	by Hugo Blanco G.	4
FOR GOOD PREPARATION OF THE NEXT WORLD CONGRESS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL,	C. C. P. R. T.	6
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN SECTIONS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL,	by L. David, Miguel Fuentes, Antonio, Inés	7
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ON TACTICS AND STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICA,	by A. Iber, J. Montero, and T. Ismael	12

(Published as a fraternal courtesy
to the United Secretariat of the
Fourth International)

20 cents

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Page 2 :

was blank in the
original bulletin

- Marty Feb 2014

A LETTER ON BOLIVIA

September 1971

In the course of the revolutionary war in Latin America, imperialism gained a battle in Bolivia. Bloody, hard lessons for the revolutionaries, particularly for the parties of the Fourth International. It cannot suffice to register this by general declarations, condemning the crimes of our enemies and exposing the criminal errors of our adversaries. We must analyze our own political, military course. We knew the political positions of the tendencies that claim to be revolutionary—reformists and centrists and populists . . . —we had no illusions about the intentions of imperialism and its lackeys, the assassins of "Che." Why, in this case, weren't we able to tear the masses away from the influence of the conciliators and lead the masses toward the destruction of the apparatus of the capitalist state, crushing in the egg the fascist "coup" which was being prepared in complete freedom, being developed without danger, because all the condemnations "of Assemblies" represented to its organizers only vain threats.

We know that our comrades fought, that several among them perished in that fight; we are aware that our Argentinian organization collaborated concretely with them. Five months previously the Bolivian and Argentinian organizations proclaimed the unification of their struggle, of its coordination, of its means, and from that moment by concrete acts, by decisions put into practice. Our analysis thus includes the responsibility of our section.

It was brought to our attention that in Bolivia on August 20 no position existed of retreat for the infrastructure of the organization in case of a defeat and to permit control of the retreat and the appropriate resumption of combat. This provision for falling back which permits recuperating strength to fight, this provision the absence of which leads one to fear the absence of a combat strategy. The fact that the leader of our sister section had to take refuge in an embassy, wasn't this a consequence of this disastrous situation?

Our Bolivian organization was weak? But did we guide the combat in a form to permit rapid progression in a revolutionary situation? Did we set forth our conceptions with clarity? There is doubt on this point, but doubt becomes overwhelming when we look for the actions necessary to put in movement a vanguard of those masses, mobilized, arms at the ready, and with whom at certain historic stages the clear comprehension of "concepts" depends on the example of deeds. There is no Permanent Revolution without permanence of the Armed Struggle.

We were not so weak, we could very well have acted on the nerve centers of the enemy, key points, gained leadership of the combats through the weight of decisiveness in our actions. Put in force the sentences against the assassins of CHE, executing them. Not to permit the presence at the side of Torres, under that famous UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES, the assassins of St. J. [battle of San José in 1964?]. For this it was necessary to get the masses and their vanguard to understand that popular justice is not terror by the sanction of terror. Agitation, propaganda in a revolutionary phase must culminate in acts, or they become confused with the chatter of Lechín, Lora, etc., even if the nuances are different.

Wise and suave lamentations on the absence of the Revolutionary Party cannot suffice for us, since we know very well that this Party arises in the current phase, of struggles, from the political and organizational selection proper to its development. It is the examination of the questions that we pose here, the answers to them that will contribute to the reinforcement of the nuclei for formation of a revolutionary leadership. Once again the construction of the Party is not a demand prerequisite to revolutionary struggle; it is the revolutionary struggle that must bring into being its structuration. There is no spontaneous generation of the Party without struggle nor a victorious armed struggle without a program for power linked to the daily struggle of the masses . . .

The questions that we pose in this note are directly related to the question of questions: Did we have in Bolivia a program of struggle for power? and did we engage in actions of escalation? actions in the Bolivian situation indispensable for winning the masses.

It would be interesting to know whether we expect to convince the vanguard of the exploited masses of the necessity of destroying the capitalist state structure by means of our documents alone or by the combination of our acts in bringing the most active parties to make the first breaches.

We are not pressing for a "bold stroke" policy but for armed struggle, revolutionary war does not exclude bold strokes, they can contribute to profoundly altering the relationship of forces, on certain occasions, numerous in Bolivia during the Torres government.

A great deal has been written about the Bolivian assembly, first soviet of Latin America, actually it was that, but it was a soviet in which the continuous action of the Bolsheviks (inside at times, from the outside always) was absent. The soviets were created to absorb the demands of the people, the Bolsheviks succeeded in transforming them into instruments of dual power, then on the basis of constituent power sweeping away the capitalist structure. In Bolivia the Assembly smothered every attempt at democracy from below, since we were incapable of sweeping over it by our acts, bringing a vanguard into struggle. For different historic reasons (struggle for peace), the Russian soviets had a composition of workers, peasants and SOLDIERS. In Bolivia, where military service is obligatory, where the soldiers are sons of this superexploited peasant and worker people, linked to the students, we struggled against this unity of the army so dear to Torres and which had no other meaning than to leave the representative of the exploited classes—the soldier—under the accepted domination of the officers. The declaration of a group of noncommissioned officers demonstrates what an echo there would have been in Bolivia to actions of fraternization in the barracks, etc. . . . undermining the base of this unity of the army of which the fascist victory was the result. This problem of work in the army merits attentive examination as the decisive element at a certain phase of the armed struggle and the revolutionary war.

In short this note has the aim of orienting the exam-

ination of the causes of our defeat in Bolivia. This examination will be a precious contribution to our political orientation, to our methods of struggle.

We leave in the garbage can the criticisms of different currents of the "left"! Ramos for example who did not hesitate to accuse our POR of being responsible, having "provoked"! the coup d'etat. I am limiting myself in this note to questioning our political activity, criticism of the positions of Lora, Lechin, the sovieteers, etc., will certainly be made in profusion, it is a matter of stigmatizing

their betrayal, but I believe that it is urgent to determine how to strip away from them the influence that permitted support being given to Torres and by that road, the coup d'etat that has brought the exploited masses of Bolivia under the yoke.

Raimond

I leave for another note the important question of a united front policy in the development of the armed struggle.

*Comments on Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank's Document
"Again, and Always, the Question of the International"*

by Hugo Blanco G.

I agree completely with the criterion that we must construct an International with a strong leadership and that we suffer to a great degree from federalism. I also agree that, in view of the profound interrelationship between strategy and tactics, the international leadership must also discuss tactical problems. It appears to me that the document is very much to the point in indicating the difficulties standing in our way in international relations. Among many other things, the authors point out: ". . . most of the members of the sections cannot participate in the daily life of the International as they do in that of their respective section. The daily problems, the problems of language, do not even permit them to follow the life of the most important sections."

If the deficiencies blocking the *real* formation of an international leadership of broad capacities are disregarded, and a course is followed as if these deficiencies were already overcome, the actual consequence is to fall into dangerous bureaucratism that can easily lead to wrecking sections that took years or decades of effort and experience to build.

Let's take a look at the *internal* relations in Latin America, which is the region most discussed:

Does any Latin American section receive the publications of all the other sections regularly?

Is there any section in this zone whose documents discussing strategy (not to mention tactics) are known to all the other Latin American sections?

Have we discussed the Latin American features of the labor movement, the student movement, the peasantry, the significance and perspectives of the marginal peoples, etc.?

Have we discussed, if only among the representatives of all the sections of the zone, let's not say the tactics but the strategy to be followed?

Without having met these requisites, who would dare *at this time* to form a Latin American leadership with authority to determine the tactics that must be followed in the different countries?

That we must move toward this, yes, I am completely in agreement; that we must no longer postpone constructing this leadership is unquestionable.

But to do this, like it or not, we must begin to overcome the indicated deficiencies with regard to interrelations among us. Upon achieving these basic requisites and organizing a Coordinating Committee with tasks of very limited scope, the dynamics that will lead to the construction of a Latin American leadership with the attributions corresponding to it will have just begun. I do not know if there are leaders in Latin America who consider themselves capable *at this moment* of exercising leadership for Latin American Trotskyism, but I doubt it.

Thus we come to the question, can some debates during a world congress, in which the representatives of some Latin American sections discuss with comrades from other parts of the world, constitute a substitute for this process

of constructing a Latin American leadership? I doubt it.

And if we Latin Americans *at present* do not dare erect a Latin American leadership holding broad powers?

And if the European comrades are likewise conscious of the great deficiencies that all of us face with regard to international relations?

If they have but few elements in congresses upon which to base judgments determining Latin American strategy, they are still less equipped to indicate tactics for this region in an International Executive Committee between congresses, inasmuch as in practice there are no Latin Americans in the leadership.

I likewise doubt that a few discussions at the next congress will equip them for this.

* * *

In the quotation they cite from Trotsky, he speaks of "a close international bond between them" (the workers' parties), ". . . a living interchange of experience, and vigilant mutual control." Precisely this is what we lack in Latin America, and it is precisely this deficiency that we urgently need to overcome.

As I understand it, the only sections that have come close to carrying out the fundamental line laid out for Latin America at the last congress are the Bolivian POR and the PRT ("El Combatiente"). Since the congress the Peruvian section has not received *a single* copy of the publications of either of these two groups, and it seems that we are not the only ones not to have received them.

Things were somewhat different with the Venezuelan group, which despite its great weakness tried to get its newly born publication into the hands of others; it would seem that they understand the need to construct the International.

I agree that we need help from the international leadership, and I agree that one of the principal forms of aid is to make the international documents available to us *in Spanish*, and to demand that the Latin American sections establish among themselves closer and closer re-

lations.

* * *

I believe that the authors lose their sense of proportion when they say in their document: ". . . we dispute any claim of a national leadership or organization at possessing greater political or organizational solidity than that of the International."

I believe that taking into account the tasks that must be carried out by the respective leaderships or organizations, there are various sections and national leaderships that are relatively much stronger than the international leadership.

For example. I do not believe that the French section and leadership know as little about France as all of us do about Latin America as a whole. I do not believe that the French section is incapable of providing all its members with the documents discussing their national problems. This is something that the International is still very far from being able to do with the documents in the international discussion.

It appears to me that although the national leaderships are likewise weak and not up to the level of their responsibilities, the international leadership is immensely weaker, precisely because of the colossal size of its tasks. As the document says, among other things, it has to struggle against the stream in a world divided into countries.

The fact that an Argentinian comrade who visited us discussed tactical problems with us in detail while a comrade of the international leadership avoided discussing what we were doing in Peru was, in my opinion, no proof of the higher political capacities of the former but of the healthy caution of the latter, who understood that, *taking into account the present level of development of the International*, it can be very difficult from Europe to discuss the tactical problems of Latin America.

Mexico
November 1971

*For Good Preparation of the Next Congress
of the Fourth International*

August 20, 1971

To the Executive Committee
of the Fourth International

Within a year the congress of the Fourth International will take place. Since the last one, ebbs and flows and sharp turns have occurred in the world against the background of the crisis of Yankee imperialism, defeated in Vietnam.

This period has been rich in lessons; the political orientation decided on at the last congress was put to the test of events. This will constitute an important step for erecting the structure of a world revolutionary leadership at our next congress.

In this process the PRT has incessantly developed armed struggle in the front ranks of the revolutionary vanguard. Our duty, like the duty of other sections, is to contribute our experience as part of the preparation for the congress of the Fourth International. In this way we will make a contribution and a criticism in correspondence with its activities; in this way we will accumulate the exact information permitting serious preparation of the congress.

The international minority must also be informed of our activity and the life of our organization; we would like to be informed of the activity and the political life of the North American section. We are afraid that the difference the North American section has on armed struggle constitutes one of the aspects of deepest divergence with regard to international orientation and organization. We would also like to know the positions of the different tendencies that were expressed at the convention of the North American section.

We have translated from English a certain number of our organization's documents, which we have put together with the enclosed item in order to publish them for the International, which from now on must assemble and circulate the informational material that is absolutely necessary for methodical preparation of the next congress.

C. C. P. R. T.
[Central Committee of the
Partido Revolucionario de los
Trabajadores (Combatiente)]

August 20, 1971

To the Executive Committee of
the Fourth International:

Concerning the La Verdad Group

We have before us a statutory provision that seems to have been submitted to the Section. The comrades who participated in working it out informed us that the problem motivating this letter was clearly foreseen:

"In each country there can be only one section and the existence of sympathizing organizations can be accepted only with the formal agreement of the official sec-

tion of the respective country."

In relation to this problem we would like to state:

a) At the last congress of the Fourth International our party's delegate (who later split away) accepted, alongside the official section constituted by the majority of the "P. R. T. Combatiente," the existence of a group—La Verdad—which without being a member of the International could develop political activities in Argentina, invoking its character of a "fraternal" organization.

It is paradoxical that the Fourth International, which aspires to construct a Centralized World Revolutionary Leadership, based on the principles of democratic centralism, could accept as a "sympathizing" organization a minority that refuses to apply the policy adopted by a national and international majority.

The same delegate in turn formally asked the United Secretariat of the Fourth (represented by L. M.) to submit to the Control Commission a request to expel from the Fourth International the leader of the La Verdad group (N. Moreno) on the basis of charges formulated by various comrades of the PRT (El Combatiente), a document that was delivered to L. M. in Buenos Aires six months before the World Congress. L. M. promised to place this document before the Control Commission.

The character of the formulated accusations was of particular importance in view of the clandestine character of our organization.

b) The PRT majority continued its course, as the International Executive Committee knows; more than two years have passed since the Ramino Congress; during this entire time the section of the Fourth developed the policy of armed struggle, in accordance with the theses of the International. This process involved internal crises, selective regroupment, as well as numerous victims in battles; all this placed the Argentine section of the Fourth International in the front ranks of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and its accomplices.

Throughout the period in which we developed this activity, the comportment of the Moreno group (La Verdad) was in no way either fraternal or sympathetic. The attacks they carried out against us went from perfidy to slander and they did not hesitate to quote (in their periodical "La Verdad"), with complete complacency, the accusations of "ultraleft provocateurs."

c) With the PRT group (La Verdad) it is not a question of exposition and discussion of differences but of two opposed political lines, ours which applies armed struggle implacably and theirs which betrays it. The epithet they apply to our members "political delinquents" is one more example.

In the ranks of the International this group follows a policy of intrigue, claiming to have the support of the North American section without reservations. It is difficult for us to believe that support "without reservations" could exist and we would like to know what it means.

It is quite plain that the behavior of this "fraternal and sympathizing" group puts in question the authority that the International claims to have. For all these reasons our section considers that the PRT group (La Verdad) is an opponent grouping that is betraying the class-strug-

gle politics defined by our national and international organization.

Our section asks the International Executive Committee to take note of this and *to bring to the attention of all the sections our complete separation from the "La*

Verdad" group.

The C. E. of the P. R. T.
[The Executive Committee of the
Partido Revolucionario de los
Trabajadores (Combatiente)]

*For the Construction and Strengthening
of the Latin American Sections of the Fourth International*

by L. David, Miguel Fuentes, Antonio, Inés

Our position on the subjects being discussed internationally is not the fruit of improvisation, but of long meditation and a discussion that has been going on among us for a good number of months.

By way of preliminary, we must provide a panoramic sketch showing where armed struggle stands in this country. Three organizations are practicing it: the FALN [Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional], commanded by Douglas Bravo; the Bandera Roja group, led by Carlos Betancourt; and the Organización Revolucionaria, headed by Julio Escalona. Recently they appear to have reached an understanding pointing toward a fusion. As underground organizations, it is very difficult to determine the size of their membership. The only way they have evidenced their strength has been through actions they have engaged in, and it is obvious that such actions are at a minimum—very small groups in separate areas of the states of Falcón and Yaracuy, where the FALN is operating, have held a town for some hours, taken the justice of the peace and two policemen as prisoners, held up the local grocery store, distributed a printed proclamation, and returned to the mountains. Such things have occurred quite sporadically.

Another type of armed action has been the kidnapping of a millionaire, or the younger son of a millionaire, whom they freed when the family paid the demanded ransom.

Also quite infrequently they have ambushed a military convoy, inflicting some casualties. But it is also true that on other occasions it was the guerrillas who fell into ambushes, with the loss of lives and fighters taken prisoner. And at the beginning of 1971, the police uncovered an underground network and arrested a large number of activists.

In the cities it could not accurately be said that armed actions have occurred outside of a few kidnappings and

this or that assault on a bank or other institution to obtain funds, or some surprise attack on a patrol car of the Caracas police.

A decade after having begun armed struggle, those who have been practicing it do not hold a single zone in the country, and it is obvious that in place of their having made progress, the current situation in this field has greatly improved for the government.

The majority of the guerrillas of the past decade have renounced armed struggle in the form in which they used to practice it. A case in point is those who formed the MIR [Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria]. The principal leaders of the MAS [Movimiento al Socialismo] were also practitioners of urban and rural guerrilla war, and all of them are convinced that they must devote the entirety of their forces to forming a party.

In the meetings which the main leaders of the MIR held with us, they voiced severe self-criticisms—that they practiced foquismo, that they disdained working among the workers and peasants, that their concept of guerrilla war was militarist, that at the same time in the unions they carried on reformist policies, that the guerrillas were separated from the masses. Those belonging to the MIR recognized in conclusion, just as did those belonging to the MAS (it was Teodoro Petkoff himself who told us about the conclusions of the latter party) that they had been defeated.

We also met with representatives of Bandera Roja. What did they say? Above all that a state of war exists in the country; but they agreed that the masses had to be mobilized. How? By means of "executions" (for example, of plant supervisors who had dealt harshly with the workers), setting business establishments and police patrol cars on fire, blowing up oil wells, etc. Exactly the same as they had previously advocated, only now it should be done in an "opportune" way. They did not consider anyone

to be a revolutionist who did not practice armed struggle. They called Pedro Duno,* for example, a "merchant" because he published books and pamphlets arguing for armed struggle without practicing it himself.

They discounted written and oral propagandistic work. They discounted in the same way the Cultural Congress of Cabimas, held at the end of 1970, which served to bring different groupings of the left into contact with each other and which set up a permanent committee to keep up ties among the revolutionists, including us, on a weekly basis. They put the label "economism" on the struggle in behalf of the living standards of the masses. They consider the MIR and the MAS of Venezuela to be as reformist as the Venezuelan Communist Party. They talk a lot about dying like Che Guevara. They admire the Tupamaros.

Another of their characteristics is vituperation of theory and belittling the role of the revolutionary party. In contrast, the representatives of the FALN, with whom we also had interviews, consider the organization of a revolutionary mass party to be absolutely necessary; but they feel incapable of carrying out this task.

What have we done during the past year? We offered the FALN and Bandera Roja our backing and collaboration. The former were willing to accept help from us in any form; for example, supporting them orally or by the printed word, particularly through a magazine whose columns were then available to us. The latter were more demanding: they wanted concrete economic help; they wanted ammunition for their guns of a certain caliber which they had run out of; they wanted effective *material* aid, since in their view the printing of pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, or leaflets was of little value.

This was the extent of our participation in armed struggle. As a consequence, the progress we achieved is to be seen in "public relations" with other groupings, but this did not acquire a development of its own.

* * *

The Communist parties have always turned the ultra-leftism of the other tendencies to account. The forces now making up the MIR and the MAS have rectified their positions in the meantime and this has led to undeniable successes; the PCV [Partido Comunista Venezolano] is suffering from such organizational prostration as to give the impression that it will never be able to recover. But Trotskyism has always distinguished itself from Stalinism not only by criticizing its reformist policies but also by scoring its ultra-left deviations. Today when Stalinism is in retreat, are we going to give it a new opportunity by ourselves falling into ultra-leftism?

* Former leader of the FALN, who, during the past few years, has published books (Ediciones Barbara—including *Historia de la Cuarta Internacional* by Pierre Frank) and pamphlets of FALN documents, as well as a fortnightly, *Punto Negro*, recently repressed. Now in exile in Chile.

To us it appears that what the official section of the Fourth International in Argentina is practicing is ultra-leftism. The audacious actions of the ERP have created more ripples abroad than in the Argentine working class. They are actions engaged in from outside the working class, although some of them were intended to benefit the working class. What is involved is urban guerrilla war in the style of the Tupamaros in Uruguay, and as such it falls perfectly within the context of the resolution on Latin America adopted at the Ninth World Congress; but what is striking is that the representatives of the ERP in their public declarations place Trotsky and Trotskyism *on the same level* as Mao Tsetung, Che Guevara, the Tupamaros, the Chilean MIR, and even San Martin and Bolivar. And with complete reason—what they are doing did not emanate from Trotsky and has nothing to do with Trotskyism; it is necessary to find other teachers and other sources of inspiration. If the comrades who support the strategy of armed struggle hold that what the Argentinian ERP is doing is what must be done in Latin America (and Comrade Hansen has demonstrated that it is impossible to hold the sections on other continents from following this "strategy"), they should now grasp that the Fourth International will soon cease to be Trotskyist. It is possible that they believe that such a strategy is the only one that can lead to victory. In that case it is their duty to say publicly that the Fourth International, like the ERP, considers the theoretical legacy of Lenin and Trotsky to be insufficient and for that reason alongside them they assign equal value to Mao, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and organizations like the Tupamaros and the Chilean MIR. We would be able to see their position clearly, and for our part we would with equal clarity maintain that in our judgment the sole and indispensable means to gain victory for the socialist revolution in Latin America (as in other areas) is through the strategy of constructing the revolutionary workers party in accordance with the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky and that we believe that in Latin America the strategy of guerrilla war, whether rural or urban, cannot be applied on a continental scale under present conditions.

In Venezuela in particular, either we carry on guerrilla war or we construct the party. We cannot whip ourselves up and get in line, for the simple reason that the party must be constructed in accordance with the will of the masses and they have always stood aloof from the guerrillas. The party must be constructed in the cities fundamentally; because in Venezuela the peasants constitute only one-fourth of the population and their contribution to production is very small. The working class, in contrast, has grown as has the population in the outskirts of the cities.

We must stress the need for a proletarian united front that would bring in first of all those who have broken with the PCV. But it happens that the proponents of armed struggle will make agreements only with those who practice guerrilla war. The most qualified leaders of the MIR have told us on the other hand that they consider their organization to be one of the sources of the future revolutionary party.

* * *

The resolution on Latin America is based on the sup-

position that a prerevolutionary situation exists on the continent. If this has the general meaning indicated in the Transitional Program where it says, "The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a prerevolutionary state of society," we have no reason to object. But on the basis of this general appreciation, tactics applicable to each country cannot be decided on, since in this case the "prerevolutionary" situation is only synonymous with the death agony of capitalism. But the resolution of the Ninth Congress gave a different meaning to the word "prerevolutionary"—that is, that in many Latin American countries conditions are ripe for taking power within the immediate or not distant future. This is what we deny since in our opinion the favorable revolutionary indications in these countries have been exaggerated.

We do not mean that we are living in a period of mass retreat. The violent strikes in Argentina testify to the contrary, as do the bloody events in Mexico. The political mobilizations in Colombia destroy the grounds for such a judgment, and in Venezuela (not to mention other countries) in the past two years strikes of a subversive nature demonstrate instead that in Latin America the working masses are fighting for their interests.

But it must be observed that this combativeness is of an urban nature fundamentally. It is the students and the workers who are jarring and shaking the structure of the bourgeois state. Compared to them, the peasants are adopting a relatively passive attitude. Is this because of the agrarian reforms from Venezuela to Peru (not to mention the most radical of all in Bolivia) that the ruling classes initiated some time ago with the agreement of U. S imperialism? The positiveness of the bourgeois undertakings in the countryside is very dubious; but we believe that by means of them the bourgeoisie has succeeded in quieting the peasantry.

With agitation centering in the cities and not in the countryside, a resolution that took rural guerrilla warfare as its main axis ended up out of touch with reality. But rural guerrilla warfare was the perspective presented to us in point No. 17 of the resolution on Latin America that was passed and many people understood it that way. Comrades Germain and Knoeller are not of that opinion; they place a broader character on the document and hold that revolutionary strategy is based essentially on armed struggle, taken in a general way. If by armed struggle is meant the inescapable necessity of the working class utilizing violence to conquer power, it is certain that no one within the Trotskyist movement will argue with that. But the meaning given to "armed struggle" in the resolution on Latin America passed at the last congress is that despite the small size of our organizations and of the revolutionary vanguard in general, it is necessary to launch armed combat now, mainly by means of rural or urban guerrillas (it seems that with the worldwide propaganda gained by the ERP, the comrades who defend the resolution have now changed the emphasis from rural to urban guerrilla warfare). They hold that the "classical" road of insurrection is very improbable. Why? Don't they have in mind a "prerevolutionary" situation giving this a very concrete meaning? Yes; but they maintain that several elements that could bring about a "classical variant" are lacking, such as the existence of a world war and con-

traditions that could disintegrate the bourgeois army from within.

According to these comrades, given a minimum size organization, the Latin American sections of the International should proceed by enlisting in armed struggle, since such participation goes parallel with, and helps, construction of the party. In our opinion, to participate today in armed struggle stands in the way of the party building tasks, for the simple reason that the concrete "prerevolutionary" situation presumed by the comrades of the majority does not exist in Latin America—the masses in the cities are very discontented and restless, but they do not know what direction to turn to. The most desperate place some feeble hopes in a Perón, a Rojas Pinilla, a Pérez Jiménez, because they have had no one to indicate the revolutionary road to them, that is, there is no revolutionary party to fuse action by these discontented masses with the consciousness of the vanguard. And if in place of forming the revolutionary organization that is required we dedicate ourselves to taking up arms now, these impatient and tumultuous masses that have not received the least indication of what a socialist revolution is, are going to persist in placing hope in the former dictators and are going to let the guerrillas continue to be isolated, as has happened in Venezuela, in Peru, in Bolivia, in Colombia, in Guatemala.

In Venezuela, Douglas Bravo, the most noted of the guerrillas, advocates forming a party; but the fact is that he himself, along with his group, are incapable of making progress along this line because of the situation in which they find themselves. He is aware of the fact that because he is completely involved in armed struggle, he can do very little to link up with the masses and build an organization.

In Venezuela, it is well known, the party of the working class does not yet exist despite the increase in numbers and strength of the workers. We have been engaged for some time in furthering this objective of bringing about such an organization, and we have also sought to turn the students, who are continuing to radicalize in this direction. And since the so-called marginal population has up to now been the one that has most rejected the regime of the "democratic" parties, we believe that the pole of attraction of these masses cannot be anything else but a revolutionary workers party.

Why do some comrades deny the possibility of accumulating forces? In Venezuela this is perfectly possible. If this was the case under the military dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez, it can be done today when better opportunities exist. The governmental repression must not be exaggerated. In Venezuela it has diminished under the Caldera regime. It is necessary to say this because the proponents of armed struggle put forward as their fundamental argument the false conclusion that the government leaves no other alternative open but to take to the mountains or go underground in the cities in order to prepare attacks, or kidnappings, or "executions." Clearly, if one prefers to carry out such actions, there is no other road but to go into hiding, and it is then that it is discovered what difficulties stand in the way of constructing the party. Of course, we can count on conditions of legality only so long as we remain weak—upon our gaining strength they will try to beat us down.

It is needless to repeat that this labor of constructing a party requires time. To accomplish it requires something more than laying down one's life; it requires dedicating one's life completely. But the partisans of armed struggle should not object to that. Comrade Livio, for example, has said that the armed struggle will be very prolonged.

It is curious that when the practitioners of armed struggle in Latin America have been reduced to a very small number, the Fourth International stresses the idea of armed struggle. A defeat has been recognized by the majority, which has withdrawn in order to struggle by other means. The defeat is a fact that has been registered by the deaths of the guerrilla leaders in Venezuela, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, that has been registered by the failure to take any territory, to gain the support of any important sector of the peasantry, to become converted (as was predicted) into civil war. On the contrary, what has been seen is that the bourgeois army learned how to struggle successfully against guerrillas who remained isolated from the masses.

If Comrade Germain and even Comrade Livio himself now say that what they stand for is armed struggle (meaning urban guerrilla struggle) and not rural guerrilla warfare, then why not recognize that the resolution on Latin America was in error in affirming that "civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare"? But we go beyond that—we believe that the strategy approved at the last world congress, that of armed struggle, has proved to be in error and it appears to us that the International has begun to rectify this in its course. If this is the case, the correct thing to do politically is to recognize in an official way the error that was committed and rectify the mistaken line in an official way.

The defenders of the resolution have not taken into account except in a very superficial way the great differences that exist between one country and another in Latin America. They have concentrated exclusively on the "variants" taken by the proletarian revolution in other continents. Naturally, the only country in Latin America where a revolution of that kind has occurred is Cuba; but twelve years have passed and this example has not been repeated. As Comrade Germain says, imperialism proved capable of assimilating this lesson. It is necessary to examine the peculiarities of each nation. In Venezuela, for example, all the important political changes that have occurred in the present century have taken place in the main cities. The countryside has played the role of spectator. Today, when almost all agricultural production takes place on ranches exploited in a capitalist form, is there any sense to practicing rural guerrilla war?

Because of the location of the imperialist center in the same region and because of its enormous power, we believe that the Latin American revolution cannot triumph unless it surges up in several countries—if not simultaneously then at least within short lapses of time—and unless it is extended throughout Latin America.

If the case of Cuba is cited as a proof to the contrary, we would reply that the current isolation of the Cuban revolution as a socialist revolution proves that Cuba represents not the rule of the Latin American revolution, but the exception. U. S. imperialism will not be caught

by surprise by another revolution like the one in Cuba, and it has shown this in Santo Domingo, in Brazil, in Bolivia. What will be difficult for imperialism to do is put out a fire that is rapidly spreading at various points. (As we indicate further on, U. S. imperialism knows how public opinion within the United States itself mounted against its course in Vietnam, and it is aware that this opposition would grow even more in the event of a new intervention against any country in Latin America.)

There are precedents for this in the history of Latin America. In the struggle of these countries against Spain, independence was declared virtually at the same time from Mexico to Argentina. The majority of these colonies rebelled in 1810, and for fifteen years Spain had to battle against some twenty nations that not only struggled simultaneously but helped each other. But, it can be said, today it is a question not of fighting against a foreign enemy but of fighting against domestic armies trained by imperialism and kept under its vigilance. In the wars for independence, it was not just native forces confronting Spaniards; more than half of the royalist armies were made up of Venezuelans, Peruvians, Chileans, etc.

The objective conditions are intensified mainly by the United States. All its economic problems are shoved onto these countries before they are on others because they are held more tightly within its grip; and in the final analysis they are shoved onto the Latin American working class, which in reality is the main victim of this exploitation. The effects of the imperialist crises are felt in common by the toiling masses of all of Latin America. And certain sectors of the national armies cannot evade these consequences. They did not evade them in Venezuela when the uprisings of Carúpano and Puerto Cabello occurred during the Betancourt regime. They did not evade them in Santo Domingo when Colonel Caamaño took the lead. They did not evade them in Brazil when the noncommissioned officers rose up. Many officers and soldiers did not stand aside from the revolution in Bolivia. The coming crises will be deeper than those already experienced up to now, because capitalism is going from bad to worse and these crises will make an impression on the Latin American armies. If even the essentials of a revolutionary workers party is already formed when these crises become acute, then the military sectors that become embroiled in the revolution will find (as has not been the case up to now) a socialist vanguard capable of leading them, and then the Trotskyists who are now partisans of armed struggle can be sure that the moment will have arrived to apply the present resolution on Latin America.

It is not correct to leave out of account beforehand the disintegration of the Latin American armies. It is necessary to count on this factor. It is easier to disintegrate the army from within than to defeat it from without. Wars between countries, like those supposed to be going on between Venezuela and Colombia, or between Ecuador and Peru, are quite improbable, because the ruling bourgeoisies know where such wars can take them. But our armies are not very cohesive. So-called patriotism is very dubious in these countries. The corruption of the ruling classes is far gone and includes many army officers. And in addition a layer of discontented officers exists that can be won over when circumstances have developed so far as to include the influence of a revolutionary party,

even though it may be numerically small, standing at the head of a revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

But the crisis is reflected not only in these countries. There are other fronts in other continents that the imperialist forces will have to pay attention to, among them the most important of all: the internal front of the people in the U. S. When Latin America declared its independence, Napoleon (who was a Stalin of the time) imprisoned the Spanish king Fernando VII. Today there are Napoleons in Russia and in China, which naturally are not the only workers states, who, under the pressure of their own people, find themselves obliged to oppose the international guardian of the old order. Is it utopian to think that the great confirmation that history will give to the permanent revolution will be of this nature and that it is close upon us?

The deepening crisis of U. S. society is bound to have repercussions favorable to the revolution in Latin America, and the latter in turn will contribute to speeding the revolution in the U. S. The resolution is imbued with the belief that an invasion of these countries would have no greater consequences than those to be seen at the time of the invasion of Santo Domingo. Would a war against the Latin American countries be less unpopular than the war in

Vietnam? In recent years some very promising signs have appeared in the U. S. — the multitude of protest demonstrations against the Vietnam war, the rebellion of the Blacks, the women's liberation movement, the radicalization of the youth, certain stirrings in the working class itself (which is beginning to react against the economic consequences of the war in Indochina). Latin American revolutionists must not lose sight of this tremendous social crisis in the United States. Its ripening can coincide with the revolutionary explosions in our own countries.

It is useless at present to discuss the "variants" that the armed struggle will take in Latin America. We suspect that this struggle will be a war of continental scale that will not exclude either urban or rural guerrilla war, or other tactics that will have to be worked out once our organizations reach a certain size. But for the present it is a question of following the general strategy outlined by Trotsky of constructing a revolutionary leadership, without which we will never overcome the defeats in which all the attempts at armed struggle in Latin America in the past decade have ended.

Caracas, January 1972

*A Contribution to the Discussion in the Fourth International
On Tactics and Strategy in Latin America*

by A. Iber, J. Montero, and T. Ismael

The Venezuelan Trotskyist group, a sympathizing group of the Fourth International, in preparation for the next congress has discussed the topics dealing with the revolutionary struggle in Latin America. SEVEN (7) comrades participated in the discussion. Four of them voted for the resolution presented by Comrade David; we, the other three, voted for the document below, manifesting at the same time our complete support for the positions held by the majority of the International, the positions of Comrades Germain and Maitan.

Our contribution is concretized in the following points:

1. The resolution of the Ninth Congress on Latin America must be modified with respect to considering *rural guerrilla war* as a general strategy for *all* the Latin American countries. We hold that the social, demographic, economic, and also topographical conditions vary greatly from country to country and that in many of them rural guerrilla war has no possibility of replacing the struggle in the big urban and industrial centers. Nevertheless, in a series of countries where the majority of the population consists of peasants, rural guerrilla war can be of strategic importance and can well constitute an armed force able to intervene decisively in urban actions at a moment of revolutionary crisis.

2. To enunciate that armed struggle, in its different variants, is a principle of revolutionary Marxism, is insufficient, if it is limited to vague, theoretical speculation. What is required in this sense, is *permanent* concern and preparation by every Trotskyist organization. To shrink from this problem under pretext of not alarming the militants and the vanguard of the workers is reformist opportunism. Lenin said, *after* the defeat of 1905:

"It is not enough to take sides on the question of political slogans; it is also necessary to take sides on the question of an armed uprising. Those who are opposed to it, those who do not prepare for it, must be ruthlessly dismissed from the ranks of the supporters of the revolution."

And he added:

"We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed from the masses the necessity of a desperate, bloody war of extermination, as the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action." (Lenin: "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising.") [*Collected Works of Lenin*, Vol. 11, p. 176 and p. 174.]

A revolutionary Marxist party cannot be created or developed if this fundamental principle is dodged. The most that can be formed is another reformist party like so many that history has known.

3. Consequently, we hold that it is necessary to reply with a categorical YES, without any equivocation, to the four questions that Comrades Germain and Knoeller directed at Comrade Hansen. Comrade Hansen evaded replying in this way to the two last questions.

A revolutionary Marxist party must prepare its cadres and members for armed struggle in its different variants. It is not enough to say that we are against reformism and for the revolution if we do not say *how this revolution*

will take place. It is necessary to state that this revolution will be an armed struggle against the armed power of the bourgeoisie, and that this is one of the fundamentals of Leninism and thus for the Fourth International.

It is necessary to energetically reject the theory advanced by some representatives of the minority that armed actions, in place of serving to stimulate popular struggles, constitute a brake on the revolutionary upsurge. This is pure reformism.

History demonstrates precisely the contrary. The urban guerrilla war of the Chilean MIR did not block but favored the victory of the Unidad Popular. The Uruguayan Tupamaros served as a detonator for the radicalization of the masses in Uruguay. The Teoponte guerrilla action in Bolivia preceded the revolutionary upsurge of 1971. The heroic actions of our comrades of the PRT-ERP galvanized the great proletarian strike of Córdoba, etc., etc. Where is the brake?

4. In Latin America Trotskyism finds itself facing the accomplished fact that a process of armed struggle already exists on which it must take a stand. Either it supports it or rejects it.

The best way of gaining these revolutionary groups to revolutionary Marxism and to the Fourth International is by linking up with them in order to be able to exercise a political and ideological influence on them. A dogmatic or sectarian attitude can only contribute to our isolation, or worse still, to our complicity with the reformist parties.

5. We hold that the sections of the International must consider the necessity of an armed apparatus, within the near or more distant future, according to the circumstances, as one of their fundamental tasks, not only in Latin America, but in the entire capitalist world.

The recent experience of Bolivia demonstrates once more the importance of the military aspect of the revolution, and our comrades of the POR (Bolivian section of the Fourth International) understood it that way. While Lora, who avowed he was for Trotskyism, limited himself to speculation about the future, our comrades were preparing an armed apparatus. If their forces were not sufficient, it was certainly not because of their fault but because of the reformist or platonic "revolutionaryism" of the other socialist organizations.

The Bolivian POR was faithful to Trotskyism in both word and deed. It prepared for battle and it battled.

6. With reference to Venezuela our position is the following:

It must be recognized that for the time being guerrilla war has suffered a defeat. This makes necessary a *tactical* retreat to regroup forces and undertake political agitation and ideological clarification, as well as training cadres, in order to again initiate a new offensive against the system, an offensive that can be mounted in the cities as the most probable case.

We hold that the armed detachments of the FALN (Douglas Bravo) and Bandera Roja, must not give up their

arms nor dissolve themselves. Although at the moment today they do not constitute an essential aspect of the political struggle in our country, we believe that maintaining these armed groups is of vital importance since they constitute a trained and experienced embryo of the future revolutionary army.

The existence of these armed detachments does not interfere with the mobilization of the masses. Quite the contrary, they serve as a support. The limitations affecting the struggles of the working class are not a consequence of the existence of the revolutionary armed organizations but of the indisputable fact that the toiling people still remain under the ideological influence of the reformist and petty-bourgeois parties.

7. We believe that the Tenth Congress of the Fourth International must lay down clear theoretical positions on the problems of armed struggle and formation of the party.

It is common to mix up the armed struggle with one of its particular forms; and, at the same time, this confusion permits the members of the minority to counterpose the problem of formation of the party to the procedures that the armed struggle—under a particular form, it is understood—requires for its development.

We hold that the armed struggle is simply the employment of arms to gain means and objectives necessary to realize revolutionary ends. In this general sense it is a principle inherent in the revolutionary process and inseparable from it. The forms that this struggle can assume are determined by the concrete circumstances and possibilities; and contrary to the opinion of the comrades of the minority, they are a fundamental factor in constituting the party.

Caracas, February 18, 1972