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## ARGENTINA AND BOLIVIA—THE BALANCE SHEET

By Hugo Blanco, Peter Camejo,  
Joseph Hansen, Aníbal Lorenzo, Nahuel Moreno

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# Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet

By Hugo Blanco, Peter Camejo, Joseph Hansen, Anibal Lorenzo, Nahuel Moreno

## I. Two Orientations

The differences over orientation, which led a minority of delegates to vote against the "Resolution on Latin America" at the last world congress, have not lessened in the three years since then. To the contrary, the dispute has spread beyond the frame of that continent. Moreover, differences have developed on various other, although related, questions. These differences center, in the main, around the problem of how to go about building mass revolutionary parties in the context of the current situation facing the Fourth International.

### Editorial Note

"Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet" was presented to the December, 1972, meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International as a contribution to the discussion on Latin America.

Sections II and III, "The Lesson of Bolivia" and "The Lesson of Argentina" were presented for a vote. On "The Lesson of Bolivia" the result was 11 for, 18 against, 2 abstentions and 1 not voting. On "The Lesson of Argentina" the result was 11 for, 15 against, 3 abstentions and 1 not voting.

Today it is clear that two tendencies have been forming around issues of vital importance to the future of the world Trotskyist movement. One tendency, continuing the line formulated in the "Resolution on Latin America," that is, the "turn" adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress (the Third World Congress Since Reunification), is committed to a strategy of engaging in guerrilla war, or preparing for this type of struggle, with little regard for the size of our own forces or the real situation they face. The other tendency holds to the line it defended at the last world congress, that is, the line advanced by the Fourth International from its foundation, of trying to link up with the masses through consistent application of the method advanced in the Transitional Program.

In this contribution to the discussion we propose to examine how the two lines have met the test of reality in Bolivia and Argentina, and what the extension of the majority line on guerrilla war to other continents signifies for the Fourth International.

Before beginning on these themes, however, we propose for the sake of convenience to summarize the two positions.

### 1. The Main Axis of Work

According to the majority, the perspective in Latin America was fundamentally rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period. The "Resolution on Latin America" stated this very clearly:

"Even in the case of countries where large mobilizations and class conflicts in the cities may occur first, civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare, the term having primarily a geographical-military meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even necessarily preponderantly peasant composition). In this sense, armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.)

Comrade Livio Maitan considered this so basic that he quoted it in a public article a year later, stating that he shared the "conclusion of the great majority of Latin-American revolutionists—that is, for a phase of the revolution whose length cannot be predicted a priori but which in general will probably be long, the armed struggle will be fundamentally a guerrilla struggle." To this he added: "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." ("Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, April 20, 1970, p. 360.)

Against this view, the minority predicted that the revolutionary struggle would tend to shift to the urban centers. The minority pointed to two significant indications of this—the uprising in Santo Domingo in 1965 and the massive student demonstrations in Mexico City in 1968, the year before the world congress. The minority held that these events, along with what had happened in France in May-June 1968, testified to the correctness of the prognosis that the coming upheavals throughout the world would come much closer to the Leninist norm of proletarian revolutions than had been the case from the end of World War II up to the victory of the Cuban revolution.

The majority have shifted somewhat from the stand they took at the last world congress. The shift, however, has been to play down rural guerrilla war and to play up urban guerrilla war.

## 2. 'Technical Preparations' Vs. Implementing Transitional Program

The basic task for our movement in Latin America, according to the majority, was to prepare technically for launching guerrilla war. This was stated in the "Resolution on Latin America" as follows: "The fundamental perspective, the only realistic perspective for Latin America, is that of an armed struggle which may last for long years. This is why the technical preparation cannot be conceived merely as one of the aspects of the revolutionary work, but as the fundamental aspect on a continental scale, and one of the fundamental aspects in countries where the minimum conditions have not yet been met." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.)

To engage in technical preparations is of course merely a necessary phase in the practical application of the theory of guerrilla war. If you agree with the theory then you are bound to carry it out in practice.

The minority defended a different theory and therefore pointed to practical work corresponding to that theory:

"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 the decisive link in the revolutionary process. It is not enough to say, as the resolution does in point 19, that 'The existence and functioning of a revolutionary party, far from being an outworn schema of outmoded Marxists, corresponds to the concrete and ineluctable needs of the development of the armed struggle itself . . .'

"The party is not a means to the armed struggle, as this sentence seems to say; the armed struggle is a means to bring the proletariat to power under the leadership of the party. 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 does not lessen the need; it intensifies it." (Joseph Hansen, "Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," *International Information Bulletin, Discussion on Latin America* (1968-1971), p. 23.)

The minority criticized the Latin American resolution for paying little attention to the radicalizing youth as a field of recruitment, and suggested that this be rectified:

"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 centers, (2) its involvement of considerable masses, (3) its tendency to try to link up with the workers or other sectors of the masses and to draw them into action.

"It thus follows that the problem of developing transitional slogans and measures to attract these forces to the Fourth International is an acute one. What does the draft resolution on Latin America contribute to help solve this problem in that sector of the world? The answer is, nothing." (*Ibid.*, p. 25.)

The minority placed considerable emphasis on the resolution's displacement of the Transitional Program, its method, and the practical tasks it outlines.

## 3. Unrelieved Reaction Vs. Possible Concessions

As the majority saw it in 1969, civil war was raging throughout Latin America. "Thus not only in a historical sense but in a more direct and immediate one, Latin America has entered a period of revolutionary explosions and conflicts, of armed struggle on different levels against the native ruling classes and imperialism, and of prolonged civil war on a continental scale." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 718.)

The majority tempered this by saying that the existence of a civil war on a continental scale did not imply "the simplistic interpretation of an inevitable collapse of the system." If the revolutionists did not act in time, "imperialism and indigenous capitalism will reorganize, if only precariously, alternating between 'new' and traditional solutions." (*Ibid.*, p. 718.)

Despite this saving clause, the authors of the resolution saw little room left for maneuver by either imperialism or the indigenous bourgeoisie. ". . . faced with the Cuban workers state, the bourgeoisie cannot help but align itself on the side of imperialism (leaving aside possible temporary diplomatic maneuvers) and is proving itself absolutely incapable of achieving a program of even the most modest democratic reforms." Still more emphatically: "The national bourgeois strata linked to modern industry arise or develop by intertwining themselves completely within the imperialist structures and in strictest dependence on them. They are intrinsically incapable of the least independent action in either the economic or political fields." (*Ibid.*, p. 719.)

With substantial democratic reforms "absolutely" excluded and the national bourgeoisie intrinsically incapable of the least independent action, the majority not only saw no alternative except guerrilla warfare, they held that it had a bright future. It could well detonate a sequence of revolutionary events, just as Che Guevara believed.

"In a situation of prerevolutionary 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)." (*Ibid.*, p. 720.)

The minority agreed that the so-called national bourgeoisie in Latin America, as elsewhere in the colonial or semicolonial world is incapable of granting concessions to the masses on a scale required to open a prolonged period of bourgeois democracy. However, it was dangerous, the minority argued, to take such a rigid view of the limitations facing the national bourgeoisie and their imperialist backers as to exclude on a continental scale any capacity on their part to make any significant concessions whatsoever.

The majority, of course, recognized that some oscillations would occur, but they held that these would not be of great significance. On this point the "Resolution on Latin America" states:

"This does not exclude possible oscillations in the most disparate directions, including new ephemeral pseudo-

reformist attempts, political gambles, and even variants within the framework of military regimes (groups of officers are continually playing at 'Nasserism' in several countries and the immediate import of military coups is not always the same in every given situation)."

This forecast, if such it can be called, was cancelled by the very next sentences:

"But this will change nothing in the general, deep-seated tendency: in a situation of chronic crisis and prerevolutionary tensions, the ruling classes will inevitably be impelled to adopt brutal repressive measures and utilize despotic and terrorist political regimes. Since these classes often are not very solid as social forces and cannot realistically contemplate solving their problems with popularly based reactionary regimes on the fascist model, military regimes remain the most likely recourse." (Ibid., p. 718.)

The minority argued that the class struggle goes through upturns and downturns that are marked by advances and retreats of the contending classes that can be of considerable, if not decisive, importance for the sections of the Fourth International in Latin America at their present state of development. Thus it was false and schematic to picture the situation in all of the countries of Latin America as being politically prerevolutionary, leaving out of account the differences between these countries and the various conjunctures affecting them. At the time of the Ninth World Congress the class struggle in some countries was on the rise (Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina) while in others it was on the ebb. Brazil, the most important country of all, was still suffering from the effects of the counterrevolutionary coup in 1964. As for the guerrilla movements, they had suffered a series of demoralizing defeats in country after country.

Worst of all was the majority's error of laying down a tactical prescription (guerrilla war) for the entire continent. This fixed in advance "the tactics to be followed by all the national sections, leaving up to them only the job of implementing the tactical formula on the local scene." (Hansen, "Assessment of the Draft Resolution," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 24.)

The majority orientation fostered rigidity precisely in the area where the national sections should have been encouraged to hold open various possibilities, the better to take immediate advantage of any concessions, however limited, partial or temporary, that the bourgeoisie might be compelled to make under the strain of the class struggle.

#### 4. Effect of Trend Toward 'Classical' Norms

The majority, while not completely excluding other variants such as phases of "military reformism," stressed a perspective of "increasingly brutal repression by the native ruling classes and imperialism." The "Resolution on Latin America" stated categorically:

"The experience of Bolivia, where all forms of normal organizational activity are continually stamped out, as well as the experience of Peru, where the repression has not let up since 1962, especially in the countryside, are absolutely clear. The same holds for Mexico where the ruling class, reverting to its most barbaric traditions,

did not hesitate to stage a full-fledged massacre of the students (the Brazilian regime's official and 'semiofficial' counterattack followed the same logic)." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.)

The minority was not surprised by the urban uprisings that led the bourgeoisie in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile to set up reformist regimes, and that led in the case of Bolivia to the appearance of the Popular Assembly. "We forecast, in our arguments, that in Latin America the revolutionary struggle would tend to shift to the urban centers, and we cited as one of the first examples of that trend what happened in Santo Domingo." (Hansen, "Report on World Congress," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 44.)

The developments in Bolivia confirmed the position of the minority at the Ninth World Congress, already mentioned, that the pattern of revolutionary struggles on a world scale was tending toward the norms exemplified by the Russian revolution of 1917.

#### 5. Castroism Vs. Leninism

In defense of their theory of guerrilla war, the majority held that the explanation for the long series of defeats suffered by those who had tried to apply it in Latin America since the Cuban revolution was to be found in practical errors—not in the concept.

"The failure of certain guerrilla experiments (in Peru, for example) came about, in large measure, more from errors in assessing the situation, the trends, and the relationship of forces among the masses than from errors in conception." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 719.)

The minority contended that this view constituted an adaptation to the position held by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara that it is possible to repeat the peculiar pattern of the Cuban revolution elsewhere in Latin America. The minority subjected this erroneous position, as well as the specific errors Guevara made in Bolivia, to detailed analysis at the Ninth World Congress.

"If we summarize all these errors, we come to the following general conclusion about them, that Che Guevara put guerrilla technique—armed-struggle technique—above politics. He put military action above party building. . . .

"The conclusion to be drawn from this . . . is that first of all guerrilla warfare does not stand up as a general strategy however well it may fit in as a tactic in certain situations when it is used by a well-constructed combat party.

"A second conclusion to be drawn from this experience is that it presented fresh proof that the struggle in Latin America has become more difficult and requires a better instrument than previously—it requires the construction of a combat party to a much greater degree than, say, in 1958 or 1959." (Hansen, "Report on World Congress," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 49.)

Just as the majority failed at the Ninth World Congress to apply the method of the Transitional Program to the current situation in Latin America so they failed to subject the Guevarist theory of guerrilla warfare to critical analysis.

"The truth of it is that the resolution is a rather faithful reflection of the publicly expressed views of the Cuban leadership on this question. . . .

"The proposed tactic can hardly be weighed properly without referring to its relation to the success of the Cuban revolution and to the way, since then, it has been extrapolated by the Cuban leadership in Latin America and elsewhere. The resolution fails to do this in even the most summary fashion." (Ibid., p. 21.)

Comrade Hugo González Moscoso, one of the leaders of the majority, had indicated the source of his views on this question two years before the Ninth World Congress: "In the prevailing conditions in Latin America, the results achieved by the guerrillas in Cuba can be realized in any country. Therefore, I say that guerrilla warfare is incontrovertibly the road revolutionaries must take to liberate their peoples from capitalist and imperialist exploitation." ("The Cuban Revolution and Its Lessons," *Fifty Years of World Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, p. 193.)

Comrade Peng Shu-tse said of this statement: "The ideas of Comrade Moscoso are a direct reflection of the ideas contained in the OLAS General Declaration." ("Return to the Road of Trotskyism," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 29.)

Commenting further on this, Comrade Peng said: "The adoption of the strategy of guerrilla warfare by sections in Latin America and even by the International leadership is a direct reflection of the Castroist influence upon the International. This situation raises the logical question of the relationship and differences between Castroism and Trotskyism." (Ibid., p. 31.)

How accurately Comrade Peng put his finger on the source of the concepts behind the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress was shown when it became known later (it was not reported at the congress) that the PRT (Combatiente) had publicly favored adopting the Castroist strategy and tactics as early as 1968: "We believe that our party should clearly pronounce itself in favor of the world revolutionary strategy formulated by Castroism." ("The Only Road to Workers' Power and Socialism," *International Information Bulletin*, No. 4, October, 1972, p. 18.)

Comrade Peng said in addition: "We, of course, support the Cuban workers state against imperialism like other workers states, and we can on certain specific issues even give critical support to the Cuban leadership against this or that tendency, such as giving critical support to their attack on Moscow's line of peaceful coexistence and the peaceful road to socialism. On the other hand, we must thoroughly criticize all the Cuban leadership's weaknesses. We must criticize such things as their support of the guerrilla war strategy, pointing out that this is not an alternative strategy to the peaceful-road-to-socialism strategy advocated by the Stalinists, but that objectively in the long run, the strategy of guerrilla warfare will only help the opportunism of the Stalinists as well as American imperialism." ("Return to the Road of Trotskyism," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 32.)

## 6. Two Views on the Place of Guerrilla War

The minority stressed the fact that it did not oppose guerrilla warfare per se. Guerrilla warfare, the minority held, could prove to be advantageous in certain situations as an adjunct in mass struggles. The use of guerrilla warfare was a tactical question to be determined by the various sections. What the minority objected to was the conversion of the guerrilla tactic into a strategic orientation that inevitably cut across and superseded the strategic orientation of building a revolutionary mass party.

The minority pointed out that the Trotskyist movement was not without recent experience in the problems of guerrilla war, having tested it out since the victory of the Cuban revolution and having learned some important lessons about it, in some instances the hard way.

In particular, the minority stressed the importance of what had been learned in Peru during the great upsurge of the peasants led by Hugo Blanco in the early sixties.

Up until the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress, this had been regarded as an acquisition of the world Trotskyist movement as a whole. It should be recalled how Comrade Maitan once spoke of it. In a polemic against Régis Debray in 1967, Comrade Maitan pointed out:

"The Peruvian experience has undoubtedly been one of the most momentous of the past five years, an experience rich and varied, outstanding in the multiplicity of movements, the application of palpably different lines, the temporary successes followed by devastating repressions, and by tragic setbacks. No serious attempt to make generalizations valid for all of Latin America can be undertaken without a detailed and profound analysis of what has occurred in Peru." ("Major Problems of the Latin American Revolution—a Reply to Régis Debray," *International Socialist Review*, September-October, 1967, p. 7.)

Citing against Debray what had been achieved under Hugo Blanco's leadership, Comrade Maitan said that "to gain even the slightest understanding of Hugo Blanco's work, one must start from the context in which it was executed and grasp its objective implications in the given conditions. When he began his work among the peasants, Blanco was reacting on the one hand against adventurist and putschist tendencies which had developed within his own organization; and on the other hand, he was breaking with the tradition of a certain kind of urban left, which was, indeed, partly bound to obsolete schemas, partly always ready to *discuss* new roads but incapable of taking practical steps to establish ties with the peasant masses. Blanco's experience did not in any way develop in accordance with abstract models but in ever closer association with the real mass movement. Now, after the fact, only a blind man could fail to realize the truly historic importance such work has had in educating the peasant sectors, even aside from the fact that it is still too early to assess the impact on the future of the revolutionary movement made by the Tacna trial and the events which followed it in which Hugo Blanco emerged as a hero of the Peruvian and Latin American people." (Ibid., pp. 7-8.)

The position held in common by the leadership of the Fourth International at that time can be judged by the

approving way in which Comrade Maitan cited Hugo Blanco's views as expressed in some letters written not long after he was imprisoned:

"In the first place, for those who have imputed reformist tendencies to Blanco (perhaps because he used the organizing of unions as a means and concerned himself also with the most modest needs of the peasants in his region, not overlooking the fact that partial gains could prove valuable in reinforcing the self-confidence of the peasants), the following passage should be noted: 'We have discovered a broad and sure road and we are advancing. Why should we lose our heads now? Those comrades who are in prison must understand that the party cannot mobilize itself in harmony with their weariness at confinement but only in accordance with the needs of the Peruvian people and the possibilities open to them. If there are some who are free and in a hurry and who feel that they are able to be guerrillas, that is magnificent! Let them prove it by devoting themselves to a peasant union, the one in Chumbivilcas for example, coming and going on foot. After that they can talk to us about guerrilla warfare, if they have enough strength left. Doesn't organizing peasant unions train militants in the nomad life? And it brings the most important result—the conscious incorporation of the broad masses in the struggle. We must gain as much ground as we can before the armed clash comes in order to be sure of victory.'" (Ibid., p. 9.)

Comrade Maitan singled out another passage for quotation, calling it "very important":

"As to the tactics of guerrilla warfare, I am completely in accord that they should be taught to defense committees. These should not be empiric, and in this respect, the vanguard party has a role to play. All knowledge of guerrilla tactics *which can be adapted* to our militia strategy must be taken advantage of.

"Manco II, for example, who surrounded Cuzco ready to crush it, was abandoned by his troops because the time for planting or harvesting—I don't remember which—had come for potatoes.

"None of that interferes with guerrilla organization. Some units can be organized to aid the militias. But the fundamental organism for the open struggle in Peru will be the militia of the unions led by the party. Let us take all the advantages of the peculiarities of our situation.

"We will not part with anything, having advanced so much.

"You say, 'it is astride the *campesino* movement that the FIR [Frente de la Izquierda Revolucionaria, the Peruvian section of the Fourth International] should face the open struggle for power.' I agree, it was so in Cuba. The difference lies in that they first grabbed the arms and then mounted the horse. We are on the horse but lack the arms. Why get off the horse?'" (Ibid., pp. 9-10. Emphasis in original.)

Hugo Blanco did not change his views during the subsequent years he spent in prison, as can be seen from the material included in his book *Land or Death—The Peasant Struggle in Peru*. In his criticisms of what was or was not done by the Peruvian Trotskyists, he indicated only two weaknesses—not enough emphasis was placed on party building, and at his trial in Tacna too much stress was placed on the guerrilla aspects of the Trotskyist involvement. Thus in a letter to Joseph Hansen written in January, 1970, while he was still in prison,

he said:

"Another item in which Moreno was right as against us: My defense and the defense of the happenings in Chumpimayo should not have been that of a 'Trotskyist guerrilla' as was done in general, but as an example of the application of the Transition Program *in opposition* to guerrillaism. By way of contrast it stood out as an example of armed struggle that arose as a result of work among the masses." (*Discussion on Latin America*, p. 55. Emphasis in original.)

At the Ninth World Congress the minority delegates and observers appealed to the gathering not to brush aside the experience of the Fourth International in guerrilla warfare, in particular what had been learned during Hugo Blanco's leadership of the peasant struggle in Peru, in which our movement had the honor of mobilizing the largest and most dynamic peasant movement in recent history in Latin America. They especially pointed to the concrete pattern that had been worked out on how to proceed to win leadership of the peasants.

The majority paid no attention. They disregarded the lessons learned from the Trotskyist movement's own engagement in the peasant struggle in Latin America.

## 7. The Danger of a Revival of Stalinism

The majority held that the consciousness of the masses in Latin America, including that of the peasantry, stood at such a high level as to have ended the debate over whether it was possible to win socialism via a peaceful road.

"In Latin America, the polemic between the advocates of the 'democratic' and the 'peaceful' road and the advocates of the revolutionary road has been entirely outmoded . . ." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 719.)

The Mexican delegation, impressed by the arguments of the majority on this point, stated: "As the draft resolution clearly recognizes, the debate over peaceful and violent roads to revolution in Latin America is concluded." ("The Position of the Mexican Delegation to the Ninth Congress of the Fourth International on the United Secretariat Resolution on Latin America." (*Discussion on Latin America*, p. 35.)

These statements were made, of course, before the experience in Peru and Bolivia and above all the success of the Unidad Popular in Chile gave fresh life to bourgeois nationalism, and, along with it, the popular frontism of the Stalinists and Social Democrats on a wide scale in Latin America, sweeping not a few guerrilla fighters off their feet.

The role of Castroism in helping to pave the way for such a development was explained in some detail by the minority at the Ninth World Congress:

"But by confining the dispute with the Stalinists almost exclusively to the issue of armed struggle, and limiting it even further to the question of rural guerrilla war, the Cubans gave precious political ground to their opponents by default. Thus the Stalinist betrayers of the revolutionary struggle in Venezuela were able to advance telling arguments on why the workers need a revolutionary

party. For the Venezuelan Stalinists, who cited Lenin in a completely abstract way, this was only a smoke screen; but the Cubans were not able to answer them effectively and this could not fail to influence at least some good revolutionary-minded militants. In the same way, the Cubans failed to offer an adequate challenge to the Stalinists in the urban centers, making it easier for them to retain a rather large following which they, of course, are now seeking to use in their wheeling and dealing in the bourgeois electoral arena.

"The Cubans likewise conceded the field of theory to the Stalinists . . .

"The Stalinists took full advantage of the ineptness of the Cubans, or their hesitation at speaking out because of possible economic pressure from Moscow, to further obscure and bury the question.

"The result of these mistakes was that even in such a favorable situation as the one in Venezuela, with the prestige of the Cuban revolution behind them, and the not immaterial advantages of state power, the Cubans ended up in their factional struggle with the Stalinists in a small minority." (Hansen, "Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 22.)

Events have confirmed in the most striking way the accuracy of the analysis offered by the minority at the Ninth World Congress on this question.

## 8. Correct Field of Work

The majority discounted the proletariat as an immediate field of work. "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." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 719.)

It is true that this statement was sandwiched between a reaffirmation of the leading role of the working class in the long run and a qualifier on the possibility of the leading role of the proletariat being exercised through various forms. It should be added that nowhere did the majority at the Ninth World Congress deny the revolutionary role of the proletariat—to the contrary, they carefully affirmed this role.

Nonetheless, for the immediate period ahead, the fields of endeavor were clearly specified in the resolution to be the peasantry for the "main weight of the struggle" and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie for the "cadres of the movement." This conclusion, of course, followed logically from the majority theory of guerrilla war and perhaps their observation of the experience of various guerrilla efforts in Latin America.

The minority argued for the proletarian orientation outlined in the Transitional Program, and for following what the Bolsheviks had taught in regard to cadre building—that even under the most brutal repression revolutionists have "no choice but to continue their patient political

and organizational work—in the underground or in exile." (Hansen, "Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 19.)

Comrade Peng said: "Replacing the Transitional Program with the strategy of guerrilla warfare, neglecting the most serious work in the working class and its traditional class-struggle organizations, i. e., the trade unions, and continuing to adapt ourselves to different petty-bourgeois currents and leaderships, cannot only not build an International, but will lead our movement into a blind alley." ("Return to the Road of Trotskyism," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 34.)

As indicated above, the minority stressed the importance of making a turn toward the radicalized youth, pointing to the weight of the youth in the urban centers, its capacity to engage in demonstrations in considerable numbers, and its tendency to try to link up with the workers and other sectors of the masses and to draw them into action.

The minority took this view not only because of the evident openings shown to exist by the experience in France, the United States, and many other countries, but because the world Trotskyist movement has looked toward the youth since its foundation, embodying the orientation in the Transitional Program.

## 9. The Struggle for Democratic Demands

The "Resolution on Latin America" failed to deal adequately with the struggle for democratic demands, of which the central one is agrarian reform.

Agrarian reform is an important issue throughout the continent and plays a key role in the politics of countries like Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and in Central America.

The "Resolution on Latin America" contains a paragraph on the peasantry that mentions their "land hunger" and other motives that lead to their becoming radicalized. Instead of stressing the central importance of democratic demands around the land question in mobilizing the peasantry, the resolution concludes with an exaggerated view of the political level of the peasantry on a continental scale. According to the resolution, the peasantry "have assimilated the lesson of the Cuban revolution, whose fortunes they continually follow; have learned a great deal from the guerrilla experiences and are not cut off from the student revolutionary movements, whose influence reaches them through a thousand different channels." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 716.)

The peasant movement is closely bound up with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities. The "Resolution on Latin America" mentions this correctly (p. 716) but only in passing. No lessons are drawn as to the importance of this to the sections of the Fourth International in Latin America. Nothing is said about how to go about this work concretely.

Comrade Peng, basing himself on the lessons taught by Lenin and Trotsky and on the experience of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semicolonial countries, particularly China, stressed the need to clarify

the democratic aspect of the Latin American revolution. He challenged the majority comrades to explain why they had left the struggle for democratic demands out of their "continental strategy." His challenge went unanswered.

The fact is that the majority discounted the democratic side of the Latin American revolution. While they admitted the possibility that the revolution could begin "as a democratic anti-imperialist revolution in regard to its objectives and the consciousness of the masses," they held that the possibility "does not affect the logic of the process with all its inevitable implications for the lineup and role of the social classes." (p. 718.)

The process they referred to was the dynamics of permanent revolution. As an abstract statement, the resolution is correct in what it says on this. In the absence of any concrete proposals, however, the theory of permanent revolution is not used as a guide to action.

This follows from the error of the majority in overrating the level of consciousness of the peasantry. A concrete program of democratic demands is hardly necessary if the peasantry in their thinking have already gone beyond this stage of the revolution. By not paying attention to this our comrades can find themselves on the sidelines when the democratic opening of the revolution bursts upon them.

## 10. Broadening and Deepening of Erroneous Line

The minority contended at the Ninth World Congress that the guerrilla orientation adopted by the majority could not be confined to Latin America. "If the draft resolution of Latin America were to be passed in its present form by the coming world congress, our movement would be hard put to explain why the orientation decided on as good for Latin America was considered to be bad for the rest of the colonial and semicolonial world. It would certainly be contended that such a position is inconsistent and that such a sharp geographical demarcation cannot reasonably be made." (Hansen, "Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 26.)

The majority leaders did not take a common stand on this very important question. Some were equivocal, stating that the resolution dealt only with Latin America and that it was improper to raise such a question in this context. Comrade Germain was emphatic in stating that the orientation applied only to Latin America. Later, Comrades Germain and Knoeller, in arguing for the necessity of armed actions by "small detachments of the vanguard of the workers parties and trade unions" under certain conditions, said the following:

"Let us repeat again, to avoid any misunderstanding, that these considerations apply only to prerevolutionary conditions and in a precise political context (the absence of democratic liberties, the impossibility of a gradual ascent in the mass movement, etc.). There is *no question* of mechanically extending this reasoning to all countries in the world, least of all the United States, Japan, Great Britain, Germany, etc." ("The Strategic Orientation of the

Revolutionists in Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 94. Emphasis in original.)

The majority reasoning on this question was, of course, extended by various comrades to other countries, including France, which hardly belongs to the colonial or semi-colonial sector. We will return to this later.

## 11. A Harvest of Disasters

At the Ninth World Congress the majority did not spell out in practical terms what they contemplated doing. As against the euphoria whipped up by the leaders of the majority on the possibility of a quick "breakthrough" to be gained by resorting to guerrilla action in selected areas of the world, the minority expressed the gravest forebodings concerning the end results of their projected course of action.

Those end results included a crippling disaster in Bolivia and the political degeneration of the guerrilla group in Argentina. We will cover these subjects in detail later.

## 12. Adaptation to Ultraleftism

The majority at the Ninth World Congress paid little attention to the arguments offered by those opposed to adopting guerrilla war as a main strategic line. Instead they persisted in and deepened their error. The minority, consequently, began to assess the meaning of this development, coming to the conclusion that it must be characterized *politically* as an adaptation to ultraleftism.

"Thus two concepts concerning the main road of the revolution were adumbrated at the congress.

"The source of the pressure for elevating 'rural guerrilla warfare' into a principle is clear. It is the guerrilla fighters, particularly in Latin America . . . and significant sections of the radicalizing youth, that is, those who have not yet gained political experience and who have made a mystique out of the fate of Che Guevara and who don't know much about Hugo Blanco's example.

"The course prescribed by Comrade Maitan and made official in the Latin American resolution represents a concession to ultraleftism. This is how it must be characterized objectively. . . .

"Consistent application of the course charted by Comrade Maitan would prove disastrous for the Fourth International. The line could hardly be confined to Latin America or even the colonial world generally, for the same ultra-left tendencies to which the adaptation has been made are operative in the imperialist centers. Fostering an ultra-left course in Latin America would surely be paralleled by permissiveness toward ultraleftism, if not worse, in the imperialist centers. In fact, there is evidence that this has already been occurring in the quite different context of conditions in Britain.

"The adoption of a resolution by a world congress

elevating 'rural guerrilla war' into a main strategy should therefore be regarded as a grave development. After full discussion on the issues in all the sections of the Fourth International, every effort should be made at the next world congress to rectify this error." (Hansen, "A Contribution to the Discussion on Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 65.)

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In the discussion since then, the majority have sought to show that the "turn" toward guerrilla warfare adopted at the Ninth World Congress comes within the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. The only quotations of any substance that they have been able to adduce in seeming support of their contention are a few items by Lenin written during one of the passing phases of the 1905 revolution in Russia. Despite the most assiduous search, they have been unable to find anything favoring their position in the volumes Lenin wrote following that episodic experience. That Lenin never returned to the subject was disregarded by the comrades of the majority. It meant nothing to them.

As for Trotsky, the greatest military expert and practitioner of armed struggle the Marxist movement has yet produced, the majority after some attempts to use him, which were challenged by the minority, appear to have given up. After all, Trotsky's position on guerrilla war—on which he wrote in the last years of his life—is too well known to be easily abused.

Another tack attempted by the majority has been to use the terms "guerrilla war" and "armed struggle" synonymously. The gain in this is that guerrilla fighters in many parts of the world use the terms in the same way. Thus when the majority write or speak about "armed struggle" it signifies "guerrilla war" to the devotees of that strategy, while to Marxists, including our own movement—at least in the past—it has meant the armed struggle of masses of the proletariat and the peasantry in a genuine uprising or civil war. Through this semantic legerdemain the majority seeks to present the "turn" toward guerrilla warfare as being within the tradition of armed struggle as taught and practiced by Lenin and Trotsky.

It can be suggested that it would help greatly to clarify the differences if the majority gave up this feeble line of argument and frankly admitted that their orientation is not a mere continuation of Trotskyism but an attempted introduction into Trotskyism of a strategy that originated elsewhere.

It is high time to advance the discussion. This can only be done by turning to the living reality and appraising it in the light of Marxist analysis.

In the three years since the debate at the Ninth World Congress, the two lines have been subjected to the test of experience. It is now possible to draw a balance sheet on the results in Bolivia and Argentina, the two areas where the decision to convert guerrilla war into strategic orientation has been carried out in life. This is what we now propose to do.

## II. The Lesson of Bolivia

At the Ninth World Congress, the comrades of the majority assured the delegates that the validity of the "turn" towards guerrilla warfare would soon be confirmed in Bolivia. The majority comrades were supremely confident that reformist interludes were excluded in this poverty-stricken country rapaciously exploited by imperialism and the native ruling class. The immediate perspective, according to the majority, pointed solely to guerrilla war. The conditions were excellent for opening up a front. An agreement had been reached with the leaders of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Even if an early victory should not be won, the renewal of guerrilla war would have important international repercussions. With Trotskyists in the leadership it could signify a rapid "breakthrough" for the Fourth International of the kind that Comrade Maitan held was absolutely essential. With enormous enthusiasm, the majority approved the "Resolution on Latin America," and returned home to begin a campaign of support for the new Trotskyist-led guerrilla front in Bolivia although it had not yet been launched.

It is important to understand how the majority leadership viewed the reality in Bolivia. They excluded either a reformist interlude or an urban insurrection. Well in advance of the Ninth World Congress this had been made clear publicly by Comrade González (as, for instance, in his contribution to *Fifty Years of World Revolution*). A typical statement was the following in a report from La Paz:

"There is no possibility of a reformist period of legal struggles, of a return to traditional trade-union activity. These are luxuries that the military regime cannot afford.

"Therefore the perspective opened for the Bolivian people is one of direct struggle to oust the military from power and build a workers and peasants government which would begin a reorganization of the country on socialist bases. This struggle can only be undertaken by armed means—by guerrilla warfare in the countryside, the mines, and the cities. This is the real, concrete perspective. All others are utopian and can only lead to the defeat of the masses, even in the hypothetical case of a change of rulers." ("New Revolutionary Ferment in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, June 10, 1968, p. 546.)

Comrade Maitan held essentially the same view of the perspective in Bolivia. He, too, outlined it publicly in advance of the Ninth World Congress. Speaking of the defeat of Che Guevara's guerrilla front in Bolivia, he said:

"The events which have followed the defeat of the guerrillas have also, in the last analysis, confirmed Guevara's fundamental option. . . .

". . . the Bolivian revolutionists not only defend the concepts which inspired Che's action against opportunists of all stripes but they also consider that the perspective of new armed clashes in Bolivia remains fundamental.

"Given the economic and social situation within the country, the capitalist regime—whether it is led by Barrientos or any of his possible successors—will only be able to survive through violence of the most systematic sort. This implies that more or less legal preparatory and orga-

nizational 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 at the outset. The explosive contradictions remain in the country and dramatic conflicts are still possible.

"In fact, we must start from the reality that a civil war situation exists in Bolivia. . . .

"This means, more concretely, that the method of guerrilla warfare beginning in the rural areas is still the correct method. Once guerrilla warfare is unleashed, even under conditions which are in several ways less favorable than was the case last year, the possibilities for political and military initiatives will multiply very rapidly." ("Experiences and Perspectives of the Armed Struggle in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, September 2, 1968, pp. 706-07.)

Comrade Maitan spelled this out still more specifically in his letter of that time projecting the possibility of building the Fourth International via a "breakthrough" in Bolivia. ". . . it is necessary to understand and to explain that at the present stage the International will be built around Bolivia." ("An Insufficient Document," May 15, 1968, *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 16.)

Such were the perspectives and concepts, ratified by the majority at the Ninth World Congress, under which our Bolivian comrades sought to achieve a quick "breakthrough" in the Bolivian class struggle.

### 1. From Barrientos to Banzer

Even while they were developing their theory of a repression so severe as to admit of no other recourse except guerrilla war in the struggle against General René Barrientos, the leading figure in the military junta that toppled the Paz Estenssoro regime on November 4, 1964, our comrades of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario reported happenings that actually showed other possibilities. Here is an example:

"On May 1 [1968], a militant, anti-imperialist, and anti-military mass meeting was held under vigorous radical slogans. It openly condemned the Barrientos dictatorship. In the major cities—Oruro, Cochabamba, Potosí, Santa Cruz—there were similar demonstrations. In Cochabamba, the district prefect, General Reque Terán . . . appeared at the demonstration backed up by force. He tried to speak to the crowd, but they did not let him. There was a violent reaction from the workers, who shouted: 'You murdered Che!' 'Imperialist lackey!' 'Gorilla!' He had to retreat in the face of the general clamor.

"Besides the militant slogans indicated, there were shouts of acclaim for Che and the guerrillas in these urban demonstrations. The government massed all its forces, po-

lice, the national guard, the army, the air force (Mustangs buzzed the demonstrations in La Paz to frighten the demonstrators), but it did not dare break them up. The junta was cowed and retreated. It is clear that more than expressing the new ascent and militant spirit of the masses, the May Day demonstrations were a victory against the government.

"Even without leadership, the masses went into the streets ready for a fight. It was clear that the spirit of the masses was to incorporate into their mobilizations the lessons left by the guerrillas. The masses set their struggle within the framework of the armed struggle line. In every city, the guerrillas were present: in the slogans, on the banners, and in the spirit of the masses. The masses went out on May Day encouraged and with greater confidence." ("New Revolutionary Ferment in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, September 2, 1968, pp. 544-45.)

It is quite true that the name of the martyred Che appeared everywhere, as our comrades in La Paz reported. But this was not the opening of another guerrilla front. It was something quite different. This was an action by the masses carried out in the streets in all the major cities. Even more significant: *the junta was cowed and retreated.*

Of similar significance was the nature of the struggle carried on by the masses. The report continues:

"A general movement is in progress for increased wages and salaries. The miners are proposing restoration of the old wages and return of all trade-union property. The immediate conflict is over the teachers' demand for a salary increase from 470 to 900 pesos. The government rejected this request. The teachers met in a national convention and approved various tactics of struggle leading by stages to a general strike. Among these were work stoppages graduated by districts, lightning meetings, blocking streets, etc." (*Ibid.*, p. 545.)

The author of this report did his best to fit the upsurge into the schema of guerrilla war. Yet the facts themselves spoke for a different interpretation. Two things in particular should be noted: (1) The capacity of the Barrientos regime, for all its repressive nature, to retreat in face of a mass upsurge. (2) The tendency of the struggle of the masses in Bolivia to follow the "classical" pattern — the Leninist norms of proletarian revolution.

Barrientos, killed in an airplane crash April 27, 1969, was succeeded by Vice-President Adolfo Siles Salinas. Hardly more than an ornamental piece for the junta, Siles was ousted in a coup d'etat that put General Alfredo Ovando in power September 26, 1969.

Ovando permitted the trade unions to function. Traditional trade-union activities were resumed and the Central Obrera Boliviana began to rebuild its structure. Throughout April, May, and June of 1970 the proletariat took advantage of the semilegal opening conceded by Ovando and engaged in continual mass mobilizations. Other sectors became involved — students, teachers, part of the urban petty bourgeoisie and even a few sectors of the peasantry. These mass actions were sufficient to enable the COB to resume open activity. In campus demonstrations, the students went so far as to take over universities.

The ruling class faced a growing crisis since they were unable to either suppress the mass movement for the time being or to grant economic concessions on the scale required to soften the class struggle.

The deepening divisions were reflected within the armed

forces. One wing, headed by General Rogelio Miranda, leaned toward attempting a repressive crackdown and tightening the ties with imperialism. The other wing, headed by General Juan José Torres, leaned toward utilizing the masses to extort concessions from imperialism, thereby gaining the means to temporarily appease the masses and defer a showdown for a more propitious moment. To a certain degree, the divisions within the army even followed geographic lines, Miranda being supported by ruling circles in Santa Cruz, Torres by those in the Altiplano (La Paz region).

On June 13, 1970, the bodies of two young leftists, Jenny Koeller and her husband Elmo Catalán Avilés, a Chilean journalist, were discovered near Cochabamba. They had been atrociously tortured and then electrocuted by government agents.

Mass protest demonstrations broke out everywhere in the country. Confrontations with the army resulted in wounded and dead. The Ovando regime was badly shaken.

It was precisely at this moment of rising mass protest, of confrontations in the streets, that the ELN opened its final guerrilla front. Under the leadership of Osvaldo "Chato" Peredo, about seventy-five young revolutionists left the scene of action where the masses were involved and set off for the mining village of Teoponte, about 100 miles north of La Paz. However valid their "conception" of guerrilla war may have been, on the day they arrived — July 19, 1970 — they made an error "in assessing the situation." They opened up hostilities by blowing up an American-owned gold-panning plant. For the army, the guerrilla challenge amounted to lowcost training in counter-insurgency. By mid-October only six of these young revolutionists were still alive.

Meanwhile the real class struggle in Bolivia continued. During August and September Ovando twisted and turned as the masses pressed for concessions and a sector of the ruling class countered by insisting on a crackdown. In August a battle over control of the University of San Marcos precipitated a national crisis. On October 6 Ovando resigned, turning the reins of government over to Miranda.

The consequence was an immediate mass explosion of the classic variety. Students and workers poured into the streets to block the attempted ultrarightist take-over.

The army split wide open. General Torres declared his opposition to the new junta appointed by Miranda and met with Juan Lechín, the head of the miners union, and Siles Suazo, a former president of the country and one of the main leaders of Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR).

"Students began to build barricades in the streets of the capital in order to block any movements by forces favorable to General Rogelio Miranda," the October 8 *Le Monde* reported. "In Catavi the powerful tin-miners unions denounced the 'fascist coup d'etat of the right-wing officers' and decided to offer 'conditional support' to General Juan José Torres.

"The miners' federation called for arms 'to defend our social gains' and posed as conditions for their support 'the establishment of democratic liberties and release of the political prisoners, repeal of the antistrike decrees, nationalization of the foreign banks and all American interests, expulsion of all imperialist bodies, and the establishment of a people's government. The COB has al-

ready issued a call for a general strike throughout the country."

The COB also ordered its members to block the streets and prevent troop movements within La Paz.

Armed detachments of peasants joined in the action. Armed civilians freed political prisoners. The homes of ultrarightist military men and civilians were assaulted. The buildings of three leading newspapers were occupied. Jubilant tin miners seized police stations and announced they would demand quick wage increases.

The *New York Times* reported that on October 8 "armed students took over the headquarters of the criminal division of the national police. Apparently unopposed, they were reportedly looting the offices and destroying the files. . . .

"Students have also begun attacks on United States property. They entered the Bolivian-American Binational Center yesterday, hauling down an American flag and announcing that they were annexing the building to the university."

While this great mass movement—developing along the "classic" lines of a proletarian revolution—was shaking the government and splitting the army, the entrapped remnants of the Teoponte guerrilla front were still being hunted down. The last survivors finally gave up. "Chato" Peredo and his five followers were deported by Torres to Chile.

Could more dramatic (and tragic) proof be asked of the falsity of the conception that the road to the masses lies through rural guerrilla warfare?

The establishment of the Torres regime, a direct product of an urban uprising of the masses, reflected a situation in which neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie could gain the upper hand for the time being. The proletariat lacked the revolutionary-Marxist leadership required to carry the revolution forward to victory. The weak and divided bourgeoisie could not summon the forces required to impose a counterrevolutionary solution. Torres balanced between the two sides. Naturally this was an unstable situation; either the revolution had to move forward to the establishment of a workers state, or the counterrevolution would recover, choose an opportune moment to strike, and then seek to establish a strong military-police dictatorship.

Torres stood between the two camps. He granted concessions to the proletariat while blocking the workers from moving definitively against the ultrarightist forces. He provided a shield for the ultrarightists while striving to keep them in check. In the final analysis he conducted a holding operation for the bourgeoisie in a prerevolutionary situation.

From the proletarian point of view the concessions granted by Torres were neither far-reaching nor durable, but for the moment they were very important. They included the release of political prisoners and the nationalization of some imperialist holdings. The working class and the peasantry were able to function with almost complete legality. It was a priceless opportunity for the revolutionary Marxists to come out of the underground and to work with all their energy to build their revolutionary party and to deepen and extend their ties with the masses.

On January 10, 1971, the counterrevolutionary forces attempted another coup. Again they were beaten back by mass mobilizations. This time the masses were better organized, reflecting the gains they had made since the

mobilizations that defeated General Miranda three months earlier. Thousands of armed miners paraded through La Paz. The mass movement began to openly proclaim its goal of a socialist transformation in Bolivia.

Under this mounting pressure, the Torres regime granted further concessions. The International Metal Processing Corporation was nationalized. In February, Torres conceded wage increases to the miners.

At the time of the October struggle against General Miranda, the COB and all the political parties of the left had set up a "Political Command" to coordinate their struggle. In mid-February it was decided to convert this body into a "People's Assembly." This was a most significant step. As a workers' parliament, the People's Assembly had the potentiality of becoming a soviet. The development offered incontrovertible evidence that in the main the Bolivian revolution was following the "classical" pattern of the Russian revolution.

The project testified to the deep urge of the working class to form a common fighting front in which its allies—the students, peasants, and urban petty bourgeoisie—could participate. Nevertheless the absence of representation of the army rank and file and most of the peasantry pointed to grave weaknesses that a revolutionary party would have put high on its agenda for remedial action. Another grave weakness, requiring similar action, was the absence of local supporting bodies. These began to be formed only on the eve of the coup that overthrew Torres.

In the following months, the proletariat marked time. What was lacking was a revolutionary leadership to set goals and tasks and to block out a line of action. The Bolivian workers thus faced a crisis in leadership. To offer the popular masses no alternative but supporting Torres signified a default in political guidance. This led to a weakening of the forces that could have been mobilized behind the working class in a bid for power. As a result, the counterrevolution began to regain confidence and to spin new plots with increasing boldness.

Under cover of a religious event, the counterrevolutionary forces staged a demonstration of 15,000 persons in Santa Cruz on August 15. Forever oscillating, Torres tried to imprison the rightist generals, including Hugo Banzer Suárez. This triggered an ultrarightist bid for power four days later.

At first only relatively small—but resolute—forces stood in Banzer's camp. However, the workers leadership, consisting of such fakers and blowhards as Juan Lechin and the pro-Moscow Communist Party, sat paralyzed. They waited for Torres to do something. Torres, in turn, waited to see if a conflict could be avoided. The few hours of fatal indecisiveness in face of an impending civil war reflected in itself a rapid change in the relationship of class forces.

The army ranks began to go over to the side of the counterrevolution. Soon sectors of the virtually unarmed working class, demoralized by what was happening, refused to respond to desperate appeals from their leaders to meet the heavily armed foe. The preparatory period had been wasted, the opportune moment lost. In the end only a small vanguard and a scattering of the masses mounted a heroic attempt to block the coup. It was too little and too late. Torres fled, taking refuge August 22 in the Peruvian embassy.

Once in power, Banzer began a murderous repression

of the revolutionary organizations. Yet, needing time to consolidate his regime, he deferred attempting to smash the trade-union movement.

Despite his repressive measures, Banzer did not succeed in stabilizing class relations in Bolivia. A reflection of unresolved differences in the ruling class is to be seen in the unstable unity of the Falange and the MNR, both of which were included in the regime. The continued development of rifts has been registered in jockeying between "right" and "left" figures in the governmental apparatus.

The working-class vanguard suffered a heavy defeat; it is demoralized and above all confused. Nevertheless, the class struggle in Bolivia remains explosive. The ruling class is incapable of alleviating Bolivia's permanent socio-economic crisis in any substantial way; it is incapable of establishing a genuine fascist regime by mobilizing the petty bourgeoisie; and it is incapable of setting up a durable reformist regime that could gain broad mass support.

The working class, beginning again with immediate demands, can be counted on to resume its struggle for democratic and transitional measures, undermining Banzer as it did Barrientos and Ovando.

## 2. A Disorienting Line

The "Resolution on Latin America" passed at the Ninth World Congress held that the national bourgeoisie in Latin America is "intrinsicly incapable of the least independent action in either the economic or political fields." This is a gross overstatement, as the events in Bolivia have shown.

It is true that the national bourgeoisie is incapable of putting up a consistent struggle against imperialism and that it will in the last analysis never break its partnership with imperialism. It is also true that the national bourgeoisie is incapable of granting any major lasting concessions to the masses. But the national bourgeoisie nonetheless does have a certain room for maneuver both with imperialism and with the masses, depending on conjunctural developments in the class struggle.

The overstatement on the limitations facing the national bourgeoisie fitted in logically with the conviction of the majority comrades that in Bolivia — particularly in *Bolivia* — it was excluded that any but repressive regimes could come to power. This view disoriented the Bolivian section of the Fourth International. The leadership there saw no essential differences between the Barrientos and Ovando regimes. Even the Torres regime — at least in the beginning — appeared to them to be much the same. After all, that was the line adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress.

The leading comrades of the majority in Europe clung to the line in a similar way. Comrade Maitan, for instance, could discern no substantial difference between the regimes of Barrientos and Ovando in Bolivia:

"And no one can close his eyes to the fraudulent character of the Ovando regime, which has done nothing to re-

place all-out repression with a more selective type, and which is still ready to jail, exile, or even kill those who do not accept the rules of its game." ("Once Again on the Revolutionary Perspectives in Latin America — Defense of an Orientation and a Method," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 74.)

Comrades Germain and Knoeller made a similar mistake in evaluation of the Torres regime:

"As for Bolivia, the first sign of a new rise in mass struggles provoked a coup d'etat followed by a bloody armed confrontation. 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." ("The Strategic Orientation of the Revolutionists in Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 89.)

In the case of the Torres regime, the misjudgment was particularly glaring. By way of contrast, let us note the opinion of a comrade who took the minority position, Hugo Blanco:

"This same proletariat is showing us that it has not been defeated — far from it. The rise of Torres is the product of terror inspired by the working class. The next weeks and months will be of decisive importance for Bolivia. In view of this it is very sad to see, precisely at this time, valuable revolutionists being pressed to leave for guerrilla war, separating themselves from the worker and student masses that are moving into struggle. It would not be strange, should these masses be defeated, that they will be blamed, or perhaps it will be used to demonstrate 'the impossibility of coming to power through the mass movement.' If this misfortune occurs, a big share of the guilt will lie with those who took away from the masses a part of their valuable vanguard. As if there were an oversupply of revolutionary cadres to lead the masses in these days!

"Thus Leninist work is required not only in Peru, where for the moment we must bide our time, but also in Bolivia and Chile, which are or could be on the verge of armed struggle. . . .

"It is correct in Bolivia to discuss the form that armed struggle must take within the process of the mass upsurge, but the best teacher in this is the Bolivia of 1952, which does not recommend taking to the hills, isolating oneself, or anything like that. Work among the peasants as a *complement* to the movement of the workers and city dwellers generally is one thing; such work will almost surely lead to peasant guerrillas. The guerrillas of the ELN are something quite different, holding as they do a more or less modified Guevarist, but not Leninist, conception." ("Letter from Hugo Blanco to Livio Maitan," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 71.)

It might be supposed that Comrade Blanco wrote with the advantage of hindsight. This was not so. He voiced his opinion in a letter from El Frontón dated October 17, 1970. The article by Comrades Germain and Knoeller was dated November 1970.

Torres came to power precisely because the upsurge in the class struggle had split the army. The army could not be reunited without a successful confrontation with the masses; and to prepare for that, time and consequently concessions to the masses were needed.

Because of the line of the Ninth World Congress, the

comrades of the POR (González) failed to see this. Thus they were caught totally unprepared for a reformist interlude and an opening that made broad work possible among the masses on a more or less legal basis.

The comrades of the minority, who had seen that on a world scale the revolutionary struggle was again moving toward the "classical" pattern and that as a result various tactical variations other than rural guerrilla war had to be held open, were not caught by surprise by the developments in Bolivia. Their forecast had received welcome confirmation. They hoped that the comrades of the majority would make the necessary adjustments so that as little as possible would be lost because of the erroneous line.

However, the disorientation was deep. The majority had considered it extremely unlikely that urban mass insurrections would occur, and even if explosions of that kind did happen, they insisted that the main line was to orient toward rural guerrilla war. "The exceptional variant of an explosive crisis involving the breaking up or paralysis of the state apparatus and a mass mobilization so impetuous that it could prevent or neutralize recourse to repression as a decisive measure, cannot be categorically excluded," the resolution on Latin America stated, "but a strategy on a continental scale cannot be based on exceptional phenomena, and in such a case imperialism would very likely intervene militarily (as happened in the case of Santo Domingo)." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.)

A year later, during the Ovando regime, Comrade Maitan hedged this somewhat in calling attention to the danger of not giving more stress to the need for a functioning revolutionary party. "There would also be the danger of forgetting that there are periods when an effort to develop mass work and to create the instruments for this must have absolute priority," he said. "For example, it would be absurd in Peru today to rely primarily on preparing a new wave of guerrilla warfare, failing to understand the need for a deepgoing activity of political clarification and to exploit all the possibilities which, despite everything, the new situation offers for stimulating mass movements and establishing links with them. This is also true on a different scale and probably for a markedly shorter period for Bolivia." ("Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, April 20, 1970, p. 359.)

In an article that energetically reaffirmed the orientation toward rural guerrilla warfare such qualifiers concerning the danger of forgetting fundamentals did not carry much weight. Thus although the Bolivian Trotskyists lived through the insurrectionary developments in October, 1970, and January, 1971, and described them well, they remained as convinced as ever of the correctness of their orientation toward guerrilla warfare in Bolivia. They did not see how this orientation was causing them to miss the boat.

"In October," our comrades wrote, "the struggle between the military chiefs paralyzed the repressive forces of the army; for two days there was a power vacuum, with the governmental palace and the ministries abandoned." They continued: "At that moment it was necessary to go into the streets with the masses; it was necessary to destroy the Mirandistas with direct action and struggle." ("La

Universidad y el Comando Político de la C.O.B." *Revista de Orientación Teórico-Doctrinal*, 3a Epoca. Republished in *Revista de América*, July-October, 1971, p. 50.)

The POR (González) blamed the Political Command for not having taken advantage of this situation. "The Political Command of the COB did not know how to take advantage of the governmental crisis that was presented in October, and in that sense is guilty of having frittered away the force of the workers and of having cheated them out of a victory." (*Ibid.*, p. 50.)

In other words, the leadership of the POR (González) saw that a power vacuum had suddenly appeared in Bolivia and that the Political Command had failed to move in to fill that vacuum. In the language of Marxism—the Political Command was guilty of not having utilized those two crucial days to lead the workers' urban insurrection towards the conquest of power.

This criticism of the Political Command was completely correct. However, some questions arise. In what way had our own comrades been preparing for this turn of events? How did their projections about rural guerrilla warfare fit in with what had actually happened in the class struggle? Instead of joining with the ELN in pursuing rural guerrilla war would it not have been better to engage in patient work in the mass movement during the period of Barrientos and Ovando in order to be in better position to lead the coming urban insurrection to victory? How did the projection of opening a rural guerrilla front in combination with the ELN correspond to the actual pattern of the class struggle, that is, a mass upsurge, a crisis in the ruling class, governmental paralysis, a deep split in the army, and the possibility suddenly placed before the workers of taking power through an urban insurrection?

### 3. The Problem of Linking Up With the Masses

Disoriented by the adaptation of the majority to the Castroist strategy of guerrilla warfare, our Bolivian comrades failed at each step to work out a correct political line for the unfolding mass movement. Instead they clung to abstract ultraleft formulas.

What was required was a series of transitional demands, developed in a very concrete way, that is, in adjustment with the living dynamics of the class struggle and in harmony with the objective of turning the organizations created by mass struggles toward the central question of power.

The way in which the Torres regime came to power—through the active intervention of the masses against an attempted ultrarightist coup—and above all the way the idea of the Popular Assembly arose out of the struggle itself showed that the Bolivian revolution had reached a critical juncture. The conquest of state power by the proletariat was a realistic possibility. To convert that possibility into a reality required utilizing the advances gained by the insurrectionary mass movement to arm the masses. The crying need was a political program matching the level of consciousness of the masses but proposing that

they move ahead without delay to create their own independent class organs and outlining a series of practical steps to be taken along this line.

The workers recognized that they had gained certain democratic rights under Torres. They feared a coup from the right. But this coup was being prepared almost openly. The key, consequently, was to give voice to this legitimate fear by hammering away at the *impending rightist coup* and calling for *armed defense of the democratic rights* won by the workers. Such a campaign would have helped place the reactionary generals on the defensive and would have facilitated work among the rank and file troops.

The forming of workers militias to defend the Popular Assembly and the gains of the masses against a rightist coup was a completely logical extension of this course. However, this had no meaning unless it was coupled with calls for mass mobilizations to bolster the Popular Assembly against any attempts by Torres to limit its free development.

Another requisite, of course, was a correct governmental slogan so as to avoid sowing any illusions in the Torres regime. The orientation would thus be toward the development of dual power, something that could be done only openly as a process engaged in by the masses themselves.

Our slogan for a workers and peasants government had to be concretized and fitted to the situation in Bolivia. Under Ovando, the COB represented the most important mass organization of the workers movement. Thus the slogan of a COB government was a possibility that ought to have been carefully examined at that time as a realistic way of filling in the abstract formula calling for a workers and peasants government.

Under Torres, a higher form of workers united front arose—the Political Command. It was absolutely essential for the revolutionary party to insist that the Political Command take over governmental power.

When the Political Command developed into the Popular Assembly the correctness of such a demand became even more apparent. The Popular Assembly was a very advanced united-front formation enjoying the full confidence of the working class. The correct moves needed to strengthen it and to make it something more than an *incipient soviet* were to democratize it and to organize local supporting bases for it throughout the country. Popular assemblies in every town! For the election with the right of recall of delegates from all factories, peasant areas, and barracks! For all power to the Popular Assembly!

An energetic effort was called for to expand the influence of the Popular Assembly among the peasantry and above all the army. The revolutionary party should have been in the forefront of such a campaign. Even if it was only propagandistic at first, a drive along this line was essential to help the proletariat break from the reformist leadership that dominated the Popular Assembly in its opening phase.

All this presupposed a clear orientation toward the masses, above all toward the urban workers and the miners.

Even worse than the tragedy of missing a most favorable opportunity for the proletariat to take power was the fact that *no party, including the section of the Fourth International in Bolivia, advanced a correct revolutionary program for the conquest of power.*

The main leadership of the Bolivian proletariat was

caught up in reformism; the revolutionary wing, drugged by the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress in favor of the "correct conception" of engaging in technical preparations for rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale, resisted being diverted by the appearance of "exceptional phenomena" in Bolivia. The strategic line of preparing for and engaging in guerrilla war had already become a crippling sectarian dogma.

#### 4. What Axis for the Struggle for Power?

The reformists, as was to be expected, did not orient at all toward workers power. They raised no slogans in this direction. Instead they supported Torres. They did everything except prepare the masses for the coming confrontation with the counterrevolution. The Communist Party of Bolivia, committed to Moscow's line of "peaceful coexistence," and the POR (Lora), an affiliate of the Healyite "International Committee," were prime movers in this historic betrayal.

In opposition to them was an ultraleft current committed to guerrilla warfare and the organization of a "Revolutionary Workers and People's Army." Within this current were to be found the Maoists, the Castroist ELN, and our own comrades of the Bolivian section of the Fourth International.

The comrades of the POR (González), carrying out the line of the Ninth World Congress to the best of their ability, were intensively engaged in preparing technically for rural guerrilla warfare when the October, 1970, insurrectionary developments brought Torres to power. Their activities isolated them from the scene of action.

It is very difficult for a small vanguard group to combine preparations for guerrilla warfare with mass work. The reason is simple enough. To carry on in the underground, transporting and stockpiling arms and so on, limits the possibility of the few cadres available taking advantage of the legal or semilegal openings that are crucial for relatively swift expansion of mass work. Comrade González himself recognized this.

"To pursue these two tasks at the same time, to combine them, is an extremely difficult thing. Under the Ovando government the party operated in completely clandestine conditions and was totally absorbed in armed work. Since last November, after Torres came to power, we have been able to redevelop our legal work aimed at the unions but also the peasants and the universities, where we had done very little before." ("The Current Situation in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, June 14, 1971, p. 545.)

Under "completely clandestine conditions" it is, of course, difficult to make rapid progress in mass work. Nevertheless, it is possible to make *some* progress as the Bolsheviks demonstrated in their time and as Trotskyists today are demonstrating in countries like Spain and Brazil. But the POR (González) was engaged in other tasks during the Barrientos and Ovando regimes, and thus it found itself outside the mass movement at the time of the October uprising. As a result our comrades were not present in the united front that led the mass mobiliza-

tions and that created the Political Command.

Instead of recognizing their error and attempting to retrieve their position by fighting to participate in the Political Command as a united-front formation backed by the masses, our comrades issued propaganda in favor of tasks and organizational forms separate and apart from the developing class struggle. That is, instead of accepting the organizations created in the process of mass struggles and battling from within against the reformist misleaders, the POR (González) propagandized for alternative organizational forms that, excellent as they may have appeared on paper, were abstract and sectarian under the circumstances. For instance, on October 11, 1970, the Executive Committee of the POR issued a declaration to the masses proposing the following objectives:

"a) *Organizing a Revolutionary Command*, including all political tendencies that favor a socialist solution to the country's present situation and support the armed struggle for power. The objective of this command would be to overcome the reformism and economism, the capitulation and class collaborationism that have caused the successive defeats and frustrations of the Bolivian people.

"b) *Creating a Revolutionary Workers and People's Army*. This is the essential instrument for taking power. It will integrate vast popular, worker, and peasant sectors into the armed struggle. In this new army there can be a place for officers and soldiers of the bourgeois armed forces who break from this organization and want to fight in fact to liberate Bolivia from imperialist oppression and extricate it from underdevelopment.

"c) *Developing a body representative of the masses*, through which they can express all their revolutionary power, initiative, worries, and determination to transform society." ("The Bolivian Political Crisis and Torres' Regime," *Intercontinental Press*, November 23, 1970, p. 1024. Emphasis in original.)

These three proposals were not connected to the living class struggle. They were not tied in with immediate, democratic, or transitional demands stemming from the actual level of political consciousness of the masses. No explanation was offered on just how the proposed "Revolutionary Command," the "Revolutionary Workers and People's Army," and the "body representative of the masses" were to be organized.

Instead of raising demands aimed at mobilizing the masses through united-front actions that would confront the reformists with unbearable dilemmas, the POR (González) presented a schema of its own that amounted to little more than the guerrilla warfare line presented in propagandistic terms that appeared to bend to the new situation. Instead of calling for rural guerrilla warfare in alliance with the ELN, which was engaged at the moment in the Teoponte adventure, the declaration exhorted the masses to form a "Revolutionary Workers and People's Army." It exhorted the proguerrilla ultraleftists to form a "Revolutionary Command." And it appealed in general, and therefore to no one, for a "body representative of the masses." The road to such a body lay through the Political Command, but the POR (González) either did not see or rejected that possibility, making a belated turn in this direction only after the Political Command had developed into the Popular Assembly.

The fallacious reasoning of our Bolivian comrades is

shown by the following judgment: "The Political Command of the COB demonstrated its lack of understanding of the process. It light-mindedly waxed enthusiastic over the Torres government without seeing its limitations, and demobilized the masses prematurely. Because of this, it is now necessary to form, either from within it or from outside of it, a Revolutionary Political Command, which in light of the previous experience can lead the masses to power and socialism." ("La Universidad y el Comando Político de la C. O. B.," *Revista de América*, July-October, 1971, p. 50.)

*Needless to say, such a formation never came into existence.* The masses still accepted the leadership of Juan Lechín, the COB, the Communist Party of Bolivia, the POR (Lora) in the established body of the Political Command that had appeared at the head of the mass insurrection. To propose, in a purely propagandistic way, that those who had declared for socialism and guerrilla war should form a "Revolutionary Political Command" of their own in opposition to the existing Political Command meant permitting the reformists to retain control over the masses without putting up a fight against their betrayal.

Even after the January, 1971, insurrectionary wave that answered the first serious attempt of the rightist generals to topple the Torres government and that led to the formation of the Popular Assembly, our Bolivian comrades still maintained an aloof attitude before finally deciding to make a turn.

After visiting Bolivia, two militants of the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International, wrote: "In addition, the revolutionary political parties, in particular the POR-Gonzales, have decided that the Assembly is worth taking seriously. At first they tended to have an attitude of watching the Assembly to see how it turned out, rather than actually participating in it." ("The Meeting of the Popular Assembly," *International*, September-October, 1971, p. 59.)

Unfortunately, when they finally made the turn, our Bolivian comrades viewed their participation as being limited primarily to speechmaking. This followed from their view that the Popular Assembly was "hardly more than a kind of national parliament" and that eventually it would give way to something more realistic — guerrilla war.

In an interview given in April, 1971, and published in the May 17 issue of *Rouge*, Comrade González said:

"The left wing, to which the POR belongs, has developed the idea that the People's Assembly should be a body that would discuss national problems and solutions for them but would leave the power in the hands of the mass organizations (unions and popular militia or people's army). . . .

"The POR comrades in the People's Assembly, whether they represent the party directly or some union, hold no illusions. They are using the People's Assembly as a forum, as a platform. That is all." ("The Current Situation in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, June 14, 1971, p. 545.)

To be noted in particular in this statement of position is Comrade González's opposition to calling for all power to the Popular Assembly. What he proposed instead was to leave the power in the hands of the mass organizations—the unions, popular militia, and a people's army. The list is an odd one; neither a popular militia nor a

people's army existed. They had yet to be created. So, for the moment, that left only the unions, that is, the COB. But the COB provided the mass base of the Popular Assembly. And it was precisely the Popular Assembly that constituted a united-front formation through which the workers could draw the peasantry and the urban masses together in a struggle for a concrete form of a workers and peasants government.

It is obvious that our Bolivian comrades did not think through the question of the road to power as it was specifically posed by the actual class struggle at the time. They were suffering under the illusion that they could achieve a quick "breakthrough" by engaging in rural guerrilla war.

They finally did decide to take the Popular Assembly seriously. Under the growing pressure of the mass movement (50,000 workers demonstrated May 1 openly calling for socialism), the POR (González) changed its position and called for the Popular Assembly becoming the basis for a workers and peasants government.

In an article in the May 1-15 issue of *Combate*, the POR (González) announced its new view:

"The Asamblea Popular can have no role except as an organ of dual power. That is, it must not simply debate and watch over government functions; it must—as the expression of the power of the great masses of our people—decide the basic questions facing the country and the workers. The Asamblea Popular must become a workers and peasants government, and we must fight both inside and outside of it to achieve this. In this process, a political-military instrument will grow up alongside the assembly which can serve as the power it still lacks to enforce its decisions." ("Put the People's Assembly on the Road to Socialism!" *Intercontinental Press*, June 21, 1971, p. 575.)

The turn was a welcome one. But it came too late and was still too confused to have effective consequences.

What was the meaning of the "political-military instrument" to "grow up alongside the assembly"? The Popular Assembly could not enforce its decisions without the conquest of power. Transitional slogans and transitional measures were needed, as already indicated above, to arm the masses. These should have been launched in the most vigorous way by our comrades at least six months earlier (when Torres came to power). The continuous talk about a "Revolutionary Workers and Popular Army" to be created by unknown means (rural guerrilla war?) and unspecified leaders (the POR or ELN?) was abstract and therefore sectarian and irrelevant in this fast-moving situation.

## 5. Arming of the Masses

When the masses take up arms, they do it in two main ways that become more and more combined. The first is the organization by the workers of their own detachments to defend their struggles and bases (union headquarters, etc.) from attack. The most elementary level of this self-organization is the formation of picket squads, as is well known. The Transitional Program indicates the steps going

beyond this level. The second way consists of spreading sympathy for the goals of the revolution among the troops of the bourgeois army and winning them over at the crucial point. The success of both processes depends on a correct political approach as was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks.

In Bolivia, without a concrete governmental slogan such as calling for power to the Popular Assembly, and without a vigorous campaign to mobilize defensive forces against the impending rightist coup, all talk of armed struggle amounted to nothing but phrasemongering or ultraleft adventurism. A consistent political effort among the ranks and among the lower officers of the army was particularly necessary as part of the process of arming the masses. The army in Bolivia could not be won over simply by propaganda, essential as that was. It was crucially important to openly organize workers' militias to show the rank-and-file soldiers that the workers were in dead earnest about defending their rights and blocking the plots of the ultrarightist generals.

The Popular Assembly voted for a proposal to organize workers' militias clandestinely. This was both absurd and opportunistic. Absurd because what was required in this situation was a highly publicized campaign on the need to form workers militias openly under the auspices of the mass organizations; opportunist because the real meaning of the motion was that the masses would not be armed. Both the reformists and the ultralefts supported this motion. The opportunists did so for obvious reasons, including posing before the masses as revolutionists. The ultralefts supported it because it fitted in neatly with their "correct conception" of guerrilla warfare, of arming the vanguard in a clandestine way, since at bottom they believe that no other way is possible.

The army cannot be won over except by meeting the masses face to face. The masses had to learn how to do this—how to march to the barracks of the soldiers, how to talk with them, how to appeal to them in the streets in a vigorous way if they were sent out to repress the workers or to disarm a workers militia unit.

If some quotations are needed on this, Leon Trotsky is a source to be recommended. We have selected some that ought to be all the more convincing to the majority since Trotsky indicates wherein guerrilla war can play a positive role . . . tactically.

"The army's political mood, that great unknown of every revolution, can be determined only in the process of a clash between the soldiers and the people. The army's crossing over to the camp of the revolution is a moral process; but it cannot be brought about by moral means alone. Different motives and attitudes combine and intersect within the army; only a minority is consciously revolutionary, while the majority hesitates and awaits an impulse from outside. This majority is capable of laying down its arms or, eventually, of pointing its bayonets at the reaction only if it begins to believe in the possibility of a people's victory. Such a belief is not created by political agitation alone. Only when the soldiers become convinced that the people have come out into the streets for a life-and-death struggle—not to demonstrate against the government but to overthrow it—does it become psychologically possible for them to 'cross over to the side of the people.'" ("Summing Up," 1905, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, pp. 268-69.)

Let us recall that Trotsky is describing the situation in Russian in the 1905 revolution, not the situation in 1917 involving a conscripted army of huge proportions demoralized by defeat in an imperialist war. He was talking about an army that was if anything *more* reactionary than the one in Bolivia. Trotsky continues:

"Thus an insurrection is, in essence, not so much a struggle against the army as a struggle *for* the army. The more stubborn, far-reaching, and successful the insurrection, the more probable—indeed inevitable—is a fundamental change in the attitude of the troops. Guerrilla fighting on the basis of a revolutionary strike cannot in itself, as we saw in Moscow, lead to victory. But it creates the possibility of sounding the mood of the army, and after a first important victory—that is, once a part of the garrison has joined the insurrection—the guerrilla struggle can be transformed into a mass struggle in which a part of the troops, supported by the armed and unarmed population, will fight another part, which will find itself in a ring of universal hatred. We have seen in the Black Sea Fleet, in Kronstadt, in Siberia, in the Kuban region, later in Sveaborg and in many other places that when the class, moral, and political heterogeneity of the army causes troops to cross over to the side of the people, this must, in the first instance, mean a struggle between two opposing camps within the army. In all these cases, the most modern weapons of militarism—rifles, machine guns, fortress and field artillery, battleships—were found not only in the hands of the government but also in the service of the revolution." (Ibid., p. 269.)

Trotsky's orientation at that time, as subsequently, was of course not in the direction of guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale. As Marxism's pre-eminent figure in military questions, he understood to perfection that revolutionary work among the troops must be based, if it is to be effective, on mobilizing the masses and bringing them to bear on the army like a powerful solvent.

The line of the POR (González), in contrast, was to encourage individual desertion, that is, to remove from the army any elements that became convinced revolutionists. As we have seen, when Torres came to power, our comrades in seeking to meet the needs of the hour offered members of the bourgeois army, if they decided to desert, a welcome in the nonexistent Revolutionary Workers and Popular Army: "In this new army there can be a place for officers and soldiers of the bourgeois armed forces who break from this organization and want to fight in fact to liberate Bolivia from imperialist oppression and extricate it from underdevelopment." ("The Bolivian Political Crisis and Torres' Regime," *Intercontinental Press*, November 23, 1970, p. 1024.) The appeal for individual desertions followed automatically from the schema of rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale.

What was required, however, was a set of demands around which the most militant rank-and-file soldiers could begin the work of polarizing the ranks against the officer caste. This was certainly feasible in view of the conditions in the army during the Torres regime.

The absence of an effective policy aimed at taking advantage of the divisions within the army and winning over a sector of the ranks and the lower officers was one

of the most serious weaknesses displayed by the leadership of the Bolivian section of the Fourth International. The "turn" at the Ninth World Congress had diverted them from preparing for armed struggle in accordance with the model set by Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian revolution.

## 6. After Torres Comes Guerrilla War

In spite of the course of the class struggle in Bolivia, the POR (González) held stubbornly to its position that a socialist revolution would occur only via rural guerrilla warfare. Disregarding all the evidence before their eyes, our Bolivian comrades remained steadfast supporters of the line adopted at the Ninth World Congress, a line that had ruled out almost everything happening around them (an urban insurrection, a reformist regime, open trade-union work, the possibility of legal preparations, work in the armed forces, etc.).

Was it a "death wish," as Comrades Germain and Knoeller might put it, that led to such persistence in sticking with an erroneous line? No, they simply still had confidence in the wisdom of the majority leaders of the Fourth International. As they visualized the coming sequence, Torres would fall and then would come the real struggle for power, that is, rural guerrilla warfare on a new and higher plane, since the successor to Torres would be the most brutal dictator yet seen in the country. This was their real perspective. That was why they were so pre-occupied with building some kind of military apparatus separate and apart from the mass organizations. That was also why they persisted so arduously in trying to create a united front with the other groups committed to the schema of guerrilla war—the ELN, the Maoists, and the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria.

In his interview with the correspondent of *Rouge*, Comrade González, in explaining the work they were accomplishing, said the following:

"But obviously this work cannot be capitalized on, or have any meaning in the long run, except in the context of preparing our organization for armed struggle. In the present unstable situation we look on everything as temporary. The repression that is to come will signal the start of a new stage of armed struggle on a scale previously unknown here." ("The Current Situation in Bolivia," *Intercontinental Press*, June 14, 1971, p. 545.)

In an interview with two militants of the IMG, Comrade González explained quite correctly why the bourgeoisie required a rightist coup. He went on: "...if there was a coup now, it would be a military victory for the right and the army. But this would not allow it to do more than control certain cities. It would re-establish the armed struggle at a much higher level than in the period of the guerillas of the Nancahuazu and Teoponte." ("Interview with Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso," *International*, September-October, 1971, p. 64.)

Continuing the same line of thought further on, Comrade González said:

"If the arming of the workers is not organised, if the

popular army does not develop, we think that the coup will easily be able to re-establish the army's control. But this control will not last. That situation will be the opening of the war. We don't think in terms of any fixed model. It will be a civil war on a national scale with different fronts. It will be the beginning of a long war for which we are now preparing." (Ibid., p. 65.)

The opinion of Comrade González thus was that after the relationship of class forces had shifted to the decided disadvantage of the working class, after the bourgeoisie had succeeded in reuniting the army and had opened a savage repression of the vanguard, and the masses had been driven back and demobilized, then the armed struggle could begin in earnest.

This total misjudgment of what would happen after the downfall of Torres at the hands of the Bolivian Kornilov followed logically from the series of misjudgments made earlier that had caused our Bolivian comrades to miss the boat. They were not alone in committing such colossal errors. The majority leaders elsewhere shared responsibility. After all, according to their theory, the events preceding Banzer's triumph constituted an "exceptional variant." What was permanent was the schema of rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale, including Bolivia.

In the final days of the Torres regime, our Bolivian comrades fought valiantly against the counterrevolutionary coup d'état, suffering heavy casualties, including deaths. The world Trotskyist movement honors them for this and will always remember those who gave up their lives.

Nevertheless, together with the Bolivian proletariat as a whole, they suffered a heavy defeat. Their ranks were decimated. Years of hard work was undone. Some of the comrades became demoralized. Bitter dissension and recriminations broke out. All this must be borne in mind in assessing the enormous difficulties now facing our Bolivian section.

But this is all the more reason for speaking out on the disastrous line to which they were committed. To remain silent or to blunt the political criticisms that must be made would mean that our Bolivian martyrs really died in vain. The need to criticize that line has become all the more imperious in view of the fact that it is still being followed in Bolivia.

In fact, little has changed. Under Barrientos, the POR (González) was for guerrilla action rather than concentrating on working in the mass movement. The most serious setbacks, including the disaster suffered by Che Guevara, did not alter their determination. It was the same under Ovando. Under Torres they made some adjustments; but no real turn was involved. The adjustments were intended only to lay a basis for guerrilla warfare when the mass mobilizations came to an end. Today under Banzer they are continuing—with one significant exception—as if the entire previous experience meant exactly nothing.

## 7. The Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front

The exception is the following. Under the Torres regime, our comrades clung stubbornly to the sectarian position

of not participating in the Political Command and of keeping away from the Popular Assembly until it was too late to significantly affect its course. They did this although the Political Command and the Popular Assembly were united-front formations based on mass support. Now, after the downfall of Torres and after the dispersal of the Popular Assembly they have joined the very leaders who were at the head of the Political Command and the Popular Assembly and who were responsible for betraying the Bolivian revolution by following a reformist course. They joined with these despicable figures in the "Frente Revolucionario Antiimperialista" under a *common bourgeois program*. In the beginning the FRA even included General Torres!

It is true that after the United Secretariat of the Fourth International publicly criticized the Bolivian section for adding the signature of the POR (González) to the manifesto of the FRA calling for a "popular and national government," our comrades responded with a self-critical statement in which they said, among other things:

"Having arisen after the coup of August 21 [1971], the FRA, which includes all the political and mass organizations against the fascism of Banzer, the manifesto of the month of December 1971 is an unclear document that does not clearly delimit the tasks of the Bolivian revolutionaries and leaves the impression that it admits forms of government of national unity. The POR does not accept such a formulation contrary to its concepts of a socialist dynamics of the revolution and of a worker-peasant government.

"The signing of such a document without publishing at the same time its criticisms and formulated delimitations, was an error for which we criticize ourselves."

The participation of the POR in the FRA, they continued, was merely a question of tactics:

"The POR in remaining in the FRA delimits itself from the reformists and ratifies its strategy of armed struggle and revolutionary war to overthrow fascism, destroy the capitalist regime, and build the socialist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this sense its participation in the FRA has a tactical character under present conditions of the Bolivian left and does not compromise its political, organic, or military independence."

In the same statement, the "Collective Leadership" promised to make public their differences with the FRA:

"The POR through a public document will delimit its political and programmatic concepts and bring out a clarification on the responsibilities of the parties in the August events and will unmask the tendencies guilty of the defeat of the masses. In participating in the FRA, it will not yield to its revolutionary duty before the masses."

As yet we have not seen the promised public delimitation from the reformist betrayers and bourgeois lickspittles gathered together in the FRA. Meanwhile our comrades remain comfortably in bed with them, for "tactical" reasons.

The main role of the FRA is to cover up the betrayal of the Bolivian revolution committed by the reformist parties under Torres. In the name of "unity" this fraudulent front seeks to silence any criticism by branding it as "sectarianism" so as to be in position to mislead the masses once again under the same disastrous program that was supported by the Communist Party of Bolivia

and the POR (Lora).

In March, 1972, the FRA laid down certain rules and regulations that are binding on those belonging to it. These bylaws make instructive reading:

"1. No political organization or party may go against the fundamental line established in the fundamental founding documents of the FRA subscribed to by the representatives of the different groups belonging to it.

"2. The political parties retain their ideological and organizational independence but their conduct is bound by the agreements they have endorsed.

"3. The FRA shall act as a single entity in all areas of social life (trade unions, universities, high schools, popular organizations, etc.). In elections of any kind, the Front will present common slates after fully discussing them internally.

"4. A trade-union and student commission will be set up to take charge of coordinating trade-union and university student work. The highest political-union-student commission constitutes the leadership of the FRA, and the political parties and organizations must subordinate themselves to it in executing the line determined by the Front.

"5. In trade-union, university-student, and other type assemblies, the FRA will present a previously studied and agreed upon line, and it is recommended that its official speakers be assigned beforehand.

"6. Those voicing the FRA's propaganda must present its common views and not solely the partial line of one or some of its components." (*Revista de América*, No. 8/9, May-August, 1972, p. 21.)

These rules and regulations are clearly intended to bottle up critical views that may be held by one or another of the components of the FRA. To remain in such a front means participating in an unprincipled political bloc with reformist betrayers of the revolution and tying the revolutionary party hand and foot.

Instead of joining in a bloc with Juan Lechín, the Communist Party of Bolivia, the POR (Lora), and other political riffraff, our comrades should be doing their utmost to expose how and why these figures and groupings betrayed the Bolivian revolution. This is an absolute requisite in starting from the beginning again in Bolivia and assembling the cadres required to build a revolutionary party capable of presenting a viable alternative to the program of the reformists.

Yet it is understandable—if not excusable—why our Bolivian comrades decided to practice entryism *sui generis* in the FRA. The logic of the guerrilla-war orienta-

tion adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress has led them to subordinate political considerations to what they deem to be the prime necessity—technical preparations for rural guerrilla warfare. They are participating in the unprincipled front regardless of its political coloration and regardless of its ideological gag rule because they think the FRA badge can prove helpful in launching "armed struggle."

In addition, they are affected by the current mood in the Bolivian vanguard favoring "unity" at any cost. This mood is a reaction to the petty, pointless bickerings of the reformists as they jockeyed for favor with Torres and for influence over the masses.

To bow to this mood is extremely dangerous, for it stands in the way of building a clear-thinking and clear-speaking Leninist-type party capable of using the method outlined in the Transitional Program to reach the Bolivian masses.

Instead of the first rule of the FRA's bylaws, stating that "no political organization or party may go against the fundamental line established in the fundamental founding documents" of that unprincipled front, our Bolivian comrades should establish as their first rule to at once go against that fundamental line. The Bolivian section must break out of the straitjacket and bring its own line to the masses through serious, persistent, daily work among the proletariat, the students, the peasants, and the poverty-stricken layers in the towns and cities. Its attitude toward the FRA should be to confront it with dilemmas that will ultimately break it up politically, that is, through united front proposals on specific issues.

New mass struggles will inevitably erupt again in Bolivia—perhaps sooner than may be expected. But to win a position of leadership in these struggles, our comrades must become deeply rooted in the masses. They must turn away definitively from the Guevarist guerrilla-war "strategy" that has proved to be such a deadly trap for the Latin American revolutionary movement. "Technical" considerations must be subordinated—but really subordinated—to the political necessity of gaining leadership in the mass struggle.

This means a policy—for a "prolonged period" and on a "continental scale"—of avoiding actions that lead to the needless sacrifice of the lives of cadres and that provide the counterrevolution with convenient pretexts for savage reprisals. This means reversing the line of the Ninth World Congress calling for a guerrilla "strategy" in Latin America. It means, in short, returning to the Leninist strategy of party building.

### III. The Lesson of Argentina

Since May, 1969, the situation in Argentina has been prerevolutionary.

In that month the country was shaken by mass struggles touched off by student protests. A general strike paralyzed Rosario, Argentina's second largest city. Major flare-ups followed in various cities, the biggest and most violent being in Córdoba, hence the name "Cordobazo" for this historic struggle. The two big trade-union federations called a nationwide solidarity strike. This widespread upsurge in May amounted to a semi-insurrection.

The use of the term "semi-insurrection" rather than "spontaneous rebellion" or "uprising" is deliberate. It accurately indicates the nature of the struggle—in the streets, with masses confronting the army and police; and the target the masses had in mind—the national government. What gave it the character of a semi-insurrection was the clear political aim of the mobilizations and confrontations—to bring down the government.

That is the profound difference from the uprisings in the Black ghettos in the United States, which were spontaneous rebellions, with no specific political demands either explicit or implicit.

But even the Argentine explosions were not insurrections. For that a revolutionary leadership applying a clear program for the conquest of power was required. None of the mobilizations of the working class in Argentina has had this feature.

We have characterized the situation in Argentina since May, 1969, as "prerevolutionary" for various reasons:

1. The confusion in government circles, and the bourgeois forces generally, has grown more and more intense as they flounder about, trying to find a way out of the critical economic situation and trying to derail or break the back of the rising mass movement.

2. The petty bourgeoisie is losing all confidence in the capitalist system, and significant sectors are inclining toward revolutionary or prosocialist positions.

3. The working class wants a revolutionary change in the government. It has lost all confidence in the government as the various regimes have succeeded each other, without ameliorating but only worsening the crisis racking the country.

It is true that the bulk of the working class still has confidence in Peronism politically. But that is because they believe, mistakenly, that through Peronism a means can be found to change the system. In other words, they are still not aware that the Peronist party is bourgeois. This is one of the consequences of the denial of Perón's democratic rights and his exile from the country for seventeen years.

The main obstacles blocking the workers from moving towards state power in the present situation consist of the bureaucratic leadership of the trade unions, the only existing mass organizations of the proletariat, and General Perón, the unquestioned leader of the toiling masses.

The great problem facing the Argentine revolutionary movement is how to transform the prerevolutionary situation into a revolutionary one, that is, into a direct struggle for power.

#### 1. Turn of the Tide

The bourgeois parliamentary regime established after the downfall of Perón in 1955 came to an end in 1966 with a military coup d'état that put General Juan Carlos Onganía in power. The coup reflected a passing downturn in the class struggle. The penetration of U. S. imperialism took a leap ahead, expanding into new sectors such as banking.

Onganía lined up with the Brazilian dictatorship in the worldwide crusade against communism. While he did not set up special courts, or alter the traditional judicial structure in general, preferring to give his regime a "legal" facade, he forced through repressive measures against the working class on both the economic and political levels. But he did not dare attempt to dissolve the trade unions or the rank-and-file structure of the factory committees. Such an attempt had been made a decade before without success. The unions continued as clandestine organizations until the bourgeois regime recognized its defeat and legalized the unions in the late fifties. Onganía's attempt at personal bonapartist rule, which he had promised would last ten years, was terminated by the events of May 1969.

The uprisings in Rosario and Córdoba altered the relationship of class forces. The retreat of the working class came to an end. Already significant efforts had been made to fight back, but these had been defeated. Now the working class began to take the offensive. The masses, in various stages, dealt a series of blows to successive bourgeois regimes, gaining concessions in the process.

The ruling class has oscillated between repression and concessions. This maneuvering, however, has necessarily been confined within the limits of the general crisis that has racked Argentina. The country's semicolonial standing has not enabled the bourgeoisie to grant significant concessions except for the period immediately following World War II. The concessions that have been granted, whether of a minimal economic nature or more typically in the field of democratic rights, have only served to encourage the workers and to lead them to broaden their offensive.

The first semi-insurrections were met with a selective repression. During the whole period since 1966, the ruling class has not carried out a single massacre of the mass movement. While accurate figures are not available, it may well be that there were more casualties in the October, 1968, massacre in Mexico City than in all six years of military rule in Argentina, in which a series of mass uprisings occurred. This is not because the Argentine ruling class is any less brutal or bloodthirsty than the Mexican ruling class, but because they understand the explosiveness of the class struggle and the inherent power of the proletariat in Argentina.

Bending with the pressure of the first Cordobazo, the government promised a relaxation of the repression. Once it felt that the situation was somewhat safe, the govern-

ment disregarded its promise and resumed its hard line. The response from the workers was a resumption of mass actions, paralyzing strikes hitting the cities and sometimes extending to a provincial and national level. In various minor cities, general strikes were accompanied by militant street demonstrations. (It should be noted, however, that mass demonstrations in the streets with the setting up of barricades and clashes with the police have not occurred in a similar way in Buenos Aires with its population of 8,000,000. Rosario and Córdoba, the second and third largest cities, where the demonstrations made world headlines, have populations of only 672,000 and 589,000 respectively.)

The slowly ascending line of mass struggles was registered in several alterations of the cabinet. The ruling class felt compelled to shift its orientation under the Onganía dictatorship, finally removing the general himself in a coup d'etat in June 1970. His replacement, General Roberto Marcelo Levingston, was in turn ousted in a coup nine days after the second Cordobazo in March 1971.

Each change of government marked an attempt to avoid a direct confrontation with the masses and to divert them away from street struggles pointing in the direction of an insurrectionary general strike on a national scale. The diversionary attempts have consisted of offers to provide legal, but relatively harmless, outlets for the expression of discontent. General Alejandro Lanusse, who replaced Levingston in March, 1971, followed up logically by calling for a return to a parliamentary regime.

This turn represents an effort by the military caste to maintain unity in their own ranks, establish a solid ruling-class front, help the trade-union bureaucracy divert the masses, and gain time so as to be in better position to crush the workers' movement at an opportune moment. The idea is to involve the masses once again in the swindle of bourgeois parliamentarism. For this, they require the good offices of the Peronist movement and its leader, the only bourgeois figure with any popularity among the masses. The plan, however, cannot be delayed too long. Two general strikes have served to remind the ruling class of that.

Within the general intensification of the class struggle, a dip occurred in actions by the industrial working class beginning at the end of 1971. This can be ascribed to the scheduling of parliamentary elections and the role of the union bureaucracy. No militant left-wing leadership exists in the unions on a scale sufficient to offer an effective challenge to this political game. But in 1972 new popular uprisings broke out (Mendoza, Tucumán, General Roca). These forced the Peronist movement to adopt a more independent stance, affecting Lanusse's Gran Acuerdo Nacional (GAN), the bourgeois class front. Moreover, the continued radicalization, drawing in ever broader layers of the unorganized workers, the white-collar workers, and the lower petty bourgeoisie, has helped keep the ruling class on the defensive.

## 2. The Labor Movement

Although the modern Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT) came into existence in the 1930s in a series

of strikes led by the Communist Party, it was not until the rise of the Peronist movement that industrial unions became established. This was the period, too, when the Cuerpos de Delegados (delegate bodies) and the Comisiones Internas (internal commissions) were established as the basic structure of the unions. The Cuerpo de Delegados is a factory committee elected either by sectors of each factory or at large. The Comisión Interna is a steering committee usually elected by the Cuerpo de Delegados, but sometimes by direct vote.

While these positive developments marked the rise of one of the most powerfully organized working-class structures in the world, a conservative bureaucracy, linked to the state under Perón, became deeply entrenched. The contradiction between a militant rank and file and a bureaucracy serving as an agency of the ruling class is the central feature of the Argentine labor movement.

With the overthrow of Perón in 1955, the government dissolved the unions. By then, however, the CGT had brought 90 percent of the organized workers within a single union structure.

The resistance to the government centered in the Cuerpos de Delegados and the Comisiones Internas. The new regime found it impossible to crush this powerful base of the union movement. The exiled Perón ordered his movement to turn to terrorism. A wave of bombings and other terrorist actions, unparalleled in the history of Latin America, swept the country. Yet these were unable to change the course of the government in any meaningful way. On the other hand, the continuous strikes led by the factory committees did have an effect, compelling the government to retreat. Finding it impossible to repress the working class at a plant level, the ruling class decided to legalize the top structure of the union movement in hope of utilizing the bureaucracy as a means of containing the factory committees and checking the general militancy of the masses. A special measure, the "Ley de Asociaciones Profesionales," was decreed, recognizing the trade-union structure but designed to place the unions under government control.

The key to Argentine politics in the recent period is similar to that in Bolivia up to Banzer's coup d'etat. The scheme of subjecting the mass movement to direct control through dictatorial regimes failed; the ruling class has been compelled to try more subtle methods.

In 1968 a rift in the ranks of the bourgeoisie resulted in a move to oust Onganía through a coup. This was backed by two major political parties, the Peronists and the Radicals. But the workers were still marking time and the top bureaucrats around Vandor, the central leader of the CGT, while still calling themselves Peronists, were "participating" with the Onganía dictatorship. The differences led to a split in the CGT. The major industrial unions — textiles, auto, construction, meat, light and power, etc. — followed Vandor. Less powerful unions followed Ongaro, who formed the "CGT of the Argentines."

The projected coup never materialized, and the unions associated with the CGT(A) began drifting back into the CGT until Ongaro was left with but a few very small unions — printers, pharmaceutical, etc. Finally, in 1971, Ongaro himself returned to the fold of the CGT, once again uniting the entire trade-union movement in Argentina.

### 3. The Gathering Storm

Before the Cordobazo, the class struggle mounted gradually, yet with strike after strike ending in defeat. For instance, in September, 1968, the workers in the largest oil refinery in the greater Buenos Aires area struck for fifty days in a defensive action against worsening conditions, only to lose.

In January, 1969, another militant strike in the important *Fábrica Financiera* printing plant lasted three months, to be betrayed finally by the bureaucracy. In February the Citroen auto workers struck in solidarity with twelve workers who had been fired from the plant. They were leaders of the *Comisión Interna*, one of them being a highly respected proletarian leader and member of the Central Committee of the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (La Verdad)*. The pickets included armed squads. In a scuffle, one of the most hated representatives of the bosses was mortally wounded. The bureaucracy of the auto union *SMATA (Sindicato de Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor del Automóvil)* used this incident to impose a halt of twenty days in the strike. This broke morale and the bureaucracy followed up to consolidate its grip on the Citroen plant.

In the interior of Argentina, especially in the northern sector, a series of militant struggles took place before the upsurge of May, 1969. These were caused in part by the bad situation in the sugar industry and the general economic blight in that region. The most important struggles broke out in *Villa Ocampo* and *Villa Quinteros*. In the latter city, a peaceful mass demonstration was brutally repressed by the police. The masses responded by building barricades in the streets. The government cracked down with a general repression of the entire population.

In Córdoba a series of struggles flared up on the eve of the May events. On February 24 the metal workers voted to call a strike. Four days later, the workers of *Luz y Fuerza (light and power)* held assemblies. The struggles in this period were occasionally accompanied by marches. In the following month all the metal workers went on strike, and in April the teachers began to mobilize, voting for a plan of struggle.

### 4. The Rosariazo and the Cordobazo

Turmoil broke out on the University of Corrientes campus on May 11. The issue was an arbitrary boost in prices at the student cafeteria. On May 15 the police killed a student. The campus uproar spread to Rosario on May 16. Two days later the police killed another youth.

The workers responded to the appeals of the students and staged a solidarity strike. The CGT bureaucrats, sensing the rising tide, gave their endorsement to the strike. On May 21 the police killed a young metal worker. This led to street demonstrations and confrontations with the police. Barricades went up, and the masses, in a completely

spontaneous manner, took over an area of twenty blocks.

Under the impact of what had happened in Rosario, Córdoba exploded.

Mass discontent had been building toward such an outcome in this powerful proletarian center, the seat of Argentina's auto and aviation industries. On May 5, the transport and metal workers went out on strike. As a show of solidarity the CGT of Córdoba voted a twenty-four-hour general sympathy strike. This resulted in a confrontation with the police on May 14 in which a worker was wounded.

The students now stepped forward. Aroused by the events in Corrientes and enthused by the action of the workers, they organized a march. This was repressed. The medical students answered the police by organizing resistance in their own district. A week of struggle was then voted by the students. In face of the mounting tension, the police arrested Tosco, the leader of the light and power union. High school students began showing up at demonstrations organized by the university students. The Catholic university students joined in the struggle, and student demonstrations spread beyond Rosario and Córdoba to Tucumán and other cities.

Disregarding the wishes of the CGT bureaucrats, factory committees began to call for a general strike. The students declared full support for the action.

On May 30 and May 31, a thirty-six-hour general strike paralyzed Córdoba. It went through three stages:

1. With the rate of absenteeism in the main plants running at 98 percent, the workers marched to the center of the city. The police threw all their forces into the streets in a showdown fight. The battle swept over a large area and involved thousands of workers and students.

Besides throwing rocks and other missiles against the police, the workers and students began using Molotov cocktails. A small number of sharpshooters harassed the police from the tops of buildings.

The outcome was a defeat for the police. This marked the high point of the semi-insurrection.

2. The army entered the city at 5 p.m. The troops occupied key points and then spread out. Proceeding on foot, and firing at roofs, the troops drove back the demonstrating workers and students, regaining buildings they had occupied.

The workers and students retreated to their *barrios* (neighborhoods where they lived).

3. During the night several police stations were attacked and set on fire. Such actions continued the next day on a wide scale. Worker-student committees began to appear. They discussed how to resist the army and how to organize and coordinate the movement from the *barrios*. Propaganda began to be directed to the troops. A significant slogan was "Soldiers, you are our brothers. Don't shoot."

The army managed to extend its control. Troops using guns seized the union headquarters of the light and power workers and the metal workers. Three prominent union leaders, Agustín Tosco, Ramón Contreras, and Elpidio Torres, were arrested.

The Córdoba magazine *Jerónimo* estimated the total casualties during the two days of fighting at six killed, fifty-one wounded, and 300 arrested. Fifteen to twenty large business establishments were heavily damaged and

about sixty automobiles were burned.

The Cordobazo marked the opening of a new rise in the class struggle. When the government decided to hand out harsh sentences to those arrested in the Cordobazo and to clamp down on the unions, the masses responded with a day of national protest June 30, 1969. On that same day, Vandor, a reactionary leader of the CGT, was assassinated. The identity of the killer and the reason for his action are still not known.

The government tried to utilize the assassination as a pretext for stepping up repressive measures against the workers. The answer to this was a nationwide general strike of forty-eight hours at the end of August. In some areas, struggles continued to mount until well into September. By the end of the year, the government pulled back, altering the cabinet and releasing the prisoners arrested during the Cordobazo.

The government alternated between token concessions and repressive measures, creating the conditions for a second series of explosions later.

## 5. Leftist Challenge to the CGT Bureaucracy

The semi-insurrections in Rosario and Córdoba changed the attitude of the left toward the workers. The student movement, especially, became "worker" oriented. The turn included not only the reformist currents but the ultra-lefts. The student enthusiasm for the workers was particularly noticeable in Córdoba. The Partido Comunista Revolucionario, a leftist splitoff from the Communist Party, and the Maoistic Communist Vanguard gained influence in key unions in Córdoba. They played an important role in the development of two unions that broke away from the class-collaborationist bureaucracy, SITRAC and SITRAM (the unions in two auto plants, Sindicato de los Trabajadores de Concord and Sindicato de los Trabajadores de Materfer).

In the first stage of the development of the antibureaucratic current, that is, at the end of 1969 and beginning of 1970, the bureaucracy succeeded in blocking the challenge to its leadership. This was occasionally done in collusion with the bosses. A case in point was the Chocón strike.

During the building of a dam in the province of Neuquen, three antibureaucratic leaders, Olivari, Alac, and Torres, who had been elected in the local construction workers union were fired from the job with the complicity of the bureaucracy. The workers, almost 3,000 strong, staged a solidarity strike. They built barricades and threatened to use dynamite if the police were brought in. They held out for twenty days before being compelled to acknowledge defeat. The three delegates, two of them members of the Communist Party, were arrested.

In union elections, some significant battles were launched against the bureaucrats. In Avellaneda, for instance, the Blue slate, a combination of young militants and an old oppositionist group in the metal workers union offered a challenge but failed to win.

In the capital of Buenos Aires, two opposition slates appeared in the metal workers union. One, the Rose slate, was backed by the CP and the PRT(La Verdad) fractions; the other by left Peronists. Both of the opposition slates were subjected to some crude bureaucratic maneuvering and had to withdraw.

The commercial workers in the capital gave an opposition slate backed by the PRT(La Verdad) 2,000 votes to the bureaucracy's 4,000.

Among the bank workers, an oppositionist slate won the majority of the vote, but with the help of the police the bureaucracy stole the election.

In the auto industry, a PRT(La Verdad) trade-union tendency with leaders in the Peugeot, Citroen, Mercedes Benz, and Chrysler plants, joined with a Peronist rank-and-file opposition led by Pérez, who has backing in the Ford, DECA, and Filtros Fram, and a leader in the Peugeot plant affiliated to the Posadas group. The bureaucracy, fearing possible defeat, barred the slate from running.

These examples are sufficient to indicate the trend in the aftermath of the Cordobazo, that is, the appearance of oppositionist groups in the unions that moved toward a class-struggle line but were still too weak to inflict defeats on the bureaucracy. The trend favored the growth of these currents.

The rise in the class struggle also affected the guerrilla groups. At that time the most prominent were those adhering to Peronism. They stepped up their activities. It also affected the PRT(Combatiente). They terminated their plans for rural guerrilla warfare for the time being and turned their attention to urban guerrilla warfare.

During 1970, the best-known guerrilla group was the Montoneros. They kidnapped and assassinated Aramburu, a former president of Argentina. On July 1, 1970, the Montoneros took over the small town of La Calera in the province of Córdoba.

On July 30, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, another Peronist guerrilla group, occupied the town of Garín, a suburb of Buenos Aires. The Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), which appeared in July, 1970, under the sponsorship of the PRT(Combatiente), moved into prominence during 1971.

## 6. Rise of a Militant Opposition

By mid-1970 significant headway was being made against the trade-union bureaucracy. This trend grew until nearly the end of 1971.

In August, 1970, the construction union involved in the Chocón strike held new elections. The opposition won easily.

In San Lorenzo, near Rosario, a class-struggle current set up an Interunion grouping that organized a general strike. Among other demands, it called for the release of political prisoners.

In La Plata, just outside of Buenos Aires, an oppositionist current began gaining headway in the textile

plant Petroquímica in 1970. The management in this plant sought to fire some of the activists in the Comisión Interna and the Cuerpo de Delegados. This precipitated a strike that was won. In 1971 at the end of an obligatory "cooling off" period, the company fired 105 workers, including the activists. This was answered by a strike that lasted sixty-seven days. The 1,100 workers won an increase of 50 percent in their pay, but by a government decision seventy-four workers were fired, including the activists of the Comisión Interna and the Cuerpo de Delegados. Within eight months, the class-struggle current was again able to wield considerable influence in these bodies.

As part of the leadership of the Petroquímica strike, the PRT(La Verdad) played an important role. All the tendencies of the far left united in defense of this critical strike. The ERP and the FAR, for instance, donated funds.

*Auto:* In the auto industry, the class-struggle tendency began to make considerable headway in Buenos Aires. In FAE (700 workers), the opposition headed by Pérez, a Peronist, was able—with the help that the PRT(La Verdad) tendency was able to mobilize in other auto plants—to win an important strike that had been provoked by the bosses.

The traditionally conservative Mercedes Benz plant (3,000 workers) began to shift to the left. At Chrysler (1,500 workers) and Citroen (1,100 workers), the current led by the PRT(La Verdad) gained considerably in strength.

Instead of negotiating a contract for the entire industry, the auto bureaucracy negotiates plant by plant. In opposition to this tradition, the PRT(La Verdad) tried to foster resistance in at least some of the plants against this one-at-a-time policy. It was in battling against the workers' efforts to achieve united action that the bosses provoked the Chrysler strike.

Although the strike was organized in model form, having a daily strike bulletin, regular picketing, and mass assemblies in reaching decisions, the workers were unable to win. They held out for fifteen days before having to concede. Some of the best militants in the plant were fired, including many PRT(La Verdad) workers.

This defeat left the opposition in the Buenos Aires auto plants too weak to offer SITRAC-SITRAM effective support when they later came under attack.

Encouraged by the results of the Chrysler strike, the bosses decided to try similar tactics at Citroen. They fired class-struggle leaders. The resulting strike was again led by the PRT(La Verdad). This time the workers were able to beat off the attack and stop the offensive of the bosses in the auto industry in Buenos Aires.

*Bank Workers:* One of the most important victories of the rising new workers vanguard was among the bank workers, traditionally a very militant sector, with 6,500 workers in the head office of the Banco de la Nación Argentina, and 2,500 in its branches in the city and its suburbs. After a series of battles, a class-struggle current began to play a leading role in the Comisiones Internas and Cuerpos de Delegados. The strength of the PRT(La Verdad) in this union is recognized by the entire left in Argentina. An indication of the esteem in which the PRT(La Verdad) comrades are held was provided by the response in February 1972 to the attempted beating of

a PRT(La Verdad) leader in the Banco de la Nación. The 6,000 workers staged a one-hour protest strike.

In Buenos Aires the workers at the Banco de la Nación have played a vanguard role since the latter part of 1970.

*Telephone Workers:* Unlike the bank workers, who were relatively quiescent after suffering a bitter defeat in 1959, the telephone workers, organized in the Federación de Obreros y Empleados Telefónicos de la República Argentina played an active role within the left wing of the Peronist movement under their main leader, Guillán.

In the September 1971 elections, various oppositionist groups formed a combination called the Frente Clasista de Renovación Telefónica (Class Struggle Front for the Renovation of the Telephone Union), which ran candidates on the Rose slate. Guillán's Brown slate won with the backing of the Communist Party. A right-wing slate won 1,000 votes, the Rose slate only 800.

*SITRAC-SITRAM:* Of all the class-struggle currents that developed, the most important was in Córdoba at the two Fiat plants represented by SITRAC and SITRAM.

Many of the technical workers in these two plants have had a university education. Consequently the radicalization that took place on the campus finds its reflection in the ranks of the unions. Two currents were especially strong in the student movement in Córdoba, the PCR and the Maoist Vanguardia Comunista. Their ultraleft and sectarian influence played into the hands of the Peronists and hampered SITRAC-SITRAM from playing the full vanguard role that was open to them on a national scale. Because of the 1968 split in its own ranks, that is, with the comrades of the PRT(Combatiente), the PRT(La Verdad) was greatly weakened in such cities as Rosario, Tucumán, and Córdoba. Until 1972, it had no influence in either of the two Fiat plants.

As in the other cases we have cited, the class-struggle current in SITRAC-SITRAM developed through difficult battles. In a parallel way, the management sought to undermine and destroy any independent leadership by firing key militants. The response of the workers was likewise similar to those elsewhere.

In January, 1971, when seven workers were fired at Concord, the workers took over the plant. The ERP participated by disarming the factory guards. The workers at Materfer and other plants declared their solidarity with Concord. The government threatened to intervene with force. The workers held firm and the management capitulated.

However, the SITRAC-SITRAM leaders in battling the Córdoba CGT, which was led by Peronist bureaucrats adroit enough to put on a leftist front when necessary, tended to follow a sectarian line and thus did not succeed in polarizing sufficient forces around them to be able to take over as an alternative leadership. Plagued by ultraleftism, the class-struggle tendency at SITRAC-SITRAM did not offer a clear program in opposition to the CGT bureaucracy that could have effectively attracted the workers in the other unions in Córdoba.

In the SITRAC-SITRAM actions, for instance, the ultra-lefts, among other inapt appeals, called for "Neither coup, nor elections. Revolution." Presented as the answer to Lanusse's maneuver of projecting elections, this abstract, sectarian ultraleft slogan was advanced by student groups

and the official Argentine section of the Fourth International, the PRT (Combatiente).

When the Córdoba CGT bureaucrats, in fear of the SITRAC-SITRAM unions and in response to pressure from the ranks, took the initiative in projecting mass struggles, the SITRAC-SITRAM leaders at times took sectarian positions.

For instance, in March, 1971, the CGT set up a Comisión de Lucha (Struggle Commission) and called for a massive but peaceful demonstration against the government. Instead of forming a united front with the CGT, the SITRAC-SITRAM leaders called for a separate demonstration. The response to the CGT Struggle Commission was massive. The march staged by the SITRAC-SITRAM workers resulted in a confrontation in which a nineteen-year-old worker Adolfo Cepeda was killed. This aroused the working class.

Under the leadership of Tosco, the CGT Struggle Commission took the initiative, shifting to the left. About 5,000 persons attended the funeral of Cepeda, whose coffin was draped with the flag of the ERP. Tosco was the only speaker.

A succession of actions followed, exploding in what is now designated as the second Cordobazo. One of the important outcomes was to further the authority of the CGT Struggle Commission and to relatively weaken the standing of the leaders of SITRAC-SITRAM, since they continued to refuse to participate in the deliberations and decisions of the CGT body.

After the second Cordobazo, the SITRAC-SITRAM leadership, realizing that it was becoming isolated, modified its sectarian stance and began looking for allies.

An attempt was made, for example, in Buenos Aires to set up a commission, the function of which was to support SITRAC-SITRAM. Along with other groupings, the Partido Comunista Revolucionario, the Vanguardia Comunista, the PRT (Combatiente), and the PRT (La Verdad) participated in this. However, the commission was paralyzed by the sectarian attitude of the ultralefts. One of their first moves was to propose the expulsion of the Communist Party and Política Obrera (the Lambertists) from the commission. Then they objected to the participation of the PRT (La Verdad) on the grounds that it was "reformist" and not for "armed struggle." Unfortunately for them, the bulk of the worker representation in the commission resulted from the influence of the PRT (La Verdad).

In Córdoba, under the direct control of the SITRAC-SITRAM leadership, the support commission developed in a more democratic atmosphere because of the pressure of the workers.

As two powerful unions in the forefront of the struggle in Córdoba and in a most influential position in the Argentine vanguard, it was natural that SITRAC-SITRAM would be singled out for attack by the government. The authorities bided their time until they felt that the two unions had become relatively isolated. On October 26, 1971, the government intervened with an order dissolving the two unions. Hundreds of militant workers were fired by the management. Gendarmes occupied the plants.

The response to these moves was very limited, even within the plants. To understand this, it is necessary to review two national plenary meetings called by the

SITRAC-SITRAM leadership in an attempt to establish a national class-struggle tendency.

## 7. The SITRAC-SITRAM Plenary Meetings

The SITRAC-SITRAM leadership called a conference (plenary meeting) for August 28-29, 1971. The following agenda was proposed: "a) analysis of the economic, social, and political situation facing the country; b) problems of the labor movement, rejection of the passivity of José Rucci and his traitorous union clique of the Azopardo CGT; c) national coordination of the protests of the working class and popular sectors against starvation wages, the turning over of the nation to imperialism, and the intensification of the government's policy of repression." All union bodies and rank-and-file organizations were invited to attend.

On the basis of this call, the Comisión Interna of the Banco de la Nación called a conference in Buenos Aires to designate a delegation to go to Córdoba. The police intervened, blocking any public meeting. Nevertheless a number of delegates and activists from Comisiones Internas did meet and voted for a declaration to be presented to the conference in Córdoba.

The meeting opened on schedule but with some delegates not present. Thirty-five had been arrested, including those from the San Lorenzo Interunion.

Between 800 and 1,000 persons attended. The majority represented the student movement and the various revolutionary organizations. These groups were asked to leave after designating two delegates for each organization; however, most of them stayed.

The presence of a large number of leftists not directly part of the labor movement had its detrimental aspects in the functioning of the conference. It required a two-hour discussion to decide whether the delegates of the Uruguayan Convención Nacional de Trabajadores should be added to the honorary presidium.

The most important forces present were the pharmaceutical and printers unions influenced by Ongaro, the CGT from Corrientes, the Comisión Interna from the Escalada textile mill, railroad workers from Tafi Viejo, the Buenos Aires delegation headed by national bank workers (which included representatives from fourteen Comisiones Internas) and leaders who had been fired from Chrysler and Petroquímica. Leaders of the Partido Comunista Revolucionario were present although they represented hardly any workers. Política Obrera was there with a few workers. Various small independent worker formations of Córdoba were represented. Also present were a few grouplets like Milicia Obrera, a split-off from the PRT (Combatiente).

In spite of the confusion, the proposals made by the SITRAC-SITRAM leadership were generally positive. The followers of Ongaro threatened to walk out if the general political declaration were put to a vote, and the SITRAC-SITRAM leadership correctly pulled back on this, leaving the declaration open to further discussion by the various

groupings. The SITRAC-SITRAM leadership proposed that a Provisional Coordinating Committee composed of representatives of the unions and tendencies present be set up to handle activities following the conference. The ultralefts protested against including the Buenos Aires national bank workers, since this would give the PRT (La Verdad) a voice in the commission. This led to the proposal being altered to exclude the Comisiones Internas and the Cuerpos de Delegados.

The conference as a whole revealed the extreme weakness of the class-struggle tendencies. The only real trade-union forces present consisted of the SITRAC-SITRAM, the small Ongaro unions, the national bank workers and other Buenos Aires Comisiones Internas, and the San Lorenzo Interunion group who never made it to the gathering because of the police. Many of the speakers dealt in abstract generalities, and the conference never got beyond the first point on the agenda.

A second plenary was held on September 22. This time only 300 persons were present. In some respects this was an improvement since it gave greater relative weight to the workers. The meeting ran more smoothly and made better headway, including acceptance of a motion presented by the Buenos Aires bank workers to form a national class-struggle tendency at the next conference. But the meeting represented only limited forces. The Ongaro unions did not participate.

A third gathering was never held, since SITRAC-SITRAM was dissolved by the government. In spite of the immense mobilizations, the Peronist bureaucracy still retained an iron grip on the central mass organizations, the trade unions. In the second half of 1971, a partial lull in the class struggle set in. The government took full advantage of the isolation of SITRAC-SITRAM, calculating that the two unions were no longer in position to mobilize an effective defense against a vigorous effort to crush the strongest point of the incipient national class-struggle tendency.

## 8. Broad Mass Mobilizations

Mass protest actions against the government did not cease during 1972. However, the axis of the protests shifted from the industrial proletariat to sectors of the white-collar workers and the petty bourgeoisie.

Important actions initiated by numbers of students gained either mass sympathy (Tucumán) or direct mass support (Mar del Plata).

The action in Mar del Plata was especially important as a model in building a united-front defense against repression. The demonstration resulted from an attempt by the police to prevent eyewitnesses from testifying before a judge about a murder committed by fascist-minded thugs linked to the local CGT bureaucracy.

At the end of 1971, the gangsters attacked a student assembly, killing one student, Silvia Filler, and wounding another, Marcos Chueque. The immediate response of the students was ultraleftist. They went down the streets, breaking windows.

Six months later when the assassin was brought to

trial, the police, in hope of discrediting the testimony of the main witnesses, arrested four students after they had attended a meeting of 1,000 persons protesting the killing. Three of them were members of the PRT (La Verdad), which by then had become the Partido Socialista Argentino.

The involvement of the PRT (La Verdad) made it possible to orient the protest along united-front lines. First a united-front committee was set up in the university. The students demonstrated against the police, but with appeals to the working class to join in the protests through their unions. The students called for a silent march on June 8, 1972, under the slogan, "Free the Compañeros." Support began mounting from all sides. Many professional groups declared their solidarity. The rector of the university and the governing council sent telegrams to Lanusse. Professors, assistants, and graduate students passed resolutions.

Various unions began to make declarations of support. These included light and power, the printers, oil, transport, mill, and the bank workers unions.

Under the impact of the growing mass support and mass actions, the CGT bureaucrats despite their connections with those guilty of the crime, declared a general sympathy strike for June 14.

Many political parties came out in support of the campaign, and they set up a broad coordinating committee.

The general strike was quite successful. High-school students turned out in mass and joined young workers in going from factory to factory to make sure the entire town came out.

The army was mobilized but the troops found it impossible to stop the demonstrators, who divided into groups of 300 to 1,000 that roamed the city. People on the sidelines cheered the demonstrators, reflecting the overwhelming popularity of the antigovernmental action.

The government decided to beat a retreat. All the prisoners were freed except Jorge Sprovieri, a member of the Partido Socialista Argentino, who was sent to a prison ship in Buenos Aires. However, he too was freed fifty-six days later.

In April, 1972, in answer to rate increases for electricity, demonstrations broke out in Córdoba, Rosario, San Luis, San Juan, and Mendoza.

The high point was the mass mobilization in Mendoza. Led by the teachers and other white-collar workers, with some support from the industrial workers, the entire city rose in protest against the rate increases. The demonstrations lasted four days. The repressive forces killed four persons, but could not put down the demonstrations. Eventually the government capitulated and lowered the rates to the previous level throughout the area where it had attempted to put across the boost.

In the city of General Roca, the popular outburst was of particular significance because of the fact that it was the first uprising with a clearly defined leadership, although that leadership was bourgeois. The Rocazo developed out of a conflict between the ruling class of the province and the federal government. The local ruling class set up what amounted to a provisional government opposed to the official Lanusse government in that area.

The efforts made by the masses to influence the troops was also a significant aspect of the Rocazo. New methods

of struggle were used and more advanced forms of organization appeared in an embryonic way. A sympathizer of the Partido Socialista Argentino set up a "Radio Free Roca," giving the small group of members of the PSA living there an opportunity to advance a line in opposition to the provisional bourgeois government. They called for the formation of worker-neighborhood coordinating committees, defense committees, and so on.

The army's tactic was to arrest large numbers of demonstrators, beat them, and then turn them loose. No one was killed. At the end of a week of protests and clashes with the occupation forces, the army released all the prisoners it had taken.

After the government succeeded in dissolving SITRAC-SITRAM and a relative downturn was felt in the labor movement, the guerrilla groups turned away from such actions as distributing milk and meat in the poor districts, resorting more to terrorism. This included a number of assassinations, among them a former head of police in Tucumán, a leader of the New Force Party in Buenos Aires, a rank-and-file soldier who refused to give up his arms, the manager of the Italian FIAT enterprise, and an army general.

The ERP and the Montoneros were the most active in this period. But in general the guerrilla groups have declined as shown by the decreasing number of actions.

This is owing to various factors, among them the increased effectiveness of the governmental repression and the decreasing interest among frustrated layers of the petty bourgeoisie in terrorism or clandestine acts of violence against the ruling class in face of the lure offered by the regime of an electoral alternative.

## 9. The Test of Two Lines in Argentina

We have seen how the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress led to disaster in Bolivia. However, it could be argued that any other line would have ended similarly. In the case of Argentina the situation is different. The PRT (La Verdad) voted against the "turn," while the PRT (Combatiente) voted for it and set out to show the results that could be obtained by putting it into practice. The PRT (Combatiente) applied the line faithfully, as Comrades Maitan, Mandel, and other comrades of the majority of the United Secretariat have testified.

The PRT (La Verdad), on the other hand, continued to apply the method of the Transitional Program and can offer the results of its activities as a positive test of the correctness of the position taken by the minority at the Ninth World Congress. The essence of the policy followed by the PRT (La Verdad) has been to attempt to construct a Leninist-type party by penetrating the mass movement, participating in mass mobilizations, and presenting itself as the revolutionary alternative leadership in the existing mass organizations. That is, it has not attempted to bypass the existing formations of the masses or their way of going into action. It has sought instead to advance within them transitional demands capable of assisting them in advancing beyond the present forms of the class struggle to higher forms pointing toward the conquest of power.

The conception of the PRT (La Verdad) is that to lead the masses a program is required that takes into account their most deeply felt needs at their present level of understanding. The question of armed struggle likewise has to be raised in a transitional way and not as a schema into which the masses have to be fitted.

That is why the history of the PRT (La Verdad) since the Ninth World Congress is directly tied to the history of the mass struggles that have arisen in Argentina. The PRT (La Verdad) sought in everything it did to gear into the objective situation that was shaped by the class struggle, participating in the mass movement in order to advance it according to its own inherent logic.

With the PRT (Combatiente), the opposite occurred, as we shall see. They embarked on a "prolonged war" that called for the construction of a "revolutionary army." They disregarded events in the class struggle involving the masses except as these might be utilized to advance their narrow schema calling for construction of an armed instrument under their own command. This was a sectarian objective, standing in contrast to the broad objective followed by the PRT (La Verdad) of constructing a revolutionary political leadership arising out of the actual struggle itself.

In order to reach a better appreciation of the practical course followed by the PRT (Combatiente) it is necessary to know the main lines of their political orientation. Of particular importance is their international outlook and their view of the Fourth International.

## 10. Call for a New International

The PRT (Combatiente) believes that the Fourth International is finished as a revolutionary international and that a new international must be built. The bases for the new international, they hold, are at hand in China, Albania, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, and certain organizations now outside of the Fourth International, plus at least part of the Fourth International.

Following its Fifth Congress (held in July, 1970), the Central Committee of the PRT (Combatiente) clarified its position on the Fourth International through a statement by one of its members entitled "Minuta Sobre Internacional" (Memorandum on the International). This was made public along with all the other decisions of the Fifth Congress of the PRT (Combatiente).

"It is necessary to restate, so as to leave no room for error, exaggeration, or false illusions, the realistic point of view I upheld at the congress that we do not believe in the possibility of the Fourth International becoming converted into the revolutionary international party, the need of which we uphold. We believe that this is now historically impossible, and that the role of the International, granting the favorable supposition that it becomes converted into a proletarian revolutionary organization, should be to seek to construct a new Revolutionary International modeled after the Leninist Third International and based on the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cuban, Korean, and Albanian parties." (*Resoluciones del V Congreso y de los Comité Central y Comité Ejecutivo Po-*

steriores [Resolutions of the Fifth Congress and of following meetings of the Central and Executive Committees], p. 42.)

Thus the PRT(Combatiente) has indicated publicly that it is battling for fundamental changes in the program of the Fourth International. First, they want to convert the International into a "revolutionary" organization, that is, an organization that agrees with and practices their orientation of "prolonged war" and construction of "revolutionary armies" on all continents. Secondly, they insist that the International drop its position of calling for a political revolution in China and other deformed workers states, and instead support those Stalinized regimes and parties politically, pressing them only to set up a "new revolutionary international" open to certain other groupings.

"We ratify our adhesion with the intention of bringing about the proletarianization of the International, of transforming it into a revolutionary organization, and of struggling to orient it toward the formation of a new revolutionary international based on the Chinese, Cuban, Korean, Vietnamese, and Albanian parties, and sister organizations that are fighting in a revolutionary manner against capitalism and imperialism in each country." (Ibid., p. 42.)

The leaders of the PRT(Combatiente) had expressed the same views, although not as explicitly, on the eve of the Ninth World Congress. In their programmatic booklet *The Only Road to Workers' Power and Socialism*, written in 1968, they called on the Fourth International to adopt the world strategy and tactics of Castroism.

"Within the framework of the Fourth International we have important contributions to make, but to do so we must define our own strategy for this stage of the world revolution.

"We believe that our party should clearly pronounce itself in favor of the world strategy formulated by Castroism. . . .

"Firstly, we are in favor of announcing our agreement with Castroist strategy and tactics for the world and continental revolution for the following reasons: a) We consider them essentially correct . . ." (*International Information Bulletin*, No. 4, October, 1972, p. 18.)

They also made clear their judgment of the different currents, Castroism, Maoism, and Trotskyism on a world scale. In their opinion both Trotskyism and Maoism are continuations of Leninism—Trotskyism in the field of theory, Maoism in the field of action. Thus the central task today, as they see it, is to reach a higher unity, which to them would represent a return to Leninism. This, they hold, is the essential meaning of the development of Castroism.

"Today the principal theoretical task of revolutionary Marxists is to fuse the main contributions of Trotskyism and Maoism into a higher unity which would prove to be a real return to Leninism. The development of the world revolution leads inevitably to this goal as is indicated by the unilateral advances of Maoism toward the assimilation of Trotskyism (the break with the Soviet bureaucracy, the cultural revolution); the moves of Trotskyism toward incorporating Maoist contributions (the theory of revolutionary war) and, above all, the effort of the Cuban leadership to achieve this superior unity." (Ibid., p. 8.)

In their public statements and in their publications, the PRT(Combatiente) hew to this view. They reject publicly defining themselves as Trotskyists.

For instance, when they were asked in an interview published in the August 29, 1972 issue of *Punto Final*, a magazine widely read in Latin America, whether the PRT(Combatiente) is a Trotskyist organization, Comrades Santucho and Gorriarán, who are top leaders of the official Argentine section of the Fourth International, replied: "The party that leads the Revolutionary Army of the People [ERP], the Revolutionary Workers party [PRT(Combatiente)], defines itself ideologically as Marxist-Leninist and welcomes the contributions of various revolutionists from other nations, including those of our main Comandante, Che Guevara. It also welcomes the contributions that Trotsky, Kim Il Sung, Mao Tsetung, Ho Chi Minh, and General Giap have made for the revolution. We believe that it is inadequate and inappropriate to ideologically define the given organization as Trotskyist. We certainly feel that Trotsky was a revolutionist and most of our members have read his contributions to revolution, especially his contributions toward a critique of the bureaucracy and on permanent revolution." (*Intercontinental Press*, November 27, 1972, p. 1317.)

On all major international events, the PRT(Combatiente) publishes its own line even when it is diametrically opposed to that of the world Trotskyist movement. Thus they publicly supported the Mao-Nixon summit conference as a victory for the world revolution. (See the article "Una Victoria Revolucionaria" in *El Combatiente*, No. 59, August 9, 1971.)

On the other hand, they have never published a statement or resolution of the Fourth International.

Recently they even changed their position on the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Originally they had accepted the Fourth International position of condemning the invasion. Now they support the invasion, thus placing themselves in line with the position taken by the Cuban Communist Party.

The PRT(Combatiente) is opposed to building Trotskyist parties in countries where groups are to be found that correspond to their criteria for building a "new revolutionary international" composed of Maoists, Castroists, and those Trotskyists that supported the "turn" made at the Ninth World Congress. Thus they oppose building a Trotskyist group in Chile where the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria already occupies the ground floor. The same holds for Uruguay where the Tupamaros are operating. And, of course, the same goes for China where they consider the Chinese Communist Party to be a genuine Marxist-Leninist organization.

One grouping will certainly not be included in the "new revolutionary international"—the PRT(La Verdad). In fact the comrades of the PRT(Combatiente) are pressing for the expulsion of the PRT(La Verdad) from the ranks of the Fourth International.

Others, too, may be in for summary eviction if the views of the PRT(Combatiente) on the composition of the Fourth International should come to prevail. The interview with Comrades Santucho and Gorriarán in *Punto Final* included the following slanderous statement adopted in 1970 at the fifth congress held by the organization:

"The Trotskyist movement, it must be explained, involves heterogeneous sectors: from counterrevolutionary adventurers who use its banner while at the same time prostituting it, to consistent revolutionists."

Just who are the "counterrevolutionary adventurers" in the Trotskyist movement? They remain unidentified in this monstrous assertion borrowed from the school of Stalinism.

It is crystal clear that the PRT (Combatiente) is not Trotskyist. In making their call for the formation of a "new revolutionary international," the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) did not wait to discuss the question within the Fourth International. They broadcast it to the world, making sure in particular that it came to the attention of the Cubans. This is understandable, since they are publicly avowed Castroists.

From their point of view, it can be seen why they were elated over the "turn" made by the Ninth World Congress on Latin America. As Castroists they viewed it as a qualitative step in their direction. By the same token they showed how correct the minority was at the Ninth World Congress in judging the resolution on Latin America to be an adaptation to Castroism.

In Argentina, then, we have two groups associated with the Fourth International. One, the PRT (Combatiente), is a publicly avowed Castroist organization. It supports the majority position of orienting toward guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale. The other organization, the PRT (La Verdad) is opposed to the Castroist line. Dedicated to the strategy of building a Leninist combat party, it supported the minority position at the Ninth World Congress.

Unlike the PRT (Combatiente), the PRT (La Verdad) views the growth of Trotskyism as an absolute necessity for the triumph of the world revolution. It sees itself as one contingent in the international struggle led by the Trotskyist movement against the bureaucracies of the degenerated or deformed workers states and the Stalinist parties, which stand for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism and class collaboration with the indigenous bourgeoisie. Therefore in all the countries whose state-controlled parties the PRT (Combatiente) wishes to include in a "new revolutionary international" the PRT (La Verdad) favors a political revolution with the exception of Cuba where the position of the PRT (La Verdad) is the same as that of the rest of the Fourth International.

The PRT (La Verdad) has always referred to itself as a Trotskyist party and as part of the Fourth International. It follows the method outlined in the Transitional Program in seeking to win leadership of the Argentine masses.

This difference between the PRT (Combatiente) and the PRT (La Verdad) on the key question of attitude toward the Fourth International is naturally reflected in their activity on the national scene. This becomes even clearer as we examine the activities of the two groups in Argentina.

## 11. Two Views of the Cordobazo

All organizations in Argentina that consider themselves to be socialist hold that the Cordobazo marked a turn-

ing point in the history of the country. In the opinion of the PRT (La Verdad), the Cordobazo opened up a prerevolutionary period. The PRT (Combatiente) took the view that Argentina had entered a prerevolutionary period even before the Cordobazo and even when the working class was still in retreat or marking time. This judgment corresponded with the position taken by the majority at the Ninth World Congress that the entire continent had entered a prerevolutionary period and was on the verge of a civil war of continental scope. The PRT (Combatiente) naturally agreed that this held true for Argentina as much as anywhere else, if not more so. Thus to the PRT (Combatiente) the Cordobazo marked the close of the prerevolutionary period and the opening of "civil war."

And that was how they evaluated the situation at their Fifth Congress where they brought things up to date. "The Fourth Congress [1968] showed that Argentina as a whole was in a prerevolutionary situation; reality confirmed this day by day and today we hold an even more concrete view: the revolutionary civil war has begun." ("Resoluciones sobre dinámica y relaciones de nuestra guerra revolucionaria," *Resolutions of the Fifth Congress*, p. 27)

Let us now take a look at how the two organizations responded to the rising mass mobilizations.

In the April 21, 1969, issue of its newspaper *La Verdad*, published at the time of the Ninth World Congress and a month before the first Cordobazo, the PRT (La Verdad) stated that "the mobilizations at Villa Quinteros and Villa Campo and those of the students in Tucumán and Rosario, make it clear that the upswing in the North is broadening on a national scale.

"The actions in the three places have indicated some of the *methods needed to confront the regime: mass demonstrations, occupation of school departments and buildings, resistance to the repressive forces. It is necessary to extend and coordinate these actions.*" (Emphasis added.)

The PRT (Combatiente) drew the opposite conclusions. Instead of seeing the need to project mass actions in the streets as a correct and necessary step in educating and organizing the masses in the struggle against the repression, they projected clandestine actions by small vanguard groups, postponing mass actions to the time when a sufficiently large military force could be assembled to take on the repressive forces militarily. This meant in practice not trying to mobilize the masses anywhere anytime.

Just prior to the Cordobazo, the PRT (Combatiente) wrote in their paper (May 21, 1969): "The regime's repressive organization and the consciousness of the revolutionary workers vanguard, *which is learning that it is suicide to confront the police empty-handed*, resulted in the government's apparently winning a victory inasmuch as there were only a few quickie strikes and one or another action authorized to be taken in the interior. . . . And thus we have seen this May Day the beginnings of the application of violence in a clandestine form, hitting if only weakly at the imperialist businesses, institutions of the government. . . . *Public meetings and massive concentrations should be engaged in where we have the military forces capable of resisting the repressive forces of the regime. Meanwhile we should strengthen ourselves through thousands of skirmishes and clandestine actions*

that will in turn weaken them. Favorable terrain, the use of surprise, will be the best friends for the conscious vanguard, basing itself more and more in the working people, overcoming the repression of the military dictatorship, servant of the foreign monopolies." (Emphasis added.)

Noting the beginning of mass actions in the streets, the PRT (La Verdad) called attention to the need to expand them and extend them on a national scale. The PRT (Combatiente), in contrast, warned that it was suicide to confront the repressive forces before a military apparatus had been assembled of sufficient strength to deal with them. Until then, the PRT (Combatiente) advised, the vanguard should devote itself to hit-and-run violence.

What stands out in the most salient way in the line of the PRT (Combatiente) is the complete absence of a practical program to involve the masses and help them move toward higher forms of struggle. The masses are to wait, arms folded, patiently enduring the blows dealt them, until the military problem is solved through the slow accretion of guerrilla fighters. The concept is gradualist in character.

## 12. Two Views of General Strikes

The differences between the PRT (La Verdad) and the PRT (Combatiente) reflected in the quotations cited above can be traced throughout their involvement (or lack of involvement) in the class struggle. This is only to be expected, for the two organizations have been following two different methods. The PRT (La Verdad) proceeds from the fact that the actual living class struggle itself indicates the forms that the revolution will take. Consequently at each step in that struggle it seeks to find and raise slogans that will help the masses to advance in political understanding, that will help build the party until it becomes a mass revolutionary party able to appear as a realistic alternative leadership for the class as a whole.

The PRT (Combatiente), on the other hand, decided a priori, on the basis of the line adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress, that the form the revolution would take in Argentina would be rural guerrilla warfare in a prolonged civil war on a continental scale. With that schema fixed unalterably, save for a shift to urban guerrilla warfare, the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) tried to make the developing mass movement fit the a priori pattern. To them the actual events merely provided an arena for what was viewed as the real revolutionary work, that is, preparations for guerrilla war and the building of an army separate and apart from the mass organizations of the working class.

The actual events, beginning with the Cordobazo and again on various other occasions, indicated that the most powerful weapon the proletariat had at its disposal in fighting for immediate demands and in preparing for higher stages of struggle against the capitalists, including the question of the conquest of power, was the general strike lifted to a political level. The tendency for such strikes to occur, even at a provincial or city level, and

to move toward insurrection, should have alerted any Marxist not caught up in some ultraleft schema that this was the way the masses were preparing to conquer power in Argentina.

Thus at every step in the unfolding struggles, the PRT (La Verdad) raised slogans aimed at weakening the trade-union bureaucracy, advancing the mass actions, and sinking the party's roots deeper into the mass organizations.

For instance, when a thirty-six-hour general strike was declared by the CGT on November 12-13, 1970, the PRT (La Verdad) raised within the labor movement the following demands which the party sought to popularize in the broadest way possible:

"Forward with the 36-hour strike! Let it help us prepare for an unlimited general strike for:

"—An immediate pay increase of 26,000 [pesos], including the government workers and employees.

"—An immediate end to the state of siege and the repeal of all repressive legislation, including the monstrous death penalty.

"—Recognition of all parties belonging to the working class and of personalities, including General Perón.

"This 36-hour strike must be utilized to prepare the decisive confrontation which will not come to an end with the winning of a mere wage boost. We must understand that this struggle is not against the government's economic team, but against the whole miserable, sinister government serving the bosses.

"The best way to guarantee success for the strike is to organize factory assemblies throughout the country. In all places of work assemblies should be set up, empowered to vote and to organize concentrations by zone, utilizing the main factories as a base, and setting up picket squads of activists, who will guarantee success in the struggle." (Declaration published in *La Verdad*, No. 243, November 10, 1970)

It was in order to raise consciousness against the role of the bureaucracy that the PRT (La Verdad) advanced the demand that the general strike be organized through the existing factory committees and through assemblies. The slogans, stemming out of the actual struggles, struck a responsive chord. The result was that in some plants the PRT (La Verdad) proposals were adopted and the party's influence grew in the factories.

The PRT (Combatiente), in contrast, advanced its schema of "revolutionary war." Just a few months prior to the general strike in 1970, it announced the existence of an "army," the ERP. The PRT (Combatiente) recognized the power of the general strike when it developed, but it proposed no program for the strike, no line of approach for the workers, no organizational forms for developing the strike. Instead, in reporting the general strike in *Combatiente* No. 50 (December, 1970), the editor lectured the workers vanguard on the necessity of raising their consciousness to the level of guerrilla war. ". . . for them it is necessary to develop a revolutionary consciousness that clearly sets taking power as the objective—the tactics and strategy of our revolution: a revolutionary workers and popular government, which will be achieved through a prolonged, mass, revolutionary war, a civil war at the beginning and probably national at a later stage before imperialism intervenes."

Not a word was uttered one way or the other concerning moving ahead to new strikes as the outcome of this co-

lossal general strike.

The PRT(Combatiente) viewed the general strike as merely offering a more favorable opening for its "revolutionary" actions. This was reflected in a report in the same issue of *El Combatiente* concerning a meeting of the Central Committee that took place in October, 1970, after the huge strikes of October 9 and October 22, when the general strike for November had already been called. The Central Committee did not project a line designed for the masses nor propose participating in it. They had something else in mind. "We must be on a state of alert and organize our small forces to act efficiently and methodically in the eventuality of mass mobilizations. It is clear that if they occur all the possibilities will be on the side of the revolutionary forces."

Not a word about the scheduled general strike, not a single word.

### 13. The Day to Day Class Struggle

The class struggle takes place through concrete forms. For instance, at the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1971, the major industries were going through the process of negotiating new contracts. Traditionally these come up every two years in Argentina; but the Onganía regime had suspended negotiations for four years, imposing his own contract terms during this period. In the context of the radicalization that was taking place, it was doubly necessary to raise the correct slogans for this period and to fight within the factories on the new terms of the contracts. The importance of this was underlined by the strikes that occurred in the auto industry.

Although we could quote at length from the proposals advanced by the PRT(La Verdad) in the plants, a single brief statement will serve to indicate their nature: "A pay increase of no less than 40 percent and 20,000 [pesos] as a minimum; no one should sign for less; for a sliding scale of wages; for a guaranteed number of hours; let the CGT draw up a plan of struggle on these points to be voted on at plenary meetings of delegates, of activists, and in assemblies by plants or union locals." (*La Verdad*, March 9, 1971.)

An example of a different concrete form of struggle was provided by the second Cordobazo and its aftermath. The PRT(La Verdad) raised the slogan of a "24-hour nationwide strike." And it added to its plan of struggle the slogans, "Free the political prisoners" "Against the attack on the Córdoba unions."

The PRT(Combatiente) acted in accordance with a completely different concept of how the party would grow, how mass consciousness would develop, and how the struggle for power would evolve. It publicized this concept in an interview that appeared in the January-February, 1971, issue of *Cristianismo y Revolución*.

Asked the question, "Does the PRT then renounce legal action and concentrate on military activity?" the PRT(Combatiente) leaders explained how they counted on winning the masses:

"The strategic principle guiding us is to extend the war, which in our opinion has already begun. We want to

make completely clear that we are not trying to *win* this war at the moment but to extend it through our role of armed detachment of the vanguard (because we do not claim to *be* the vanguard, which in our country does not exist as a constituted organization). We carry forward this extension of the people's civil war through political action and military action. This explains many of our unspectacular and even 'petty' actions. Obviously it is easy for a revolutionary commando group to take a truckload of bottled milk or meat and distribute it in a slum. However, we are not trying to solve the problem of hunger in this slum but to demonstrate to the masses that this action and many similar ones are feasible with few arms and few participants. When this idea catches on among the people, the war of the masses is invincible. Likewise, for similar reasons, we *sign* our undertakings, those that turn out well and those that turn out badly, because it is necessary to show that the armed struggle is not the task of a few, of an 'elite' of the superskilled, but that it is a task of the people and that defeats and errors occur in it." (*Intercontinental Press*, June 28, 1971, p. 615. Emphasis in original.)

The contrast could hardly be greater. Around them rage mass struggles. A bitter battle is unfolding for leadership of the masses. In the trade unions the real revolutionists are involved in daily skirmishes with the bureaucrats. But the PRT(Combatiente) will have none of this. It has discovered the true secret of how to reach the masses. It demonstrates by small exemplary actions how easy it is to practice guerrilla war. It busily liberates and distributes bottles of milk, sausages, and steaks to "show" the masses how they, too, can follow the "turn" initiated at the Ninth World Congress. Naturally it is done modestly with the admission of inevitable occasional mistakes in seizures or deliveries.

In the entire interview in *Cristianismo y Revolución*, the PRT(Combatiente) never once mentions the CGT or any trade-union struggle. Instead they repeat a few standard phrases always to be found in their statements and resolutions referring to working "in the factories, shops, slums, and universities, struggling in defense of specific interests and advancing a political line that takes into account the level of consciousness of the masses . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 615.)

But the PRT(Combatiente) never informs us what the political line is concretely in the factories, shops, slums, and universities that takes into account the level of the masses. Not one concrete example is ever offered of a proletarian orientation in their mass work. They speak in detail of their armed actions, of the relationship between their "army" and the party. They even refer to raising their own consciousness by reading the works of Mao, and the contributions of Carlos Marighela and the Tupamaros. Yet with regard to the class struggle in Argentina they have almost nothing to say.

In the documents of the Fifth Congress future guerrilla actions are discussed down to the fine point of how many men the Argentine government will have to deploy against each rural guerrilla unit. The documents include nothing, absolutely nothing—neither facts nor analysis—on the concrete class struggle taking place in Argentina. Of the fifty-six pages of their report on the decisions of the Fifth Congress, they devote less than three pages (pages 31-33) to the mass movement. The section entitled "Resolution

on Work Within the Trade Union and Mass Movements" does not mention the CGT even once. Nor does it mention any strike, any tendency, or any union! Instead it merely repeats the standard generalities used by the PRT (Combatiente) about fighting for all trade-union demands, fighting for the leadership of the mass organizations, penetrating the masses, and so on.

#### 14. Some Revealing Statistics

The failure of the Fifth Congress to so much as mention the events taking place in the class struggle, still less offer a political line for active intervention in those events, is not exceptional for the PRT (Combatiente). In the fifteen issues of *Combatiente* that were published in 1971 (we have not been able to obtain two of them, numbers 52 and 54), very few articles deal with the labor movement in Argentina. *Combatiente* is unconcerned about analyzing specific struggles. Some happenings do find a reflection in the papers of *Combatiente*, but only thinly. The January issue carried a reportage directed to the workers of Fiat in Córdoba. The September issue commented on the SITRAC-SITRAM conference in Córdoba. The December issue featured a critique of the class-struggle tendency as reflected in the SITRAC-SITRAM conferences. A line on intervening in the class struggle is conspicuous by its absence. Reports or comments on the strikes sweeping the country from one end to the other do not seem to reach the editors.

The organ of the ERP *Estrella Roja* (Red Star) is loaded with details about the "armed actions" going on, such as the distribution of milk and sausages. No doubt a narrow audience finds this interesting reading but it has little if anything to do with the class struggle in Argentina.

If we check *La Verdad* for the same period in 1971 when it, too, was being published in the underground, a totally different picture of the events in Argentina emerges. In that year no less than 250 articles dealt with concrete working-class struggles. The development of various trade-union currents is presented, specific actions are reported, suggestions on line are carefully delineated.

The articles in *La Verdad* are not mere commentaries. They reflect the real participation of the PRT (La Verdad) in the class struggle.

Despite their limited numbers, the comrades of PRT (La Verdad) intervened in almost every major class conflict. Members were active in all kinds of strikes, including Chrysler, Petroquímica, the telephone workers, and the national bank. They were present as part of the mass movement in the SITRAC-SITRAM conferences, in the student mobilizations in Tucumán, La Plata, and the mass mobilizations in Mar del Plata. They were in the forefront in organizing united-front efforts against the repression and in presenting a class-struggle alternative in the heat of battle in the General Roca uprising.

At every turn they sought to present the required transitional, democratic, or immediate demands fitted to the needs and consciousness of the workers. They sought to use the tactic of the united front to put the masses in mo-

tion on a principled basis. They raised slogans designed to help the workers gain a clearer understanding of the political tasks and of the need to organize defense units as a step toward armed struggle on a mass scale.

In answer to the maneuver of the Lanusse government to divert the masses with parliamentary elections, it was the PRT (La Verdad) that presented a class alternative through the Socialist and Workers Pole. The party always seeks to mobilize and organize the masses and to build the party through the method embodied in the Transitional Program. It is this political reality that is reflected in the statistics of its articles in *La Verdad*.

The comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) place totally different emphasis on what should be done in Argentina. They are, of course, supported in this by the leaders of the majority in the United Secretariat. Comrade Livio Maitan brought this out very clearly in his article in the April 26, 1971, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, "Political Crisis and Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina."

"Organizations devoted to armed struggle have won considerable influence and staged spectacular actions," he wrote. "The lessons of May 1969 and the latest repressions have made clear to thousands and tens of thousands of workers that class struggle in Argentina has now reached the level of armed confrontation and that the military dictatorship can be combated only by revolutionary violence." (P. 388.)

Comrade Maitan specifies what he means by "revolutionary violence" as the only means to combat the military dictatorship:

"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 categorized as follows:

"a. Actions aimed at acquiring funds by expropriations carried out in the old Bolshevik tradition (the most spectacular stroke was the one in Córdoba which, according to the Argentinian press, brought its organizers 121,000,000 pesos [350 old pesos equal US\$1].

"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 sympathies of the most deprived strata by handing out food (meat, milk, etc.) taken from big distributing firms.

"d. Actions linked to workers' struggles (the most important so far was the one carried out by an armed detachment which invaded the FIAT factory in Córdoba and held a meeting there)." (P. 388.)

These actions are in strict accordance with the concept guiding the PRT (Combatiente). Comrade Maitan continues:

"All these actions have effectively achieved their objective of armed propaganda. At the present time the ERP is the best-known revolutionary organization and has won very broad sympathy—in some big plants, too. From the technical point of view, even the enemy has had to recognize that the ERP has scored some points." (P. 388.)

To settle any doubts that may still exist as to the basic identity of the line of the PRT (Combatiente) and the line of the majority, Comrade Maitan specifies that it is an extension, a practical application, of the "turn" voted for at the Ninth World Congress:

"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 by the last two national congresses of the PRT—of a prolonged armed struggle, a revolutionary war, which might involve the intervention of the imperialists and thus could not be waged without profound ties to, and increasing participation by, the masses." (P. 388.)

Whether the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) would agree with Comrade Maitan that the ultimate source of their line is the Ninth World Congress may well be doubted—they give credit for the original thinking to Mao Tsetung, General Giap, Kim Il Sung, and above all Comandante Guevara. But it is true that they share with Comrade Maitan the error of rating their "armed actions" as the most important development in the class struggle in Argentina.

## 15. On Popular Frontism

So far we have dealt with the different orientations guiding the work of the two organizations. The PRT (La Verdad) is engaged in advancing the banners of Trotskyism in the trade unions and the mass movement. The PRT (Combatiente) is engaged in forming clandestine armed groups under political banners intended to be broad enough to attract various and even contradictory tendencies (from the Fourth International to the Maoists).

Although both groups are committed formally to fighting for the political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie, the PRT (Combatiente) has been evolving away from the Trotskyist position on this question. To disregard the importance of a clear line on independent political action is quite characteristic of all the guerrilla-oriented groups in Latin America. It is one of the negative aspects of Castroism.

The programmatic stand of the PRT (La Verdad) on this question is completely clear—for the independence of the working class, against any programmatic concessions to the bourgeoisie, against any political blocs with any sector of the ruling class or its appendages. The PRT (La Verdad) is firmly opposed politically to the Allende regime in Chile and all other bourgeois nationalist regimes in Latin America or elsewhere.

"We believe that the essential thing is to struggle for the political independence of the labor movement. In Argentina you cannot speak seriously of either a revolution or socialism while the workers remain under the political influence of bourgeois parties and leaders, and especially of Perón and Peronism." (*La Verdad*, No. 299 November 1, 1971.)

"That this strike should not be utilized by the bureaucrats, who only want to bring pressure to bear against the government to help out the Frondizi wing. That this strike should likewise not be utilized in behalf of the UCR of the People [Radical Party], nor for the Peronist leadership, including General Perón, the one most responsible for the defeats suffered by the labor movement in the past fifteen years.

"This strike must be the starting point for the indepen-

dent political organization of the workers, culminating in a government of the workers and the people." ("Declaration of the PRT on the 36-Hour Strike." *La Verdad*, No. 243, November 10, 1970. Emphasis added.)

On the question of Chile, which has served to test some tendencies in a rather decisive way, the PRT (La Verdad) took an unequivocal stand:

"Objectively the Allende government is not a workers government. Contrary to what the CP and the MIR believe, Allende has not gone beyond the limits of nationalism. The very important nationalizations carried out in the country, even though they are the most powerful blows dealt imperialism in the Southern Cone, have not liquidated the capitalist system based on private property." (*Avanzada Socialista*, No. 25, August 16, 1972.)

The attitude of the PRT (Combatiente) toward the Allende government, like their attitude in general toward the formation of governmental or programmatic blocs with sectors of the bourgeoisie, is confused to say the least.

This is most clearly reflected in the stands they have taken with regard to the Allende government and to the Broad Front in Uruguay, although it is also apparent in some of their recent declarations on political developments in Argentina.

On the Chilean situation, the PRT (Combatiente) indicates where it stands by supporting the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* politically. In their interview with *Punto Final*, for example, Comrades Santucho and Gorriarán stated: "Our modest opinion of the Chilean situation is that the correct line and approach for the victory of the revolution in Chile is that of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left." (*Intercontinental Press*, November 27, 1972, p. 1319.)

The leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) have quoted the positions adopted by the MIR at length without commenting even on the MIR's support for Allende.

As for Uruguay, the PRT (Combatiente) took their line from the Tupamaros, who supported the bourgeois candidates in the struggle over slates within the Frente Amplio. The leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) made it clear that in their opinion the Tupamaros had adopted an essentially correct position.

As for the criticisms of the PRT (Uruguay) made by Hansen in the December 13, 1971, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, they disagreed. It will be recalled that Hansen solidarized with the objectives of the Uruguayan comrades who entered the Frente Amplio in order to fight from within for independent political action and in opposition to running bourgeois candidates. He criticized the continuation of this tactical course once the leaders of the Frente Amplio imposed as a requirement for participating in the formation the inclusion of the names of the top bourgeois candidates on the slates of all the tendencies. The leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) held that Hansen's position was sectarian.

The question was not unimportant. Class lines were involved. The comrades of the PRT (Uruguay) were engaged in carrying out a *tactic* aimed at advancing the principle of independent political action by pressing for a working-class slate. The Tupamaros entered the Frente Amplio because it was the popular thing to do. They did not join the fight for a working-class slate, although their participation would have been of considerable aid. Instead,

they went along with the game of putting up bourgeois candidates. The PRT (Combatiente) leaders stood with them, declaring their support for the line of the Tupamaros.

More recently the Tupamaros have gone even further, offering to support the bourgeois armed forces who have been implacably hunting them down, if the generals would only move toward setting up a government to reconstruct the nation.

"There can be no doubt that if the armed forces, or whoever, would initiate or help to initiate a road toward national reconstruction they would find us unconditionally at their side. We remain ready for any kind of contacts and we will wait for a reply to this note until July 17 at 6 p.m." ("Report on Negotiations with the Armed Forces." *Correo Tupamaros*, July 5, 1972.)

This may, of course, be the Tupamaros's idea of a tactical stunt, aimed at showing up the top commanders of the armed forces (as if they needed to be exposed!). Back of the maneuver, however, lurks a completely unprincipled position. The Tupamaros are open to reversing their guerrilla orientation. If a coup were to put in a junta that followed the Peruvian model of General Velasco, the leaders of the Tupamaros have given advance notice that they will change overnight like Héctor Béjar and others in Peru.

What about the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente)? Will such opportunistic intimations on the part of the Tupamaros cause them to modify their opposition to the Fourth International's attempting to construct a section in Uruguay? This remains to be seen.

The PRT (Combatiente) leaders have not extended their deviations from Trotskyism on this question to the Argentine political scene. Yet some of their formulations are hardly reassuring. Examples are to be found in the editorial statement "Revolutionists and the Democratization of the Country" which was published in the May, 1972, issue of *El Combatiente*. The editorial correctly suggests that revolutionists must take advantage of legal openings, but it also discusses making alliances with bourgeois forces. The nature of these alliances is never clarified. To speak of "progressive bourgeois sectors" that "can have an interest in the revolution" is certain to spread confusion if more than that is not actually implied:

"As we can see, our perspective for making alliances with reformist parties and groups and other nonproletarian forces is of vital importance for the development of the immediate struggle of the proletariat.

"The solution to this problem of alliances can be seen in the fact that these parties and groups (CP, socialists, Christians, PCR, VC, rank-and-file Peronism, Radical Left, etc.) represent certain working-class sectors, and essentially sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and progressive bourgeois sectors, that is, sectors that suffer from the political and economic oppression of the regime and can have an interest in the revolution, but not with sufficient consistency to be able to lead it forward." ("PRT's Position on 'Democratization' in Argentina," *Intercontinental Press*, July 31, 1972, p. 903.)

## 16. The Problem of Peronism

The consolidation of industrial unionism in Argentina during the Perón regime a quarter of a century ago made

an indelible impression on the masses. Perón came to power after a period of relative prosperity arising from Argentina's remoteness from the scenes of battle in World War II and its ability to take advantage of a profitable market. Perón had the wherewithal to grant considerable concessions to the masses. Among the consequences were the fastening of a powerful bureaucracy on the labor movement and the instilling of deep illusions among the masses with regard to the capacity of a bourgeois nationalist regime to meet their most pressing needs.

In the interests of Argentine capitalism, Perón sought to maneuver among the imperialist powers. To accomplish this he encouraged the partial mobilization of the masses, but under the strict control of a government-dominated bureaucracy and readiness to resort to repressive measures should this be required.

Perón's policy of standing up to imperialism while supporting and strengthening Argentine capitalism ended in a blind alley, as was inevitable. Perón opposed independent mobilization and arming of the working class, the only class willing and able to confront imperialism in a showdown. He maintained and built up an officer caste loyal to the national bourgeoisie, which in turn is tied to imperialism through the world market. Thus Perón prepared the way for the extensive penetration of American capital both economically and politically in Argentina. Similarly he prepared the way for his own downfall at the hands of his subordinates in the army.

Because the coup d'etat of 1955 was proimperialist, the masses were deprived of the opportunity of seeing Perón's own relationship to imperialism become exposed. Their faith in him remained unaltered throughout the seventeen years of his exile.

Peronism has, of course, suffered erosion. But this has been measured in the weakening of the position of the labor bureaucracy which has betrayed the working class under every regime since Perón was toppled. This process has not yet led to the dissipation of nationalist illusions or of illusions in Perón as an individual. Perón's return to Argentina, however, favors speeding up this process under present conditions.

Peronism is the expression of a deep contradiction in Argentine politics. It is based on the existence of a very powerful labor movement that has never been defeated so far as the existence of its mass organizations and its high level of combativity is concerned. At the same time, Peronism ties the working class politically to capitalism through a bourgeois party.

The inevitable failure of any "nationalist" course to solve the problems besetting the working class and its allies signifies a very favorable objective situation for the Argentine revolutionary-socialist movement provided that it is deeply embedded in the mass movement and offers a clear programmatic alternative to all the nationalist and populist combinations.

At the same time the illusions among the masses concerning Perón and Peronism constitute a standing danger to our own movement, since our ranks cannot be sealed off from the milieu in which they work. This requires absolute clarity on the nature of Peronism and constant alertness to its invidiousness.

This problem is well understood by the PRT (La Verdad) in view of its rich experience in mass work in organizations dominated by Peronism. The PRT (La Ver-

dad) teaches its members in the Marxist tradition of insisting on the independence of the working-class movement against any and all blocs with the nationalist bourgeoisie. Precisely because of the opening that has been developing on the electoral front, the PRT (La Verdad) has been stressing its opposition to any populist, nationalist, or popular-front formation that seeks to induce the workers into turning away from independent political action and voting for bourgeois candidates as in the case of the Frente Amplio in Uruguay and the Unidad Popular in Chile.

That is why the Workers and Socialist Pole, for which the PSA is campaigning in the projected elections is of such importance at the present conjuncture of the class struggle. In opposition to the Communist Party's popular front and the "anti-imperialist" coalition called for by the Lambertists of *Política Obrera*, the comrades of the PSA are calling on the working class not to cross class lines at the polls.

As for the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) they appear not to have given much thought to these complex questions. They were caught by surprise and now stand in confusion as to what to do in face of the electoral opening and Perón's return to Argentina.

It is to be hoped that they will make the correct decision before too much time elapses and join in the campaign for a Workers and Socialist Pole.

## 17. The Struggle for Legality

In view of the fact that the rising movement of the masses was compelling the government to concede bit by bit on the legal front, the PRT (La Verdad) began searching in the most serious way for crevices that could be widened so as to permit the party to function more freely, that is, in a semilegal or legal way. The PRT (La Verdad) was the first organization in the Argentine underground to venture opening up semilegal headquarters and to begin taking advantage of the new possibilities that came with the downfall of Onganía.

When it became clear that the ruling class was seriously considering making a shift from military dictatorship to a parliamentary regime, however feeble or transient it might turn out to be, the PRT (La Verdad) recognized that this could be utilized to the advantage of the Trotskyist movement if a way could be found to function legally.

At the last congress of the PRT (La Verdad) in the fall of 1971, a decision was made to explore all possible avenues. Success was achieved through a principled agreement with the Partido Socialista Argentino (Coral wing) consisting essentially of a summary of Trotskyist positions based on the theory of permanent revolution and a series of immediate, democratic, and transitional demands. This principled agreement explicitly rejects any blocs with bourgeois formations for electoral purposes and instead calls for the formation of a Workers and Socialist Pole against all the bourgeois candidates, including the Communist party's popular front (the Encuentro Nacional de los Argentinos), the Peronists who dominate

the labor movement, and other populist alternatives. (An English translation of the text appeared in *Intercontinental Press*, November 13, 1972.)

Once legality was attained, rapid growth became possible. The first big success was the affiliation of more than 40,000 workers and students to the PSA on the basis of the party's new statement of principles. ("Affiliation" means registration as qualified voters adhering to the PSA.) The results of the affiliation campaign met the requirements for legality at the national level and in every major city except Mendoza. The party is now in legal position to run its own slates in the elections.

At a conference of the PSA held less than six months after the agreement was reached, the PRT (La Verdad) tendency was established as the majority. The Central Committee was formally organized on the basis of a two-thirds majority for the PRT (La Verdad). The real relationship of forces in the ranks, however, is more like ten to one in favor of the PRT (La Verdad). The Trotskyist tendency not only controls the new weekly *Avanzada Socialista* but all of the fifty headquarters opened up by the party.

The whole thrust of the PSA's electoral campaign is centered on advancing the slogan of a Workers and Socialist Pole. The concept behind the slogan is to unite the militant organizations, currents, tendencies and individuals favoring the formation of a class-struggle current within the labor movement, and to do so in sharp opposition to all the electoral variants proposed by the ruling class. That is, the electoral tactic is nothing but an extension of the same work the PRT (La Verdad) has been carrying on in the unions and factory committees.

It is impossible to understand the importance of the Workers and Socialist Pole if we forget the defeat suffered by SITRAC-SITRAM and the difficulty the new oppositionist currents are experiencing in coalescing on a national scale. The central factors blocking formation of a nationwide left wing in the labor movement have been the relative smallness of the vanguard party, the PRT (La Verdad), and the deep entrenchment of the trade-union bureaucracy. The electoral opening helps cut through these difficulties.

First of all, it has enabled the party to grow rapidly, thus assuring deeper penetration of the unions and making it possible to exercise a more direct influence on spontaneously arising class-struggle currents. The mere fact that the party is able to publish a legal paper to orient the periphery is a great advantage. Upon gaining legality, the PSA immediately opened discussions in factory committees and with class-struggle militants throughout the country to bring them together under the Workers and Socialist Pole. Although the development has been uneven in different cities, legality has made it possible in general to reach more workers and factory committees in months than was previously possible in years. In addition it has made it possible for the party to become truly national with branches in almost every major city in Argentina.

It would have been a most serious sectarian error to fail to take advantage of the legal opening or to reject taking advantage of the bourgeois elections. It would have paralyzed the growth of the party and put its vanguard role in jeopardy.

The PRT (Combatiente), confronted with the new and unexpected reality has simply floundered. At the very

time the PRT (La Verdad) began probing the new openings and setting up semilegal headquarters, Comrade Maitan was assuring the Fourth International that while turns in the Argentine political situation offering opportunities for legal or semilegal activities could not be "absolutely excluded" nevertheless they were "improbable." ("Political Crisis and Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina," *Intercontinental Press*, April 26, 1971, p. 388-89.) The resolution on Latin America passed at the Ninth World Congress forecast a growing trend of repression on a continental scale and gave no indication of what those who were preparing for rural guerrilla war should do in case things didn't quite turn out as predicted in all countries.

Caught between a sectarian schema and a reality that proved to be richer than counted on, the PRT (Combatiente) has tried to straddle. One must take advantage of the legal openings but on the other hand one must continue with "revolutionary war":

"These legal or semilegal struggles, and this use of bourgeois legality, must be inseparably linked to the development of revolutionary war, to the independent building of the Revolutionary Party of the Workers and the Revolutionary Army of the People." ("PRT's Position on 'Democratization' in 'Argentina,'" *Intercontinental Press*, July 31, 1972, pp. 903-04.)

Downswing or upturn in the class struggle, military dictatorship or parliamentary regime—the PRT (Combatiente) is indifferent. They have enough to handle with building their "army" and conducting "revolutionary war."

Yet they are capable of an extra exertion. Without any relation to the process of mass struggle in the country, the PRT (Combatiente) suddenly announced the establishment of "rank and file" committees to involve the masses. The committees, according to the announcement, are to function legally or semilegally while at the same time supporting "revolutionary war." Naturally only a limited number of committees have appeared and their size is equally limited. This is generally what happens when sectarians try to set up their own mass organizations instead of working in those already in existence.

## 18. The Question of Armed Struggle

The "turn" at the Ninth World Congress resulted, among other things, in the comrades of the majority giving up the Marxist concept of armed struggle in favor of Guevara's concept. The Marxist concept has been succinctly summarized by Trotsky in the Transitional Program. The orientation is armed struggle on a mass scale. The training and arming of the masses in this field begins on the most elementary level with pickets. It reaches its highest level in the formation of a workers militia. Another process occurs concomitantly. This is the disintegration of the bourgeois army, which begins on a propagandistic level among the ranks. Both processes require the guidance of a Leninist-type party. Its presence hinges on being deeply rooted in the masses and growing as the masses mature politically.

Guevara's concept was quite different. In his opinion

all of Latin America was so ripe for revolution objectively that all that was needed was a small determined nucleus to begin armed action on a small scale and the masses would respond. Hundreds of fighters would join the rebel forces, and as these forces grew, the masses would supply them logistically. In a prolonged war, the guerrillas would little by little gain the upper hand and defeat the bourgeois army. Thus Guevara advocated arming a small vanguard group and carrying out actions that would win the sympathy of the masses.

The Marxist concept is that the vanguard, by participating in the daily struggle of the masses and winning them to the program of socialism, can in the heat of mass mobilizations and struggle bring them to the point of engaging in armed struggle on a scale so massive as to sweep over every obstacle.

Clearly these two concepts lead to diametrically opposite approaches to the masses.

The Marxist concept requires concentrating on penetrating the mass movement and gearing into their actual struggles through immediate, democratic, and transitional demands. Each demand is right or wrong at a given moment, depending on the objective situation and the consciousness and mood of the masses, all of which must be carefully observed, studied, and taken into account.

The Guevarist concept requires setting up small armed units that engage in action regardless of the consciousness and mood of the masses. (The Guevarists, of course, regard these as being given, as not changing in any decisive way, except perhaps to become more favorable, so that they can be ruled out as largely irrelevant in considering the military problem.) From this it follows that the armed units can be set up in isolation from the mass movement and without paying much attention to its current leadership (whether reactionary or otherwise), for the masses will come directly to the "revolutionary army" by-passing all the human obstacles standing in the way of the socialist revolution.

This is one of the deepest and most pervading errors of the Guevarists. In trying to find a shortcut to organizing the subjective factor in the revolutionary process, they disregard the problem of overcoming the present subjective level of the masses and the grip of misleaders of all stripes, ranging from pseudolefts, union bureaucrats, and bourgeois demagogues to the minions of the church. In actuality the Guevarists assume that the problem is already solved—the masses are already committed to socialism in their minds; all they require is to learn the technique of handling the gun and how and where to get it.

That is why the Guevarists consider that guerrilla war can be started virtually any time and any place where the government is dictatorial, and with a minimum of forces. (Here they provide another example of where the minimum tends to become the maximum.) The situation is so explosive, as they see it, that this is all that is needed to serve as a detonator. Moreover this holds true for the entire continent. The PRT (Combatiente) consequently urges the initiation of guerrilla war in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, and everywhere else. It complains that most of the sections of the Fourth International are only paying lip service to the decisions of the Ninth World Congress. What is holding them back? Why don't they get going?

No matter what the status of the class struggle may be, whether in an upturn or a downswing, guerrilla war is in order. The permanent prerevolution is not affected by the ups and downs of the class struggle. Thus in absolute contradiction to the Marxist concept on this question, the PRT (Combatiente) frankly asserts:

"Armed struggle is not initiated simply as the corollary to a triumphant popular insurrection. It can start as a defensive reaction of the masses and their vanguard under circumstances of a pronounced downturn in the class struggle." ("The Only Road to Workers' Power and Socialism," *International Information Bulletin*, No. 4, October, 1972, p. 14.)

As can be seen, the Guevarist concept is at bottom a variety of ultraleft sectarianism, which does not mean, of course, that its practitioners are guaranteed against falling into opportunism.

We have considered the results of applying the Guevarist concept in Bolivia. Let us now turn to Argentina.

The PRT (Combatiente) is refreshingly frank about its concept of armed struggle stemming directly from the views of Che Guevara. It regards the situation in Argentina as being permanently prerevolutionary. The task for the vanguard, however small it may be, is to begin armed struggle even though at first the only ones to engage in armed actions are the party cadres. These cadres, it must be clearly understood, lack any mass base. But that is not decisive, according to this way of thinking. The PRT (Combatiente) is convinced that once the armed struggle is launched, it will inevitably grow, making it possible to build a mass army and to defeat the bourgeois army on the field of battle.

For the PRT (Combatiente) a complex transitional process is not required to arm the masses. It is done gun by gun, through the establishment of independent, autonomous, armed units that then grow "from small to big, starting with a handful of combatants and drawing in on a widening scale the people as a whole." (*Estrella Roja*, No. 11, March, 1972.)

Once armed action is initiated by a small group isolated from the mass movement a terrible logic sets in. The armed actions, the bank robberies, the attacks on police stations, the kidnappings, assassinations, and all the rest, make it virtually impossible for the cadres to engage in mass work, as Comrade González noted in Bolivia. To do fruitful work among the masses requires being with them, sharing their experiences. To engage in guerrilla activities requires a certain separation, if for no other reason than to maintain the underground apparatus and to guard against its being unravelled by the police.

While mass work always entails a certain risk for revolutionists, the risk is enormously multiplied when the organization they belong to declares a private war against the armed forces of the bourgeois state. Proselytizing and recruiting become highly dangerous. While these problems may not be as acute for students or members of the professions, workers are aware of how vulnerable they are as individuals. Rather than join such an organization, they are inclined most often to wait until something comes along in which they can at least feel the strength and power of numbers.

Thus it is not surprising that the history of the class struggle in Argentina for the past four years shows that

the PRT (Combatiente) has remained on the sidelines. It "supports" the workers—by giving money, by disarming factory guards, by other actions—but it has never led the workers in a single strike, a single demonstration. It has never been able to organize a tendency in the trade unions.

A crucial question becomes more and more acute for such Guevarist groups—how to "link up" with the masses. This becomes their central preoccupation. And because they cannot find a solution to this problem they become ripe for disintegration or for a turn toward opportunism. What they fail to see is that their very concept of armed struggle blocks them from forming organic ties with the masses.

They try all kinds of experiments. They try to win the masses by giving them bottles of milk and meat. In kidnappings, they seek publicity of a kind to demonstrate to the masses that they really care. They become paternalistic, referring to themselves as the "army of the people," the only force that "protects" and "defends" the poor.

Yet none of this seems to solve the problem of how to link up with the masses.

The ultraleft guerrilla line of the PRT (Combatiente) is just as disastrous with respect to gaining a base in the armed forces. Following the perspective of building their own army bit by bit, the PRT (Combatiente) comrades do not project working within the bourgeois armed forces. Instead, they urge soldiers to desert individually. Thus they repeat an error made by the Bolivian comrades. Here is how they put it:

"Nevertheless we know that within the enemy ranks honest but mistaken persons can be found who want to help the people. All those military men and functionaries of the regime who really want to serve the people, who feel that they are part of the people, and who identify with them in the injustices inflicted on them should abandon the enemy ranks. Only in the army of the people can they place all their patriotism and energy at the service of the workers and the people." ("On the Armed Forces," *Estrella Roja*, No. 7, October, 1971.)

Again, as in Bolivia, the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) have offered dissident members of the armed forces the perspective of joining not an army but a small group of guerrilla fighters.

It should be noted, however, that these comrades do not consider the ERP to be a small group. They refer to it as a "mass" organization. This is not because of its size—it is hardly larger than the PRT (Combatiente) itself—but because the only criterion that must be met to join the ERP is hatred of the dictatorship and willingness to bear arms.

Despite the image of the ERP held by the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente), members of the armed forces inevitably see it for what it is—a small group of guerrillas without any real perspective for success in the military field or anywhere else in the immediate future. The civilian battalions have mobilized only partially and sporadically. They have not turned toward the task of dissolving the army. Thus the soldiers in the armed forces do not hear the voice of the masses nor feel their pressure in any direct way. Moreover, the PRT (Combatiente) has rejected doing the necessary preliminary, preparatory work among the ranks of the armed forces. It is not following the model set by Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian revo-

lution of battling for the minds of the troops. It calls on the few who may sympathize with its aims to desert.

We reiterate—one of the main errors in Bolivia is being repeated in Argentina!

## 19. The Kidnappings and Assassinations

The full concretization of the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress came with the kidnapping of Stanley Sylvester, the manager of the Swift de la Plata meat-packing company, on May 30, 1971, the kidnapping of Oberdan Sallustro, the general manager of Fiat Concord, on March 21, 1972, his assassination on April 10, and the assassination on the same day of General Juan Carlos Sánchez. The operations of the PRT (Combatiente) had reached the level of terrorism.

The Marxist movement from its very beginning has always rejected the use of terrorism against individual capitalists or their representatives. The reason is simple. It disorganizes and miseducates the mass movement as to the correct means of struggle, and provides unnecessary excuses to the enemy for responding in kind, particularly in repressing the mass movement. Only under the conditions of civil war, when the rules of war apply, can terrorism be considered as a tactical adjunct to armed struggle on a mass scale.

The excuse used by the PRT (Combatiente) for resorting to the use of terrorism against selected individuals is that a state of civil war exists in Argentina. As we have seen, this is not so. Even the most ardent defenders of the course followed by the PRT (Combatiente) are doubtful that a state of civil war actually exists in Argentina. Comrade Maitan would not go beyond saying that it is "at least partial civil war." (See the April 13, 1972, press release of the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari, Italian section of the Fourth International, on the kidnapping of Sallustro.) Comrade Mandel seems to favor the formulation "a country on the verge of civil war," to judge from an article that appeared in the April 21, 1972, issue of *La Gauche*.

The kidnapping of Sallustro is a clear case of terrorism. An individual manager is taken by force and threatened with execution (which is carried out) unless a high ransom is paid and certain reforms are granted to a sector of the masses. The gravity of this development for the Fourth International lies chiefly in the fact that this terrorist act is supported and publicly hailed by some of the most prominent journals in the Trotskyist movement.

One of the most forthright statements was made by *Rood*, the Flemish newspaper of the Ligue Révolutionnaire des Travailleurs, Belgian section of the Fourth International.

"How do revolutionists view terrorist actions? Why did we condemn the kidnapping of the French Renault official Nogrette and endorse the action in Argentina? A terrorist action is only 'the continuation by other means' of the 'normal' activity of revolutionary militants. It is beneficial insofar as it arouses the militancy of the workers,

fires their hatred of the established order, and exposes the weaknesses of the prevailing system (e.g., the actions of the Tupamaros)." (*Rood*, March 30, 1972.)

The Maoist kidnapping of Nogrette in Paris was incorrect, according to *Rood*. "It is still an exception for a worker to be shot down at Renault, even if this is the path the French bosses intend to follow in the future. The mass of French workers do not see this. They still have illusions. As long as the mass of the workers harbor such illusions, terrorist acts can only widen the gulf between the revolutionists and the masses... In Argentina the action carried out by our comrades of the Revolutionary People's Army has so far had a different result." (*Ibid.*)

To the comrades who edit *Rood*, individual terrorism is correct if the government is repressive and the action is popular. That would make most of the actions of the Russian terrorists "correct." Why then did all the Marxists of those days oppose them so vigorously? The comrades on the staff of *Rood* should consider this. In any case, they wrote accurately and honestly in characterizing the actions of the PRT (Combatiente) as terrorist.

The comrades of the PRT (Combatiente), in accordance with the schema of "revolutionary war," visualized the kidnapping of Sallustro as having an impact equal to that of the uprising of the masses in Mendoza. "The development of the war of the people found its point of maximum expression in the kidnapping of Oberdan Sallustro and the victorious struggle of the masses of Mendoza. Each act delivered a harsh blow to the dictatorship of the monopolies, proving its fragility, which compels it each time to resort to more measures of brutal, cruel repression, as its only response to the just demands of the people." (*Combatiente*, No. 68, April 8, 1972.)

The kidnapping of Sylvester won a measure of popularity for the ERP—at least for a time—since the ruling circles accepted the ransom demands. However, after two months the management of the Swift meat-packing plant reintroduced the same conditions as those that motivated the kidnapping. How little the kidnapping altered the consciousness of the workers was demonstrated by the fact that after applauding the distribution of food and clothing they voted for the reactionary trade-union bureaucrats.

The PRT (La Verdad) headed an opposition within the plant. The PRT (Combatiente) found itself caught in a somewhat embarrassing position. Having set things right in the plant through its own methods, yet having no base among the workers there, what position should it take toward the union elections? Fortunately, the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) made the right decision; they publicly urged the workers to vote for the opposition led by the PRT (La Verdad). This is the only time they have made such a move.

In the Sallustro affair, the public attitude toward the ERP was not condemnatory. Yet it could hardly be called enthusiastic. As the spectators followed the events on television or in the press, they displayed little sympathy for Sallustro, although his impending execution aroused emotions. Blame for his fate fell largely on Lanusse because of his blocking negotiations between company officials and the ERP. But the spectators felt little personal involvement. The kidnapping did not appear to affect their own situation and problems.

The government utilized the kidnapping and execution

for its own reactionary ends, that is, as an excuse for new repressive measures that resulted in high and bitter casualties among the cadres of the PRT (Combatiente). Another consequence was the further isolation of the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) precisely when openings for legal activities demanded exploration.

## 20. Castro on the 'Execution' of a Hated Bourgeois Figure

It is worth noting that at least up to now the leaders of the Cuban revolution have held a position on kidnappings and assassinations perceptibly different from that of the PRT (Combatiente). In a long speech, made in Havana on March 13, 1967, Fidel Castro explained the Cuban attitude on this subject. The occasion was the kidnapping and assassination of a former Venezuelan government official, Dr. Julio Iribarren Borges, described by the Associated Press as "perhaps the most hated man in Venezuela at this time." The circumstances were as follows:

On March 1, 1967, three guerrilla fighters forced Iribarren into an automobile which then drove off at full speed. On March 3, the Caracas police reported that they had found his body. There were three bullet wounds in the back. The police said that they had also found leaflets beside Iribarren's body signed by the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional.

The leader of the FALN, Comandante Elías Manuitt Camero, who was in Havana at the time, issued a press release on March 4 stating that the "execution" had been carried out by his organization as an application of "revolutionary justice."

"With each application of revolutionary justice," Manuitt continued, "the assassins of the tyrannical government find no lack of echo to their laments among their followers and even among those who pretend to be neutral or in the camp of the opposition. But the people support and hail each one of these actions."

Manuitt did not state what evidence showed that the people had hailed and supported the killing of Iribarren. If he was making an "educated guess," it was not borne out by any significant rise in recruitment to the FALN.

"We will continue to fight a war to the death against the enemies of our people," he promised, "whether they are directly or indirectly implicated in the situation existing in Venezuela."

He ended by affirming how the existence of an "armed vanguard" had rescued the people of Venezuela from a "helpless" position:

"None of Leoni's repressive measures, the new suspension of constitutional guarantees, the arrests, the tortures, and the assassinations [of revolutionists] will be of any avail. The people of Venezuela are no longer helpless; they have an armed vanguard, firmly consequent and decisive, that will protect them at all times, avenge their dead and lead them to final victory, which is no other than their definitive and total independence."

The Leoni government utilized the killing of Iribarren to step up the repression. Constitutional guarantees were again suspended, forty-eight hours after they had been

restored.

The Venezuelan Communist Party turned the incident to account in its own treacherous way. Under guise of denouncing the anti-Marxist nature of such actions as the kidnapping and assassination of Iribarren, the Venezuelan Communist Party broke decisively from its previous involvement in guerrilla war, and headed toward resumption of its "peaceful coexistence" line and engagement in the game of parliamentary politics.

The Leoni regime took advantage of the kidnapping and assassination of Iribarren to open an international campaign against the Cuban government, alleging that the deed had been inspired by Havana.

Castro had no choice but to reply. He presented the main facts, including Manuitt's statement cited above, and then opened a counterattack. This consisted of a denunciation of the "rightist" line of the leaders of the Venezuelan Communist Party and their opportunistic support of the Leoni regime, plus a scorching analysis of the witch-hunt that had been opened against Cuba.

Castro took up the defense of the Venezuelan guerrillas in no uncertain terms; but he also did something else—he criticized them publicly. This section of his speech is highly pertinent to the subject we are discussing. The full text of Castro's speech can be found in *Intercontinental Press*; the paragraphs of particular interest are as follows:

"What attitude must we revolutionaries assume before any revolutionary deed? We may disagree with a concrete method, with a concrete deed; it is possible to disagree with the method of liquidating this former government official. As I said, we know nothing about him—whether he was hated, as the AP says, or not; whether or not he was responsible for measures taken against the revolutionaries.

"Our opinion is that revolutionaries must avoid procedures which may give the enemy ammunition: killing a man who has been kidnapped. We never did this sort of thing no matter how great our outrage at the ferocity of the enemy. And in combat, we knew how to deal with prisoners with serenity.

"Revolutionaries must avoid procedures which are similar to those of the repressive police. We do not know the circumstance of this death, we do not know who were responsible; we do not even know whether or not it was produced accidentally, whether or not it was really an act of revolutionaries. Our sincere opinion—and to give one's sincere opinion is a right of any revolutionary—is that, if it was the revolutionaries, we consider it to have been a mistake. It was a mistake to use this type of procedure that the enemy can use to full advantage before public opinion, that may remind the people of enemy procedures.

"The entire world knows the behavior of the Revolution, knows that we have revolutionary laws, and severe ones. We have never mistreated a prisoner. We have made strict laws, and our revolutionary courts sentence serious offenders against the Revolution and our nation to capital punishment, but not once has a man been found dead on a highway, in a ditch, or in a park.

"The Revolution acts within given revolutionary forms and respects those forms. Even in dealing with people who have committed heinous crimes, we have always insisted upon proper procedure. This is our criterion.

"It is perfectly legitimate for a revolutionary to disagree with a deed, a method, a concrete aspect. What is immoral, what is unrevolutionary, is to make use of a given deed in order to join the hysterical chorus of the reactionaries and imperialists to condemn the revolutionaries. (Applause.) If revolutionaries are responsible for this deed, we may give our opinion, but we may never join the hysterical chorus of the hangmen who govern in Venezuela, in order to condemn the revolutionaries." ("Those Who Are Not Revolutionary Fighters Cannot Be Called Communists," *Intercontinental Press*, March 31, 1967, pp. 346-47.)

Let us summarize Castro's position: Revolutionists must avoid procedures that may give ammunition to the enemy or that are similar to those of the repressive police. The Cuban leaders never did that sort of thing no matter how great their outrage at the ferocity of the enemy. In the Cuban revolution, "not once has a man been found dead on a highway, in a ditch, or in a park."

The revolution has its own forms of administering justice, which must be respected and observed, and they are not the same as the forms used by the enemy.

It is perfectly legitimate for revolutionists to publicly criticize a mistaken action or method that does injury to the revolutionary cause. What is impermissible is to "join the hysterical chorus of the reactionaries and imperialists to condemn the revolutionaries."

Castro does not develop his point of view in depth nor link it up with the position on this question adopted long ago by the revolutionary Marxist movement. He offers only some observations of his own. However, in our opinion, these observations, drawn from the Cuban experience, are weighty and should not be dismissed by our movement, particularly by those who draw much of their thought on armed struggle from Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

## 21. Majority Defense of the Line

Whether doubts have ever arisen in the minds of the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) concerning the wisdom of their course, they have not voiced them. The role of the majority has hardly been of a kind to induce rethinking. In fact, the decision at the Ninth World Congress could only serve to remove doubts and to harden them in the mold of Guevarism. The contributions of the majority comrades since then have been of the same nature.

The resolution on Latin America affirmed the position of the PRT (Combatiente):

"In a situation of prerevolutionary 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)." ("Resolution on Latin America," *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.)

This erroneous concept—which should be credited to Che Guevara—led Comrade Maitan in his last contribution to the discussion on Latin America, dated June 23, 1971,

to hold that the way the Sylvester kidnapping was carried out showed that the PRT (Combatiente) was "linking up" with the masses. Comrade Maitan wrote:

"Concerning the kidnapping of manufacturer-consul Sylvester, there is a revealing detail on the comrades' style of operation: they turned over to the press the tape on which they had recorded their accusations against the exploiter and the statements he made in his own defense. This material was used by the press. Those who operate in this fashion are clearly concerned above all with generating favorable responses from broad layers of the population. Moreover the Rosario operation and, more tellingly, the operation carried out at Fiat in Córdoba during the workers' struggle there, demonstrates that our comrades are attempting to link up with the mass movements, integrating their actions into the dynamics of these movements." )"Let's Keep to the Issues, Let's Avoid Diversions!" *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 174.)

An important article in the April 21, 1972, issue of *La Gauche*, which met with the approval of the editor Comrade Mandel, also declared for this incorrect concept of armed struggle. The article, aimed at justifying the course followed by the PRT (Combatiente) presented an inaccurate picture of the reality in Argentina:

"When the adversary systematically fires on any mass demonstration that displays the slightest radicalism; when he savagely represses any strike and any union that goes beyond reformist objectives, the concrete choice facing the militant workers is reduced in reality to three possibilities: either deliberately restrain the movement in order to avoid a bloody confrontation with the repressive forces, or consider as inevitable a confrontation between unarmed masses and repressive forces armed to the teeth or, without delay, to get on with preparing and organizing the arming of the masses."

Referring to the Mendozazo, the article stated: ". . . the workers had to confront bare-handed a band of assassins of the people, who fired without mercy on the crowds of workers and on their homes, massacring several dozen persons. But how to improvise on the spot the arming, organization, and tactics of self-defense groups?"

The eloquent description is in fact misleading for it indicated that the relationship of forces had reached the point where the ruling class felt it could stage massacres of masses while they were in motion without provoking a national crisis. As we have already pointed out this was not the situation in Argentina. In fact the alleged massacre of "several dozen persons" did not occur in the Mendozazo. The defense of the course of the PRT (Combatiente) was somewhat too eloquent.

The comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) came much closer to the truth. Instead of picturing the situation in Argentina as semifascist they admitted in a front-page editorial, written at the same time as the *La Gauche* article, that legal openings had appeared and that the bourgeoisie were moving toward a parliamentary bourgeois regime.

The relationships between the mass movement, the army ranks, and the ruling class were not pictured correctly in the article in *La Gauche*. The masses kept pouring into the streets precisely because they sensed that the ruling class was hesitant about attempting a showdown. The masses also sensed the hesitancy of the soldiers, who were reluctant to use their guns against their own people.

A vast struggle is going on in Argentina. The struggle involves the loyalty of the army ranks, the level of consciousness of the workers, the allegiance of the petty bourgeoisie. Lanusse is doing his utmost to convince the ruling class to close ranks and help divert the masses from taking the road of revolution. Perón at the age of seventy-seven is being utilized once again. The repression is carefully *calculated*, a fact completely at variance with the picture presented in the *La Gauche* article.

As to the three alternatives—demobilizing the masses, leading them into a massacre, or beginning to arm them—the answers suggested in the article are not without interest.

The first two alternatives are rejected. "There remains the last variant, which is the one proposed and applied by our Argentine comrades. The revolutionists construct autonomous and clandestine armed detachments, which are implanted in the mass movement as it matures and attains higher and higher levels, in order to stimulate the formation of broader and broader armed detachments, which they can fuse."

The reference to "our Argentine comrades" is not, of course, to the Trotskyist PRT (La Verdad) but to the Castroist PRT (Combatiente). They are the ones putting into practice the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress. You begin with "autonomous and clandestine armed detachments" and these grow, as *Estrella Roja* puts it, "from small to big." When they are big they are implanted in the mass movement. Precisely how? We are not told. This is understandable. The contradiction between autonomous, clandestine detachments and the organizations of the mass movement has not yet been resolved by either the PRT (Combatiente) or the editor of *La Gauche*.

We are compelled to drop back to a simpler question. How will the detachments, small at first, grow broader and broader? The *La Gauche* article graphically describes how desirable it would be to have them grow that way:

"At the time of the Mendoza insurrection—where our comrades were not yet implanted—the presence of such armed detachments would have served as an organizing pole for the most advanced elements among the workers, each fighting cell, already trained and armed, becoming the organizer of a larger group of workers."

But just how do you become implanted? And how do the detachments grow broader and broader? Just how? No answer is provided.

The more the *La Gauche* article is studied the stranger it seems. Consider the phrase: "the presence of such armed detachments" in Mendoza. What is meant by "presence"? Should the clandestine, autonomous groups come up out of the underground and fight a pitched battle with the government troops? Should they engage in a hit-and-run skirmish? Ambush a couple of soldiers? When is one of these variants the correct one? Is it always correct to attempt one of them in all the mass demonstrations in Argentina? Who is to decide? Should it be done unilaterally by an organization like the PRT (Combatiente) which doesn't lead the mass movement? Which, in fact, has not yet discovered how to link up with the masses?

Probably with strategists like the editor of *La Gauche* in mind, Lenin wrote a small item entitled "Concerning Demonstrations" that ends with what could be called a moral:

"Precisely because a step like the transition to armed

street fighting is a 'tough' one and because it is 'inevitable, sooner or later,' it can and should be taken only by a strong revolutionary organization which *directly* leads the movement." (*Collected Works*. Vol. 6, p. 262. Emphasis in original.)

Lenin stresses as prerequisites to engaging in armed struggle the actual strength to lead demonstrations, have marshals, draw the onlookers into the action, approach the troops correctly, and have a strong revolutionary organization. The article in *La Gauche* projects only one prerequisite—the presence of clandestine, armed detachments that can become organizers of larger detachments.

Ironically, while the article affirms "our agreement with the general orientation of the PRT of developing the armed struggle," it leaves in doubt whether the orientation has really made much of an advance in solving the main problem. It expresses "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. . ."

## 22. Our Argentine Martyrs

We have already considered how the guerrilla orientation heightens the difficulties of proselytizing and recruiting. The swiftness with which a guerrilla group can deploy its forces—one of the main advantages of this type of activity—is counterbalanced by its inherent incapacity to move rapidly into openings where fast recruitment becomes possible.

It should be noted in addition that an organization that concentrates on preparing for and engaging in guerrilla warfare experiences a considerable turnover in membership. Besides the requirements in sheer physical stamina, this type of activity, with the accompanying extreme nervous tension, is difficult to sustain over a prolonged period. It is quite true that certain persons find the atmosphere congenial and are attracted by an organization that provides excitement and risks of a high order. Even they, however, become worn out before long. All this makes for a slow rate of growth.

In Argentina this has been registered in the different rates of growth of the PRT (Combatiente) and the PRT (La Verdad). In 1969 at the time of the Ninth World Congress they were fairly equal in size, with the PRT (Combatiente) able to present a plausible case that it held a majority because of shifts to its favor in the voting of the Central Committee of the then common organization. Since 1969 the PRT (Combatiente) has been able to preempt the headlines in the bourgeois press and the coverage on television and radio. Nonetheless, the PRT (La Verdad) is now unquestionably much the larger organization, much better rooted in the masses and far more influential in the mass organizations (judging by objective criteria such as visible cadres, the running of left-wing slates in the unions, and the size, frequency, and circulation of publications).

The PRT (Combatiente), moreover, has suffered several obscure splits that have radically altered the composition of the leadership, two-thirds of the Central Committee

that existed at the time of the Ninth World Congress having left the organization or been expelled. The PRT (La Verdad), in contrast, has shown stability in its leadership, has strengthened it by drawing in new youthful cadres, and has proved its attractiveness to other left-wing currents through its unification on a principled basis with the Coral wing of the Partido Socialista Argentino.\*

From the viewpoint of capacity to assemble the "minimum" number of cadres required for a higher level of political activities of whatever nature—and this is a very important if not decisive criterion—the PRT (Combatiente) has lagged far behind the PRT (La Verdad).

One of the worst disasters suffered by the PRT (Combatiente) has been the loss of key cadres at the hands of the butchers of the military dictatorship. This is one of the most painful sides of the Argentine experience. It has given anguish to the entire world Trotskyist movement.

The minority has felt these losses all the more bitterly because it foresaw their inevitability. We take no special credit for seeing what would happen. It had already occurred with a series of guerrilla groups in Latin Amer-

ica, including a force led by a master in guerrilla warfare, Che Guevara, backed by a state power. The minority felt that our movement had no need to vie with these groups in providing additions to the long list of martyrs.

It is not difficult to give funeral orations or to write eloquently on the spirit of self-sacrifice, the heroism, and dedication to the cause of socialism that motivated the young men and women who were massacred at Trelew or in other dungeons of the military dictatorship, or who were cut down in the flower of their youth in a futile raid. Such exercises find a popular echo in the far left, including sectors that are incapable of either an audacious action or a patient, sustained effort in the daily grind of the class struggle. It is less popular to differentiate politically from the martyrs and to try to drive home the lessons to be learned from their errors. We choose to follow that course even at the risk of being misunderstood for a time. And we propose to do our utmost to change an orientation that involves such a high and unnecessary cost in the lives of cadres.

\*At a national congress held December 17, 1972, after this document was written, the PSA changed the name of the organization to Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers Party).

## IV. The Crisis in the Fourth International

Instead of drawing back, the leaders of the majority have continued to deepen their mistaken course. They have elevated the guerrilla orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress into a virtual principle. As we have seen, the adventures committed in Latin America in the name of this "turn" have been condoned and even hailed by the majority leaders. They have maintained silence over the gravest ruptures from the program, tradition, and practices of Trotskyism while voicing public solidarity with those involved in such a way as to encourage similar violations elsewhere in the world Trotskyist movement.

It is true that they have made some adjustments. As we have already indicated, they have shifted the emphasis from rural guerrilla war to urban guerrilla war. They have given greater recognition to the possibility of "exceptional variants"; i. e., mass upheavals in the cities, the coming to power of reformist regimes, and the appearance of legal or semilegal openings that should be utilized by the revolutionary movement.

These concessions have altered nothing in substance. The line remains the same. What has happened in reality is that the guerrilla orientation has become more concrete. Compared with the way things stand today, the line was only *adumbrated* at the Ninth World Congress. It was difficult then for many comrades to see that something of greater importance than a *tactic* was actually involved.

How many delegates at the Ninth World Congress would have voted for that line if it had been presented frankly and openly as it became revealed in practice? Who, for example, would have voted for a "turn" that projected Robin Hood distributions to the poor of commodities hijacked from the rich? Of armed commandos entering plants to stage "workers' meetings" and distribute leaflets at gun point? Of tiny armed groups challenging the armed forces of the state without having built a revolutionary party, without the least preliminary work among the armed forces, and in complete isolation from the masses? Of kidnapping individual members of the bourgeoisie, holding them for ransom, and executing them? Of staking the lives of the best cadres against heavy odds in desperate gambles? Of ultraleft actions that doomed the sections engaging in them?

If these things had been spelled out so that it was clear that they were necessarily and inescapably included in the guerrilla commitment, few, we think, would have voted for it. What dazzled the delegates were the assurances that this course could bring a quick "breakthrough" by applying it to a judiciously chosen country like Bolivia.

One cannot help but wonder. Did the leaders of the majority have a clear conception of how their orientation would work out in practice? Did they hold back from describing this in order not to make an unfavorable impression on the delegates? Or did they simply proceed empirically, trusting to luck? It is difficult to determine. Perhaps Comrade Maitan, the chief architect of the orienta-

tion, was not altogether naive. As we noted earlier, he specified a year later: "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 by the last two national congresses of the PRT . . ." And he approvingly cited the adventurous bank holdups, which he held were in "the old Bolshevik tradition," and romantic distributions of commodities that were making a "very great impression on the daily and weekly bourgeois press."

The majority's persistence in following a mistaken line has proved costly to the Fourth International. The worst aspect, perhaps, is the political deterioration that has set in.

### 1. Politics Gives Way to the Gun

There is nothing very complex about the theory of guerrilla war. If we leave aside the specifics that make up most of the content of the guerrilla manuals, it boils down to the preeminence of arms. What counts is the gun, once a minimum (very small) group has been assembled. Politics counts for little—and theory, of course, still less. The disdain in which the Cubans held, and still hold, theory and the great lessons of the Russian revolution is well known.

The reason for placing the gun above human reason in this way is simple. It worked. And anyone can tell you about the cases of China and Cuba. The *theory* of guerrilla war elevated these exceptions into the norm, and made the old norm worked out and followed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky the exception. The Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 by this reasoning must likewise be regarded as exceptions.

What happened at the Ninth World Congress was the infiltration of this pernicious theory into the thinking of the majority leadership. Its prime source was the Castroist movement, specifically Guevara. Its acceptance was part of an adaptation to ultraleftism owing to various causes analyzed in other documents submitted previously in the discussion.

We have seen how the guerrilla orientation worked out in practice in Bolivia and Argentina. Here we need only stress how knowledge of the guerrilla theory helps to clear up such mysteries as the POR (González) joining the reformist and bourgeois judas goats in the FRA. The Bolivian comrades placed the problem of guns above the problem of politics.

In the case of the PRT (Combatiente), we are provided with a striking example of how this primitive theory leads to separation from Trotskyism. Note the logical sequence:

1. Trotsky was a revolutionist, but only one among others, like Mao, General Giap, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi

Minh, and above all Comandante Guevara, from whom the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) have drawn their ideas.

2. The Fourth International has to be recognized as having revolutionary aims, but it includes "counterrevolutionary adventurers." In other words, it is badly tainted.

3. It is dubious that the Fourth International can be saved for the revolution, although it is worth an effort.

4. Other parties like the Albanian, Chinese, and North Korean Communist parties are equally revolutionary. (If they bear the taint of counterrevolutionary adventurers this is not mentioned.)

5. A new international must be built that would include all these parties. (The axis shifts in their direction. After all, they hold state power.)

6. The Cuban Communist Party is hailed. The PRT (Combatiente) already subscribes to its leadership, while still retaining nominal ties with the Fourth International.

7. It may be possible to establish fraternal ties with other workers states besides Cuba. (That's without political revolutions in those countries; consequently the ties would be with Stalinism.)

8. The Kremlin's invasion of Czechoslovakia was, after all, in the best interests of socialism.

This sequence is not a sign of absolute confusion, although confusion is not lacking. It is a clear indication of a direction of movement—away from Trotskyism toward the theory of a two-stage revolution, and toward Stalinism, with the likely end result being political disintegration. The single stable item in this erosion of principles is the conviction that guns take precedence over politics; and that, of course, is the main source of the erosion so far as theory is concerned. In passing, we can note that this is the key to understanding why the PRT (Combatiente) has no difficulty in establishing and maintaining fraternal relations with the most disparate political formations both in Argentina and outside, ranging from the Fourth International to the Cuban Communist Party and with bids to Kim Il Sung and Enver Hoxha. The PRT (Combatiente) leaders merely make it a principle not to let political principles interfere with getting on with guerrilla war.

As for political differentiations within the leadership of the ERP-PRT (Combatiente), we know little about them. The majority of the United Secretariat have given the world Trotskyist movement no accounting of what happened to the two-thirds of the Central Committee who were expelled or walked out since the Ninth World Congress. What we do know indicates that a more or less steady shift has been occurring. More and more the emphasis is on the planning and implementation of guerrilla actions, less and less on initiating political drives and carrying them through. Those with the best political capacities are being displaced by those most adept at handling the gun.

## 2. The Deepening Commitment

It is an understatement to say that the leaders of the majority have not stood up against this trend. They have in reality bent to it, thereby helping to spread it in the

Fourth International. In short, in cheering on the "Trotskyist" guerrillas in Bolivia and Argentina they themselves are guilty of discounting the importance of maintaining the Trotskyist tradition of placing top priority on political principles.

A good example was the eloquent defense of the ERP-PRT in the April 21, 1972, issue of *La Gauche* with regard to the executions of Oberdan Sallustro and General Sánchez. This two-page article, "Class Struggle and Armed Struggle in Argentina," ended up by affirming, the correctness of the course being followed by the ERP-PRT whatever the incidental errors may have been. It stated that two duties faced the Fourth International. One was affirmation of complete solidarity with the comrades under attack.

The other was "affirmation of our agreement with the general orientation of the PRT of developing the armed struggle, while expressing 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 the broadening of an organized base among the masses, and with a clear political orientation toward the socialist and proletarian revolution, against any concept of a revolution by stages."

The article, the authorship of which was unidentified but which certainly met with the approval of the editor of *La Gauche*, Comrade Mandel, went on to voice sweeping conclusions as to the efficacy and broad applicability of the guerrilla war strategy:

"The lesson to be drawn from the events in Argentina in this regard is, moreover, of universal importance. The temptation to resort to a fascist regime or to a military dictatorship constantly recurs to the bourgeoisie as soon as the class struggle becomes exacerbated anywhere in the world.

"The possessing classes must be made to know that after the experience of the barbarous Nazi atrocities, the young vanguard throughout the world will never again tolerate the most abject form of civil war: that in which one camp is armed to the teeth, and murders, tortures, and oppresses without mercy, while the other camp is physically, psychologically, and politically disarmed, and resigns itself passively to the role of victim. The example of Argentina demonstrates that this vanguard is already sufficiently strong and resolute so that such an ignominy will not be repeated again."

We pause in wonder before the ramifications of what this suggests. Guerrilla war can stop *fascism*? Then what about the course Trotsky advocated in battling against the rise of Hitler? Why didn't he advocate guerrilla war in the style of the PRT (Combatiente) or the Tupamaros? Did he, after all, miss the key to the German situation in the early thirties?

And what about fascism in Italy? Lenin, whom the majority comrades have cited again and again as one of the original protagonists of guerrilla war, was still alive. Why didn't Lenin advocate guerrilla war as a sure-fire means of halting Mussolini? Had Lenin perhaps become senile or turned reformist?

Interesting as these questions are, let us postpone discussing them. Right now we want to stress something of much more immediate concern.

What does this alleged lesson of "universal importance," suggest to the young comrades of our movement not only

in Argentina, but throughout the world, including Europe?

The answer is that they begin to think, quite logically, that armed actions of an autonomous and clandestine type, such as those being carried out in Argentina, are applicable in other parts of the world. In Europe, for instance, it is quite clear that Greece, Portugal, and Spain have dictatorial regimes that are worse than the one in Argentina. Moreover, the bourgeoisie are quite capable of setting up similar regimes in rather advanced countries, as is shown by the current trend towards establishment of "strong" states.

It should hardly be necessary at this point to prove that this completely logical line of thinking, flowing from the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress has been going on in sectors of the Fourth International. It has influenced attitudes on many questions which we will not pause to discuss here.

Let us note, however, the criterion publicly expressed by the comrades in charge of editing *Rood* that individual terrorism is a valid tactic under a dictatorial regime if it is popular and if those engaging in it have mass support.

Let us note the admiration and endorsement of the terrorist actions in Québec voiced by some of the European leaders of the Fourth International. "I believe," Comrade Tariq Ali said on television when asked his stand on the terrorist kidnapping in Québec, "that individual terror is justified when you have a mass movement; when you have mass support inside a particular society, then it is justified." ("In Defense of the Leninist Strategy of Party Building," *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 123.)

The same line of reasoning is apparent in the uncritical view taken of the use of terrorist methods in Ireland, particularly those involving the Provisionals, the more extreme and less political wing of the Irish Republican Army. This uncritical view reflects a failure to understand the Marxist concept of armed struggle and is directly traceable to the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress and to a carry-over of the guerrilla orientation from Latin America to the European scene.

### 3. From Bad to Worse

The article in *La Gauche* bolstered this trend in the thinking of some of the comrades in Europe although that may not have been the intention of the editor. Comrade Mandel may have wanted merely to open the pages of *La Gauche* to the most eloquent defense possible of the comrades of the ERP-PRT (Combatiente), who were under heavy attack because of a very bad mistake they had made (although their action was no more erroneous than the entire line they were following).

At the same time the article served to defend the majority line as it had developed in practice. Instead of helping to correct an error made by the Argentine comrades, the editor of *La Gauche* placed himself in position of being an apologist for it. Instead of helping to rectify the mistaken course adopted at the Ninth World Congress, he helped to fix it all the more firmly by justifying it on a universal level. Finally, instead of beginning

to correct himself, he deepened his own error by inducing others to share it.

Comrade Maitan was the chief theoretician in working out the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress. What he attempted was to open up Trotskyism to the theory and practice of guerrilla war. This required finding historic precedents and authoritative backing for it in the works of Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, an enterprise in which he was ably assisted by Comrades Germain and Knoeller. For a time it appeared that Comrade Maitan might be reconsidering his position in view of the consequences of that "turn" in Bolivia and Argentina. A change by Comrade Maitan would have been a very favorable development, for it would have greatly assisted the work of repairing the damage. It now appears that he has made up his mind otherwise although he seems hesitant about applying the "turn" of the Ninth World Congress to Italy, despite the recommendations of the editor of *La Gauche* on the utility of guerrilla war in struggling against a rebirth of fascism.

The creation of an atmosphere favoring the extension of the guerrilla orientation to areas far outside Latin America has also been assisted, perhaps unwittingly, by Comrade Pierre Frank. He of course is a strong partisan of the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress. He is also a strong partisan of the PRT (Combatiente). In his July 26, 1971, letter to the convention of the Socialist Workers Party, he reaffirmed this position: "Concerning the activities of our comrades of the Argentinian section, the P.R.T. and its armed organisation, the E.R.P., we don't look at them as being ultra-left. We think that their policy corresponds largely to the present needs of the class struggle in their country." ("Letter to Convention From Pierre Frank," *Internal Information Bulletin*, Socialist Workers Party, No. 6, November, 1971, p. 15.)

Comrade Frank has been especially concerned that public dissociation from the errors of the ERP-PRT might open the door to "federalism," thus undermining the principle of democratic centralism. But by attacking the statements made by various sectors of the world Trotskyist movement dissociating themselves from terrorist methods while solidarizing with the comrades of the ERP-PRT (Combatiente) against the attacks of the bourgeois enemy, Comrade Frank placed himself in the position of condoning those methods and of helping to spread them in the International.

### 4. 'Democratic Centralism' Dragged In

Comrades Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank raised still another question—the possible violation of the rules of democratic centralism by the minority. In their article, "Again, and Always, the Question of the International," they called for revising the statutes of the Fourth International at the next world congress. As justification for their proposal, Comrades Krivine and Frank cited some instances that would tend to show that the present statutes are too loose. We do not consider the statutes to be perfect. However, we defer for the present taking up either this question or the pertinence of the instances they cited.

Comrades Krivine and Frank advanced the concept of a highly centralized international empowered to intervene in the life of the sections in an energetic and forceful way. Again, we defer discussing whether such a highly centralized international is either desirable or feasible at the present stage of development of our movement. We want at this time merely to take up the chief point of the article which was to suggest that the minority has been violating the rules of democratic centralism. Here is what the two authors say:

"Up to this point we have taken up arguments that to us appeared to be dangerous. Unfortunately we have to add that since the last World Congress things have likewise gone in practice in a direction opposite to that of reinforcing the International, most particularly with regard to Latin America. On this question, there was a majority and a minority at the World Congress; it was decided that while acting in accordance with the orientation voted for, the discussion would be reopened at a date to be decided on by a plenum of the IEC; this was done at the end of 1970. The comrades of the SWP of the United States supported the minority point of view. We must regret that they did not limit themselves to defending their point of view in the discussion—which was obviously their completely unquestionable right—but also through multiple interventions in the field encouraged those who shared their point of view to pay no attention to the vote of the World Congress and to go against those who were applying the orientation adopted by the majority. Matters reached greatest sharpness in Argentina. No one had ever thought of asking the members of the 'sympathizing group' to apply the line voted for, because they would not have been able to do so. They should at least have had a genuine 'sympathizing' attitude toward those who were carrying it out and who were risking their lives each day. In Argentina and several other countries in Latin America, the support of the SWP went, both in the press published under their control and in the interventions of members of their leadership, to groups or to comrades who openly fought the orientation decided on at the World Congress. We will not dwell more on this subject since it is a notoriously known fact and no one can deny it.

"Obviously we cannot accept the 'argument' according to which the 'sympathizing group' of La Verdad had a correct policy, a Leninist concept of party construction, while the Argentine section of the Fourth International is presumably an ultraleft formation. First of all because we do not share this point of view (but this is another subject for discussion). Next because it is not possible for a national organization no matter who it is to take upon itself to decide on the international level who is and who is not Trotskyist. Finally because, in the case in question, it was undeniable that *in intervening against the Argentine section, the intervention in fact was against the decision by the World Congress*. It will be possible at the next World Congress to confirm or to reverse the decision of the preceding Congress, but whoever does so at present on his own authority simply repudiates democratic centralism on an international level, and places in question—more than the 'rights' of this or that elected international body—the vote of the World Congress and by that the obligations that this vote imposes; in other words it is the very existence of the International that

is put in question." ("Again, and Always, the Question of the International," *International Information Bulletin*, No. 5, July, 1971, p. 4. Emphasis in original.)

We do not accept the charge that the minority engaged in any violations of democratic centralism in advancing its views within the world Trotskyist movement during the period of discussion on Latin America. And we deny that any violation of democratic centralism was involved in the cases of certain sectors of the world Trotskyist movement who dissociated themselves from the terroristic methods used in Argentina or who disagreed with the public approval of such methods voiced by members of the majority. Leaving discussion of these charges and denials aside, we want at this time merely to draw attention to something else:

What function did the leveling of these charges play in the discussion on Latin America? The answer is that they helped to divert attention away from the very real violations of democratic centralism committed by the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina.

These violations included publicly questioning the revolutionary character of the Fourth International and calling for the formation of a "new revolutionary international." They included publicly characterizing the Albanian, Chinese, Cuban, North Korean, and North Vietnamese parties as revolutionary organizations, the potential foundation of the proposed new international. They included publicly supporting organizations hostile to the Fourth International as against official sections or sympathizing groups in certain countries. They included publicly opposing the advancement of the political revolution in China and other Stalinized workers states. They included publicly declaring that the official section of the Fourth International in Argentina accepted the guidance of the Cuban Communist Party. They included publicly putting Trotsky on a level with Mao Tsetung, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh, General Giap, and Che Guevara. They included publicly contending that Trotskyism and Maoism both represented continuations of Leninism, which was finding a higher synthesis in Castroism. They included publicly denying that they are Trotskyists.

What have Comrades Krivine and Frank had to say about these violations of democratic centralism? Not a word. Not a single word either publicly or internally. They have not even informed the membership of the Fourth International that these violations occurred.

Why did Comrades Krivine and Frank remain silent? As the two leaders of the majority most concerned about maintaining democratic centralism and spotting possible deviations, it is hard to come to any other conclusion—they regard the violations committed by the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina as nothing but the unfolding of the real position of the majority and therefore as not only legitimate but wholly within the framework of democratic centralism.

Either that, or they are practicing their own version of "federalism."

## 5. Blind to the Logic of the 'Turn'

It is difficult to believe that Comrades Krivine and Frank could have been aware of the direction in which

the PRT (Combatiente) was moving politically. Perhaps they, too, were kept in ignorance by the comrades in the majority assigned to follow developments in Argentina. In that case they can be accused of displaying blind trust, which is not a very good sign in top political leaders.

Besides blind trust they can also be accused of displaying a certain imperviousness to the logic of the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress. This is shown by the following extract from Comrade Pierre Frank's letter to the 1971 convention of the Socialist Workers Party:

"The second argument of Comrade Joe, i.e., that the logic of those who today advocate armed struggle for Latin America must lead them to extend it to other countries, has surprised me even more than the first one. [The first one concerned the contradiction between the guerrilla strategy of armed struggle and the Leninist strategy of party building.] Not that the policy of armed struggle is not relevant to other countries. I suspect that the Bengalis, the Ceylonese, for example, are giving some thoughts to armed struggle. What surprised me is first that Joe makes again his 'demonstration' with quotations of ultralefts and second that he places himself in tow of these ultralefts in raising the question of armed struggle for countries like the USA, Canada, and Great Britain. . . . For the F. I. there is an *international unity* of revolutionary struggles all over the world, but *unity does not at all signify identity*. The F. I. knows that what is good for Latin America is not necessarily good for the U. S. A. and vice-versa what is good for the U. S. A. is not necessarily good for England or Brazil. Armed struggle as a policy can be determined for a country or a group of countries only after a concrete analysis of the situation in this country or group of countries and is not conveyable to other places. I am really amazed that Joe took for good such a dogmatic argument of ultralefts . . . " (*Internal Information Bulletin*, Socialist Workers Party, No. 6, November, 1971, pp. 14-15. Emphasis in original.)

The truth is that the problem of ultraleftism already confronted the Fourth International even before the Ninth World Congress. It came with the big influx of radicalized youth in France in 1968, many of whom were ultraleft, and was therefore inevitable. A romantic view of Che Guevara and his Bolivian adventure was one of the features of this ultraleftism. It was a test of the leadership capacities of the Fourth International to overcome this ultraleftism and particularly the uncritical acceptance of Guevarism. When the majority leaders adapted to the ultraleftism of some of the radicalized youth and decided on a guerrilla orientation in Latin America, it became clear—at least to some leaders of the world Trotskyist movement—that the sickness was contagious and could spread far beyond Latin America, particularly since further recruiting in the radicalized student movement would strengthen this tendency in the International in view of the failure of the majority leadership to give a correct education to new members.

Evidence that this was occurring was abundant enough. It was visible not only in the ultraleft positions on various issues that were being taken by some Trotskyist groups; it could be seen in the uncritical acclaim given to actions of guerrilla fighters who were in *political opposition* to Trotskyism. Their politics was disregarded; their guerrilla exploits were pictured as exemplary actions. Grave mistakes made by such guerrillas were even pictured in a

way to suggest them as models. This development has been easy to follow in the coverage given by the *Red Mole*, *Rouge*, and other journals of the movement to guerrillas in Québec, in Ireland, and many other places besides Latin America.

## 6. France—Ripe for Guerrilla War?

Bearing out the prediction of those who opposed the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress, prominent members of the majority in the Ligue Communiste, Comrade Frank's own organization, have now raised the question of applying the guerrilla orientation to France. They are in dead earnest. The Ligue Communiste, they maintain, has no other way out of its crisis of perspective.

The proposed new line for the French section of the Fourth International was submitted by Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane in a long article published in the internal bulletin of the Ligue Communiste. The article is of prime interest not only because it represents the most irrefutable evidence of the process set in motion by the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress but because it goes quite a distance in adumbrating the theoretical underpinnings of that turn. In this respect, like the frankness of the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente), the article represents a welcome advance in the international discussion. It therefore demands the closest attention and study. Although it will lengthen an already long document, we think it will prove worthwhile to indicate the reasoning of the four authors particularly since the article is as yet generally available only in French.

As they see it, the Ligue Communiste is making good progress in recruiting but not at such a rate as to be able to realistically envisage a struggle for state power in the near future. In fact the work of extending the organization on a geographical scale is open to question. "But we are quickly going to reach a point where this spontaneous growth is no longer profitable and may even result in a waste of energies." ("Is the Question of Power Posed? Let's Pose It!" *Bulletin d'Histoire et de Sociologie du XX Siècle*, No. 30, June, 1972, p. 8.)

In what enterprises other than expanding the size of the organization could the energy of the militants be employed more profitably? We will come to that.

The big obstacle to a breakthrough that would lead to posing the question of power in France is the thoroughly Stalinized Communist Party in which it is virtually impossible, the authors hold, to make an impact on the ranks. In the unions, too, the work only plods along although progress is being registered. The workers simply do not accept the leadership claims of our comrades, and the prospects of rapidly forming a left wing are remote.

To be noted here is the contrast to Argentina where the PRT (Combatiente), to believe Comrades Maitan, Mandel and others, is immensely popular. The two situations are nonetheless closely comparable in the fact that the PRT (Combatiente) has not yet solved the problem of "linking up" with the masses.

What about the possibility of new major upheavals in France along the "classic" lines of a proletarian revolution?

The authors, in accordance with the general position of the majority, take a pessimistic view on this. It is excluded, they say, that France will witness another situation like the one in 1936 in which the left wins an electoral victory accompanied by an irresistible mass upsurge "that we could carry to final victory just by lending a little push," (ibid., p. 4), for that would require the Ligue's being intimately linked with the masses, a possibility closed by the obstacle of Stalinism and the alertness of the bourgeoisie.

While the Ligue Communiste is building along Leninist lines, it is excluded, they hold, that the bourgeoisie will permit it to become "robust and deeply implanted" in the masses. "Thus it would be naive to think that the bourgeoisie, its guard up, its repressive apparatus perfected, is going to permit a really revolutionary organization to grow in its midst beyond a certain point." (Ibid., p. 4.)

The situation in France, as these comrades paint it, is roughly parallel to the situation in some of the Latin American countries after all! And what about a repetition of another situation like the one in May 1968 but with the Ligue Communiste in position to take maximum advantage of it? That, too, is excluded, to believe the authors of the article. "Because the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists have drawn their lessons from May." (Ibid., p. 4.)

Still another rough parallel can be drawn between the situation the Ligue Communiste will face in the coming period and the situation currently faced by our comrades in Latin America; that is, selective repression:

By continuing to face the public openly, "and tempted to maintain this position as long as possible to draw the maximum profit from it," the party becomes more vulnerable to repression by ultrarightist strong-arm squads, who seek to pick off individual militants and to break up local headquarters.

There is no choice, according to these comrades, but to consider going underground. They hold that "for us there is no absolute distinction between a period of legality and one of *clandestinity*. We have been given a respite." (Ibid., p. 4. Emphasis in original.)

Another grave question must be weighed. Unless it goes underground, how can the party hope to maintain its purity, how can it avoid sliding into reformism? "A moment comes when the dangers of legality outweigh its advantages. *This moment is up to us in part to determine. Provided that we have built an organization capable of taking the step. Unless we do this—since being determines consciousness—a completely legal existence will not fail to produce a legalistic consciousness.*" (Ibid., p. 4. Emphasis in original.)

The model these comrades have in mind, apparently, is the purity of the PRT (Combatiente), which places guerrilla action above all other considerations, including political principles and the foundations of Trotskyism itself.

They themselves dispose of basic theoretical positions in passing. For instance: The "classical schema of the Russian revolution," which really exists, according to Maitan, Germain, Knoeller, and Hansen, as shown by their writings, "appears to us to be quite mythical." (Ibid., p. 4.) In all revolutions, including those in the past in Russia, what is involved each time is a "specific military

context in which the proletariat is either already armed or supported militarily by other social forces." (Ibid., p. 4.) In short, like the PRT (Combatiente), the four reduce the highly complex process of revolution to one aspect—the employment of arms, disposing of everything else as irrelevant.

Placing the military question above all other considerations—which is in strict accordance with the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress—these comrades continue: "The proletariat's military form of organization, born out of its struggles, is pickets, or militia for collective defense. These are relatively sporadic defensive forms, poorly suited to meeting the challenge of the state in the offensive field." (Ibid., p. 5.)

Left out of consideration is the proletariat's strike weapon, a rather amazing omission by comrades who lived through May-June 1968 when France witnessed the greatest and most paralyzing strike action in its history.

That is a mere bagatelle, however, compared to the programmatic implications of this view. What these comrades have done is challenge one of the most basic parts of the Transitional Program. They have, in effect, denied the validity of the orientation outlined in the Transitional Program on the arming of the proletariat.

They have weighed the question, it is quite clear. And they have come up with an orientation, which, while it is at variance with the Transitional Program and everything that Trotsky taught, clearly dovetails with the "turn" adopted at the Ninth World Congress and the way that "turn" was put into practice by the majority in both Bolivia and Argentina:

Rural social forces are much more reliable than the proletariat even in France. "The peasantry is more supple, has greater capacity for evasive action. Against feudalism, it was capable of organizing itself in armed columns. The march of the Eighth Route Army in China is the most celebrated example, but this experience goes way back, among others to the celebrated peasant war in Germany." (Ibid., p. 5.)

Even in the cities this dictum applies. The proletariat cannot be relied upon; the petty bourgeoisie offers the best hope. "The urban middle-class layers, through their social mobility, their financial, material, and technical resources, are providing the essential social base for the urban guerrillas; at least that is what is indicated by the accounts of the Tupas about themselves and by the social base of the ERP.

"If one thus conceives of the revolutionary crisis, not as the blessed moment when the masses enter the fray and arm themselves spontaneously, but as a moment when the thrust of the masses makes possible the victorious conclusion of a process of prolonged struggle, the preparatory phase takes on all the greater importance for us inasmuch as we have to reintroduce the dimension of revolutionary violence against weighty traditions of legality in the labor movement." (Ibid., p. 5. Emphasis in original.)

At this point, one must ask, haven't we now come close to the heart of the majority position? That is, to drop the Transitional Program and the proletarian orientation in favor of converting our movement into the party of the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie with a corresponding orientation in the field of armed struggle?

Comrades Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane are merely prescribing for France what the "Resolution on Latin America" laid down for Latin America. We have already cited it once; perhaps it is worth citing it twice:

"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." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 719.)

## 7. 'A Continental Revolutionary War'

With admirable logic, the four comrades continue, posing the question of violence and of party building in terms consistent with extending the "turn" of the Ninth World Congress from Latin America to the continent of Europe.

Holding that the dynamics of the revolution in the European countries cuts across national boundaries, which is of course true, they state: "The dynamics, taking into account the unevenness of development, is that of a continental revolutionary war." ("Is the Question of Power Posed? Let's Pose It!" *Bulletin d'Histoire et de Sociologie du XX Siècle*, No. 30, June, 1972, p. 4.) It is merely necessary to visualize a mass revolutionary upsurge in one country of such scope as to threaten toppling the government to see that this brings up the more enduring problem of the "relationship of military forces vis-à-vis the reaction on a continental or subcontinental scale." (*Ibid.*, p. 4.)

That faces the Ligue Communiste with a real test: "It is not sufficient to mumble in front of the PCF that the peaceful road is in fact a bloody deathtrap; we must ourselves be capable of defining the practical consequences of our critique." (*Ibid.*, p. 4.)

This brings us to the key point, the *raison d'être*, of the document. "The perspectives that we are able to point out likewise imply a certain type of organization with regard to utilizing violence." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.)

The reasoning in this connection becomes very close, for the authors are quite consciously broaching the sensitive questions of party building, of guerrilla action, the contradiction between them and how to resolve it, or, if it cannot be resolved, how to cut through it. And they are doing this in the light of the experience in Latin America and the discussion on this topic in the Fourth International.

As against the Lambertists, who in principle exclude the use of violence by a minority, the four comrades say, the Ligue Communiste takes a different view. While systematically propagating the idea of self-defense as a means of mass struggle, "we have not hesitated to resort to violent actions when their relationship to mass work could be clearly established, as in the case of Burgos and Indochina." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.)

It is worth noting in passing that only a single criterion is advanced—clear establishment of a relation to mass work. Unlike the position of *Rood* in the case of the kidnapping and assassination of Oberdan Sallustro in Argentina, the criteria of the existence of a dictatorial regime and the popularity of the action are not specified. But to

continue:

"Within this overall framework, it is necessary to understand and to systematize the dialectics of mass violence and minority violence." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.)

But to conceive such activities, they contend, not as spectacular accompaniments "but as a permanent, essential axis of our activity, entails a series of organizational consequences." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.)

These include beginning at once to set up the framework of a special organization for such matters. Moreover, it means conceiving the construction of the party from a different angle than has been followed hitherto.

Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane disagree with Comrade Maitan in his polemic with Hansen on the question of the contradiction between a guerrilla orientation and the Leninist strategy of party building. They are of the opinion that Comrade Maitan evaded the question by asking rhetorically whether Hansen had ever thought of the "construction of the party" being opposed to "participation in a general strike." (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

The four French comrades argue that it is obvious that if a group is following "an orientation of armed struggle, and more precisely guerrilla struggle in the case under consideration of Latin America, then this fact affects the whole process of constructing the party. The relationship between party construction, armed struggle, and mass work assumes a particular, complex character. In the main the problem is what kind of mass work, legal or semilegal, in the labor movement and in intellectual circles can be done by a clandestine party engaged in armed struggle? How do democratic demands and armed struggle fit together? What organizational structures are capable of tying the two fronts together?" (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

The four comrades resolve the difficult contradiction with a single masterly stroke. They redefine what is meant by a Leninist party:

"Contrary to what the conclusion of Hansen's document suggests, the Leninist party is not synonymous with the revolutionary party of the 'classical schema,' but of the proletarian revolution in general. And when Lenin spoke of militants who should be tribunes of the people and not secretaries of trade unions, he was affirming the unifying function of the party. Around and under the leadership of the proletariat, an alliance must be consolidated, uniting different social and class layers that can achieve their aspirations only by this means. This in particular enables the working class to benefit from the military capacities of the peasantry and the urban middle layers." (*Ibid.*, p. 5.)

The confusion in this paragraph between the role of a Leninist party and the role of soviets is total; but we leave discussion of this question to another time.

The final consideration raised by Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane, which may be one of the weightiest with them and which shows how directly they have been affected by the orientation of the PRT (Combatiente), is that the Ligue Communiste must somehow get beyond the "propagandistic level." The Fourth International may "find itself quickly disarmed" unless this is done. (*Ibid.*, p. 9.)

It is especially difficult, they say, to reply to the "questions raised by certain Latin American sections, or the Spanish comrades, if we close our eyes to our own future while holding forth on the whole range of international

problems. It would be particularly dangerous to pose questions for other sections that we have not formulated for ourselves..." (Ibid., p. 9.)

## 8. Why They Have Been Attracted to the Way of the ERP

As shown by this document, it is clear that some of the members of the Ligue Communiste—and not the least important sector—have grown impatient over the slow and arduous work of building a party in the Leninist way. They are looking for a shortcut. That shortcut seems to lie in the direction of the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie.

It is clear, moreover, that the role of military technique has assumed priority over the role of politics in their thinking. Their conviction as to the impenetrability of the Communist Party, the sluggishness of work in the trade unions, the inadequacy of proletarian methods of struggle, the messianism they feel in relation to violence, the justification they advance for "minority violence," the discounting of legality, the imagined virtues of working underground, and their organizational proposals all testify eloquently to that.

Another telling sign of the drift of their ideas is the concept that the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists, having learned the lesson of May 1968 are not going to "permit" any repetition. (As if they really exercised such control over the class struggle!)

From this, the four comrades draw the conclusion that it is possible to get around the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists by giving up the fight for legality, going underground, and launching something like urban or rural guerrilla war (or a combination) in France. It is curious that these comrades believe that the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists, having learned the lesson of May 1968, will not permit a repetition of that but *will* permit a group of partisans to get away with actions that seriously pose the question of power. Don't the defeats of a series of guerrilla fronts in Latin America, including the front led by Che Guevara, show that the bourgeoisie have learned certain lessons?

The desire of the authors to copy the Tupamaros and the ERP, that is, to apply to France the orientation adopted by the majority for Latin America, is the most serious aspect of the document. To merely project this orientation in a theoretical way for France is an ominous sign of the way the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress has led to the miseducation of a key layer of cadres in the Ligue Communiste.

In the absence of strong resistance from the leadership, the danger is mounting that the guerrilla orientation will be put into practice in France. The majority leaders have not been resisting. They have not been opposing ultra-leftism; they have been adapting to it, and fostering it.

A single incident will serve to illustrate how real the danger is. Following the Trelew massacre in Argentina, a group set off a Molotov cocktail at the entrance of the Argentine embassy in Paris early in the morning of

August 25 and scattered some leaflets. The action was hailed in the September 2 issue of *Rouge*, which identified the group as "revolutionary Marxist militants." Laudatory comments on the action, signed by *Cuarta Internacional*, presumably the Spanish publication of the United Secretariat, were featured. The use of the name of *Cuarta Internacional* gave the impression that the Fourth International itself was publicly endorsing the planting of a fire bomb in Paris.

The approval of such a substitute for mass protest only pointed up the weakness of the Ligue Communiste, that is, the weakness of its ties to the masses and its incapacity to mobilize a significant action. The Ligue Communiste cannot be blamed for not doing what it is unable to do. That would be completely unreasonable. But it can be blamed for engaging in a disorienting action.

Much greater than the single incident, however, was the setting of a precedent and the sanctioning and approval of an ultraleft action of this nature. The development corresponds to the logic of the position advanced by Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane; and, naturally, the logic of the guerrilla orientation adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress.

To any comrade who has followed the development of the discussion in the world Trotskyist movement since the Ninth World Congress, it should now be absolutely clear what dangers were involved in the "turn." A significant grouping in the leadership of the Ligue Communiste has gone so far as to propose applying the guerrilla orientation to France with the modifications they have outlined.

This testifies to the accuracy of the analysis made by the minority of the meaning of the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress and their forecast on how it would inevitably become extended both geographically and programmatically.

## 9. Guerrilla War for the Workers States?

Let us once again raise some questions previously asked of the majority, which they have stubbornly refused to answer, either because they are incapable of answering them, or, more likely, because they cannot reach common agreement on what to say.

What about Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, for that matter all the deformed or degenerated workers states? In advancing the political revolution, does the guerrilla orientation apply to these countries? Yes or no?

If the answer is no, precisely why is guerrilla war excluded? If the answer is yes, then what about the course followed by Trotsky and the Left Opposition? Would it not follow logically that they made a historic blunder in failing to resort to guerrilla warfare in the struggle against Stalinism in the Soviet Union? Even worse, was it not a colossal mistake on Trotsky's part not to have mobilized the Red Army against the usurping Stalinist clique when he still could have done so?

We venture to predict that these or similar questions will inevitably be raised by sectors of the majority in the coming period, just as the question of applying the

guerrilla orientation to Europe, and specifically France, has been raised by a sector of the leadership of the Ligue Communiste. Would it not be preferable to attempt to answer these questions now rather than remaining silent until you are confronted by a full-blown tendency among your followers who want to apply the guerrilla orientation to the workers states and are already impatiently waiting to go into action?

## 10. Time to Call a Halt!

We think that the persistence of the majority leaders in maintaining the guerrilla orientation in face of the disasters experienced in Bolivia and Argentina promises an even greater disaster for the Fourth International as a whole. Up to now we had hoped that a rectification could be

achieved without the organization of a tendency. But this hope has not been borne out. We therefore propose the organization of a tendency on an international scale to give battle to the guerrilla orientation.

In our opinion, the platform of this tendency should consist of the following three planks to be advanced for adoption at the next world congress.

1. Reversal of the "turn" made at the Ninth World Congress on guerrilla warfare and its extension since then both geographically and programmatically.

2. Reaffirmation of use of the method indicated in the Transitional Program to solve the concrete problems faced by the Fourth International and its sections in bidding for leadership of the proletariat in the class struggle.

3. Reaffirmation of the basic program, tradition, and practices of the Fourth International as they stood up to the time of the Ninth World Congress, that is, specifically, of commitment to the Leninist strategy of building a combat party to assure success in the coming revolutionary upsurges of the proletariat and its allies.