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Resolution adopted by the October 1983 meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Revised

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Theses on the International Situation

[The following resolution was adopted in October 1983 by a majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International for submission to the pre-World Congress discussion bulletin.]

I. The Overall World Situation

1) During the last fifteen years the structural crisis of international capitalism together with the crisis of leadership of the world working class have deepened.

The present phase of the capitalist crisis is characterised by a combination of factors, making it the most serious crisis of its history:

- the long period of economic depression and the long-term, far-reaching social crisis which began towards the end of the sixties;
- the deterioration in the international relationship of forces for capitalism, the imperialist defeat in Indochina in 1975 being the clearest expression of this;
- the accentuation of inter-capitalist contradictions and crises of bourgeois leadership, especially since the middle of the seventies;
- the unprecedented organic strength of the working class, a product of the long period of post-war economic expansion;
- the growing force and extension of the movements for social and national liberation in the dominated countries.

2) *This crisis deepened sharply in 1979* with the overthrow of the Shah's dictatorship in Iran, the revolutionary victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador.

The extension of the socialist revolution in Central America is a crucial challenge to imperialism: it demonstrates in practice the possibility of revolutionary victories at the very moment when Latin America (and particularly the Southern Cone) is going through a major social and political crisis.

More generally, the depth and brutality of the economic disaster and the structural crisis of bourgeois rule in a series of semicolonial countries will lead inevitably to large-scale social explosions. At the same time the big battalions of the working class in the imperialist countries are resisting step for step the capitalists' austerity and militarisation offensive.

The beginning of the political revolution in Poland also had a destabilising effect on international capitalism, especially in Europe. It confirmed the revolutionary potential of the working class and its capacity to bring an overall solution to the crisis of humanity. The resistance of the Polish workers, after December 1981, remains an important element of the international political conjuncture.

3) The structural deterioration of the international relationship of forces to the detriment of imperialism does not mean it is incapable of reacting. American imperialism's quasi-political paralysis after its Indochinese defeat or when faced with the fall of the Shah and Somoza was only temporary and conjunctural. There were political reasons for this situation, mainly related to internal U.S. politics.

From 1979 *the imperialist counter-offensive* became clearer and was stepped up a year later with the arrival in government of the Reagan Administration.

The target of the counter-offensive is above all the colonial revolution in Central America and in the Middle East. In the im-

perialist countries it takes the form of an anti-working class austerity and rearmament policy. It is exerting increasing military and economic pressure on the Soviet Union without this amounting to a new period of the Cold War. For imperialism it is rather the case of constraining the bureaucracy, already in difficulty, to negotiate a new precarious balance of the world relationship of forces from an unfavourable position.

4) *A long-term capitalist solution* to the crisis indeed presupposes something quite different to partial military or diplomatic successes and a gradual erosion of the forces of the workers movement. It requires *a qualitative deterioration in the organisation of the working masses* and sweeping defeats in a whole series of key countries.

The 'safety-valves' which functioned in the last ten years are less and less able to absorb the shockwaves of the crisis: export of capital to semi-industrialised countries of the 'third world'; expansion of the market in these countries and the OPEC ones; growth in East-West trade; relocation of production centres internationally. Limited changes in the share-out of national income in the imperialist countries are far from sufficient for ensuring an adequate rise in the rate of profit. To do that it is necessary to impose a brutal cut in wages, a far-reaching dismantling of the social security systems and massive unemployment with much lower indemnity payments.

The present imperialist counter-offensive is preparing the decisive blows necessary for a capitalist solution to the crisis in the medium to long term. *In the short term* it aims to block any new breakthrough of the revolution in the semicolonial and semi-industrialised countries and is trying to roll back the revolution where it has marked up decisive victories, as in Nicaragua.

By reducing the masses' living standards and through long-term unemployment which weakens the organised workers movement it is seeking to create the conditions for large-scale attacks against the social gains and democratic rights of the working class in the imperialist countries (right to strike, trade union freedom, freedom to demonstrate etc.).

This counter-offensive has already inflicted heavy defeats on the Turkish masses, with the establishment of the dictatorship in September 1980, and on the Palestinian and Lebanese masses as well as the PLO. The counter-revolutionary U.S. intervention in Grenada is a defeat for the revolution on this island. It concretely shows U.S. imperialism's intention to militarily attack the revolution in Central America. Certain sectors of the working class in the imperialist countries have suffered partial defeats.

But the imperialist counter-offensive has not been able to decisively defeat the working class of any of the key imperialist countries, nor stabilise bourgeois rule in most of the semicolonial and semi-industrialised countries. It has not been able to roll back the mass movement where it is on the advance and nor has it restored capitalism in any of the countries where it has been overturned.

5) The dynamic of the present world situation *is above all one*

of the interaction between the crisis of the international capitalist system and the crisis of the system of rule established in the bureaucratic workers states.

a) The Soviet bureaucracy took advantage of the victory of the Indochinese revolution and imperialism's temporary paralysis to try and modify in its favour and without great cost the regional relationship of forces (Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia).

But from the beginning of the imperialist counter-offensive the Kremlin took a line of overall negotiations with imperialism, sacrificing if need be the mass movement of certain countries, as was confirmed at some cost in its attitude to the Palestinian movement at the time of the Zionist invasion in June 1982.

Within the framework of these overall negotiations the Soviet bureaucracy does continue to help certain national liberation movements while at the same time tries to limit the level of this aid in order to dispose of the maximum advantages in its relations with imperialism. The bureaucracy has to also take into account the existence of social and political forces partially outside its control. In a similar fashion neither does imperialism any longer control all the counter-revolutionary forces in play.

For its part the Chinese bureaucracy, through its 'detente' with imperialism and the bourgeoisies of the ASEAN countries, has facilitated the bourgeois counter-offensive in South East Asia and has helped to limit the repercussions of the victory of the Indochinese revolution. In the framework of its overall 'reorientation' and of 'demaosiation' it has however in the course of the last year once again taken its distance from imperialism.

Behind both the Soviet and the Chinese bureaucracies' basic attitudes to imperialism and the world revolution is their basic counter-revolutionary conservatism.

b) From the beginning of the austerity offensive the reformist bureaucracies have politically disarmed the working class by making a series of social agreements and pacts with the bourgeoisie and gradually capitulating to the economic and social objectives of Big Capital. They have thus contributed to the weakening of the organised workers movement in several important countries while at the same time the emergence of organised class struggle currents and, a fortiori, the building of an alternative revolutionary leadership have not developed to the extent of, at least partially, neutralising the negative effects of the bureaucratic betrayals. The crisis of leadership of the proletariat there-

fore remains the main obstacle preventing resolving the capitalist crisis by taking a socialist road.

c) Finally the discredit of the 'socialist alternative' disfigured by the bureaucratic regimes of the USSR, Eastern Europe or China holds back the workers movement of the imperialist countries and to a lesser extent of the semi-industrialised semicolonial countries from taking the anti-capitalist road — despite the effects of the crisis and the deadly threats of the arms race. The Cambodian tragedy, and the Chinese-Vietnamese wars have discredited socialism. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the occupation of the country and the type of war that the USSR army is carrying out, and the denial of peoples' right to self-determination, have facilitated the international imperialist counter-offensive and the campaigns aiming to discredit socialism. The political counter-revolution unleashed by the 13th December 1981 coup d'état in Poland have further deepened this discredit.

This has less direct influence over the toiling masses of the semicolonial countries particularly since the living and cultural standards of the USSR appear greatly superior to those of countries subject to imperialist pillage. Also the bureaucracy has given limited but real aid to certain revolutionary movements. However new political space can be opened up between the Kremlin and various currents of these countries as a result of the experiences of the developing mass movement.

6) The extent of the crisis of proletarian leadership on a world scale has meant that up to now in the main imperialist or dominated capitalist countries the mass movement has not come to directly pose the question of the revolutionary conquest of political power — the only means of tackling the economic crisis with a solution in the interests of the exploited masses.

So in the three sectors of the world revolution there will continue to be a long period of convulsive upheavals, struggles of great importance, pre-revolutionary crises followed by phases of conjunctural downturn, even new revolutionary explosions. It is the outcome of these struggles which will decide the future of humanity. The crisis of capitalism can result in the long-term in the victory of the world socialist revolution or in humanity falling back into barbarism. Historically the solution of the crisis is impossible without the resolution of the crisis of the subjective factor, which is more than ever the main obstacle barring the road to socialism.

II. The Crisis in the Imperialist Countries

7) In the imperialist countries the crisis is dominated by the effects of the long economic depression that began at the end of the Sixties and which has already been marked by a series of increasingly serious recessions (1970-71, 1974-75, 1980-82). Given the logic of the capitalist industrial cycle there can be short phases of recovery in production and national income like the one which began in 1983. But the tendency is still one of a decline in the average long term rate of growth.

The main characteristics of the depression are the rise of long term structural unemployment and the persistence of inflation. Taking just the imperialist countries, official unemployment has gone up from 10 million at the beginning of the 1970s to 20 million in 1975 and 30 million in 1982. It will probably reach 40 millions in the years to come without even taking into account all those — and especially women — 'who voluntarily withdraw from the labour market' and are no longer registered in the unemployment figures. While inflation has declined a little, particularly under the effects of credit restriction measures taken by nearly all the imperialist governments, it continues at levels without common measure with a 'stable monetary system.' Up to now inflation has prevented a fall in prices and incomes really corresponding to the decline in values expressed in stable monetary terms. Consequently the decline in production is still inferior to those of the 1929-32 period. The persistence of inflation however threatens the world system of credit and banking with collapse.

This threat presents the international bourgeoisie with a harrowing choice. If it chooses to limit inflation at all costs it will continue to accentuate credit restrictions which would threaten important sectors of world capitalist industry with collapse and cause a catastrophic reduction in world trade, and could result in a dislocation of the world market. If it lets inflation rage in order to absorb the crisis it runs the risk of a headlong lurch to a financial 'crash.' This is why the safeguard measures prepared by organisations like the IMF and the International Settlements Bank tend to come up against a decisive obstacle: how to divide up the costs of the rescue operations between different central banks, i.e., between the different imperialist powers in the eventuality of a threatened collapse of a major bank.

8) Indeed it was above all the inflation of credit which fed the long period of post-war economic growth based on the expansion of credit to capitalist companies, to consumers and to imperialist and semicolonial governments.

To absorb the effects of the 1974-5 recession there was an explosive growth in credit to so-called 'third world' countries and bureaucratised workers states. Today the total sum of debts to the big international capitalist banks without any doubt reaches the fantastic figure of \$5,000,000,000,000 i.e., \$5,000 billion. \$600 billion is owed by the semicolonial countries and nearly \$100 billion by the bureaucratised workers states.

Within this mass of debt there is a very big amount owed by private capitalist firms — a good number of whom are on the edge of bankruptcy (including important multi-national companies) or by imperialist governments, (France, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Denmark). These debts are often concentrated in the hands of a few banks (e.g., many of the debts of the bureaucratised workers states are in the hands of a few West German banks, nearly \$100 billion of the debts of some Latin American countries are with a few American banks). The actual resources of these banks hardly permit them to withstand their

debtors defaulting. The bankruptcy of a few big debtors from the 'third world' could provoke a chain reaction leading to a massive withdrawal of deposits and then to the collapse of the banks themselves.

The risk of such a bankruptcy is even greater since the annual servicing of the debt already absorbs a growing proportion of export income. But due to the crisis export income cannot grow substantially and is even declining in many cases. In 1983 the total amount of capital coming into the under-developed countries was just equal to the interest charges on their debts, in other words, just equal to the outflow of these interest charges. At the same time the bourgeoisies of these countries organise a large-scale flight of capital to the imperialist countries.

The imperialist bourgeoisies have drawn the lessons of the 1929-32 'crash' by creating national systems controlling the banks with the latter being bailed out in case of crisis by the Central Bank. But on the international level there is no such 'lender of the last resort.' A real 'central bank of central banks' on the international scale would require the existence of an international capitalist state, that is the disappearance of inter-imperialist competition. In a period of crisis this *intensifies* rather than declines. Whatever measures prepared and inter-imperialist compromises made (after increasingly tough bargaining and sharp conflicts), the *threat of a banking crash* continues to hang over the capitalist world.

9) As inter-imperialist competition deepens it produces strong pressure in favour of protectionism which shows the limits of free-trade during periods of depression. Each imperialist power seeks salvation through exports, i.e., in plans to export unemployment since the total volume of exports is stagnant.

This aggravation of inter-imperialist competition is taking place when the supremacy of American imperialism has seriously declined. The productivity advantages it enjoyed for several decades over its main Japanese or European competitors have been eroded (cars, steel, machine tools, electrical equipment, robots). American imperialism reacts by trying to compensate for this weakening by a re-industrialisation effort, particularly in high technology sectors, by monetary manipulations and by using its military superiority (which is still formidable). Compared to its European competitors it has the advantage of a unified and powerful state apparatus to help achieve these objectives. But it runs a major risk with this. If it goes too far in the abuse of its political and military superiority to weaken or put the squeeze on its European allies/competitors it can push them to develop their own arms industry, even an independent army (including nuclear weapons). The European imperialists already have the means to do that.

More generally the accentuation of inter-imperialist competition obliges American imperialism to adopt a policy where its own interests take the priority more and more over the overall interests of the imperialist system. *The crisis of bourgeois political leadership* which is shown first in each of the main imperialist countries thus tend to be transposed onto the world level. While since the Second World War and up to the beginning of the 1970s *American imperialist hegemony was a factor of relative stabilisation of the system, Washington's policy has become today a factor de-stabilising capitalist order on the international scale.*

This de-stabilisation was produced by the crisis. It in turn deepens this crisis. The European Economic Community (EEC) has undergone serious tensions seen in the failure to stabilise the

European Monetary System, repeated changes in the inter-European exchange rate and the difficulty of setting up a dynamic and effective industrial policy. There are also problems with the deepening contradictions of the agricultural policy and the resistance from many quarters to the proposed membership of Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless on the commercial level and in the domains of military and Space production EEC integration has stood up well to the shockwaves of the depression. The return in force of protectionist tendencies operates more between the EEC, Japan and the USA than on an inter-European level. The toughest protectionist measures furthermore affect the industrial exports of the dominated semi-industrialised countries.

West German imperialism had been one of the 'motors' of post-war economic expansion and of the 'moderation' of the crisis during the 1970s. It owed this privileged situation to its positions won on the world market (machinery, electrical equipment, cars) due to the progress in productivity achieved as well as its greater internal political and social stability. The latter was notably due to the reforms carried out during the social democratic years of power — in turn made possible by the long period of economic growth.

But already towards the end of Helmut Schmidt's term of office these advantages had disappeared. The indebtedness of the East European and semi-colonial semi-industrialised countries had already put a brake on the expansion of German exports. The slowdown in growth, then the 1980-82 recession, caused a deficit in public finances and social security which led the bourgeoisie to impose an austerity policy, which has already been stepped up after the arrival in government of the CDU. The basis of social stability has thus been eroded, favouring a recovery of working class militancy and differentiations within the trade unions.

Japanese imperialism continued to improve its positions in inter-imperialist competition up to the end of the 70s. Today the Japanese economic miracle is reaching its end. The worsening of the 1980-82 international recession marked the limits of Japanese commercial expansion. Certain branches of industry like steel, shipbuilding and the auto-industry are already affected by surplus capacity and lack of sales, exactly as in North America and Europe although it occurred here some years later. The crisis of public spending looks as though it will be severe. Just like its competitors Japan will not again have the high growth rates of previous decades.

10) The effects of the crisis on the *social and political relationship of forces inside the imperialist countries* are uneven. The crisis facilitated the bourgeoisie's austerity offensive and the strengthening of its rightwing tendencies (Thatcher, Reagan, Kohl, Tanaka-Nakasone). The capitulation of the working class bureaucracies, expressing their overall policy of class collaboration and revealing their own social interests, reflects this first shift to the right even inside the workers movement.

The limited and uneven character of the initial fightback of the working class is explained by the very mechanisms of the crisis. Those first hit were the more vulnerable and less organised sectors of the proletariat: immigrant workers, women, youth, older sectors — all of whom were insufficiently defended by an overall class solidarity. Reactionary forces have taken advantage of this situation and of the effects on the working class of all the reformist policies concerning immigrant workers. They have launched xenophobic campaigns that have found a certain audience among some popular layers. The big battalions of the workers movement only began to be hit hard later on, around 1979-80 steel industry in Walloon Belgium, France, UK and West Germany; Fiat in Italy, British Leyland, AEG in Germany etc.). As the crisis deepens and the social security system is attacked by austerity measures movements of mass resistance will begin to gather strength among these key sectors of the working class.

More generally the European workers movement found itself — to varying degrees — thrown onto the defensive from 1975-76 on, not just because of the economic crisis but also as a result of political factors after the way the main workers parties actively contributed to the victory of the 'democratic counterrevolution' in Portugal, to the establishment of a parliamentary-monarchist regime in Spain and to the stabilisation of bourgeois regime rocked by the first upheavals of the crisis.

Finally the forms of fightback used by the working class vanguard in the 1960-75 period of expansion have lost their effectiveness. The trade union movement has been weakened in general. Social pacts and austerity policy implemented by the reformists have increased the disarray of the working class. In many countries important sectors of the trade union bureaucracy (including those considered to be left wing) support the protectionist campaign of certain sections of the bosses. All these elements have accentuated divisions inside the working class and is a factor in the fragmented and dispersed nature of the initial large-scale working class fightbacks in most imperialist countries.

The disarray of the workers movement faced with the crisis and the partial defeats suffered on the economic and political levels (Great Britain) have led in some countries — particularly in Spain and France — to an initial weakening of the trade union movement, especially trade union membership. But:

a) this tendency is far from universal. It practically does not affect the smaller northern European countries. It hardly affects West Germany;

b) in most countries it is without any common measure with the extent of unemployment — i.e., qualitatively different from the weakening of the trade unions which accompanied the 1929-34 crisis;

c) it is very contradictory since the decline in trade union membership can be accompanied by a maintenance of voting levels in elections to workplace councils/committees (Spain) and working class militancy in the workplaces, industrial sectors or towns.

On the other hand François Mitterrand's and Felipe González's electoral victories express, in a deformed way, the basic social relationship of forces which, given the difficulty of achieving victories by partial struggles, resistance to austerity and the desire for change, is expressed on the electoral level. But the dynamic of these victories is limited in an initial period by the fact that they take place after a period of setbacks and division of the workers movement, and not as the continuation of a united mobilisation.

The first signs of more extensive and militant working class fightbacks can already be seen in Italy, in Portugal (in 1982), in Belgium (in 1982-83), in West Germany and even in Spain. The limits of these struggles — imposed by the serious crisis of leadership and perspectives — should not lead us to underestimate the importance of the reaction of wage earners. Since the political level is higher among the European working class than in Japan or the United States there is still a certain openness to an alternative political solution to the crisis, so the European imperialists are more politically vulnerable than their competitors.

In the medium term the indignation, indeed the revolt, of the working masses, accustomed now for several decades to full employment and a steady improvement in their living standards, is inevitable. New election victories of the reformist parties are also likely. But the refusal of these Stalinist, eurocommunist or social democratic reformist leaderships to break with the bourgeoisie and the drive for profit will bring them inevitably to carry out austerity policies. The deeply felt disillusionment of the masses can then lead to either an outflanking in action of the reformist leaderships (the consequences of which will depend on the existence and strength of a class struggle current in the trade unions

and the workplaces) or to a return in force of the direct representatives of the bosses, more aggressive than ever.

11) The shift of the European workers movement onto the defensive is not automatically produced by the economic crisis. The explanation lies just as much in the traditional leaderships' class collaborationist policies. They refuse to propose real solutions (which can mobilise the masses) for mass unemployment, redundancies, factory closures, falling living standards, attacks on social security, welfare benefits and other democratic rights.

But it would be false to conclude from the experience of the last six years and in particular the present processes in France, Spain, Portugal and Greece that the working class is integrated into capitalism (in full crisis), or that the reformist leaderships can only reflect the organic reformism of the masses, or that revolutionary perspectives are dead and buried, if not definitively, at least for a long period, in Europe. As opposed to what happened in the past the big electoral victories of the reformist parties have not been linked to a congruent increase in membership or in their control over the workers. The relations between the aspirations of the masses and the policy of the leaderships still tend to conflict:

a) The electoral successes in France and Spain have not resulted in a current of workers joining these parties nor adhering to the trade unions led by them. On the contrary, the contradiction between their electoral success and the failure of their social and economic policies once they are in government fuels prolonged crises inside these parties.

b) The increasingly clear alternative between accepting or refusing the so-called inevitable constraints of national and international capitalism will deepen the differentiations inside the workers movement, the working class and its allies.

A vanguard is slowly developing inside the workers movement which is realising that lasting satisfaction of its demands in the context of this crisis is only possible by an anti-capitalist political alternative. The weakening of the organic links between the traditional apparatuses and the workers and the decline in their capacity of control is shown in the crises of the British Labour party and the Spanish Communist party which are the most spectacular at the moment but which will be followed by similar crises in the French Communist party, German, French, Spanish and Portuguese Social Democracy and in the smaller communist parties that are liable to real processes of decomposition.

c) However for a whole period alienation from the traditional leaderships can be stronger than the radicalisation itself, given the weakness of an alternative revolutionary pole and the still limited character of the spontaneous mass reactions. In this case what happens is a relative weakening of the overall resources and apparatus of the workers movement.

However neither the stagnation or temporary downturn of the strike movement, nor the apparent depoliticisation of young people, nor the ideological offensive of the right and extreme

right, justify drawing impressionistic conclusions on the overall situation. What is on the agenda in capitalist Europe is not a capitalist solution to the crisis through the accumulation of gradual defeats and without any fight from the working class, or collapse of the revolutionary alternative. No, rather we will see mass reactions against the unbearable blows of the crisis and the beginning of a recomposition of the workers movement. At the same time we will see the negative effects of the reformist experiences on workers' morale and militancy. One of these two processes will finally win out over the other. The deepening of the capitalist crisis, the crisis of bourgeois political leadership, the maintenance of potential working class militancy and the beginning of a recomposition of the workers movement mean that sharp turns in the situation remain on the agenda in a whole series of countries.

In the United States, the repeated sell-outs of the trade union bureaucracy to imperialism and the bosses, its thoroughgoing integration in the bourgeois state apparatus and the two-party system, the progressive shift of industry to the South and West where most workers are not trade unionised, have deeply weakened the trade union movement. The capitalist counter-offensive has thus made more gains than in Europe, Japan, Australia or Canada. But working-class resistance is beginning to emerge against the intolerable concessions that the bosses and state have wrested from the bureaucrats under Reagan. The initial fightback which involves sections of the working class and Black masses will continue to develop. Such struggles could go as far as raising the question of working class political independence and a break with the two-party system, particularly among the Black masses, especially if the campaign of the next Democratic Party candidate for President is not much different from that of Reagan on austerity, mass unemployment, and attacks against social spending. The struggle for the emergence of a mass labour party and a Black party independent of the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more relevant.

12) A demoralisation of the working class similar to that of the French proletariat in 1938 is possible only in the long term, as a consequence of heavy defeats and a failure of the revolutionaries' intervention.

The first urgent priority is to oppose any defeatism as well as any underestimation of the seriousness of the crisis, its length and its possible results (poverty, more repressive regimes, dictatorships, imperialist counter-revolutionary wars).

The decisive struggles are in front of us and not behind us. Workers capacity for struggle remains immense, but their possibility of winning depends more than ever on building a revolutionary leadership effectively able to carry out its tasks.

The recomposition of the workers movement, which is beginning in the imperialist countries given the powerlessness of the traditional reformist leaderships to find a solution to the crisis, should provide the necessary elements for the formation of such a leadership.

III. The Crisis in the Underdeveloped Countries

13) The semicolonial and semi-industrialised countries which account for a majority of the world population, entered the crisis suddenly in 1979-80, many of them some time after the imperialist countries. Their situation became even worse in 1981, 1982 and 1983.

They have experienced a drop in production, a decline in the volume and value of their exports, and a drastic cut in employment in a situation where they were already chronically plagued by unemployment and underemployment. Their per capita income is further reduced by demographic growth. Proletarian and semiproletarian popular layers are hit hard and directly. The income of the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie is falling rapidly. Social inequality increases relentlessly. The scanty infrastructure of public equipment and services is in process of being dismantled. The nutrition and health situation is deteriorating dramatically. Capitalist and imperialist superexploitation have made a new leap forward.

Insofar as these countries underwent a more thoroughgoing integration into the world market over the last few decades, the first effects of the 1974-1975 recession were reflected in a growing balance of payments deficit. Their debts snowballed and reached unprecedented heights in 1982, giving imperialism the means to press for and impose extraordinarily brutal austerity policies, thereby aggravating the social and political crisis.

Moreover, the onset of the crisis further widened the spectrum of differentiations among the countries of the so-called "periphery."

14) In the poorest countries, mainly in Africa, but also in South Asia and Latin America, the crisis has taken on the dimension of a catastrophe. The standard of living of the popular masses has fallen below the "minimum threshold" set by the thugs of the World Bank. Broader and broader layers are not getting the daily food intake specifically needed by inhabitants of these regions.

Famine has struck the bulk of the people of whole countries: The Sahel, Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad, Bangladesh, North-East Brazil, Zaire and Ghana. The scourge of famine had never struck so massively in recent decades, yet imperialist countries are implementing a policy of subsidies to reduce their grain-producing capacity and keep prices up.

Wherever market relations developed in the countryside, they have led either to the near-destruction of food production, or to a considerable reduction of the share of that production consumed on the farm — the farmer must first produce for the market if he wants to be in a position to secure the goods needed to reproduce his labour power. Still smarting from the deep upheavals of their agrarian structure set in motion at least in part by agribusiness, these countries have to import an ever-increasing share of their food. These imports weigh heavily on a balance of payments already skewed by the drop in the prices of some of their export goods and the increase of the prices of manufactured goods, energy and interest on their debt!

In this context, the International Monetary Fund's "stabilisation programs" work to spread and deepen the recessionary tide. The subjection of these dependent economies to the relentless logic of the law of value pushes them backwards even further. The process of social decomposition gains momentum with a twofold result: hunger, massive unemployment, galloping underemployment and the unchecked drop of incomes on one side; unlimited corruption and "doomsday" policies of the ruling

classes on the other.

These poorest countries, in addition to their most immediate particular features, display all the classical characteristics of semicolonial countries: predominance of agriculture and agricultural production, key role of raw materials and agricultural goods in their exports, a puny industrial base almost entirely oriented to the final phase of production of consumers' goods, weak development of the industrial proletariat and decisive weight of the peasantry which is becoming increasingly socially differentiated, direct control of imperialism over decisive sectors . . .

As a result, some of these countries are faced with the perspective of acute social explosions and political convulsions that can lead to prerevolutionary or revolutionary crises.

15) In the course of the last decades semi-industrialised countries have emerged within the group of semicolonial countries. These semi-industrialised countries, although still dominated by imperialism through the mechanisms of technology, credit, commercial (insurance, transport, distribution) and institutional links (IMF, GATT, Trade agreements), no longer have all the specific characteristics of underdevelopment.

Some have developed a permanent industrial base, even a heavy industry sector, and exports these products, with an even greater presence of imperialist companies but also of the "national" state: Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Argentina, India, South Africa, Taiwan and Singapore. In a number of these countries the proletariat is already the majority of the working population, the bourgeoisie is qualitatively stronger than in the poorest countries and there is independent financial capital and even export of capital. Even if dependence on imperialist loans is greater than ever there is an important difference between *imperialist property* and dependence on credit or loans.

Others have developed large capital reserves: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Persian Gulf Emirates. Finally, some have an initial industrial base: Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Colombia, Venezuela, Iran.

In all these countries, the state plays an essential role in mobilizing capital (through the banks and various financial institutions), in investments (in heavy industry, but also in other branches), and therefore, directly or indirectly, in the consolidation of a national bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie whose industrial and agricultural workforce is decisively managed by the state, is subject to the international division of labor caused by imperialist expansion, but at the same time, strives to improve its rank in this hierarchical system; hence its vacillations between subordination and attempts to loosen the grip. However, the crisis has considerably narrowed the margin of maneuver of these bourgeoisies.

These countries are entering the crisis from a specific situation determined by a number of factors:

a) The end of the opportunities for sustained growth through broadening the domestic market, through a resumption and significant increase of imports, or through new autonomous industrialisation drives. This economic dead end has considerably altered the social and political atmosphere, as compared to the previous period. As a result, these bourgeoisies are looking for closer alliances with multinational firms and banks either to try and change the position of a given export-oriented industrial sector through technological input, or to partly substitute direct imperialist investment for the assumption of new debts that have now reached the limit of what is tolerable, or finally to mobilise capital.

b) Semi-industrialisation has considerably strengthened the social weight and even the political role of the industrial proletariat. The crisis and austerity policies make the superexploitation even more severe (with direct attacks on wages, brutal speedups, a lengthening of the workday) at the same time as they elicit resistance movements from the workers.

Accelerated capitalist penetration into the countryside has led to the proletarianisation of a new layer of the peasantry and to the subjection of a growing number of small individual landowners, farmers, and sharecroppers to the needs of capitalist agriculture. This has caused a deep mutation of work relations in the countryside and a renewed explosiveness of the agrarian question. In turn, this agrarian crisis feeds a mass exodus towards the large urban centers, especially towards the giant slums that surround them. These peasants, impoverished or driven off, constitute a reserve pool of labor that capital can draw on, as it pleases, for the construction industry or the vast network of semi-industrial subcontracting outfits, just as the large landowners can, at harvest time. The "marginalisation" of these pauperised masses corresponds to the needs of capitalist accumulation. Superexploitation takes the most violent forms: the growth of child labor, the maximum lengthening of the workweek, the most extreme casualisation of employment, the lack of any form of contract and of the most elementary social benefits, severe accidents.

c) The fact that, over and above the unresolved tasks of the national-democratic revolution (the land question, independence from imperialism, the elimination of dictatorships, the conquest of fundamental democratic rights, the separation of Church and State, the conquest of elementary democratic rights for women . . .), the social demands of the wage-earning and pauperised urban masses are now posed.

In these semi-industrialised countries, the consequences of the government's capitulation to the plans of the IMF are terrifying. Wages collapse under the impact of inflation, the freezes imposed by the state and the pressure of the industrial reserve army. The employment situation is decaying rapidly. Public expenditures, especially social expenditures, are contracting. A drop in investment ensues under the double blow of reduced real demand and the restriction of expenditures for public infrastructure.

16) This has called into question the very model of development these bourgeoisies implemented with the blessing of imperialism. It is most unlikely, unless the international capitalist system collapsed, that a new wave of import-substitution could emerge, this time in the field of equipment goods.

Of course, we cannot totally exclude that the ruling classes might demagogically play their nationalist card, or that factions might appear in their midst and momentarily try to arouse some popular support for a nationalist campaign against the effects of imperialist aggression. But such attempts to legitimate their rule by resorting to populist nationalism cannot succeed because of the extent of the bourgeoisie's dependence and because of the exploited masses' advances in organisation and consciousness. The example of the nationalisation of the banks by the Mexican government in 1982 is an indication of this: its political impact was quite narrow and short-lived since the government immediately rushed to make concessions to international capital.

The bourgeoisie opted for military dictatorship in Brazil, then Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina in turn. This military "solution" either led to genuine economic and social disasters, or proved totally incapable of assuming the day-to-day tasks of management, and of meeting the new needs that have grown out of past economic growth. Thus, the crisis of the bourgeois regimes opened in several countries without the perspective of an alternative political solution having gained the slightest credibility. The explosiveness of the cities and country make even the most limited overtures precarious. Economic crisis and political instability will grow hand in hand.

By contrast, in a number of countries where society is less differentiated, where the pauperisation of the urban and rural masses is increasing but their social weight and organisation remain limited, nationalist and populist forces can come to the fore. They will draw their strength from the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie and plebeian masses. This can be the pattern in some African countries (Ghana).

17) In several *Middle Eastern* countries, nationalist experiences, first the Nasserist, then the Ba'athist, came up against intractable problems as a result of the social consequences of their economic policies (only briefly concealed by the oil boom), of the corruption which spread like gangrene among the new ruling layers, of the increasing breadth of the process of private capital accumulation (of which the Egyptian Infitah is the most advanced expression), and of their growing adaptation to the requirements of imperialism.

Repression and a lasting drop in oil revenues have exacerbated these social contradictions. The cowardice these regimes displayed in their support for the Palestinian liberation movement dealt a harsh blow to their prestige in the eyes of broad layers of the masses. This created a fertile breeding ground for the Islamic fundamentalist current. The petty and narrow-minded outlook of the organisations identified with socialism and the workers movement, their acceptance of the role of auxiliaries of the ruling regimes, along with the discredit of the ruling bureaucracies, helped that current to spread.

In the name of Islam, fundamentalism opposes both imperialist oppression and its domestic representatives. This enables it to gain a hearing among the popular layers whose pressure in turn imparts a populist hue to the fundamentalist current. Nevertheless, the determining social base of Islamic fundamentalism remains located in the traditional layers of the small and medium bourgeoisie who have run into problems as a result of the development of capitalism under the aegis of nationalist regimes or of dictatorships such as that of the shah of Iran. These are the sectors that have found a vehicle for their aspirations in fundamentalism.

Fundamentalist ideology is profoundly reactionary. It goes against the great bulk of the tasks and demands of the national democratic revolution. It violently opposes any independent organisation of the masses, especially of the working class.

18) In a growing number of dominated countries, increased urbanisation and the uneven strengthening of the proletariat has caused the emergence of trade union organisations (sometimes confined to a single sector) or the rapid "massification" of existing unions, and sometimes a more or less explicit breakaway of some trade union sectors from the control the state apparatus or its client parties exercised over them (Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia . . .).

Even in the least developed countries of Africa and Asia, urbanisation has considerably modified the conditions in which the working class forms. An increasing proportion of the male and female workers, even when their job is temporary, now come from an urban milieu and have had some schooling. The expansion of the state industrial sector often provided a launching pad for the first stage of organisation of a wage-earning layer, even though the state's role as the employer enabled various state institutions to establish their grip over the trade unions.

Thus, in dominated capitalist countries as a whole, the tendency is for trade unions to be strengthened, extended or rebuilt. This is a starting point for the fight for the achievement of class independence.

In attempting to annihilate these forms of unionisation, the employers can resort to the massive "underworld" of the proletariat, the host of workers without contracts, of casual workers (see the bosses' answer to the 1982-1983 Bombay textile strike), or even to the harshest repression of trade union militants

through official or unofficial channels.

Coming on the heels of a period in which the real wages of large layers of the population of the dominated countries most often stagnated or regressed, the harsh austerity moves are being desperately resisted by the workers. A series of key demands were brought out by the struggles of the Indian textile workers, the Brazilian and Mexican metalworkers, and the Bolivian miners: the demand for a unified minimum wage, a wage hike to catch up with inflation, stable employment, rehiring of fired trade union activists, and even workers control over production and management in the case of the Bolivian mines. Once they pass a certain threshold, these struggles raise the problem of how they should be generalised (civic work stoppage or general strike) and what overall political perspective they should be linked to.

19) *The agrarian crisis* has generated an explosion of peasant mobilisations and struggles, often in the form of land seizures, of the defense of reclaimed lands against a threatened takeover by large landowners, of struggles over the price at which crops will be sold (to multinational firms as well as to the state) or over the requirements to obtain credit . . . Along with this, a process of unionisation of the pauperised peasant masses has emerged (in Brazil, in Mexico, in Bolivia, in Peru, in the Philippines . . .). This process puts demands on the agenda that deal with the contracts issued by agribusiness firms and large landowners who determine access to land, to natural resources (water), and the working conditions and health and food standards on plantations.

These mobilisations are one of the main sources of strength of the *armed struggle movements*, as for example in the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, on which industrial and commercial crops take up 50% of the land. The peasant struggles often combine with national demands (language, traditional forms of cooperation), as seen in the Philippines, Guatemala or Bolivia.

The various and many links that exist between the slum-dwelling masses, the pauperised peasants and the proletariat provide fertile ground for the convergence of their struggles. While this junction is not automatic, it is made feasible by the growing closeness of their concrete material interests, provided the combative sectors of the workers and union movement make a conscious effort to put forward overall responses to the needs of these masses that are the motor force of the socialist revolution.

20) There is a crying contradiction between the gigantic dimension of the social and economic crisis, the aggressiveness of imperialism, the extent to which the most deprived societies have decomposed, and the lack of a revolutionary leadership on an international scale. Out of it flow the tragedies and convulsions of the dominated countries, such as the expulsion of millions of African workers from Nigeria, or the massacre of refugees from Bangladesh and Nepal in Assam (India).

In this epoch of the putrefaction of imperialism, partial victories won by national liberation movements (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau for example) or the advance of the mass movement (Brazil, Bolivia) can be rapidly undermined. The combined forces of imperialism and the exploiting bourgeoisies will not stop hurling new attacks against the masses, to throw them back. Their task will be so much the easier where the recognised leaderships of the workers and popular movement have helped to create the illusion that the revolution must pause at a bourgeois democratic stage, or that it should be content, when precarious democratic 'openings' occur, to use the new opportunities without consciously preparing the unavoidable show-downs.

The March 1983 Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in New Delhi showed that the bourgeoisies of dominated countries have decided to concentrate their complaints around the question of their increasing debt, and consign to oblivion a series of demands that they had raised in the 1970s along with their call for a new

economic order and increased participation in the sharing of surplus value. This backslide bears witness to the change in the relationship of forces brought about by the crisis and the imperialist counteroffensive.

While social explosiveness is high, while the crisis of bourgeois rule and political instability are obvious, while mass mobilisations follow in close succession, the advance of the colonial revolution is by no means following a straight line. Its course is uneven and halting.

21) Thus, in the *Middle East*, American imperialism and Zionism have scored some points. The Arab bourgeoisies made not a move while Lebanon was invaded and the Palestinians massacred. In fact, a convergence of interests had come about between the aims of the Zionist regime and the Arab bourgeoisies' desire to eliminate the potentially revolutionary hotbed of instability in Lebanon. This convergence arose out of the social, economic and political changes of the countries of that region. These changes are reflected in the continuation of the turn taken in Egypt after Nasser, in the Saudi monarchy's role as a pilot-fish for imperialism, and in the fierce attempts of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes to consolidate the class privileges which have come under attack from all quarters (national minorities, fundamentalist currents, popular masses). All this could only speed up a more open endorsement by the severely dislocated leading factions of the PLO, of the imperialist plan for the region. Nevertheless, the Palestinian protest movement remains strong in the occupied territories. The social crisis in Egypt is going from bad to worse. In Israel, political contradictions have reached an unprecedented level and Begin's/Shamir's policy is a constant factor upsetting the international plans cooked up by American imperialism and its regional cohorts.

The main purpose of the Soviet presence in Syria is to allow the Soviets to participate in the diplomatic settlement that might be applied to this key region for the international relationship of forces.

In *Iran*, the Khomeini regime first channeled and regimented the mass movement, and then beat it down with harsh blows. It opened the door to counterrevolution. Elementary democratic rights were flouted. The organisations of the workers and progressive movement were declared illegal. "The Labor Law" denies the workers any possibility to organise. A bloody war is being waged against the Kurds. The most elementary reforms were suspended or postponed (the land reform, the partial monopoly of foreign trade). Overtures were made towards capitalist sectors that had left the country. An attempt to normalise relations with imperialism is under way.

The Shi'ite hierarchy has used the oil revenues to build a vast patronage network based on a multitude of organisations and institutions controlled by the IRP. The Pasdarans (Guardians of the Revolution) and the army left by the old regime, slowly came to fuse in 1983, in the course of the war against Iraq.

The Iranian revolution which mobilised millions of workers, peasants and plebeian masses, confirms once again that there is no mechanical continuity leading from the bourgeois democratic revolution to the advance of the socialist revolution, if the proletariat allied to the peasant masses does not assert its leadership over the entire process (see the "Theses on the Iranian revolution").

In *Africa*, imperialism is striving with some success to recover its lost ground. In Zimbabwe, the dynamic of the independence struggle was blocked by the Mugabe leadership. The masses, especially the poor peasants (agrarian crisis, hunger, bloody repression) have already begun to pay a very high price for this. In Angola, the MPLA leadership was caught between the military pressure of South Africa and the UNITA and acute economic problems, and was forced to the negotiating table with imperialism. Imperialism is broadening its impact in the economic

field.

This outcome had been prepared ever since independence by the course of the MPLA, as corruption and "privileges of function" spread and came into full view. In Mozambique, a similar process is emerging. The last FRELIMO congress decisions (April 1983) signaled a turn tending to reinforce private property in agriculture which accounts for 90% of the population. The racist rulers of South Africa are increasing their pressure and blackmail to arrive at a normalisation of relations with the "frontline states." They see these states as their natural economic outlet. Pretoria will not stop using its military force until it is sure the liberation movements have suffered substantial setbacks (especially in Namibia) and the Cuban troops have left Angola. In this context, the fact that the proletariat and popular masses of South Africa are vigorously and boldly challenging the apartheid regime, gives them a strategic role in future developments of the revolution in this region (see the resolution on South Africa).

By contrast, in the present phase, the revolution in *Central America* and the Caribbean with its three advanced detachments in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Grenada, represents the only revolutionary process that is today set on a course with a definite socialist orientation in the continuity of the Cuban revolution. Imperialism has grasped its full import. It is constantly escalating its military offensive in the region (see the resolution on Central America).

At the same time, class struggles in the *Southern Cone* of Latin America have entered a new phase. In Bolivia, the rotten military dictatorship was overthrown by a mass movement whose vitality will not be easily undermined by the maneuvers of the Siles Suazo government. In Argentina, an important change occurred as early as 1981. The crisis of the military dictatorship has now opened. Cleavages have appeared in the army. It has been directly hit by the full impact of the economic crisis and the many scandals (disappeared, corruption, Malvinas). The workers and popular movement is raising its head and drawing strength from the traditions of the Argentine proletariat.

In Chile, the Pinochet dictatorship is being challenged in the streets. Workers, peasants, the plebeian masses, and the petty-bourgeoisie impoverished by the crisis, are all turning against a dictatorship that was built on the blood of workers and peasants. Inside the ruling classes, people are moving away from the junta. The beast can still lash out and claw away, but the hour of its agony has arrived. The Latin American revolution is entering a new cycle.

In *East Asia*, the contradictory aspects of the world international situation appear sharply. Imperialism experienced one of its worst defeats there, in 1975. The Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indochinese conflicts had their greatest impact there, notably in 1968-1969. The social and economic upheavals transforming the region are deep-going and brutal and caused the emergence of poles of industrialisation (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan) as well as the rapid expansion of agribusiness, generating a new agrarian crisis (Thailand, Philippines).

The old neocolonial order was undermined by the defeat of American imperialism in Indochina. A variety of factors — Chinese diplomacy, the tragic degeneration of the Cambodian revolution under the leadership of Pol Pot, the outbreak of the military conflict between Vietnam and China after the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia — enabled imperialism to regain the political initiative.

At the present time, the Indochinese revolutions are being subjected to very harsh external pressures. The objective conditions in which they must move towards consolidation are extremely difficult. Their leadership's orientation has proved little suited to the solution of a series of major problems and, as a result, has contributed to make the social and economic contradictions worse. The Thai revolutionary forces that experienced a genuine growth between 1973 and 1977, are now going through a period of deep crisis; the Communist Party (TCP) will not easily recover from the failure of its traditional leadership.

In South Korea the weight of the bureaucratic policies of Moscow, Peking and Pyong-Yang, and the presence of American troops bolstering the ferocious dictatorship bear down heavily on social struggles.

Nevertheless, the imperialist counteroffensive has encountered several obstacles. The uprising of the city of Kwangju in South Korea shows how severe the social and political contradictions generated by this development model can become.

In Thailand, the TCP's failure and the regime's success in fighting the Communist guerillas neither mean that the masses have been crushed nor that a historical defeat of the mass movement comparable to Indonesia in 1965-1966 has occurred.

The Thai revolutionary left is scattered and must now face a very grave situation. However, it is undergoing a slow process of recomposition that could enable it to regain the initiative in the future. In the Philippines, the social struggles are progressively broadening and the Communist movement (including the guerilla) is making highly significant advances. This country, whose strategic importance is emphasized by the presence of the gigantic American military bases, is going through a deep political and social crisis. It has been the arena of high level class struggles which express the fact that the revolution is on the agenda in the region.

In the *Indian sub-continent* the workers movement has undergone practically an uninterrupted deterioration in its strength for more than a decade now. This has been mainly caused by the class collaborationist policy of its traditional leaderships. The latter have ended up by collapsing in parts of India (except in West Bengal) and in Sri Lanka. The bourgeoisie has been able to take advantage of this to block the masses into a choice between purely bourgeois governmental alternatives and it has also accentuated national-communal contradictions. All this has helped to strengthen its rule. But the explosiveness of these national and social contradictions prevents it from stabilising the situation in the long term and periodically produces serious political crises — like the one which is presently rocking the Zia dictatorship in Pakistan.

IV. The Crisis of the Bureaucratised Workers States

22) Society in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the People's Republic of China has been experiencing a *crisis of bureaucratic rule* which has been reflected for over fifteen years, especially in the USSR, by a regular slowdown of the rate of economic growth. This crisis has been enhanced by the crisis of the imperialist system, but it is not a mere extension of the latter: it has its own specific causes and roots in the contradictions inherent in bureaucratic management of a planned economy.

Its main cause lies in the ever more acute contradiction between collective ownership of the fundamental means of production on the one hand, and the power of a bureaucratic caste to avail itself of these means of production in practice, on the other. Under bureaucratic dictatorship, state ownership of the means of production does not lead to their gradual socialisation. Bureaucratic planning cannot lead to the development of productive relations based on the progressive cooperation and association of the producers. To achieve such relations, producers must determine by themselves, and democratically control, the priorities in the use of productive forces; they must have the ability to choose among a variety of economic and political solutions, in the framework of an authentic pluralistic socialist democracy, that is, to exercise power themselves.

The overthrow of capitalism had resolved the contradiction between the increasingly social character of production and the private character of appropriation. It made possible a substantial, and even, for a time, impetuous development of the productive forces. But now, the increasing socialisation of production is not matched by that of appropriation: from a relative brake on the development of the forces of production, bureaucratic management is tending to be transformed into an absolute brake. The positive economic effects of the overthrow of capitalism are weakened by the bureaucratic regime. The transition to socialism is blocked.

23) On the one hand the collective ownership of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and central economic planning, since it is not based on genuine relations between associated producers leads to a functioning of the economy through administrative and juridical relations and through bureaucratic plans that retain full powers to set the level of prices and wages and the physical volumes of production. Since individual bureaucrats or groups of bureaucrats have no other material interests for keeping the system going than increasing and stabilising their material privileges and their status which guarantees them, this system cannot have any overall rationality. It gets ever deeper stuck in the dead end of bureaucratic centralisation: a great deal of wastage, breaks in the continuity of the productive process, weak labour productivity, growing imbalance between different sectors of the economy, etc.

However on the other hand workers gain access to the consumption fund mainly through their wages, and the relations between firms are still formally of a market-type. Even if their impact on the economy as a whole is limited these formally market-type relations are not subordinated by new relations of associated producers. In the absence of the latter type of production relations the bureaucracy can also use the survival of market relations to reinforce its domination over the working class. It thus borrows from capitalism its methods of work organisation such as piece work, the production line, etc.

But in a postcapitalist society where there exists neither a gen-

uine 'labor market' nor an industrial reserve army, these practices are not sufficient to guarantee a continuous and regular process of production in the nationalised firms. This is why the bureaucracy is obliged to limit the use of these market mechanisms. Consequently the system neither has the 'rationality' of generalised market production nor the rationality of socialist planning.

Bureaucratic management of the economy is an obstacle to the reconversion of industry, and even more of agriculture, from an extensive-type development pattern to an intensive-type development pattern. To achieve such a reconversion, a new, rational and conscious organisation of work, calculations of the real compared productivity, as well as the actual completion of development projects on time, are indispensable.

Now, *this reconversion is becoming ever more necessary and urgent*, on the one hand because the natural reserves which had been lavishly expended are getting closer to exhaustion, and on the other because of the growing contradiction between the overall shortage of labour (in the USSR, in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia) and the substantial "surplus" of labour in individual firms. It is also imperative because of the demands of the consumers (not just the labouring masses, but also broad layers of the bureaucracy) and the pressure which technological and labour productivity advances in the most developed capitalist countries bring to bear on the economy of the bureaucratised workers states.

The transition to an intensive-type development of the economy is incompatible with bureaucratic rule and can only come about in one of two ways:

- *Either by the extension of market relations* that would free the bureaucrats at firm-level from the constraints imposed by bureaucratic planning and reestablish a labour market, a market of the means of production, and a capital market.

The Yugoslav experience, which went furthest along this path, showed that this alternative generates strong contradictions and runs up against the survival of collective ownership and the resistance of the workers to the deterioration of their social conditions which inevitably arises in this kind of dynamic.

The solution of these contradictions would then require *a genuine social counterrevolution and the restoration of capitalism*, which would merely substitute the economic and social crisis of international capitalism for the specific crisis of the bureaucratised workers states, and in addition subject these societies to a semicolonial-type superexploitation by large imperialist finance capital.

- *Or by establishing democratic planning based on a coordinated system of self-management* and the subordination of market relations which inevitably survive in the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, to such a system. To achieve this, the workers must, themselves, really and democratically exercise power in the state and economic management. Socialist democracy is not some abstract or moral norm. It is a necessity for a planned economy to run smoothly, because the mass of the workers constitutes the only social force with a real material interest in a generally rational and conscious reorganisation and management of the economy. Only the workers are interested both in an overall increase in the quantity and quality of the consumers goods produced, and in reducing the effort needed to pro-

duce them. These two aspirations imply the transparency of the economy, of costs, and of productivity gains.

By contrast for the bureaucracy its efforts to defend and consolidate its material privileges overrides the overall rationality of production and the improvement of the masses' consumption even when its 'material interests' are expressed by attempts to fulfil the plan. Furthermore its material interests are fragmented between different layers and cliques and are not unified at the level of the caste as a whole.

There is a tendency for opposition to develop between the heavy central apparatus, which is afraid of losing its influence and privileges once the bureaucracy of groups of firms gain the upper hand and pressure groups from different sectors and the regions, which hope to increase and consolidate their privileges at the expense of the central apparatus thanks to decentralisation. Such tensions can exist and even shake up the political apparatus of the state/party. But the fundamental attachment of the bureaucracy to the monopoly of power — the only solid base of its material privileges — means it has to react to these contradictions and to its fears of working class revolts by half-reforms and vacillations. Nevertheless it is not possible for the bureaucracy to rationalise the rigid and contradictory functioning of the system.

24) In the USSR, the bureaucratically planned economy is further weighed down by the burden of participation in the arms race launched by imperialism. In China, the burden of military expenditures corresponds to the twofold pressure of imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The bureaucratised workers states' dependence on the advanced technology of the imperialist countries continues, with all its consequences on the commercial and financial levels.

In the 1960s and especially the 1970s, the bureaucracy tried to overcome the obstacles to a transition to intensive-type development, through an increase of the division of labour inside the COMECON and an expansion of trade with the imperialist countries. Expanded trade rapidly got the upper hand. The bureaucracy hoped that the production increase that these imports would generate, would divert the people away from massive revolt by providing greater satisfaction to their need for quality consumers goods. It met with temporary success in Hungary, especially because of the modernisation and specialisation of agriculture that eliminated supply problems for a whole period.

But the contradictions of these projects burst out into the open in 1980 with the aggravation of the capitalist economic crisis. Its magnitude and length surprised and threw off the bureaucracy in the USSR and the Eastern European countries just as it had surprised the workers bureaucracies in the capitalist countries. Outlets in the West for the goods produced in the bureaucratised workers states shrank. This led to a balance of payments deficit with the West and a crisis in the repayment of the debts imprudently accumulated in many of these countries during the 1970s. So they had to reduce both the imports of quality consumers goods and of production goods. The intrinsic slowdown of growth was thereby made worse.

The specific interests and chauvinism of each of the COMECON member country bureaucracies further contributed to the partial failure of the economic reorientation of the 1970s. Faced with the consequences of the capitalist economic crisis, the Soviet bureaucracy at first tried to increase the satellite countries' integration in COMECON, hoping that the lessons of Eastern Europe's grave debt situation and financial crisis would make the satellite bureaucracies more amenable. It will meet with some success although this will not prevent renewed resistance by these bureaucracies when they see the Kremlin will not keep to its promises.

25) Mass discontent is on the rise in the bureaucratised workers states, albeit unevenly, for a number of reasons: as a result of problems in the supply of quality consumers goods, sometimes

(as in Poland and Rumania) aggravated by generalised scarcity phenomena; as a result of the growing expectations of the masses that were generated by the real economic, social and cultural advances of the previous decades and by the promises of the bureaucracy; as a result of the attraction of the capitalist model of consumerism which is better known today thanks to improved communications; as a result of social, or even moral demands for greater equality, freedom and truth that are the product of the very nature of the postcapitalist societies smothered by cynicism, careerism and corruption; and as a result of the deep ideological crisis racking these societies, aggravated by the lack of upward social mobility which finds its most concentrated expression at the top of society in the ruling gerontocracy (USSR, China). It is also on the rise as a result of brutal instances of national oppression, especially in the USSR (Ukraine, Georgia, Baltic countries, nationalities of Soviet Asia, Jewish population) and in China (Tibet, Inner Mongolia) where many nationalities live under the yoke of Great Russian and Great Han chauvinism. The same observation applies, although to a different degree, to the oppression of the Hungarian minority in Bulgaria, and of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Stalinism shares with imperialism the historical responsibility of the division of the German nation into different states and of the counterrevolutionary division of the potentially most powerful proletariat of Europe.

However, the obstacles before a spontaneous revolutionary outburst of the masses are enormous. They derive, first of all, from the fact that the bureaucratic regime keeps the working class and all of society in a state of forced atomisation, and prevents independent organisation and the free circulation of information. Under these circumstances the working class can only accumulate experience and develop class solidarity very painfully and slowly.

Moreover, the weight of the repressive apparatus in the system of bureaucratic rule is increasing, even though, contrary to the Stalinist era, it now operates more through selective repression of the first opposition nuclei and of any form of workers' rebellion, than through massive terror. The case of Poland, however, demonstrates that the bureaucracy is capable of conjuncturally resolving its crises of regime by resorting to open military intervention, including, for a time, by the temporary institutionalisation of a military form of its dictatorship. But the latter does not rule out the distribution of social and cultural advantages to divide the working class — this has always been used by the bureaucracies in the workers states.

But the obstacles to the emergence of mass movements leading to the beginning of political revolution, can break down. The bureaucracy's inability to control effectively the working class in the process of production is reflected by the workers capacity to resist passively in the workplaces. In this context, active resistance can be sparked off in a number of ways. The absence of unemployment and the fact that the state is the single employer enhances the rapid development of class solidarity and unity in the struggle. This is why a significant social explosion, even though it be local, can lead to a vast social movement.

26) In Poland, it was a series of overwhelmingly spontaneous explosions and the assimilation of these experiences that led to the formation of activist nuclei (mainly the KOR) and a broader workers vanguard which in turn helped to overcome the obstacles described above, beginning with the strikes of the summer 1980. This explains how the explosion of mass self-organisation could come about between July 1980 and December 1981. This is why ten million workers could assemble in Solidarity and wrest a series of democratic freedoms. A situation of dual power began to appear.

It is the most profound experience of the beginning of a political revolution that Eastern Europe has experienced to this day.

Poland's acute national feelings and the historical role of the church as the embodiment of these feelings contributed to the process by maintaining an opposition center that was partially tolerated thanks to the concessions of the bureaucracy to the Catholic hierarchy; the bureaucracy preferred concessions to the church to allowing the slightest legal or semilegal activity of socialist, communist or workers opposition centers.

Subsequent events confirmed the lessons drawn from the explosive struggles in East Germany in 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the beginning of the Polish revolution in 1956, the Chinese cultural revolution and the "Prague Spring" in 1968. There is no substitute for a real antibureaucratic political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states. Any hope of a gradual and peaceful democratisation of these states through reforms, whether they be initiated at the top or come about as a result of a split in the bureaucracy and mass pressure, is illusory. The bureaucracy may concede on secondary questions; it will never bend on the key issue, namely its monopoly over the exercise of political power from which flow its material and social privileges. The political revolution is a genuine mass revolution that implies the destruction of a series of specific state apparati, including especially the repressive apparati.

The feudal nobility and bourgeoisie had succeeded in safeguarding their rule while making real political concessions to their class enemies. The bureaucracy's — apparently irrational — rigidity is an illustration of the fact that it is not a class, that its rule is infinitely more precarious and unstable than that of a ruling class, that it corresponds to no necessary economic function, that it is in permanent conflict with the efficiency and logic of the plan.

The Polish experience confirmed that the bureaucracy only makes concessions on the field of democratic freedoms on a temporary basis, when pressured and coerced, and without giving these concessions the slightest final juridical or constitutional formalisation. It retreats only to advance later and take back what it gave. The counterrevolutionary move of General Jaruzelski was inevitable to the very extent that the rise of political revolution had not come to fruition in the seizure of political power by the workers.

Likewise, the rise of political revolution and then of bureaucratic counterrevolution in Poland have confirmed that even the mobilisation, at first spontaneous, and then increasingly well organised, of millions of workers cannot on its own succeed in overthrowing the dictatorship if there is no conscious and determined revolutionary leadership. More generally, they have confirmed the immediate relevance of the political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states, the hegemonic role of the proletariat in that revolution, and the workers spontaneous tendency to self-organisation and the institutionalisation of socialist democracy.

Proletarian hegemony in the revolutionary process, the workers' drive towards taking over the firms and running the economy themselves, constitute real guarantees against the danger that capitalist restorationist tendencies might gain the upper hand. However, on the longer term, there is no automatic guarantee that these tendencies will be defeated since they arise for both social reasons (the survival of market mechanisms, the pressure of the capitalist economy, the spontaneous tendencies of petty commodity production) and political reasons (the disastrous political and ideological consequences of decades of bureaucratic dictatorship). Only the emergence of a consistent revolutionary leadership sinking deep roots in the working class, the rebirth of the proletariat's class consciousness, and the international extension of the revolution can finally neutralise these tendencies.

The Polish proletariat suffered a real defeat on December 13, 1981. The bureaucracy was able to score some tactical victories but is far from having restabilised its dictatorship. The workers

have kept some forms of organisation, albeit more limited and less effective than the legal ones they had between August 1980 and December 1981. They have preserved a substantial capacity to resist and fightback, especially where Solidarnosc was rebuilt in the workplaces and where interfactory coordinations have emerged.

27) Without any doubt Yugoslavia is one of the bureaucratized workers states where the contradictions and centrifugal forces are the most explosive: the rise of the different nationalisms, the recent riots in Kosovo and the extreme disarticulation of an economy where neither the plan, nor the market, nor self-management, nor the League of Yugoslav Communists manage to impose a coherent regulation, are all elements of the most serious crisis of the system since the end of the war. New loans and re-scheduling of a foreign debt of some 20 billion dollars have just been obtained in the context of these deficiencies. The Western bankers and the IMF prefer to deal with a single, 'responsible' partner rather than a multitude of Yugoslav firms that have all separately got into debt so paradoxically they have encouraged a strengthening of state control over foreign trade and foreign exchange.

Thus a halt is going to be made to the increasingly confederal evolution of Yugoslavia. But this comes up against powerful resistance from the richer republics such as Slovenia and Croatia. At the same time the Yugoslav authorities are counting on the accentuation of market competition to restore a greater unity to the economy. This new 'liberal' turn will doubtlessly go hand in hand with purges and will meet bitter working class resistance. Up to now workers have used their self-management rights to stop redundancies (which is not to say they have used such rights to hire the hundreds of thousands of youth, peasants and women who are looking for jobs). This turn will also come into contradiction with the oft-repeated objective to reduce regional inequalities which stoke up national tensions. Finally the inducements for the development of the private sector — aimed at resolving the problems of unemployment and of the non-repatriation of some 12 billion dollars placed in the Western banks by emigrant workers — will come into conflict with financial measures limiting private enrichment.

Intense public debate is presently taking place in Yugoslavia on the balance-sheet of its system, centred on the question of political pluralism. Revolutionary Marxists have a responsibility to participate in such debates but also to make them as known about as possible in the other bureaucratized workers states since the present problems of the Yugoslav system are at the same time the richest in experiences permitting us to come to terms with the conditions of an integrated system of socialist self-management.

28) *Soviet society's* failure to move forward had already appeared in many fields during the last years of the Brezhnev era. In addition to the decline of the growth rates of industrial production, there was: an increasing technological lag, the failure of the application of the "Kosygin reform" to the management of the economy, the sclerosis of the apparati, the more and more acute ideological and moral crisis in the bureaucracy itself, and especially the worsening crisis of agriculture and consequent greater difficulty in supplying the population in products derived from livestock. At a time when a public polemic with imperialism is raging as a result of the war drive launched by Carter and Reagan, Soviet society's dependence on massive imports of American grain is not merely a source of economic weakness but also of ideological and political disarray.

While avoiding any kind of underestimation of the economic might of the USSR (which remains the second industrial power in the world today) and the real advances of the standard of living of the masses over the last thirty years, and while denying the slightest credence to the fantasies about an impending "collapse" of the Soviet economy, revolutionary Marxists must emphasize

the tendency to stagnation in all realms of society in the USSR. The beginning of Andropov's era is characterised rather by a desire for reform than by the actual ability to impose it against the stubborn resistance of given factions of the apparatus. This means that, under Andropov, the bureaucracy will have far less leeway in which to play the card of a "consumers' society" (consumerism) to cushion at least some of the elements of the social crisis ripening in the country, than it did under Khrushchev or Brezhnev. This spells a worsening crisis.

29) After beating around the bush for a long time to avoid new explosive crises in its own ranks, the Chinese bureaucracy finally openly decided on a course of demaioisation which included the de-facto dissolution of the rural "People's Communes," a stronger use of market mechanisms, a broader opening to the world market, an emphasis on modernisation, the abandonment of some theoretical precepts of Maoism, a break with the conception of two "superpowers" of which the USSR was the most aggressive, a return to the definition of the Eastern European bureaucratic workers states as "socialist countries," and the attempt to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the Kremlin at the level of state-to-state relations.

The success of such an armistice would modify the international situation to the detriment of imperialism. It will not mean the end of the Chinese bureaucracy's manoeuvres within the

framework of 'triangular relations,' P.R. of China-USA-USSR. But it highlights the fact that the Nixon-Mao, and later Carter-Deng Hsiao-Ping rapprochements, just as the Hitler-Stalin pact before them, only had conjunctural significance; they had no structural implications on the class nature of the People's Republic of China.

This "new course" has undeniably eased the economic, social, cultural and ideological atmosphere and its effects among the population are quite visible. But the strengthening of the trends to primitive accumulation of capital in the private sector and the development of economic and social inequalities, will cause new tensions and new discontents, especially among the urban youth, workers and poor peasants.

The repression of the "democratic movement" as well as the sudden turn-about against Polish Solidarnosc are a first sign of this, along with the development of strikes and the appearance of new political opposition centers.

This is why the leadership of the bureaucracy is beginning to tighten up against the private sector in the towns and stepping up repression against dissident political currents. It wants above all to 'normalise' the situation inside the Chinese CP which is riven with internal, deep-going differences due both to the existence of tendencies nostalgic for the Maoist era and tendencies that want to press ahead even faster with the 'liberalisation line.'

V. The Imperialist War Drive and the Antiwar Movement

30) The crisis of capitalism is accelerating capitalism's *tendency to rearm and increasing the danger of war* in the world. The new round of the arms race imperialism set in motion at the end of the 1970s corresponds to several immediate objectives:

- To set up *a mobile and effective strike force against developing national liberation struggles* and revolutions in the semicolonial and dominated countries.

- To provide *a greater "replacement market"* that will allow for profit rates to increase (in the context of the crisis) without increasing the standard of living of the masses.

- To weigh down the Soviet economy with the particularly heavy burden of the arms race and sharpen its social contradictions so as to force the Kremlin bureaucracy to enter an overall negotiation in a more unfavourable relationship of forces and reduce its possibilities of answering requests for help from governments brought to power by national liberation struggles.

- *To reestablish American hegemony* inside the imperialist camp and block the centrifugal tendencies enhanced by the "détente" policy, by bringing its military supremacy into full play.

In the longer term, the arms race aims to prepare the reconquest of several workers states by imperialism, an objective realisable only through war. But the *immediate threat* is localised counterrevolutionary wars against liberation struggles or advances of the revolution in Central America and the Caribbean, in the Middle East and in Southern Africa where Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are on the firing line of the South African army supported by imperialism.

31) But the arms race is not confined to the escalation of nuclear weapons, far from it. It should be noted in particular that 10% of the U.S. military budget are allocated to these weapons, while 25% go towards interventions in so-called third world countries, and the remainder to conventional weapons, chemical weapons and research. Nevertheless, the specter of the nuclear holocaust is not the product of some great irrational fear. It corresponds to the qualitative transformation of the means of destruction since World War II. Their murderous potential has advanced more in the last thirty years than in the period stretching from the age of the sling to World War I.

The nuclear destruction capacity which already exists at the threshold of the eighties represents more than one million Hiroshimas and the possibility of annihilating the entire population of the planet twenty times over. The French nuclear arsenal alone — although it may appear dwarfish — represents 4,000 potential Hiroshimas. A nuclear world war would signal humanity's collapse into barbarism and perhaps the destruction of all human life from the face of the Earth.

As it is, the risks of accidents and the outbreak of localised nuclear conflicts are increasing for political as well as military reasons as a result of the development of a whole gamut of sophisticated weaponry, including chemical weapons, which is beginning to bridge the gap which had existed between conventional and nuclear weapons; as a result also of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their possession by reactionary regimes like those of Israel or South Africa; and as a result of the continuing capitalist crisis and bourgeois leadership crisis in some of the main imperialist countries. This is the context in which some of the Pentagon strategists have come to seriously consider the possibility of a "limited nuclear war," at the peril of triggering the

mechanisms of a generalised nuclear conflict.

Such a war would be qualitatively different from World War I and World War II. It would no longer pit armies against one another but aim to annihilate populations as shown in a sinister way by the neutron bomb and the chemical and biological weapons. Today, the very nature of the means of destruction makes the dilemma socialism or barbarism more urgent than ever.

32) The American bourgeoisie has already used the nuclear weapon twice against another imperialist power (Japan). It has threatened to use it against the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions. One of the reasons it has not carried through this threat is the dissuasive impact of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. This arsenal will remain necessary as long as imperialism continues to build and perfect atomic weapons; but its effectiveness alone will not be enough to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war.

Dissuasion can be a lesser evil, but only so long as one is looking for a way out of it: humanity's survival cannot hang forever on the unstable equilibrium of nuclear terror. The imperialist strategists are looking for their own way out in the direction of "limited nuclear war." All forces identified with the workers movement must take a clear stand in favour of the other way out: *a total ban on nuclear weapons and the controlled destruction of all stocks of such weapons.*

In this framework, the workers states should take *spectacular initiatives to partially reduce their own arsenal* — this would constitute a *political challenge* to the imperialist plans and the most vigorous encouragement for mass mobilisations against the war drive.

33) While all consistent and resolute opponents of atomic weapons can and must come together in the broadest united action, the question then becomes: by what means can this disarmament be imposed?

We reject the demobilising and defeatist notion that the outbreak of nuclear war is already a fatality. We also reject the idea that world war can be prevented by permanent negotiations and a series of agreements between the "Two Big Powers." Finally, we also reject the illusion that nuclear war can be avoided on the long run through a gradual weakening of imperialism as a result of its being defeated in a growing number of dominated countries, of the strengthening of the economic and military potential of the bureaucratised workers states, of the internal divisions of the imperialist camp and of the advances of the antiwar movement.

The war drive and the Bomb are not some wart on an otherwise healthy face, nor are they the toy of delirious rulers who need only be reasoned with. The arms race is rooted in class society. It is part and parcel of the needs of the imperialist system in crisis. Armed conflicts change their form but they do not escape the logic of the class struggle. This is why there can be no subordination of the struggle for socialism to some sacred union among the various social classes against the mysterious demon of the nuclear threat.

Only the extension and victory of the socialist revolution in the very strongholds of imperialism can disarm the warmongers.

34) *The imperialist states, with U.S. imperialism coming first among them, are the principal warmongers and the main threat to peace.* The new drive towards worldwide slaughter they have

initiated is the third one of our century — the first unfolded during the first years of the century, the second in the thirties. In the first two cases, the pretext of a "Soviet arms build-up" could not be used. It has been made up out of whole cloth to get the population of the imperialist centers to accept an astronomical increase of military expenditures. It is the third big lie on this topic put forward by the American ruling class and military, with the complicity of the imperialist bourgeoisies; the first concerned an alleged Soviet superiority in strategic bombers in 1950 and was followed by the myth of the "missile gap" at the beginning of the sixties.

In fact, the Trident, MX and Cruise programs were conceived at the end of the sixties, long before there was any talk of the SS 20s. The deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles was prepared ever since the Vietnam war ended. The strategic modernisations put into effect by Reagan were already initiated in 1972. Military expenditures had already begun to skyrocket in 1977, under Carter's administration. The refusal to ratify the SALT II agreements and NATO's two-track decision in 1979 on the deployment of the Pershings came before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, not to mention the Polish events.

The pretexts used to justify the imperialist escalation are not only given the lie by the chronology of the arms race, but also by the facts of the matter. U.S. imperialism and its allies still retain a quantitative, qualitative and strategic superiority in both the fields of nuclear and conventional weapons. Their expenditures on armaments are far above those of the USSR and Warsaw Pact both per-capita and in absolute value. The land divisions alone of those European armies which are allied to the United States number 2,176,000 soldiers, as opposed to 2,617,000 in the land divisions of the entire Warsaw Pact; that is, they are far larger than the USSR's which has many other frontiers to cover. The deployed missiles are not the only installations in Europe targeting the USSR; such installations also include American bases and the system of Poseidon nuclear submarines soon to be replaced by the Tridents.

The deployment of the Pershing missiles in Europe under a direct American command introduces a new imbalance not from the point of view of their technical features, but from the point of view of their strategic function: it places the vital centers of the Soviet territory within a few minutes of the range of American weaponry.

This colossal arms build-up implies the stepped-up plunder of semicolonial countries, harsher austerity drives against the workers of the capitalist countries themselves, attacks against democratic rights in the imperialist countries and the denial of the sovereignty of nations.

35) Workers states, even bureaucratically degenerated or deformed ones, must be defended against any attempt to restore capitalism. *We recognise the right of these states to equip themselves with the necessary armament, including nuclear weapons, to dissuade imperialism.* We have never considered the conditional and parsimonious Soviet military aid to the Vietnamese or Cuban revolutions as dangerous "Soviet expansionism;" rather, we have often denounced the inadequacy of this aid and the conditions that were sometimes attached to it.

But the best defence of the USSR and the other workers states against the threat of a capitalist comeback lies in the mobilisation of the proletariat and the extension of the revolution. But the fact that a parasitical bureaucratic minority has usurped power in these countries transforms the state, including the military apparatus, into an instrument of rule against the working class. The repression of any autonomous activity of the masses and the irrational management of the economy undermine the workers states' ability to defend themselves.

The victory of the antibureaucratic revolution would make it possible to defend and develop the remains of the conquests of

October and to launch a massive mobilisation of the international proletariat against the imperialist war drive. This is why *the defence of the workers states cannot be separated from the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship.*

Therefore, stating that the bureaucratised workers states have the right to equip themselves with a dissuasive nuclear armament should in no way imply support for the military choices of the Soviet bureaucracy or for placing those countries where its missiles are deployed under receivership. These choices are part of a defence policy which like the bureaucracy itself fulfills a dual role. On the one hand, it contributes to the defence of the workers state (as with Stalingrad, or with its military aid to North Vietnam during the war). On the other, it defends the bureaucracy's own interests either against the workers of the workers states (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland) or against the self-determination of peoples (Afghanistan). Thus, the needs of defence are inseparable from the means of coercion, from the costs of the armaments policy in terms of social welfare and democratic rights, and from the diplomatic and political utilisation of the nuclear weapon.

The fact is that this armament is in the hands of a bureaucratic caste which is totally uncontrolled, a factor which increases the chances of its being used. It serves at once as a means to intimidate the mass movement of the countries under the rule of the bureaucracy, as an instrument for negotiation and compromise with imperialism, and as a means of pressure on allied semicolonial countries or in interbureaucratic conflicts (as between the USSR and China). In this respect, the Soviet nuclear weaponry is also *one of the pillars of the division of the world instituted in Yalta and periodically renegotiated since.*

The ceaselessly growing burden of military expenditures in the bureaucratised workers states cannot be explained only by the pressure of imperialism; one must also take into account the reactionary nature of the bureaucracy's military policy and the irrationality of its economic management. The refusal to base the defence of the workers states on the self-defence of the masses and the general arming of the workers leads to relying on technical means rather than the mobilisation of the masses and unavoidably ends up developing an ever-larger and more advanced military power. At the same time, bureaucratic rule is inherently wasteful; the military domain, being no exception, contributes to maintaining a low standard of living for the masses.

While imperialism must bear the overwhelming responsibility of having renewed the arms race, the bureaucracy makes its task easier, by moving from a dissuasive policy to a military policy whose form parallels that of imperialism ever more closely, by sending its troops into Afghanistan, and by its repression of the Polish workers. Thus, Andropov's threat to answer the deployment of the Pershings with the deployment of new missiles in Czechoslovakia and the GDR dealt a blow to the unilateral disarmament movements in Western Europe.

This is why the struggle for the unilateral disarmament of imperialism is inseparable from the struggle for control by the masses in the workers states over the production and utilisation of these countries' military might, for the arming of the workers in the framework of a regime of socialist democracy, and for their sovereign right to define a foreign policy based on the worldwide interests of the proletariat.

36. In the imperialist countries, broad mobilisations against war and the arms race constitute a fundamental obstacle for the warmongers. *Insofar as these mobilisations oppose the build-up of imperialist arsenals, without posing any preconditions or demands for reciprocity,* by actions that are independent of the diplomatic policy of any state, they play a highly progressive role and behave in practice as a movement for the unilateral disarmament of imperialism.

Mass pacifism, which should not be confused with pacifist

ideologies, plays a positive role in capitalist Europe, in the United States and Japan insofar as it signals practical opposition to imperialism's policy, even without the understanding that the threat of war is inherent in the capitalist system itself.

We are fully committed to participate in these mobilisations, to organise and broaden them on the basis of the greatest possible unity around such slogans as *No Pershing! No Cruise! Nato bases out! Out of Nato! No neutron bomb! No to French and British nuclear weapons, integral parts of the imperialist war machine! Imperialist troops out of Central America, the Middle East, Grenada, Chad, . . . ! For a nuclear-free Europe from Poland to Portugal!*

By contrast, the slogan "No Pershing, No SS 20", under the guise of simplicity, actually introduces confusion if it aims to tie the rejection of the Pershing missiles to a withdrawal of the SS 20s. For such a bias tends to transform the antiwar movement into a means of pressure on the negotiations. If it really wished to express a radical refusal of all nuclear weapons, it should encompass not only the Pershing and SS 20s but also the American MX and the French and British warheads. Although we do not endorse this slogan, we do not make abandoning it a condition for united action by the antiwar movement.

By linking the struggle against imperialist militarism as closely as possible to the struggles against military aggression against dominated countries and against capitalist austerity, we give the antiwar mobilisations a class content that is not only anti-imperialist but also anticapitalist.

We seek to give the antiwar movement its full anti-imperialist dimension by showing how the dangers inherent in imperialist militarism are already concretised at this very moment in warring expeditions against the colonial revolution. The people's liberation struggles are no more the result of some plot or "Soviet expansionism," than the Polish workers upsurge is the product of some CIA or Vatican plot. Both are expressions of social contradictions that no state apparatus can even aspire to control.

Likewise we link the struggle against militarisation to the struggle against austerity and military budgets around demands such as the rejection of military budgets, "Money for social services, not for war, down with the bomb!," for the planned reconversion of the arms industry, for the defence of soldiers' material demands and democratic rights. Thereby, we work to broaden the participation of the organised workers movement, of its parties and trade unions, in the antiwar movement.

In Europe, the strength of the movement against nuclear weapons and war is fostered by the experience of two world wars and the feeling that a new world conflagration would once again make Europe its theater. Various ideologues and leaders can try to orient this sentiment towards some form of nationalism or alleged "armed neutrality" or "non-alignment" on behalf of a still capitalist Europe. But at the level of the mass movement, the rejection of nuclear armament and American and Soviet decisions taken behind the back of the peoples can be transformed into a new internationalist spirit that is both anti-imperialist and anti-bureaucratic, into a willingness to break out of the constraints imposed by Yalta and into the perspective of the *Socialist United States of Europe*.

Within this perspective, the question of the division of Germany is posed again and the theses of the last world congress on this subject are more relevant than ever:

The division of Germany is a major factor in maintaining the status quo. It is a brake on the most powerful proletariat in Europe. But, on the other hand, any upsurge in mass mobilizations in one part of Germany will have an impact on the other, and more generally on Europe as a whole.

We link ending the division of the German nation with the socialist unification of Germany, based on the political revolution in the German

Democratic Republic and on the social revolution in the German Federal Republic. We oppose any unification that involves dismantling the economic foundations of the workers state in the German Democratic Republic.

We support the demand for withdrawal of occupation troops from the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, respectively allied troops — first of all the American forces — and those of the USSR. In fact, this double military occupation is designed to assure stabilization of the political and social situation on both sides of the line in this key area of confrontation between the imperialist camp and the bureaucratized workers states. In the long term, it is also aimed at blocking both the socialist revolution in the German Federal Republic and the political revolution in the German Democratic Republic.

The stationing of powerful armies equipped with gigantic nuclear arsenals in both parts of Germany poses a danger of nuclear war, with the catastrophic consequences that would flow from this for the future of humanity as a whole.

37) We support the peace movements that are independent of the states or governments and have emerged in the GDR, Hungary or the USSR for example. We support their right to organise independently to struggle against war, as well as their resistance to the nuclear and military policy of the bureaucracy which has an objectively antibureaucratic dynamic.

The demand for the abolition of secret diplomacy and military secrecy about the use of resources, for making information widely available to the workers and for the right of the people to decide their own fate, represent a first step in a growing awareness of the danger of militarism. The refusal of the militarisation of social life, of military-chauvinistic education, of military interventions against the mass movements, which has emerged in significant sectors of East-German youth, deserves to be supported as well as the rejection of the deployment of SS 20s in the GDR and the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops stationed in this country. As opposed to the "Brezhnev doctrine" of "limited sovereignty" we also stand for the right of East European countries to leave the Warsaw Pact.

Decades of bureaucratic dictatorship and denial of the most elementary democratic rights could foster tendencies among the East European peace movements that believe bureaucratic rule represents the main threat to world peace. In some extreme cases this position can lead them to support imperialist rearmament in the name of defending "democracy" against "totalitarianism." We make no concessions in fighting such positions, and support the demand for a radical disarmament of imperialism and the bureaucracy put forward by the most conscious sections of the independent peace movement.

Within the antiwar movement of the capitalist countries, we take a stand in favour of active solidarity with the independent pacifists of the USSR and other Eastern countries, and for setting up non-exclusive relations between the peace movements of the East and of the West.

38) *We unconditionally support the peoples of colonial and semicolonial countries against any imperialist aggression.* When an armed conflict breaks out, we unambiguously take sides for the military victory of the dominated country and for the defeat of the imperialist power (Malvinas). This unconditional support in a confrontation does not imply in any way support for a truce or some kind of sacred union between the exploited masses and the ruling bourgeoisie. Only the recognition of democratic and trade union rights, the strengthening of the independent organisation of the toilers, the extension of such social measures as the agrarian reform and the confiscation of imperialist holdings, permit a full mobilisation of the masses and a strong and effective defence against imperialism.

The crisis racking the dominated capitalist countries is also reflected in an increase of military conflicts among them in Africa, the Middle East (Iran-Iraq), Latin America (Peru-Ecuador). The

large extent, these conflicts are the direct product of the "Balkanisation" imposed by imperialism on entire regions of the world. They reflect imperialism's determination to maintain its yoke over the exploited and oppressed peoples.

They are a means whereby imperialism can exercise a variety of pressures that can lead to armed conflicts which it hopes to use to weaken the political forces that have escaped its control, to counter the Soviet bureaucracy's influence in a given region or, more openly, to attack an ongoing revolution. In the civil wars that arise in a particular country, such as Angola, imperialism supports the reactionary forces.

Therefore, in order to determine the tasks of revolutionaries in a military conflict, whether international in scope or localised inside one country, and in order to know how to combine the anti-imperialist tasks with the tasks of defence of the workers class independence against their own bourgeoisie, it is necessary in every concrete case to define the reality and dynamic of the class struggle and imperialist policy.

Imperialism systematically tries to use the military conflicts

between dominated countries to its advantage. It is no accident that many of the "hot spots" are located in regions that it considers economically or strategically important. But the fact remains that a series of these clashes are the product of policies decided by the bourgeoisies of these dependent capitalist countries on the basis of their own specific interests. These bourgeoisies have developed a relatively large military machine to counter the rising social explosiveness and consolidate their rule through repression, most often with the backing of imperialism. These ruling classes can be led to revive ancient territorial claims or launch nationalist campaigns in order to sidetrack the social and democratic aspirations of the masses.

In conflicts of this type, our *basic guiding principle is the struggle for the political independence of the exploited classes.* We point to the road of a struggle of the popular masses both against imperialism and their oppressors. We can even advocate the need for a political settlement of the disputes left behind by imperialist rule.

On the Iran-Iraq war, see the resolution on the Iranian revolution.

VI. Our Tasks

39) In the long term *only the world revolution can prevent a nuclear world war*. This implies the overthrow of the imperialist bourgeoisies by the proletariat of these countries and not the subordination of the socialist objectives of the workers movement to the antiwar movement, nor the subordination of the socialist revolution in the capitalist countries or the political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states to the anti-imperialist struggle. Setting such a hierarchy of tasks for the world revolution would also mean an under-estimation both of the objectively revolutionary movements that will continue to emerge in the imperialist countries and the bureaucratised workers states *and* the threats of the outbreak of a nuclear war as long as imperialism survives in its main strongholds.

The victory of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist centres, the victory of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the USSR or in China and the progress of the permanent revolution in the main dominated countries, *today becomes a question of survival for humanity*. Only the socialisation of the means of production under workers management and widescale public control and the withering away of sovereign national states in a world socialist federation will permit the elimination once and for all of any danger of nuclear war through the simultaneous destruction of nuclear arms stocks and the definitive banning of their production, under the control of all potential producers.

Establishing a hierarchy between the three sectors of the world revolution flows from a strategy which gives priority to the confrontation between 'camps' — i.e., between the imperialist states and the bureaucratised workers states (beginning with the USSR) and not to the class struggle on a world scale.

True the very existence of the USSR, independently of the precise policies of the bureaucracy, or even in spite of that, facilitated the consolidation of the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions against imperialism. But at each decisive stage of the rise of the world revolution (in 1935-37 in Europe, in 1943-47 and the 60s in Latin America, the Arab countries and South Asia for example), imperialism was supported not only by the dependent bourgeoisies but also by the ruling bureaucracies and the bureaucratic apparatuses of the workers movement. The inevitable conflicts and contradictions between imperialism and the bureaucracy should not be allowed to obscure this basic reality. Similarly such conflicts and contradictions should not lead us to minimise the importance, for the world revolution as a whole, of the rise of the political revolution in Poland and the counter-revolutionary intervention of the Soviet bureaucracy against it.

The deepening of class conflicts on an international scale highlights with increased force the dialectical unity of the three sectors of the world revolution. This unity reflects the actuality of the class struggle worldwide and cannot in any way be reduced to a confrontation between 'blocs' of states, with imperialism on one side and the 'socialist camp' along with progressive bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces on the other. Recent developments in Central America, Latin America, the Middle East and in Iran prove this point. The passivity of the Soviet bureaucracy, bogged down with its own economic difficulties and the policy of the Arab regimes at the time of the Zionist aggression in Lebanon illustrate this too.

In a strategic sense the emancipation of the workers means the overthrow of imperialist and capitalist forces and the ruling bu-

reaucracies. Political and social crises are inevitable in the bureaucratised workers states. Any attempt to ignore or relativise these conflicts between the bureaucracy and the working masses of these countries will necessarily result in practice making concessions or capitulating to Stalinism and the bureaucracy.

40) At the present stage, the tasks of revolutionary Marxists flow from the immediate problems facing the masses in the three sectors of the world revolution, from the masses' relations with the traditional organisations and leaderships which retain a grip over majority or substantial sectors of the mass movement, and from the emergence of new organisations with which the masses are beginning to identify.

Among the immediate tasks, *the solidarity campaigns* with revolutionary movements targeted by repression or counter-revolutionary attacks, are a priority on an international level: solidarity with the independent Polish workers movement, solidarity with the Palestinian resistance and with the Southern African masses.

These campaigns correspond to an urgent need as well as to the call of leaderships such as the Salvadoran FMLN, or Solidarnosc, that have understood their importance in shaping the relationship of forces. They are developing on the initiative of a variety of currents of the workers and people's movement. It is important that they set themselves concrete and precise objectives which can impart a genuinely unitary dynamic to mobilisations.

Moreover, revolutionary Marxists must stand in the front ranks of the many initiatives on behalf of working class organisations and activists targeted for repression by reactionary regimes, as in Turkey, Argentina, Chile, and Iran. Such efforts correspond to the struggles waged inside these countries against "disappearances," tortures, assassinations, and are a key factor in rekindling the fight against these dictatorships.

41) *In the imperialist countries*, the priority tasks revolve around the struggle against the austerity offensive and military build-up of Capital.

Sections of the Fourth International will strive, to the extent that their forces permit, to organise the workers resistance and to participate in their fight back against attacks on employment, wages and social security. They will carry out mass campaigns on issues that can generate united mobilisations of wage earners and broaden their struggle against austerity. *Rejection of austerity policies in all forms* is the core of their propaganda and agitation.

In this context, *the struggle against unemployment through the immediate shortening of the workweek* — 35-hour week with no loss in pay, compulsory hiring and workers control over speedup — and through nationalisation under workers control and without compensation or repurchase, of all firms that close down, massively fire employees, or collect massive government subsidies, plays a key role in the propaganda of our sections, and when conditions are ripe, in their agitation.

Moreover, the sections will strive to put forward an *overall anticapitalist alternative* to the bourgeois and reformist policies, sometimes expressing it in an action program. Such a program must help to bring together the various currents opposing the collaborationist policy of the bureaucracies and to convince ever broader layers of the need to break with the bourgeoisie, its logic

of profit, its state, and its international system, and to orient towards the conquest of power by the workers. In periods of acute political crisis, it is imperative to combine such an action program with agitation for a precise government formula which concretises in the eyes of the masses the necessary break with the bourgeoisie.

Sections will work to promote the broadest unity in action of all forces willing in practice to open breaches in the austerity policy. While such initiatives should not be subordinated to the policy of the bureaucracy, they must be part of a united front policy towards all the workers organisations.

The defence of the most vulnerable layers of the proletariat of imperialist countries (immigrant workers, women, youth, recipients of social benefits) is part of this approach. The workers movement must organise a response to the rise of racism and xenophobia on which the far-right and fascistic forces feed. Assaults and repression against the immigrant workers lay the ground for assaults that will be extended next to revolutionary organisations, trade union activists, and the whole of the workers movement.

In addition to the struggle against nuclear weapons and the imperialist military pacts, the campaign against the military build-up requires a sustained struggle against the bourgeois army, for democratic rights for soldiers, including the right to form trade unions. The combined struggle against austerity and the military build-up revolves around such slogans as: "Social expenditures, not military expenditures," "Schools, hospitals, not missiles," "Jobs not Bombs."

42) *In the semicolonial and semi-industrialised countries, the combined struggle for democratic, anti-imperialist and antidictatorial goals plays a central role.*

The mobilisation of broad popular layers for their most elementary rights, in a context of rising poverty and crisis, profoundly undermines military dictatorships, and more generally, all ruling regimes. The link between democratic rights and the anti-imperialist struggle strengthens because of the still more blatant and aggressive intervention of imperialism in periods of crisis, through the IMF, the World Bank, the resort to the food weapon, and direct military interventions. Independently of the uncertainty of any actual repayment of the loans — it is improbable — the demand for the real annulment/repudiation of the foreign debt retains all its validity.

The struggle for democratic and anti-imperialist demands includes the struggle for *land reform*. Wherever possible, sections will strive to draw up a concrete program of land reform, that will take into account the great diversity of regional situations, put the emphasis on helping to mobilise and organise poor peasants and the agricultural semi-proletariat and proletariat, and seek to answer their aspirations in matters of land ownership, access to water, to fertilizers, to tools and agricultural machinery, to credit, to commercialisation networks, to social infrastructures and to jobs.

Wherever possible, we must promote the formation or help to enlarge mass *peasant unions or peasant leagues*, and encourage them to carry out effective land seizure actions. More generally, we must promote the constitution of *mass fronts* among the peasants, the slum dwellers, the women, the youth, the unemployed, when possible on a united front basis with other revolutionary or combative socialist tendencies, in order to enhance the self-activity and self-organisation of the most deprived layers, and encourage them to enter into united actions with the working class. The initiatives and leading role that revolutionary Marxists can play in these mass fronts will also represent important tools for party-building.

The particularly dramatic situation of the semi-proletarian, marginal population of the towns means the demand for *urban*

reform has great importance. Such a reform should include the immediate satisfaction of the needs of the shantytown population in terms of services (running water, sewers, electricity), housing, public transport, education, health, decent commercial supply of basic necessities, etc.

As a result of the industrialisation and urbanisation of a certain number of semi-industrialised countries the specific demands of the working class become more and more intertwined with the democratic and anti-imperialist demands from the very beginning of the mass movement. This interconnection is further strengthened by the consequences of the crisis and the effects of austerity policies on living and working conditions. All this leads to the emergence of a series of demands against austerity policies and anti-working class legislation, but also to the appearance of transitional and anticapitalist demands as is the case in Bolivia today. These demands mainly deal with the massive urban unemployment, famine and undernourishment, inflation and superexploitation.

This overall orientation, rooted in the program of permanent revolution, entails a systematic effort to *mobilise and independently organise the proletariat* and poor peasants, *to struggle for the class independence of the proletariat*, and to build the workers and peasants alliance in which the outcasts of the cities, the popular youth, and the labouring urban petty-bourgeoisie will take their place. The struggle for class political independence can be based on all or part of the existing trade union structures. It can also emerge out of a political radicalisation of militant trade unionists and workers, as was the case when the Workers Party of Brazil was formed. It can also come about through a broad united front of organisations of the workers movement with substantial trade union influence, as could have been the case in Peru on the basis of ARI.

Clearly then, it can arise through a variety of paths, depending on the country. Revolutionary Marxists' fight for class political independence must include initiatives towards populist or nationalist currents moving in an anticapitalist direction who can be won over to the project of building a workers party independent of the bosses and the state.

Insofar as the anti-imperialist tasks intermingle with the battle for class political independence, revolutionary Marxists do not exclude the possibility of agreements with sectors of the bourgeoisie who *are acting in practice*, albeit only temporarily and around a limited range of issues, against the dictatorships and imperialism. These agreements or tactical alliances must be established on the basis of precise goals and accompanied by the systematic education of the masses to the fact that these bourgeois sectors will inevitably go over, sooner or later, to the camp of the counterrevolution.

Strict maintenance of the class political and organisational independence of the proletariat and poor peasants; unrestricted freedom of the masses to mobilise and organise to promote their own class demands; march separately, strike together: these are the rules that must guide revolutionaries in such conjunctural agreements with fractions of the bourgeoisie. They must especially promote a mass self-defence policy based on the balance sheet of past experiences, of the recurrence of waves of repression, coups and counterrevolutionary foreign interventions. The workers and peasants must be prepared to fight back, using as a point of departure their military preparation inside their own mass organisations. Revolutionary Marxists emphasise the combination of the insurrectional tasks on the agenda during a revolutionary crisis, and the general political-military tasks.

43) *In the bureaucratised workers states* the revolutionary tasks revolve around *the preparation of the political revolution*, i.e., the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy. This is now the best way to defend the revolutionary gains that remain in

these countries and to eliminate the obstacles which prevent new advances towards socialism. These tasks can be concretised in the light of the Polish experience. They range from the struggle for the basic interests and democratic rights of the workers, in order to begin to overcome their atomisation, to the struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment (or restoration) of socialist democracy.

The antibureaucratic political revolution requires a revolutionary party of the vanguard capable of concentrating the energy of the mass movement on the urgent tasks, of proposing tactics that can help achieve the strategic goals, of giving impetus to the self-organisation and centralisation of the mass movement. The nucleus of such a party could only play that kind of role if it intervened in close connection with the most advanced currents of the movement, and if it respected its rhythms of maturation and real dynamic.

Revolutionary Marxists undertake the building of such a nucleus as an urgent task of the day.

This approach implies a rejection of the positions propagated by some sectors of "the dissidents" who claim the passivity of Soviet workers reflects their acceptance of the bureaucratic regime, or even a preference for the faults of bureaucratic management because this state of affairs allows them to combine low productive efforts and a 'system' based on individual resourcefulness.

It also rejects any sort of defeatist approach that would subordinate the development of political revolution in Eastern Europe to the emergence of a vast mass opposition movement in the USSR. The Polish events demonstrated quite the opposite: that the proletariat contains an immense potential for mobilisation, creativity, and organisation, and is capable of reorganising society on socialist foundations as soon as it represents a majority of the active population. In the future, other East European countries will experience similar explosions and bureaucratic rule will not remain stable in the USSR or in the P.R. of China.

44) Everywhere we continue our relentless work of building

mass revolutionary Marxist organisations and a mass revolutionary *International*.

Building a genuine world revolutionary organisation remains a priority task which corresponds to the growing internationalisation of class struggles which is the outgrowth of the growing internationalisation of productive forces, and to the crisis of revolutionary leadership on a world scale.

The bourgeois ideological and political offensive against communism, Marxism and socialism must be vigorously answered. Unlike the 1930s, socialist planning no longer appears to the masses as the natural answer to the grave crisis of capitalism because this planning is identified with bureaucratic planning and its contradictions in the USSR and Eastern Europe. This confusion is fostered at once, though for different reasons, by the imperialist bourgeoisie, by the Stalinist bureaucracy, and by the reformist bureaucracy in the West. Defending the real meaning of socialism, as revolutionary Marxism and the workers movement have traditionally understood it, but integrating the new possibilities opened by the present level of development of the productive forces, is part and parcel of the defence of Marxism and socialism.

Hence the importance of a program that combines the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries, the permanent revolution process in the dominated countries, and antibureaucratic political revolution in the bureaucratised workers states, to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy on a world scale.

By deepening their roots in the working class and youth, by demonstrating their ability to converge and fuse with currents moving towards revolutionary Marxist positions on the basis of the experience of the class struggle in their own country, sections of the Fourth International work to implement and enrich this program.

The fact that they have endeavored to do so makes them an irreplaceable instrument for the building of a mass revolutionary International.