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The Present Phase of the World Revolution

by Alan Jones

[The general line of this document will be proposed for voting on at the next World Congress. The document was submitted by the Central Committee of the British section of the Fourth International to open the discussion on international questions at its July 1984 conference.

[It will therefore be added to and amended in the course of the discussion.]

The pre-1968 situation of imperialism

1. From 1945 until 1968 the international capitalist system experienced a slow but progressive deterioration of the relation of forces on a world scale.

Inside the imperialist states the working class underwent a prolonged increase in its weight in society; traditional mass bases of the capitalist class — notably the petty-bourgeoisie and conservative peasant strata — greatly declined in numbers; almost all major colonies obtained independence; the existing workers states experienced a tempo of industrial growth more rapid than that of any major imperialist centre except Japan.

This worsening relation of forces for imperialism was punctuated and expressed through the emergence of new workers states successively in Eastern Europe and North Korea in 1945–48, China in 1949, North Vietnam in 1954, and Cuba in 1959.

2. Despite this deteriorating relation of forces on an international scale the imperialist system was able to maintain its coherence and stability on a world scale from 1948–68. The enormous expansion of the imperialist economies provided a room for concessions to buy relative social peace within the imperialist states. The existence of economic boom allowed a relative elimination of significant conflicts between the imperialist powers and a relatively painless acceptance of U.S. capitalist supremacy.

Under these conditions imperialism was able to utilise its economic strength to consolidate its major defensive system of social alliances. Significant room for manoeuvre was granted for the semi-colonial bourgeoisies — the chief ally of imperialism within the semi-colonial states. First “containment” and then “détente” was pursued in relation to the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and China — the bureaucracies of these states being the chief social ally of imperialism within the workers states.

Under these conditions from 1945–68 imperialism disintegrated “from the edges.” Major advances of the colonial revolution were accompanied by relative stability and relative absence of mass working class struggles within the imperialist states. Those major working class struggles which did occur within the imperialist states (the Belgian general strike of 1961, the smaller wave of strikes in several Western European countries in 1962–63) were followed by a return to relative social peace and did not provoke an ongoing destabilisation of the political situation.

The post-war turning point — Vietnam and 1968

3. The origins and driving forces of the post-1968 capitalist economic crisis was a classical crisis of the decline of the rate of profit and of overproduction. Its forms however were catalysed by the Vietnam war. From both an economic and political point of view the Vietnam war constitutes the turning point of post-war

development.

Economically U.S. imperialism was incapable of sustaining simultaneously both the strain of the war and the internal social reforms (“the Great Society”) necessary to secure social peace during its development. To finance its war effort the U.S. was forced to make an historical turn in its relations to the world economy and to the other imperialist powers.

The war greatly stimulated the economies of Japan and the East Asian rim (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong etc). During the period of the height of the Vietnam war Japanese imperialism achieved the most rapid sustained growth ever achieved by a capitalist economy in history. Immense quantities of U.S. aid, both direct and in the economic consequences of the war, flowed into East Asia and provided a large part of the initial basis of their subsequent rapid rates of growth. They have prepared the dramatic increase in the weight of the “Pacific” economy within the world capitalist system.

For Western Europe, however, the economic consequences of the war precipitated a major deterioration in the relative position of the West European imperialist states compared to the U.S. and Japan.

Initially the rapid growth of the American economy, stimulated by the war, and the huge U.S. balance of payments deficit it created, produced conditions of rapid economic expansion in Western Europe. However, the U.S. financed this balance of payments deficit simply by printing and pumping dollars into the hands of its West European rivals. The rapid inflation which ensued from the mid-1960s, and the consequent rapid decline in the value of the dollar holdings of the West European states, meant that in effect the U.S. ruling class was involuntarily taxing the West European capitalist economies to finance its war effort.

4. The Vietnam war accompanied and catalysed a turn in the relation of the United States not simply to Western Europe but to the entire world economy.

Since its emergence as the greatest imperialist power during the First World War, the United States has benefitted from its exploitation of the world capitalist economy. The economic reserves of U.S. imperialism, however, had been such that it had been able to play a role of stabilising the world capitalist economy — the chief exception to this, following 1929, precipitating the world economic crash of the 1930s.

Following the First and Second World Wars U.S. imperialism had utilised its reserves to stabilise and rebuild capitalism in Europe. From the late 1940s onwards, faced with the victory of the Chinese revolution, U.S. capitalism had rebuilt Japanese imperialism. Following the victory of the Cuban revolution the United States had aided not merely the establishment of military dictatorships in Latin America but had been able to back them

with major economic aid. During the Vietnam war U.S. military spending and economic aid had stimulated the economies of East Asia.

From the Vietnam war onwards the U.S. economy became a factor not of stability but of increasing instability in the world capitalist economy. This process commenced in Western Europe during the 1960s where the combination of rapid economic growth and inflation created by the Vietnam war provided a major part of the base for the working class struggles that began to unfold from 1968 onwards. The oil price increases supported and engineered by the United States in 1973 spread increasing chaos in the non-oil producing semi-colonial states — providing a background to the explosions of struggle of the late 1970s. The high interest rate policies pursued by the Reagan administration greatly exacerbated and rendered intractable the international debt crisis — this in turn leading to a sharp destabilisation of the political situation in the major Latin American states of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay. By 1983-84 the internal economic policies pursued by the United States, concentrated in particular in the Federal budget deficit, were creating increasing international economic instability and contradictions.

From a factor of stability in the world capitalist economy U.S. imperialism has become an element of major crisis. It was increasingly exploiting the semi-colonial states and extracting forced transfusions of capital from other imperialist states — in particular from Western Europe. The inevitable result of this process was increasing hostility to U.S. imperialism and its policies from diverse forces on a world scale and an increasing tendency to instability throughout the world capitalist system.

5. Politically the consequences of the Vietnam war were even more devastating than its immediate outcome on the economic field.

Vietnam showed that the greatest imperialist state on earth could be defeated despite an enormous mobilisation of its forces. The outcome of the Vietnam war was rapidly followed by new and sharp reverses of U.S. and imperialist international policy — the most important being the overthrow of the regime of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia (which preceded the final U.S. defeat in Vietnam), the defeat of Portuguese and South African imperialism in Africa and Angola in 1975-76, the PDPA coup in Afghanistan in March 1978, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in February 1979, the overthrow of the Gairy dictatorship in Grenada in March 1979, the victory of the FSLN in July 1979, and the emergence of full scale civil war in El Salvador. In Western Europe a major wave of working class struggles developed and mass opposition to U.S. policy in Vietnam existed. In the United States an increasingly powerful antiwar movement produced a profound residue of opposition to any large scale U.S. military involvement abroad.

Imperialism, and in the first place U.S. imperialism, therefore found itself confronted following Vietnam with a new and powerful upsurge of colonial revolution under conditions of sharp economic and political weakening of the United States, the development of major working class struggles in Western Europe, and profound antiwar sentiment among wide sections of the American masses. All imperialist and U.S. policy since the inevitability of its defeat in Indochina became clear has been aimed at reversing this situation.

6. This crisis of imperialism in turn necessarily translates itself into a crisis of all the major social and political allies of imperialism — including notably the semi-colonial bourgeoisies, the bureaucracies of the deformed and degenerated workers states, and the Social Democratic bureaucracies in the imperialist states.

During the period of the 1950s and 1960s the relative economic room for manoeuvre which imperialism was able to grant to the

semi-colonial bourgeoisies produced the broad movement of “non-alignment” of which Nehru, Nasser, and Tito were the symbols. Under the increased imperialist pressure of the 1970s and 1980s the internal coherence and stability of this movement has disintegrated. At the Dehli summit it abandoned formally the limited demands for restructuring of the world capitalist economic order it had adopted in the 1960s and 1970s and decided to concentrate its attention purely and immediately on minimal demands such as on the question of debt. A series of the key regimes of the non-aligned movement of the 1960s, notably the Egyptian bourgeoisie, shifted drastically closer to imperialism.

During the 1970s the East European, Soviet, and Chinese bureaucracies had moved to closer direct collaboration with imperialism around the policies of detente and seeking major economic aid from the capitalist states. The results of this, under the conditions of lack of working class democracy which existed in these states, was major economic contradictions which culminated in economic chaos in Poland in 1982. By 1984 currents of political discontent, feeding on both the general suppression of socialist democracy and immediate economic, social, and political issues, existed in almost all East European states.

These developments constitute a striking confirmation of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. The development of the struggle against imperialism leads not to a lessening of clashes with the semi-colonial bourgeoisie, and the bureaucracies of the deformed and degenerated workers states, but to the exacerbation of conflicts with these forces. The crisis of the imperialist system necessarily leads to an upturn of struggle in all three sectors of world revolution — in the imperialist states, in the semi-colonial states, and in the workers states.

The development of world revolution since the Vietnam war

7. The development of international crisis and class struggle since the Vietnam war has followed a path which is both strictly coherent and corresponds to the structure of world imperialism and the class struggle against it.

The centre of the crisis is the economic contradictions of the imperialist states themselves. The long boom of 1941 to the late 1960s created rapid accumulation of capital in relation to the rate of exploitation of the working class and the existing supply of labour. The decline of the rate of profit which resulted was worsened by successful working class struggles in a series of countries in the late 1960s and 1970s to defend living conditions, by limitation of the exploitation of semi-colonial economies through their escaping the direct political control of the imperialist states, and by the imperviousness of the economies of the workers states to significant capitalist penetration. Only a qualitative reversal of these relations of forces — a crushing defeat of the working class in the imperialist states, a qualitative weakening of the colonial masses in relation to imperialism, and a major weakening or defeat of the workers states — would allow a new qualitative increase in the rate of profit and the relaunching of a new long wave of capitalist accumulation and growth.

The inevitable consequence of the crisis unleashed since the late 1960s is therefore to release and strengthen capitalist forces seeking to bring about the conditions for a new wave of capitalist development — i.e. of forces seeking to crush the working class in the imperialist states, to roll back and defeat the colonial revolution, and to qualitatively weaken or destroy the workers states. The emergence of regimes symbolised by Reagan in the United States, Thatcher in Britain, and Nakasone in Japan represent the beginning of the drive of imperialism to embark on this course. Despite individual successes, however, imperialism has succeeded in achieving no such qualitative reversal of class forces on an international scale.

The international imperialist system faces a prolonged crisis

which is still continuing to deepen.

8. While the centre of the contradictions of the capitalist system lie within the imperialist states themselves this is not where the most violent explosions and most advanced struggles first break out.

Within the imperialist states capitalism possesses its greatest economic reserves, its most powerful ruling classes, and its greatest ability to draw on the exploitation of the entire world. Drawing on these reserves, the imperialist system is able to create within its strongest centres the greatest economic reserves for concessions to the masses, to build powerful labour bureaucracies, and to create its most flexible systems of class rule — in particular bourgeois democracy. This gives to the struggle within the imperialist centres a protracted character against a capitalist enemy possessing great political reserves. No equivalent reserves are possessed by the ruling classes of the semi-colonial states — nor, in a different economic and social system, by the bureaucracies of a whole series of deformed and degenerated workers states.

9. While the origins of the crisis of the capitalist system therefore lie within the imperialist states themselves its most powerful convulsions leading directly to overthrows of capitalist rule lie in the semi-colonial states. The origins of the crisis lie in Wall Street, Tokyo, Detroit, and the Ruhr. Its most violent convulsions and advanced struggles take place in Managua, El Salvador, Tehran, and the Lebanon. Within Eastern Europe the emergence of relatively modern economies, together with the political illegitimacy of the regimes in the eyes of the masses, give rise to conditions for social and political explosions. In Western Europe major working class struggles exist without as yet posing the overthrow of the capitalist order. In the United States major setbacks of the working class on the economic field have taken place while a mass antiwar sentiment continues to exist among wide sectors of the population and a significant radicalisation among the most oppressed sections of the population, in particular blacks, has commenced.

The overall character of the world revolution therefore assumes an extremely structured character with each struggle proceeding from the general crisis of the imperialist system but with the different class struggles at different phases of development and facing different concrete tasks. It is the *interrelation* of these struggles, not their identity, which constitutes the unity of the world revolutionary struggle.

10. While the crisis develops in its most advanced and spectacular form in the semi-colonial states today the conditions for working class victories can only be created on an international scale.

The prolonged armed and political struggle of the NLF in Vietnam was the absolute condition for victory in Indochina — without this no struggle, not only in Vietnam but internationally, would have existed. But the Vietnam war was not won simply in Indochina. U.S. society was riven and torn by massive mounting opposition to the war. Movements of colonial liberation throughout the world intensified their struggle as the opposition to the United States deepened. In Western Europe from 1968 onwards the economic dislocation, produced by the effects of the war on the world economy, produced mounting class struggles and demands by sections of the European imperialists themselves that the consequences of the war be ended — demands expressed in the continual attacks on the U.S. currency from the late 1960s onwards.

The NLF won in Vietnam but the relation of forces which allowed that victory was created both by solidarity movements and by a massive development of class struggles on an international scale. It was the cumulative development of these struggles that weighed down on and finally broke the resistance of the U.S. aggressor.

11. The international line that won the war, and every major struggle against imperialism, was well summarised by Che Guevara in the slogan "Create two, three, many Vietnams" i.e. the maximum development of all aspects of the international class struggle is the condition for victory in each of its individual struggles.

The power of the imperialist system, and in the first place the United States, is so great that if it were able to concentrate its forces, to bring its full weight to bear on a single enemy, then it would inevitably triumph. The United States was defeated politically, not primarily militarily, in Vietnam — it was simply unable to continue the war without still greater losses than entailed by withdrawal from Vietnam. Militarily the United States could crush the revolutions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Central America. It is unable to do so today because it is unable *politically* to create the conditions to bring its overwhelming military power to bear against its enemy.

Confronted with this situation the task of an international revolutionary leadership, of the Fourth International, is to build solidarity with the most advanced class struggles taking place on a world scale and simultaneously to develop the "Vietnams", the enormous social and political movements and struggles, which can weigh down upon and break up the power of the imperialists and their counter-offensives. Such a struggle requires the capacity to set in motion not merely a few tens of thousands of people, who are utterly inadequate to the task of confronting imperialism, but to mobilise millions of millions of people in struggles with the actual weight to block the moves of the capitalist class.

Such a combination of tasks — of the combination of solidarity and mass struggles on an international scale — constitutes the chief problem of revolutionary tactics and line on a world scale. It is in correctly understanding the specific nature of each of these struggles, developing the tasks and tactics appropriate to their phase of development, and combining them into a coherent overall international strategy that constitutes the chief task of a revolutionary international today.

The Central American revolution

12. Since the late 1970s the most advanced expression of imperialist crisis, and the most advanced class struggle taking place on a world scale — the sole one directly posing the creation of new workers states — has been unfolding in Central America and the Caribbean.

U.S. imperialism historically Balkanised Central America and the Caribbean region and reduced it to the most miserable state of oppression. The entire region was seen by U.S. imperialism as an advanced area of United States defences and of defence of the Panama canal. In no area of the world was U.S. military and political intervention so direct and continuous as in Central America and the Caribbean. U.S. colonies and bases dot the region and its needs and policies dominated the internal politics of every ruling class and state of the region.

13. The outcome of the reduction by the United States of Central America and the Caribbean to a state of blatant servitude and oppression has been to create conditions of explosive revolt against its domination and that of its subordinate ruling classes in the region.

To secure its most immediate interests the United States prevented the formation of any strong national bourgeoisie's in Central America or the Caribbean. Whereas the crisis of the 1930s and 1940s gave rise in the chief Latin American states to nationalist populism of the type of Peron in Argentina or Vargas in Brazil, no social base existed for such bourgeois controlled mass movements in Central America. Nor were the national bourgeoisies strong enough to control mass movements when

they did unfold. The struggle of Sandino until his assassination in 1934, the 1932 insurrection in El Salvador, the revolt of November 1933 in Cuba all had dynamics going far beyond bourgeois control.

Whereas the 1930s produced bourgeois populism in the stronger Latin American states it produced in Central America attempted insurrections which escaped the control of the feeble national ruling classes and led to the formation of direct reactionary dictatorships which economically enfeebled the region still further.

14. The commencement of the Latin American revolution in 1959 in Cuba corresponded to a profound historical logic. Cuba, the last Latin American state to gain its independence — almost a century after the states of the Latin American mainland — contained the feeblest local ruling class, was the most directly subordinated to imperialism, and had an explosive history of social struggles which flowed from this prolonged colonisation and late independence.

Even at the beginning of the late 19th century the Cuban bourgeoisie had refused to participate in the general Latin American revolt against Spanish rule precisely because it feared it would be unable to contain the resulting explosions. The Cuban bourgeoisie remained prostrate throughout the twentieth century before the direct and blatant domination of the United States. The revolution led by Fidel Castro in 1956–59 therefore based itself on an entire history of social struggles against U.S. imperialism and the weak national bourgeoisie.

The last state decolonised by Spain gave rise to the first workers state in the Western Hemisphere. The spread of this revolution first into Central America and the Caribbean in turn corresponded to the logic of the social destruction, and prevention of local capitalist development, carried out by the United States in the entire area.

15. For the first twenty years of its existence the Cuban revolution remained isolated despite the attempts of the Cuban leadership to spread it. The failure of the guerilla movements in Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1967, the American blockade, and enforced economic dependence on the USSR, led the Cuban leadership in the late 1960s and early 1970s to align itself more closely on the international positions of the CPSU. This reached its peak in the endorsement of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the ending of attempts to create rivals to the Latin American Communist Parties, and explicit reconciliation with the Latin American CPs at the 1975 Havana conference.

Internally a process of quantitative bureaucratisation, more closely aligning Cuba on Soviet models, occurred. Internationally strong, and even vehement, support was given to the suppression of Solidarnosc in Poland in 1982.

While these political processes were occurring however, no qualitative formation of a bureaucratic social caste, with interests separate and apart from those of the working class, took place. The development of the Cuban leadership remained tied to, and not opposed to, the international development of class forces.

16. The strong development of world revolution flowing from the final American defeat in Vietnam in 1975 created a far wider field for action of the Cuban leadership. While supporting suppression of movements of revolt against the bureaucracies of the workers states, and maintaining support for the CPs, and even sections of bourgeois political parties in the imperialist states, the Cuban leadership was able to develop major struggles against imperialism in a series of semi-colonial countries.

Cuban military intervention in Angola in 1976, made possible logistically by the support of the Soviet Union, was decisive in defeating the South African invasion of the country. Cuban mil-

itary and technical support made a crucial contribution in defeating the Somalian invasion of Ethiopia. Above all Cuban political, economic, and military support has played a decisive role in the unfolding of the Central American revolutions.

17. The particularly decayed conditions of Central American capitalism, with their feeble ruling classes, created the conditions under which forces essentially on the political positions of the Cuban Communist Party could come to power. In their origins the politics of the FSLN, New Jewel Movement, and decisive components of the FMLN did not differ qualitatively from those of the Chilean MIR, Argentinian ERP, Uruguayan Tupamaros, Bolivian ELN, Brazilian guerilla organisations or a series of similar currents which developed in Latin America under the impact of the Cuban revolution.

However, while the Argentinian, Brazilian, Uruguayan, and other groups were smashed to pieces by the more powerful bourgeoisies of the Latin American heartland the FSLN and NJM in contrast found themselves confronted with the personal dictatorship of Somoza and the rotting regime of Gairy. Currents which in their origins had been no more advanced than those of many Latin American groups were therefore able to overthrow the regimes which confronted them. In so doing, of course, their conditions of struggle and mass experience transformed their nature.

By 1979 the most advanced leaderships seen in Latin America since the Cuban revolution had developed — capable in Nicaragua of acting with strength and subtlety in defence of the revolution, in Grenada of commencing the most advanced social transformations in the Caribbean outside Cuba, and in El Salvador capable of developing a full scale civil war against a regime with a more substantial base and degree of organisation than had been confronted by the FSLN.

18. The overthrow of both Somoza in July 1979 and Gairy in March 1979 transferred political power into the hands of the proletariat. The old bourgeois state apparatus was shattered.

Following March 1979 and July 1979 not only workers and farmers governments were created, such as can exist within a capitalist state, but state power passed into the hands of the working class. The regimes established in Grenada and Nicaragua following March and July 1979 represented the first phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the first step in the later economic and social consolidation of the workers state.

The state apparatuses established in Nicaragua and Grenada following the revolution were capable of expropriating the economic bases of capitalism. They could not be used to maintain capitalist rule but would have to be overthrown to achieve this. U.S. imperialism, and local capitalism, realised this and oriented to the violent overthrow of these regimes from their beginning.

The defeat of the Grenadan revolution

19. The imperialist counter-offensive against the Central American and Caribbean revolution found its weakest link in Grenada.

The New Jewel Movement government led by Maurice Bishop had achieved outstanding economic, social, and political gains for the masses. Unemployment was cut by two thirds, eradication of child malnutrition and absence of serious mechanisms of education achieved, organisation of the masses vastly extended, and the position of women qualitatively improved. The Bishop wing of the NJM represented an exemplary revolutionary leadership from the point of view of its understanding of the needs of the mass of the oppressed and exploited and ability to propose concrete lines of advance for their action.

The NJM itself, however, had not undergone the prolonged period of mass armed struggle and civil war through which the FSLN was forced to pass in its road to power. The overthrow of

Gairy was achieved far more easily than the enormous struggle to destroy the Somoza dictatorship. Subjectivist and commandist forces, far more isolated from the needs of the class struggle than the FSLN leadership, existed in the NJM in the faction of Coard. These were able to destroy the revolution by internal division and create the conditions for imperialist intervention which finally crushed the revolution.

20. The conditions whereby the Bishop leadership was unable to defeat Coard, however, was aided by weaknesses in the NJM's conception of the revolution linked to political weaknesses of the Cuban leadership.

The Coard faction never at any time enjoyed even marginal support among the masses — who remained solidly on the positions of Maurice Bishop. Coard's faction could have been defeated by an appeal to the masses and their involvement in, and understanding of, the debates in the NJM.

The Bolsheviks involved the masses in public discussion of their differences even at the most critical moments in the revolution — the decisions to undertake the October revolution and to sign the Brest-Litovsk peace were both undertaken publicly and helped consolidate the understanding of the masses around the revolution and the decisions taken by its leadership. Even as late as 1926–27 Stalin was forced to concede an open discussion of the questions raised by the Left Opposition. In the case of the NJM, however, the nature, and even the existence, of different positions was completely unknown to the masses.

The fundamental question of party democracy, and of mass working class democracy — the tradition of the Bolsheviks — is one of the basic lessons of the Grenadan revolution and one that will be even more fundamental in the coming revolutionary struggles.

21. The struggle for renewal of the revolutionary process in Grenada will start fundamentally on the tradition and gains of the leadership of Maurice Bishop.

While the conditions of US military intervention occurred under circumstances where illusions were entertained in it by sections of the Grenadian population *no* significant mass support exists for undoing the social gains of the revolution of March 1979. The American occupation has been followed by tripling of unemployment, destruction of social programmes, repression, and the return of the hated ex-dictator Gairy. Starting initially around campaigns against repression, for defence of the gains of the revolution, and to maintain the political tradition of Maurice Bishop there is every chance of rebuilding the traditions of the New Jewel Movement. The basic task of the Fourth International in this process is both politically campaigning in solidarity with these struggles in Grenada and aiding the Grenadan revolutionaries in any way requested.

22. A strong identification with the revolutionary traditions and methods of Maurice Bishop is a fundamental part of the education of the Fourth International and those it influences. As with Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Leibknecht, Antonio Gramsci, Malcolm X, Fidel Castro, or Che Guevara, Maurice Bishop represents a fundamental part of the traditions out of which a mass revolutionary international will be built. That tradition has to be taken, built up and defended, not only by the NJM but by the Fourth International against the attempts to distort and destroy it which are already being put in place by the Communist Parties.

Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

23. Nicaragua today is a state under direct economic and military attack by imperialism.

The attempts by US imperialism during 1983 to secure a relatively rapid overthrow of the FSLN by external and local military intervention were defeated in the face of mass popular resistance. Specific areas of imperialist gains, such as among the Miskito

population, were defeated by skillful political and social policies pursued by the FSLN. The immediate aim of US imperialism today is therefore to attempt to strangle the regime economically and undermine its base by the exhaustion of constant war.

On the northern borders of Nicaragua the United States has now assembled its largest mercenary army since the Vietnam war. Continual incursions into Nicaragua are combined with air strikes and naval attacks directly carried out by vessels of the United States navy.

During 1983 the Reagan administration attempted to create a direct political base within the United States for open military intervention against Nicaragua. The Kissinger Commission was aimed at establishing a bipartisan Republican/Democrat consensus for increased military intervention and eventual invasion if necessary. This policy was directly backed by the central leadership of the AFL/CIO. A significant setback to these plans however was created by the debacle of U.S. intervention in Lebanon — which showed the United States population is still not prepared to accept any prolonged U.S. military operation abroad which threatens major casualties to United States troops.

A second-term Reagan administration, without the U.S. president having to seek re-election, would undoubtedly create extremely dangerous circumstances for direct intervention against Nicaragua.

24. The FSLN leadership has responded to the attacks on Nicaragua by a radicalisation of the revolution itself and by supporting the revolution throughout Central America.

During 1983 and 1984 the tempo of agrarian reform in Nicaragua has significantly increased. In 1983 two and a half times more land was distributed than in the preceding year. Holdings of large landowners have been reduced from 41 per cent of all arable land in 1978 to 12 per cent in 1984. This was complemented by a moratorium on debts for more than thirty per cent of peasant cooperatives.

In the field of industry essentially effective control had been achieved over trade and currency. A number of deals had been achieved with multinationals. The economy however remained sharply depressed due to the consequences of war and mounting naval and air attacks. Counter-revolutionary forces have in particular aimed at destroying the oil reserves of the country. Despite these attacks however, and the bourgeois propaganda accompanying it, there were no signs of decline in support for the government.

The most powerful and important development however continues to be the rising curve of mass organisation. By the beginning of 1984, out of a population of only three million, there were 40,000 members in the Rural Workers Association, 90,000 in the Sandinista Workers Confederation, 70,000 in the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Women's Association, 30,000 in the Sandinista Youth, 70,000 in the Farmers and Livestock Raisers National Union, and 500,000 in 12,000 Sandinista Defence Committees. Coupled with 80,000 volunteers in the Sandinista Militias, and 20-25,000 in the Sandinista People's Army, this is by far the strongest creation of mass organisations ever to exist in Latin America outside Cuba. They establish the political power of the working class in all spheres of society.

Under these conditions the calling of elections in November represents a further correct step in the consolidation of the political positions of the Sandinistas.

25. Immediately from the victory of July 1979 it was clear that the Nicaraguan revolution could not remain isolated within a single country. It would either spread or US imperialism would isolate and crush it.

The Nicaraguan revolution sparked the already rising mass struggle in El Salvador into full scale civil war. Despite large scale US aid it was clear by the beginning of 1984 that the El Sal-

vadorian regime was losing the war. Approximately one third of the country had passed into the hands of the FMLN. The presidential elections of March 1984 were marked by still greater chaos than all preceding ones. Major signs of disintegration existed within the army. Left on its present course the El Salvadorian regime would undoubtedly collapse in the next one or two years — a situation of which US imperialism was well aware.

Following its defeat of the Grenadan revolution US imperialism has therefore stepped up still further its military intervention in the region. Large scale regular US forces are permanently stationed and active in Honduras. Full support is being given to the quasi-genocidal regime in Guatemala.

26. The essential decision taken by US imperialism is that under no circumstances will it accept the creation of new workers states in Central America. Grave internal political problems, aggravated by the debacle in Lebanon, place considerable obstacles in the path of direct large scale utilisation of US ground forces in Central America. It is for this reason that for the present it prefers to operate largely through surrogates. But if this fails, as it is currently in El Salvador, then US imperialism has no option but to attempt to use its own regular military forces against the Central American revolutions. Only the largest possible movement of solidarity on an international scale, and the maximum development of the class struggle, can block, hinder, or resist this US intervention.

The task of defending the Central American revolutions is the most important international solidarity task which must be carried out by the Fourth International today.

The colonial revolution

27. While the Central American revolution is the most advanced class struggle taking place on an international scale today it shows, in an advanced form, the overall features of the developments in the semi-colonial states today.

During the late 1960s and 1970s a profound series of economic and social transformations took place within the semi-colonial states. From 1950 to 1973 the weight of the semi-colonial economies within world capitalist production and trade remained constant or even marginally declining. From 1973 onwards the weight of the semi-colonial economies in production and trade significantly increased. This however did not correspond to an even process of economic development but on the contrary to a violent exacerbation of unevenness between the different semi-colonial states.

The most spectacular rise in weight within the world capitalist economies was experienced by the oil producing states. The weight of these states in world capitalist economy and trade more than doubled between 1973 and 1980. In addition a number of semi-colonial states — Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore — underwent a major process of industrialisation leaving them with manufacturing sectors that were the largest parts of their economy. This industrialisation however was not achieved through breaking with imperialism but on the contrary by a still greater subordination of the economies of these semi-colonial states to foreign capital and foreign banking.

In the rest of the semi-colonial states, apart from the oil producing states and those undergoing significant industrialisation, literal economic catastrophe had developed by the end of the 1970s. The share of these semi-colonial states in world capitalist production and trade was shrinking. Vast social dislocation, and in Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America, literal famine and human catastrophe were developing.

It is these processes which lie behind the powerful upsurge of colonial revolution which commenced in the 1970s. While these states remain semi-colonial countries, dominated by im-

perialism, their social differentiation however has now reached a point where clearly different tactics and levels of class struggle exist in the different types of semi-colonial states.

28. In the least developed semi-colonial states a literal direct process of social dislocation is developing.

In certain cases this provokes violent swings to the right and even developments of an extreme reactionary character. The massacres of Tamils in Sri Lanka, the massacres in Assam, the mass expulsions of Ghanians from Nigeria indicate some of the reactionary developments that can take place under these conditions. In addition South Africa has been able to utilise the economic catastrophes facing Mozambique and Angola to extract major concessions from their regimes.

In an important number of cases however this social dislocation produces radicalisation and movements to the left. The most advanced expression of this is in Central America — the part of Latin America with by far the lowest per capita incomes and level of economic development. Other major developments are the incipient crisis of the regime in Pakistan and the development of mass rural and urban opposition to the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines.

The forces leading these struggles will in many cases be very far from the positions of Trotskyism or revolutionary Marxism. In Asia — notably the Philippines — currents emerging from the Communist Parties, or the CPs directly, may play the leading role in struggle. In Central America and the Caribbean the revolutionary struggles have developed under the leadership of currents supporting the Cuban Communist Party.

In general currents of a "campist" character may be expected to play a considerable role in such struggles in the least developed semi-colonial states — in these states the USSR appears far more as a potential supplier of economic and military aid than as an oppressor of working class democracy and with a leadership pursuing a counter-revolutionary international line.

In no case is the solidarity of the Fourth International with these struggles, and its identification with them, in any way dependent on the overall ideological character of their leaderships. The Fourth International had an unparalleled record of solidarity with the Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions. It is the chief force on an international scale carrying out solidarity with the Central American revolution. This is the tradition and work it must develop.

On that basis also the Fourth International and its sections are able to enter into dialogue and discussion with other revolutionary forces developing on a world scale and in particular states.

29. The significant process of industrialisation undergone by a series of semi-colonial states during the 1960s and 1970s produces specific tactics and tasks for the class struggle within these countries today. South Africa, while not a semi-colonial state, possesses a number of the same features due to the specific character of its economy.

In the industrialised semi-colonial states today the axis of struggle, as in the other semi-colonial states, remains the fight against imperialist domination. This struggle today however passes through the fight for organisational and political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. Under the conditions of dictatorship, which exist today in most of these states, this task is that of the revolutionary struggle for democracy — this struggle including a whole series of economic, social and political demands of the working class.

The most spectacular development of this process of the fight for class independence has come in Brazil — which has now become in certain sectors one of the major manufacturing states of world capitalism. Since the mid-1970s a major process of unionisation of the Brazilian working class has taken place together with the formation of the Labour Party (PT). In South Africa a

sustained process of the creation of black trade unions has developed. In Mexico a clear opening of a crisis of domination of the ruling PRI has commenced. In Peru a series of attempts of the working class to gain political independence, starting with the FOCEP and the ARI, have been gone through. In a number of other states — including Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay — a revival of the working class movement has developed. In the chief Latin American states a sharp crisis of the dictatorships has taken place and will continue to do so.

The Fourth International in a number of cases has been able to play a significant role in this process of conquest of independence by the working class and rise of the mass movement. In Mexico the section of the Fourth International was directly able to participate as part of the process of breaking the working class from the PRI. In Brazil supporters of the positions of revolutionary Marxism were able to play a significant role in the PT.

Given the overall situation in the continent it is in Latin America today that the Fourth International has the greatest opportunities for party building. Here it has a possibility to directly double or treble its forces in the coming period — a possibility which does not exist in other parts of the world and the chief resources of the Fourth International must go into aiding this Latin American work.

It is against this overall development of the colonial revolution that imperialism is today preparing its chief military interventions.

Eastern Europe and the workers states

30. The sharply increased crisis of the imperialist system which commenced in 1968 coincided with a sharp exacerbation of contradictions in Eastern Europe.

From the end of the Second World War until the mid-1960s bureaucratic economic planning in Eastern Europe had transformed previously agrarian dominated societies into industrialised states. This both aroused expectations among the masses of greater political, social, cultural and democratic freedoms, and posed increasingly insoluble problems for the economic functioning of bureaucratically deformed workers states.

Under the political domination of the bureaucracy 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 socialist democracy, that is, to exercise power directly themselves.

The overthrow of capitalism made possible a substantial, and even, for a time, impetuous development of the productive forces. But the increasing socialisation of production is not matched by that of appropriation. Bureaucratic mismanagement and domination increasingly affect the functioning of the entire economy. The transition to socialism is blocked and the bureaucracy increasingly turns from a relative brake of the development of the productive forces into an absolute obstacle.

31. The Dubcek reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1968 represented the most advanced attempt to find a way out of the increasing contradictions of East European society along the path of reform of the existing economic and political structures. It represented the most advanced development of "Khrushchevism" as it had developed after the 20th Party Congress.

In reality however Dubcekism illustrated the impossibility of proceeding down this path. The loosening of economic and political controls necessarily produced currents escaping bureaucratic domination. Soviet intervention was aimed not primarily at sup-

pressing the economic changes but at blocking any move to political liberalisation which would have threatened the position of the bureaucracy itself.

Following 1968 it was reasserted that no reforms involving a major expansion of the field of political opposition by the masses was acceptable to the Soviet bureaucracy.

32. Given that all measures of economic change involving greater direct political power by the working class were excluded the sole possibility open to the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe was an increasing turn to the reintroduction of market relations within the economy and to closer economic ties with imperialism.

This policy of a more direct link with imperialism, to attempt to overcome the economic crisis in Eastern Europe, was pursued by all the bureaucracies following 1968. The possibility for such a course was given by the turn of the US ruling class to "detente" in order to attempt to limit the consequences of its defeat in Vietnam.

Political relations with Western Europe were "normalised" in the series of treaties culminating in the Helsinki conference. Major loans were obtained by the East European states. A series of market oriented reforms were introduced into Hungary.

33. The outcome of the policy of more direct economic links with imperialism was the crisis in Poland from 1970-82.

Reintroduction of ties with the capitalist world, and a more market oriented economic policy, demanded attacks on a series of the most essential gains of the working class in Eastern Europe. In particular it demanded the elimination of the large scale subsidies on food, energy, transport and other essentials of working class existence.

In Poland however the relation of forces which had existed in the country since 1956 blocked the successful implementation of such policies by the bureaucracy. Attempts to introduce them in 1970 and 1976 led to mass successful resistance by the working class. A similar attempt to introduce such measures in 1980 provoked the mass movement which created Solidarnosc.

34. The crisis in Poland from July 1980 to December 1981 represents the most advanced development towards a political revolution seen in any workers state.

The movement was preceded by the creation of activist nuclei (mainly the KOR) and a broader workers vanguard which had been formed out of the strikes of 1970 and 1976. The eruption from the beginning of 1980 onwards was marked by the massive predominance of the working class in general and its industrial sections in particular. Tactics of mass strikes, occupation of workplaces, mass unionisation, demands for self-management and socialisation marked the movement and were immediately combined with demands for the democratic reform of society. The major political error of the leaders of the movement was to fail to understand that such a process was completely unacceptable to the bureaucracy and that attempts to compromise with it were doomed to failure.

The violent suppression of Solidarnosc in December 1981 overcame the immediate political crisis faced by the bureaucracy. It however neither succeeded in eliminating the political tradition, and many of the activists, created in 1980-81, nor did it surmount the fundamental crisis faced by bureaucratic management of the economy.

35. Following the debacle both of Dubcekite reformism and the "opening to the west", and excluding any policy based on involvement of the working class in direct political power, the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe today finds itself with no coherent strategic perspective for confronting the economic crisis of these societies. The inevitable result of this situation is a sharp exacerbation of centrifugal forces between the different East European states.

Yugoslavia, historically the East European state most integrated with the west, has attempted to restrengthen its links with the USSR and Eastern Europe. However, under conditions of significant inflation and unemployment there continues to be an acceleration of centrifugal forces in the country itself. The Hungarian economic reforms have restimulated economic growth but on a path which has become sharply dependent on the capitalist west. Hungarian membership of the IMF was negotiated with evident disapproval of the Soviet bureaucracy.

East Germany has experienced rapid economic growth but is extremely dependent on its privileged economic relations with West Germany. Poland is recovering from economic crisis and Rumania has suffered severe economic dislocation. Politically the bureaucracies have responded to the contradictions facing them by consumerist concessions to the masses where possible, by ending arbitrary repression for non-political activities, and by reviving pro-war nationalist and similar ideologies.

The key to the situation in Eastern Europe however remains the situation in the Soviet Union.

36. The Andropov interlude in the Soviet Union, following the death of Brezhnev, represented an attempt to break out of the more extreme excesses of the Party bureaucracy under the banner of modernising and rationalising the Soviet economy.

The old network of Brezhnevite corruption was confronted. Work discipline emphasised and the first element of limited economic reform introduced. On the field of international policy emphasis was given to the strict state and military interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The death of Andropov, and the succession of Chernenko, however brought to a halt many of the elements even of this limited reform process. Brezhnev's disgraced supporters were rehabilitated. The Soviet bureaucracy fell into still greater political paralysis — in particular suffering sharp political setbacks in Southern Africa.

Given the depth of penetration of the CPSU into all layers of Soviet society it is extremely unlikely that any sharp crisis in Soviet society can start without a crisis in the party itself. The conditions of evident near paralysis in both the economic and foreign policy fields which developed by the time of the succession of Chernenko bring the beginning of such a crisis significantly nearer.

37. The net effect of the crisis of Eastern Europe after 1968 has been to produce social tensions, and currents of political opposition on a far more widespread scale than seen previous.

From consolidation after the Second World War up to 1968 Eastern Europe remained essentially frozen — punctuated by the upheavals of 1953 in East Germany and 1956 in Hungary and Poland. Outside these crises however no serious ongoing oppositional currents existed in Eastern Europe.

Since 1968 ongoing opposition, in some cases clearly with at least a minimal organised form, has existed in most of the East European states. This is most spectacularly the case in Poland but also extends into the East German peace movement, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, and various opposition currents in Hungary and Yugoslavia.

At the level both of the emergence of sharp economic, social and political contradictions, and of the emergence of ongoing oppositional currents, 1968 marked a clear turn in the situation of Eastern Europe.

38. After initial hesitations, due to the need to avoid a new explosive crisis in its ranks, the Chinese bureaucracy decided on a full scale rejection of the policies pursued by the Mao leadership.

This involved de-facto dissolution of the People's Communes, a stronger use of market mechanisms, a broader opening to the world market, and an emphasis on modernisation.

On the field of foreign policy the Chinese bureaucracy returned to a definition of the East European states as 'socialist'. A return to contacts with the USSR was maintained on the diplomatic level.

Despite these shifts however the Chinese leadership maintained its orientation towards the United States. These links were not broken despite the provocation of continuing major US arms sales to Taiwan. Economically, after a temporary retreat, the Chinese leadership continued to develop its economic links with the imperialist states.

Despite a certain more 'balanced' position on international questions the Chinese leadership refused to return to the strong support given for national liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s. The criminal policy of military and economic attacks on Vietnam, and support for Pol Pot and capitalist forces in Kampuchea, was maintained. Chinese alliance with the South East Asian bourgeoisies against Vietnam helped lead the Thai CP to the loss of the semi-totality of its effective forces.

39. The increasing crisis in Eastern Europe, accompanied by the extreme right wing line of the Chinese leadership, has produced a major decline in the prestige and positions of the bureaucratized leadership of the workers states.

Pro-Chinese and Maoist currents, with a few isolated exceptions, have almost disappeared as a major force. The previously pro-Moscow Communist Parties have suffered major losses in all but the weakest imperialist states such as Greece and Portugal. The Soviet bureaucracy has suffered major political reverses in Egypt and in several parts of Africa. While the Communist Parties have participated in the anti-missile movements in Western Europe they have in general formed their right wing and least dynamic section with the lead being taken by left social democratic, radicalised Christian, ecologist, feminist and similar forces. The East European regimes have been discredited as a model for socialism by all but a small section of the working class of the imperialist states and by large sections of the working class outside them.

While the defence of the workers states continues to be an urgent task of the international class struggle this is less and less capable of being undertaken by their bureaucracies. The last ten years have seen a sharp decline of the prestige of the bureaucracies of the deformed and degenerated workers states on an international level. This has created the space within which a whole series of currents in the workers movement have emerged which would previously have been captured by the Communist Parties. It has also brought forward considerably the weight which the prospect, and development, of political revolution plays in world politics.

The crisis of the imperialist system, in line with the theory of permanent revolution, has led to an exacerbation, and not an amelioration, of the contradictions between the working class and the bureaucracies of the workers states.

The contradictions of West European capitalism

40. The general international capitalist recession, the rise of major working class struggles, the rise of tensions between Western Europe and the United States, and the discrediting of the regimes in Eastern Europe have all produced major shifts in the West European political situation since 1968.

The struggles which unfolded in May 1968 in France, autumn 1969 in Italy, 1970-74 in Britain, 1975 in Portugal, 1970-76 in Spain, and since 1968 in the North of Ireland are the most advanced working class struggles to be seen in any imperialist countries since World War II. They have been accompanied by, and interacted with, a whole series of mass movements against women's oppression, against racism, against national oppression, for ecological demands and other issues. While these strug-

gles did not overthrow West European capitalism, nor is this posed in the short term, they have brought about permanent and fundamental shifts in the structure of bourgeois and working class politics in Western Europe. These are in particular

(i) The downfall of the dictatorships in southern Europe — Portugal, Spain and Greece.

(ii) A major recomposition of the political support of the mass working class parties in Western Europe to the advantage of the Socialist Parties and against the Communist Parties.

(iii) Created in the anti-missiles movement the largest and most international movement in Western Europe since the Second World War.

Furthermore from the end of 1983 onwards, connected with the economic upturn, a new series of mass working class struggles against austerity has commenced in Europe whose dynamic is continuing to mount. The other major social and political movements have developed strongly within, and affecting, this framework — the women's movement in particular penetrating deep into, and affecting, both the recomposition of the workers parties and the anti-missiles movement.

While the driving forces of these shifts lie in the economic, social and political contradictions of Western Europe their form and pattern of development can only be understood by the position West European capitalism occupies in relation to both the world capitalist system and Eastern Europe.

41. European capitalism emerged from the Second World War economically and politically prostrate. The power of the USSR was consolidated in Eastern Europe after the failure of the United States to break it in 1945-48. No spontaneous revival of the European capitalist economy took place — with European production still failing to reach its pre-war levels by 1947 and actual starvation appearing in parts of Europe in the winter of that year.

No restoration of the equilibrium of European capitalism with the rest of the world economy proved possible spontaneously. Left to its own resources European capitalism would have faced rising social, economic and political instability threatening the existence of capitalist rule in Western Europe.

Under these conditions it was only the economic and military resources of the United States which made possible the rebuilding of West European capitalism. Large scale US economic aid under the Marshall Plan restabilised the internal and international position of West European capital. United States military power re-established the military defence of West European capital against the USSR. Only this US aid made possible the restoration of social equilibrium in Western Europe.

42. The reconstruction of Western Europe was carried out within a world economy of which all essential structural elements were dictated by United States capitalism.

The Bretton Woods currency agreements enshrined the dollar as the sole universally acceptable international currency. The United States was given veto power over the actions of the newly created International Monetary Fund. The establishment of free trade in manufactured goods was established as a goal of the international economy, to allow the weight of US productivity to be brought to bear in the world market, while protectionism in agriculture was guaranteed in order to protect the U.S. farming industry from international competition. United States dominance of world oil, with Britain as a subordinate partner, was established.

On the military field the United States attempted to create a monopoly of nuclear weapons for itself and through NATO dictated all essential military decisions in Western Europe. All economic, political, and military relations of the West European states with Eastern Europe were subjected to US veto. The United States dictated the division of Germany and re-estab-

lished relations with the fascist dictatorships of Portugal and Spain.

43. Despite the supremacy of the United States, and its dictation of the post-war capitalist order, this created no major strains between and within the imperialist states during the period of long economic boom from 1948 onwards.

The losses incurred by West European imperialism by its integration within a US dictated international capitalist order were more than compensated by aid received from the United States. The resources which the United States had to expend in rebuilding the stability of West European capitalism were limited compared to the gains made by the consolidation and growth of the world capitalist economy as a whole.

From 1948 until the mid-1960s relatively stable conditions existed within the 'Atlantic Alliance' based on the relatively harmonious economic interests of the United States and West European capital. Specific differences, such as between the United States and British and French imperialism over the invasion of Suez, were resolved relatively rapidly and easily. The United States fostered the creation of the EEC as a means of consolidating the economic and political stabilisation of European capitalism.

44. The position of both the European bourgeoisies and mass reformist West European workers movement towards the United States began to change substantially from the mid-1960s onwards in line with the changing economic relations between West European capital and the United States.

From the mid-1960s onwards, catalysed by the effects of the Vietnam war, US capital turned from a net aider of the West European economies into striking clearer and clearer blows at them.

The enforced 'dollar taxation' used to finance the Vietnam war was followed by competitive dollar devaluations from 1971 onwards, the unilateral imposition of import restrictions in the same year, the US engineered oil price increase of 1973, and the high interest rate policies pursued by the Reagan administration — which pumped capital out of Western Europe to feed the expansion of the US economy. These were accompanied by growing protectionist moves by the US, attempts to block West European trade with Eastern Europe, and attempts to impose US controls of high technology exports from Eastern Europe.

By the beginning of the 1980s the United States was no longer directly aiding Western Europe but on the contrary materially directing blows against the situation of the West European economies.

Faced with a deterioration of economic relations between Western Europe and the United States sections of the West European bourgeoisies attempted to pursue a policy more independent of US imperialism.

This path was pursued in particular by de Gaulle from the 1960s onwards in exchanging dollar holdings against US gold reserves, by proposals to end the reign of the dollar as the sole universal international currency, by removing France nominally from the military structure of NATO, and by independent foreign policy initiatives. While de Gaulle's specific projects were checked economic tensions between Western Europe and the United States continued to increase during the 1970s and early 1980s — taking such forms as the clash over the Siberian gas pipeline, the farm war between the United States and the EEC, and the clash over steel imports.

45. Despite all individual successes however any attempt by the West European bourgeoisies to challenge the fundamental policies and supremacy of the United States necessarily faces irreconcilable contradictions.

The US possesses not merely greater economic power but above all a centralised state. It possesses overwhelming military

supremacy without which the West European states could not defend themselves against the USSR. The supremacy of the dollar within the international capitalist economy secures for the United States an ability to impose its structuring of world economic policies on its West European rivals — as shown by the inability of any West European state to successfully challenge the policies pursued by Reagan after 1980. US supremacy in the field of agriculture, raw materials, and oil remains crushing.

In addition to the international structural advantages of United States imperialism the weakness of the US labour movement, and the major successes gained against the US working class during the 1970s and 1980s, allowed the United States to embark from 1973 onwards on a qualitatively more rapid expansion of its high technology sectors than its West European rivals. In particular in the fields of electronics, computers and related technologies the United States, and Japan, possesses a crushing superiority compared to Western Europe.

Under such conditions the West European bourgeoisies have attempted to engage in a policy of competition with the United States on the economic terrain while accepting US supremacy in most military fields — and even attempting to tie the US more closely militarily into Europe in order to counter incipient 'isolationist' trends within the United States itself.

Such an orientation is not contradictory with, but complements, attempts to strengthen West European economic cooperation within the Atlantic Alliance and NATO.

46. The position of the West European bourgeoisies was worsened by the fact that the recession from 1975 onwards, exacerbated by contradictions with the United States, necessarily produced increasing conflicts and tensions within the EEC.

The West European imperialist powers have made substantial progress in competition with the United States in the sphere of manufacturing industry. West European conventional armaments production is also at an advanced level. The crucial weaknesses of the West European states lies in the fields of agriculture, energy, atomic weapons, and, above all, that Western Europe remains Balkanised compared to the power of either the United States or the Soviet Union. As it is not possible within a capitalist framework to create a West European state the result of the overall situation of European capitalism is a series of divisions both between and within the West European bourgeoisies.

Internationally the EEC states remain divided over the means of admission of Spain and Portugal in the EEC and over relations with the United States. Internally a relatively general division existed between forces looking to increased EEC and European cooperation for solutions and those seeking local and national solutions more directly in alliance with the United States. These divisions were reflected via tensions within and between bourgeois political formations — Kohl and Strauss in West Germany, Giscard and Chirac in France, Thatcher and the SDP/Liberals/Tory wets in Britain.

The policy of the southern European bourgeoisies, since the downfall of the dictatorships in Greece, Portugal, and Spain, has been integration into the EEC.

The restructuring of working class politics in Europe

47. The changing relations of West European capital and the United States necessarily produced profound changes not merely within bourgeois politics but for the mass reformist parties tied to capitalism.

The prostration of European capital, and the division of Europe, dictated not only the structure of post-war West European bourgeois politics but also the post-war structure of the West European labour movement — as it had, on smaller scale, after the First World War.

Massive US economic aid the Western Europe created a basis

for pro-American currents and orientations within both the population as a whole and the Social Democratic Parties. Following the First World War the European Social Democracy typically contrasted favourably supposedly 'democratic and peaceloving' US imperialism with allegedly more 'reactionary' European capitalist circles. US Presidents from Wilson, through Roosevelt, up to Kennedy enjoyed widespread popularity, and support, among relatively wide sections of the West European masses.

More structurally US imperialism was able to use its massive economic aid to Western Europe after World War II to align the West European Social Democratic Parties on the essential positions of the United States.

The Italian and French trade unions, and the Italian Socialist Party, were split by US intervention. Consolidated cold war leaderships were created in the French Socialist Party (SFIO), the British Labour Party, and progressively within the West German SPD.

This alignment on pro-US positions reached a point where the Gaitskell leadership of the Labour Party supported the positions of the United States, against those of the major sections of the British ruling class, over Suez. In general however the cold-war pro-US positions of the Social Democracy was in line with those of the West European bourgeoisies itself.

The only alternative mass force within the workers movement to that of the pro-US and pro-Atlanticist Socialist Parties following 1945 was that of the pro-Moscow CPs. These constituted the dominant forces of the workers movement in the weaker European imperialist powers (Greece, Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal) where the national ruling classes had least room to offer concessions to the masses and were unable to maintain strong Social Democratic Parties.

Social Democracy remained the dominant force of the stronger north European imperialist states (in particular Britain, Scandinavia and West Germany) — although here the CPs represented a significant minority current within the workers movement.

48. From 1948 to 1968 the relation of forces between the mass Social Democratic and Communist Parties in Europe remained essentially constant as did their political alignments — the Social Democracy aligned on support of the Atlantic Alliance and Cold War positions, the Communist Parties on the positions of the Soviet bureaucracy. Loosening of these political ties remained only quantitative in character — a distancing of certain Communist Parties from Moscow following the Twentieth Party congress of 1956 but with all Communist Parties supporting the invasion of Hungary. The combined effect of the period opened by 1968 was to bring about the first major shift in the relation of forces between the different currents of the workers movement in Western Europe since the Second World War.

In terms of the Social Democratic parties this process commenced with the launching of the Mitterrand project of rebuilding the French Socialist Party from 1971-72 onwards. The pro-American cold war line of the SFIO had brought it to electoral disaster in the aftermath of 1968 — in 1969 it was reduced to 5 per cent in the presidential elections. Mitterrand broke the SP from this cold war Atlanticist orientation and commenced a policy directly tied to the strategic orientation of French imperialism. This combined anti-American demagogy on certain specific international questions, strong opposition to U.S. economic policies, but a military subordination to North American imperialism.

Similar orientations were subsequently adopted by the Spanish PSOE, the Portuguese SP, the Greek PASOK, and are at the root of the policies of the Kinnock leadership of the British Labour Party.

49. This policy of 'Eurosoci-alism' represents a far more direct tying of the Social Democratic parties to the interests of the European imperialist powers under conditions of sharpening economic competition with the United States. Objectively such a policy represents an alliance with the European imperialist states against the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. It represents a rigorous subordination of the interests of the West European working class to the needs of European capital.

In the period since 1968 this right wing 'Eurosoci-alist' current has emerged as the dominant political force of the West European workers' movement — forming governments in France, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, together with an enhanced role in government in Italy. Analogous policies, under different conditions, are pursued by the new Socialist Party government in Sweden.

50. The same processes which since 1968 have produced an increase in the weight of the Socialist Parties in the working class movement in Western Europe, and a sharp decline in explicitly pro-American currents within them, has produced a sharp decline of the position of the Communist Parties.

In the period from 1948 to 1968 the Communist Parties appeared as the only alternative to the supine capitulation of the Social Democratic parties before U.S. imperialism. Under these conditions the Communist Parties were able to maintain the essential forces they had conquered during, and in the aftermath of, the Second World War. The rise of the Eurosoci-alist SPs, able to distance themselves from U.S. imperialism, however succeeded in providing an alternative pole of attraction to the CPs — one greatly heightened by the general discrediting of the regimes in Eastern Europe in the eyes of the working class.

In the period since 1968 the PCF has lost approximately one third to half of its support — falling from 22 per cent of the vote in 1967 to 15 percent in 1981, and around 12 per cent in 1984. The PCE, which had been the unchallenged dominant party of the working class in the Spanish state during forty years of struggle against Francoism, saw its vote fall to 4 per cent in the elections of 1983. In Greece and Portugal previously totally dominant Communist Parties saw themselves overtaken on the electoral terrain by social democratic parties. The smaller CPs in Britain and Holland suffered a spectacular decrease in membership and splits. Only the PCI essentially maintained its forces.

While the most spectacular change in the relation of forces between the SPs and CPs was on the electoral field a smaller but still significant change took place in a number of countries in trade union forces. In France the CFDT was reinforced as a trade union following 1968 and the UGT in Spain transformed itself from an insignificant grouplet into a minority force within the unions. In Britain the previous CP domination of the trade union left became challenged from the 1970s onwards by left social democratic forces. In general however the CPs continued to maintain a more favourable relation of forces on the trade union field, and in terms of militants, than on the electoral terrain.

Overall the strengthening of the Socialist Parties, and the decline of the CPs, represented the first major change in the relation of forces between the mass working class parties in Western Europe since the aftermath of the Second World War.

51. The crisis of the Communist Parties has promoted the revival and re-emergence of straightforwardly pro-Moscow currents within, and in certain cases outside, the CPs.

The phenomenon of 'Eurocommunism,' which developed incipiently after the Communist Parties criticism of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and openly from the mid-1970s, represented a reaction to the same forces that had produced the rise of the Eurosoci-alist orientation of the SPs. The relative recovery of European imperialist states after their prostration at the end of

World War II provided an alternative poll for reformism to either the United States or the Soviet bureaucracy. It was to attempt to link up with this force that the Eurocommunist currents oriented. In this however they were necessarily outbid and defeated by the Social Democracy.

The entire Eurocommunist project therefore collapsed amid the debacle of the PCE, of the Greek Interior Communist Party, of the extreme rightward drift of many Eurocommunist currents, and the return of the PCF to a clear alliance with Moscow.

The only clear and stable base for the CPs in Western Europe is an alliance with the Soviet bureaucracy — only the PCI having a sufficient domination of the working class to escape this choice to some extent. Within the overall decline of the CPs there has therefore been a relative strengthening of pro-Moscow currents.

In the case of Spain and Britain these pro-Moscow forces have been directly promoted by the CPSU. While tactically at present the pro-Moscow forces within the CPs advocate a more militant line, strategically they remained within a popular frontist orientation of alliance with the bourgeoisies — a framework which flows from the orientation of the Soviet leadership towards alliance with the European capitalist classes against the United States.

No matter what tactical turns occur, which calls in a number of countries for a clear united front policy towards pro-Moscow forces, the Communist Parties in both their Eurocommunist and pro-Soviet currents, remain within a clear orientation of subordination to the West European ruling classes.

52. Flowing both from mass opposition to the war in Vietnam, and the wave of working class struggles which followed 1968, currents have emerged in Europe seeking solutions independent of both the U.S. and West European bourgeoisie's and fighting against their policies.

In the period immediately preceding and following 1968 these forces, among youth and inside the workers movement, essentially by-passed the mass reformist parties. The Social Democratic Parties were in a whole series of European countries in the period before and immediately following 1968 either in office (Britain, W. Germany, Sweden, Italy) or pursuing ultra-right wing policies (France). The impact both of their reformist line, and of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, greatly weakened the appeal of the Communist Parties to these forces.

Under such circumstances of an extreme right wing line by the Social Democracy, and lack of attractive power by the Communist Parties, relatively large vanguard forces emerged to the left of, and outside, the mass reformist parties. At their peak these were capable of attracting some hundreds of thousands of votes — almost a million in Italy, 700,000 in France and, in a somewhat different form, over five per cent of the vote for the Greens in West Germany.

The emergence of these forces, which were far larger than the existing revolutionary Marxist nuclei, called for a sharp turn in terms of tactics of party building — essentially a break of the Fourth International with entryism in Western Europe.

53. While stressing the importance of this layer lying to the left of, and in most of Europe outside, the mass reformist parties from the point of view of tactics of party building its nature must also clearly be understood.

This current remained strictly a *vanguard* force. In no case did any section of the masses break with the reformist parties. The attraction of these forces to many vanguard elements within the working class was decreased not simply by general political considerations but by a generally ultra-left political attitude towards the mass workers parties which led the ultra-left groupings which emerged from this radicalisation to disaster.

From 1975 onwards this tactically ultra-left, and politically centrist, current was clearly in decline in Europe — although

maintaining significant forces in a number of countries. Its decisive problem was to link up with the forces of opposition developing within the mass organisations of the working class themselves.

54. The radicalisation which developed from 1968 inevitably produced differentiation, and in some cases crisis, within the mass reformist organisations themselves.

Initially this generally took the form of a radicalisation of currents within the trade unions. Currents such as the Italian metal workers unions, the Jones-Scanlon leadership of the TGWU/AUEW in Britain, the left wing of the CFDT in France played a role of a left wing in the workers movement under conditions in which such currents had not appeared inside the mass reformist parties. Progressively however this process of differentiation penetrated into the mass reformist parties themselves. Essentially five currents, in different relations of forces in each country, have developed within the mass reformist parties:

(i) Pro-American currents — these have essentially disappeared as a major force within the European workers movement.

(ii) The right wing 'Eurosociologist' current represented by Mitterrand, Suarez, Soares, Papandreou, Kinnock, Craxi and the right wing leadership of the SPD. This is today the majority current in the West European workers movement and holds majority support in the working class in all West European states except Italy.

(iii) The Eurocommunist current — this is in sharp decline in all countries except Italy. Its forces have undergone a sharp evolution to the right.

(iv) Pro-Moscow currents. These dominate the CPs in Greece, Portugal, and France, and are increasing their weight in Spain and Britain. This relative strengthening of pro-Moscow forces within the CPs however occurs in the context of an overall major decline of the weight of the Communist Parties.

(v) Currents of a left social democratic character which appear both in the forms of left wings inside the Social Democratic Parties and trade unions and as ecological/radicalised Christian and other movements.

The 'Eurosociologist' and Eurocommunist currents represent essentially the right wing of the workers movement. It is necessary in certain countries to engage in united fronts in particular with the pro-Moscow Communist Parties in the struggle against austerity and missiles. Overwhelmingly however it is the left social democratic/ecologist/radicalised Christian and similar forces who provide today the most dynamic part of the workers movement and that from which the sections of the Fourth International can be built — the major exception to this being Italy where the PCI continues to dominate the workers movement.

55. The tactics of intervention of the sections of the Fourth International towards these differentiations within the workers movement necessarily depends upon the precise relation of forces and political situation in each country. The fundamental perspective in which the Fourth International must operate however is that revolutionary parties will not be built except through a process of splits and fusions of the mass reformist parties and that the process of class struggle will necessarily produce increasing political differentiation within these mass parties themselves.

Within this framework the process of united front action and intervention in this differentiation must be adapted to the rhythms of development and concrete conditions of each country.

(i) In Britain, where the Labour Party exercises unchallenged domination over the workers movement, possesses great organisational flexibility, and where forces breaking to the left of the Labour Party were weak, it is necessary for supporters of revolutionary Marxist ideas to join the Labour Party.

(ii) In Denmark, where the Social Democracy has itself split into three currents it is necessary to orientate towards the left social democratic parties.

(iii) In France, where the Socialist Party does not organise the militant forces of the workers movement, where the conditions do not exist for entry into the CP, and the forces outside the mass reformist parties are large, the priority of work is within the trade union opposition currents.

(iv) In other countries where primarily independent organisations are being created at present it is necessary to undertake fraction work within the mass reformist parties.

Even where work is being carried on primarily outside the mass reformist parties today it must be clearly understood that this is within a framework that the radicalisation of the working class will inevitably produce differentiations within the mass reformist parties and at a certain point pass through them. It is idle to speculate today whether the splits and fusions necessary for the creation of mass reformist parties will consist of a series of eruptions within the traditional parties, or one major explosion, nor the precise tactics that will be adopted — we are in any case many years away from the creation of mass revolutionary parties in Western Europe. The fundamental concept in which the sections of the Fourth International must be educated however is that the radicalisation of the working class will not by-pass the mass reformist parties but produce differentiations within them. The education of the sections of the Fourth International in 'principled' opposition to entryism will both profoundly miseducate these organisations and leave them quite unprepared for the process of differentiation within the workers movement that will take place in the coming period. On the contrary an understanding of the character of the mass reformist organisations, and of the different tactics which must be utilised towards them must be a fundamental part of the education of the Fourth International.

56. The essential axes around which the recomposition of the working class movement is taking place in Western Europe precisely corresponds to the contradictions with which West European capitalism is confronted, not merely internally but internationally.

The West European imperialist states are in a subordinate position to the United States militarily. They require increasingly sharp policies of austerity to compete with it economically and to reverse the decline in their own internal rates of profit. The strong labour movements and welfare states possessed by the West European capitalist states is an insuperable obstacle to their economic competition with the U.S. They are neither able to break with the United States nor to openly endorse its policies and objectives. The result is a rising series of movements since the mid-1960s which have objectively, and increasingly subjectively, clashed both with the interests of the United States and the West European imperialist states. Taken historically these were:

(i) The movement of opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam which in the mid and late 1960s centered in wide layers of students and youth — this constituted the first new major wave of opposition to U.S. imperialism in Europe and one which for the first time escaped the control of the Communist Parties.

(ii) The wave of working class struggles which unfolded from 1968 to 1975 under the impact of the sharp economic contradictions surrounding the end of the Vietnam war. These struggles, which far exceeded those in Japan and the United States, relatively protected the economic position of West European workers compared to the losses of the working class in the U.S. and thereby materially worsened the economic situation of West European capitalism relative to its rivals. The effect of these struggles brought about the downfall of the dictatorships in Southern Europe and recommenced the recomposition of the working class movement in Europe after the period of stability

from 1948-68.

(iii) The downturn of economic struggles in Western Europe after 1975, brought about by the depth of the recession and initial defeats following 1975, was accompanied from 1979 by the spectacular emergence of the largest peace movement since the Second World War in the struggle against the placing of U.S. missiles in Europe. This anti-missiles movement, which constituted the second major wave of opposition to United States imperialism in Europe both spilled over into clearly unilateralist demands in Britain and other countries, substantially destabilised the political situation in West Germany, and reinforced in a major way left wing currents inside the workers' movement. It also significantly deepened the polarisation within the mass working class parties.

(iv) The economic recovery of 1983-84 led to a new sharp upturn of struggles against austerity in Western Europe. Occurring in a context where the anti-missiles movement has not undergone any substantial decline the effect was further to widen, and greatly deepen socially, the beginning of the emergence of left wing

currents inside the working class movement. In a number of countries these commenced as oppositional currents within the trade unions but their dynamic was to spill over into divisions within the mass parties of the working class themselves.

57. This pattern of struggles shows clearly the overall characteristics of the working class radicalisation in Western Europe. The rise of economic contradictions and crises is leading not to a narrowing of the concerns and driving forces of political recomposition of the workers movement but to its widening. Movements against the oppression of women, racism and all forms of social and political oppression continue to fuel a movement whose key axes and driving forces are the struggles against austerity and militarism. This recomposition is differentially based among the strongest sections of the working class and the most oppressed. Its dynamic is to increasingly penetrate into the mass working class organisations and the mass working class parties and produce division within them.

It is on this perspective that the Fourth International in Western Europe must base its work.

Poland: or How a Resolution That Poses No Problems Does Not Resolve Any

by Sandor, Revolutionary Communist League, France

The following contribution is a deliberately brief critique of the document "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland," presented by the United Secretariat as a draft resolution for the coming world congress. It is not an overall assessment: it sticks exclusively to the main points of disagreement. Obviously then this is not a counterdocument. It tries to provide the basis for substantial amendments. A rewriting of the draft is in progress and the participation of comrades in agreement* with the following is welcomed.

Summary

The draft resolution is very long and it is therefore difficult to be in total (dis)agreement with it. The resolution is itself contradictory on the characterization of what has happened. Its dominant tendency, however, is a — onesided — needlessly rosy vision of the events. I will discuss this point in the first part.

Although the document is long, it is a bit short on some political questions specific to Poland, such as nationalism, the church, the peasantry, and the Polish United Workers Party. *Less than 1 percent of the document* is devoted to all these questions.

Next, it says either too much or not enough about an important theoretical question, the status of labor power in the transitional societies. That will be the second point.

But beyond these narrow criticisms, the document dodges a basic question: the need for a more convincing response to the "argument of the Soviet tanks." Of course the relationship of forces between the working class and the bureaucracy takes place at a given moment in one country: Poland. But it cannot be analyzed; and especially it cannot be resolved, except in the international context.

Any strategy aimed at gaining a "Polish" victory is bound to fail. Of necessity such a strategy has to be one of either self-limitation or adventure. It is illusory to propose another, revolutionary, path without clearly breaking through this narrow view of the antibureaucratic revolution.

And if we Trotskyists do not do it, who will? Of course, our draft deals with "the international context" (as it deals with the question of the party), but as icing on the cake, a supplement that is *not organically linked* to the preconditions for the victory of the political revolution. That will be the final point.

1. On the assessment of what has taken place

Regarding the facts themselves, the document suffers from the same shortcoming as most of our articles published in French on Poland. It enumerates a mass of elements — all certainly accurate — but *without giving them a sense of perspective* in the overall context.

And since we are obviously interested in paying special attention to everything that goes in the direction of the revolution (if only because others, bourgeois or Stalinist, keep quiet about them) the result is a distortion of the reality.

How many workers, for example, have *in real life* gone through an experience of workers councils *already exercising power* in an enterprise or over a region? Hundreds, tens of thousands, millions? If read in a certain way, the text, like most

of the facts (what is called "the concrete") that are reported in our press, could give the impression of a massive phenomenon. That is not true. If read carefully, this same document itself (in point 3) destroys this illusion in one passage: the situation was limited not only to the distribution of certain consumer goods (and therefore had nothing to do with production), but also to a single region. One could even add "and in recent months." Of course there was the seed of a mortal threat to the bureaucracy, but it was still largely a potential threat.

This lack of perspective is even more glaring on questions of ideology. Here, moreover, a question of method is posed.

It would of course be imbecilic to judge the thrust of the Polish events on the basis of the fact that currents daring to call themselves Marxist were practically absent or prudently silent¹ or solely on the consciousness expressed by most of the "expert" intellectuals in Solidarity.

But it would be just as naive not to consider their ideology a perversion of a spontaneously proletarian or socialist mass movement in the historic sense of the term. The last three paragraphs of point 9 — where it is unambiguously stated that the solution sought by the workers was "clearly proletarian and socialist in nature" — are confused.

The description of the consciousness of the workers — because involved here is precisely the question of political consciousness, not alas the question of practice (cf. the preceding) — is quite simply false: "To the siren songs offering competition between firms and between individuals . . . [and] to the exaltation of so-called market economy values, they counterposed the cooperation of producers."

It would be more correct to say that "the sirens" were a majority among the experts and that, like it or not, they represented (and produced) the dominant ideology in the movement on these questions.

As a "description" of what would have taken place later *if* the workers had been confronted for example with unemployment, one could of course be more optimistic. But we must not telescope these two situations. This ideological battle had not really been waged and this was a weakness of Solidarity, not a strength as the draft implies by supposing that this problem had already been resolved.

In summary, we would say that the movement in Poland was characterized by the tremendous contradiction between the massive character of the mobilization (one of the largest ever seen), its ideological confusion, and the nearly total absence of perspective; *which in the end would rebound back on the power of the mobilization.*

Certainly any beginning revolution is characterized by the broadest ideological confusion; including revolutions that are victorious because they involve millions of previously passive people going into movement.

But the precondition for victory is the emergence of at least a widely recognized nucleus that has clear ideas on goals and methods. This was totally lacking in Poland. This must be stated clearly and not diluted in 4,000 lines.

This dilution has two immediate consequences (two causes?):

1. The document, following in the footsteps of our articles in

French, is primarily a "general propaganda" document in favor of the revolution and the Polish working class. That is not useful for a world congress resolution.

2. It underestimates the importance of ideological and programmatic factors as a precondition of the development of the revolution at a certain moment, which is one of the key tasks of revolutionary Marxists in Poland.

The draft in fact has a onesided (straight-line) view of the process of the antibureaucratic revolution in Poland. For example, I do not believe that Jaruzelski's coup surprised a "revolution [that] was still gaining momentum" as the draft asserts. If that were the case, it would mean that the coup would have been easier six months or a year earlier, which seems difficult to assert.

And then why say — true, 88 lines later — "December 13 was a moment of truth which revealed a relationship of forces unfavorable for the mass movement"? Unfavorable! At a time when the revolution could only go forward — according to the draft — what more did it need?

The truth is that the movement, as a spontaneous movement, began to see its own dynamic exhausted as it was provided with no perspective and as daily life became ever more difficult.²

The bureaucracy understood this. It did not win primarily a military victory, marked by thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of arrests. (And as the document says in one place it did not have the resources to do so.) It won a political victory — certainly using military means — and it struck at the right moment. We must, of course, have agreement on terms: if the goal of Jaruzelski's military operation had been to make the population love him, or more seriously to make the PUWP more popular, or to significantly improve the economy, then of course the operation was a total failure. In the face of such a plan, the power of the resistance is extraordinary. And since this is the regime's official plan, it is well and good to say so and to repeat it in newspaper articles.

But the real goal of the operation was much less utopian — although nearly unimaginable a few months earlier. It was basically to outlaw Solidarity at the lowest cost to the Polish and Soviet bureaucracies. More serious normalization would have to follow later.

Facing a workers movement whose breadth and degree of organization³ were perhaps the most impressive in the world, they played for high stakes. They won the first hand.

Of course, as the document states — in a curious way — this does not mean they could "totally crush and disperse the mass movement everywhere." And there is no comparison between the level of self-organization against the Polish regime and anything seen in the other bureaucratized workers states, etc. But given how things had been, there is no need to reinterpret what happened before December 13 to understand the still very high residual level of the mobilization.

On the contrary, such rewriting makes the coup and everything that followed incomprehensible. Or else you have to be content with banalities such as "the main instrument permitting the government to make some gains is the use of direct and brutal repression" and the use of the "secret police."⁴

Furthermore, even on this descriptive level, the brutality of the dictatorship in Poland simply does not compare with that of fascism in Germany (the sole means the German bourgeoisie had to reduce its working class), or the repression in El Salvador. But even in El Salvador the dictatorship must engage in politics, and that is also the case in Poland.

In its fashion, *the Polish regime engages in politics* not simply in repression (even though there were several thousand political prisoners and are still several hundred). Or more precisely, "brutal repression" is one element of its politics, but not the only one. It did not free Walesa because it was directly forced to. This

was a political decision aimed at dividing the movement between "extremists" and "reasonable" elements, with the church playing a key role in the affair.

While the resolution correctly stresses that the bureaucracy is not a social class, and while the bureaucracy's roots are infinitely less deep, they are not less broad. We are talking about a total of perhaps one million people spread throughout all of society (and not solely, nor even primarily in the repressive apparatus).

The PUWP, for example, is certainly the bureaucracy's party. But it is not composed solely of bureaucrats (experience proved this in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, and in Poland, and it will be proven again): if that were the case, the PUWP would be of no value to the regime itself.

Our draft never talks about the regime's politics, except in a few lines dealing with struggles between cliques ("liberals" versus "hawks") over the use of repression (end of point 24) which reflects "the instability of the situation and the fragility of the relationship of forces".⁵

The draft deals with the regime's economic policy only to say that it is a disaster. Perhaps. But from that, it simplistically draws the conclusion that the normalization is an "economic, social, and political" failure (beginning of point 24). But what makes for the bureaucracy's strength is first of all its ability to break the workers self-organization, not its economic competence or its popularity. For our activity in Poland, we must certainly get more into the "details" of the failures and successes of the normalization.

2. On the status of labor power

My disagreement deals with the following sentence: "This [the fact that in determining wages, the bureaucracy "brutally denies the material conditions needed to assure reproduction of the labor force"] is the reason, along with the fact that labor power partially retains a commodity character, that the workers need a trade union" (point 12b).

In my opinion these two statements are true, but *they are not connected*: The justification for the union should not be sought in the residual commodity character of labor power.

As is pointed out later in the draft, this theory is the theory of the experts (the "sirens"), and given the pressures exerted in Solidarity in this regard, it is important to be very clear.

Nowhere in life does one encounter pure categories. And still less so — I daresay — in the bureaucratized workers states when it comes to economic categories. However, one could say, for example, that the peasant's production of private chickens, which are then sold on the free market, is very close to the (theoretical and practical) production of commodities.

On the other extreme, the production of diesel locomotives in state factories, which are then allocated to the national network, is very close to the production of use value.

Between these two extremes there are all sorts of intermediaries (and in Poland in every sense of the term!).

Labor power, says the document, "partially retains a commodity character." This is partially true, but why? Because labor power is partially the result of private and independent formations (meaning more or less subsidized by the family and "freely" decided). One could even add that the labor power is in great measure paid, as wages, in zlotys that in turn will serve partly to purchase commodities. *But that's all.*

An essential attribute is missing: the price of labor power (wages) is not determined by any market but rather, as the document states, by Messrs. Bureaucrats in line with their own interests. This would therefore be a commodity without a market.

The introduction of the market would mean that labor power would have the possibility of *not* being purchased, unemployment, etc.

Therefore saying that labor power is "partially" a commodity does not suffice to justify the union. One must say in what way this justifies it. The "partial commodity" as analyzed above does not justify the union: labor power is not a commodity in terms of its conditions of sale, that is to say in the arena where a union intervenes. Calling Solidarity a "union" could be very misleading.

There is certainly a justification for unions in the workers states (especially when they are bureaucratically deformed), but to link the unions to labor power's (even partial) status as a commodity is therefore:

1. Theoretically disputable;
2. Does not clearly put to rest the theories of the "experts";
3. And especially implies a reductionist concept of the role of unions in post-capitalist societies (painting them somewhat in the image of what they are in the capitalist countries).

The need for unions must be linked more to the contradictions that will continue to exist between the logic of production and consumption and between general and specific interests, to the struggle against the bureaucracy, etc.

And in Poland, in any case, the need for unions must be linked to the need to *distinguish the responsibilities of management from those of the defense (and gains) of social acquisitions.*

3. What criticism of Solidarity's strategy?

In Chapter II, "Why was the counter-revolution victorious?," the draft gives as principal reasons for the defeat of Solidarity:

* Points 6 and 7: the KK's wavering and hesitations, encouraged by the illusion of the possibility of long-term coexistence with the Polish bureaucracy (as long as the interests of the USSR were not threatened). From this flows a related point:

*Point 8: lack of work in the army and militia and insufficient development of the workers councils.

I do not know if Walesa, the leadership of Solidarity, (and even the Polish workers) were naive enough to believe in the possibility of a permanent (and conflict-filled) dialogue with the regime. But they were convinced of two things:

1. Soviet intervention would take place if certain limits were reached;
2. It had to be avoided at all costs.

Under these conditions, the *only* possibility was to carry on as if the dialogue was possible. (Furthermore, the most eminent theoreticians of the need for long-term dialogue were also the ones who wrote — in other connections — the most definitive lines on the impossibility of coexistence between the "totalitarian regime" and the liberated civil society, thereby proving that they were not so naive, even if today they prefer to confess to this pet failing of naiveté).

From this flowed the whole strategy of self-limitation, which could only end in defeat: the other party obviously not having the same scruples.

The bureaucracy's success December 13 was written into this strategy: what could the "Polish nation" have expected from a (temporary) victory over Jaruzelski and his Polish officers who were in fact incapable of truly repressing? Certainly intervention by the Soviet army and therefore an even greater defeat and bigger misfortunes. Just as before the coup Michnik stated that the PUWP, left intact, could protect against the Soviets and therefore it would be best not to touch it, so too whether one likes it or not, the Jaruzelski coup "protected" against Brezhnev's coup.⁶

This "argument" of the Soviet tanks, which was and remains the backdrop of all the Polish events, is only mentioned in the document in several lines, in passing and in an unfocused form, although it provides the ideological underpinning for the strategy of self-limitation.

As long as there is no convincing answer to it, this "strategy"

will revive in Poland dressed in other garb. And in the other bureaucratized workers states the idea will remain that the Polish example, interesting though it might be, also does not solve the fundamental problem.

It is certainly correct, though secondary, to counterpose to this strategy the idea that the limits Moscow will tolerate are not fixed in advance, that nothing proves that a weak movement is more likely to be spared than a strong and resolute movement. But to add that it was necessary to move resolutely toward workers self-defense and armed pickets in the face of the threat appears ridiculous, and in this form it borders on the provocative. Did we, moreover, really hammer away at this idea in Poland before Dec. 13? And we were — in contrast to many others — absolutely convinced the confrontation was inevitable.

It is true that Stalin did not dare intervene against Yugoslavia in 1948 basically because he would have had to confront a situation where there had been "a general arming of the [Yugoslav] masses" who had just made their revolution, while his successor did intervene in Czechoslovakia in 1968 even though everything, but really everything, had been done to avoid provoking him.

All this is true. But it avoids the real problem. There are a whole series of steps between the actual (totally unarmed) state of the Polish revolution in 1980–1981 and the passage to that degree of self-organization in general (and military organization in particular). And one of those steps triggers intervention. That was, at any rate, the general feeling in Poland. Neither "the fierce determination to defend the gains of the revolution" nor audacity were missing in the Polish workers. That is why paragraph "e" of point 31, which aims to answer the Soviet tanks "argument" (in a few lines) is hardly convincing.

In fact, in the Kremlin's view, intervention is:

1. All the more necessary to the degree that the success of the political revolution in Poland is a danger to it. And it is a mortal danger⁷;

2. Always possible as long as there is uneven development of the revolutionary situations between Russia, the different republics of the USSR, and the so-called "people's democracies."

As long as the strategy of the Polish revolution is conceived within the national framework, in one form or another the strategy of self-limitation will be reborn from its own ashes (unless the situation matures in the USSR and especially in Russia, which for the present seems to be a longer term development). And with that rebirth comes defeat.

Whether one likes it or not, one of the difficulties for the success of the political revolution is that *from the start* it must be worked out within an international framework. Of course any revolution is confronted with the problem. But the character of the bureaucratized workers states makes this understanding of the international framework particularly difficult, and at the same time particularly indispensable.⁸

To say that the Polish revolution cannot be victorious except as an integral part of the antibureaucratic revolution in the other bureaucratized workers states and of the anticapitalist and anti-imperialist revolution (which is much more difficult to understand in Poland) *does not mean that one must wait for a generalized maturation of the revolutionary conditions.* Such a degree of simultaneity will never exist. Every revolution begins in the national context; but it does not remain within it and this is especially true for the political revolution.

In their own fashion, the bureaucrats — not Solidarity — had this understanding of the international context. Or more precisely, Solidarity could not counterpose the internationalism of the workers movement to the "internationalism" of the bureaucracy.

It was necessary to act in such a way that the (real) specter of intervention would also be a specter facing the interveners. To

that end, it was necessary not to leave the Soviet bureaucracy alone to prepare the intervention; it was also necessary to prepare for an intervention in such a way that it would be "the last political act" of these gentlemen.

That is somewhat similar to what Kuron said in his first letter from prison. But he considerably weakened the thrust of his sentence by confirming the apocalyptic idea of a bloodbath signifying the virtual disappearance of the Polish nation.

If, as the document says, the workers facing Jaruzelski's coup were able to make "a more realistic assessment of the relationship of forces" and finally decided not use violence, we can *a fortiori* suppose that in the face of the Soviet coup they would have been able to evaluate an even more unfavorable relationship of forces on the military level.

If these gentlemen in the Kremlin were absolutely determined to militarily occupy Warsaw, they could do it, and in those conditions no responsible working-class leadership should call for frontal armed resistance.

And after that? It is one thing to take Warsaw, Gdansk, Wroclaw, to occupy the mines, etc., and another thing to remain afterwards. Military though it would be, the Soviet intervention pursues a political aim; this was the case in Hungary, as well as in Czechoslovakia. The key precondition of success for the Kremlin is that its intervention should not amount to a foreign military occupation. Schematically, what does this imply?

On the national plane, the problem was to isolate to the maximum degree possible the Polish bureaucratic upper crust that could play the role of Quislings, which means — in contrast to the policy of "National Accord" — the realization that the enemy was also within our country. This obviously implied a mobilizing working class program. The future document on Poland must provide at least the elements of such a program. Our draft is astonishingly abstract on this question. An example? Not a single word is said about the struggle against the bureaucracy's privileges and the inequality in living standards, except for the statement in point 16 on "the systematic limitation and reversal of all phenomena of social inequality."

It is true that Solidarity's program is also very discreet on this topic, but we need not perpetuate what was one of its weaknesses.

On the international plane, this would mean a policy of seeking alliance not only with the working class in the capitalist countries but also with those struggling against imperialist barbarism (something about which there was absolutely no understanding in Solidarity).

The — mutual — lack of understanding between those who are most involved in the anti-imperialist struggle (in Latin America) and the Polish workers is detrimental not only because, as the document says, it leaves the Polish proletariat convinced that it stands "alone in its struggle" (point 33). It is an element of weakness in Solidarity: the Soviet intervention could be carried out without the Kremlin paying the price of a rift with those considered today the most advanced point of the world revolution.⁹

That is why the militants of the Fourth International must not only continually defend the Polish revolution in Latin America¹⁰ as the draft states. But, as the draft does *not* state, and whatever the difficulties in doing so, they must also explain in Poland the significance of the anti-imperialist struggle.

A congress of Solidarity that — in addition to its appeal to the workers of the Eastern European countries — had also proclaimed its solidarity with the poor peasants and workers of Latin America would have improved its relationship of forces against the Soviet bureaucracy. Only those who think it is more intelligent first to fight against "the Russians," while avoiding uselessly turning on "the Americans," could think differently.

On this example one can prove that proletarian internationalism — which might have to be called something else in Poland — is not only a moral imperative, *it is also an objective element in the relationship of forces.*

All these problems are not easy to develop in our propaganda in Poland; but it is necessary to pose them because *the victory of the political revolution depends on their correct solution.* Moreover, today, many things are clearer in Poland. Walesa himself explains in substance (*Robotnik-83*, issue 10, see attached excerpts) that without the Soviet workers one cannot do anything. This is a gigantic step!

In this we can still see the beginning of another policy of self-limitation, but it would be self-limitation of an altogether different kind. This policy would not flow from what the Soviet bureaucracy might or might not tolerate, but from the level of consciousness of the masses looked at in all the bureaucratized workers states.

Rather than "limitation," it would be better to say that at each stage of their struggle the workers would have to provide a minimum of political and practical safeguards that would insure that any Soviet intervention would force those who ordered it to pay the highest possible price.

One could imagine:

* *political* safeguards involving the need to make it understood outside Poland that what the Polish workers want is part of the general struggle of exploited peoples. This obviously involves a political struggle to develop such clarity within Poland;

* *practical* safeguards. These come in all types: from the increased number and dispersal of printing presses, cassettes, explosives, light arms, etc.

* *politico-practical* safeguards, an increase in the number of TV and radio transmitters, materials published in Russian, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, etc.; mass arrival of young people and peace activists to occupy the airports after Solidarity declared its desire for a nuclear-free Europe to Portugal, etc.

To conclude this point 3, I would say that what counterposes partisans of self-limitation to revolutionaries is certainly not the prognosis regarding Soviet intervention. We would completely cut the ground from under ourselves if we claim or lead people to think that we revolutionaries might have a good strategy that would make it possible to avoid intervention. Of course the seizure of power effectively carried out by the Polish workers would be such a means. But the regime in Poland was not a ripe fruit ready to drop (here the analysis of what really took place must be precise, not journalistic). Even very weakened, and because of the unlimited support of its "big brother," the regime's fall would still have needed the development of dual power and the arming of the proletariat (an arming that was totally nonexistent).

In the course of this process, and before it was completed, the USSR would have intervened (at the appeal of the "legal government"). The Kremlin bureaucracy is quite as conscious as we are of the importance that an already accomplished seizure of power has for the further unfolding of events.

Of course this was not a certainty. But in all honesty who could we convince in Poland that this was not the most probable variant? The ground would also be undermined *because it implicitly accepts the equation of intervention—bloodbath—absolute defeat.* This equation is paralyzing, and once you accept it, then those who are always the most "self-limiting" are the winners of the game of "the best way to avoid Soviet intervention."

It is easy, but necessary, to prove the futility of the strategy of self-limitation in terms of the very goal it pursues — avoiding intervention.

Its ultimate logic is to accept Jaruzelski's intervention, even if you don't like it.

On the other hand it is much more difficult to be positive. We should not hide this. I believe, however, that outlined schematically our response should be:

1. Self-limitation certainly involves defeat in the best of cases and capitulation in the worst.

2. If certain political, ideological, and practical conditions were met (see the preceding) — and that was and is the task of whatever revolutionary Marxist militants there might be — the Soviet intervention: a) would not be a bloodbath; b) is not the end, even if it marks a pause, in the process. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a longer-term struggle, but also one of great breadth.¹¹

In brief, to be convincing in Poland and because it corresponds to reality, our revolutionary strategy must include Soviet intervention. Therefore, what distinguishes the "self-limiters" from the revolutionaries is that the former limit their horizon to that intervention, while the latter indicate *how to confront it and ultimately win*.

4. On several minor points

1. The concept of "clandestine society" is very popular in Poland. It harks back: a) to the Polish tradition against Tsarist rule in the 19th century, where the question was to maintain islands of Polish civilization "against the sway of Russian barbarism"; b) to the project of developing a type of "civil society," which is an old project of the KOR (among others), and which has the merit of dodging the question of power.

Our draft, itself, gives a precise meaning to this term, a meaning focused in the working class. It is not clear however that this is the currently accepted meaning in Poland. Is it wise to use the same term to designate different things?

2. Section 1a explains that a cause of Poland's rapid industrialization after the war was the bureaucracy's desire to leave the working class "in a state of perpetual political 'adolescence'" and thereby to "neutralize the social power of the workers."

This is a curious explanation. Naively, if one limits oneself solely to this arena, one could just as well think the opposite. This, moreover, is what the document suggests some 30 lines later in speaking of the regime's congenital inability to ally the peasantry to it.

3. On arming, the document says in point 19: "The 'Wujek' miners' exemplary action demonstrated once again that arming the workers and mass violence are effective tactics in clashes with the repressive apparatus."

Demonstrated to whom? To the Polish workers? No, because later on we read that they drew the conclusion "that mass violence was useless and should be rejected." Nor to ourselves, because we assert that "these forms of resistance contributed to worsen Solidarnosc's defeat and considerably weakened the subsequent resistance in that region."

What it seems to mean is that if everyone had done what they did they *would have* demonstrated . . . Once again the document confuses the past tense with the conditional. The fact that everyone did not do as they — the Wujek miners — did, is not a military question, it is a political question and it harks back to everything said earlier.

4. The document compares the gains of the Polish revolution only with those of the earlier Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, and German (Berlin 1953) revolutions.

Its description of these gains as unprecedented is correct in terms of the material level of organization (which is far from a small matter: the independent organization of 10 million workers!). On the ideological level it is false. There it would be necessary, for example, to mention all the contributions of the

Yugoslav revolution on plan-market-self-management relations, which are very little known in Poland.

5. It can be ambiguous to say (section 1-c) that "the position of the Catholic church . . . has favoured the existence of a plurality of conceptions of the world, and thus the development of more or less critical and independent thought in wide sectors of society." If "the position" were replaced by "the positions," it would be clearly false. On abortion, contraception, etc. it is one of the most reactionary in the world.

5. Conclusion

Our draft:

1. Underestimates the role of program (what one fights for) as a precondition for the success — or failure — of the revolution;

2. Does not sufficiently integrate the Polish revolution into the international context.

Related to this,

3. It develops a onesided vision of the process itself.

Completely despite our wishes, this has two consequences:

1. This draft in fact makes the question of the party and of the international a secondary question, even though it speaks about them at length. These questions are not integrated into the problems that the Polish revolution has to resolve, even embryonically, in order to win.

2. More marginally, in the long run the draft threatens to discourage a good number of militants, disillusioned by a revolution as it is and not as it "should" be.

As I already stated in the introduction, this document aims to correct a onesided approach. Its function is therefore to bend the stick in the other direction, and to do this it always pushes in one direction. A leaner rewriting of the document that avoids its repetitions (the document having been worked out piece by piece) would make it possible to incorporate the above comments without lengthening it.

N.B. The text of the Polish *Inprekor* (Issue 13, January 1984) — which was translated into French and which I just became aware of — while much less emphatic, partially suffers from the same defects as the draft, but partially corrects them. For example, on page 22 we read: "The fear that the Polish revolution will be crushed by Soviet military power if it threatens the existence of the totalitarian regime is fully justified and demands of each Solidarity militant an especially well-developed sense of political responsibility."

If this is so, and this *is* so, why does the resolution devote only 11 lines to it, and feeble lines at that? Going even further, *Inprekor* correctly adds that "the military danger that the totalitarian Soviet regime represents for the Polish revolution is proportional to the danger that the revolution represents for the [Soviet] regime." It adds, and this point should be developed, that "involved is a danger for the two sides and not, as is said in Poland, a football match with only one goal post."

Further still, on page 47, *Inprekor* returns to the subject: "To go beyond the 'geopolitical fatalism' that — as we stated — blocks the development of Solidarity's strategy requires that this strategy take into account the international dimension of the Polish revolution. The demands not to pose the question of power and not to pass beyond the limits of its own country are imposed by the strategy of 'self-limited revolution': this in fact involves two aspects of a single problem, which are indissolubly linked, even if only the first aspect has theoretically crystallized."

Of course this article has a different objective than the world congress resolution, but paradoxically it is less journalistic. Certainly it would serve to improve the draft resolution. In addition, to the extent that the draft and this article are the product of roughly the same comrades, this in any case proves that certain

objections made here to the draft resolution could easily be taken into account.

Paris, May 19, 1984
Sandor
LCR

Appendix

What follows are portions of the French translation of an interview that Walesa gave *CDN-Glos Wolnego Robotnika* issue 47, September 8, 1983 and published in *Robotnik-83* issue 10. Emphasis added by me.

Question. What are you thinking of when you speak of Solidarity's errors?

Answer. It would be our underestimation of the adversary, whom we viewed as a partner of good faith and having great latitude to act . . . Another error was our inability to communicate our ideas to very diverse social groups in the socialist countries.

Q. Was this possible?

A. Undoubtedly. Perhaps not directly; but it was possible. We were invited to diplomatic receptions and official meetings. We did not go. That was a mistake. We could then have won to our cause many official figures in the socialist world. It was more difficult with the representatives of the USSR, but even there we could have done a little good work. *Worse, we let pass the chances to make our aspirations known to the men in the street in other countries in our bloc. We will have to remember that, because without them we will do nothing.*

Q. Do you think this will be possible in the future?

A. Inevitably. We must profit from each occasion, each contact between individuals. We cannot turn our backs on the Russians and sit and meditate about the wrong they have done us. We cannot make them feel our hostility against them. *It would be much better to make them understand that we count on them in our struggle.* Another of our errors was to win to our cause so few rank-and-file members of the PUWP or of the militias close to it. . . . Our influence remained weak in the army and the militia. . . . We must propagate among people the ideas that are essential for us. *The people must know exactly what we are struggling for, what type of state and society we see, what unions we want to have. . . .*

FOOTNOTES:

*And also in disagreement. Ernest — in fundamental disagreement with the initial version of this contribution, which he judged "to the right of Michnik" — sent me a critical note. I thank him for three reasons. 1) The note helped me — as did several oral contributions from various comrades — to specify what could be ambiguous in the first draft. 2) It suggested a certain number of measures that the Polish revolution ought to adopt, which I take up in the end of section 3. 3) Finally, it confirmed to me — indirectly — that the draft resolution dodged the problems that did and do confront us.

1. This was not the case earlier in Poland, nor in Hungary or Czechoslovakia. These currents had often come out of the Communist parties — the reformist Communists. Their absence in Poland testifies to the masses' break with the official ideology. A sign of the radicalization of the movement, certainly. But this absence nonetheless poses a problem: in contrast to the prose of Mr. Jourdain, socialism is not built without knowing it.

2. One could add, to be complete, that certainly in the final weeks it had become more obvious to broad layers and to the leadership of Solidarity that the dead end was total and that in the end *you could not dodge the question of power*. But this does not characterize a "revolution . . . in full swing"; so much as a process of growing differentiation.

3. We must not place the most radical positions on the same level as the most revolutionary. In certain cases, the KPN (right nationalists) controlled the movement, and not only among the students.

4. Explaining that "force" or "repression" are what permits the enemy to make gains is like explaining that weight caused the bridge to collapse. It is true but not very useful: by all evidence "this instrument" existed before December 13. Why wasn't it used? In short, it is necessary to discuss *politics*.

5. And yet at the time of the coup on Dec. 13, when Solidarity was fully legal, there was "a relationship of forces unfavorable for the mass move-

ments." Did it improve since then to become "unstable"?

6. Of course, in truth, the opposite is true. But this cynical turning of responsibility, presenting the "Polish" coup as a lesser evil to the "Russian" coup was the real weapon of the Polish army.

7. It is even — if I dare say so — a more mortal(?) danger for the USSR than the victory of the Nicaraguan or Salvadoran revolution for the United States.

8. Point 18 is another example of the onesided view of the draft. It describes "the distinctive features of the working class struggle in the workers states subject to the bureaucracy's totalitarian rule" only as involving "the level of class consciousness of the proletarian forces involved in the revolution" being "on the average very high." Once again not everything goes in the same direction. It would have been better to speak of a combination of elements, some of which are certainly "on average very high", etc.

9. And this rift in something the Kremlin does not want. Not for abstract ideological reasons, but because it would weaken the Kremlin in its dealings with U.S. imperialism.

In 1968, Fidel Castro's position considerably limited the — nonetheless great — international damage of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.

10. A very simple starting point could be the following: a Soviet intervention in Poland aimed at wiping out Solidarity means *carte blanche* for U.S. imperialism to intervene in Nicaragua, El Salvador, or even Cuba. That is, it would create especially favorable political conditions for the counterrevolution.

11. From this point of view, a retrospective and detailed analysis of what really took place in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia would be interesting: if the "military" victory was brilliant, the normalization of the working class took much longer. And, there had not been a 10-million member strong Solidarity!

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