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What Course for Argentine Trotskyism?



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What Course for Argentine Trotskyism?

Analysis of the evolution of the class struggle in Argentina and how revolutionary Marxists should respond to developments in that country has been at the center of a political debate within the Fourth International for more than half a decade. The discussion has centered on perspectives for Argentine Trotskyism and the balance sheet to be drawn on the application of alternative lines. It has touched on some of the most important questions of program and tactics for the Marxist movement—the role of guerrilla warfare, armed struggle, defense of democratic rights in colonial and semicolonial countries, the united front, the utilization of such electoral opportunities as are open to a revolutionary workers party, and many others. At bottom is the question of how to build a mass revolutionary party in Argentina today.

This debate inside the Fourth International and its sympathizing organizations resulted in the formation of two organized formations that debated the counterposed positions, the International Majority Tendency (IMT) and the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF). Those interested in the general documents outlining the views of the two formations will find them published in a special issue of *Intercontinental Press*, "Documents of the World Congress of the Fourth International," December 23, 1974. This can be obtained by sending \$2.50 to *Intercontinental Press*, P.O. Box 116, Village Station, New York, New York 10014.

At the center of the debate between the LTF and IMT are differences over the program and course of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores of Argentina (PST—Socialist Workers party) which is today the largest Trotskyist organization in the world.

The last stage of this debate on Argentina has been public, initiated in July 1974 by the publication of the article entitled "Whither the PST?" by the IMT majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

This article was answered by the leadership of the PST in an article entitled "In Defense of the PST and the Truth," to which the IMT responded with another public rejoinder entitled, "Statement of the United Secretariat on the PST." The public exchange ended with a document by the PST leadership entitled "In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter Number 2."

These four documents are reprinted in chronological order at the beginning of this *Education for Socialists* bulletin.

The last two items of the public exchange were published on the eve of a meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International held January 1975. At that gathering Argentina was the central political debate on the agenda and the general line of "In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter No. 2" was approved by the steering committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction and presented to the International Executive Committee in the name of the LTF. IMT members at the gathering approved the line of the two public statements by the IMT members of the United Secretariat.

At the IEC meeting itself there was a full and democratic exchange of opinion on the new lessons to be drawn from the evolution of the class struggle in Argentina and the implications for building a party.

Following the IEC, the United Secretariat decided to continue the debate on the political line for Trotskyism in Argentina, but it was agreed that this discussion should take place in the internal discussion bulletin of the Fourth International.

In addition to the four public documents published together for the first time, this bulletin includes various documents of the PST and articles translated from their paper, *Avanzada Socialista*. Most of these items are referred to in the public exchange between the IMT and PST.

May 1975

Whither the PST?

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, September 9, 1974

[The following resolution, passed by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, was published in the July 26, 1974, issue of *Rouge*, the weekly newspaper reflecting the views of the French Trotskyists organized in the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire. The title under which the resolution appeared was "Où Va le PST?" (Whither the PST?). The translation from the French is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

On March 22, at their request, the Argentine president Juan Perón received representatives of eight political parties. The parties involved were the Unión Cívica Radical [Radical Civic Union, the bourgeois liberal opposition party], the Partido Revolucionario Cristiano [Revolutionary Christian party], the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores [PST, Socialist Workers party], the Partido Socialista Popular [People's Socialist party], the Partido Intransigente, the UDELPA [Unión del Pueblo Adelante—People's Union for Progress], the Communist party, and the Progressive Democratic party. This meeting was not an isolated incident. It was part of a series of moves made by Perón with the aim of "normalizing" his relations with the officially recognized parties (another meeting took place on April 5). But the March 22 meeting was the most important one up to now because the eight organizations issued a joint statement at its conclusion:

"The participants," this statement said, "have confirmed their fundamental commitment to spare no effort to maintain and consolidate the process of institutionalization in our country within the context of the democratic system and through the practice of coexistence and constructive dialogue. . . . The republic has been experiencing difficult moments as a result of its confrontation with forces that have long subjected it to their pressure. But these problems will be easily

surmounted by actions of solidarity conducted by sectors that respect the aspiration of the majority of the people and of the popular strata for freedom that was expressed in the elections, a freedom that guarantees their right to continue to express themselves in the future so that they can apply this liberty in practice to free themselves from the burden of imperialist domination and assure enjoyment by the workers of the benefits of the wealth created by their labor.

"As participants in this process, we have not taken an attitude of opposition to achieving these objectives. Because of the spectrum of opinion represented by those taking part and the development of the discussion, this meeting must be considered a concrete step forward, a combining of efforts that will assure the continuation of the ongoing process of institutionalization along the lines the people voted for. We understand all the risks involved in the endeavor the country is calling for, and, over and above any differences about how deep or how fast the process of change should go, we agree on the unavoidable need for it. As for those who want the constitutional system to fail or are waiting for circumstances that will permit a new reactionary adventure, those who are trying to use sectors of the regime to prejudice future options, and those who are adopting totalitarian or corporatist practices that fit in ideologically with fascist-type demands and the interests of the multinational companies that exert a constant pressure on our frontiers, all these people must realize that this country is united on the basis of a fundamental agreement and will respond to their actions."

This statement, which was published on March 22 by all the daily papers, was reprinted in the March 28 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the organ of the PST. But *Avanzada Socialista* did not confine itself to publishing the com-

munique; it added two commentaries in the form of editorials.

After noting the escalating violence from the right, which reached its culmination in the coup by the police chief Navarro in Córdoba, the first editorial explained that "participation (by the PST) in the dialogue with the president of the republic" was a "concrete step in defense of the democratic rights gained in heroic struggle by the mobilizations of the workers and the people that have developed since the Cordobazo." It went on to explain that "defending constitutional stability" should not coincide with a political defense of the government and drew the following conclusion: "The fact that eight parties reached an agreement to call for a meeting to demand institutionalization is of extraordinary importance. But as always we will continue to maintain that mobilizations constitute the primary way to defend democratic gains. This has been shown, moreover, by the Acindar struggle and that of the bank workers. This is why we will continue to point to the need for an agreement to defend democratic rights in action, starting with a big public meeting of all the parties, the political youth organizations, and all the workers and student organizations." The same appeal for a joint meeting with the bourgeois parties was repeated at the end of the second editorial, which explained the need for "concrete, flexible responses to every conjuncture in the class struggle."

The PST leadership must have realized that all of this—its decision to participate in a meeting that served as a cover for Perón's "normalization" moves, its signing a common document with bourgeois parties (including the Unión Cívica Radical, the traditional bourgeois party and even today the principal bourgeois force aside from Peronism), its proclaiming a "fundamental agreement" among all the signers on defending the process

of "institutionalization," its accepting "objectives" approved by "the people" (which in reality are objectives elaborated by Cámpora and Perón), and its thesis that the fight against fascism can and must be conducted in common with the parties representing the class enemy—would provoke reactions among the party membership.

That is why the same issue of *Avanzada Socialista* published a letter signed by a "Comrade F." (a letter that reached the editors with astonishing rapidity) along with an answer that took up almost two pages.

The letter seemed to accept class collaboration with the bourgeois parties. Indeed, it said (falsifying a quotation from Trotsky referring to the need for a united front with the Social Democrats in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s) that "it is permissible to form a united front with the class enemy and even with the devil's grandmother." But the author criticized signing the eight-party document because, he said, in this way the PST had aided Perón and given its support to a bourgeois government on the brink of collapse. The editors' answer clarified the central question. It maintained that the starting point had to be "a basic fact—there has been a semifascist coup that has toppled a regional government. This coup was not an isolated incident but represented a leap in the escalation of violence by the right that is moving onto the offensive and has no intention of stopping." The conclusion was that in the given context one should not conduct a struggle to overthrow the government or the existing institutions but, to the contrary, it was necessary to defend "democratic institutionalization and that, to this end, it is correct to establish an accord with bourgeois parties by signing joint declarations and calling for joint demonstrations."

In the past, the leaders of the PST have criticized the Stalinists' popular-front conceptions and they formally reaffirmed these criticisms in the issue of *Avanzada Socialista* in question. But just as they previously supported the Uruguayan Frente Amplio, which was led by a representative of the bourgeoisie, SEREGNI, today they have signed a joint statement

with bourgeois parties and called for common actions with these parties. In order to justify this ultraopportunist attitude, they utilize precisely the argument the Stalinists advanced in the mid-1930s to justify their adopting the popular-front line, that is, that it is legitimate to make alliances with the bourgeoisie or its so-called democratic sectors in order to oppose a fascist danger. By this action, the PST is entering a new stage in its evolution, openly breaking with the revolutionary Marxist conception of the workers united front based on the Leninist conception of the Third International and revived by Trotsky.

At the same time, they have forgotten the fundamental distinction that exists between the democratic rights demanded by the workers movement and the structures of bourgeois democracy. In signing a document that calls for institutionalization in the country and in taking a stand alongside bourgeois parties as a "participant in the process of institutionalization," they are helping to maintain Perón's principal obfuscation, the pseudodemocratic farce that the Argentine bourgeoisie has been playing for three years, and they are falling for the maneuver designed to present Perón as the guarantor of a "democracy" that includes everybody except the extreme right and extreme left organizations (Perón has expressed this line in an explicit way). The term used several times by *Avanzada Socialista*, dialogue with the president, is quite revealing of the opportunist conceptions of the PST leaders.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International, which has always rejected every form of class collaboration with the "democratic parties" of the bourgeoisie, thinks that while they should take advantage of whatever openings for legal or semilegal activity there are, the duty of revolutionists in Latin America is to expose the fraudulent operation inaugurated by the Gran Acuerdo Nacional (GAN—Great National Agreement) and carried forward by Perón, that their duty is to fight without compromise or truce against the government in office and the bourgeois state.

June 1974

In its issue of June 26, 1974, *Avanzada Socialista* states that the PST did not sign the declaration of March 22, 1974, "because there was still disagreement" with the other parties. Supposedly the editor in chief published the report about the signature by error. But the article in the paper that offered this correction still contained an explicit reaffirmation of the legitimacy in Argentina today of concluding tactical accords with bourgeois parties for the defense of democratic freedoms and of bourgeois democratic institutions.

The fundamental option of the PST is further confirmed by the fact that on June 29, 1974, three days after the publication of this issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the PST together with seven other parties called "center-left" by the Argentine papers signed a statement supporting "the process of institutionalization in the country" and "the operation of the legal mechanisms of constitutional succession." (*La Opinión*, June 30, 1974.) On July 3, in the aftermath of Perón's death, it signed a new statement in the city of Santa Fe at the request of the president of the provincial chamber of deputies favoring "the maintenance of constitutional stability as the only adequate means for attaining social justice in freedom, breaking the grip of the imperialist interests, and achieving lasting independence." (*El Cronista Comercial*, July 4, 1974.)

This proves that despite the article in the June 26, 1974, *Avanzada Socialista* the PST has fully maintained its fundamental difference with the programmatic line of the Fourth International on the method of defending the workers' freedoms.

This tidying up of a programmatic deviation for which the Fourth International cannot take any responsibility must in no way stand in the way of developing a vigorous campaign of solidarity with the PST and a defense of this party against the blows of the repression and the terror of the extreme right.

July 12, 1974

In Defense of the PST and the Truth

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, September 9, 1974

[The following statement was issued by the Executive Committee of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers party), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Argentina, in reply to a resolution "Whither the PST?" passed by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

[The translation from the Spanish is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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The United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in a resolution passed at the end of May, subjected the leadership of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores to a severe criticism that we consider to be unjustified.

Ordinarily the matter would be discussed within the ranks of the world Trotskyist movement, whose political activities are of fraternal interest to us. (Reactionary legislation bars the PST from affiliating with the Fourth International as an official section.) However, the authors of the resolution made the document public, thereby compelling us, much to our regret, to reply in public.

There are several versions of the resolution. In our reply we shall refer to the version published in the July 26, 1974, issue of *Rouge*, the weekly newspaper reflecting the views of the French Trotskyists organized in the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire. For the information of the Argentine workers, *Avanzada Socialista* is publishing a Spanish translation of the document.

No information is provided in the resolution as to the vote cast in the United Secretariat. It was not unanimous. The resolution was proposed by representatives of the International Majority Tendency, which holds a majority in the United Secretariat. Representatives of the Leninist Trotskyist

Faction argued and voted against it. They proposed seeking further information from Argentina, in particular from the PST.

An additional fact should be indicated. The decision to make the resolution public was made at a United Secretariat meeting held July 3, 1974. A postscript, dated July 12, was included in the version published in *Rouge*. The postscript was not considered at any meeting of the United Secretariat.

The central contention made in the resolution is that "the PST is entering a new stage in its evolution, openly breaking with the revolutionary Marxist conception of the workers united front based on the Leninist conception of the Third International and revived by Trotsky."

This charge is accompanied by the assertion that the leaders of the PST have adopted a policy of crossing class lines and that in justification "they utilize precisely the argument the Stalinists advanced in the mid-1930s to justify their adopting the popular-front line, that is, that it is legitimate to make alliances with the bourgeoisie or its so-called democratic sectors in order to oppose a fascist danger."

In justification of these grave accusations, the authors of the resolution allege that the leaders of the PST joined with representatives of seven other political parties, among which were several bourgeois parties (including the Unión Cívica Radical), in signing a common document that was presented to "the Argentine president Juan Perón" in an interview held "March 22." (The actual date was March 21.)

To prove that the document could not be signed by the PST without crossing class lines, the authors of the resolution quote several key passages from it. They then quote from two supposed editorials in the March

28-April 5 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*.

(We say "supposed editorials" precisely because only one of the articles cited as such by *Rouge* is actually an editorial. This confusion is odd since in recent months *Avanzada Socialista* has followed an explicit norm, publishing its editorial in each issue on page 3 in 12-point type under the caption "EDITORIAL" placed in the right-hand column. The authors of the resolution are apparently utilizing the fact that almost all of the articles in *Avanzada Socialista* are unsigned (a tradition inherited from twenty-six years of clandestinity) in order to dub any and all articles as editorials. And they do this despite the fact that the very issue of *Avanzada Socialista* cited by them, adhered to our norm, that is, published only one article under the title of "EDITORIAL"—on page 3 in 12-point type. And from that article, devoted entirely to the interview with Perón, the authors of the resolution cite nothing except the following phrase: "concrete, flexible responses to every conjuncture in the class struggle.")

In their opinion, this assemblage of quotations proves that the leaders of the PST believe that presenting Perón with a document containing a bourgeois political line signed by a mixture of bourgeois and proletarian parties constitutes an exemplary action in defending democratic rights and fighting fascism.

The charges appear on the surface to be irrefutable. Nonetheless something is awry. The Peronist administration does not appear to have concluded that the PST capitulated. On March 25, four days after the interview with Perón, Comrade Juan Carlos Coral was arrested and imprisoned for participating in a meeting with workers on strike held in front of the entrance to the Banco Nación. An article on this was published in the same issue of *Avanzada Socialista*

that reported the meeting with Perón.

Nor do the ultraright thugs, who are operating in collusion with sectors of the government, appear to have concluded that the PST is bowing to the pressure of the bourgeoisie. To the contrary, they consider that the PST, in view of its fast rate of growth and its expansion into more and more areas, is becoming a greater potential threat to Argentine capitalism. That is why they have stepped up their raids on our headquarters and their assassinations of members of the PST.

The leaders of the PST did not sign a common document with any other political party, and no document of such kind was presented to Perón at the March 21 interview.

How then did the authors of the United Secretariat resolution gain a contrary impression?

We acknowledge that we are partly to blame for this. *Avanzada Socialista* did publish the text of the supposed common document in the March 28-April 5 issue. Moreover, it included a list of supposed signers. This was an error—along with the delay in correcting it—for which we take responsibility. Comrade Coral did make a public correction on May 8 in a television interview. A public rectification was also made by the editorial staff of *Avanzada Socialista* in the June 26 issue.

However, these public acknowledgments that an error had been committed did not satisfy the authors of the United Secretariat resolution. Apparently they consider the public rectifications to be merely part of a cover-up.

It has thus become necessary to explain the circumstances of the interview with Perón more fully.

The context was the ultrarightist coup of February 27 in which the chief of police in Córdoba, Antonio Domingo Navarro, toppled the elected provincial government headed by Obregón Cano. This ominous development, which threatened to start a chain reaction that could lead to a similar coup in Buenos Aires and the reinstatement of a military dictatorship on a national scale, was profoundly disturbing. To meet the threat, it was imperative for the Argentine workers to mobilize in defense of their hard-won democratic rights and press toward a socialist resolution of the economic and political crisis racking

Argentine society. For the PST, this was the central objective governing everything we did.

The coup in Córdoba also disturbed other circles, including sectors of the bourgeoisie. For various reasons these sectors feared a resumption of military rule; they also feared the possibility of a confrontation that could goad the workers into a socialist revolution.

From the revolutionary-socialist point of view there was every reason to foster this incipient division within the ruling class and to seek to take advantage of it. While this was a secondary consideration, it played a role in shaping our immediate tactics, particularly in the question of gaining publicity that might aid in mobilizing the workers.

The leading figure in the move to seek an interview with Perón was Ricardo Balbín of the Unión Cívica Radical. He had his own political reasons, of course, for doing this. Among them was fear of what the Córdoba coup might signify. He arranged the interview with Perón.

Perón granted the interview as head of the government. As the authors of the United Secretariat resolution correctly explain, Perón was interested in bolstering his political image as the "guarantor" of democratic rights for everyone except the ultrarightists and the protagonists of guerrilla warfare. We understood this, and we did everything we could to counteract Perón's objectives in this respect, exposing the real role of his regime.

The projected interview had another side—it involved a formal governmental act of quasiparliamentary character. The interview was an official one between the president and the representatives of legally recognized parties listed as being in the *opposition*. Perón therefore demanded that the opposition parties present a document stating the objectives they sought in the interview.

For an opposition party to withdraw at this point would have brought into question its legal status. To struggle for legality and to defend it when it is won is a matter of principle for Leninists.

Oscar Alende, of the Partido Intransigente, drew up a draft for consideration by the seven other parties. Aside from other items, we found the draft to be totally unacceptable both

for what it included (support of a bourgeois government and its institutions) and for what it left out (mobilization of the working class in defense of democratic rights). At a meeting of representatives of the eight parties, we argued in favor of amending the document along these lines.

We sought to eliminate all references to supporting the Peronist regime and to add points concerning mobilizing the workers. It soon became clear, of course, that it was impossible for the eight parties to reach agreement on a joint statement.

Balbín communicated this fact to officials of the Perón administration. Perón then made a concession; he withdrew his demand that a common statement be presented.

Thus the interview was held without a common statement being presented to Perón and with each party free to state its own positions. It was on that basis and that basis alone that we participated in the interview. We went as representatives of the PST and not as adherents of an unprincipled block or incipient popular front.

It can be argued that we made a mistake in doing this. We do not think it was a mistake, but we are quite willing to discuss the question and are open to persuasion if sufficiently compelling arguments can be adduced. However, this has nothing to do with the charge made by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution that we joined with bourgeois parties in signing an unprincipled document.

We recognized that our participating in an interview with Perón might be misunderstood by a few loyal militants and that some of our opponents might subject it to malicious misinterpretation. Through all the means at our disposal, including nationwide television broadcasts, we sought to lessen those risks. In the only genuine editorial cited by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution, we clearly stated our political opposition to Peronism and the Peronist regime. For instance, in relation to our posing the danger represented by the violent actions of the budding semifascist currents, we said:

"Preserving the stability of the institutions in this period does not mean supporting the Peronists' policy or their government; rather it means defending the right to utilize all demo-

cratic instruments, which however precarious, insufficient, and grudgingly conceded, make possible a more extensive and continuous relationship with the working class as a whole and the people. It means preserving the right—for ourselves as well as the other political forces—to publish journals, open headquarters, make use of radio and television, organize rallies, assemblies, and demonstrations. It also means the right for workers to improve their trade-union organizations, freeing them both from military intervention and from the bureaucracy, as the *compañeros* in Villa Constitución have just done. It means, finally, the chance to make an impact in the election of our rulers and in criticizing their programs and the activities of the government.

"All this has absolutely nothing to do with a *defense of the policy of the government*. Perón came to office with the support of a broad alliance of all the capitalist and imperialist sectors. Defending Perón's government would mean defending the Social Pact designed to freeze wages at the present levels of exploitation, guaranteeing the privileges of the landholding oligarchy and the investments of the foreign monopolies. It would mean, finally, defending the broad range of repressive means by which they are trying to impose this economic policy, from reforms of the Penal Code to enforcing the Ley de Prescindibilidad [Civil Servants Redundancy Law]." (Emphasis in the original.)

We believe that it is impermissible under any circumstances to give *political* support to a bourgeois regime, party, coalition, structure, or representative—and we have never done so in the slightest way. We have always opposed taking the road of class collaboration leading to popular frontism and to bourgeois nationalism.

In the face of a rightist coup, the threat or actual outbreak of civil war, and an assault on the liberties of the people and the rights of the workers, it is permissible and even sometimes imperative to organize and carry on *practical actions* in defense of democratic rights together with nonproletarian organizations and tendencies. That is what Lenin taught. At the same time the revolutionary party must make it crystal clear that such a strictly limited tactic of joint action to ward off an immediate danger does

not entail the slightest political subordination, rapprochement, agreement, or collusion with the false policies of the temporary bourgeois democratic allies. Lenin instilled the principle of maintaining independence of action and voice. Democracy can be safeguarded only through the constant and independent struggle of the workers for power and socialism. The PST has worked to mobilize the masses along this line and will continue to do so.

What led the daily papers to report that a common document had been signed? What led some of them to say that the supposed joint document had been handed to Perón? (The majority of the Buenos Aires dailies, however—*Noticias, La Nación, Clarín, Mayoría*—said that it was only a press release.)

In giving the press his version of the interview with Perón, Balbín used as an aide-mémoire his own draft statement based on corrections he had made to the draft drawn up by Alende and the one proposed by Coral. No doubt it was from this that the reporters gained the impression that it was a joint statement, and a few of them concluded that it had been handed to Perón. It should be added that the leaders of the Communist party have been pressing for the formation of a popular front in Argentina and they hoped to utilize the interview with Perón as a step in that direction. It was in their interest to help advance the interpretation that a common document had been agreed to.

Let us now take up the attempt by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution to show by judiciously selected quotations from two articles in the March 28-April 5 issue of *Avanzada Socialista* that we have made a turn and now favor joining unprincipled blocs with bourgeois parties in defense of democratic rights.

The United Secretariat resolution states that it is our position that in the given context a struggle must not be conducted to overthrow the government or the present institutions, but on the contrary it is necessary to defend "democratic institutionalization and that, to this end, it is correct to establish an accord with bourgeois parties by signing joint declarations and calling for joint demonstrations."

Neither the genuine nor the supposed editorials utilized by the au-

thors of the United Secretariat resolution contain the quotation ascribed to us. Was the "quotation" taken from a different source? We would appreciate learning what the source was.

The matter is important, because it is on the basis of that "quotation" and its accompanying interpretation that we are accused of repeating the arguments used by the Stalinists in the thirties in favor of a popular front. The truth is that we have been campaigning in the most consistent way for many years against popular frontism. The very same issue of *Avanzada Socialista* that has proved so serviceable to the authors of the resolution carries vigorous polemics against popular frontism, which in the current situation in Argentina represents a real danger. (The authors of the resolution acknowledge our polemics against popular frontism, but brush them aside, saying we only "formally reaffirmed" our position.)

They brush aside, for instance, the following statement in one of the articles cited by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution:

"We . . . are the most determined opponents of 'democratic' or 'popular fronts.' That is, united fronts between workers and bosses. The most basic thing we are fighting for is the political independence of the workers movement from the parties or fronts of the bosses. For this reason, we did not join in the elections either with Frejuli [Frente Justicialista de Liberación Nacional—the National Liberation Front for Social Justice, the Peronist electoral formation] or the APR [Alianza Popular Revolucionaria—People's Revolutionary Alliance, a popular-front-type front of small left liberal parties supported by the CP.] We stand, more strongly than ever, for a united front of the working class."

The authors of the United Secretariat resolution even go so far as to take phrases from the document allegedly handed to Perón, place them in quotation marks, and represent them as our position. This procedure enables them to say the following:

"The PST leadership must have realized that all of this—its decision to participate in a meeting that served as a cover for Perón's 'normalization' moves, its signing a common document with bourgeois parties (including the Unión Cívica Radical, the traditional bourgeois party and even to-

day the principal bourgeois force aside from Peronism), its proclaiming a 'fundamental agreement' among all the signers on defending the process of 'institutionalization,' its accepting 'objectives' approved by 'the people' (which in reality are objectives elaborated by C mpora and Per n), and its thesis that the fight against fascism can and must be conducted in common with the parties representing the class enemy—would provoke reactions among the party membership."

With such methods, it is easy to prove a case—any case, no matter how far it departs from the truth.

The other quotations selected by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution are irrelevant inasmuch as they do not presumably defend the famous statement that was allegedly presented to Per n. They deal with the concrete situation revolving around the ultrarightist coup in C rdoba, the broader threat this represents in Argentina today, and how the opposition of certain bourgeois sectors to a possible fascist threat in Argentina might be utilized in furthering the only sure answer to fascism, that is, mobilization of the working class in accordance with the program of revolutionary socialism.

From the way these quotations are utilized and from a couple of mistranslations, it is evident that the authors of the United Secretariat resolution do not understand the concrete situation in Argentina or our position on it. For instance, they quote one of the articles in *Avanzada Socialista* as talking about "defending constitutional stability." The original reads "defending institutional stability." That difference is not an essential one; what is essential is to understand that the reference is to the *coup in C rdoba and its ramifications*.

The loose use of the word "*institucional*" has undoubtedly added an element of confusion (and we are not free of blame in this), but it is hard to understand how the authors of the United Secretariat could have so badly misinterpreted the term in this instance, for it immediately follows the opening paragraph of the article outlining the concrete situation. The translating error (if that is what it really is) is repeated elsewhere. For instance, the article states that the fact "that eight political parties converged to demand a meeting to raise the institu-

tional question is of extraordinary importance [que ocho partidos pol ticos hayan coincidido en solicitar la entrevista para plantear el problema institucional es de extraordinaria importancia]." This is translated as "the fact that eight parties reached an agreement to call for a meeting to demand institutionalization is of extraordinary importance [le fait que huit partis soient arriv s   un accord pour demander la r union, afin de demander l'institutionnalisation est d'une importance extraordinaire]." But the reference in the article is to the struggle for the establishment of constitutional guarantees of democratic rights, a process that began with the Cordobazo and the subsequent downfall of the military dictatorship. In other words, the eight parties sought the interview in order to dramatize the problem of the coup in C rdoba and the danger that the process of establishing democratic rights might be reversed. The objective of the PST was not to plead with Per n but to give impetus to mobilizing the Argentine workers.

Still another charge is made against the leaders of the PST by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution. They state: "At the same time, they [the PST leaders] have forgotten the fundamental distinction that exists between the democratic rights demanded by the workers movement and the structures of bourgeois democracy."

We acknowledge that some of the formulations we have used could have led to this impression. We might even have made the error in the current situation in Argentina of not carefully distinguishing between a given bourgeois "structure" and the defense of democratic rights. Since our attention has been called to this, we have begun discussing the matter. We appeal to other sectors of the Trotskyist movement to also consider this question, bearing in mind the concrete situation in Argentina, including the meaning acquired by the word "*institucionalizaci n*."¹

1. "Institutionalization" and the "process of institutionalization" have acquired a special meaning in current Argentine politics.

In 1949, during his first regime, Peron put a new constitution into effect. After he was overthrown in 1955, his successors restored the 1853 constitution. A brutal military dictatorship that seized power in 1966 converted the 1853 constitution into a dead letter, dissolving congress, altering

If an adjustment is called for, we will not hesitate to make it as we have in the past on other questions.

However, we insist that our basic approach is squarely in accordance with the Leninist concept of the Third International, particularly as promulgated by Leon Trotsky. That basic approach is to mobilize the workers and their allies along the road to a socialist revolution through methods outlined in the Transitional Program.

We see no alternative to this approach. The "guerrilla strategy" has been advanced as a possible shortcut. We have rejected the "guerrilla strategy" as not being in accordance with the Leninist concept of the Third International, above all as promulgated by Leon Trotsky. In Argentina the "guerrilla strategy" has proved to

the judicial system, violating democratic rights in the most arbitrary way, and ruling by decree.

Upon regaining the presidency in September 1973, Peron began drafting still another constitution. This was supposed to be unveiled next year.

The status of the constitution in Argentina is thus far from clear.

Meanwhile the Argentine workers themselves, through a series of giant mobilizations that in some instances amounted to semi-insurrections, thoroughly undermined the military dictatorship, and re-established at least certain democratic rights in practice. This set off a broad movement to extend the process—to "institutionalize," these rights; that is, to compel observance of rights that have been formally recognized and to codify additional ones.

The PST has actively supported this movement, seeking to develop it through mass mobilizations. The stand taken by the PST is not different from that of Trotskyists in other countries who battle for democratic rights.

In the United States, for instance, during the McCarthyite period the Socialist Workers party stressed the struggle for observance of the Bill of Rights, the section of the U. S. constitution guaranteeing democratic rights.

Today the SWP supports the struggle for an amendment to the constitution guaranteeing equal rights to women. If the amendment were passed, this could be described in the current terminology of Argentine politics as "institutionalizing" equal rights for women.

In Argentina, reactionary forces are seeking to reverse the "process of institutionalization." Thus the issue has become an acute one in the class struggle there. — IP

be a big obstacle to mobilizing the workers and their allies along revolutionary-socialist lines.

We note in passing that the authors of the United Secretariat resolution throw in the charge that we "previously supported the Uruguayan Frente Amplio, which was led by a representative of the bourgeoisie, SEREGNI . . ."

The intent of this gratuitous assertion is clear. The authors want to suggest that we supported the bourgeois figure Seregni, and called on the workers to vote for the Frente Amplio, a class-collaborationist bloc. The innuendo, however, has no basis in fact. That is why the authors of the United Secretariat resolution offer no quotations or other "proofs." (We are willing to discuss the character of the Uruguayan Frente Amplio, the Chilean Unidad Popular, or the French Union de la Gauche, and what tactical attitude ought to have been adopted toward them, but this is hardly the place to take up these problems.)

We turn now to the July 12 addendum to the resolution of the United Secretariat. The addendum acknowledges the public self-criticism made by the editorial staff in the June 26 issue of *Avanzada Socialista* only to shrug it off as meaningless. If the leaders of the PST did not sign the document handed to Perón, that proves nothing, they argue, because the PST leaders support such a course in general! But then the specific case involving our allegedly signing the document, on which the authors of the

United Secretariat hinged everything, also disappears, and we are left with nothing but their general assertion, deprived of any foundation in fact, that our course has been "opportunist."

Moreover, the authors of the resolution contend, if the leaders of the PST did not sign the document allegedly handed to Perón, they at least signed other unprincipled documents; therefore the charges against us still stand. The fresh "evidence" adduced for this argument—which is an extraordinary one to say the least—is that on June 29, 1974, the PST added its signature to the signatures of seven other parties on a "center-left" declaration supporting "the process of institutionalization in the country" and "the operation of the legal mechanisms of constitutional succession." The source of this "evidence," state the authors of the resolution, is the June 30, 1974, issue of the Buenos Aires bourgeois daily *La Opinión*. (Other newspapers reported to the contrary. For example, *La Nación*.)

Besides this, the authors of the resolution declare, on July 3, following the death of Perón, the leaders of the PST signed a statement in the city of Santa Fe in response to a request from the president of the provincial parliament in support of "the maintenance of constitutional stability as the only adequate means for attaining social justice in freedom, breaking the grip of the imperialist interests, and achieving lasting independence." The source cited for this "evidence" is a dispatch

from Rosario published in the July 4 issue of the Buenos Aires bourgeois daily *El Cronista Comercial*.

The reports are erroneous in both instances. In neither case did either leaders or members of the PST sign any such documents or support them. We would suggest to the authors of the postscript to the resolution of the United Secretariat that the standards of accuracy in the bourgeois press in Argentina are even below those of *Le Monde*.

A final point: How could it happen that the editorial staff of *Avanzada Socialista* made the error it did in reporting the March 21 interview with Perón? It is of no public interest to go into the details, which concern the organization and functioning of the staff. Suffice it to state that the specific problem is but one of many facing our organization in a period of tumultuous growth. The opportunities for recruitment and expansion have placed extreme demands on all our seasoned cadres. New adherents are being integrated as fast as possible, but full integration requires time. Meanwhile errors are bound to crop up. Our situation, we are sure, will be appreciated by those sectors of the world Trotskyist movement that have undergone similar periods of swift growth. What we require above all from the Fourth International at present is understanding of our opportunities and problems—and loyal collaboration in our effort to handle them in a principled way.

August 20, 1974

Statement of the United Secretariat on the PST

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, January 20, 1975

[The following statement was published in the December 12, 1974, issue of *Inprecor*, a fortnightly publication of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International has adopted the following statement in response to the August 20, 1974, statement of the Executive Committee of the PST:

We acknowledge the affirmation of the comrades of the PST that they did not sign the document of March 21, 1974, or the documents of June 29 and July 3, 1974, signatures the Argentine press had attributed to them.

If the contrary impression was created, it was due in large part to the fact that *Avanzada Socialista*, the organ of the PST, had itself confirmed the information in the bourgeois press in this regard and to the fact that there was an extraordinary delay in the correction made by the PST.

Let us leave aside the argument that it was necessary to wait two months before publicly correcting the error made by *Avanzada Socialista* in order to give that correction greater exposure through the television appearance of Comrade Coral. But what of the delay in the *internal* rectification?

The comrades of the PST were invited to three successive meetings of the United Secretariat to explain their attitude toward the meeting and document of March 21, 1974. They did not attend any of these meetings. They could have immediately explained in writing that they had not signed the document in question. They refrained from doing so. The first written indication in this regard was received by the United Secretariat at the beginning of June in a letter from the PST dated May 23. The first public interpretation of the new version of the facts came to the United Secretariat three months after the events, with the June 26 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, which explained that the PST had not signed the document. To this day we have received no explanation of the reasons that led the PST to delay so long an internal rectification that could have been sent forty-eight hours after their receipt of the first letter from the United Secretariat.

We also acknowledge to the comrades of the PST that in the published text of the United Secretariat resolution of July 12, 1974, the passage relative to the PST's conception of the defense of institutionalization was placed between quotation marks through an error in transcription of the manuscript. It is true that this was not a quotation from *Avanzada Socialista* but rather our own judgment of the meaning of the conceptions and action of the leaders of the PST, a judgment based not on an allegedly abusive quotation but rather on an analysis that we can only reiterate.

All this is not the basis of the problem. What concerned the leadership of the Fourth International was not only the fact that according to the Argentine press, including *Avanzada Socialista*, the PST was said to have signed a common declaration with seven other parties, several of them bourgeois parties, one of them the country's principal bourgeois opposition party. What was also of concern was the argumentation through which the leadership of the PST had justified the meeting with representatives of the government and the bourgeois parties and through which *Avanzada Socialista* had justified—"by mistake," it now appears—signature of a common document of the eight parties.

Avanzada Socialista continued to develop this argumentation for months. It thus exhibited a political orientation that breaks with the programmatic continuity of the Fourth International and of revolutionary Marxism on at least one important question. That is the reason the leadership of the Fourth International judged it necessary to make public its criticism of the PST in its declaration of July 12, 1974, and, at the request of the PST, continues to have this discussion publicly.

I.

Thus, in the first denial, published by the June 26 *Avanzada Socialista*, we read (we are quoting the English version published in the July 15, 1974, *Intercontinental Press*):

"In our country the democratic liberties we have at present are the result of tremendous workers' struggles that erupted with the Cordobazo. These liberties are being threatened by the rise of fascist groups that are supported by a wing of the government, by the union bureaucracy, and by the bourgeoisie. Faced with that threat, we consider it not only permissible but obligatory to make limited, tactical, temporary agreements with any sector that comes out for the defense of democratic rights. . . .

"One of the eight parties proposed that a joint declaration be made, and it presented a draft. Our party proposed a series of changes that were partially accepted. At the time we went to press, the editorial staff thought that the document bore the signature of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores. Actually, it was not signed because there was still disagreement with it."

That can mean but one thing: In principle, the leadership of the PST continues to think that signing a common document with the Communist party and a certain number of bourgeois parties, among them the country's principal bourgeois party, "for the defense of the process of institutionalization" was correct. If the PST did not sign this particular common declaration, it is simply because an agreement on the exact content

of the declaration had not (must we say, had not yet?) been reached.

In its July 4, 1974, issue *Avanzada Socialista* returned to the charge and wrote (again, we are quoting the English version, published in the July 22, 1974, *Intercontinental Press*):

"Our party is the only militant party left in Argentina that has publicly stated that it supports the process of institutionalization. . . .

"In October 1972 representatives of our party went to meet the representative of the military dictatorship to tell him that we supported the 'process of institutionalization' and to demand the withdrawal of the military junta from the government. . . .

". . . today . . . once again, in the aftermath of General Perón's death, we have reiterated our support for the 'process of institutionalization' against the attacks of the putschist right."

We were and are in total opposition to this political orientation, whose fundamental logic, based on a distorted quotation from Lenin, is expressed in the clearest manner in the following passage from the July 4, 1974, *Avanzada Socialista*:

"In a nutshell, since the Cordobazo unleashed the struggle against the Onganía dictatorship, the word 'institutionalization' has acquired a meaning in Argentine politics different from the one given in the dictionary. It has become a synonym of fighting to defend or win democratic rights.

"This is why we have used the term in public statements. And we do not regret using it to condemn the military dictatorship, even though this could have the effect of defending the elections the Peronists won; or to condemn the Navarro coup, even though this could have the effect in practice of defending Obregón Cano; or to condemn a coup d'etat now, even if it has the effect of defending the Peronist government. . . . This is what Lenin was referring to when he said that every revolutionary had to distinguish between forms of government and defend higher ones. . . .

"How must the process of institutionalization be defended?

"The fact that in defending democratic rights our position coincides with non-working-class and nonsocialist currents and parties does not mean that we agree with them on anything else or on the way to defend these democratic rights.

"Our party will always agree with Balbín and the FAS lawyers in opposing by all means the suppression of the daily *El Mundo*. Balbín does this in the name of the bourgeois liberal constitution he supports. We do so in the name of workers democracy and socialism.

"These convergences with bourgeois sectors can be expressed in the form of limited agreements, documents, statements, etc. All these various types of public actions, from joint communiqués to rallies, are useful and help to create the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism. Moreover, they safeguard and reinforce the legal rights of the revolutionary party."

We can only repeat: We are in total disagreement with this conception of the struggle against fascism and the threat of rightist dictatorship. For the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International, the struggle against

fascism and the threat of rightist dictatorship is centered on the necessity for the *workers united front*, which is a class front and not an interclass front. We reject the Social Democratic policy of lesser evilism according to which the workers are supposed to defend "superior" or "better" bourgeois "forms of government" against "less good" or "inferior" forms of government. Lenin explained that it was perfectly possible to struggle against Kornilov without defending the "superior" form of government of Kerensky. Trotsky many times explained that the necessity of combating the fascist threat as the heaviest threat weighing on the working class in no way involved defense of the "superior" government of Brüning, not to mention that of von Papen or von Schleicher, against Hitler. (Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971, pp. 95, 108, 135-7, 140, 152, etc.)

The position of *Avanzada Socialista* was so excessive that the PST had to back off on the matter and sketch out an initial self-criticism in its statement of August 20, 1974. There we read:

"Still another charge is made against the leaders of the PST by the authors of the United Secretariat resolution. They state: 'At the same time, they (the PST leaders) have forgotten the fundamental distinction that exists between the democratic rights demanded by the workers movement and the structures of bourgeois democracy.'

"We acknowledge that some of the formulations we have used could have led to this impression. We might even have made the error in the current situation in Argentina of not carefully distinguishing between a given bourgeois 'structure' and the defense of democratic rights."

Unfortunately, this beginning of self-criticism, which we salute, stops short with an attempt to reduce everything to semantic confusion over the word "institutionalization." The word is supposedly not being used in the dictionary sense, but rather to mean "the institutional guarantee of democratic rights." Without wanting to enter into this semantic debate, we draw the attention of the PST comrades to the fact that *they themselves* have used this term in a clearly broader sense—one that does not diverge very much from the usual meaning the "dictionaries" commonly attribute to it. When *Avanzada Socialista*, apropos of the "process of institutionalization," refers to *the elections won by the Peronists* (issue of July 4, 1974); when the PST insists on the necessity of obtaining *constitutional guarantees of democratic rights* (*Intercontinental Press*, September 9, 1974); when Comrade Coral affirms at the "multisectoral" meeting of October 8, 1974: "El PST seguirá luchando contra todos esos factores que crean el clima golpista, y luchará por la continuidad de este gobierno, porque fue elegido por la mayoría de los trabajadores argentinos, . . ." (The PST will continue struggling against all those factors that create the putschist climate and will struggle for the continuity of this government, because it was elected by the majority of Argentine workers; *Avanzada Socialista*, October 17, 1974), it is obvious that it is not simply a question of the "guarantee of democratic rights" but also of the functioning of *the institutions of the so-called democratic parliamentary bourgeois state as a whole*. Obviously, this includes parliamentary elections, the parliament, the bourgeois state apparatus, the govern-

ment that comes out of these elections, etc. And Marxist-Leninists know that these institutions *also involve* defending bourgeois property, capitalist exploitation, and the apparatus of repression devoted to this defense.

The insufficiency of the self-criticism and the confusion that it maintains derive from the fact that the comrades of the PST identify the question of "institutionalization," that is, the continuity of the democratic parliamentary institutions of the bourgeois state with the question of the defense of democratic rights. It is true that the PST's August 20, 1974, declaration pronounces itself against any *political* support to a bourgeois regime or coalition. That is really the least one can demand from an organization that claims allegiance to Trotskyism. But the rejection of "support to the policy of a bourgeois regime" combined with "support to the process of institutionalization," that is, the consolidation and strengthening of the institutions of bourgeois-parliamentary democracy, leaves the question of the PST's attitude toward the *bourgeois state* completely open. And it is that question that lies at the center of the controversy. The PST's self-criticism has not at all clarified the party's attitude in this regard. We hope that it will be extended to eliminate any equivocation on this crucial problem.

II.

The origins of the confusion appear rather clearly when the question of agreements with the parties or representatives of the bourgeoisie is examined. Revolutionary Marxists are advocates of the defense of democratic rights. They have even always allowed for the possibility of temporary technical agreements with bourgeois liberals *on practical objectives of struggle for a given and precise democratic right*, all the while rejecting any political bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie. Trotsky cited in this regard the fact that some bourgeois Jews gave money to the Social Democratic workers groups in Russia in order to allow them to buy arms to fight against the Black Hundreds, who were organizing pogroms. Only inveterate sectarians who are scarcely interested in the real struggle could reject such an agreement as "opportunist."

Likewise, no revolutionary having a minimum of good sense would reject the support of a bourgeois politician in a campaign to defend or regain legality for a workers journal or for the exercise of the right to strike, so long as that support is not contingent on subordinating the general orientation, including in the defense of democratic rights, to the exigencies of the search for the support, that is, to a policy of compromise with the "liberal" bourgeoisie.

The August 20, 1974, document of the Executive Committee of the PST appears to say the same thing. But in sliding from the question of an occasional technical agreement for the defense of a particular democratic right to the search for an agreement with the "liberal" bourgeoisie for the defense of democratic rights in general, the statement passes imperceptibly to the search for political accords *for the defense of the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy*.

This emerges clearly from the quotations already cited from the July 4, 1974, *Avanzada Socialista*, in which this journal speaks of "convergences with bourgeois sectors (that) can be expressed in the form of limited agree-

ments, documents, declarations, etc. All these various types of public actions(!), from joint communiqués to rallies, are useful and help to create the kind of social consciousness and climate(!) needed to defend civil liberties or condemn(!) fascism."

It is precisely to avoid such confusion that Trotsky clarifies the objectives of a workers united front in the struggle against the rise of fascism by making a *distinction* between the defense of the "germs, elements, of proletarian democracy within bourgeois democracy" and the defense of the bourgeois-democratic institutions of the bourgeois state:

"What will the Communist Party 'defend'? The Weimar Constitution? No, we will leave that task to Brandler. The Communist Party must call for the defense of those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state. This most directly concerns the fate of the workers' political organizations, trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, libraries, etc. Communist workers must say to their Social Democratic counterparts: 'The policies of our parties are irreconcilably opposed; but if the fascists come tonight to wreck your organization's hall, we will come running, arms in hand, to help you. Will you promise us that if our organization is threatened you will rush to our aid?' This is the quintessence of our policy in the coming period. All agitation must be pitched in this key." (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, Pathfinder Press, 1971, p. 72.)

And still more clearly in an article entitled "Fascism and Democratic Slogans" dated July 14, 1933:

"It is true that the upsurge of discontent of the middle classes and the resistance of the workers will provoke a division in the bloc of the owning classes and will impel a 'left wing' to seek ties with the petty bourgeoisie. *But the task of the party of the proletariat in regard to the 'liberal' wing of the owning classes will not consist in integrating them into a bloc 'of all classes' against fascism but on the contrary in immediately engaging in a determined struggle against it for influence over the lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie.*" (Trotsky, *Schriften über Deutschland*, Volume 2, p. 600, our emphasis.)

Now, the meetings in which the PST has been participating in no way had as their objective *engaging in practical actions for the defense of a given democratic right, a given conquest of the working class*. It was a matter of meetings to affirm—in the presence of the government—the defense of the "process of institutionalization." Moreover, *regular meetings with the bourgeois opposition parties and the CP are in turn becoming institutionalized meetings*. In political terms, that is called *an interclass political bloc against all those who "resort to violence" in Argentina and who thereby threaten the "process of institutionalization."*

This political orientation is inadmissible from the standpoint of principle. From the standpoint of the desired effects in the struggle against the fascist threat and against the terror of the far right it is totally ineffective.

In its March 28, 1974, issue *Avanzada Socialista* makes much of a quotation from Trotsky affirming that in the struggle against fascism one can even make an alliance with the devil and his grandmother. But the organ of the PST neglects to add that this quotation

was aimed at explaining to Communist workers the necessity of a united front with *the Social Democratic party*, that is, a reformist workers party whose leaders are undoubtedly representatives of the bourgeoisie within the workers movement but who are no less *part of the organized workers movement*. Trotsky in no way proposed such an agreement with *bourgeois parties* like those that are participating in the regular meetings between the PST and the seven other parties.

In drawing this quotation out of context Avanzada Socialista above all does not point out that the very article from which this phrase is drawn, "What Next," turns completely on the idea of the *class united front*, of a "class against class" opposition to combat the rise of fascism:

"The contentions regarding the policies of the united front take their origin from such fundamental and inexorable exigencies of the struggle of *class against class*. . . ." (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p. 179.)

"'Class against class!' This means all organizations of the proletariat must take their place in the united front against the bourgeoisie.

"The practical program of the united front is determined by agreements with organizations made in full view of the masses. Every organization remains under its own banner and its own leadership. Every organization obeys in action the discipline of the united front.

"'Class against class!' Indefatigable agitation must be conducted in order that the Social Democratic organizations and the reformist trade unions shall break with the perfidious bourgeois allies in the 'Iron Front' and that they join in common with the Communists and all other organizations of the proletariat." (Ibid. p. 256.)

Trotsky considered the breakup of the alliance between the Social Democrats and the "antifascist" bourgeois "liberals" of the *Staatspartei* as a concomitant condition for the constitution of a *workers united front* against fascism. He called for the exclusion of the bourgeois liberals of the *Eiserne Front* (Iron Front) at the same time as he demanded the conclusion of *agreements* between the Social Democratic party and the CP.

Does the PST counterpose the conception of a bloc with liberal bourgeois parties for the defense of the "process of institutionalization" to Trotsky's conception of the workers united front?

This conception of Trotsky's was not a concession to the ultraleftist atmosphere prevailing in the Communist International in the beginning of the 1930s. Its roots lie in the Marxist comprehension of the origins and nature of fascism. The source of the rise of fascism lies in the structural crisis of decadent capitalism and the crisis of the bourgeois-parliamentary system, which is its corollary. The more serious these two crises become without the revolutionary vanguard being capable of leading the working class to the overthrow of capitalism, the more the culture medium of the fascist germs ferments. Under these conditions, to counterpose defense of increasingly paralyzed bourgeois-parliamentary institutions in decomposition to the rise of fascism is to court certain defeat. Trotsky explained in this regard:

"Isn't the conclusion self-evident that, faced with difficulties and tasks too great for it, the democratic re-

gime is losing control? . . . The internal and external difficulties of the German nation have heated up the class struggle to the point where no one can or wants to subordinate it to parliamentary conventions. Some may regret this, bitterly reproach the extremist parties for their inclination toward violence, hope for a better future. But facts are facts. The wires of democracy cannot take too high a social voltage. Such are, however, the voltages of our time." (Ibid. pp. 267-68.)

For this reason, the *workers united front* against fascism turns entirely on the *extraparliamentary action of the workers*. The *defense* of the workers organizations against the fascist gangs is an indispensable precondition for strengthening the self-confidence, striking force, and combativity of the working class. That is why wanting to pass to "the offensive" so long as fascism is not driven back represents irresponsible chatter. But this defense *must unleash* a dynamic of anticapitalist offensive to render the antifascist struggle victorious:

"The task of demolishing fascism retains all its acuteness. The decisive battle of the proletariat against fascism will signal the simultaneous collision with the Bonapartist state apparatus. This makes the *general strike* an indispensable fighting weapon. It must be prepared. A special general strike plan must be worked out, that is, a plan for the mobilization of the forces to carry it out. Proceeding from this plan, a mass campaign must be unfolded, on the basis of which an agreement for carrying out the general strike under well-defined political conditions may be proposed to the Social Democracy. Repeated and made concrete at every new stage, this proposal will lead in the process of its development to the creation of the *soviets as the highest organs of the united front*" (Ibid. p. 321.)

And even more clearly:

"The logic of events is such that the struggle for 'parliament' and for 'democracy' becomes for every Social Democratic worker a question of *power*. Therein lies the main content of the whole conflict from the standpoint of the revolution. The question of power is the question of the revolutionary unity of the proletariat in action. A united front policy with respect to the Social Democracy must be pursued in the very near future to render possible, on the basis of proletarian democratic representation, the creation of class organs of struggle, i. e. of workers soviets."

Of course, Argentina in 1974 is not Germany in 1932. There are important differences in the social structure of the two countries, in the relative weight of the different social classes, and above all in the forms of organization, political tradition, and level of political class consciousness of the workers. But no "national particularity" can transform the Radical party of Mr. Balbín into a serious candidate for the organization of a general strike — not to mention workers councils — at the side of the workers organizations. Is it not obvious that Trotsky is defending a *different political orientation* in these propositions of struggle against the fascist threat through the workers united front leading to the united class action of the proletariat culminating in a general strike — different from the orientation that sees regular meetings with bourgeois parties, signing common declarations and communiqués with these parties, and organizing common meetings with these parties as the useful condi-

tion for "creating the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism" (Avanzada Socialista, July 4, 1974)?

Moreover, the comrades of the PST are caught in an additional contradiction. They heavily insist on the fact that they were and remain irremediably opposed to coalitions of the "popular front" type. Excellent resolve! But they seem to forget that the popular fronts were constituted in the 1930s exactly with the aim of "defending democratic rights" against the fascist threat. If not only *technical* agreements but also *political* agreements with liberal bourgeois parties are admissible for the defense not only of a specific democratic right but democratic rights in general, what remains of the basis of the revolutionary Marxist opposition to the "antifascist" policy of the popular front? Is it solely the fact that the popular front also contains a governmental program? Would it then become acceptable without such a program? If agreement with bourgeois parties to defend democratic rights in general is admissible, is it not even more admissible for regaining them where they have been suppressed? What then remains of the validity of the revolutionary Marxist opposition to the policy of "antifascist front" with the "liberal" bourgeoisie and its political parties, as followed by the Spanish CP, the Chilean CP, and the Uruguayan CP, to cite only three examples?

The question is not simply rhetorical. Already the PRT-U (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores-Uruguay), a close political ally of the PST, has pronounced itself squarely in favor of such a front for the "reconquest of free elections":

"In view of this situation and the way the consciousness of the working class has advanced as a result of the colossal general strike it fought in defense of the last vestiges of its democratic rights, which were wrenched away by the putschists, we think that the struggle begun in June (1973) must continue. It must go forward to overthrow the dictatorship *by raising a program that sums up the most urgent demands of the workers and draws behind it the entire people's movement, including sectors of the bourgeoisie itself that are opposed to the dictatorship. We think this program . . . is summed up in the demand for free elections in which all parties can participate.*" (Prensa Obrera, March 11, 1974, quoted in Intercontinental Press, April 22, 1974, our emphasis.)

We are entitled to ask the comrades of the PST: Do you agree with this "bloc" with the liberal bourgeoisie for the "defense" or "conquest" of "free elections"? Is that the line that Trotsky defended as the orientation for the struggle against fascism and the threats of far-rightist dictatorship? Is that the orientation of the workers united front? Is not an urgent and complete self-criticism required in face of such dangerous confusion?

III.

Nevertheless, the seriousness of the error committed by the PST acquires an additional dimension when it is placed in the context of the concrete political situation that exists in Argentina today.

Revolutionary Marxists are unanimous in regarding the replacement of the military dictatorship of Lanusse by the return to power of the Peronists as being the result of the rise of an explosive mass movement that

began with the insurrectional general strike in Córdoba in 1969. We will add that the development of multiple forms of armed confrontation between the military bourgeois forces on the one hand and sectors of the masses as well as some groups of the vanguard on the other created for the bourgeoisie the clear danger of a civil war in which entire sections of the toiling masses would successively become engaged, a danger that precipitated its opting for a return to power of the Peronists.

By promoting the "process of institutionalization" through the "great national accord," the Argentine big bourgeoisie, supported by imperialism, pursued the essential aims of averting the risk of an overall confrontation between its army and the masses (which involved, moreover, a challenge to the internal cohesion of the army), of reestablishing control over the workers movement through the Peronist trade-union bureaucracy, of arresting the impetuous rise of workers struggles, and of relaunching the process of accumulation of capital thanks to the combination of reestablished "social peace" at home and precise operations abroad (search for investments from European and Japanese imperialism, search for new outlets in the bureaucratized workers states, development of an "Andes bloc" as a privileged market for Argentine industry vis-à-vis its Brazilian competitor, etc.).

But the sine qua non for the success of this Peronist project was the acceptance of "social peace" by the whole working class in exchange for "free elections" and some improvements in real wages in comparison with the worst periods of the military dictatorship. And the situation in the workers movement after the experience of the military dictatorship and after the Cordobazos was no longer one of integral control by the Peronist bureaucracy over all the workers. A growing number of workers—although still largely a minority on a national scale—were beginning to act independently both in certain regions (Tucumán and Córdoba, for example) and in certain sectors (the workers of the drafting industry, for example).

Under these conditions, the reestablishment of the Peronist regime inevitably involved a *growing violent and terrorist repression* not only against the Peronist far left and the groups engaged in guerrilla struggle, but also against all independent sectors of the workers movement and the working class. From the attacks against the Peronist youth *on the very day of Perón's return to Argentina* (the massacre at Ezeiza airport) to the raiding operations against union headquarters in October 1974, inclusive of the innumerable intervening bombing attacks and assassinations of leftist militants, this repression has in no way been a "riposte" to the "violence of the far left," as the open apologists and other mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie claim. *Rather, it is inscribed in the very logic of the project of the Great National Accord: reestablish "social peace" at any price and isolate—in order to crush them—the radicalized sectors of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie that are not submitting to the "social peace."* The resolution on Argentina adopted by the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International (Fourth Congress since Reunification) affirmed in this regard:

"It is this very explosion of the internal conflicts of Peronism that has rapidly brought to light the unstable

character of the new period of bourgeois democracy. But beyond the internecine struggle within the Peronist movement, the escalation of actions by the parapolic gangs and the bureaucracy is aimed at dealing selective but effective blows against sectors of the social vanguard that refuse to accept the imperatives of capitalist 'national reconstruction.' The murder of militants, kidnappings, and the rightist attacks of various kinds are occurring at a rhythm never seen before, even under the military dictatorship. A curious 'democracy' that develops the white terror starting from the highest governmental circles! The selective repression, under the cover of the activity of the parallel gangs, is going to be completed by new repressive legislation on various levels."

That is exactly what has happened.

This "institutionalized" and systematic repression, under the direct control of López Rega, the "strongman" of the Peronist regime, reveals the hypocritical and fraudulent character of the declarations of the leading Peronists — yesterday General Perón and today María Estella Perón — according to which "the process of institutionalization" justifies no form of violence. Those who have made these declarations are tolerating, covering for, and justifying a systematic terror against the vanguard sectors of the working class and youth. The first duty of a revolutionary party in Argentina is to denounce this abject hypocrisy. The PST's participation in the institutionalized meetings between the government and the so-called center-left opposition on the contrary provides left cover for a political operation whereby the Peronist regime is seeking to *camouflage its responsibility* for the organization of an antiworker and antirevolutionary repression behind the shield of verbal declarations against "terrorism wherever it comes from." By publishing headlines in its newspaper like "Neither Guerrillas Nor Social Peace," by multiplying condemnations of "terrorism of the left and the right," by affirming that the "guerrillas create the pretext" for the unleashing of the rightist terror, the PST provides grist for the mill of the bourgeois propaganda to the effect that the fascist terror is the "product" of the "violence of the left" instead of denouncing the terrorist repression against the far left and the vanguard sectors of the working class as the logical and inevitable product of the Peronist project of reestablishing "social peace" at any price and of fostering class collaboration in a climate of exacerbation of the class struggle.

The PST's participation in the hypocritical comedy of "national harmonization" around support to the process of institutionalization organized by the Peronist regime is all the more fraught with consequences in that it allows the bourgeois press to distribute in millions of copies reports about the PST's *approval* of the government propaganda about the "union of all Argentines around democratic institutions and the unanimous condemnation of violence." And the statement made by Juan Carlos Coral at the "multisectoral meeting" of October 8, 1974, was not made to deny this propaganda. In the text of that statement, we read, notably:

"Asumiendo plenamente la cuota de responsabilidad que nos corresponde en el actual proceso político con la sinceridad con que siempre hemos expresado nuestros puntos de vista, y con la sinceridad que la misma

señora presidente nos reclamaba en su discurso inicial, hemos venido esta mañana a *repudiar* categóricamente todas las formas de terrorismo, todas las manifestaciones de violencia individual de grupos que se ejerzan al margen de la voluntad y las necesidades de *las masas*, y a repudiar también esa otra forma de violencia mas general y casi institucionalizada en nuestro país, que es el golpe de estado.

"Termino, señora, diciendo que nuestro partido considera útil esta forma de diálogo, que no tiene precedentes en el país. No pretendemos modificar con un discurso la política del gobierno, pero, seguramente, la señora presidente y los señores ministros habrán recogido algunas de las observaciones que hemos formulado.

"Sabemos que las limitaciones burguesas del gobierno le impedirán adoptar las medidas mínimas que nosotros reclamamos. Ni puede hacer la Reforma Agraria, ni puede expropiar los monopolios, ni puede modificar sustancialmente la relación de precios y salarios, ni podrá, seguramente, sancionar drásticamente los desbordes de la violencia fascista.

"El Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores seguirá luchando contra todos esos factores que crean el clima golpista, y luchará por la continuidad de este gobierno, porque fué elegido por la mayoría de los trabajadores argentinos y porque permite el ejercicio de algunas libertades democráticas que son, a su vez, una conquista de las movilizaciones obreras y populares que conmovieron el país a partir del cordobazo." (Avanzada Socialista, October 17, 1974.)

("We fully assume the responsibility that devolves on us in the present political process with the sincerity with which we have always expressed our points of view and with the sincerity that Señora Presidente herself demanded of us in her opening speech; we have come this morning to categorically *repudiate* all forms of terrorism, all the manifestations of individual violence of groups that act apart from the desires and necessities of the masses, and to repudiate also that other, more general, almost institutionalized, form of violence in our country represented by coups d'état.

("Finally, Señora, let us say that our party considers this form of dialogue, which is unprecedented in the country, to be useful. We do not hope to alter the government's policy with a speech; but surely Señora Presidente and the ministers have noted some of the observations we have formulated.

("We know that the bourgeois limitations of the government will prevent it from adopting the minimal measures that we are demanding. It cannot carry out the Agrarian Reform, cannot expropriate the monopolies, cannot substantially change the relations of prices and wages, nor, surely, will it be able to drastically restrict the incidents of fascist violence.

("The Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores will continue struggling against all those factors that create the putschist climate and will struggle for the continuity of this government, because it was elected by the majority of Argentine workers and because it permits the exercise of some democratic rights that, in turn, are conquests of the workers and peoples mobilizations that have shaken the country since the cordobazo.")

It is true that Coral's speech as reported in Avanzada

Socialista also contained a condemnation of the government's "passivity" in face of the murder of worker militants like those of the PST (a condemnation that was not reported in the bourgeois press). But the passages we have just quoted—like the accounts published in *Avanzada Socialista* according to which the president approached the PST delegates to express condolences for the losses in human life suffered by the PST and like the big headlines about the condemnation of the white terror by the oppositional delegates assembled at the multisectoral meeting—facilitate the Peronist government's camouflage and cover-up operation instead of exposing it. Coming on the eve of the proclamation of the state of siege, after the vote on antistrike laws, and after the greater and greater accentuation of terror against the PST itself, this manifestly serves the bourgeoisie and the Peronist regime more than it contributes to defending the PST against the violence of the far right or the attempt to outlaw the PST.

It is thus high time for the PST to reexamine and correct its policy of "support to the process of institutionalization." To take all the initiatives necessary to effectively defend its own legal status, the freedom of action of all the workers organizations, the total exercise of the right to strike and of trade-union democracy, and to

defend effectively its own leaders and militants, who are more and more threatened by the terror of the far right, the PST must resolutely orient itself toward the line of the workers united front and the propagation and carrying out in practice of self-defense by the workers organizations themselves against the fascist terror.

It is high time to put the main stress on the Peronist government's responsibility for the repression against the left and to avoid any false maneuver that serves in reality to hide this responsibility from the masses.

The Fourth International has a duty of political clarification to fulfill. We are convinced that this duty constitutes an aid for the comrades of the PST and not an attack on this sympathizing organization. But the principal task of the sections of the Fourth International at the present moment, given the situation that is developing in Argentina, is to arouse the workers movement and the toiling masses of all countries against the terror in Argentina, to the defense of the workers and revolutionary organizations that are victims of violent repression, both legal and extralegal, to the defense of the PST and the other sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International in Argentina. We are certain that our sections will not fail in this task. □

In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter Number 2

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, January 20, 1975

[The following statement by the Executive Committee of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers party), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Argentina, was issued January 7, 1975. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Whose Responsibility?

1.

On July 26, 1974, the majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International published an "open letter" entitled "Whither the PST?" which was directed to the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores. The objective of the statement was to try to show that the PST was following a class-collaborationist policy in clear violation of the principles of Trotskyism.

In a reply dated August 20, 1974, "In Defense of the PST and the Truth," we deplored the decision of the majority of the United Secretariat to engage in a public attack on our party on matters that ordinarily would be discussed within the ranks of the world Trotskyist movement. We regretted that the action taken by the majority of the United Secretariat left us no recourse but to answer in public.

The majority of the United Secretariat was obviously disconcerted by our reply, which set the record straight, including criticizing ourselves for some mistakes we had made. But instead of closing the public debate on this subject and referring continuation of the dispute—if this was thought necessary—to the internal bulletins of the movement, the majority of the United Secretariat decided to publish another "open letter," which they apparently hope will prove less fragile than the first one. This was made public in the December 12, 1974, issue of *Inprecor*.

We again express regret that the

majority members of the United Secretariat have chosen to follow this course. They have assumed a grave responsibility.

We would like to stress the point all the more since the majority members of the United Secretariat have chosen in their second open letter to misrepresent our stand. They state that it was "at the request of the PST" that the United Secretariat decided to continue the public discussion.

Nothing of the kind. We took the opposite position that the debate be internal.

In addition, we have been informed that a minority of the United Secretariat, that is, the representatives of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, whose views we share, not only opposed the contents of the new statement but argued against continuing the discussion of this subject in public and warned that it could further damage the authority of the United Secretariat. They had taken the same position on the first open letter submitted by the majority of the United Secretariat, and they contended that the resulting exchange had confirmed their forecast.

The majority members of the United Secretariat, who adhere to the International Majority Tendency, the faction that gained a majority vote at the last world congress of the Fourth International, again rejected the advice of the LTF leaders. There is thus no question that the IMT leaders knowingly assumed responsibility for opening and continuing this public attack on the PST.

Some Questions Best Discussed Internally

2.

Before proceeding to issues of greater substance, we would like to call attention to the tone of the new open letter. The IMT leaders accept in the most grudging way our explanation

of why *Avanzada Socialista* mistakenly gave the impression that we had signed a document that also carried the signatures of the representatives of the Communist party and several bourgeois parties. If they found it inadvisable to criticize themselves for their suspicions, they would have done better to simply say no more and drop the matter.

Instead they decided to bring forward new grounds for throwing blame on us: "The comrades of the PST were invited to three successive meetings of the United Secretariat to explain their attitude toward the meeting and document of March 21, 1974. They did not attend any of these meetings."

The IMT leaders fail to mention that a representative of the United Secretariat visited Argentina. We explained to him how the error came to be made in *Avanzada Socialista*, and we thought that our explanation was accepted. No doubt we should have sent a formal written explanation.

However, why present such an organizational complaint to the public after acknowledging that we did not sign the famous document?

In return we would like to ask the IMT leaders to answer the following question: "In view of your recent interest in improving relations with us and making it easier to respond to your invitations to attend meetings of the United Secretariat, would it not be well to rectify your policy and end the ban you imposed on PST observers being present?"

We are referring to the fact that immediately after the last world congress and before we allegedly added our signatures to a class-collaborationist document, the leaders of the International Majority Tendency specifically barred the PST from having observers present at meetings of the United Secretariat.

This action, it is worth noting, was taken against the largest contingent

of the world Trotskyist movement, a contingent organized moreover in the difficult conditions of a semicolonial country.

We would also like to ask the leaders of the IMT about another matter. An addendum dated July 12, 1974, was attached to Open Letter No. 1. The addendum accused us of having signed a second document like the first one we were alleged to have signed. The addendum specified the exact date of the supposed crime: "June 29, 1974." It accused us further of having signed a third document of similar class-collaborationist nature. The exact place, date, and circumstances were specified: "Santa Fe . . . July 3 . . . at the request of the president of the provincial chamber of deputies." Open Letter No. 2 grudgingly acknowledges our "affirmation" that we did not sign these documents.

Now we should like to ask: "Why, dear comrades, are you silent on your reasons for having included these fabrications in an official document of the Fourth International? Why do you refrain from offering a single word of explanation?"

We called attention in our reply of August 20, 1974, to the fact that the addendum to Open Letter No. 1 "was not considered at any meeting of the United Secretariat." It was never discussed or voted on by the United Secretariat. Yet it was presented to the public as part of an official document of the United Secretariat.

Just what is the explanation of that? Or do the leaders of the IMT consider the reasons to be so obvious as not to require any explanation even after attention has been called to it?

Was it, then, approved at a faction meeting held at an as yet undisclosed place and undisclosed date? Was it at such a meeting that a decision was made to use the name of the United Secretariat to lend authenticity to these concoctions found in the bourgeois press of Argentina?

The Real Issue— Guerrillism Versus Trotskyism

3.

Let us turn now to the political arguments leveled against us by the leaders of the IMT in their Open Letter No. 2.

The essence of these arguments is simple. It consists of lecturing us on the situation in Germany in the early thirties, citing numerous quotations from the writings of Leon Trotsky on the need for a united front of the mass proletarian organizations to fight German fascism, and accusing the PST of departing from the course outlined by Trotsky and seeking instead to organize a class-collaborationist front (i.e., a popular front) in the vain hope that in Argentina this will stem the assault of the ultrarightists and their backers in ruling circles.

First, on the quotations from Trotsky. We have no quarrel with them although we note that the selection is one-sided. We agree with Trotsky's analysis of the situation in Germany in the early thirties and his conclusions as to what ought to have been done there. His position, in fact, is not new to us. We recommend what Trotsky had to say on the German situation more than forty years ago to everyone interested in the problem of stemming an ultraright advance, above all in imperialist countries.

In particular we recommend to the IMT leaders that they themselves re-study Trotsky's writings on this subject, for they seem to have missed the main point Trotsky was making—that the purpose of forming a united front of the mass proletarian organizations is to mobilize the working class and its allies *by the millions* against the fascist threat.

Insofar as it is possible to compare the situation in Germany in the early thirties with the situation today in Argentina (we note the admission of the IMT leaders that "Argentina in 1974 is not Germany in 1932"), our objective has been the same as the one projected by Trotsky—to *help mobilize the masses by the millions to carry out a socialist revolution*.

It was by hewing to this objective that we were able to build the largest national organization of the world Trotskyist movement to date and to root it deeply in the Argentine working class and its trade unions. It was this concentration on the objective fought for by Trotsky that has assured such a high proletarian composition to the membership of the PST. No other sector of the international Trotskyist movement comes near the PST in this

respect. It is a fact that ought to be weighed in judging the political course we have followed.

Why did the leaders of the IMT happen to miss the main point in the quotations they cited from Trotsky? The explanation is that since the world congress of the Fourth International held in 1969 they have been partisans of guerrilla war, or, to use the label they prefer, "armed struggle in Latin America." It is adherence to this view that lies behind their public attack on the PST, for the PST stands as living evidence of the incorrectness of their position.

Because of numerical (not political) reasons, the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Combatiente) was recognized at the 1969 world congress of the Fourth International as the official section in Argentina. The PRT (Combatiente) had in reality developed a guerrillaist deviation which it was soon to carry to extreme lengths, going so far as to set up a guerrilla force, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, that opened up "armed struggle" in complete isolation from the masses. Instead of seeking to rectify the guerrillism of the PRT (Combatiente), the IMT leaders approved it. They held that its course was nothing less than a model application of the "turn" adopted by the majority at the 1969 world congress.

When the Socialist Workers party in the United States dissociated itself publicly in a mild way from one of the more flagrant departures of the ERP from Trotskyist principles, this dissociation was denounced by the leaders of the IMT as a gross violation of democratic centralism.

The official section in Argentina was never a Trotskyist organization, a fact that was fully known to the leaders of the IMT before the 1969 world congress. It adhered to Guevarism, Giapism, Maoism, and Kim Il Sungism. It held that the Fourth International harbored counterrevolutionaries in its ranks. It held that sectors of the Fourth International were redeemable but that a genuinely revolutionary international had yet to be built, and this was to be accomplished with the aid of other Latin American guerrilla groups plus the Cubans, the Chinese, and the Albanians.

Despite this, the IMT leaders continued to present the official section to the public as exemplary. They felt that its guerrilla actions more than compensated for its anti-Trotskyist politi-

cal positions.

It was not until the official section was on the verge of denouncing the Fourth International that the IMT finally ventured to formulate some criticisms of the course of the official section. Even then it kept its criticisms internal until the 1974 world congress.

The comradely procedure followed by the IMT leaders in relation to this anti-Trotskyist grouping stands in striking contrast to the way they have acted toward those who have sought to uphold the program of Trotskyism in Argentina.

During this same period, as mentioned above, we had to face the "normal" difficulties to be found in a semi-colonial country. In addition we had to face the complication of a guerrilla group that engaged in a highly provocative course and that was recommended to the public by the IMT leaders as a model of Trotskyism. Despite these difficulties we succeeded in building a relatively strong nucleus of revolutionary cadres.

The lesson and the result appears to us to be instructive. Nevertheless their significance was rejected by the IMT leaders. At the world congress in 1974 they reaffirmed "armed struggle" as the royal road in Latin America. Open Letter No. 2, like Open Letter No. 1, was written within the framework of this proguerrilla line and against the Trotskyist line followed by the PST for the past half decade in opposition to the guerrillism of the former official section.

The real issue is thus guerrillism versus Trotskyism. The questions of substance that have to be answered are: Is it possible to repeat the pattern of the Cuban revolution (as depicted by Guevara) elsewhere in Latin America or anywhere in the world? If so, what are the odds? Doesn't the guerrilla course followed by the Tupamaros and their kind amount to toying with insurrection, which was condemned long ago by the Marxist movement? Shouldn't the theory and practice of the guerrillas—despite the heroism displayed by many of them—be resolutely opposed as obstacles in the path of the proletarian revolution and the building of its vanguard party?

Instead of drawing the lessons that ought to be drawn, the IMT leaders prefer to follow a different course. By using dubious tidbits culled from the bourgeois press or bad formulations made by militants of the PST or the

staff of our press, they hope to persuade Trotskyists in other countries that we are crossing over to the side of the capitalist class.

If successful, this dubious enterprise would eliminate the need to determine just why the PST was able to score its notable gains and why the IMT made one of the worst blunders in the history of the Fourth International in supporting a Guevarist guerrilla group in Argentina, covering up its anti-Trotskyist views, and proclaiming it to be a model section of the world Trotskyist movement.

Why the Relentless Search for 'Proofs'?

4.

Appreciation of this background is a necessary requisite to understanding the differences held by the IMT leaders over our way of proceeding in defending democratic rights, trying to bolster Argentina's weak democratic institutions through mobilizing the masses in their defense, and fighting against the efforts of the ultraright to crush them.

For the Peronist and Guevarist guerrilla organizations, the political necessity of defending democratic rights and institutions hardly exists. They scorn bourgeois democracy. We, too, do not think it is much; that is why we propose to replace it with proletarian democracy. But we differ with such groups on whether bourgeois democracy (not the capitalist state that operates behind its façade) should be defended from attack by the ultraright. The formula of the guerrillas is to proceed, arms in hand, regardless of the situation—even if there are only a few dozen hands, even if the democratic institutions are threatened at the same time by powerful ultraright forces armed to the teeth and backed by a section of the army, and even if their guerrilla pinpricks, which they parade as "armed struggle," play into the hands of the foe as surely as if they had been planned by the rightists themselves.

The official section of the Fourth International held to this ultraleft view before it deserted; and, of course, it has maintained its ultraleft view and its ultraleft course ever since. The proguerrilla turn taken by the IMT at the world congress in 1969 and confirmed again in 1974 required adap-

tation to this ultraleftism. It is the ultraleft bias of the IMT leaders that prompts them in their Open Letter No. 2 to state that our way of defending democratic institutions leaves in question our attitude toward the *bourgeois state*. Only out and out Guevarists could have indicated more clearly the view that defense of democratic institutions against reactionary attacks equates to defense of the bourgeois state.

It is from this angle that the IMT leaders comb the Argentine bourgeois press and our publications for evidence to prove their thesis that the PST in defending democratic rights and institutions must inevitably slip, even if only "imperceptibly," toward a Kautskyst position of defending the bourgeois state. We will return to this point further on.

Trotsky on Importance of Defending Bourgeois Democracy in General and in the Colonial and Semicolonial Countries Specifically

5.

In the Imperialist Sector

In polemicizing against the ultralefts of his time on this question, Trotsky stressed the general importance of defending bourgeois democracy against reaction. The sectarians, he said, "refuse to draw a distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism—as if the masses could help but feel the difference on every hand!" (*Transitional Program*.)

Trotsky continued: "Sectarians are capable of differentiating between but two colors: red and black. So as not to tempt themselves, they simplify reality. They refuse to draw a distinction between the fighting camps in Spain for the reason that both camps have a bourgeois character."

Trotsky spoke even more incisively against the ultralefts. Here is an example:

"These doctrinaires refuse to understand that we carry on half, three-quarters, or, in certain periods, even 99 percent of the preparation of the dictatorship *on the basis of democracy*, and in doing this we defend every inch of democratic positions under our feet. But if one can defend the democratic positions of the working class, then perhaps one may fight for them where they do not yet exist?"

"Democracy is a weapon of capitalism, our critics tell us; yes, but a contradictory one, just as capitalism as a whole is contradictory. Democracy serves the bourgeoisie, but within certain limits it can also serve the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. The unfortunate thing is that the Bordighists do not grasp democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat as historical institutions which can replace one another dialectically, but as two naked principles of which one embodies good, the other evil." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930-31), p. 135. Emphasis added.)

In taking this general position, Trotsky, of course, placed no confidence whatsoever in the capacity of the bourgeoisie or any sector of it to offer an effective defense of bourgeois democracy. In fact he warned over and over against placing any confidence in the bourgeoisie. Revolutionary Marxists must retain complete independence from the bourgeoisie, even if marching side by side with a sector of the bourgeoisie in struggling against fascism. That is why Trotsky insisted on the use of proletarian methods to defend bourgeois democracy.

It is important to understand why it is in the interests of the working class to defend bourgeois democracy against reaction. First of all, as one of the conquests of the revolution that overturned feudalism, it is a heritage that belongs to the working class. Secondly, the greater the degree of bourgeois democracy, the easier it is for the proletariat to strengthen its own institutions and to organize for the coming socialist revolution.¹ Thirdly, it constitutes a point of departure for the extension of democracy into the economic structure that will occur under world socialism. Fourthly, the bourgeoisie, both big and little, are increasingly incapable of defending democracy—in actuality the upper layers of the bourgeoisie

1. Lenin considered this question in *State and Revolution*. Here is one of his formulations: "Engels's statement that in a democratic republic, 'no less' than in a monarchy, the state remains a 'machine for the oppression of one class by another' by no means signifies that the *form* of oppression makes no difference to the proletariat, as some anarchists 'teach'. A wider, freer and more open *form* of the class struggle and of class oppression vastly assists the proletariat in its struggle for the abolition of classes in general." (*Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 454.)

tend more and more to turn against it; thus it devolves upon the proletariat to assume this task.

The necessity to defend bourgeois democracy against fascism constitutes one of the basic principles of the Trotskyist movement. Trotsky dealt extensively with this question not only in connection with the struggle in Germany but also with those in Austria, Spain, France, the United States, and other countries.

We come now to a crucial point. The leaders of the IMT apparently consider the example of Germany to be their most telling argument. That is why they offer such extensive quotations from Trotsky on the struggle against fascism in Germany. But they simply reveal how abstract their approach is. It is true that they admit, as we noted above, that "Argentina in 1974 is not Germany in 1932." But this is only an escape clause. In exactly what way is the Argentina of 1974 not the Germany of 1932? They are mute on this, stopping precisely where they ought to have begun if they were to consider the situation concretely to develop a correct policy under the given conditions in Argentina.

Besides stating the *general* position of revolutionary Marxism in relation to defending bourgeois democracy against reaction, Trotsky took into account the division of the capitalist world into imperialist powers and colonial and semicolonial countries. From this he derived a basic distinction within bourgeois democracy between *imperialist* democracy and *colonial and semicolonial* democracy. In the imperialist countries, finance capital turns from democracy to fascism as political need dictates. In the epoch of the death agony of capitalism, democracy in the imperialist powers becomes increasingly less substantial, and the ease with which finance capital resorts to a strong state or fascism becomes increasingly marked.

Colonial and Semicolonial Sector

In the colonial and semicolonial world, on the other hand, bourgeois sectors are to be found that will offer at least a certain resistance to imperialism. In doing this they sometimes turn to the masses for support, even if only partially and for a short time. Such uncompleted democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution as *national independence* are thus thrust to the fore.

In Trotsky's time, a sector of the Mexican bourgeoisie under General Cárdenas provided an example that is still worth studying. Another example occurred later in Argentina under General Perón.

Such cases can be considered rather rare and also evanescent. But at certain times they can be quite important tactically. Much more common, of course, are the cases in which sectors of the bourgeoisie, giving way to the latifundists or their own fears of the proletariat, serve as local agencies of imperialism. The Pinochet regime in Chile provides a good current example.

The different weight that Trotsky gave to democracy in the imperialist and semicolonial countries is clearly outlined in the letter he wrote in 1938 to the Cuban paper *El País*:

"Democracy for Mexico, for instance, signifies the desire of a semicolonial country to escape from bonded dependence, to give land to the peasants, to lift the Indians to a higher level of culture, and so on. In other words, the democratic problems of Mexico have a progressive and revolutionary character. And what does democracy signify in Great Britain? The maintenance of what exists, that is, above all the maintenance of the rule of the metropolis over the colonies. The same is true in relation to France. The banner of democracy covers here the imperialist hegemony of the privileged minority over the oppressed majority." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1938-39), second edition, p. 26.)

Trotsky was dealing in his letter with the struggle against fascism, and how this struggle in the semicolonial countries differs from that in the imperialist countries. He said among other things:

"In the same manner we cannot speak of fascism 'in general.' In Germany, Italy, and Japan, fascism and militarism are the weapons of a greedy, hungry, and therefore aggressive imperialism. In the Latin American countries fascism is the expression of the most slavish dependence on foreign imperialism."

Already we can see the insufficiency of the analogy drawn by the IMT leaders between the Germany of 1932 and the Argentina of 1974. The insufficiency is *qualitative*. It reduces the lesson of Germany to such a thin abstraction as to make it misleading if the utmost care is not used in ap-

plying it to the Argentine situation.

In the one case we are dealing with an imperialist power, in the other with a semicolonial country. The difference is decisive in determining the political course of the Trotskyists in each instance.

In Argentina we have to take into account as a prime element the struggle against a foreign imperialist power; and this affects the attitude that must be adopted toward the sector of the bourgeoisie that is inclined—however weakly and undependably—to resist imperialism and its most venal and brutal native agents. The struggle for national independence, a bourgeois democratic task, becomes one of our foremost considerations. In this our tasks differ from those of the Trotskyists in imperialist Germany, whether in 1932 or 1974.

How did the IMT leaders happen to leave this out of account in criticizing our course in Argentina? Was it just a lapse of memory ascribable to their lack of familiarity with the political problems of revolutionary Marxism in semicolonial countries?

Trotsky Explains the Difference

Let us listen to Trotsky a bit more on this question. In October 1938 he wrote an article dealing with the concessions granted by imperialist Britain to Hitler at Munich. In arguing in favor of a revolutionary defeatist policy in the imperialist democracies, Trotsky added the following proviso:

"All of this does not, of course, imply that there is no difference at all between democracy and fascism, or that this difference is of no concern to the working class, as the Stalinists insisted not so very long ago. Marxists have nothing in common with such cheap political nihilism. Only, it is necessary in each given instance clearly to comprehend the actual content of this difference, and its true limits.

"For the backward colonial and semicolonial countries, the struggle for democracy, including the struggle for national independence, represents a necessary and progressive stage of historical development. It is just for this reason that we deem it not only the right but also the duty of workers in these countries actively to participate in the 'defense of the fatherland' against imperialism, on condition, to be sure, that they preserve the complete independence of their class or-

ganizations and conduct a ruthless struggle against the poison of chauvinism. Thus, in the conflict between Mexico and the oil kings and their executive committee, which is the democratic government of Great Britain, the class conscious proletariat of the world sides wholly with Mexico (this does not of course apply to the imperialist lackeys at the head of the British Labour Party).

"As regards advanced capitalism, the latter has long since outgrown not only the old property forms but also the national state, and in consequence bourgeois democracy as well. The fundamental crisis of contemporary civilization lies precisely here. Imperialist democracy is putrefying and disintegrating. A program of 'defense of democracy' for the advanced countries is a program of reaction. The only progressive task here is the preparation of the international socialist revolution. Its aim is to smash the framework of the old national state and build up the economy in accordance with geographic and technological conditions, without medieval taxes and duties." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1938-39), second edition, pp. 64-65.)

Note what a sharp line Trotsky draws between the defense of bourgeois democracy in the colonial and semicolonial countries and its defense in the imperialist countries. In the one case it is "necessary and progressive"; in the other, it is a "program of reaction."

Lest he be misunderstood, Trotsky in the very next paragraph indicates that even in the imperialist countries, revolutionists are duty bound to defend democracy against its domestic foes:

"Again, this does not imply an attitude of indifference toward the current political methods of imperialism. In all cases where the counterrevolutionary forces tend to pull back away from the decomposing 'democratic' state and towards provincial particularism, towards monarchy, military dictatorship, fascism—the revolutionary proletariat without assuming the slightest responsibility for the 'defense of democracy' (it is indefensible!) will meet these counterrevolutionary forces with armed resistance, in order, if successful, to direct its offensive against imperialist 'democracy.'

"This policy, however, is applicable only with regard to internal conflicts,

that is, in those cases where the struggle really involves the issue of a political regime, as was for instance the case in Spain. The participation of Spanish workers in the struggle against Franco was their elementary duty. But precisely and only because the workers did not succeed in time in replacing the rule of bourgeois democracy with their own rule, 'democracy' was able to clear the path for fascism."

Case of Haya de la Torre

Trotsky did not write extensively on the problems of the Latin American revolution. It was not until his residence in Mexico that he gained firsthand acquaintance with these problems and some of the political personalities. The conditions of his political asylum in Mexico further restrained him from writing freely. From what he did write, it is clear that he was reaching insights of increasing concreteness. That he did not have the opportunity to write more on this subject was among the great losses our movement suffered from his untimely death.

Despite the tantalizing brevity of the material, we would like to call attention to his attitude toward Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, the head of the Peruvian APRA movement. Referring to a letter by Haya de la Torre published in the August 1938 issue of the Argentine review *Claridad*, Trotsky said:

"We won't apply either a Marxian or socialist criterion to this document; Haya de la Torre wrote the letter as a democrat and we shall consider it from that angle, primarily from the democratic point of view. A good democrat is better than a bad socialist, but precisely from this point of view, the letter of Haya de la Torre has great limitations." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1938-39), second edition, p. 101.)

Haya de la Torre, Trotsky explains, sees the dangers threatening Latin America not in "imperialism in general" but in only "one of its varieties, fascism." The APRA leader voices confidence in the United States. Trotsky, in contrast, sees the United States as "the most immediate danger and, in a historical sense, the most threatening."

Trotsky offers an example of what he is referring to: "The relations between Washington and Rio de Janeiro

have not become worse but indeed have improved after the coup d'etat in Brazil. The reason is that Washington considers the Vargas dictatorship a more docile and sure tool of American imperialist interests than revolutionary democracy. This basically is the position of the White House in regard to the whole southern continent."

Throughout his criticism, Trotsky refrains from demanding that Haya de la Torre take a revolutionary-socialist stand. ". . . we limit ourselves to purely democratic criteria."

Trotsky does demand, however, that Haya de la Torre, as a democrat, take a consistent stand: ". . . democratic politics demands clarity."

What is most instructive in the way Trotsky addresses Haya de la Torre is his basic assumption (the progressive nature of the struggle for bourgeois democracy in the colonial and semicolonial world), and the issue he singles out (the struggle against imperialism). He criticizes Haya de la Torre on his inconsistency as a bourgeois democrat—he ought to be a good one, that is, above all take a clear stand in opposition to American imperialism, the oppressor of Peru.

In a follow-up, in which he answers a defender of Haya de la Torre, Trotsky says further: "The democrat in France and the United States cannot, naturally, be a revolutionist; he is for the maintenance of the existing system; he is a conservative. But the democrat of a backward country, who finds himself under the double oppression of imperialism and police dictatorship, as is the case in Peru, cannot but be a revolutionist if he is a serious and logical democrat." The reproach registered against Haya de la Torre is over "his position as a defender of democracy and not because he doesn't appear to be a socialist in his programmatic letter." Haya de la Torre is an "illogical democrat." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1938-39), second edition, p. 183.)

Practical Agreements

Further on in the same article, Trotsky touches on the question of practical agreements with bourgeois democrats in semicolonial countries:

"Revolutionary Marxists can conclude practical agreements with democrats, but precisely with those who are *revolutionary*, that is to say, with those who rely on the masses and

not on the protecting hen. [A reference to the description by Lombardo Tole-dando, the Mexican Stalinist trade-union leader, of the imperialist United States as a hen protecting its Latin American chicks.] APRA is not a socialist organization in the eyes of the Marxist because it is not a class organization of the revolutionary proletariat. APRA is an organization of bourgeois democracy in a backward, semicolonial country."

Trotsky places the APRA in the same category as the Russian populists and the Chinese Kuomintang. "The Russian populists were much richer in doctrine and 'socialist' phraseology than APRA. However, that did not hinder them from playing the role of petty-bourgeois democrats, even worse, *backward* petty-bourgeois democrats, who did not have the strength to carry out purely democratic tasks in spite of the spirit of sacrifice and heroism of their best combatants." The Russian populists proved to be "prisoners of the liberal bourgeoisie—this good hen who protects her little ones—and they betrayed the peasants at the decisive moment during the 1917 revolution. It is impossible to forget that historical example. A democrat who sows confidence in imperialist 'guardians' can only bring bitter illusions to oppressed peoples."

Trotsky's interest in Haya de la Torre as a representative of bourgeois democracy in a semicolonial country suggests a further line of thought. Trotsky's criticism of Haya de la Torre centered on his inconsistency. What about the case of *consistent* bourgeois democrats in countries like Peru? Can any such cases be found? We grant that they are few and far between. Bourgeois democrats who display varying degrees of inconsistency constitute the average. Nevertheless we would offer as an exhibit Fidel Castro.

Case of Fidel Castro

Castro began from a petty-bourgeois position (his description) dedicated to struggling for the restoration of bourgeois democracy in Cuba. The consistency of Castro's position in favor of bourgeois democracy was shown not so much by his decision to resort to the use of arms—that was a tactical question—as by his struggle for a thoroughgoing agrarian reform. To carry that out demanded, in turn, op-

position to U. S. imperialism; and that entailed struggling for national independence, a bourgeois-democratic task.

Castro demonstrated the consistency of his bourgeois-democratic position by following this road to the end; that is, mobilizing the masses, establishing a workers and peasants government, and by means of that instrument establishing a workers state.

As has been pointed out many times by the Trotskyist movement, the logic of the course followed by Castro was the logic of the permanent revolution.

Castro himself was such a consistent democrat that in pursuing his course to the end he had to admit that he had gone beyond bourgeois democracy. With some reluctance, he said that the Cuban revolution was socialist in character.

This instructive example should show us how completely consistent it was of Trotsky from a revolutionary-socialist point of view to take an attitude toward bourgeois democracy and its protagonists in the colonial and semicolonial world quite different from the attitude he took toward bourgeois democracy and its protagonists in the imperialist countries. Trotsky's contrasting attitudes were different in principle, deriving from his analysis showing the world to be divided into three sectors (imperialist, colonial-semicolonial, and workers states).

In Argentina all of our work touching on this question has been governed by adherence to Trotsky's line of reasoning.

Criticisms addressed to us should be directed to how well we have succeeded in keeping that concept alive and applying it in practice, not to how well we have conformed to a sectarian concept that would have us apply in Argentina an attitude relevant to the imperialist sector.

Our Opposition to Peronism

6.

On the most salient peculiarity of Argentine politics—the Peronist movement—we are unable, unfortunately, to turn to Trotsky for advice. Peronism developed after his death. Again unfortunately, outside of our own efforts, little is to be found on this question in the literature of the world Trotskyist movement.

The main characteristics of Peronism can be specified as follows: Its

base consists of the most powerfully organized labor movement in Latin America, one that has resisted every effort up to now to crush it. Its most contradictory feature is the difference between this base and its leadership—a bourgeois figure who exercised control through a conservative trade-union bureaucracy. A further characteristic was that Perón, somewhat like General Cárdenas, represented a sector of the Argentine bourgeoisie willing (up to a certain point) to adopt independent attitudes toward imperialism, including specifically the colossus north of the Rio Bravo [Rio Grande].

The Peronist movement thus presented an unusually complex problem for the revolutionary Marxist movement. On the one hand the ranks consisted of the most militant sectors of the working class that had to be gained to the cause of the socialist revolution. On the other hand appeals to the ranks had to bear constantly in mind their devotion to Perón, which was based on genuine concessions granted to the working class during his first regime.

In trying to demystify the image of Perón, it was necessary to take into account his resistance to imperialism, which, for Argentina, as we have seen, was a key issue. The task was made still more difficult by the success of U.S. imperialism in toppling Perón in 1955, in exiling him, and in replacing his regime by one that Washington considered to be a "more docile and sure tool," as Trotsky observed of the Vargas dictatorship in Brazil.

Perón in exile was regarded with reverence by the Argentine working class as a whole. We had no choice but to keep this feeling in mind in all our efforts to educate the class and help it move along the lines of independent political action. To have acted in any other way would have barred us from getting a hearing.

Throughout the long years of Peronism, the small nucleus that later expanded into the PST persevered along this course. Whatever errors were made—and we are aware that we made some—we think the attitude we took toward Peronism was in correspondence with the principles outlined by Trotsky.

After a decade and a half of regimes whose main objective was to please Washington, a new chapter was opened in Argentine politics in 1969. In Córdoba and other cities the workers took to the streets in massive dem-

onstrations that shook the military regime to its foundation. The rank and file of the Peronist movement was on the march.

In our participation in these events, we sought to follow the method proposed by Trotsky in the *Transitional Program*: the coordination and extension of mass actions, the development of militant strikes, the projection of bold initiatives and slogans that in their logic transcend capitalism. With our small forces we could not exercise a direct leadership role—most of the mass actions at the time were spontaneous—but we began to grow at a rate we had never before experienced, and we took this as a good indication that we were on the right road.

Why Peron Was Brought Back

7.

The nationwide upsurge of the working class symbolized by the Cordobazo precipitated a political crisis for the Argentine ruling class. To meet this crisis they felt compelled to make some concessions to the working class, the most important of which was restoration of at least some democratic rights.

Granting that the weakness of Argentine capitalism, coupled with the pressure of U.S. imperialism, precluded this constituting anything more than a democratic *interlude*, what should our attitude be toward this opening? We decided that we ought to take full advantage of it. That meant doing everything possible to extend democracy and to *institutionalize*, that is, strengthen it. Above all, it meant opening an intensive struggle to gain legal recognition for our party.

And that was the course we followed. In our opinion, it represented the consistent application of the basic principles of Trotskyism in a semicolonial country, specifically Argentina at a particular moment.

The Argentine ruling class, of course, intended to withdraw its concessions as soon as possible. The tactical prescription was to bring back General Perón, making this out to be an additional concession to the masses.

The chief aim of putting Perón back into the Casa Rosada was to divert the masses from taking the road of socialist revolution. Once this im-

mediate goal had been achieved, the democratic concessions would be undermined and chipped away until conditions again became propitious for another phase of open military rule or something still more oppressive, if that proved necessary. It can be taken for granted that the State Department and the CIA were privy to this blueprint and approved it, as their public posture indicated.

Perón himself began the process of hemming in the newly won democratic rights and striking blows at the political opposition that stood to gain by them. With his death, the process was considerably speeded up. The success of Pinochet in Chile helped in this.

The general political situation in Argentina, briefly put, was as follows: By proletarian methods, i.e., strikes, demonstrations, extraparliamentary methods, etc., the working class made big strides forward beginning with 1969. Because of Peronism, these actions were blocked from immediately opening up a socialist revolution. Leveling off at a plateau for the moment, they became registered primarily as gains for bourgeois democracy.

The Cordobazo and similar outbursts, it is quite clear, gave an impulse to the realization of tasks belonging to the bourgeois democratic revolution, and this occurred *against the will and the efforts of the Argentine bourgeoisie*.

In this respect, Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution was again confirmed. Likewise confirmed was the position of the PST in assiduously trying to advance the socialist revolution along *this road*, the road actually taken by the living class struggle in sovereign disregard of the schemas and dogmas of the guerrillas and their well-wishers.

What We Actually Said

8.

We have outlined the concrete circumstances we faced and the course we have followed to show how earnestly we have sought to uphold the principles of Trotskyism and to apply them in practice. Permit us to repeat that criticisms of our work ought to be directed either against the principles we chose to follow or to the gap between what we could have achieved and what we actually accomplished.

But that is not the case with the leaders of the IMT.

They do not take up what Trotsky taught our movement concerning the correct course to be followed in semi-colonial countries like ours. We do not know whether they agree with Trotsky or not. If they think that Trotsky was mistaken, or that his positions have been outmoded by the theories of the practitioners of guerrilla war, it would greatly facilitate the discussion if they would state their views. However, they simply say nothing. Is it because they regard Trotsky's views on how to conduct the revolutionary struggle in semicolonial countries as irrelevant? Or insufficient?

Much of the argumentation of the leaders of the IMT is aimed at proving that we have abandoned Trotskyism and that we are proceeding like Social Democrats or a comparable variety of class collaborationists.

This explains why they disregard the many statements of our views published in our press on a weekly basis over the years concerning our opposition to Peronism, to the Peronist regime, to the capitalist state, to the capitalist parties, and to our defense of the rights of the guerrillas despite our opposition to their anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, and anti-Trotskyist course.

Why, in attacking us, do the leaders of the IMT rely so heavily on falsifications in the bourgeois press (as they did in Open Letter No. 1) unless they believe that the bourgeois press presents a more honest view of where we stand than our own publications and statements?

This view accounts for the extraordinary importance they place on isolated errors we have made. And it explains why they read into some of our statements the opposite of what we clearly mean.

Above all, the view that we have in actuality become reformists, while trying to cover it up, would explain the strange selection of quotations from our press and the way they are presented. As an example of this, let us take the main quotation they use in Open Letter No. 2 in their effort to establish a case against us.

They quote four paragraphs from the statement made by Comrade Juan Carlos Coral at the "multisectoral" meeting held October 8, 1974, with Perón's widow, the current president of Argentina. They state that they took these four paragraphs from the text

of the statement published in the October 15, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*.

The first paragraph quoted by them does not read the same as the text published in *Avanzada Socialista*. The IMT leaders were either incapable of copying correctly, or they used a different text—maybe one taken from their favorite source, the Argentine bourgeois press.

Fortunately, the differences are not substantial ones. Unfortunately, the IMT leaders do not quote the entire paragraph. The first half was sufficient for their purposes.

We now come to the subsequent three paragraphs quoted by them. These consist of an accurate reproduction of the final three paragraphs of Coral's statement (save for one change that seems to have been introduced to correct his usage of the Spanish language). *The IMT leaders give no indication whatsoever that something came between the first sentences quoted by them and these last three paragraphs.*

This "something" consists of nothing less than 136 centimeters of type; that is, all of Coral's statement except the opening and closing sentences.

It is hard to know exactly which of Comrade Coral's phrases were considered by the IMT leaders to be the worst, but the following two probably come high on the list: ". . . will struggle for the continuity of this government, because it was elected by the majority of the Argentine workers. . . ."

In isolation the phrases can be given an invidious implication by opponents searching for ammunition. Considered in the context of our general policy, their meaning is quite plain, and completely in the tradition of the Trotskyist movement.

1. ". . . will struggle for the continuity of this government. . . ." That is, we will fight against its being toppled by a reactionary coup d'état, although we have no political confidence in this government and will continue to oppose it from a revolutionary-socialist point of view. Our position is comparable *in general* to the one advocated by Trotsky in Spain during the civil war there. Naturally, our *concrete* position corresponds to the

situation in Argentina today.

2. ". . . because it was elected by the majority of the Argentine workers. . . ." That is, our party will abide by the will of the majority of the working class and popular masses. In our opinion, the workers are mistaken in placing political confidence in a bourgeois government. Despite this mistaken attitude, caused by illusions in Perón, we will submit to majority will in our course of action (but not in our political views). We hope to win this majority to our program. Our method of doing this is outlined in the *Transitional Program*. Until we have won that majority, we are opposed to actions that play with insurrection. This includes violent *minority* actions, guerrilla war, or other "exemplary" deeds carried out by a handful of individuals divorced from the masses.

Understood in this context, it is quite clear that these "damning" phrases do not depart from Trotskyist principles.

The authors of Open Letter No. 2 admit that Coral's speech, "as reported in *Avanzada Socialista*," also contained "a condemnation of the government's 'passivity' in face of the murder of worker militants like those of the PST (a condemnation that was not reported in the bourgeois press)." But "the passages we have just quoted . . . facilitate the Peronist government's camouflage and cover-up operation instead of exposing it."

By judiciously selecting and fixing up quotations in this way, it is possible to prove anything. It is even possible to prove that while the headquarters of the PST were being smashed and its militants murdered, the leaders of the PST were so caught up in class collaborationism and were of such low political level as to engage in a tactic that "manifestly serves the bourgeoisie and the Peronist regime more than it contributes to defending the PST against the violence of the far right or the attempt to outlaw the PST."

It must be admitted that this is consistent with the view of the leaders of the IMT that the growth of the PST into the largest sector of the world Trotskyist movement is to be explained by the low political level of those Argentine workers and youth who have become acquainted with our press, our activities, and our political positions and therefore signed up as

members.

What brazenness was required to reduce the content of Coral's statement to the few sentences that the IMT leaders thought would best prejudice the PST in the eyes of the world Trotskyist movement can be judged from the fact that on the very same two-page center spread in *Avanzada Socialista* featuring the statement, an editorial denounced the butchery of Coral's words committed by the bourgeois press. The editorial, entitled "Struggle Against the Coup Without Supporting the Government," stressed once again the opposition of the PST to the Peronist regime. The editorial explained why, in face of this opposition along class lines, we nevertheless considered that a military coup would signify a political defeat for the Argentine working class.

The editorial reaffirmed the stand we had previously taken on the multi-sectorial meeting in the form of a statement by the Executive Committee of the PST distributed in mimeographed form at the meeting. It was surely known to the leaders of the IMT, since it was published in the October 10, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*. The leaders of the IMT had their own good, or at least sufficient, reasons for ignoring the analysis of the multi-sectorial meeting that appeared in that issue along with the text of the statement of the Executive Committee of the PST that was presented at the meeting. Here are the opening paragraphs of the statement:

"Our party is attending this meeting, as we did previous meetings between the government and other parties and organizations. Not because we aspire to, or believe in, the possibility of a 'national unity'—which is impossible between antagonistic social classes—but because we want to defend the democratic liberties won at a heavy price by the masses in the fight that began with the Cordobazo.

"The fundamental purpose of such democratic rights is to ensure respect for the right of the masses to decide what government they want—which in this case is the Peronist government—and the fundamental respect for the right of all political forces to present their ideas to the masses. Thus, we unhesitatingly condemn any attempt at a coup designed to bring down the current government, which has been elected by the majority of the working class.

"Starting with June 12, when the social tensions caused by the failure of the Social Pact came out into the open, provoking a resignation threat from the deceased President Perón, a period began in the country that has been marked by a threat hanging over our heads—a threat that the forces of oligarchic-imperialist reaction, the same elements that had to begin a retreat after the Cordobazo, were trying for a comeback by means of a new 1955.

"This threat, which if realized would mean the worst kind of defeat for the country and the workers, is real because the lukewarm nationalist measures and the relatively independent foreign policy line adopted by the government have not touched the powerful economic and political bases that imperialism maintains in the country."

The statement carefully distinguishes between the fascist-minded terrorists of the ultraright and the revolutionary-minded guerrillas of the ultraleft:

"We did not have to wait until the situation reached its present gravity to express our condemnation—in the name of the working class and socialism—of guerrilla warfare isolated from the masses. We have consistently opposed that desperate resort, which has been taken at times in the name of a socialist ideal and at others as a tactic designed to apply political pressure. Normally this kind of action ends up sowing the worst type of confusion in the ranks of the workers, as well as opening up the way for the most indiscriminate repression. In this case it has promoted a militarization of the country that may lead very far, that may lead ultimately to eliminating the increasingly limited democratic freedoms that the masses won by their struggles.

"But these condemnations of the guerrilla operations must not be used to cover up the causes that provoked this phenomenon nor to whitewash the fascist gangs by lumping their activity together with that of the guerrillas under some general common heading.

"We recognize perfectly the differences between the present government and the dictatorial forms that preceded it and threaten to return. We recognize that guerrilla actions and terrorism promote putschism. We proclaim our determination to fight against any attempt to topple the government by a coup. At the same time, we must

point out the responsibility for this situation that falls on the government because of its retreat on democratic rights, which began May 25, 1973."²

Here are some sentences from the statement's indictment of the government for its role in the deteriorating situation:

"The attack on democratic rights is shown by the absolute impunity with which the fascist gangs act. It now culminates in the passage of the State Security Law, which contains articles designed to repress the guerrillas and uses their activity as a pretext to institute repression of strikes and leftist currents.

"This rightist course of the government, followed by its four presidents, has in itself achieved many of the objectives that a reactionary coup might shoot for. This course in our country has been an expression of the same evolution that has led to brutal repression of our brothers in another part of the Southern Cone. Continuing this orientation cannot lead anywhere but to a 'cold coup' born in the belly of the very regime in power, a reactionary take-over which, through a Bonapartist dictatorship, will end up suffocating the democratic possibilities of the parliamentary regime."

We think it high time that the leaders of the IMT begin to present to the Fourth International as a whole the "unedited" texts of our declarations expressing our political positions. Every member of the world Trotskyist movement ought to be able to draw an individual conclusion on the basis of accurate, and not truncated, biased, and distorted presentations of our positions.

We propose, therefore, that the IMT leaders meet their responsibility by giving international circulation not only to this reply but to the full text of the speech made by Comrade Coral at the multisectorial meeting, the editorial analysis of the meeting published in the October 15, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, and the Executive Committee statement published in the October 10, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*.

Let the ranks of the Fourth International read all the material and judge for themselves.

2. May 25, 1973, was the date Hector Campora was sworn in as Peron's surrogate in the presidency. — IP

False Accusations Based on False Premises

9.

We turn now to arguments made by the leaders of the IMT that we have not yet dealt with.

'Superior' Democracy Vs. 'Inferior' Fascism

IMT accusation: "We reject the Social Democratic policy of lesser evilism according to which the workers are supposed to defend 'superior' or 'better' bourgeois 'forms of government' against 'less good' or 'inferior' forms of government."

PST reply: We, too, reject the Social Democratic view that socialism can be won by reforming capitalism through parliamentary measures until it has been legislated out of existence; and, as part of that view, of backing for office the least evil of whatever bourgeois alternatives are placed before the electorate. The Social Democratic view means placing *political confidence* in bourgeois democracy.

We are likewise against the ultraleft sectarian policy of refusing to defend bourgeois democracy against fascist attack. The fascist offensive is carried on outside of parliament, and the working class must meet this attack in a similar way.

The innuendo made by the IMT leaders brings to mind a quotation cited by Trotsky in an article he wrote during the Spanish civil war (September 14, 1937). The quotation, from a resolution submitted by the Joerger-Salemme group, an ultraleft sectarian tendency in the Socialist Workers party, was as follows:

"The Social Democrats who criminally preferred the victory of Hindenburg to that of Hitler, and got both, or the Stalinists who preferred Roosevelt to Landon, are no more politically degenerate than the Cannons and Shachtmans who prefer the victory of the Negrins over the Francos and will get either a Negrin military dictatorship or a Negrin-Franco truce." (*The Spanish Revolution* (1931-39), p. 287.)

Trotsky said in reply:

"The civil war between Negrin and Franco does not signify the same thing as the electoral competition of Hindenburg and Hitler. If Hindenburg had entered into an open *military* fight against Hitler, then Hindenburg would have been a 'lesser evil.'

We do not choose the 'greater evil,' we choose the 'lesser evil.'" (Ibid., p. 287.)

In the concrete situation in Germany, in which the differences did not extend beyond the parliamentary arena, "To support Hindenburg against Hitler meant to give up political independence." (Ibid., p. 287.)

Trotsky continued: "To affirm that to fight together with the Negrin forces against Franco is the same as to vote for Hindenburg against Hitler is an expression, I am sorry to say, of what is known as parliamentary cretinism. The war against fascism cannot be resolved by parliamentary means because fascism is an army of reaction that can be crushed only by force. That's why we were against the policy of the Social Democrats in Germany — the pure parliamentary combination with Hindenburg against Hitler. We called for the creation of workers' militias, etc. But here we do have a fight against fascism. It is true that the general staff of the 'democratic' army is capable of tomorrow making a truce with Franco, but it is not a fact today. And we can't overlook the real events. Tactically we must use the war of the republicans against the fascists for the purpose of a strategic aim: the overthrow of the capitalist regime." (Ibid., p. 288.)

In the cases of both Germany and Spain, the analogies with Argentina are of but limited usefulness. Insofar as they do apply, they plainly speak in favor of the policy followed by the PST, which was neither Social Democratic nor ultraleft, but in the tradition defended by Trotsky.

Support Gains, Not Limitations

IMT accusation: On the PST's support of the struggle to institutionalize democratic rights: "Obviously, this includes parliamentary elections, the parliament, the bourgeois state apparatus, the government that comes out of these elections, etc. And Marxist-Leninists know that these institutions *also involve* defending bourgeois property, capitalist exploitation, and the apparatus of repression devoted to this defense."

PST reply: Obviously, the IMT leaders are disregarding the implications of their arguments. Marxist-Leninists consider themselves to be heirs to the *gains* of the bourgeois democratic revolution, not its limitations, still less its retrogressive features in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism.

For instance, in the United States Marxist-Leninists are duty bound to defend and attempt to extend the Bill of Rights which has been institutionalized in the bourgeois constitution of that country. That does not mean that they thereby become involved in defending bourgeois property, which is sanctified in that same constitution.

To take a contrary position would *also involve* defending the sectarian rejection of the positive features of bourgeois democracy, a position scored by Trotsky. True, such a sectarian position is held by some of the guerrillas in Argentina, but that is hardly a recommendation for discarding the Trotskyist stand.

Yes, the Capitalist State Is Bad

IMT accusation: "It is true that the PST's August 20, 1974, declaration pronounces itself against any *political* support to a bourgeois regime or coalition. That is really the least one can demand from an organization that claims allegiance to Trotskyism. But the rejection of 'support to the policy of a bourgeois regime' combined with 'support to the process of institutionalization,' that is, the consolidation and strengthening of the institutions of bourgeois-parliamentary democracy, leaves the question of the PST's attitude toward the *bourgeois state* completely open. And it is that question that lies at the center of the controversy."

PST reply: We disagree that this is the question that lies at the center of the controversy. What is central in our opinion, is the question of guerrillism versus Trotskyism.

Aside from that, it is fallacious to argue that our defense of bourgeois democracy against attack by fascists and their kind leaves our attitude on the bourgeois state "completely open." The argument should really be directed against Trotsky. It was he who maintained that the struggle for bourgeois democracy in a semicolonial country is progressive and revolutionary. We only followed him in this.

Was Trotsky wrong? Did his view on this question leave "completely open" his attitude toward the bourgeois state? Or have the leaders of the IMT left themselves completely open on the question of their attitude toward ultraleft sectarianism?

We oppose the capitalist state and support whatever democracy exists in Argentina. Is this position right or wrong?

The Slander on 'Political Accords'

IMT accusation: On temporary practical agreements with "bourgeois liberals" in defense of democratic rights: "The August 20, 1974, document of the Executive Committee of the PST appears to say the same thing. But in sliding from the question of an occasional technical agreement for the defense of a particular democratic right to the search for an agreement with the 'liberal' bourgeoisie for the defense of democratic rights in general, the statement passes imperceptibly to the search for political accords for the defense of the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy."

PST reply: Neither in our statement nor anywhere else have we passed "imperceptibly," perceptibly, or in any other way, into searching for *political accords*. This is a slander. Not a shred of evidence can be cited to support it, unless one considers the tortured reasoning of the IMT leaders to be "proof."

In our long struggle to convince the vanguard of the Argentine working class of the necessity for independent political action, we have always been alert to the importance of our own example. Besides that, we did not care to commit political suicide.

In seeking allies in this struggle we have always sought practical objectives such as the defense of political prisoners, and, above all, concrete actions that, from our point of view, would help mobilize the masses.

It is true that our tactics and attitude have been different from that required in an imperialist country like France, Belgium, Germany, or the United States. That was because we paid attention to Trotsky's admonition concerning the difference between democrats in imperialist countries and those in colonial and semicolonial countries.

Again we ask the leaders of the IMT, was Trotsky wrong in teaching us this?

What 'Institutionalized' Meetings?

IMT accusation: "Now, the meetings in which the PST has been participating in no way had as their objective engaging in *practical* actions for the defense of a *given* democratic right, a *given* conquest of the working class. It was a matter of meetings to affirm — in the presence of the government — the defense of the 'process of institutionalization.' Moreover, *regular* meetings

with the bourgeois opposition parties and the CP are in turn becoming *institutionalized* meetings. In political terms, that is called *an interclass political bloc against all those who 'resort to violence' in Argentina and who thereby threaten the 'process of institutionalization.'*"

PST reply: Let us separate out the various ingredients of this mishmash.

1. Our objectives from the beginning have been to initiate practical actions jointly with other forces aimed at helping to mobilize the masses.

2. The given democratic rights were all those won by the Cordobazo and similar mass actions, which we consider to be conquests of the Argentine working class.

3. The meetings "in the presence of the government" were intended as confrontations, as efforts at obtaining wide publicity, and as springboards for actions such as mass rallies that could lead to broader and more dynamic mobilizations of the working class.

4. Meetings with the bourgeois opposition parties "and the CP" (is the IMT, then, against meeting with leaders of Communist parties?) were neither regular nor institutionalized, nor led to any political accord, "interclass," or otherwise.

5. Our position is crystal clear. We never make strategic, programmatic, or long-term blocs with non-working-class parties. Nor do we sign common political programs, or hold joint rallies of a general political type with such parties. With such parties we conclude only "limited, specific, tactical agreements." Such tactical accords serve essentially for propaganda campaigns on well-defined individual problems and to a lesser degree and in exceptional cases for obtaining some practical gain. They therefore play only a relative role, since for our party only "the mobilization of the working class can solve all the problems."

6. As to the charge that we have formed an "interclass political bloc" against all those who "resort to violence," this is a falsification.

The PST has never declared itself in opposition to violence in general, nor has it raised the slogan "Down with violence." The purpose of this falsification is to insinuate that the PST has adopted the position of the petty-bourgeois pacifists who oppose violence even when it is exercised by

the masses.

(Certain phrases in the above IMT accusation are enclosed in quotation marks. The French translation does not follow the Spanish in this. The English version differs from both the Spanish and the French. We would appreciate it if the falsifiers would reach a common agreement on what phrases they want placed in quotation marks and what were the sources of the phrases.)

7. In political terms, this accusation leveled by the IMT leaders can be called a malicious factional construction aimed at prejudicing the rank and file of the Fourth International against the PST.

Workers United Front

IMT accusation: "Does the PST counterpose the conception of a bloc with liberal bourgeois parties for the defense of the 'process of institutionalization' to Trotsky's conception of the workers united front?"

PST reply: We are against any bloc that crosses class lines. We are for practical agreements that help advance the struggle to institutionalize the democratic gains won through the Cordobazos. We are also decidedly in favor of a workers united front.

With regard to a workers united front we would greatly appreciate it if the IMT leaders could furnish Argentina with the mass Social Democratic and Communist parties of the Germany of 1932 to go along with the quotations from Trotsky's writings on this subject that they provided us.

In the absence of forces like the ones in the Germany of 1932 we have had to content ourselves with the reality at hand — the disintegrating Peronist movement and the mass trade unions, which confront us with a different set of problems from those the IMT leaders have in mind.

Trotsky, Kerensky and Joerger-Salemme

IMT accusation: "Under these conditions, to counterpose defense of increasingly paralyzed bourgeois-parliamentary institutions in decomposition to the rise of fascism is to court certain defeat."

PST reply: The IMT leaders are arguing by analogy that what Trotsky said about the situation in Germany in 1932 applies to the Argentina of 1974.

But the IMT leaders are so one-

sided in their quotations that the lesson they would like to draw for Argentina does not hold for concrete situations that can arise in the struggle against fascism even in the *imperialist* democracies. Consider the following observations made by Trotsky during the Spanish civil war against the position of the Joerger-Salemme group:

"1. The difference between Negrin and Franco is the difference between decaying bourgeois democracy and fascism.

"2. Everywhere and always, wherever and whenever revolutionary workers are not powerful enough immediately to overthrow the bourgeois regime, they defend even rotten bourgeois democracy from fascism, and they especially defend their own position inside bourgeois democracy.

"3. The workers defend bourgeois democracy, however, not by the methods of bourgeois democracy (Popular Fronts, electoral blocs, government coalitions, etc.) but by their own methods, that is, by the methods of revolutionary class struggle. Thus, by participating in the military struggle against fascism they continue at the same time to defend their own organizations, their rights, and their interests from the bourgeois-democratic government." (*The Spanish Revolution* (1931-39), p. 282.)

In those years, the ultralefts did not hesitate to call Trotsky wrong, and even worse than wrong. Joerger-Salemme were as arrogant as others of their school. In his rebuttal, Trotsky did not give a millimeter:

"The difference between the Negrin government and that of Franco,' I said in reply to an American comrade, 'is the difference between decaying bourgeois democracy and fascism.' It is with this elementary consideration that our political orientation begins. What! exclaim the ultralefts, you want to restrict us to a choice between bourgeois democracy and fascism? But that's pure opportunism! The Spanish revolution is fundamentally a struggle between socialism and fascism. Bourgeois democracy does not offer the slightest solution. . . . And so on." (Ibid., p. 295.)

Trotsky continued with further concrete analysis. One of the points he made was the incorrectness in the given situation of attempting to engage in an immediate effort to overthrow the bourgeois democratic government:

"The Stalin-Negrin government is a quasi-democratic obstacle on the road to socialism; but it is also an obstacle, not a very reliable or durable one, but an obstacle nonetheless, on the road to fascism. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, the Spanish proletariat may perhaps be able to break through this obstacle and seize power. But if it aided, even passively, in tearing it down today, it would only serve fascism. The task consists not merely of theoretically evaluating the two camps at their true worth, but moreover of utilizing their struggle in practice in order to make a leap forward." (Ibid., p. 296.)

In several instructive paragraphs, Trotsky took up the example of the Bolsheviks in the struggle between the Kerensky regime and the attempted coup d'etat by Kornilov in August 1917:

"The left centrists as well as the incurable ultralefts often cite the example of Bolshevik policy in the Kerensky-Kornilov conflict, without understanding anything about it. The POUM says: 'But the Bolsheviks fought alongside Kerensky.' The ultralefts reply: 'But the Bolsheviks refused to give Kerensky their confidence even under the threat of Kornilov.' Both are right . . . halfway; that is, both are completely wrong.

"The Bolsheviks did not remain neutral between the camp of Kerensky and that of Kornilov. They fought in the first camp against the second. They accepted the official command as long as they were not sufficiently strong to overthrow it. It was precisely in the month of August, with the Kornilov uprising, that a prodigious upswing of the Bolsheviks began. This upswing was made possible only thanks to the double-edged Bolshevik policy. While participating in the front lines of the struggle against Kornilov, the Bolsheviks did not take the slightest responsibility for the policy of Kerensky. On the contrary, they denounced him as responsible for the reactionary attack and as incapable of overcoming it. In this way they prepared the political premises of the October Revolution, in which the alternative Bolshevism or counterrevolution (communism or fascism) evolved from a historic tendency into a living and immediate reality.

"We must teach this lesson to the youth. We must inculcate the Marxist method into them. But as to the people who are a few decades past school

age and who persist in counterposing to us at all times—to us as well as to reality—the same formulas (which they have, by the way, taken from us), it is necessary to recognize them publicly as incurables who must be kept a few feet away from the general staffs who are elaborating revolutionary policy." (Ibid., pp. 296-97.)

We ask those who today echo the arguments of Joerger-Salemme: Has anything occurred since Trotsky's time that would show he was wrong in calling for a policy of defending "even rotten bourgeois democracy from fascism"? Has Trotsky been outmoded? Should he be displaced to make way for the theoreticians of "armed struggle in Latin America"? Isn't it time to speak up?

Was it Wrong for Antiwar Movement to Let American Balbins Speak?

IMT accusation: "Of course, Argentina in 1974 is not Germany in 1932. There are important differences in the social structure of the two countries, in the relative weight of the different social classes, and above all in the forms of organization, political tradition, and level of political class consciousness of the workers. But no 'national particularity' can transform the Radical party of Mr. Balbin into a serious candidate for the organization of a general strike—not to mention workers councils—at the side of the workers organizations. Is it not obvious that Trotsky is defending a *different political orientation* in these propositions of struggle against the fascist threat through the workers united front leading to the united class action of the proletariat culminating in a general strike—different from the orientation that sees regular meetings with bourgeois parties, signing common declarations and communiqués with these parties, and organizing common meetings with these parties as the useful condition for 'creating the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism' (Avanzada Socialista, July 4, 1974)?"

PST reply: In listing the differences between Germany in 1932 and Argentina in 1974, the IMT leaders ought to have added that Germany belonged to the imperialist sector and Argentina the semicolonial. How do they explain having missed this capital distinction?

Despite the oversight, we think we can reach substantial agreement with

the IMT leaders on at least one point they raise. We can agree with them that Balbin is not "a serious candidate for the organization of a general strike—not to mention workers councils."

As to the rest of the accusation, it shows either bad faith or political blindness. We did not say that meeting with these parties is a useful "condition" for "creating the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism."

Since the IMT leaders themselves quoted us almost correctly only a few pages previously, it is easy to ascertain our views. (Perhaps a stronger word than "almost" should be used. In one of the paragraphs, an important sentence was omitted without any indication that something had been left out.) Two paragraphs of the quotation used by the IMT leaders should suffice to show our views (we have restored the missing sentence, italicizing it for easy identification):

"Our party will always agree with Balbin and the FAS lawyers in opposing by all means the suppression of the daily *El Mundo*. Balbin does this in the name of the bourgeois liberal constitution he supports. We do so in the name of workers democracy and socialism.

"These convergences with bourgeois sectors can be expressed in the form of limited agreements, documents, statements, etc. A recent example was the rally organized by our party in condemnation of the Pacheco Massacre, in which, besides the left, almost all the bourgeois democratic forces participated. All these various types of public actions, from joint communiqués to rallies, are useful and help to create the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism. Moreover, they safeguard and reinforce the legal rights of the revolutionary party."

It appears to us that the IMT leaders do have a serious political difference with us. They seem to be opposed in principle to limited agreements or public actions involving bourgeois sectors in the struggle against fascism or other ultrareactionary forces. We think that they are not alone in taking an ultraleft position of this kind.

We should like to remind them that at the height of the antiwar move-

ment in the United States, quite a few petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois figures sought to share the platform in the giant rallies that were staged at the time. The Trotskyists in the United States did not oppose this. In fact, they favored it.

But how the ultralefts screamed! They considered this to be proof positive that the Socialist Workers party had formed an "interclass political bloc" with the liberal wing of the Democratic party, thereby falling into the Social Democratic "policy" of class collaborationism. It is one of the main "proofs" still thrown at the SWP by the ultralefts in the United States (and elsewhere) to bolster the charge that the SWP has "degenerated," turned "reformist," and "betrayed" the working class.

Popular Frontism in Thirties and Today

IMT accusation: "Moreover, the comrades of the PST are caught in an additional contradiction. They heavily insist on the fact that they were and remain irremediably opposed to coalitions of the 'popular front' type. Excellent resolve! But they seem to forget that the popular fronts were constituted in the 1930s exactly with the aim of 'defending democratic rights' against the fascist threat. If not only technical agreements but also political agreements with liberal bourgeois parties are admissible for the defense not only of a specific democratic right but democratic rights in general, what remains of the basis of the revolutionary Marxist opposition to the 'anti-fascist' policy of the popular front? Is it solely the fact that the popular front also contains a governmental program? Would it then become acceptable without such a program? If agreement with bourgeois parties to defend democratic rights in general is admissible, is it not even more admissible for regaining them where they have been suppressed? What then remains of the validity of the revolutionary Marxist opposition to the policy of 'antifascist front' with the 'liberal' bourgeoisie and its political parties, as followed by the Spanish CP, the Chilean CP, and the Uruguayan CP, to cite only three examples?"

PST reply: This house of cards collapses at the first touch. The popular fronts in the 1930s were *not* constituted "exactly with the aim of 'defending democratic rights' against the fascist threat." That was the propagand-

istic bait used to hook the naïve and the unwary. The popular fronts of the 1930s were constructed "exactly with the aim" of drawing the working class into political collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Stalin was thoroughly aware of what he was doing in both France and Spain.

That was why Trotsky saw these popular fronts as replicas of the class-collaborationist blocs of earlier times despite the difference in publicly professed aims.

The astonishingly superficial approach of the IMT leaders on this question led them in 1974 to classify the Union of the Left in France as something different from the people's fronts of the 1930s, since the propagandistic bait used by the architects of the Union of the Left was to "win socialism" not "defeat fascism."

On the basis of that distinction, the leaders of the IMT approved the policy of the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire of calling on the French workers to vote for Mitterrand in the second round.

In Argentina, in contrast, the PST entered the elections in opposition to the Peronist candidates from top to bottom—and not only in the first round *but in the second round*.

The electoral course of the PST proved where we stood politically in relation to *all* the bourgeois parties and those in the left tied to Perón's Justicialista party such as the Stalinists and most of the guerrilla organizations.

The former official section of the Fourth International went through a crisis on the question of whether to vote for the Peronist candidates, and ended up by splitting. It is true that the official section had already left the Fourth International, so that the IMT leaders cannot be held directly responsible for this lamentable outcome.

As for the PST, we had no problem whatsoever in this question; our party demonstrated its political clarity in the most graphic way throughout the campaign.

One of the features of our campaign was rejection of all overtures to build a popular front or to help pave the way for one.

In a report approved at a special convention of the PST in July 1973, Comrade Coral denounced the bourgeois effort at establishing under Perón "the broadest alliance of classes that the country has ever known." Co-

ral's concluding remarks were as follows:

"It is not a question here of preparing the party to carry out an electoral function but of putting the elections at the service of building the party. During this period, as during any other, we will have to carry out the three-pronged revolutionary tasks described by Lenin: agitate among the masses, propagandize for our ideas, and educate the cadres. It is in this sense that we must intervene in the elections.

"What I want to point out in conclusion is that at this stage we must be conscious above all else of the urgent need to educate our cadres. For it is certain that the instability of this latest attempt at an alliance between the classes, the instability and decrepitude of the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes in the government, opens up for us a revolutionary perspective. And when this moment arrives, it is the strength of our organization and the ability of the cadres of our party that will determine whether this revolutionary crisis will end in a tragedy, like the Spanish revolution, or in a historic revolution, like the Russian revolution of 1917." (See the August 1-8, 1973, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*.)

We have followed the same line since then, scorning the overtures made in our direction by both the Stalinists and some of the bourgeois political figures.

In their Open Letter No. 2, the IMT leaders sedulously avoid considering how our electoral campaign proved the intransigence of our revolutionary-socialist stand against class collaborationism. In fact they do not even mention our campaign.

Besides, the Uruguayans Are Not Guilty

IMT accusation: "The question is not simply rhetorical. Already the PRT-U (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores-Uruguay), a close political ally of the PST, has pronounced itself squarely in favor of such a front for the 'reconquest of free elections' . . ."

PST reply: We are against the practice of determining guilt by association. We are responsible for the political course of the Trotskyists in Argentina; not those in Uruguay, Belgium, Canada, or anywhere else. Moreover, even if we were to prove the innocence of the Uruguayan com-

rades, the IMT leaders would hardly agree that this made us innocent by association.

We will say, in addition, that we consider it completely inadmissible to subject the Trotskyists, working in the most difficult conditions in the underground movement in Uruguay, to being pilloried in public this way without discussing with them in advance, without notifying them, without giving them a chance to explain their position internally, and without even quoting them in context.

Is this the way the IMT majority of the United Secretariat proposes to proceed from here on out with all the sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International?

We underline the fact that the responsibility for attacking the Uruguayan comrades in public this way belongs completely and solely with the leaders of the IMT.

As to our positions on issues facing the Uruguayan revolutionary Marxist movement, we will state them after the Uruguayan comrades have had an opportunity to reply to the completely unjustified attack leveled against them.

Divisions Among Bourgeoisie

IMT accusation: "The PST's participation in the institutionalized meetings between the government and the so-called center-left opposition on the contrary provides left cover for a political operation whereby the Peronist regime is seeking to *camouflage its responsibility* for the organization of an antiworker and antirevolutionary repression behind the shield of verbal declarations against 'terrorism wherever it comes from.'"

PST reply: Of course the Peronist regime is seeking to camouflage its responsibility. Nonetheless the divisions among the bourgeoisie over the question of putting an Argentine Pinochet in power are quite real. In our opinion it is absolutely correct to try to take advantage of these divisions as part of the effort to mobilize the working class in defense of democracy against the ultraright.

To argue that the confrontations on a propagandistic level with the government representatives provided a "left cover" for the Peronist regime is nothing but camouflage for the ultra-left sectarian position that staked everything on guerrilla action in isolation from the masses.

Should We Worry Over Bourgeois Press?

IMT accusation: "The PST's participation in the hypocritical comedy of 'national harmonization' around support to the process of institutionalization organized by the Peronist regime is all the more fraught with consequences in that it allows the bourgeois press to distribute in millions of copies reports about the PST's *approval* of the government propaganda about the 'union of all Argentines around democratic institutions and the unanimous condemnation of violence.'"

PST reply: The IMT leaders have caught us red-handed; consequently we plead guilty to the charge that we have not gauged our tactics according to what the bourgeois press might say. We have resisted dropping to such a low political level.

What we have kept our eyes on, in accordance with the Trotskyist aim of building a mass revolutionary party in Argentina, has been among other things the circulation of our press, the rate of recruitment to the PST, and our becoming rooted in the masses.

Because of long years of experience under dictatorial regimes, the vanguard of the Argentine working class is accustomed to discount what appears in the bourgeois press to a higher degree than may be the case in countries where the vanguard, under imperialist democracy, has fallen into uncritical acceptance of what is printed in the bourgeois press. Consequently the references to us in the Argentine press helped to arouse curiosity as to what we had really said and done. Coupled with this were some expositions of our real positions that Comrade Coral was able to make to a vast television audience. As a result, the circulation of *Avanzada Socialista* increased by leaps and bounds.

Similarly, recruitment to our ranks proceeded at such a rate as to necessitate our putting controls on it to bring it into conformity with our capacities to educate and integrate new cadres.

Was this swift growth resulting from our political orientation and tactics bad? The guerrilla groups may think so. We do not. We are proud of the expansion in numbers and in prestige that we have been able to bring to the world Trotskyist movement.

We propose to continue what we have been doing with whatever tactical adjustments may be required in view of objective developments in the

situation. We grant the right of other revolutionists to say what they want about this. We are willing to debate with them, publicly or otherwise. But unless more compelling arguments can be advanced than those assembled by the IMT leaders, we do not intend to change our course.

Where They Go Wrong on the Situation in Argentina

10.

A Superficial Survey

The résumé of the Argentine situation offered by the leaders of the IMT is journalistic and incomplete; it lacks precise class characterizations. This summary consists of the following seven points:

1. "The replacement of the military dictatorship of Lanusse" is attributed to the struggle of the mass movement beginning with the Cordobazo. Another factor cited is "the development of multiple forms of armed confrontation" with the "military bourgeois forces" by "sectors of the masses as well as some groups of the vanguard."

2. The bourgeoisie and imperialism "by promoting the 'process of institutionalization' through the 'great national accord' . . . pursued the essential aims of averting the risk of an overall confrontation between its army and the masses" and "of reestablishing control over the workers movement. . . ."

3. ". . . the sine qua non for the success of this Peronist project was the acceptance of 'social peace' by the whole working class in exchange for 'free elections'. . . ." Minority sectors of the working class were beginning "to act independently."

4. "Under these conditions, the reestablishment of the Peronist regime inevitably involved a *growing violent and terrorist repression* not only against the Peronist far left and the groups engaged in guerrilla struggle, but also against all independent sectors of the workers movement and the working class."

5. "The resolution on Argentina adopted by the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International (Fourth Congress since Reunification) affirmed . . . the unstable character of the new period of bourgeois democracy." At the same time this resolution pointed out it was "a curious 'democracy' that develops the white terror starting from the highest gov-

ernmental circles!"

6. "This 'institutionalized' and systematized repression, under the direct control of López Rega, the 'strongman' of the Peronist regime, reveals the hypocritical and fraudulent character of the declarations of the leading Peronists. . . ."

7. "The PST's participation in the institutionalized meetings between the government and the so-called center-left opposition . . . provides left cover for a political operation whereby the Peronist regime is seeking to *camouflage its responsibility* for the organization of an antiworker and antirevolutionary repression. . . ."

Startling Omissions

This summary, which is correct as to the facts—although not in its assessment of the PST's actions—suffers from omissions and insufficiencies that are startling. Let's consider a few.

1. The IMT leaders fail to say whether the "new period of bourgeois democracy" is better for us Trotskyists than the military regimes, and whether, with the great gains scored by the masses, the workers are in a more advantageous position than under the Lanusse and Onganía governments. The PST holds that in fact the present regime in Argentina differs qualitatively from the military dictatorship, as well as the regimes of Pinochet, Bordaberry, Geisel, or Banzer, which are brutal Bonapartist dictatorships supported by the oligarchy and imperialism.

This characterization does not deny the right-wing and reactionary course of Peronism in office but does include a qualification; namely, that we have a bourgeois democratic regime although the government is in the hands of a party that is swinging more and more in a rightist and reactionary direction.

2. The lack of a precise characterization of the regime causes the leaders of the IMT to overlook the danger that a coup d'état may *wipe out the democratic gains made by the masses and the workers movement*, that is, sweep away the "new period of bourgeois democracy" mentioned in the resolution adopted at the last world congress.

The PST maintains that such a threat exists, that it is a terrible danger (although not something that is likely to happen next week, that is, immediately), and that it constitutes the gravest political problem facing

the masses and our party.

3. While the summary takes into account and defines the attitude of the vanguard of the workers movement, it fails to say a single word about the overall situation in the workers movement.

It recognizes that the workers movement as a whole does not act or think in the same way as the vanguard, by noting that the latter is "largely a minority on a national scale." But it totally ignores the level of consciousness and attitude of the working class as a whole. This omission, this failure to analyze how the entire working class thinks, feels, and acts, is impermissible, since the level of class consciousness is one of the fundamental elements required for formulating a correct policy.

4. As a result of this deficiency, the IMT leaders analyze Peronism as a government and the GAN [Gran Acuerdo Nacional—Great National Agreement] as a system, but they overlook Peronism as a mass movement and they overlook the mass support the GAN has. However, there are some figures that point up these facts clearly. The GAN, with its project of "institutionalizing the country" was voted for by 98 percent of all Argentines over the age of eighteen. More than 90 percent (95 percent comes closer) of the workers voted for the Peronists.

This current, therefore, has much greater support in the workers movement, for example, than Mitterrand in France and more than double the support for the Socialist and Communist parties in Italy.

The IMT leaders should specify whether they believe that the situation remains the same today or whether they believe that it has undergone a qualitative change. That is, does this majority of the working class, which does not follow the vanguard and does not support its independent actions, still support the government or not?

The PST holds that the crisis of Peronism in the workers movement has begun, but only just begun, and that it is developing very slowly. We do not know whether, when this crisis reaches its culmination, the workers will turn directly to the positions of revolutionary socialism, toward an independent workers party, or will remain stalled for a period at some "left" variety of popular frontism of-

ferred by the populist Peronists.

Do the IMT leaders believe that the crisis of Peronism is in its early or in its concluding stages? Is there a possibility or not that a mass popular front may arise as a result of this crisis?

5. This ignorance of what the workers movement is doing and what it seeks is shown by the fact that although they refer to the "Social Pact" as a governmental plan, they "neglect" to analyze it from the standpoint of its relation to the working class. They fail to point out that because of what this plan means (freezing wages in face of accelerating inflation), it has been and will remain the source of the most intense workers struggles.

The omission leads to a still graver oversight: forgetting the struggle of our class in general—not minority sectors of the vanguard—against the wage freeze. Nonetheless, this struggle produced three giant strike waves in 1974 and led to an important partial defeat of the "Social Pact" and the wage freeze. The class struggle has been deemed not worthy of a single line in the document of the IMT, as if it were devoid of significance.

6. An almost incredible oversight is the failure to mention the guerrillas. However, they exist and are active. The PRT (Combatiente) and the ERP launched a war to the knife against the Peronist government shortly after its installation. More recently, the Peronist left also turned to guerrilla actions against the government. The guerrillas are part of the national reality that deserves mention, and so we will devote some attention to them.

Is it politically correct to launch armed attacks against a government that had—and continues to have—the political support of the immense majority of the workers movement and a large part of the populace? Is it valid to argue that the guerrillas played no role in the stepped-up repression, because such repression is inherent in the capitalist system? Shouldn't Marxist analysis note that if the workers movement does not react against the repression this is because it is being carried out in the name of defending a government regarded by the workers as their own that is being physically attacked by a small irresponsible elite? Shouldn't it be said that this guerrilla activity provides an excuse for accelerating

the repression, provoking an unnecessarily early crackdown out of proportion to the level reached by the workers struggles; that this activity enables the bourgeoisie to isolate the vanguard sectors, which cannot find the mass support needed to resist these attacks because the masses support the government?

7. It is not made clear that in the Argentine situation the gravest contradiction is the one between the degree of militancy and organization achieved by the proletariat on the trade-union level and the degree of rotteness reached by its trade-union and political leaderships. This contradiction cannot be left out of any serious analysis, since on the subjective level it finds expression in the contradiction between the very high trade-union consciousness of the Argentine workers and their extreme political backwardness, their fanatic Peronism.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Political Course

11.

To develop a correct revolutionary policy in our country requires taking into account the situation as a whole, of which the factors overlooked by the IMT leaders form an essential part. Thus the policy prescribed by our critics, who call on us to "resolutely orient . . . toward the line of the workers united front and the propagation and carrying out in practice of self-defense by the workers organizations themselves against the fascist terror," simply sounds ridiculous to us.

A workers united front? With whom? The relatively tiny Argentine Communist party? No, obviously a workers united front requires mass organizations, not small parties. A workers united front with the Peronist unions, which are the only mass organizations that exist? But the fact is that a whole "sector of fascism" draws its support from the Peronist unions, which in their turn support the government as do the workers. So then, should it be a united front of the Peronist unions against the Peronist unions?

"Self-defense" by the workers organizations themselves? Should we call on the Peronist unions to organize "self-defense" against their own fascist goons or against the parallel police, if the goons are part of the govern-

ment apparatus?

We would like the authors of the document to tell us exactly with what "workers organizations" (mass organizations, of course) we are supposed to achieve a workers front and promote self-defense. The key to the situation, precisely, is that the Argentine workers in their vast majority do not think or feel that there is any need *for the time being* for self-defense against the fascists. They do not think so because in their extreme political backwardness, as shown by their support for the Peronist government and movement, they do not regard fascism as their main enemy *for the time being*. They do not feel the need to defend themselves because, *for the time being*, the fascists are not attacking the mass workers organizations, or the labor movement, but only sections of the vanguard standing far in advance of the masses. The working class as a whole, *for the time being*, is indifferent to the fascist threat.

What the workers are conscious of is the threat of a coup d'etat. But precisely with regard to this danger, which is the most serious one—much more acute than the activity of the fascist groups—and which the working class recognizes, the leaders of the IMT have no line. Nowhere in their document do they mention the possibility of a reactionary coup d'etat, as if the perspective of a Pinochet seizing power in Argentina were something remote. Just at the moment when this danger begins to loom larger, they prove to have no line for confronting it. We cannot help feeling astonished at this failure by those who a year ago were predicting a reactionary coup and accusing us of lack of preparations to meet it.

Nor do our critics suggest a course to help speed up the crisis in the Peronist movement and prevent the workers movement from going through a new populist or popular-front experience.

To top off their falsifications of our positions, the leaders of the IMT go so far as to suggest that the PST thinks that the way to fight the reaction is by agreements with the bourgeoisie; and without any proof, they go on to accuse us of having a "popular front" line.

Yet when it comes to analyzing the immediate problems and formulating a line for Argentina, they leave out completely the danger of popular

frontism and what to do about it. Specifically, the IMT leaders fail to even indicate that the main slogan to advance in combating Peronism, any alternative form of populism, and a popular front is the political independence of the working class.

Another incredible "omission" by our critics with regard to what line revolutionists in Argentina ought to adopt concerns the gravest kind of "terrorism," as our party has defined it, the terrorism waged by the Peronist government against the workers in imposing the "Social Pact" and its wage freeze. We cannot understand why those who accuse us of serving as a "left cover" for the Peronist government failed to mention that one of the fundamental tasks in defending the rights of the workers against this government is to struggle against the agreement between the bosses and the union bureaucrats included in the "Social Pact."

Finally, there is another "omission" that seems to be a complement of the ironical attitude these polemicists decided to adopt toward the "process of institutionalization." They fail to take into account its effect on the consciousness of the working class. The process of institutionalization as it concerns the bourgeoisie is one thing, and our critics have correctly ascertained what this is. But institutionalization is something else again from the standpoint of the understanding, feelings, and aspirations of the labor movement and the masses who voted for it.

To the workers and the masses, "institutionalization" means the process of winning democratic freedoms for themselves besides supporting the Peronist government, which they consider to be *their* government. If this is not understood, it is impossible to understand anything at all about the present level of consciousness of the Argentine workers; and, as a consequence, it is absolutely impossible to develop a correct line.

A genuinely revolutionary line must take into account all these elements that have been "overlooked" by our critics. Our party weighed them in arriving at a policy that combines the following complementary lines of action:

1. To mount a head-on fight against the "Social Pact." Our policy is to help the working class organize strikes to win higher pay, break the "wage

freeze," and defeat the "Social Pact."

This line of struggle goes hand in hand with denouncing the government for enforcing the pact. It means seeking to unmask the government in practice; and, what is just as important, impelling the working class to mobilize massively behind an objective that it is able to undertake right now.

Our entire policy is based precisely on finding a leverage point from which the working class as a whole can be set in motion on its own against the capitalist system and the Peronist government. Given the workers' high level of trade-union consciousness, this leverage point is to be found in their readiness to mobilize against the "Social Pact." If, in struggling against the pact, the working class wins successive victories, they will in due course come to confrontations with the government and the fascists that will enable them to overcome their political backwardness. Events are proving us right in our choice of the central issue, since the largest working-class mobilizations have occurred against the wage freeze, the main pillar of the "Social Pact."

2. To engage in an energetic defense of the "process of institutionalization" as the masses understand it—not as the bourgeoisie and above all the Peronist government understand it. In voting for this "process," the workers voted for expanding democratic freedoms. We agree with the workers and with the feeling they expressed by their votes. We are pointing out to them that they must struggle to ensure that the process moves forward and not backward.

In this course, we are following the method outlined in the *Transitional Program*, which teaches us to look for the progressive substance placed by the working class in slogans that on the surface may appear to serve their interests (for example, "peace," when the bourgeoisie advance it as part of their preparations for a reactionary war).

3. To engage in a dialogue with the Peronists as long as they continue to enjoy massive support from the workers. Our purpose in engaging in a dialogue, which includes such tactics as meetings with them, is to try to accelerate the crisis of the Peronist movement. We level demands on the Peronists in the name of the working class and denounce them for the "Social Pact," the repression, the protection of fascist groups, their reactionary course, and their policy that ob-

jectively facilitates preparations for a reactionary coup. Our main accusation is that they do not defend democracy but undermine it and curtail it.

4. To continue to make "limited, tactical agreements" with any current in defense of any specific right or body of rights that is under attack or can be won. At the same time, as conditions mature for forming a real working-class united front against the fascist gangs, we will continue to propose to independent unions and left worker parties that they form united fronts and participate in united efforts of workers militias. (Although we have received only negative responses so far, the PST has been carrying out a full-fledged campaign in favor of such proposals for months, a fact systematically ignored by our critics.)

5. To continue combining the struggle for trade-union democracy with the struggle against the "Social Pact" as the best way of sweeping away the trade-union bureaucracy.

6. To continue to raise the alarm against the danger of a reactionary coup d'etat and explain the need for mobilizing the workers movement to face this threat. This policy includes using proletarian methods to defend the bourgeois democratic regime against a reactionary coup d'etat. That is, we fight for the continuity of the "present period of bourgeois democracy" against reactionary assaults as long as the masses are not yet prepared to go beyond it to the establishment of socialist democracy.

7. To continue to battle for the political independence of the workers movement and to oppose any slide into popular frontism. This is the axis of our entire line—class against class.

8. To continue to oppose guerrillism. In their ignorance of, and contempt for, the consciousness of the masses, for what the masses want and feel, the guerrillas fell into terrorist actions against a government that the workers are not yet ready to abandon, particularly in face of a threat from the ultraright. The majority of the working people either ignore or repudiate the terrorist actions of the guerrillas. Moreover, we will continue to explain how the irresponsible course followed by the guerrillas has helped accelerate the repression and increased the danger of a reactionary coup against a workers movement not yet prepared politically to resist and defeat such an attack. □

Argentine PST Selects Presidential Ticket

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, September 10, 1973

The Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST — Socialist Workers party) called a special convention at the end of July. Its main purpose was to determine the party's response to the new election campaign occasioned by the resignation of President Héctor Cámpora and the declaration of the candidacy of Perón. The election is scheduled for September 23.

The convention was described by the August 1-8 issue of the PST's weekly, *Avanzada Socialista*, as a "work session." This was shown, it said, "by the fact that the discussion of electoral tactics took up only three of the thirteen hours of the entire session."

Three points were on the agenda: party activities, the international situation, and the national situation. The last was broken down into three points, dealing with political questions and the election, the youth, and the unions.

The proceedings went on under portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, and banners reading: "For a world party of socialist revolution," "Solidarity with the persecuted members of the French Communist League," "For a socialist Argentina," and "For the nationalization of Códex and Standard Electric."

A major decision of the gathering was to announce the candidacy of

party leader Juan Carlos Coral for president and José Páez for vice-president. Páez is a union leader from Córdoba and was a leader of the now banned SITRAC (Sindicato de Trabajadores Concord — Concord Workers Union).

Following the PST convention, the party offered its ballot status to a possible presidential slate consisting of Agustín Tosco, head of the Córdoba Light and Power Union, and Armando Jaime, a peasant leader from Salta. Although considerable support developed for such a ticket, Tosco and Jaime decided in mid-August not to run. Therefore, Coral and Páez remain the PST's ticket.

Avanzada Socialista provided the following summary of the PST convention proceedings:

"The report on party activities was presented by Arturo Gómez and traced the progress and advances of all aspects of party life. Its general line was approved, and it was decided to refer it to all party centers so it could be discussed and definitively approved. Under this point, certain forms of party organization were discussed, and it was agreed that the main activity of the coming period will be the training of solid Marxist cadres, with an aim toward forging a Leninist combat party.

"The international reports were presented by Compañeros Mario Doglio,

Nahuel Moreno, and Maria Encabo, and the subsequent discussion touched on various questions. This point initiated the international discussion within the party. Although no resolution was adopted, steps were taken toward a characterization of the situation and tasks on an international scale, and an orientation for party work was set. This is a discussion that remains open and is being carried on in the party centers.

"With regard to the national situation, we are publishing Compañero Coral's report separately. [See article below.] Following discussion, the report was approved, the Coral-Páez presidential ticket was chosen, and the party executive committee was authorized, in line with Article 15 of the party statutes, to implement any changes in electoral tactics that might be called for by the changing and unstable political situation prevailing in the country. In addition, the convention approved a proposal by Compañero Grano to issue a call to all class-struggle and socialist forces, which was sent to the press.

"This was a gathering marked by workers democracy, in which clear resolutions were adopted that arm the party to continue the struggle."

The gathering also adopted, by acclamation, a statement of solidarity with the Ligue Communiste, French section of the Fourth International, which has been declared illegal by the Pompidou regime. □

Why PST Is Participating in Elections

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, September 10, 1973

[The following is the conclusion of the report by Juan Carlos Coral to the special convention of the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers party) at the end of July. Coral's remarks were published in the August 1-8 issue of the PST's weekly, *Avanzada Socialista*, from which they have been translated by *Intercontinental Press*.

[Coral's speech dealt with the current situation in Argentina. "He explained," reported *Avanzada Socialista* in an introduction, "the plunder to which it has been subjected by imperialist penetration: growing indebtedness, the maintenance of the old oligarchic structure of the large, rural landholdings, and the exploitation of the working class to a critical point. He then showed how the workers movement responded to this exploitation in a combative, class-struggle way, beginning with the Cordobazo." Coral's concluding remarks follow.]

* * *

Thus, in the logic of these events, and in face of this combative, class-struggle response of the workers, the bourgeoisie had to respond with the only alternative remaining to it: the broadest alliance of classes that the country has ever known, in which the dominance of international finance sectors is taken for granted, but which also involves the landed oligarchy

and the national bourgeoisie. Naturally, this alliance has taken shape under the leadership of Perón as the great Bonapartist leader who assumes the luxurious role of arbitrating conflicts between sectors of the bourgeoisie, and enjoys the support of the working class.

While he was in Madrid, Perón was a kind of reservist for imperialism; from that vantage point it was easy for him to fill the role of a workers and people's leader. On another plane, he sent his tape-recorded blessing to all sectors of the [Peronist] movement: Osinde and Rucci, Galimberti and López Rega. All of them had Perón's blessing—naturally, with special encouragement to the youth and the combative sectors, since this was the way to keep high the expectations of the workers and people for this fake revolutionary leader.

But when the moment for assuming power arrives, a position has to be taken on all the concrete problems. And Perón now stands, as he really is, before a working class that lived through eighteen years of expectations and heroically intervened to bring about his return.

With regard to the archaic latifundia setup, he responded with a diplomatic tax on the potential income of the land, maintaining the old, privileged structures. With regard to the problem of the country's loss of capital stock through the free outflow of profits on foreign investments, Perón re-

sponded by imposing a ceiling of 12.5 percent—a ceiling that is not even being observed now that nothing stands in its way. With regard to the question of nationalizing the banks, which we called for, he responded only by nationalizing bank deposits, which made it possible to direct credits toward sectors that had an interest in receiving them.

Finally, with regard to the whole gamut of superexploitation suffered by the workers, the response was the wonderful wage increase of 20,000 pesos [US\$1 equals approximately 1,000 pesos], which is not an increase but simply brings wages back to the level they were at during the first months of this year.

But through our party the working class is also preparing its response to this bourgeois policy. Its response is the revolutionary mobilization of the masses and the conquest of power by the working class along the lines of our revolutionary program.

This response consists of discrediting all utopian, reactionary illusions about national revolutions. For our economy is nothing more than one element within the organized pole that is the world capitalist economy. There is no possibility of freeing ourselves from imperialism without escaping from the confines of the capitalist system. There is no possibility of saving oneself from imperialist exploitation through Third Worldist formulations or references to national revolution;

this can only be done by changing the relations of production—that is, through socialist revolution, through permanent revolution, as we can see from the examples of Russia, Cuba, and Vietnam.

We will carry out this political response with one instrument—a party of cadres who are perfectly disciplined and conscious of the fact that they will provide the leadership for the revolutionary process that is approaching.

And we, *compañeros*, must now solve the problem of using these new elections to bring all these elements together. At a time when all the other forces are caught up in their own

maneuvers and cannot get out, we—if we respond immediately—will be setting an example in organization and conviction. We will reflect not confusion, which is their stock-in-trade, but clarity, which is ours.

It is not a question here of preparing the party to carry out an electoral function but of putting the elections at the service of building the party. During this period, as during any other, we will have to carry out the three-pronged revolutionary task described by Lenin: agitate among the masses, propagandize for our ideas, and educate the cadres. It is in this sense that we must intervene in the elections.

What I want to point out in conclusion is that at this stage we must be conscious above all else of the urgent need to educate our cadres. For it is certain that the instability of this latest attempt at an alliance between the classes, the instability and decrepitude of the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes in the government, opens up for us a revolutionary perspective. And when this moment arrives, it is the strength of our organization and the ability of the cadres of our party that will determine whether this revolutionary crisis will end in a tragedy, like the Spanish revolution, or in a historic revolution, like the Russian revolution of 1917. □

Coral Confronts Peron With Five Demands

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, May 13, 1974

[The following document appeared in the April 11 *Avanzada Socialista*, weekly of the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International). It features points made by PST leader Juan Carlos Coral at a meeting held April 5 between opposition political parties and officials of the Perón government. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Like that literary character who spoke in prose without realizing it, almost all those who met Friday, April 5, at 10 a.m. at the Olivos mansion [Perón's country estate] failed to see—or pretended not to see—that the meeting between administration officials and representatives of eight opposition parties was a by-product of the big workers mobilizations that began with the Cordobazo.

The Cordobazo dealt a death blow to the oligarchic-imperialist military dictatorship. It resulted in all the bosses being compelled to support a pact known as the Gran Acuerdo Nacional [Great National Agreement], designed to maintain capitalist rule in the form of a bourgeois-democratic government. That is the government of Lieutenant General Perón, which will soon complete its first year in office.

Our party considered it obligatory to participate in all the difficult stages of this laborious process involving constitutional democracy, which was initiated by Lanusse and Mor Roig¹

and is continuing today under General Perón. The struggle has been over democratic rights: on one side, the masses fighting by means of strikes and mass mobilizations to extend these rights; on the other, various ruling figures, parties, and bourgeois sectors trying to restrict them.

This is something that General Lanusse does not seem to understand: In a speech he made last week, he credited the armed forces with having brought about the return to constitutional rule. The bourgeois politicians, on the other hand, credit it to "La Hora del Pueblo."² Gentlemen of the military, gentlemen of the bourgeois parties, the credit goes to the working people. They paid for it with their blood.

Today the threat against the democratic conquests of the masses comes from a sector of the ruling party and the union bureaucracy. That is why, just as we once demanded that the military get out and that free elections be held, we have now confronted Perón's government with five demands of the labor and socialist movement.

Our party, based on the daily struggle of the workers, believes that it was proper to voice these deeply felt demands at the Olivos mansion. Consequently, to this meeting—which was made possible by a Cordobazo that toppled the military dictatorship and opened a period of constitutional bourgeois democracy—we sent a delegation in the same way that we intervened in the strike of the bank workers, the occupation at Panam, and in the Villazo to defend the demands of the workers and the people.

We were able to confront the gov-

ernment ministers and the president directly with these demands. Perón, who was in good health and a jovial mood, showed that he was perfectly aware of what is going on in the country. From here on out, the workers need not entertain any doubts on this score. The excuse advanced by left-wing Peronists that there is some sinister conspiracy to keep the president in ignorance lacks any basis in fact. There is no "screening," no "evil genius," no misinformation, no doing things behind his back. The president is in command and he is directly responsible for everything that happens.

Here are the five most urgent demands of the working people in brief: (1) Call a halt to the violent repression of popular organizations and the murder of their activists. (2) Stay the hand of the union bureaucracy, beginning by recognizing the victory of the workers at Villa Constitución.³ (3) Repeal the law on redundancy. (4) Stop exploitation, starvation wages, and rising prices. (5) Fight imperialism, beginning by nationalizing the automotive monopolies.

The government, we must say, did not reply satisfactorily. There was silence in some cases, evasive answers in others. Nor were promises, hints, or concrete announcements of any kind made—contrary to what the bourgeois press asserts. Each time the government was asked for precise, concrete answers, it evaded the questions, insisting instead on the need "to carry out new meetings to deal with the technical aspects." Only on point No. 2 did Minister [of Labor] Otero maintain that his ministry was committed to carrying out the agreement reached with the metalworkers.

1. President and minister of the interior, respectively, in the closing days of the dictatorship—they were architects of the Gran Acuerdo Nacional.

2. The People's Hour, the Peronist-led popular-front formation in last year's elections.

On drawing a balance sheet and making a report on this meeting, our party must act like the *compañeros* in a Comisión Interna (plant committee) of a factory when they return to the assembly after seeing management: *Compañeros*, we met with management and we put our five demands up to them. They responded affirmatively only to the one about Acindar, although even that is not a complete guarantee. The real victory there belongs to the *compañeros* who carried out the Villazo. On the remaining points they made no positive response. We must keep on fighting to win them."

1. Stop Escalating the Repression

Coral: Minister [of the Interior] Llambi—repeating a concept that we have heard several times from General Perón—has just warned that peace and internal security are threatened as much from the ultraleft as from the ultraright. Nonetheless, we note that the government deploys a large police and military apparatus that is quite efficient when it comes to handling what is called ultraleft violence; an apparatus that, in addition, carries out its functions so zealously that at times we see it tilting with windmills—uncovering imaginary assassination attempts and plots. But, when it is faced with dealing with the violence unleashed by the ultraright, it has not made a single arrest or cleared up a single one of the shocking incidents that have been happening almost every day in the country.

This complacent attitude of the government toward the armed bands of rightists has encouraged an escalation of genuine terrorism, which reached a peak in the seditious action of the police in Córdoba, and which is to be seen in the assassination of students and the destruction of headquarters of political groups that is going on; all of which stirs grave uneasiness over a threat from the army to the exercise of civil liberties.

In summary, gentlemen, the government should speedily come to grips with such flagrant contradictions as the following: Giving a speech at a peaceful assembly of workers is treated as an act warranting arrest for "disturbing the public order," while kidnaping a governor and his entire

cabinet, leaving a province at the mercy of armed civilians, does not constitute a crime, not even an offense!

2. Stay the Hand of the Union Bureaucracy—Respect the Victory at Acindar

Coral: Another factor at the root of the instability to be seen in the country is the discriminatory and despotic way in which the union leadership directs the workers organizations. We could document this statement with an infinite number of examples of intimidation and fraud, of corruption and violence—habitual practices that violate union democracy. But for the moment I want to single out one example, the metalworkers at Villa Constitución, as a symbol of the current situation in the unions. For four years they tolerated the national leadership's intervention in their section. They patiently went through every conceivable channel to present their grievances peacefully. They put out thousands of leaflets and petitions. They made trips and negotiated. They interviewed leaders of the UOM [Unión de Obreros Metalúrgicos—Metalworkers Union] and officials of the Ministry of Labor.

Finally they had no recourse left but to occupy the main plants in the district, which they did with the active solidarity of the whole population, completely paralyzing production. That is, in order to exercise the elementary right to elect their own regional leadership, the workers at Villa Constitución had to go to the very brink of a popular insurrection.

But that is not all, Mr. President. The agreement signed as a basis for ending the conflict has not begun to be implemented, though fifteen days have passed, and Villa Constitución has once again reached an explosive point. We maintain that the government cannot continue as a mere spectator, only observing the unleashing of situations of this gravity by the despotic union leadership.

Minister Otero: In the first place I should state that the agreement to which Coral refers will be carried out in all aspects as a responsibility of this ministry. But I want to make clear, too, that Law 14455 did not establish any time limit on interventions. In the new Trade Union Law

we have included a clause doing just that. On the other hand, we are aware that in the past there have been long interventions by the state, not only in unions but also in the Central Obrera [trade union federation] itself.

Coral: We gratefully accept the commitment that the minister has just made to put the Villa Constitución agreement into force immediately. It is true that the old law did not establish a time limit on interventions. The fact is that all the deadlines and limits laid down in the labor laws were intended to prevent abuses by the bosses and the state. Now the minister should include time limits on moves by the union leaderships themselves. This example cited by the government, far from providing a justification for their actions, constitutes one more proof of the abnormal situation of the unions that I just mentioned. As for the examples of previous interventions—pardon me, Mr. Minister, but I must tell you that your argument is quite unfortunate. Because if you have to point to the ill-fated interventions by the "gorillas" in order to justify the present ones, then I must confess that the situation of the unions is even more serious than we ourselves had imagined.

Mr. Otero: The workers at Villa Constitución were right, but they tried to turn the strike into a political action. . . .

Coral: I can assure the minister that at Villa Constitución, as in the rest of the country, 80 percent of the workers are still Peronists. It is not comprehensible how Peronist workers could organize a strike against their own government. . . .

3. Repeal the Law on Redundancy

Coral: We differ with the president when he states that the aim of the law on redundancy is to dismiss functionaries who are not needed to carry out the present policies and to eliminate employees who are hanging around in the hallways with no useful function and who are in general not needed. At Banco Nación, on the contrary, the law was used to dismiss the most militant representatives of the workers, some of whom had been rehired by the Peronist government itself and then were dismissed again under the law on redundancy. As for functionaries who served the "gorilla" govern-

ment, they not only continue in their posts, but in some cases have even received promotions to key positions in the current government.

President Perón: Those are isolated cases. . . .

Coral: Yes, they are still isolated cases, but sufficiently important to justify our alarm. Above all in view of the government's insistence that parliament extend a law that up to now has only been used to fire union militants. That is, this law has served as one of the instruments with which the government has tried to enforce the so-called Social Pact. We ask that those fired at Banco Nación, at IME—and all others fired for the same reason—be immediately rehired.

(Earlier, in answer to a similar question, the president stated that the constitution gave the administration the power to throw out, transfer, or remove public functionaries. Perón stated that he had not wanted to raise the problem so as not to stir up a juridical controversy, but that he was not willing to permit a limitation of his powers in this regard. From this, we can only draw the conclusion that the president of the republic is taking personal responsibility for the application of the redundancy law.)

4. Stop Exploitation and Starvation Wages

Coral: At a time when the government has begun to enter the dangerous road of declaring that a strike voted on by an assembly of 3,000 workers is "illegal and subversive," we state that what is really subversive is the minimum wage imposed on the workers.

The minister of the economy has just admitted that "we are entering a very difficult phase in which we must con-

trol price increases to prevent them from getting out of hand." He has also recognized that "there is a certain amount of speculation going on among merchants and industrialists." In view of that situation, we maintain that it is indispensable and urgent to set up mechanisms controlled by the people to ensure compliance with the price ceilings.

But, in addition, those price ceilings should be set after an exhaustive study of costs in all stages of production and marketing, with control of the study in the hands of the workers. We must end trade secrets and substitute workers for the accountants, since the latter are real technicians in tax evasion and in keeping two sets of books to swindle the people. If the whole country knows how much a worker earns, all workers should also know exactly what the bosses' gains are.

Let's take the example of meat, which is of decisive weight because of its importance in the so-called family food basket. The government has fostered a running battle between the housewives and the butchers. We call for a battle of all consumers against the cattle barons—those typical parasitic middlemen, the oligarchy's base of economic power—whose fabulous profit margins, reached under the military, are now being recognized and guaranteed by the present government.

5. Fight Imperialism

Coral: The final item that we are concerned about is the control that imperialism continues to exercise over our economy. This is another serious cause of instability, as is shown by what has happened in several other sister countries of Latin America. Right now, the conflict is coming to a head

around the question of the North American companies that are delaying authorization to their Argentine branches to begin shipment of automobiles sold to Cuba. This threatens our national sovereignty and shows to what extent the international monopolies exercise control over the most dynamic sectors of our productive apparatus.

Mr. Gelbard (minister of the economy): You are wrong. The Argentine government is carrying out the trade agreements with Cuba and is not negotiating—nor would it accept negotiating—with foreign companies or officials.

Coral: I ask you concretely, Mr. Minister, have the shipments to Cuba of Ford and General Motors cars begun yet?

Mr. Gelbard: They haven't begun yet because we have set an order of priorities that begins with agricultural machinery.

Coral: Then our doubts are fully justified, above all after reading the recent foreign reports that Cuba will turn to Mexico as an alternate source for buying automobiles in view of the delay.

[*Foreign*] *Minister Vignes:* The government has carefully maintained the national dignity and sovereignty of the country in all its foreign policy actions. If a situation arose like the one described, the government would know very well how to proceed.

Coral: And the Socialist Workers party also knows what must be demanded of the government—nationalization, under workers control, of all branches of the foreign firms. They did not come here graciously to use their capital to promote the autonomous development of our economy, but to set themselves up like pumps to keep the national wealth—that is, the country's resources and what the workers have produced—flowing into their hands. □

May Day Manifesto of Argentine PST

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, June 10, 1974

[The following May Day Manifesto was issued by the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International). It was published in the May 3 issue of the party's weekly *Avanzada Socialista*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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Worker activists and revolutionaries have the chance to attend three rallies on May Day.

One has been called by the government, organized by [Labor] Minister Otero, and supported by the Juventud Peronista [JP—Peronist Youth]: the "Celebration of Labor and National Unity." It will be blessed by Caggiano and protected by Villar and Margaride's police. The ads and posters already indicate what will be expected from those at the Plaza de Mayo [site of the "Celebration"]: to shout, "We are with you, General."

The second is the rally called by the Communist party, the party that at one time was with the gorillas, and until March 11 [1973, date of the presidential elections that brought the Peronists to office], accused Perón of being "fascist," only to become pro-Perón after March 11. This is the party that defended and continues to defend the line of the "peaceful road," which brought on the defeat of the Chilean working class. At that rally there will be some criticisms of the government, but it also will conclude with shouts of "We are with you, General."

If you want to be honest with yourself, you cannot attend either of these rallies. First, because you are not "with" the Social Pact and the wage freeze. Second, because if you seek—in spite of that—to attend the Plaza de Mayo rally with the aim of "chang-

ing its content," as the Juventud Peronista and some left currents do, you will only repeat your error of August 31 [date of a 1973 mass rally organized by José Rucci, then the leader of the CGT], when you acted as the stooge of the union bureaucracy. In addition, you will be committing an act of political provocation, because Perón has the right to "celebrate" the proletarian holiday in his probourgeois, probureaucrat way.

If you are not "with the General," the only constructive, nonprovocative, and nonopportunist way to show it is by coming to the only workers, socialist, and internationalist rally that will be held: the one called by our party, the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores.

The 'Peaceful Road' Is Violent Road to Reaction and Fascism

Chile was the great triumph for the Communist party: the triumph of the Popular Unity in office. For years we Trotskyists had denounced the counterrevolutionary Stalinist positions on the "peaceful road," the "revolution by stages," and "popular frontism." Those concepts chained the working class to the politics of the bourgeoisie. They doomed it to the role of "pressuring" its bourgeois ally and led it to defeat.

In Chile the debate was tested by events. Stalinist reformism greeted the experience as the concretization of its old aspiration. Although not sharing their enthusiasm, revolutionaries around the world fixed our attention on our Chilean brothers and were infected with the great expectations awakened by this experience during the last few years. It was reformism's great opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of this heralded "road."

We did not stop warning the working class against this ill-fated policy,

which recommended that the masses have confidence in a bourgeois front, sweetened the "progressive" character of the national bourgeoisie, counseled prudence to avoid frightening these allies, exalted the armed forces as patriots upholding society's institutions, braked the revolutionary aspirations of the masses, and impeded their organization and arming, which they claimed would be provocative. A policy, in the final analysis, that systematically paved the way for handing over the Chilean proletariat to their military hangmen. A policy that criminally squandered the heroism of the masses and betrayed the interests of the proletariat. A policy that succeeded in thwarting one of the deepest revolutionary processes in the Americas and made possible the victory of the gorillas who today drown Chile in blood.

The same policy and the same debate have also come up in Uruguay. A huge general strike with fifteen-day factory occupations—undoubtedly one of the biggest workers mobilizations in Latin America—was given up by the Stalinist leadership, who had confidence in a progressive nationalist sector of the Uruguayan armed forces. Such confidence was shared by the guerrilla groups. As in Chile, they were incapable of providing a revolutionary alternative and ended up capitulating to bourgeois nationalism. They had confidence in precisely those who buried all semblance of bourgeois legality and who today "progressively" are conquering our brothers.

Revolution Is Exploding All Over the Globe

Today, this policy is revealed to be incorrigibly counterrevolutionary. We are witnessing a period of up-

surge of the world revolution. Its most visible signs are found in the process of "Latin Americanization" of the developed countries, which are beginning to experience the social explosions that until recently were exclusively our endowment.

In the old world the crisis has been simmering on a low flame; the increase in oil prices is making it flare up. While inflation soars and production goes down, workers struggles grow. Strikers bring down the conservative government of England, and the military itself comes forward to do it in Portugal, in view of the chaos that the colonial war has provoked within the country. Strikes, collapsing governments, and an increasingly divided bourgeoisie is the new face of old Europe. The era of the insoluble crisis of the imperialist bourgeoisies has begun. Watergate and the Nixon affair show that the process is not strictly European; it is worldwide.

The colonial world is experiencing violent shake-ups that have repercussions in the imperialist centers. Portugal is the latest demonstration of that. Vietnam, the great detonator of the Yankee crisis, that is, the crisis of the world imperialist system, was the predecessor of the African revolutions. The Middle East and its oil were the spark that ignited the crisis of the big capitalist countries.

To this picture must be added the democratic struggle of the peoples of the workers states to throw off the yoke of their bureaucracies. That struggle at times begins in the form of protests by intellectual or student sectors. It is the expression of a profound revolution embracing the entire society, which inevitably will involve the working class and generate a broad process of mobilization to reconquer socialist democracy in the workers states. An evidence of that is the recent episode involving the Russian writer Solzhenitsyn. Although not a revolutionary, in his works he made important allegations against the Soviet bureaucracy and in favor of democracy, and he was expelled from the country.

The bureaucracies of the USSR and China need to silence any opposition voice in order to carry out unimpeded their counterrevolutionary pact with North American imperialism and other policies. The only aim of the Nixon-Mao-Brezhnev pact is to bene-

fit the national interests of its signers by curbing the worldwide revolutionary process. Its first and most dramatic application has been the Paris accords that the Vietnamese revolutionaries were forced to sign. The inadequacy of Chinese and Soviet aid and the pressure of these countries for "peace" imposed accords that did not expel the Yankee aggressors nor liquidate the Saigon puppet government.

In this international context the revolutionary movement is cutting a path, breaking away from reformist and capitulationist influences. For this the development of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist parties is indispensable. Such parties must join together in the Trotskyist Fourth International, the embryo of the only party of the world revolution.

This same choice between reform and revolution faces us in Argentina, where we undeniably form part of that world revolution.

Balance Sheet of One Year of Peronist Rule

The Peronist government took office under very favorable political and economic conditions. For one thing, the military dictatorship and the social sectors supporting it agreed to yield governmental power. Specifically, the oligarchy and imperialism gave Perón their approval. For another, the working class, which had been fighting the dictatorship with semi-insurreccional mobilizations like the Cordobazo, offered Perón the broadest electoral support. That was accompanied by a profound confidence about what lay ahead. To this must be added the international economic situation, which permitted some sectors of the ruling class to export at a great advantage. That reinforced their political support to the government. Given these conditions, Perón could sum up his program in one sentence: go slower than Allende; or, better yet, go slower than his first government. Now, let's see where this has led.

Nothing Has Changed Fundamentally

During this year the oligarchy did not lose a single hectare, imperialism not a single monopoly, the bureau-

cracy not a single soft job. Beyond that, they strengthened their control over the country and the workers.

Bunge and Born did not return a single cent of the money they amassed in their fifty years of exploitation. On the contrary, they are preparing to take over management of the State Enterprises Corporation.

Ford, FIAT, and General Motors did not give up a dollar of what they had piled up for twenty years. On the contrary, they are rewarded with preferential prices, juicy exports, and more superprofits.

Standard Electric did not lose the Sheraton Hotel, nor did they construct a children's hospital on the site as the JP announced they would. On the contrary, they did not get the punishment they deserved.

Miguel, Otero, and Company [secretary general of the "62 Organizations" and labor minister, respectively] were not penalized. Instead they were rewarded with ministries, government posts, and a new Trade-Union Law.

The chiefs of repression during the military dictatorship exchanged the decree-laws for the reformed Penal Code, and, with several Chejoláns added to their list of victims, they retained their posts and influence.

And, to complete this picture, the wage-freeze policy has been inherited by the new government under the pompous name of the Social Pact.

Anti-Imperialist Foreign Policy?

Not even in the arena of foreign policy—where the Communists and the Peronist youth agree with Balbín, Alende, and Sueldo [bourgeois politicians], and praise the government—has the regime adopted really anti-imperialist measures. Of course, we all support the opening of diplomatic and commercial relations with Cuba and Russia, but we should not misunderstand their political significance.

Breaking the ideological barriers to permit commerce with all countries of the world was initiated under Lanusse. He embraced Allende and sent emissaries to China. Perón has taken one more step in this policy. But can we call it anti-imperialist?

Those steps were taken at the same time that the worldwide struggle of the masses forced the Yankees to reach an understanding with the bureau-

cracy: the Nixon-Mao-Brezhnev pact. Then it stopped being a crime to sell wheat to China. How could it be a crime after Nixon had tea with Mao? And it was at tea time that our oligarchy and bourgeois nationalists got up their nerve.

They were not alone: Even the dictator Bordaberry got up the courage to sell 40 percent of Uruguayan wool to the socialist countries. The jackal Franco was more "anti-imperialist" than the Argentine government when he negotiated with Cuba. Franco negotiated while the United States prohibited it; Argentina waited until the blockade had been broken and even the Pope was sending bishops to talk with Castro.

The Argentine government has defended the interests of the national and imperialist bosses. Thus the owners of Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors pressured the government of the United States so that it would permit the opening up of the virgin market represented by Cuba and the socialist world.

We are not ignorant of the fact that there are frictions and pressures accompanying these negotiations, such as the well-known incident between [Foreign Minister] Gelbard and Mr. Schultz, the North American chargé d'affaires. But that cannot be confused with a true anti-imperialist policy, which begins by destroying the fundamental bases of the domination—expropriating the imperialist enterprises, and nationalizing banking and foreign trade. Such a policy would break colonial treaties and ties with the OAS [Organization of American States] and would propose a Federation of Latin American Workers States. Perón had done none of this. Thus we do not hesitate to assert that these meaningful anti-imperialist tasks can be accomplished only when the working class takes power in our countries.

The Peronist government had the opportunity to adopt an anti-imperialist stance when the Chilean military coup took place. Our party demanded a break in diplomatic relations. Perón not only did not do that. In addition, he refused to grant asylum to the refugees who were fleeing the military's fury, and he extended a credit of ten million pesos to the junta.

Peronist Government Entering a New Period

Nonetheless, the Peronist regime is entering a new period in the series of changes governed by the tempo of mass struggles, which began with the Cordobazo and modified national life to its very roots. From a directly imperialist government they passed to an oligarchic one, and now, to one where the bourgeoisie is represented by the CGE [Confederación General Económica, the national employers organization] and the union bureaucracy.

The upsurge of the masses shows the other side of the coin: the retreat of imperialism without giving up its privileges and monopolies. On the institutional level, this was reflected in a reversal: The government run by the armed forces, and supported by the parties of the Hora del Pueblo [the Peronist-led electoral bloc in last year's elections] and others, became a government of these parties (with their parliament, their Perón-Balbín agreement, etc.), supported by the armed forces.

Defend and Deepen Democratic Process

Perón and Balbín think that this democratic process, which began with the Cordobazo, can be stopped at its present level. To achieve this objective they plan to take advantage of the juridical-institutional mechanism of constitutional reform, through which they are trying to guarantee stability to the current bourgeois front and share the government between themselves.

On the other side, the CP warns about the imminent danger of a "fascist coup" through which imperialism plans to regain its foothold.

Perón and Balbín in their optimism do not take into account that all the factors stabilizing the regime are transitory, and even now are shifting. The political credit that the working class extended to the government is diminishing. The workers have not stopped struggling for their economic demands and these are bringing them rapidly toward a confrontation with the government.

This has been particularly clear among the bank workers. They were fired under the Law on Redundancy, which bears the signatures of Perón and Gelbard, and then, for good measure, they were repressed by the police of the "people's government."

Nor should anyone be fooled by the favorable economic situation for our exports. That cannot be the basis for any sustained progress. Since the world market is dominated by the imperialist powers, a simple agreement or order by them can modify the prices and the conditions, as is happening this very minute with the doubling of oil prices.

That makes Perón and Balbín's dream of a long economic, social, and political stability very unlikely at present, given the fact that no fundamental steps have been taken. The most probable perspective is that of an inescapable crisis. But does that mean that the imperialist "fascist coup" is imminent? Concretely, is the Navarrazo [February 1974 coup that ousted the elected Córdoba provincial governor Obregón Cano] the prelude to that coup?

There is no question that Peronist bourgeois nationalism is historically threatened with the danger of a reactionary coup. But it goes farther: Almost all our country's formally democratic governments—from Yrigoyen to Illia—were brought down by force. Perón, in 1955, and similar Latin American governments (Arbenz, Getulio Vargas, Paz Estenssoro, Goulart, etc.), fell in the same way and for the same reason: By hobbling and impeding the mobilization of the workers and people, they handed over power to imperialism.

On the other hand, the pressure and democratic struggles of the masses after the rise of Perón combined advances and retreats. One integral sector of the government (the union bureaucracy is exactly that), in a pact with the right wing of the cabinet, tried to respond to the masses with the Navarrazo and profascist coups. The Villazo [recent successful strike by metalworkers in Villa Constitución] has been the most recent big workers' response to that offensive.

But neither the historic danger that menaces all bourgeois nationalist gov-

ernments nor the present exacerbation of the struggle between the masses and the right wing justifies the CP's prediction of an imminent CIA coup. That is crying wolf. The government remains stable, in part because the fundamental line of imperialism, the oligarchy, and the native bourgeoisie is to support it.

Our party has a principled position with regard to democratic conquests: They belong to the masses and should be defended unconditionally. In spite of the fact that this is not our government, we do not waver in proclaiming that we will be in the front lines when danger approaches, in the struggle to preserve the present government against a coup, because we recognize only the masses' right to install and overthrow governments.

By taking this position, we are not doing anything different than we did in 1955. At that time the Federación Bonaerense del Partido Socialista de la Revolución Nacional [Buenos Aires Federation of the Socialist Party of National Revolution]—the name of our party then—was the only one that warned in advance and called for a struggle against the gorilla coup.

Meanwhile, fighting with the masses to defend and deepen their conquests, we will not waver in combating the most reactionary sectors of the government and the government as a whole, as they try to cut back the conquests.

For Political Independence of the Working Class

Three roads are open to the Argentine revolutionary vanguard. One is proposed by the Juventud Peronista and the Communist party. Another, similar to the first, is proposed by the guerrillas. We propose a completely different, third road—the political independence of the working class.

For forty years the CP has come to us saying that the governments of the "good" bosses will begin building socialism, that what is needed is to find and support them. For twenty years, since the Unión Democrática [Democratic Union—pro-Yankee popular front that opposed Perón's bourgeois nationalist program], the CP has found and supported them in the camp of antiworker, antipopular, antinational gorillaism. For a little less than

one year now, they have joined the Juventud Peronista in asking the Peronist bosses for socialism, although without breaking with their past friends. The CP and the JP together are desperately looking for the new leader to follow Perón among the Cámporas, the Alfonsíns, the Alendes, and others who aspire to ride a new populism. The important thing for them seems to be that the mass movement not become independent, not follow its own course, but that it continue in its allegiance to Perón. In summary, they propose a new *Argentine* version of the Chilean popular-front experiment.

Equally incorrect is the road the guerrillas propose. The guerrillas are like the populists, who try to force the working class to take a passive role and simply support capitalist leaders. But the guerrillas put armed organizations whose social base is in student and petty-bourgeois milieus in the place of capitalist leaders.

The guerrillas and the populists share a common underestimation of the masses. They believe that their role can be filled by a leader or by a handful of fighters.

Thus the guerrillas always stand aside from the big mass movements, which, when they arise, take them by surprise. The biggest urban semi-insurrection in our history—the Cordobazo—exploded while the guerrillas were training in the countryside. And the advice that the guerrillas gave to the Córdoba workers was that they should not confront the repressive forces, because they were not sufficiently equipped. Not only did they not foresee an urban semi-insurrection like the Cordobazo; it was made against the guerrillas' suggestions and advice.

This same disorientation, born of that underestimation of the masses, was repeated with the Villazo. Again the working class demonstrated that no one can replace it as protagonist of history. For their part, the guerrillas demonstrated that their "armed road" is not appropriate for "insertion into the masses," an objective that preoccupied them so much since the recognized failure of focoism.

But the guerrillas are not merely disoriented. Their ill-planned actions create a double danger for the workers. The first is an immediate, direct one: The regime always takes advan-

tage of those actions as an excuse to act against the workers. The most recent example was the guerrilla assault on the Azul barracks, which the government used to get the Penal Code approved. The other danger is still more serious: The guerrillas become brakemen of the mass initiatives. Like the populists, they relegate the masses to the role of spectators instead of calling them into organized, independent political action.

Populism is the common feature that unites the guerrillas with the CP, as is shown in the FAS [Frente Antimperialista y por el Socialismo—Anti-imperialist and Socialist Front], which, it is worth mentioning, is a popular frontist proposal, open to the "progressive" sector of the bourgeoisie.

The working class's big problem is that its political independence is compromised. It does not have an organization or a line of its own in the political arena. In the union arena, its independence is subordinated to the bureaucracy and in the political arena, to Perón. The struggle against the bureaucracy to obtain rank-and-file control over the union is much more advanced than the struggle to obtain political independence.

Only our party speaks of the necessity for the latter and intervenes in all arenas in defense of the political self-determination of the labor movement. In union elections we propose that the workers movement should have its own candidates (for which we throw open our slates, proposing class unity along the lines of the Tosco-Jaime formula). This is an example of our meaningful defense of class independence for the workers, which is a life-and-death issue for them.

For a Coordinating Committee of Antimanagement, Antibureaucratic Forces in Workers Movement

The struggle to defend and broaden democratic rights won by the masses centers today on the fight against the bureaucracy. To uproot it from its control of the CGT and the unions is essential to transforming these organizations into true weapons for the mobilization of the workers against the Social Pact, the wage freeze, the

firings, and exploitation in general.

Regaining control over the unions, currently dominated by a bureaucracy that indirectly ties them to management and the state, will be a first step toward political independence for the workers movement.

The current struggles demonstrate that there are possibilities for a mass movement uniting all antimanagement, antibureaucratic forces to be born and to develop. We saw this possibility in the recent plenum of the Comisiones Internas [plant committees] at Acindar, Metcon, and Marathon in Villa Constitución. With the exception of the JTP [Juventud Trabajadora Peronista — Peronist Worker Youth], all forces that agree on those objectives gathered there.

At the plenum it was decided to form coordinating committees by zone to support all struggles, to demand wage increases and present other economic demands, and to fight for union democracy throughout the country. The PST proposed the formation of a national antimanagement, anti-bureaucrat coordinating committee then and there.

There were two forces against that: the JTP, which announced publicly that it would not attend the plenum; and the Communist party, which attended to oppose it from within. It is no accident that the same forces that are political agents of bourgeois populism appear here, opposed to the working class developing independent union organizations.

For their part, the guerrillas, in-laws of the CP by virtue of their common marriage to populism, played no significant role; as always in these important actions in which the working class is protagonist, they had no adequate answers.

In contrast to all this, our party was and will be the one to do most for the formation of such a national coordinating committee to unify struggles and regain control of the unions. This is because the PST will conduct a serious defense of the working class's union and political independence.

The development of this coordinating committee is the most important and pressing task for worker and revolutionary activists. It will undoubtedly be the tool that will enable the working class as a whole to win its most urgent demands.

Our Revolutionary Workers and Socialist Party

The winning of workers democracy and political independence are the two main tasks. To accomplish them, all worker and socialist activists must be part of the same organization — a revolutionary party.

Activists isolated in different sections of a factory can do very little against management. Only if they are united in a plant committee, for example, can they manage to lead all their compañeros in a unified struggle. The party is made up of the best activists emerging from the mass movement. There it is rooted, learns, discusses, and orients the masses — providing an answer and a line on all their problems.

This party is the only one that can recapitulate, enrich, and transmit all the experience and theoretical and political tradition of the struggles of the world working class, the synthesis of which is Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism. The party teaches the working class the need to struggle for its political independence and to organize the revolutionary vanguard party to take power and create a workers and popular government. With such a government the working class will advance toward the socialist society through the continuous mobilization of the masses. It is precisely the lack of this political revolutionary vanguard organization in a world ripe for socialist revolution that we see most dramatically today.

In our country there are revolutionary fighters who do not understand this necessity to join a revolutionary party, which fights at the head of the masses. That is the price of long years of Peronist populism, which has made them forget not only the masses' struggle for political independence, but even the need for their own political parties as vanguard elements. Thus, they disperse themselves within a bourgeois movement with the argument, "That is where the masses are." This converts them into accomplices in tying the masses to the cart of the bosses and the bureaucracy.

Nor do the guerrillas and the sectarians see the necessity to form this revolutionary party. They are not familiar with the mass movement and deprecate the power of its mobiliza-

tions. They believe that the revolution will not be made by the masses but by a small elite group. Thus, their organizations are caricatures of a revolutionary party and become closed groups that jump from sectarianism to opportunism.

We are building the revolutionary party — against populist opportunism and reformism, against union and political bureaucracies, and against guerrillaism and elitist sectarianism.

The PST is the party needed to destroy capitalism here, and the Trotskyist Fourth International is the international party.

* * *

Join Us in Fighting for These Goals

Against the Social Pact, the 13 percent [the wage increase granted by Perón with the Social Pact; prices are expected to have risen by 24 percent by the end of the year, however], and the wage freeze. For a minimum [monthly] wage of 250,000 pesos [US\$250], to be adjusted automatically every two months to the cost of living. Reopen the parity commissions [where democratically elected labor delegates challenge the bosses' representatives on questions of wages and working conditions].

Against rising prices. Abolish commercial secrecy. For workers control of production and the accounts.

Against the oligarchy and imperialism. For the expropriation without compensation of all plantations and the resettlement of farmlands. Expropriate all monopolies without compensation and nationalize them under workers control. Nationalize all banking, finance companies, and insurance companies.

Against the new Law on Redundancy. Rehire all workers fired at IME [Industrias Mecánicas del Estado, state-owned automobile enterprises], Banco Nación, and other state and provincial government departments.

For solving the housing problem by expropriating all luxury housing and uninhabited land and turning them over free of charge to those without homes. Turn over all rented quarters to those who are living there. Develop a plan for housing construction under workers control, with the units to be

paid for monthly at a maximum of 10 percent of one's salary.

Against profits in public health care. Nationalize all laboratories and private clinics under workers control. For free health care and medicine for the entire population.

Against the Penal Code reform and Article 48. End the repression of activists and their organizations. Free all political prisoners. End torture. Disarm the goon squads. Investigate and punish those responsible for all the massacres and attempted violence that have taken place.

Against the closing down of periodicals. Repeal the decrees that closed *El Mundo*, *Militancia*, and *El Descamisado*. For freedom of the press and expression.

Against the Trade-Union Law. For a national coordinating committee of all antimanagerial, antibureaucratic forces to organize in solidarity with the workers at Villa Constitución and with all workers and people's fights. For a congress of democratically elected delegates of the rank and file of the CGT to elect a new leadership for the labor federation and the unions that will put those organizations at the service of the ranks. For new leaders and the return to the factories of all the current leaders for a period of at least two years.

Against the decree that prohibits the sale of contraceptives. For the right of women to control their own bodies and

the right of the family to decide how many children they want. For equality of men and women on the job, in wages, and before the law. For free, legal abortion and sex education. Create free, twenty-four-hour childcare facilities.

Against the Peronist-Radical university law and the restoration of the "De La Torre" in secondary schools.

— Defend all conquests of the student movement. For rectors and deans supported by the students.

— For the right of students to elect their own administrators and determine their own programs of study.

— For student control of the universities and secondary schools.

— For student solidarity with the struggles of workers here and around the world against imperialism and exploitation.

— For socialist education in a socialist Argentina.

Against any coups. Defend and deepen the democratic rights won through worker and popular mobilizations.

Against the new populism advocated by the Juventud Peronista and the Communist party. Against guerrilla actions isolated from the masses. For the political independence of the working class.

For the construction of a revolutionary Marxist party of the working class in our country.

Against any capitalist government. For a workers and popular government and a socialist Argentina.

For breaking relations with the OAS. Break agreements that tie us to imperialism.

— Solidarity with the peoples of Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay who are fighting against their pro-Yankee dictatorships.

— Unconditional defense of socialist Cuba. For a Federation of Socialist Republics of Latin America.

— Solidarity with the people of Vietnam and all colonial peoples who are fighting imperialism and exploitation.

— Support to the Arab peoples who are fighting Zionism and imperialism.

— Solidarity with the European workers who are mobilizing against their imperialist bosses.

Against the counterrevolutionary Nixon-Mao-Brezhnev pact. Against peaceful coexistence with imperialism and the exploiters.

— Solidarity and support to those struggling to regain socialist democracy in the USSR, China, and the other workers states.

— For proletarian internationalism. For a Marxist party of the world revolution. For the strengthening of the Fourth International. □

No PST Signature on Statement Handed to Perón

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, July 15, 1974

[The following editorial note appeared in the June 26 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the weekly newspaper of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers party), an Argentine sympathizing organization of the Fourth International. The note deals with the PST's participation, together with seven other political parties, in two interviews with General Juan D. Perón.

[The first interview took place on March 21. It was intended to help dramatize, and thereby help mobilize active resistance to, the resurgence of the ultraright that had led to, among other things, a coup d'etat in the province of Córdoba on February 27.

[In its report in the March 28–April 5 issue of *Avanzada Socialista* on the confrontation with Perón, the editorial staff indicated that the PST had added its signature to a joint document presented to the general by the eight parties that participated in the meeting. This led to some misunderstandings of the position of the PST, which the editorial note is intended to help clear up.

[The second interview with Perón, in which delegations from the eight parties participated, was held April 5. No general document was presented on this occasion. For the stand taken by the PST, see "Coral Faces Perón in Defense of Strikers," *Intercontinental Press*, April 29, p. 501; and "Coral Confronts Perón With Five Demands," *Intercontinental Press*, May 13, pp. 606–608.]

* * *

We have received a letter from a European reader who follows our newspaper closely, although here reports that recently a few issues have not reached him. The compañero expresses solidarity with us in facing the violent attacks and assassinations

our party has suffered, but he would also like something cleared up.

He learned that in April a delegation from our party participated, along with seven other political organizations, in an interview with General Perón. He asks us to make clear whether we—along with these bourgeois parties—signed a document to be presented to Perón. The question arises from three contradictory reports: one in *Avanzada Socialista*, in which we stated that the document was jointly signed; a second, an account of a television program in which Juan Carlos Coral denied having signed the document; and a third, an article in the magazine *Así* about the television program, in which Coral's denial was not mentioned.

The compañero wants to know whether or not there was actually a document signed by the eight parties. Along with his question, the compañero makes other points in which he criticizes our party's policy with regard to agreements for the purpose of defending democratic rights.

In this brief reply we are not going to take up the various criticisms of a political and theoretical nature made by the compañero. Here we want only to state again the basis of our political position and clear up the question of the document.

In our country the democratic liberties we have at present are the result of tremendous workers' struggles that erupted with the Cordobazo [the 1969 semi-insurrection in Córdoba]. These liberties are being threatened by the rise of fascist groups that are supported by a wing of the government, by the union bureaucracy, and by the bourgeoisie. Faced with that threat, we consider it not only permissible but obligatory to make limited, tactical, temporary agreements with any sector that comes out for the defense of democratic rights. That does not

stand in the way of—on the contrary, it requires—our continuing to advance the socialist revolution as the only way to really solve the crisis. And, at the same time, for this purpose we have to narrowly define our agreements with bourgeois parties, since these parties cannot be relied upon to defend democratic rights consistently.

It was to press this policy that we attended the interview with government officials, and mounted mobilizations for democratic rights to counter the murder of our members and those of other parties.

Let us turn now to the question of the document. As Compañero Coral told an immense television audience April 8, our party did not sign any document jointly with the other parties. Coral explained in front of the television cameras that the report in *Avanzada Socialista* was the result of an error.

If *Así* did not take note of Coral's explanation, it was because the article is a reporter's selective treatment of a program that lasted nearly two hours. The Argentine public can verify Coral's public denial, and also the fact that the entire program argued the case against popular frontism.

For our part we want to make clear how *Avanzada Socialista* happened to make the error. It resulted from the following sequence: One of the eight parties proposed that a joint declaration be made, and it presented a draft. Our party proposed a series of changes that were partially accepted. At the time we went to press, the editorial staff thought that the document bore the signature of the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores*. Actually, it was not signed because there was still disagreement with it.

We on the editorial staff complete the record by indicating how the error was made with regard to the signature. □

Why Argentine Workers Need Their Own Party

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, July 22, 1974

[In its first issue after the death of Perón, *Avanzada Socialista* analyzed the political alternatives before the Argentine workers. To those workers who supported the so-called orthodox, or "anti-Marxist," wing of the Peronist movement, the weekly of the PST (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores—Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing group of the Fourth International) pointed out that there could be no more doubt now about what "orthodoxy" implied.

[A contradiction had persisted while the populist caudillo was still alive: Some trade-union militants had fought for the interests of the workers against the effects of Perón's class-collaborationist deals, while still pledging unconditional obedience to "our general."

"Now this contradiction is finished," *Avanzada Socialista* wrote. "If you had any hope about Perón making a turn, that is over." The "orthodox" Peronist workers had to realize that backing official Peronism meant supporting the wage freeze, rightist goons, and a trade-union bureaucracy that denied the workers even the right to elect their own leaders.

[As for the left Peronists, who had been under direct attack from the rightist gangs and under political attack from "el líder" himself for many months, they also offered no alternative. In the first place, the left Peronist politicians had proved their inability to stand up to the offensive from the right:

"You who want to defeat adversaries such as imperialism and the oligarchy," *Avanzada Socialista* asked, "can you rely on an Obregón Cano, who confronted the semifascist coup in Córdoba by resigning?"

[Along with politicians like Obregón Cano, the Peronist left includes the old nationalist guerrilla groups now united under the name of the Montoneros (the Irregulars). *Avanzada So-*

cialista recalled how ineffective their military actions had proved in countering the political plans of the bourgeoisie.

"When they kidnapped Aramburu, they said that they had scuttled the Gran Acuerdo Nacional [Great National Agreement, the scheme for a class-collaborationist regime that was eventually implemented by Perón], but it continued to sail along."

[The Trotskyist weekly also noted how the needs of staying in the framework of Perón's movement had prevented the left Peronists from effectively supporting or leading workers' struggles.

[The guerrillas' objective of winning "hegemony" within a bourgeois movement and a bourgeois government was illusory, *Avanzada Socialista* stressed. Either they would end up administering the capitalists' government for them or be forced to break totally from the bourgeoisie and its political formations.

[The major part of the article, which follows, discussed the problem of class-collaborationist politics at some length and contrasted this with the alternative of the PST, building a mass revolutionary workers' party.]

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There is a third alternative not very different from the one proposed by the Montoneros, although it has more of a left, or Marxist, veneer. This is the popular front advanced by the Communist party and other sections of the left that are seemingly opposed to the Communist party, such as the FAS [Frente Anti-imperialista y por el Socialismo—the Front Against Imperialism and for Socialism].

The Communist party has been proposing a national coalition that all the bourgeois, oligarchic, and petty-bourgeois parties would enter to govern the country jointly. That is, it proposes a Social Pact too, although

one with different—leftist—trappings.

We believe that such a recourse would be disastrous. We don't have to go very far to find examples. What happened in Chile with the Unidad Popular? What happened in Uruguay with the Frente Amplio?

Some of our readers may work in factories owned by Argentine capitalists. Maybe your bosses have problems in competing with the Yankees. But what do you think? When the fat is in the fire, are your bosses going to join with the workers against the Yankee big boss? Or is the little boss going to join with the big boss against the workers?

When the time comes to decide who owns the factories and the banks or who manages production, or still more, who rules in the country, who owns the means of production, who has the right to hold arms or to make the economic plans, are the bosses going to let us workers give the orders? Haven't we had to fight tooth and nail against the bosses, including the Argentine ones, in order to get food to eat, clothes to wear, and a place to live?

When the Social Pact was signed, all the advantages went to the bosses. Despite the fact that it was designed to guarantee them maximum profits, they were not satisfied and resorted to hoarding and black-market operations to get still more. If, when everything was in their favor, they still tried to gouge the workers for more, does it seem likely that they're going to let us run the economy of the country? Do you think that if we go into a government with them, they're going to become our benefactors?

So, the Communist party is deliberately deceiving us, because experience has already shown what happens in a deal between the bosses and the workers; it has already shown that even when the scales are tilted

in favor of the bosses, they won't carry out their end of the bargain.

What is the Communist party trying to get us to swallow? That when we are in a government together with the bosses we can do what we want and the bosses will accept what they have never accepted before?

As regards imperialism, experience has shown us what is going to happen. Every bosses' government has a fundamental understanding with imperialism, an agreement to maintain the system of exploitation. Along with this, friction develops from time to time over problems of competition. In view of this understanding, a bosses' government is hardly likely to expatriate the imperialists altogether. Moreover, in the cases where some governments have made partial expropriations, as did Perón's first administration and the Allende regime in Chile, the bosses have shown that they were completely incapable of resisting the imperialists when the latter struck back.

This is what happened to the Chilean workers. Their government did not arm them or prepare them to resist the coup by Pinochet. It left intact all the economic levers that could be used to create scarcity and a black market. It did not touch the armed forces, but left the officers armed and ready to strike. In short, the Allende government carried out a capitalist and not a working-class policy.

So, the government of workers and bosses that the Communist party proposes to us is really a government of the bosses. It would use false representatives of the working class to inflict on us the same thing that the Social Pact does now.

What they are calling on us to do is join hands with the so-called good, progressive bosses, with the "patriotic" officers, to adjust the program and the organization of the workers to fit the needs of the bosses.

At this point you might think that we believed we could never come together with bourgeois currents on anything. This is not so. There are some minimum, limited questions on which we might agree at times with currents that represent the bosses. For example, our position coincides with that of Balbín in opposing the penal code reform [the reintroduction of harsh

penalties for political offenses]; and we have also found ourselves in agreement about the right of *El Mundo's* publishers to put their paper out. We agree with Oscar Alende that our oil should be exploited by Argentines and not by imperialists.

On these questions, we don't object to a common struggle embracing workers and bosses. These are struggles based on specific agreements that in no way involve the workers' movement in the plans of the bosses' government. They may even be very beneficial. But these agreements do not mean that we should participate in the bosses' governments or let ourselves be directed by them, or join their parties, or vote for them. These are agreements for concrete struggles and not agreements involving support for a government.

The line of the Communist party in Argentina is the same as that taken by the Communist party in Chile. If the workers' movement takes this course, it will be heading for a catastrophe like the one suffered by our Chilean brothers.

All these variants differ considerably among themselves. It is possible, moreover, that they will not emerge in precisely the same way as we have described them. It is possible that in the immediate future we will have a certain stability. But sooner or later we are going to see a struggle between the proponents of these different lines, who will be spurred on by the crisis of the Social Pact, by the conflicts among different sectors of the capitalist class, and also by the pressure of our own struggle, the fight waged by the workers' movement. These battles may lead to shifts in the government. The confusion that reigns in all sectors, including the capitalist class, makes it impossible to make any definite predictions.

However, all these variants, those put forward by the ruling group as well as by the opposition, have one thing in common. In all of them the workers' movement is seen as the tail of one or another section of the capitalist class. *What they have in common is their opposition to political independence for the workers' movement.*

What does political independence for the workers' movement mean? It means that the workers' movement

should organize its own political party. If this were achieved, it would be a big step forward. We, for our part, would try to make this party revolutionary.

For some time—to be more precise, since the Cordobazo [the insurrectionary general strike of May 1969]—the Argentine workers' movement has been starting to move in the direction of class independence, although in a contradictory way. The workers did not carry out the Cordobazo by following the Peronist principle of obedience to superior officers. They did it in opposition to the orders of the recognized leaders of the movement.

Most of the struggles the workers' movement has waged since the Cordobazo have pointed in the direction of political independence. In every one of these strikes, the workers have gone against the orders and advice that came both from their "líder" and the trade-union bureaucrats. They did not follow the order to "dismount until the dust settles." Riding over all these obstacles, the workers' movement has adopted a program of action, although a limited one in many cases, to fight for higher wages and to get rid of bureaucrats.

When the workers' movement voted for General Perón, it did so with the hope that he would defend its interests. But, in contradiction to the logic of this vote, it did not abandon this road toward working-class independence. While it continued to struggle against Perón's own directives and at times against his direct representatives, it voted for him in the elections.

This is a historic confusion, because many workers sincerely believed that voting for Perón was voting for the working class. This confusion can no longer be maintained; even while Perón was alive, it was dissipating.

If you are an activist in the printing workers' union and you are fighting for higher wages, if you are a metalworker in Villa Constitución and you are trying to get the representatives you elected recognized, and if you are not listening to those who are telling you that you've got to go along with the Social Pact and the bureaucracy, then you're taking steps along the road to independence for your class.

What has been happening is that

this class independence has been expressed in trade-union or political struggles. But this has been in an isolated, atomized way, without the compañeros in different parts of the country being able to get to know one another, to raise their voices in a coordinated and united way, or develop clear objectives.

The workers have got to govern this country. That is the only way to solve its problems. But in order to do this, they need a party. Only a workers' party, led by workers and with a program expressing the immediate and future interests of the workers,

can unite the class and lead it to setting up its own government.

Both because we fought against the 1955 coup and for Perón's right to return and because we did not vote for him, we have a right now to say that this is the time to push to build a big, independent, working-class revolutionary party. The ranks of our party are open to those who want to build such an organization.

The fundamental purpose of the PST is precisely this—to lay the foundations of a mass revolutionary workers' party. We know that the working class as a whole does not rec-

ognize us as its leadership. We are convinced, moreover, that there are other working-class currents that are in favor of political independence and will contribute to building a mass party.

Compañeros, don't let the Cámporas, the Bidegains, or the López Regas, or the Oscar Alendes decide things for you. You have seen all the variants they represent in power and you know what they are. Think back and you will recognize them.

It is the workers now, through their party, who should decide things without the tutelage of any boss. □

'Institutionalization' and Rightist Threat

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, July 22, 1974

[The following article is from the July 4 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the weekly paper of the Argentine PST (Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores—Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing group of the Fourth International). The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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Our party is the only militant left party in Argentina that has publicly stated that it supports the "process of institutionalization." In line with this, it was the only working-class and socialist current that, in order to participate in this process, did the work necessary to gain the status of a legal party and intervene in the elections.

In October 1972, representatives of our party went to meet with the representative of the military dictatorship to tell him that we supported the "process of institutionalization" and to demand the withdrawal of the military junta from the government. More recently, in the case of the coup by Navarro in Córdoba, we met with the Peronist government. And, along with reiterating our opposition to military dictatorship, we called for a series of measures such as the repudiation of the Social Pact, democratization of the unions, and expropriation of the oligarchy and the imperialists.

These are the same demands we make today, when once again, in the aftermath of General Perón's death, we have reiterated our support for the "process of institutionalization" against the attacks of the putschist right.

What is the meaning of this process that we find ourselves supporting together with bourgeois political forces?

In Argentine politics, the term "process of institutionalization" began to be used a few years ago with more or less its present meaning. This was not happenstance. Its meaning was associated with the struggle against

the military dictatorship. More concretely, it meant ending the dictatorial regime of Onganía. Thus, different sectors that opposed the Onganía regime from different standpoints and with different perspectives, could use this common language.

In the same way, in these days, actions that represent an attempt to return to the methods of the Onganía dictatorship—the coup in Córdoba; the murders of left-Peronist, Communist party, and PST militants by fascist gangs with government protection; or the closing down of *El Mundo* or *El Descamisado* by the Ministry of the Interior—have all been condemned in the name of the "process of institutionalization." Different currents, including some bourgeois ones such as the UCR [Unión Cívica Radical—Radical Civic Union] and Alende's party, as well as working-class ones such as our party, have condemned these acts.

In a nutshell, since the Cordobazo unleashed the struggle against the Onganía regime, the word "institutionalization" has acquired a meaning in Argentine politics different from the one given in the dictionary. It has become a synonym for fighting to defend or win democratic rights.

This is why we have used the term in public statements. And we do not regret using it to condemn military dictatorship, even though this could have the effect of defending the elections the Peronists won; or to condemn the Navarro coup, even though this could have the effect in practice of defending Obregón Cano; or to condemn a coup d'état now, even if this has the effect of defending the Peronist government.

"Anyone who cannot defend a higher form of government against a lower one does not deserve to be called a revolutionist." (Lenin)

Neither the government of Obregón

Cano nor the one of María Estela Martínez de Perón is the revolutionary socialist workers' government we want. But we condemn and will condemn any reactionary attempt to overthrow these governments, and we will fight together with them against the common enemy for two reasons.

The first is that as far as we are concerned only the workers have the right to elect and to remove governments. As long as the masses want these governments, we will fight together with them against any reactionaries that try to overthrow them. At the same time we will patiently explain, until we convince the majority of workers, that what is needed is a socialist workers' government, that the constitution that governs Peronist Argentina is a bourgeois constitution and it serves the interests of the exploiters, that under Peronism the organization and leadership of the country is in the hands of the bosses, and that the working class must develop a new program, a new socialist, working-class plan and constitution, to replace this kind of organization and leadership.

And the other reason is that we must distinguish carefully among the various kinds of bourgeois governments. It is true that Perón's government was just as bourgeois as the one of Aramburu and Rojas. This can be easily demonstrated. Under Perón as well as under Aramburu and Rojas, the owners of the factories and those who controlled the police, the armed forces, and all institutions were bosses or agents of bosses.

Nonetheless, there were profound differences between the Peronist government and the "gorilla" dictatorship. For example, under Perón, the plant committees functioned; Aramburu tried to ban them. Under Perón, the unions could operate, although with bureaucratic leaders; Aramburu sent in military interventors. That is, the

bosses' government of Perón was vastly more favorable for the workers and for the country than the bosses' dictatorship of Aramburu and Rojas.

This is what Lenin was referring to when he said that every revolutionist had to distinguish between forms of government and defend the higher ones. These forms are higher because they give a basis for better elements, types of organization, and more rights and opportunities for the workers so that they can fight the bosses more effectively to win their class and socialist objectives. What these higher forms of organization—which may be unions or revolutionary parties granted legal status by bourgeois governments—represent precisely are islands, tools of workers' power, the first fragments of power won by the workers that are advance installments of the future workers' government and the future socialist society.

How must the process of institutionalization be defended?

The fact that in defending democratic rights our position coincides with

that of non-working-class and non-socialist currents and parties does not mean that we agree with them on anything else or on the way to defend these democratic rights.

Our party will always agree with Balbín and the FAS [Frente Antimperialista y por el Socialismo—Front Against Imperialism and for Socialism] lawyers in opposing by all means the suppression of the daily *El Mundo*. Balbín does this in the name of the bourgeois liberal constitution he supports. We do so in the name of workers' democracy and socialism.

These convergences with bourgeois sectors can be expressed in the form of limited agreements, documents, statements, etc. A recent example was the rally organized by our party in condemnation of the Pacheco Massacre,* in which, besides the left, almost all the bourgeois democratic forces participated. All these various types of public actions, from joint

communiqués to rallies, are useful and help to create the kind of social consciousness and climate needed to defend civil liberties or condemn fascism. Moreover, they safeguard and reinforce the legal rights of the revolutionary party.

It would be naïve, or—worse still—legalistic cretinism, to think that these rights can be defended simply by a scrap of paper or from a public platform. In our country, moreover, this would mean completely ignoring recent history. Here, the celebrated "process of institutionalization" is the direct result of the Cordobazo. It was this great mobilization of the workers and the people that awakened and spurred the dormant democratic consciences of the bourgeoisie. Since then, every gain, every prize, has been the result of great struggles, strikes, demonstrations, occupations, and mobilizations. The pride of our party, the only militant left party intelligent enough to take the lead in the "institutionalization," is precisely that it has intervened in every one of these struggles, strikes, demonstrations, occupations, and mobilizations. □

*The murder of three members of the PST by rightist goons.—IP

Balance Sheet on Argentine 'Multisectoral'

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, October 28, 1974

[On October 8 a "multisectoral" conference was held in Buenos Aires. Attending were representatives of all the legal political parties, except the Communist party, as well as representatives of big business and the trade-union bureaucracy. (The Communist party was not represented directly because, since it did not participate in the elections of February and September 1973, it does not have the status of a registered party. It was, however, represented indirectly.) These figures met with Argentine President María Estela Martínez de Perón to discuss eliminating violence.

[The following article analyzing the conference as a whole appeared in the October 10 issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, weekly newspaper of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International). The statement drawn up for the conference by the PST follows. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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The "multisectoral conference" began in a framework of unknowns and doubts, some of which have still not been cleared up. One of these question marks is represented by the absence of several sectors that it had been announced would attend, such as the armed forces and the church. Moreover, the Communist party was not invited.

The president expressed the idea—which she later repeated clearly, off the top of her head, in her impromptu closing remarks—that to confront the threat of an imperialist military coup and to combat "violent terrorism, subversion, and ideological extremism," the government was turning to dialogue and a pact with the political parties. To achieve such an agreement,

she stated, she was ready to "make any necessary sacrifices as well as the adjustments always needed by a machine in constant operation."

The lineup of the sectors participating also pointed toward a shift toward the "adjustments" the president mentioned and the policy of "dialogue" she laid out. Of the seventeen persons who spoke—not including comrade Coral [Juan Carlos Coral, a leading member of the PST], whose remarks had special characteristics—thirteen of them had the same axis. While condemning guerrilla warfare and terrorism in general, with different nuances, they agreed in their denunciation of the indulgence or tolerance by the government itself toward the rightist terrorism. And, by extension, they harshly criticized the government that they considered responsible for such indulgence.

This is the thread connecting the speeches of the capitalist Julio Broner ("There are irresponsible publications that have the support of official bodies" and "the break-off of dialogue is as serious as terrorism is"), Christian People's party representative Enrique de Vedia ("We must get rid of this concept that 'the best enemy is a dead enemy'"), and of [Radical Civic Union leader] Ricardo Balbín ("The dialogue and this meeting have one virtue—that of breaking down the walls of the narrow circles that surround presidents, disturb the functioning of government, and create an atmosphere of political intolerance and blindness").

The tone of the conference was set fundamentally by this lineup of thirteen speakers, who made different limited criticisms directed at the government in general—most of which were played up in the press—but who centered their criticism on the López

Rega/Ivanissevich¹ antialogue sector of the regime.

It was the accusations against the rightist terrorist organization AAA [Alianza Anticomunista Argentina—Argentine Anticomunist Alliance] by a representative of Dr. Héctor Sandler (who did not attend the meeting because of the threats on his life) that prompted a reply from Raúl Lastiri. The representative of the Partido Justicialista [Social Justice, a Peronist party], explaining that he had not intended to speak, took the floor to tell Sandler's representative that his party condemned all forms of terrorism and that he would personally accompany Sandler to assure his safety.

Outside this bloc were others whose remarks must be analyzed. First there was Frondizi, who defended the need of the state to protect itself against subversion and maintained a careful, neutral tone in face of the political differences.

There was the representative of the Partido Conservador Popular [People's Conservative party], who made a passionate apology for the government and for the president in remarks that seemed oriented more toward defining his position in his party's internal disputes.

Finally there were the speeches by Palma and Miguel.² The former, who made a reappearance in the political arena after a considerable absence, came to join the government conclave, demonstrating his support in general for the Social Pact,³ and in particular

1. Jose Lopez Rega, minister of social welfare, and Oscar Ivanissevich, minister of culture and education, are part of the old-guard Peronist right.

2. Segundo Palma and Lorenzo Miguel, the general secretaries respectively of the CGT and the metalworkers union, are two top rightist union bureaucrats.

3. The Social Pact is the antilabor wage-freeze policy of the Peronists.

his endorsement of Isabel, whom he hailed as "a person with a clean record who undoubtedly will leave her mark on the norms of political life."

Lorenzo Miguel angrily claimed that most of the victims were among the union leadership. Responding indirectly to Comrade Coral, he harshly criticized those he said had been stirring up the workers against the Social Pact. He added that the union leadership was going to ask for a wage increase soon, and then he announced a "historic mobilization" in repudiation of the violence.

As for our party's representative, he did not fit into any of the de facto factions that formed there. Coral condemned the threats of a coup and criticized, from a socialist standpoint, guerrilla warfare in isolation from the mass movement. He denounced rightist terrorism, and placed overall blame on the government for all that has happened—not just on its "right" wing but also on its "prodialogue" sectors, including the one that promoted the Social Pact. His remarks were based on the document that accompanies this article.

An initial balance sheet indicates that there has been a relaxation of social tensions, as reflected in the unanimous repudiation of a military coup, although in this regard it remains to be seen why the military was absent from the meeting. A turn seems to be in the making—the "adjustment" referred to by the president—which consists of an agreement by almost all

the parties, the government, and the armed forces to cement a social and political front for the purpose of suppressing the guerrillas. This "adjustment" or turn involves a step back by the "no dialogue" sectors of the government and those who favor rightist terrorism. This retreat is not definitive nor does it mean a dissolution of the gangs who only on Tuesday murdered two members of the JUP [Juventud Universitaria Peronista — Peronist Student Youth] in La Plata.

Within the government the economic team together with the wing of the old guard represented by the minister of the interior appeared to be the ones leading the turn. However, the positions of these elements have not been uniformly reinforced, as shown by the fact that Brunello⁴—a friend of the economic team—failed to appear at such a crucial meeting.

The agreement reached on the bases outlined is aimed at isolating the guerrillas socially and politically so that they can be eliminated by the police. The direct participation of the armed forces in this task seems to be a question secretly under discussion. The president revealed that she was opposed to this when she said:

"What they want is to get the armed forces to come onto the streets. And while I am president, I will not permit this."

4. Duilio Brunello is second vice-president of the Justicialist party and former federal interventor of Cordoba.

Within the context of this agreement, the union bureaucracy seems willing to support decisions such as those being made today by the Comité Central Confederal.⁵ At the same time, the bureaucracy—especially the sector represented by Lorenzo Miguel—is continuing to put pressure on the Social Pact, invoking it to demand some reforms such as the Ley de Contratos de Trabajo.⁶

This is the line that seems to have prevailed, to judge from the indications given by the conference in the Casa Rosada [government palace]. With dialogue, a pact, and the police, they plan to suppress the guerrillas. Nonetheless, the workers movement and the left are also threatened, as is shown by the outlawing of the Federación Gráfica [Printers Federation], which was decreed by the Labor Ministry at the very time the conference was going on, as well as by the president's references to "ideological extremism," and the institution of the State Security Law. □

5. The Comité Central Confederal is the top body of the General Federation of Labor. At the time of the "multisectoral" it was meeting to decide the date of a demonstration in support of the government and against terrorism.

6. The Ley de Contratos de Trabajo (Labor Contract Law) provides for compensation for workers who are fired, guarantees holiday pay, sets health and safety requirements the bosses must meet, and grants workers the right to disregard any agreements signed to which discriminatory provisions have later been added.

PST Statement at the 'Multisectoral'

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[The following is the statement of the executive committee of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers party, a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International) that was presented at the "multisectoral" conference in Buenos Aires October 8. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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Our party is attending this meeting, as we did previous meetings between the government and other parties and organizations. Not because we aspire to, or believe in, the possibility of a "national unity"—which is impossible between antagonistic social classes—but because we want to defend the democratic liberties won at a heavy price by the masses in the fight that began with the Cordobazo.¹

The fundamental purpose of such democratic rights is to ensure respect for the right of the masses to decide what government they want—which in this case is the Peronist government—and the fundamental respect for the right of all political forces to present their ideas to the masses. Thus, we unhesitatingly condemn any attempt at a coup designed to bring down the current government, which has been elected by the majority of the working class.

Starting with June 12, when the social tensions caused by the failure of the Social Pact came out into the open, provoking a resignation threat from the deceased President Perón, a period began in the country that has been marked by a threat hanging over our heads—a threat that the forces of oligarchic-imperialist reaction, the same

elements that had to begin a retreat after the Cordobazo, were trying for a comeback by means of a new 1955.²

This threat, which if realized would mean the worst kind of defeat for the country and the workers, is real because the lukewarm nationalist measures and the relatively independent foreign policy line adopted by the government have not touched the powerful economic and political bases that imperialism maintains in the country.

However, the threat of a comeback by oligarchic-imperialist forces at their worst is being aggravated, reinforced, and compounded at this moment by another danger.

This second threat is represented by a growing militarization of political life prompted fundamentally by the activity of the guerrillas and their mirror-image—the terrorists of the AAA and other organizations of the ultraright.

Many sectors objectively are pushing for such a militarization. Independently of the intentions of the protagonists, a dynamic leading toward a military coup has been set in motion. No matter what its ideological tendency may be—but especially if it is under the direction of the oligarchy and imperialism—this coup will have the effect of smashing the democratic rights of the masses.

We did not have to wait until the situation reached its present gravity to express our condemnation—in the name of the working class and socialism—of guerrilla warfare isolated from the masses. We have consistently opposed that desperate resort, which has been taken at times in the name

of a socialist ideal and at others as a tactic designed to apply political pressure. Normally this kind of action ends up sowing the worst type of confusion in the ranks of the workers, as well as opening up the way for the most indiscriminate repression. In this case it has promoted a militarization of the country that may lead very far, that may lead ultimately to eliminating the increasingly limited democratic freedoms that the masses won by their struggles.

But these condemnations of the guerrilla operations must not be used to cover up the causes that provoked this phenomenon nor to whitewash the fascist gangs by lumping their activity together with that of the guerrillas under some general common heading.

We recognize perfectly the differences between the present government and the dictatorial forms that preceded it and threaten to return. We recognize that guerrilla actions and terrorism promote putschism. We proclaim our determination to fight against any attempt to topple the government by a coup. At the same time, we must point out the responsibility for this situation that falls on the government because of its retreat on democratic rights, which began May 25, 1973.³

The attack on democratic freedoms was launched by the government itself on the day when, without consulting the workers or taking their opinions into consideration, it imposed a Social Pact freezing wages. Moreover, this guidelines policy was applied with sympathy for the needs of big business, while workers who resisted it were hit with harsh penalties.

1. The 1969 semi-insurrection in Cordoba.

2. On September 16, 1955, Peron was overthrown in a military coup.

3. May 25, 1973, was the day the Peronists took office.

The attack on democratic rights began when a repressive system was set up to protect that Social Pact. The first step in this process was firming up the position of a tarnished union leadership through reforms in the Trade-Union Law.⁴ The next was the application of the new penal code against striking workers.

The attack on democratic rights began when the internal fight in the ruling party spread to public institutions and led to totalitarian measures that affected the whole country. In this way, in a tragic escalation of violence foreshadowed by Ezeiza,⁵ the "Navarrazo"⁶ occurred, elected provincial officials were replaced by federal appointees, newspapers were shut down, university administrations were purged, and many of the faculties were closed.

The attack on democratic rights is shown by the absolute impunity with which the fascist gangs act. It now culminates in the passage of the State Security Law, which contains articles designed to repress the guerrillas and uses their activity as a pretext to institute repression of strikes and leftist currents.

4. The Trade-Union Law is designed to protect the job trusts of union bureaucrats.

5. Scores were killed and several hundreds were wounded in May 1973 when right-wing Peronist goons opened fire on the left-wing Peronist contingents awaiting Peron's return from exile.

6. The February 1974 coup that ousted the elected Cordoba provincial governor, Obregon Cano.

This rightist course of the government, followed by its four presidents, has in itself achieved many of the objectives that a reactionary coup might shoot for. This course in our country has been an expression of the same evolution that has led to brutal repression of our brothers in another part of the Southern Cone. Continuing this orientation cannot lead anywhere but to a "cold coup" born in the belly of the very regime in power, a reactionary take-over which, through a Bonapartist dictatorship, will end up suffocating the democratic possibilities of the parliamentary regime.

Moreover, this course, unmitigated by feeble attempts at concessions such as the Labor Contract Law, prevents the government from responding to the provocations of the terrorists and the guerrillas in any way but with stepped-up police repression or the militarization of the country, which in turn expose it still more to the danger of a coup.

In April we told General Perón that only adopting measures that could "put the brakes" on the escalating repression, the union bureaucracy, the Law on Redundancy,⁷ exploitation and starvation wages, and the oligarchy and imperialism could stop the march down a dead-end street.

We took then the same position that we have maintained throughout these troubled seventeen months of Peron-

7. The Law on Redundancy is designed to facilitate the firing of union militants on the basis that there is "excess personnel" in the workplace.

ist rule and that we once again reiterate now. We simply point out the objectively necessary solutions. We have no illusions that they will be adopted, since many of them would require a socialist, workers revolution to transform the structures of society.

In the same spirit, we believe now that the solutions that would be adopted by an authentic workers government arising out of, and based on, a mass mobilization, would start with repealing the State Security Law and disarming, investigating, and punishing the fascist gangs. Such a government would throw out the Social Pact and immediately reinstitute collective bargaining. It would democratize the CGT [Confederación General del Trabajo—General Confederation of Labor] and the unions, guaranteeing the election of leadership representative of the ranks. It would return the universities to the authorities chosen by the students, teachers, and workers. It would cut down the economic power of the oligarchy and imperialism by expropriating the big landholdings, monopolies, and foreign and domestic companies, and by putting them under workers control.

If even at this point in the deepening of democracy and the revolutionary process guerrilla and terrorist groups were to persist, they would be turned over to the working masses for judgment.

Our party demands its right to offer this socialist option to the masses and pledges to fight, and is fighting, against any attempt to bring down by a coup d'etat the government these masses elected. □

Coral's Statement at the Multisectoral

Reprinted from *Intercontinental Press*, January 13, 1975

[The following statement plus an editorial introduction was published in the October 15, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the weekly newspaper of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST— Socialist Workers party, an Argentine sympathizing organization of the Fourth International). The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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The Secretaria de Prensa y Difusión de la Presidencia de la Nación [Presidential Press Office] was responsible for the official version of the speeches given at the October 9* multisectoral meeting.

It was through this office that the official versions were sent out to all the media.

However, all the speeches, except those of the president [María Estela de Perón] and Doctor Ricardo Balbín [the head of the main bourgeois opposition party] suffered omissions that in many cases changed their meaning or made them incomprehensible.

This is what happened, for example, to Doctor Alende's speech. In the October 11 *La Opinión*, the leader of the Partido Intransigente maintains that "the version given to the press by the Secretaria de Prensa y Difusión was mutilated," since his positions on the Constituent Assembly were left out.

Similar things happened to the speeches of Professor Américo Ghioldi of the PSD [Partido Socialista Democrático — Democratic Socialist party] and Doctor Haydée Birgin, who stood in for Doctor Sandler [the leader of the Revolutionary Christian party].

In the replies by the president to Ghioldi and by Lastiri [head of the

Peronist parliamentary bloc] to Doctor Birgin, it is a mystery what they are referring to. The official stenogram omitted precisely the sections that motivated these answers, sections that contained criticisms of, and demands on, the government.

The same thing that happened in these cases happened with the speech by Compañero Juan Carlos Coral. We had intended to publish the official version. But when we got it, we realized that it suffered from the same omissions that in the radio and television reports had altered the meaning of what he said.

For this reason, and in order to inform our compañeros and readers better, we are publishing here a reconstructed text of what Coral said.

* * *

Fully assuming the responsibility that falls to us in the present political process, with the sincerity with which we have always expressed our points of view before the government and the sincerity the president asked of us in her opening speech, we have come here this morning to declare our categorical repudiation of all forms of terrorism, all manifestations of individual or group violence carried out in disregard of the wishes or the needs of the masses, and of this other form of violence— a more extensive one that has become almost an institution in our country— the coup d'etat. We believe, however, that the analysis of terrorism as an abstract category is one-sided and insufficient. For decades, criminologists have ceased considering individual modes of behavior in isolation from the social environment that produces them. With still greater reason, then, such a complex social phenomenon as terrorism should be considered within the broader framework of the economic and political conditions in which it

takes place.

Terrorism and guerrilla activity are, thus, much more than a simple political matter; they are much more than a simple relationship of forces between the "security bodies" and the armed groups. These phenomena are a critical manifestation, an acute symptom, of the conditions currently existing in Argentina, which we should take up in all their fundamental aspects.

For all these reasons, we want to use as a reference point in making our analysis the meeting we had with General Perón early in April. On this occasion, we socialists summed up in five points what we called the main factors in the instability and crisis. And we pointed out the indispensable solutions that were urgently demanded. Along with other political parties, we asked for a meeting to warn the government about the dangers of a wave of violence that was being allowed to spread with impunity. And our warning was so well founded that today it is the government that has called the parties here to consider the problem of terrorism. From that date to this, it has not adopted any of the measures proposed; and what then were only the seeds of violence have developed in the short period of six months into a dizzying escalation of terrorism that threatens democratic rights and is circumscribing the rights of the working class.

In early April, the first signs of terrorism appeared in trade-union circles— veiled forms of fascist violence, introducing terror into assemblies and intimidating trade-union activists every time they raised elementary demands for higher wages or disavowed conciliationist or sellout leaderships. The police and the armed forces, which are waging a merciless battle against the guerrillas, have not arrested a single person responsible

*This is apparently a typographical error. The date of the multisectoral meeting was October 8. — *IP*

for this rightist terrorism, they have not collected or exhibited a single piece of evidence against these rightist terrorists. This form of violence has never been punished; and what began with threats by goons in plant bathrooms has ended in the publication in the newspapers of long lists of persons "condemned to death," who are being "executed" with efficient regularity. We can repeat this morning our firm condemnation of the death of the latest victim of terror, who happens to be an officer of the armed forces. But, on the other hand, when our turn came in this orgy of killing, when four ordinary workers, four young activists in our party were murdered in Pacheco, we did not hear any condemnation from the government, nor did we see the government use the power of the state to punish those responsible.

The only formal response from the government to these developments were the amendments to the Penal Code, which were first used to repress the strike of the Matarazzo workers; and the recent "State Security Law" that has made certain kinds of strikes and opinions crimes. While internationally ideological barriers are being broken down—for the sake of profitable business deals—within our country itself the violence is being used as a pretext to draw lines of ideological exclusionism in order to repress the protests of the workers movement and the spread of socialist ideas.

But not all the subversion can be ascribed to the terrorists and the guerrillas. The terrorists and the guerrillas have no monopoly on subversion. There are also subversive wages, subversive hunger, subversive working conditions, subversive slums. A wage of 130,000 old pesos [about US\$132.60] a month is a subversive wage, Señora. And we will not let anybody justify this as the legacy left by bad previous governments, because in that case you couldn't explain the salaries of military officers, judges, and government functionaries, who get more than two million pesos a month—that is, some of them get more in a month than a worker does in a year, although no one has yet proved that military officers and functionaries have stomachs twelve times larger than those of workers.

If we are faced with a grave national emergency, if the country is paying the price for fifteen years of

oligarchic and proimperialist governments, all inhabitants of the country should bear the consequences equally, as they do the results of any catastrophe. And I propose that the advocates of the Social Pact, those who have imposed the Social Pact on us, be the first to restrict themselves to an income of 130,000 old pesos a month, the wage to which they have condemned the workers who are supposed to build up Argentina into a great power by the year 2000.

I understand that this is not an occasion for polemics. But with all due respect, Señora, I must express our fundamental disagreement with the idea you put forward in your speech opening this meeting. You said: "The government has achieved harmony between workers and management, except in those sectors where the forces of disorder are active." We disagree absolutely with this. Outside agitators or not, it is impossible for harmony to exist between superexploited workers who earn 130,000 old pesos a month and bosses who continue levels of profit secured for them by the military dictatorships. There can be no harmony between workers whose wages have been rigidly frozen, and bosses who are allowed to raise their prices in the name of the sacred capitalist principle of "profitability." The sole harmony that does unfortunately exist is between the bosses and the trade-union bureaucrats, who are united by the Social Pact, which was not discussed by the workers in their workplaces or in their unions.

Another factor of instability and violence that we pointed to in April is that of prices, especially the prices of necessities. We called for opening the account books, for letting the workers study prices, and for supervision of price ceilings by popular bodies. None of these measures were adopted. To the contrary, the government went from a policy of frozen prices to "administrated" prices, giving the Secretaría de Comercio [Commerce Bureau] the authority to grant price increases, which has brought about a steady decline in the real wages of workers. And, as we anticipated, the companies that have gone to cry on the doorstep of the Secretaría de Comercio, appealing for increases to eliminate their deficits, are the same ones that every two or three years turn out to have billions of dollars of undeclared income. This pe-

riodic amnesty for tax evaders and swindlers of workers is what they call a "write-off for capital." Through this policy, the government itself becomes the main instigator of hoarding, black-marketeering, and scarcity, which in turn are used to create a threat of scarcities to pressure it and to promote inflationary expectations.

The price ceilings exist only in official statistics, while speculators and hoarders are invariably rewarded by being granted new increases. This was also done for the ranchers who hold the winter pastures, the most privileged and anachronistic caste not only in the countryside but in the entire national economy.

Another factor in the violence that we pointed out is the exaggeration of some government measures. You cannot substitute propaganda for reality, and when the outlook is painted rosier than it is, disillusion and collective frustrations necessarily follow. You cannot, for example, proclaim that the distribution of petroleum products has been nationalized, while the foreign companies retain their hold intact on their refineries and their rights to sell outside the gas stations. Barely 15 percent of the foreign companies' local market, the part represented by their sales through gas stations, has been affected. But even within this very modest percentage, we do not know exactly what interests belong to international capital, nor do we yet know if YPF [Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales—State Oil Fields, the national oil trust] will have even the financial liquidity that can be provided by the gasoline tax income. All this, Señora, is very far from constituting nationalization of petroleum distribution.

It is also an obvious exaggeration when you call the Ley de Contratos de Trabajo [Work Contracts Law] revolutionary. We hailed many of its provisions without reservation. But it is not a revolutionary law, nor is it the most advanced in the world. It extended some rights of the sort the workers in Argentina have been winning since 1905. The drafters incorporated in the law many provisions that were already being applied by judges. But in 1974, the workers throughout the world are fighting not only for the regulation of wage labor, but for control and ownership of the instruments with which they produce.

Moreover, to cite another example of the government's advertising excesses, I would point to the Agrarian Law, which is far from being an effective instrument for transforming the latifundist structure and which marks an obvious retreat even from the homesteading projects of the Second Five-Year Plan. This draft, which is being touted as a great step toward agrarian reform, guarantees the property of the present owners for ten years, and after this generous concession of time, in the event that the landlords fail to put their land into production, it sets the laughable "penalty" of forcing them to take tenants.

All these factors that I have rapidly summed up, from violence and terrorism to disillusion and poverty, go to make up a climate favorable to a coup. The coup d'etat is a full-fledged institution in the semicolonial countries of our continent. It is not inscribed in the constitutions because the liberals prevented this. But the ruling classes resort to it every time a mass upsurge, a sharpening in the class struggle, endangers the bourgeois power structure. The coup d'etat functions, in all, as a safety measure for the system.

For this reason, the working class is the only sector of society that consistently opposes coups d'etat.

Military officers, obviously, have participated in coups d'etat. They are the indispensable protagonists. Armies, in fact, with a tradition of professionalism and abstention from politics like those in Chile and Uruguay have staged the most repressive and

bloody coups in memory in Latin America.

Businessmen participate in coups d'etat when they think a despotic government can better guarantee their investments and profits. Politicians participate when they lose hope of getting mass support. And some trade-union leaders also participate when they think they can hold on to their bureaucratic positions more easily in association with a military dictatorship. I have here in my briefcase advertisements in support of the proimperialist dictatorship of Onganía signed by some leaders who at this moment are heading major trade-union organizations.

The only sector of society that has never been involved in a coup d'etat is the working class. The working class has always been the main victim of coups d'etat, which have invariably been carried out in order to increase the exploitation of the workers and the looting of the country by imperialism.

For these reasons, the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* declares its categorical opposition to a coup d'etat and to the violence in the form of terrorism and guerrilla activity, which although with different motivations, are equal in provoking coups and thus stand in opposition to the democratic demands of the masses. But we believe that a coup d'etat cannot be prevented by lyrical appeals to "national unity." Such unity is impracticable in a society historically divided into antagonistic classes. There is no reason, however, to carry

the discussion onto the theoretical level, since it is enough to point out that it is clearly absurd to call for unity of the entire nation, when unity cannot even be achieved in any one of the [bourgeois] political parties, which are suffering an infinite number of cleavages that reflect the contradictions in which capitalist society is caught.

I will end, Señora, by saying that our party considers this kind of dialogue, which is unprecedented in our country, to be useful. We have no illusions that we can change the policy of the government by speeches, but, surely, you Señora Presidente and your ministers have taken note of some of our observations.

We know that the government's bourgeois limitations will prevent it from adopting the minimum measures we call for. It cannot carry out an agrarian reform, nor can it expropriate the monopolies, nor can it substantially change the relationship of prices and wages, nor can it decisively punish the outrages of fascist violence.

We socialist workers will continue to struggle against all these factors that are creating the climate for a coup, and will fight to keep this government's term of office from being cut short illegitimately, since it was elected by the majority of the Argentine workers and since it permits the exercise of some democratic freedoms, which, in turn, are the fruits of the mobilizations by the workers and the poor sectors of the population that shook the country beginning with the Córdoba insurrection. □

Against a Coup and Against the Government

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[The following editorial appeared in the October 15, 1974, issue of *Avanzada Socialista*, the newspaper of the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, under the title "Luchar contra el golpe sin apoyar al gobierno" (Struggle against a coup without supporting the government). The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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As a result of the distorted reports on the multisectorial conference on television and in the papers, we have received letters and telephone calls asking if we have changed our position and are now supporting the government.

We think this has been clarified sufficiently by the publication on this page of a resumé of our statements in the multisectorial meeting. The maneuver tried by the Secretaria de Prensa regarding our statements as well as those of the other parties was so clumsy that it can be exploded just by publishing what we said.

But besides this we want to take advantage of what has happened to reiterate some of our positions toward this government and the threat of a coup. This will give us an opportunity to explain at the same time why the government attempted such a maneuver.

We went to this meeting and put forward all of our positions, the same ones that we have expressed every week in the pages of this paper and that we apply in our daily work, because we are completely and firmly opposed to a coup d'état. Opposing a coup—that is, opposing the return of a military dictatorship—does not mean supporting the government. What is more, we oppose a coup for the same reasons we do not support

this government or its policy (i.e., the Social Pact; allowing the local and foreign monopolies to maintain their hold over our economy; the Security Law; giving free rein to the fascist gangs; arbitrary rule by the bureaucracy in the workers movement; handing the universities over to primitive reactionaries; and other such things). The fact is that the main objective of a coup would not be so much to oust Isabel and end her right-wing policy as to crush the workers movement. The coup would come to finish the job that the present government cannot be relied on entirely to carry out and to follow through to the end.

Among some compañeros on the left, you can hear it said that the problem of a coup is less and less important because, in the last analysis, this government (with the Security Law, its take-over of unions, and so on) more and more resembles the Onganía regime, that there is less and less difference.

It seems to us that this is a completely wrong way of posing the question. It is true that the entire policy being carried out by the Peronist government is aimed at cutting back the margins of democratic freedom that the workers and student movements won in the struggle against the dictatorship. But this does not mean that it does not matter to the working class whether we have the one kind of regime or the other. A military coup would no longer be a question of more or less democratic margins within a bourgeois-democratic government but would represent a *change of regime*. It would no longer be a question of partial defeats (such as the one in SMATA,¹ the typograph-

1. Sindicato de Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor—Union of Automotive Machinists and Allied Trades.

ical workers union, etc.), defeats that can easily be recouped as the workers overcome the confusion created by their confidence in the government, the provocations of the guerrillas, and the errors of the leaderships in the recent conflicts. A coup, on the other hand, would represent a general political defeat for the working class.

The compañeros who equate this regime with a military dictatorship also overlook one "detail": This government was elected by the votes of the working masses and not by the three "commanders in chief," and although its luster has waned, it still enjoys the confidence of a large part of the working class.

For all these reasons, we also oppose the guerrillas, who by their actions are promoting a coup as well as the anti-working-class repressive measures of the government.

The proof that we have only one point in common with the government (i.e., that we do not want a coup) was given by this government itself after the multisectorial, in the first place by its censorship of the statement we made there. If this had been reported as it was given, no one could have made a mistake and thought that we supported the government. In the second place, an even more "forceful" demonstration of this fact was given by the police raid on our headquarters in Córdoba. Along with this, our headquarters in Mendoza was blown up and comrades were kidnapped, as we report in other pages.

What happened in Córdoba was especially revealing. The government, or at least a wing of it, acted within the spirit of the recently passed Security Law, whose intent was to repress, using the convenient pretext that the entire workers and left movement is giving aid and comfort to the guer-

rillas. The government knows that we are completely opposed to its policy and that is why it both distorted what we said in the multisectorial and did what it did in Córdoba.

The task of the entire movement

of the workers and toiling masses is to fight against a coup without supporting this government. Only a mobilization of the working masses can guarantee that we will not be subjected to a Pinochet. This struggle is

inseparably bound up with the struggle against this government's reactionary measures such as the Security Law. For this reason we call for a massive repudiation of this law and for its repeal. □