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French Trotskyists Debate Strategy in Portuguese Elections

[In its June 30 issue, *Rouge*, the Paris daily that reflects the views of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR—Revolutionary Communist League), opened a public debate on the Portuguese presidential elections. It published three articles signed by leaders of the LCR presenting three different positions on this question.

[The editorial board noted that a debate had been taking place on the Portuguese election in the ranks of the LCR “which interests the entire far left and which we

have delayed too long in making public.” It was announced that the next plenum of the Central Committee of the LCR would adopt a resolution on this question, and that the leaderships of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI—Internationalist Communist League, Portuguese sympathizing organization of the Fourth International) would also discuss it and come to a decision.

[The translation of the following articles is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

The Only Possible Working-Class Vote

By Gérard Filoche

The June 27 presidential election was a trap for the Portuguese working class. The two main parties that the workers gave an absolute majority in the April 25 legislative elections were able to divide and disorient the working class. The plebiscitary 61.5% vote for Eanes represents a grave defeat for the vast mass movement that swept Portugal to the brink of revolution. The SP leadership's betrayal pushed hundreds of thousands of workers and poor peasants to cast their ballots for a reactionary candidate. And most of the rest of the workers' vote was divided between the other two military candidates, while the only civilian candidate belonging to the workers movement came in last.

These are the consequences of a revolution betrayed. The responsibility falls on the SP and CP leaderships, which followed a criminal policy of holding back the workers' struggles for the sake of an alliance with the military and with the bourgeois parties.

Heeding the warnings from American imperialism about the need for keeping the CPs out of European governments, the SP, the main workers party, rushed to endorse a military officer, even though last year it tried to give the impression that it was demanding that the military withdraw from power.

Isolated by this concerted maneuver of the SP, the PPD [Partido Popular Democrático—Democratic People's party] and the CDS [Centro Democrático Social—Social Democratic Center], the Communist party was forced by pressure from its ranks to run its own candidate. It could have counted on holding its own and even capturing part of the SP electoral follow-

ing, if it had not had to pay the price of its long opportunist policy toward the MFA [Movimento das Forças Armadas—Armed Forces Movement] and thus toward the three military officers running. Rather than run a campaign, the CP tried to make guarantees to Eanes and negotiate a withdrawal from the race on honorable terms. The CP policy of “campaigning in retreat” increased the confusion in this election and undermined the enthusiasm that could have been aroused by the only working-class candidate.

The workers who in their great majority had understood the need to cast a class vote in the legislative elections, found it hard to make such a clear choice in the June 27 election. As a result, many of them turned toward the candidate of illusion, Otelo de Carvalho.

The fact that because of a lack of perspectives a large number of workers were dazzled and deceived by his campaign does not give Carvalho's campaign a working-class character. (This is not the first time in history that, betrayed and mocked, the workers have turned toward a leader who served as a surrogate for what they wanted.) The real problem is that extraordinary energies were tapped by the Carvalho campaign. In many cases, it was the most combative and radical sectors that constituted his electoral following. The result is all the more tragic because of this. This movement showed both the combativity and political confusion of all these sectors. The Portuguese centrists have incurred a grave responsibility by diverting all these energies toward a charismatic substitute for accomplishing the necessary and indispensable task of building a revolutionary workers party.

Otelo's success was possible only because of opportunist and ultraleftist policies in the past, sectarian impatience, and the absence of a revolutionary strategy capable of winning the masses away from the influence of the reformist leaderships and the military.

This former general, this former member of a ruling triumvirate, this man who freed Jaime Neves,¹ this man who endorsed the November 25 state of siege, managed to work effectively into his campaign those themes that have most disoriented the working class and its vanguard: “people-MFA alliance,” “unity and discipline of the armed forces,” “respect for the constitution,” “mass political education by the army,” “people's power,” and so on. The most pernicious of such themes are “non-partyism” and “people-MFA” supra-class unity, because these go directly against independent organization and political expression by the working class. Carvalho even called on the centrist groups supporting him to subordinate themselves to the GDUP [Grupos de Dinamização da Unidade Popular—Groups to Promote People's Unity] so that he could maneuver more freely over the heads of the parties and in fact against them.

Throughout his campaign, Carvalho stood for a policy of class collaboration that, although different in form, was comparable to those followed by the SP and the CP. It was the same reactionary policy that has kept the workers from drawing the lessons of two years of revolution and which is blocking any clarification.

This is why the thing to do was not to “go through the experience” with the militant and radical workers who were being led astray by their illusions and errors, on the pretext that by so doing we could gain a hearing or link up with some kind of “dynamic” or “potentiality” for “regroupment of the vanguard” (is this supposed to take place on a nonparty or multiclass basis?). In this election, which was rigged against the workers, the revolutionary Marxists could only struggle against the stream, dig their heels in, and struggle to keep the most militant workers

1. The commander of the Amadora Commandos. A soldiers committee attempted to purge him as a rightist at the start of August. He was rescued by Carvalho. As a result, he was able to crush the soldiers movement in this regiment and make it into the main striking force for the government. This unit played the leading role in crushing the November 25 attempted coup.—IP

from being drawn into the wake of a petty-bourgeois candidate pretending to be radical.

This, moreover, was what was signified by the LCI's correct decision to run a Trotskyist candidate. Such a campaign would have been the best forum for opposing the various military candidates, as well as the CP candidate.

Because our attempt to run our own candidate failed, were we put in a position where the only choice was abstention? This is the only serious question.

However, such a position looks at all the candidates as "Tweedledum and Tweedledee." While the program of all the candidates, after two years of revolution, represented a reactionary policy, they nonetheless did not all have the same class position. One of them, Octávio Pato, was organically linked to one of the main workers parties. What was needed was to throw up a roadblock against Eanes. What was needed, in one way or another, was to register a class vote against the common candidate of the CDS, PPD, and SP and against Otelo's supraclass "nonpartyism." This is the only real argument for voting for Pato.

Such a position by no means represents endorsing Pato's program or his campaign. Pato was also for unity of the army, for "people-MFA" unity. His policy was to

subordinate working-class independence to the MFA, and he was able to accomplish this only because the workers saw him as the spokesman of a workers party. The assessment of Pato cannot be separated from the class nature of his party. It was in spite of his policy and his noncampaign that 7% of the workers cast their ballots for the only candidate from the workers movement.

We have to seize on everything that can advance the perspective of working-class independence from the bourgeois parties, ministers, and military. To "skirt" this question on the grounds that Carvalho "got more votes" is opportunistic and right wing. Precisely because we do not underestimate the sectors taken in by Carvalho, we should fight all the harder for working-class unity and independence. And this requires fighting for an SP-CP government without bourgeois ministers and without military officers. It is utopian to think that this fight can be bypassed by following the star of the "leader," Carvalho.

The Portuguese revolution marked a "return" to the "classical schema" of workers revolution. The strength of the working class and its traditional organizations makes it foolish to gamble on Carvalho playing a charismatic and substitutionist role. □

Is this sufficient to define where he stands in class terms and keep him from joining the camp of the workers?

The criterion for solving this question has to be sought elsewhere, in the *political significance* of the fight whose standard-bearer he has become. Supported by the organizations of the far left alone, he has sought the votes of the workers and of them only. What backing has he gotten from any organized bourgeois or petty-bourgeois current, any sector of the state apparatus, of the military hierarchy, or even of the defunct MFA? None.

On the basis of his support, to see in the Otelo phenomenon a new version of Peronism or Nasserism is inadmissible. That Otelo might tomorrow in fact play the role of a left bonaparte is, of course, not excluded, but this is not predestined. And if this happened, the responsibility would have to be placed on the errors and betrayals of the working-class leaderships.

Was the thing to do, then, to call for a vote for Otelo? Unquestionably, by voting for him many workers registered their defiance. They took a stand to the left of the CP and identified, over and above some dangerous ambiguities, with the defense of the organs of people's power and the revolutionary gains whose standard-bearer Otelo became (his final speech in Lisbon is clear testimony to this, see *Rouge*, June 29).

However, if we want to define the policy put forward by Otelo in terms of the currents in the workers movement, we should talk about left reformism and not centrism. Paradoxically, the breadth of his vote indicates what distinguishes his electoral support from that of the Proletarian Democracy slate in Italy, or even the traditional PSU [Parti Socialiste Unifié—United Socialist party] vote in France. Otelo's candidacy cannot therefore be equated with a united far-left candidacy, no matter how much unity and militancy coalesced around it.

Moreover, as a providential tribune comfortably positioned above the parties, Otelo could only be the momentary spokesman of a refusal and a hope. His success largely reflected the bankruptcy of the reformist workers parties. But it does not offer a start to overcoming this bankruptcy.

Otelo's success only better highlights the power that could have been brought to bear by the candidacy of a workers leader who came out clearly for an anticapitalist program of action and had the united backing of the far left, the workers commissions, and representative trade-union structures.

Kalidas Barreto, a workers leader and a member of the left-wing of the SP, could have been such a candidate. (See the interview with him in *Rouge*, May 8. [A translation of the interview was published in *Intercontinental Press*, May 31, p. 895.]

In the absence of this sort of candidacy, the only thing that this election could

Pato-Otelo, Two Working-Class Candidates

By A. Artous, D. Bensaid, F. Lourson, A. Robs, and Y. Salessé

The ballot choice and more broadly the decision about what kind of political fight revolutionists should wage in the Portuguese elections depended on an analysis of the objective significance of the electoral confrontations and thus on a clear characterization of the candidacies of Pato and Otelo.

In choosing to vote for Pato, our comrades of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista said that his was "the only possible class vote," because Pato was the only candidate "organically linked to the workers movement." (*Rouge*, June 9.) Otelo's candidacy was thus indirectly characterized as one outside the workers movement, without its class content being clearly defined (was it bourgeois or petty bourgeois?). This analysis led logically to a prediction that the workers, and especially those who up till then had placed their confidence in the SP and would refuse to go along with its support for Eanes, would express their rejection of bourgeois candidates by throwing their vote behind the "only working-class candidate," Pato. In order to maintain this analysis, it is necessary to interpret the results of the election as a political defeat, a spectacular drop in the level of consciousness of the workers in a mere two months' time, when no confrontation has occurred to change

the relationship of forces between the classes since the April elections.

However, the election results have confirmed what a correct characterization of Otelo's candidacy would have enabled us to foresee. The CP candidate was incapable of becoming the rallying point for such elementary class consciousness. In fact, the CP even saw a large part of its party's own electoral base turn away from it and vote for Otelo. In voting against the bourgeois candidates, the workers issued a warning to the bourgeoisie and to the reformist leaderships of the CP and the SP: They are determined to defend their revolutionary gains and not to give up an inch of ground without a struggle. They are determined to put up a stubborn fight against the process of normalization that is under way and against the threatening advances of the democratic counterrevolution that is being directed by Soares with the willing complicity of Alvaro Cunhal.

It was wrong to see a class difference between Pato and Otelo.

Both candidacies are bourgeois in the program they put forward, and, regardless of Otelo's references to "people's power," both remain in the framework of respect for bourgeois democracy and its institutions. By his origins and his place in society, Otelo is certainly petty bourgeois.

clearly register was a class-against-class vote. This in fact was what was expressed by the support the workers gave Pato and Otelo.

The only thing left, then, for revolutionists to do was to put forward their own

Take Advantage of a Working-Class Vote to the Left of the Communist Party

By Alain Krivine

The debate that has opened up in the LCR and throughout the revolutionary far left on what electoral policy should have been followed in Portugal takes on a great interest once the question is not limited to merely calling for a vote for one candidate or another, which is a tactical problem, but rather when we try to understand the differences in the analysis of the Portuguese revolution and the currents that run through it.

From this broader standpoint, we think there are only secondary differences between those of us who felt that the thing to do was to call for a vote for Pato and Otelo, and those, including myself, who believed that the right thing to do was to vote for Otelo alone. On the other hand, our differences with those comrades who maintain that Pato represented the only possible class vote are of a different order. This latter position arises from a failure to understand the phenomena of radicalization that developed prior to the November 25 coup.

Correctly, at that time in the columns of *Rouge*, we pointed up the various exemplary actions carried out by the workers in the united fighting organizations that they built, that is, the workers commissions, neighborhood commissions, and soldiers committees. Tens of thousands of workers began to take their struggle into their own hands and carry out experiments in workers control. This wave of self-organization was not free from confusion and political weakness, since it developed in the country at a time when all the big national workers organizations, the CP, the SP, and Intersindical, were practicing a class-collaborationist policy, with one foot in the committees and the other in the bourgeois state apparatus. This contradiction led the revolutionary organizations to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis, turning more toward one pole or the other. The FUR² at first was completely opportunist toward the CP; it may even have been attracted by the demagogy of the CP's left speeches. And then it fell into an

program, while strongly criticizing the programs of Pato and Otelo and calling on the workers to vote for them rather than the bourgeois candidates. And at the same time, revolutionists should have called on the workers to continue their struggle. □

ultrasectarian policy toward the big reformist parties, explaining that only the committees could carry the revolution to victory over the bodies of the CP and SP. This "nonparty" sentiment found a considerable echo in a section of the working class disgusted by these parties' policy of betrayal and division. However, the sectarianism of the far left helped to isolate the vanguard from the great mass of the workers. It prevented these committees from developing a united national structure and from developing a centralized leadership so that they could become a mass structure representing the working class and a possible alternative power to the bourgeois state.

The logical culmination of this course was November 25, that is, a rightist provocation designed to liquidate the process of self-organization, and which was facilitated by a desperate adventure by certain far-left groups and a section of the army.

The vanguard workers suffered a defeat on November 25. But they were not crushed; the bulk of them were not involved in the coup and did not fight.

It was inconceivable that two years of politicalization and revolutionary mobilization could be forgotten and wiped out overnight. It is this movement that we find today following Otelo, with the same hopes and the same confusion as before November 25. Two attitudes may be taken toward it.

One position, the dogmatic one, basing

CP left the front after about two days. The CP's front organization for its petty-bourgeois periphery, the Portuguese Democratic Movement, however, remained in until after November 25. The bloc included all of the ultraleft and centrist organizations of any size, except the eclectic Maoist União Democrática do Povo (People's Democratic Union), which was in orbit around it. It was dominated by two formations. One was the Partido Revolucionário do Proletariado (Revolutionary party of the Proletariat), a group with an urban guerrilla history and anarchist political conceptions. The other was the Movimento de Esquerda Socialista (Movement of the Socialist Left), a centrist group with theories of rank-and-file organizing and combining parliamentarism and building "counterpower." Both adopted a position in favor of an immediate insurrection in the period before November 25, and thus played into the hands of the rightists.—
IP

itself on the fact that Otelo is not a member of a workers party and does not seek to build a revolutionary party, places him in the camp of the bourgeoisie. From this standpoint, the shift of votes from the CP to Otelo is analyzed as a political regression, or even a reactionary vote. This position seems to me to be extremely dangerous inasmuch as it keeps us from understanding anything about the form the radicalization of the working class has taken in the Portuguese context.

On what bases was Otelo able to win in the strongholds of the CP?

Fundamentally, Otelo was able to do this by putting forward correct anticapitalist themes representing a position to the left of the CP—defense of the nationalizations, of the agrarian reform, of the workers committees. The personal prestige of the former Copcon [military security forces] chief and the artisan of April 25 certainly helped to bolster his popular support.

However, this prestige was effective only because Otelo identified himself with the themes we mentioned. The betrayal of the reformist parties and the impotence of the workers commissions explain, while of course they do not justify, the veritable cult around this personality. These parties have lost credibility to the benefit of the section of the working class that has taken refuge behind this personality. And, to be sure, it is in this problem of the personality cult that all the dangers lie. Otelo himself is responsible to no one, and may go off in any direction. Even if he is still under the pressure of the concerns of those who voted for him, this is an unorganized following in danger of being cruelly disillusioned tomorrow. The "nonparty" demagogy is dangerous. The CP and SP still have a broad following in the working class. With its tradition and its apparatus, the CP will be able to win back a part of those who voted for Otelo. To think that it is possible to advance to socialism while neglecting these two parties means starting down the same road of errors as before.

This said, in such an election, you cannot sit in your ivory tower and score points in the name of program. The candidacies of Otelo and Pato both created illusions but not the same ones. It was important that a massive vote appeared to the left of the CP for a candidate, what is more, who had no support from any bourgeois formation. Despite the confusion, Otelo's success will restore the confidence of a broad section of the working class and prepare them for future struggles. Those who voted for Otelo certainly represent the most radicalized wing of the workers movement (see, for example, results in Setúbal and Beja). By giving critical support to Otelo, the Portuguese revolutionary Marxists could have gained opportunities to more effectively expose the limitations and illusions of his campaign. □

2. Frente de Unidade Revolucionária, Front for Revolutionary Unity. This bloc originated in the August 25 demonstration in Lisbon in support of the Fifth Provisional Government of Vasco Gonçalves. It was originally called the August 25 Bloc and the Frente Unitária Popular (People's United Front). The name was changed when the

ON UNITY WITH THE REFORMISTS

[Following is a translation of an article titled "Sur l'Unité Avec Les Reformistes," which appeared in the February 6, 1976, issue of *Rouge*.]

The PSU and the Ligue agree in stating:

—that workers power can only consist of the self-government of workers organized in councils (regardless of the respective importance each of us attaches to factory councils and to neighborhood councils);

—that as a result, revolutionaries must continually work to achieve unity within the working class, and to do so they must develop a unity policy vis a vis the reformist organizations that the majority of workers identify with;

—that this unity policy has to be carried out systematically regardless of its immediate results, without any precondition other than the interests of the mass movement itself.

However, for several months we have noted that mutual criticisms have accumulated over daily activity. Polemics are tending to take the place of the discussion we need. But the comrades of the PSU seem hesitant, to say the least, to have a national public debate with the LCR outside the framework offered by *Politique-Hebdo*. And yet taking off from our points of agreement, the discussion between the PSU and the LCR would arouse interest broader than the influence of the two organizations themselves.

Here we shall limit ourselves to two questions, renewing our proposal that the PSU reply to them in an open forum [a column in *Rouge*, made available to other working-class organizations].

Unity With Reformist Organizations: A Tactic or a Strategy?

For us, revolutionary strategy is embodied in the united working class establishing itself as the dominant class through revolutionary struggle, and building a new state in order to do so, a state of workers councils. Within this strategic perspective, a unity policy vis a vis the reformists can only be a tactic made necessary by the fact that the class consciousness of the workers holds back their action as a class (as we have already noted in Portugal, where the workers can organize themselves into commissions, develop methods of workers control, and still retain their confidence in the SP which denounces the "parallel power" of those same commissions). Consequently, while we can completely eliminate from the start the assumption that the traditional reformist parties, under the pressure of the radicalization of their rank and file, will not go further along the revolutionary road than their leaderships would like to, we cannot base our strategy on this rather uncertain possibility. On the contrary, the most probable assumption is that establishing the working class as the dominant class, which presupposes defeating reformism politically, will similarly involve defeating it organizationally, that is, through the working class breaking with the

reformist parties, a break that will be expressed in massive splits in these parties.

But the PSU comrades' concept of "popular unity strategy" means at the same time both unity of the class and its allies achieved through workers and peoples councils, and a "strategic" alliance with the reformist parties. Likewise, there are two interpretations of this "popular unity strategy" as we saw in the public debate on Portugal between members of the PSU's National Bureau. On the one hand, the strategic accent can be placed on "people's power," represented by the councils, in working out a unity tactic vis a vis reformist forces. On the other hand, one could stress seeking a strategic agreement with the reformist parties on a moderate program to open the way to socialism, thus limiting the mass movement to a role of pressuring these parties.

It seems to us that the PSU tends to slip toward this latter interpretation, which in the end is rather close to the strategy of CERES (Centre d'études, de recherches et d'éducation socialistes—Center for Socialist Studies, Research and Education—a dissident wing of the Socialist Party), or even more of the CFDT [Confédération Française et Démocratique du Travail—French Democratic Trade Union Federation—the union federation strongly influenced by the SP]. But to the extent that the PSU rejects the common program, such an orientation would only make sense if they hope that the combined pressure of the mass movement and the PSU itself would be able to change the orientation of at least one of the major reformist forces. Is this illusion, which led Rocard into the SP, today shared by the PSU with respect to the CP or the CFDT?

Do the comrades of the PSU still hold to the assessment of their national factory conference that the CFDT leadership has a reformist character? Do they still think it desirable that a left tendency develop within that federation, with all due respect for trade union autonomy of course?

Unity and Relationship of Forces

At all times revolutionaries must work for the unity the class needs in order to meet its immediate needs. At all times, therefore, revolutionaries must propose unity to the reformist organizations, whatever the chances of achieving it. But it is not a matter of proposing unity without clearly defining the class basis of that unity, or of putting forward a compromise acceptable to the reformists without negotiating with them first, on the pretext that the revolutionaries are "small." That is what the PSU has done rather frequently, both when confronted with the crisis when they proposed unity to the CP and the SP without clearly defining their objectives, as well as in the army dispute when they pretended that they were not part of the far-left and that, as the PSU, they were not defending revolutionary anti-militarism, under the pretext

that the soldiers movement was not developing on an anti-militarist basis.

But at that game, revolutionaries cannot help but lose at all the tables. Their "tactical maneuver" doesn't deceive the reformists; on the contrary it throws into confusion the workers receptive to their propaganda.

But revolutionaries cannot be content with propaganda for unity that does a swift turnabout when they are verbally backed into a corner. Whenever possible they must seek the means to create a relationship of forces that will compel the reformists to accept the united action needed to mobilize the broad masses. In order to do so, revolutionaries must take initiatives capable of mobilizing a section of the radicalized workers. Most of the time, for such initiatives to be capable of bringing about a mobilization, they must be taken in a united fashion by several far-left organizations. That is what happened in May 1968, during the youth movements against the Debré law, and with the national march in support of Lip. . . . Conversely, it is not a matter of simple high-level

agreements being able to unblock unity among the ranks. And similarly, to see the fruit of the "popular unity strategy" in the June 26, 1975, demonstration, in the signing of a common PSU-PCF communiqué on Portugal, or even in the signing of the most recent common statement on the army, is to be dazzled by mere words.

Let us understand each other, we are not in principle opposed to high-level agreements, but where we criticize the PSU comrades is their willingness—for the sake of signing such agreements, whose contents are sometimes debatable—to limit the independent, united activity of revolutionaries, which would make possible an improvement in the relationship of forces vis a vis the reformists. As a result, they do not carry out any struggle against exclusions. In order not to cut themselves off from the reformists, the PSU gives the impression of keeping its distance from revolutionary organizations, even if they appeal over their heads to "unorganized revolutionaries" who are "much less sectarian."

—R. Yvetot

WHAT KIND OF UNITY WITH REVOLUTIONARIES?

[Following is a translation of the article "PSU: Quelle Unité Avec Les Révolutionnaires?" from the February 13, 1976, issue of *Rouge*.]

The Amiens congress of the PSU [Parti Socialiste Unifié—United Socialist party] did not, strictly speaking, define the PSU's unity policy toward organizations of the far left. This default is explained by the PSU's strategic orientation to "popular unity" as this is understood in its current interpretation (see last week's *Rouge*). Actually, this "strategy of popular unity" does not in any way involve the revolutionary organizations; it is essentially a matter of "pushing to the left" the traditional forces in the workers movement in the hope of welding behind this political alliance a "social bloc" that would draw all the popular layers together around the proletariat. To the contrary, in this perspective of a strategic alliance with the reformist forces, the revolutionaries are seen as bad company. This explains why, in their search for "popular unity," the comrades of the PSU avoid as much as they can any united action and public debate with the revolutionary organizations, and why they don't conduct any struggle against the exclusionary policies of the reformists toward the revolutionaries.

However, this "strategy of popular unity" is deeply contradictory. Actually, it is a complete illusion to think that the reformist organizations will accept unity on a class basis unless they are forced to. But the PSU by itself does not have the strength to force them, and it has to be recognized that the solitary campaign of the PSU for "popular unity" has evoked scarcely an echo. The PSU seems to be aware of this, since it attempts to base itself on the radicalized workers (which we call "the broad vanguard"), who are distrustful of the reformist leader-

ships and receptive to the ideas and initiatives of the far left. But it wants to approach them for the most part independently of any unity with the revolutionary organizations, planning to regroup them in a broad "movement for workers control and self-management," the first step toward which were the meeting on "mini-Lips," the "workers institute" project, and the PSU's call for an "Estates General for Self-Management." Consequently, the PSU runs a strong chance of bringing together only its sympathizers or of falling into manipulative practices, despite its intentions. We, on the other hand, begin from the idea that the organizations of the far left are the political expression, in a diverse way, of a "broad vanguard" that is breaking with reformism. They are an expression of a broad phenomenon of recomposition of the workers movement which is penetrating the mass reformist parties.

Therefore we propose:

1) unity of action at every opportunity by the revolutionary organizations, based on the sole condition that such unity should not be achieved on a basis that would contradict the pursuit of united action with the reformists and the masses they influence.

2) a common "mass work" on the trade union level, in building the women's movement, in the youth, in support for the soldiers—all of which assumes agreement on a platform acceptable to everyone and a consensus on the mode of democratic functioning of such "mass organizations."

3) finally, a debate on the two central problems of the revolutionary strategy—councils and the united front policy toward the reformists—because we think that agreement on these two points, despite other differences, makes it possible to think in terms of a common

organization and to concretely consider the problems of party functioning and the construction of the international.

Rather than puzzling over what conditions would permit revolutionaries to eventually participate in a government

of the left, to us it seems more important to know whether the working class will be able to meet the next revolutionary crisis with, if not a mass revolutionary party, then at least a party capable of challenging the CP and SP's influence over the workers.

—T.Y.

AFTER THE 'PH' [Politique Hebdo] ARTICLE THAT WAS REPRODUCED IN ROUGE

[Following is a translation of an article by Matti printed in the Internal Bulletin of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, *Cahiers d'Etude et de Recherche Socialistes*, No. 43. The article by Yvetot that Matti's article is in answer to was not available to us at the time this bulletin was in preparation. We have included, instead, two other articles on the LCR's "unity policy" printed in *Rouge*.]

Yvetot's article in *PH* on "unity" was considered by certain groups like the OCR (Organisation Communiste Révolution) or the ex-AMR (Alliance Marxiste Révolutionnaire—the name of Michel Pablo's group before it entered into the Parti Socialiste Unifié) as a "turn" in our policy after the Tours election.

Three Misconceptions

It is true that this is a turn—another one—and it is regrettable that it was made without authority. All the more so as it contains three confusing concessions:

1) **First, the policy.** He advances into exposed territory on the basis of calling for a "front of revolutionaries" in the name of "Unity!" without *first of all* proceeding to enumerate the tasks on which we must propose unity. To proceed in this way vis-a-vis centrist groups is to condemn oneself to all sorts of compromises. To scream "unity, unity, unity," as the only line after having so loudly lamented the "pitiful division" at Tours** *is not a good method. The opposite should be done—to ask the question, "What is the central task at the moment?"* (It is to counterpose workers unity to the Union of the Left, to counterpose the workers united front to popular unity for combat, to counterpose a CP-SP government to a government of the "Union of the Left," or the "Union of the French people," or a "Government with Giscard," by every means to counterpose the perspective of a united front of the working class to all forms of class collaboration.) And, beginning from the definition of this policy that is endlessly elucidated, to challenge all the centrist groups

without exception by proposing common action. Common action at the level of mass work first of all (to begin by working as a tendency in the unions, then in all fields: youth, women, etc.). Then a strategic debate on fundamental questions designated by us. That is the best way to avoid giving the impression of wanting to manipulate these groups, to create the conditions for a clear debate, and to make concrete progress on the practical grounds of mass work in gathering the most politicized forces.

2) **Winning hegemony over the GOP** (Gauche ouvrière et populaire) [workers and people's left—a reference to the concept of the workers and people's left held by the organization called the GOP, a Maoist split-off from the PSU]. The linguistic concession of acknowledging that the "broad vanguard" is the same thing as the "workers and people's left" or the "movement for control," or "a part of Arlette's electorate" [refers to Arlette Laguillier, presidential candidate of Lutte Ouvrière in 1974] is demagogic and confusing: by recognizing the same "target" ("winning hegemony over the workers and people's left") behind different words we are certainly simplifying the discussions in the confusion.

Our target is *the masses*, it is building the unity of the working class, not detaching the "workers and people's left," nor a "broad current for control." It is not the "people's union for combat" of the OCR-GOP; it is "workers unity," which is not summed up in the united front of its parties, but for which a battle for the united front is necessary. The phenomenon of radicalization that is bringing forward broad layers of combative workers in the unions and is pushing numerous unorganized workers to join the traditional organizations. This raises and will raise growing contradictions in the ranks of the CP and SP that will at first feed the centrist groups and will benefit us in so far as we are able to lead audacious mass work while using our daily newspaper as an untiring instrument of politicization. This phenomenon exists as it does in *every* workers upsurge: A broad workers vanguard is destined to develop, but to win it, we must show it the way to class unity, we must show that our target is more vast and essential, we must show that our policy is not, in a sectarian fashion, reduced to breaking away the workers and people's left.

3) **A "coalition of lefts?"** In conclusion, Yvetot's article settles in advance what we will do in the municipal elections without us even having discussed it. He proposes a common platform while choosing not to mention the points of departure for discussion of such a platform; he

**Politique Hebdo* is a weekly, new-left-type political magazine. Yvetot is a leader of the LCR.

**Refers to the May 9, 1976, legislative by-elections in the city of Tours, in which three candidates of organizations of the so-called "far left" competed.

allows "slates that are not reduced to a coalition"—therefore slates beyond the organizations (from a struggle, or "the mass movement," or the "broad vanguard"). Specifying "that those who talk in the name of struggles do so without ambiguity, either in their own name or mandated by a mass organization," does not avoid the Tours "imbroglio" in any way—quite the contrary. The fact that "each organization supporting the unity slate would retain its freedom of expression" is in no way a condition! Still better! These "reservations" about the unity slate are only symbolic: with a point of departure of this order we're on our way to an "Italian FUR in French colors," or to the "coalition of the lefts." What is more, it is the best way to not end up with this famous unity slate. In elections, we don't just agitate (let's remember our justified reproaches to LO [Lutte Ouvrière]); as a "party," we defend our program without concessions. It was correct at Tours to reproach the OCR-PSU-GOP candidate with not putting forward a central perspective or an answer to the question of power. We must continue on this polemical road and ourselves give a response, which was lacking in our May Day contingents (in how many towns did the LCR march with the classic "Power to the Workers," when it wasn't "Power's in the Streets," or "The Only Solution is Revolution," or if it wasn't this, then nothing at all). We must draw attention to ourselves with a response in concrete political terms. Moreover, the "formula" "SP-CP" that is valuable today in Italy and Portugal is not a gadget-formula; what counts is the approach that leads to it. But it must be followed and put forward in the contingents, in our factory bulletins and during the elections. All the other organizations (OCR, LO, PSU-AMR) are being criss-crossed by this debate. We should be the spearhead of it; we should point toward it from the beginning of any discussion around an electoral "platform." It is this debate that will shape unity, not ecumenical incantations.

Workers Unity Against the Union of the Left

Yes to the possibility of common slates in the municipal elections with the centrist groups *if* we can arrive at a clear orientation: by counterposing "workers unity" to the multiple forms of "popular unity," by counterposing a government of the workers parties that is designated by name—a SP-CP government without bourgeois ministers—counterposed to the many-faced class collaborationist coalitions that can call themselves "Union of the Left," or "people's power."

This is the key question. This is what will make us say that only the working class is revolutionary, that will lead us concretely to go to war to *counterpose* workers unity to every form of alliance with the bourgeoisie and its state, that will permit us without being sectarian to counterpose the masses to their leaderships and their fierce refusal of such a solution.

It is this that will lead us to common positions in advice on how to vote; because the centrists will want to vote for the left radicals for the same reasons as for the CP and SP, while we will distinguish a class vote ("Don't vote for a bourgeois") for the SP or the CP where we will not be present.

Against the Stream

In addition, we will probably not be present in a lot of

places; it will be necessary to select the cases where it will be *useful* for us to campaign in the municipal elections to help us implant ourselves. This kind of election is not the best for us; there is no point in "seeking to be counted" in a situation where everything tends to minimize us and all the class movement is going toward the SP and CP.

It must be said clearly: we are going against the stream, and in the short term things can only be unfavorable for us. The daily *Rouge* is running the risk of having to speak ironically again of the 0.007% of the vote. No unity slate will save us from that prospect. To let such a thing be believed would be dangerous and—electoralist! To make hasty compromises to try and avoid *electoral defeat* would be to fall into a ridiculous electoral trap. No, the masses are not breaking with reformism today, they are running to it! No, the No. 1 phenomenon is not the partial, empirical, lasting, tactical or other kind of break with reformism; it is the reverse—the CP and SP have the power to break struggles, to block all centralization, to make expectations reign!

Is there anything for us to despair about? No, on the contrary, the phenomenon that strengthens the traditional organizations is *at the same time* a phenomenon that weakens the political credibility of their leaderships. When Mitterrand and Marchais have several thousand members behind them, they say, "Let's wait until we're stronger; let's look for allies." When they have hundreds of thousands of adherents flocking to them, the impetus of the masses makes it hard for them to give these speeches ("Let's wait; let's look for other allies, let's enlarge the Union"), which become less credible to the workers as they sense their growing strength. This phenomenon implies that we will be relatively a minority: no shortcut, no gadget is going to prevent us from suffering electoral defeats (especially electoral! And especially in the framework of the municipal elections!).

And the articles in *Rouge* that lament the *pitiful division at Tours* cart along with them a bunch of illusions that are not very healthy, in trying to make believe that with just a little effort we would be united and—have more votes. If there is one field on which revolutionaries should unite it is in action! To place ourselves in advance in a situation where programmatic compromises would be unavoidable (*in the name of struggles*, a personality, or a mandate from a mass organization) is the most confused solution that could await us. And most especially, what is the sense of such common slates between groups that do not even agree to fuse the mass organizations they work in! Insofar as the CDA is separate from the CAM [the CDA and the CAM are two French antimilitarist organizations], insofar as we cannot build a united student movement, insofar as our trade union policy prevents the formation of a common tendency, and insofar as we do not work together in the women's movement—that is, insofar as we do not have the same practice in struggles, what value is there to a *common electoral program*?

First Conclusion

Let's repeat: Yes, fundamentally, to united action by revolutionaries. No to an Italian FUR in French colors. We do not have a unity policy distinct from our policy of workers united front.

Yes to unity slates that pose this question of workers

unity and that *counterpose* this response in governmental terms to the Union of the Left.

Yes to arriving at common mass work in the same organized framework with the different centrist groups, in a clear perspective of united action with the reformists, whether they be social democrats or Stalinists.

But Then, With Which Forces And Concretely What Does It Mean?

1) The PSU: The political resolution of the November 1975 Central Committee defined the PSU as "Rocard's PSU without Rocard." [Rocard is a former PSU leader who went over to the Socialist party.] The proof of this is clear. The pressure that the Union of the Left exercised on the SP [sic—apparently should be PSU] is spectacular and significant for the present time. It is this objective pressure of the Union of the Left that will limit the audience for the ex-AMR's entry work. The AMR, to preserve a certain capital at the PSU's base and to avoid being a minority, is itself going to be led to make concessions (demarcating itself still more from a Leninist organization in order to insist on a self-management party of a new type, but *independent*). Undoubtedly, these efforts will not prevent a *center* [group or tendency] from forming in the ranks of the PSU for its renewal and continuity in the name of organizational patriotism, against the *ex-Trotskyists* who propose only to fuse with the sectarians of the LCR. The debates inside the PSU are going to be all the more involved in that we are acquainted with the political component that is behind them: the ex-AMR.

This new *left* wing of the PSU has some concrete political characteristics that we must not disregard. To replace the defunct fusion [with the whole of the PSU] with the *left of the PSU* would be to choose a new trap. The ex-AMR is politically interesting for the quality of a number of its militants as prime movers of the mass movements. They have been right many times in contrast to us on the level of sensitivity to the type of mass work to carry out, and on certain political questions (even if only on the much discussed SP-CP slogan under the belated pressure of current events). But they have sharply broken on one essential question: the Fourth International, and the Leninist concept of organization, democratic centralism, the selection of vanguard militants, etc.

Their plan vis-a-vis us is clear: they want to *build the party* with a section of the LCR and a section of the PSU, that is, explicitly, with what they believe to be the former tendencies 2 and 3 against tendencies 1 and 4 [tendencies in the LCR], and at the international level, they want to discuss with the IMT to the exclusion of the LTF and the SWP. Therefore their attitude is factional and their goal is to divide us: from this it follows that our main concrete response in regard to them is to steer the debate toward those questions they would like to see submerged, the questions of delimitation and organizational rigor, the key question of the Fourth International and its achievements. These leaders of the opposition inside the PSU are not novices and there is no "pedagogy" in regard to them on this subject, where it is precisely they who are consciously attempting to maneuver. All work pushed forward with them should be defined in terms of this analysis. Which, once again, implies no sectarianism—just the opposite—in regard to all forms of common action and principled debate.

2) **The OCR and the GOP:** It seems that their fusion process is an accomplished fact. There is a place in France for a populist-based organization, and it is even surprising that it was not built before. The bankruptcy of the Maoist currents after 1968 and the specific dominance in France represented by the three groups claiming to be Trotskyist, the LCR, LO, and the OCI, explains this in part, in the context of the French workers movement. What the fused OCR and GOP constitute is a kind of "fragment" of the former PSU centrist regroupment (from Heurgon to Behar passing by Bridier) that looks for its models in the Chilean MIR as well as in Lotta Continua and Avanguardia Operaia. Their eclecticism does not shelter them from the debates imposed by the period: in its turn, the OCR is discussing the question of the governmental slogan and positions of the AO type in Italy are seeing the light of day ("PSI-PCI without bourgeois ministers"). They are still a minority, but their existence indicates the general tendency of all the "far left" organizations to ask the question and to resolve it with more or less clarity or rigor. We should spearhead the discussions in sharp terms with this current, which often asks intelligent questions (cf. in *Workers Tool* [newspaper of the GOP], the article on "When the Reformists are in Power," where the myth of the "left" that "is breaking massively with reformism" is swept aside). The most lively question with them is "people's power" and the so-called "people's union of combat." This perspective, which leads them to vote SP and CP (which they define elsewhere as bourgeois or neo-bourgeois) is more realistic than their previous hesitations or abstentions but reveals a growing confusion on the level of distinguishing it from "workers unity." Behind the word "people's" they cover for a class collaborationist bloc of poorly defined contours in so far as they do not concretise it at a political level. They hold on to the old formula of "anti-capitalist united front" on the basis of which they do not put themselves in a position distinct in approach from that of the Union of the Left. It's a "popular front from below" to the exclusion of the organized reformists.

To put forward as the program the example of the "Notebook of Demands for the People," after the example of the MIR, as did one of the last numbers of *Révolution* [newspaper of the OCR] shows this general orientation concretely. Nevertheless, the Trotskyist origin of *Révolution* and their parasitism in regard to us leads them, through contamination, to pose problems like rank and filism and populism, including that of the popular front (cf. the one good article—Trotskyist—out of the four contained in their dossier on the 40th anniversary of 1936). Nonetheless, their slowing down among the youth is pushing them to demagogic, rank and filish, ultraleft lines, toward the "unorganized," under the pretext of detaching the "left," as was the case in the whole recent student movement as well as their choice of an antimilitarist group (CAM). It is necessary to first of all apply ourselves to removing these obstacles to mass work with them as the concrete element of a political confrontation before calling for "unity of the revolutionary forces" with them.

3) **The OCI:** We were right to remove the obstacles so that they can express themselves in *Rouge*. Our lack of response to their repeated offers of discussions with no preconditions permitted them to take the offensive in regard to our militants and to maintain the myth of "Pabloism

that is scared of a debate." Without ceasing to follow vigilantly the affair of the international tribunal of honor for Varga, and while maintaining the warnings against possible "violence," we should take the initiative in responding and proposing a meeting to them. We can make them appear as sectarians if they refuse to recognize the Fourth International and the United Secretariat, if they do not really want to debate with the leadership of the organization as it is. Again, at the same time, we must approach concrete questions with them: What is in dispute at the level of our common practice, or rather of our non-practice? On what grounds can we meet? There appear to be two a priori areas: The most important is on the Eastern European countries (it must be recognized in a non-sectarian way that they have had a real success with the Plyushch campaign) where we can participate in a common committee to save the political prisoners, and among the youth where they are the second most important force after us and before the OCR and the PSU (leaving aside the Stalinists). Under what conditions are they ready to respond to our perspective of rebuilding a united student movement? Beyond these two fields, the objects of discussion are many: what assessment of the unions and in particular of the CFDT; what evolution of the workers movement? Finally, they must be questioned in clear terms that permit no fleeting falsehoods: What do they want when they ask to be present as observers at the coming world congress? To be "observers" like Lutte Ouvrière at the 9th World Congress? In a word, we have no reason to hide behind exclusions and to be *on the defensive* in relation to this group. We can profit, as difficult as their internal debates and contradictions must be. Their tribune in *Rouge* was sectarian, par excellence; but it appeared that they were addressing not our readers, but their own militants, to explain that they were expressing themselves in a "Pabloist" newspaper without capitulating! The characterization of *Rouge* as a workers newspaper at the end of a particularly grim column is one important thing to note in their own concept, in their vocabulary for us. One positive thing is that they gave an interview of two hours with Lambert to *Rouge*, of which we will soon publish 7-8,000 characters (extracts).

4) *Lutte Ouvrière*: Clearly this is the organization with which we have the most possibilities for reaching relevant common action, including in the specific area of the municipal elections. Not by posing as candidates for "fusion," but by undertaking a serious, systematic, sustained discussion. It is not a question of separating it from concrete practice either; [we can pursue it] with the

youth from the CET's (vocational schools) that they influence, in the factories or unions where we are both present.

They also, drawing the balance sheet of Portugal, have undertaken to discuss questions they had hardly approached until then, such as the governmental slogan. They are presently isolated internationally and have tried to get the organizations claiming to be Trotskyist to discuss. The United Secretariat correctly replied that "the preoccupations that their declaration reflects about putting an end to the crumbling of the Trotskyist movement correspond to ours." There is a beginning of a concrete discussion on building the Fourth International.

The lessons of Tours are not lost: the question is not that of the failure to field a common candidacy, but the reasons it was not done. What LO says is weak and not at the level of the political arguments ("to clearly denounce the Union of the Left") they advanced at the beginning. At the time of the municipal elections, with a *fundamental* debate (and not "unity, unity, unity"), another attitude on their part can be predicted.

Provisional Conclusion

Beyond these four currents, the immediate perspectives for unity in action or discussion are almost nonexistent.

Already the difficulties we must assume can be seen, but without discouraging us. But there is an exceptional trump card in our favor: the objective situation (the movement of the working class toward the traditional parties) is going to impose responses and parallel discussions on these different organizations, breaking up their sectarian heritages, pushing for a practical reconsideration of the policies to carry out. The fact that the question of power is being discussed everywhere and that in France it can be hoped that the myths of "people's power" will be avoided in order to advance more solidly in the areas of unity and working class independence is already a very important element, and indicator of the possible evolutions *if we act consciously and in a determined way by profiting from our organizational relationship of force while showing our total absence of sectarianism in the matter of mass work.*

This document completes Internal Bulletin No. 4 on the same question, responds to Garcin's new text and, in its general line, constitutes an alternative approach to what is proposed to us for the municipal elections in Yvetot's article in *PH* that was reproduced in *Rouge*.

In this sense, the text is submitted to the Central Committee.

May 28, 1976, Matti

FRANCE: REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE PROBLEM OF UNITY

EIGHT YEARS AFTER MAY 1968

[Following is an article reprinted from the May 1976 issue of *Class Struggle/Lutte Ouvrière*, the bilingual journal of the organization Lutte Ouvrière in France.

In the legislative by-elections in Tours (9 May 1976) three candidates claimed allegiance to extreme left. These were the candidates of Lutte Ouvrière, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, and a woman candidate «supported» by the PSU (Unified Socialist Party) and the Maoist-oriented groups Révolution and the GOP (Workers' and Peasants' Left).

This multiple candidature could obviously only lead to a scattering of the few votes that might go to the extreme left. (Lutte Ouvrière finally got 0.58 percent of the votes, the LCR 0.35 percent, and the PSU-Révolution-GOP 0.33 percent.) But this was only to be expected. When all is said and done, the revolutionary movement did not look more divided at Tours, electorally speaking, than it is the rest of the time in all other areas of struggle.

The arguments stirred up within the extreme left by these elections would not be worth any further discussion, except that they pose a more general problem. Namely, the attitude that groups claiming to belong to the extreme left ought to have toward each other today. The LCR, like the PSU-Révolution-GOP coalition, rather than trying to center the debate around the political differences that brought about these three candidatures have talked about who was «responsible» for the situation. Each of them has stated that, with a bit of good will, the extreme left could have come up with a joint candidature. Each accused the other, and Lutte Ouvrière, of being responsible for this multiple candidature, due to sectarianism.

The LCR said the existence of several extreme-left candidatures at Tours was «dramatic.» We do not really see what could be «dramatic» about such a situation. The fact that organizations whose differences are such that they feel obliged to lead an independent existence each present their own candidature and their own program, is completely natural.

Is it not mere electoralism to state that unity is essential on the electoral level, when at the same time you claim that these elections are meaningless? And when you do not strive for the unity of the revolutionaries in other spheres of activity?

The real question was whether or not the differences there are today between the various extreme-left groups meant that a common candidate was possible or desirable. And, seen from this angle, the steps taken by the LCR comrades regarding the PSU seem to us to be typical of their wrong approach to the problem.

How could the revolutionaries possibly have considered putting up a candidate in these elections in common with a party that, in 1974, supported the campaign of the bourgeois politician Mitterrand without the slightest reservation?

The leaders who pushed the PSU in this direction have of course since gone over to the Socialist Party lock, stock, and barrel. But the new leaders have not at all renounced this orientation. Well before the failure of the LCR-PSU negotiations, the LCR daily paper *Rouge* published an interview with the present national secretary of the PSU, who said basically that participation by the PSU in a left-wing government would be not only possible but desirable. Reminding us of his party's support for Mitterrand, the secretary of the PSU added that this support would «result in an unconditional participation in the government.»

How, in these circumstances, could it have been possible to consider a joint candidature with a party like the PSU? A party which, on the very day that the LCR proposed a single candidature to the PSU, was making advances to the Union of the Left. (It was asking to be included on the list for the 1977 municipal elections.) How can we believe that such a joint candidature would have enabled workers to express their

mistrust of the Union of the Left? And yet this is what the revolutionaries should have aimed at in these elections.

And what are we to think of the lamentations in the 20 April issue of *Rouge*, after the failure of the LCR-PSU talks? Emphasizing the moderation of the LCR's demands, who were ready to support the PSU candidate, they wrote:

We simply requested that a statement denouncing the Common Program and the reformist parties' policy of waiting on the sidelines be included in the PSU's election platform.

Even if the PSU had consented to write this statement (that is, if it had attached more importance that it did to an agreement with the LCR), what would this have changed? «Opportunists cannot be caught with a turn of phrase,» Lenin used to say. And one short sentence could not have forced the PSU to explain to workers that the Union of the Left's policy was basically an alternative policy for the bourgeoisie.

Therefore the problem is not simply a question of good intentions and a desire for unity. It is a political problem.

For our part, we cannot see how a joint candidature with the PSU would have been possible when, for two years, the PSU has done nothing but coat-tail the Union of the Left.

But after the failure of their two weeks of negotiations, with the PSU, why not have a joint LO-LCR candidature? This is what the LCR comrades basically wrote in *Rouge* of 20 April. Did not the two of us agree about the Union of the Left? Obviously not. We only have to look at the LCR's insistence on coming to an agreement with the PSU to be convinced of the contrary.

We have important differences with the other Trotskyist groups, including the LCR, about what the revolutionaries' policy on the problem of the Union of the Left should be. Suffice it to say here that the LCR's policy of asking people to vote for them «to get rid of Giscard before 1978» seems to us to foster more illusions about the Union of the Left than it fights against. Consequently, it was a policy that could not enable workers to unequivocally demonstrate their mistrust toward the politics of Mitterrand and Marchais.

But why then did the LCR and Révolution insist on posing the problem in terms of «working toward unity» or «sectarianism»? (This approach was very evident in what their representatives said at Tours during the

central meeting of support for the Lutte Ouvrière candidature.) Why did Révolution, in spite of its flashy name, go and campaign with the PSU? And why did the LCR go to such lengths to come to an agreement with the PSU? Through opportunism in the direction of the Union of the Left? No doubt. But this opportunism does not only mean that they have a policy of coat-tailing the Union of the Left. They also try not to openly oppose the latter in an election.

The various speeches about the necessity for the extreme left to appear united in fact merely cover up the desire of these organizations not to appear under their own banner. We only have to look at the type of joint candidature they proposed to be convinced of this.

Seen from this angle, the bargaining that went on in a whole section of the extreme left during the Tours elections was merely a repetition, on a smaller scale, of what happened in the 1974 presidential election.

At the time, the LCR and Révolution proposed Charles Piaget as a candidate. (He was the leader of the Lip factory section of the CFDT.) He was to be «the candidate of those in struggle.» But the idea was shortlived since Piaget did not even present himself as a candidate. Moreover, as a disciplined PSU militant, he actively campaigned for Mitterrand. It was only after giving up all hope of convincing Piaget to run as a candidate that the LCR decided to present Alain Krivine against our comrade Arlette Laguiller.

At Tours, the candidate put forward by the PSU, Révolution, and the GOP was not even a union militant who had been brought to the forefront by a big struggle. Instead, she was an unknown militant, whom they presented as a «candidate representing those in struggle» and whom the LCR was prepared to support in exchange for «a sentence denouncing the Common Program.» But the aim of the operation was the same. In the name of a candidature which would be «representative of those in struggle,» but basically apolitical, it was to allow some extreme-left groups to take part in the campaign by lumping themselves together, without appearing clearly under their banner. It is significant from this point of view that the PSU, Révolution, and the GOP emphasized the fact that their candidate belonged to the MLAC (Movement for Free Abortion and Contraception). But they merely gave her their «support,» and did not openly present her as the candidate of their organizations.

So we see that the times when the PSU and the Ligue Communiste could present

the whole movement with the fact of their candidacy, have gone. (This was what had happened in the 1969 presidential election.) Many things have changed since then.

The events of May-June 1968, for the first time in a long time, had made the extreme left look like a political force to be reckoned with in the country's political life. The extreme left had won the sympathy of a lot of workers in the fights of that spring. And it would no doubt have been possible to consolidate this sympathy by organizing thousands and thousands of young workers. But to do so the extreme left would have had to show a little more responsibility and a different face than that of its sectarian fighting.

But only the extreme left *as a whole* could have done it. None of the organizations which were part of it had the necessary prestige and authority to succeed in doing it. It was then that trying to bring about the unity of the revolutionaries would have had a vital importance. (This unity would not have meant each giving up his ideas but acting together whenever possible, as was the case during the May events.) But Lutte Ouvrière was the only revolutionary organization that consistently had such a policy.

In fact, most of the revolutionary groups thought that their organization could, on its own, become the axis of a future revolutionary party. They hoped to capitalize on the diffuse sympathy that many workers felt for the «leftists» for their own account. And they were all the more convinced they would be able to play this role as they overestimated the depth of the May 1968 crisis. Just as they overestimated the crisis that they said the reformist organizations were going through.

And in fact, the latter seemed to offer no prospects. The agreements between Mitterrand's Federation of the Democratic Socialist Left and the French Communist Party were in fact broken when Mitterrand thought de Gaulle's resignation was imminent and power within his grasp. The backlash effect of de Gaulle's comeback was that it even brought about the break-up of the Federation. And one year after 1968, the Socialist Party, with Defferre as a candidate, got its lowest election score in a presidential election.

The French Communist Party was again isolated. It had no prospects to offer its militants in the short or medium term—not even parliamentary ones. And yet many of its militants had been disturbed by the May 1968 events. The Communist Party's main preoccupation seemed to be to prevent revolutionary ideas from contaminating its own ranks.

Today, the situation is very different. In spite of all the statements by those who try to bury it regularly, the revolutionary movement has certainly not regressed. But it has shown itself to be unable to organize a significant part of all those who at that time had some sympathy for it. The reason was that it was unable to offer them an organizational framework that would have allowed an open confrontation of the different tendencies present.

Because of this inability, Stalinism quickly got over the events of 1968. Which allowed the French Communist Party to rapidly resume its natural course. This is illustrated by the fact that it was able to do away with the dictatorship of the proletariat and the raised fist without causing significant disturbances in the party. And the worst of all is that, eight years after 1968, the French Communist Party is changing not under pressure from the revolutionary movement but from resurrected Social-Democrats. Whereas in 1968-69 the left seemed to have very little hope of coming to power in the near future, today this is a prospect that everyone has to take into account.

The change in the attitude of a number of revolutionary groups is to be explained by this change in the political situation. «Triumphalism»—the expression later used by the Ligue Communiste to characterize its then policy—has given place to a more or less circumspect tail-ending of the Union of the Left. Their leftism is hardly a good cover for their opportunism anymore. And their election-time unitary speeches are simply justifications of their search for vague candidates «representing the struggles» which enables them not to have to openly oppose a Union of the Left they are currently coat-tailing—even if they are doing so in a «critical» way. At the same time, they express the uneasiness of those groups of people who fear that they will count for nothing in the future compared to the Union of the Left which appears credible to ever greater masses of workers.

This approach is characteristically petty-bourgeois. The attitudes of these groups change according to the pressure of events and not because of the needs of the period. They are falling into unprincipled unitarianism exactly at a time when it has become vital to clearly uphold class policies. (Before that, they were busy theorizing their sectarianism in a period when unity of the revolutionary movement should have been the preoccupation of all.)

The problem today is of course not to stand for a policy of «splendid isolation.» Lutte Ouvrière have always considered them-

selves as an integrant part of the revolutionary movement, as a fraction of a revolutionary party that remains to be built. We have always tried to act as often as possible in common with the other tendencies of the revolutionary movement. But what appears to us to be the essential task of revolutionaries today is to prepare the working class for the trials awaiting it tomorrow—whether the right stays in power or whether it lets the left in. (For the left itself to be replaced by the right afterwards.) Preparing the working class for these trials implies an uncompromising criticism of the politics of the Union of the Left.

It would be criminal for revolutionaries to be satisfied with supporting the politics of the Union of the Left, even if they add a few reservations about its lack of radicalism. Those who do so assume that the left's coming to power could open the prospect of a revolutionary mobilization of the masses. But it could also bring about a reactionary venture. And the way of seeing to it that the

working class does not have to experience this, the way of preparing workers to provide a socialist solution to the present crisis is certainly not to hide one's opinions about the class interests defended by the Union of the Left and about the reasons that might prompt the bourgeoisie to let the left assume power for some time. No one ought to keep silent on the bloody traps which such a solution can lead into if workers are not ready to take their fate into their hands when the time comes.

The electoral successes of both the Socialist Party and the Union of the Left do not deprive revolutionary groups of their prospects. Their prospect now is to prepare the workers politically for the struggles to come, to prepare them to take the future of society into their own hands. But to be able to perform this task, revolutionaries will have to hold their flag high and not shamelessly offer their hand to the laggards of reformism with the false hope of building a vanguard with them.