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ASSESSMENT OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON LATIN AMERICA
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ASSESSMENT OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON LATIN AMERICA

By Joseph Hansen

The draft resolution on Latin America submitted by the United Secretariat for the consideration of the delegates at the next world congress of the Fourth International falls broadly into two parts. About one half of the document consists of a summary of the economic, social, and political conditions in Latin America that point to the perspective of socialist revolution. The second half or so proposes a general tactic applicable on a continental scale to assure success in the struggle for this perspective; namely, the technical preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period. Included in the second part, in passing, are polemics in support of the proposed continentwide tactic.

Nothing essentially new is advanced in the economic summary. The economic tendencies "remain pretty much as in the past." Under capitalism only stagnation and further decline lie ahead, with the imperialist grip becoming ever tighter and costlier.

Similarly in the role of the social classes, the processes of "the past fifteen years" have seen a decline in the weight of the landlords, while the increased weight of the urban ruling strata has been offset by the crippling operations of U.S. imperialism. The national bourgeoisie is incapable of offering any historical perspective.

As for the "new petty-bourgeois strata" that have appeared in the "last fifteen to twenty years," these constitute the strongest ideological base for imperialism, although they are subject to being swept into the vortex of revolution.

The peasantry is declining in relative size but still remains the majority, has the least perspective, and is charged with discontent and anger. The peasants display a persistent inclination to engage in struggle and revolt; have learned revolutionary lessons; and have ties with the revolutionary students in the cities.

The working class is not a relatively privileged layer. The workers do not view themselves as being privileged, and "have not ceased in reality to be an explosive force, a motor force of the revolution." They, like the peasants, have ties with the revolutionary students. They have engaged in powerful strikes "in defiance of the military dictatorships" and there are "significant symptoms of a proletarian resurgence at the present time."

The plebian masses in the cities, who have immigrated from the rural areas, represent another "explosive potential" which has already partially expressed itself several times in "the last ten years."

The revolutionary student movement has turned out to be so powerful that it has already shaken several Latin-American countries. Despite its limitations, the student movement is capable of "stimulating or deepening revolutionary crises."

In the political arena, the "democratic" regimes have ended in bankruptcy. The relative political stability of countries like Uruguay and Mexico is gone. Military regimes are on the rise; but they, too, are in continual crisis.

Thus Latin America is characterized by "structural instability" on a continental scale, by "more precisely a pre-revolutionary situation which is taking the form of both a more or less rapid ripening of profound social and political explosions...the outbreak of real revolutionary crises...and the emergence of a state of civil war in certain countries..."

Hence the general conclusion to be drawn, in the light of the international context and the continued existence of Cuba, is that the perspective is one of "mounting social and political tensions tending toward the outbreak of revolutionary situations."

The document emphasizes that there is no way out economically for the ruling classes and imperialism in Latin America; "the situation is hopeless for any economic solution, with all the inevitable implications this entails in the political field."

This means internecine struggles within the ruling class as the difficulties mount while the margin for maneuver left open to American imperialism constantly shrinks.

From this it must be concluded that not only in a broad historical sense, "but in a more direct and immediate one," Latin America has entered a period of "revolutionary explosions and conflicts."

Allowing for a possible degree of exaggeration as, for example, in the estimate of the general political level of the peasantry on a continental scale ("the peasants...have assimilated the lesson of the Cuban revolution"), the general con-

clusions outlined in the resolution are shared by probably all of the revolutionary tendencies and even by the more objective specialists in the imperialist camp. From the viewpoint of the Trotskyist movement there is every reason for the greatest optimism about the perspectives in Latin America.

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But it is precisely here that a disappointing note is struck. The document indicates considerable reservations as to the possibility of a major victory anywhere in Latin America in the near future. These reservations are not developed. They are merely indicated in arguing for the general tactic of technical preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period.

Thus the following assertion appears in point 16:

"The exceptional variant of an explosive crisis involving the breaking up or paralysis of the state apparatus and a mass mobilization so impetuous that it could prevent or neutralize recourse to repression as a decisive measure, cannot be categorically excluded, but a strategy on a continental scale cannot be based on exceptional phenomena, and in such a case imperialism would very likely intervene militarily (as happened already in the case of Santo Domingo)."

In the context of the analysis of the general economic, social and political situation, this paragraph is hard to explain. It has been specified that on a continental scale "a prerevolutionary situation" is shaping up, with the ripening of "profound social and political explosions" and the "outbreak of real revolutionary crises." Nevertheless, we are told that a crisis explosive enough to paralyze a state apparatus or a mass mobilization of truly impetuous character, while it cannot be excluded, is an "exceptional variant."

If the variant is actually exceptional, there must be definite reasons for it. Either the economic situation is not hopeless for the Latin-American ruling class, or they are not as decrepit as indicated, or the masses are not as revolutionary-minded as painted, or the candidates for revolutionary leadership are not likely to measure up to the political challenge involved.

The alternative would seem to be that either the general analysis is defective or the resolution takes a pessimistic view of the possibilities of constructing a revolutionary leadership.

The resolution does not go into this. With its reference to Santo Domingo, the paragraph ends on a note reminiscent of

the days before the Cuban revolution when even some revolutionists were of the opinion that if a revolution happened to break out and win power in one of the smaller countries of Latin America it would quickly be crushed by U.S. imperialism. The revolutionary experience in Santo Domingo, where an urban explosion precipitated the biggest crisis which U.S. imperialism has had to face up to now concurrent with the Vietnam war, would seem to deserve better appreciation in a resolution summing up the major developments in Latin America for the past decade and projecting possibilities for the future.

It should be mentioned in passing that it is difficult to follow the logic of saying that U.S. imperialism will "likely intervene militarily" in the event of a major explosive crisis as in the case of Santo Domingo while saying nothing about the continual intervention of the CIA and Pentagon in the conflicts with rural guerrilla forces. The fact that the military challenge offered by the guerrillas has been successfully met by U.S. imperialism and its agents in the past nine years by a relatively modest outlay in arms, advisers, and participants (and minimum overhead political cost) as compared with the outlay and political cost of a military invasion on the scale of the Santo Domingo operation (or the Bay of Pigs) can hardly be considered a reason for ignoring it, unless the view is held that intervention by U.S. imperialism at this level is, because of the small forces involved, really unimportant in the continental strategy of technical preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period.

The same depreciation of what is possible practically in Latin America would also appear to be involved in the argument in point 15 in which the resolution warns revolutionists to be on guard "against simplistic schemas," but also warns that on the other hand "no concession whatever must be made to ideas according to which the armed confrontation, conceived as the culmination of a progressive rise and broadening of the mass movement, can in principle be reduced to a minimum."

The warning seems to be not to count on any progressive rise and broadening of the mass movement that would culminate with such force as to paralyze and shatter the central power.

The underlying doubts about what is really possible in Latin America emerge still more clearly in point 16 where the resolution refers to the great mass mobilizations of 1968 in such urban centers as Mexico City. Directed at the false theorizing of those who doubt the capacities of the working class and the urban masses to play a dynamic revolutionary role, the

argument is qualified as follows:

"Nonetheless, revolutionary Marxists cannot conclude from this that the 'classical' variant calling for a progressive rise and broadening of the mass movement and its structuring and reenforcement through traditional organizational forms before it reaches the armed struggle has been revalidated. In the international context, after all the experiences of the last decade and in face of an increasingly brutal repression by the native ruling classes and imperialism, such a variant is not the most probable."

This affirmation stands in contradiction to the principal conclusion of the first part of the main resolution, "The New Rise of the World Revolution," drafted for the forthcoming world congress. That document states: "This new revolutionary rise means that essentially proletarian forces and vanguard political currents carrying on the traditions of revolutionary Marxism and workers democracy will be in the thick of the fight, that their methods of intervening, of action, and organization will draw much closer to the classical norm of proletarian revolutions."

Quite clearly, on this point the draft resolution on the world situation is at variance with the draft resolution on Latin America. In deciding which of these opposing positions to adopt, it is to be hoped that the delegates will decide that the perspectives in Latin America are not qualitatively different from those in the world as a whole. The conclusion of the main resolution follows logically from the general analysis of the world situation -- the revolutionary pattern is giving evidence of drawing closer to the "classical norm." What is out of line is the conclusion of the document on Latin America that "such a variant is not the most probable" in that part of the world.

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Naturally, arguments that may be advanced in favor of the latter view should be heard and weighed with the greatest attention; and, if they turn out to be persuasive, then the main resolution should be altered accordingly.

In the draft resolution on Latin America only one argument is advanced on this question. It is limited to happenings in Latin America and does not refer to the conclusions drawn in the main resolution. However, the argument could be advanced with regard to situations in a number of other areas, including the countries in the imperialist sector. Here is the argument: "In reality, the adversary is in nowise ready to allow a mass revolutionary movement to organize more or less legally or normally, not only because in

the given economic and social conditions a general mobilization even for economic goals would threaten disastrous consequences for the system, but also and above all because the men in power no longer underestimate the dynamics of mass movements, even when they start off with limited objectives."

In essence the argument is not new. Not since the first appearances of the proletariat as an independent political force has the adversary taken a permissive attitude toward revolutionary formations, including small ones. The Fourth International has had a rich experience in this. Underestimation by the adversary of the potential of revolutionary groups or mass mobilizations is truly an "exceptional variant." Our movement has always proceeded on the assumption that the adversary sees his class interests clearly and appreciates the dangers besetting them perhaps better than anyone else, even though at a certain point he may be struck by paralysis of the will and may close his eyes to what is happening. The lesson drawn by the Bolsheviks on this, and repeated by Trotsky, is that revolutionists in face of the most savage repression have no choice but to continue their patient political and organizational work -- in the underground or in exile.

* * *

The proposals on strategy and tactics in the draft resolution should be considered in relation to the contradiction between the appreciation of the truly enormous explosiveness of the situation and the doubts as to the real possibilities for a successful revolution in Latin America along the lines of the Russian revolution in 1917.

"The problem now posed in Latin America," it is stated in point 14, "is not primarily that of determining which are the driving forces of the revolution, a problem which for revolutionary Marxists has been resolved at the theoretical level." The driving forces consist of the working class, backed by a peasant revolt, and aided by its allies among the petty bourgeoisie and the student youth. Nor is the primary problem one of the size of the forces. "Gigantic forces composed of millions of men and women in fact exist and can be mobilized in revolutionary struggle now or in the next stage." We reach the nub of the question. The "real problem" is to work out a strategy that can succeed, bearing in mind the "crying contradiction between the objective potential and the subjective will to struggle of broad strata on the one hand and on the other by the persistent weakness of the organized vanguard..."

This is a restatement, in terms of the Latin-American situation today of the

key question posed on a broader scale thirty years ago in the Transitional Program: "The strategic task of the next period -- a pre-revolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization -- consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation; the inexperience of the younger generation)."

How is this crying contradiction to be resolved? A fruitful approach for a resolution on Latin America that seeks to make an advance in this respect might be to examine concretely the reasons for "the persistent weakness of the organized vanguard." This would mean considering the experiences in each country -- what actually happened, for instance, in the various guerrilla struggles, what policies were followed, what actions were undertaken, and how these were related (or not related) to the specific economic, social, and political situations in which they occurred and which they sought to affect. The examination should not be limited to the record of the anti-Trotskyist tendencies active in these struggles. The course followed by the Trotskyist groups or parties in each of these countries should likewise be presented and evaluated, particularly as to how they contributed to (or hampered) carrying out the task of building a revolutionary Marxist combat party. As an example of what is required, the excellent beginning made by Hugo Blanco in evaluating the experiences of his group can be cited.

The lessons should be considered in accordance with the method used by Trotsky in the Transitional Program so as to derive slogans and organizational forms and political lines of attack against the adversary geared to the concrete situation in each country in a way to facilitate bringing the immense power of the masses in the urban centers to bear in the revolutionary process. The Fourth International as a whole could profitably participate in this as it did in working out the original Transitional Program and its first applications.

Such an approach, which would be in accordance with the "classical" methodological procedure of our movement, would lower the risk of reaching views that conflict with the broad conclusions of the general analysis of the Latin-American situation and the world situation.

* * *

Instead of drawing a balance sheet in this way, the draft resolution simply proposes a continental tactic or strategy of technical preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged

period.

The proposal is advanced almost casually. We hardly notice it until, in point 15 where armed struggle is posed as the fundamental perspective in Latin America, we read: "This is why the technical preparation cannot be conceived merely as one of the aspects of the revolutionary work, but as the fundamental aspect on a continental scale, and one of the fundamental aspects in countries where the minimum conditions have not yet been met." Looking back to see how the entire Trotskyist movement in Latin America became committed to the "technical preparation" of armed struggle as the "fundamental aspect" of revolutionary activities for years to come, even in countries where the conditions are not yet ripe, we notice that it occurred in what looked like an attack against any universal formula.

The second paragraph of point 15 begins with the correct observation that there is "no universally valid formula which can be applied to surmount difficulties and contradictions which have real objective roots..." It is mentioned that "certain guerrilla experiments" failed, as in Peru, but the failures, it is asserted, "came about, in large measure, more from errors in assessing the situation, the trends, and the relationship of forces among the masses than from errors in conception." In short, the conception was correct and remains correct. It is universally valid. By the time we reach point 18, it is taken as so firmly based that it can be mentioned almost parenthetically: "Under the perspective of a prolonged civil war with rural guerrilla warfare as its principal axis..." With the correctness of the conception assumed to have been established, the document concerns itself with aspects of applying it concretely, with possible variations, and so on.

The possibility that there might be a connection between the errors that led to failures in "certain guerrilla experiments," errors which were of a political nature as the sentence indicates, and the conception itself is not even mentioned. But if the possibility so much as existed that the errors in practice might be related to an error in theory then the conception and its application should have been subjected to rigorous analysis before accepting it.

Not even the origin of the conception is indicated. So far as the resolution is concerned, it could be taken to have originated from within the Trotskyist movement. This is not so, of course. Isn't it all the more incumbent on those responsible for drafting a resolution that proposes a universal formula of this kind to indicate its origin and to evaluate its possibilities and its limitations, partic-

ularly as they have been disclosed by life? The failure of the draft resolution to trace the origin and ups and downs of the proposed tactic -- both its theory and its practice -- is a serious flaw. The oversight appears strange in view of the scope of the resolution which seeks to assess the major trends in the Latin-American situation for the past ten to twenty years. And it appears all the stranger in view of the fact that the resolution proposes that this tactic should constitute the major orientation of the Trotskyist movement in all of Latin America for a long time to come...in fact, up to the final victory which it is hoped it will assure.

* * *

The truth of it is that the resolution is a rather faithful reflection of the publicly expressed views of the Cuban leadership on this question. It goes so far in conforming with their position as to postulate that guerrilla war can stimulate a revolutionary dynamic "even if at the start the attempt may seem to have come from abroad or to be unilateral (which was the case with Che's Bolivian guerrilla movement)." Such a statement should be highly qualified, otherwise it can feed the propaganda that guerrillas cause revolutionary situations, not to mention its use as justification for adventures doomed to certain defeat.

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

* * *

The following considerations may prove useful as a point of departure for probing this question:

(1) Guerrilla war in Latin America was not the invention of the Cubans. It has existed in the continent as a living tradition with a venerable history.

(2) One of the most unexpected features of the Cuban revolution was that this tactic could prove sufficient to win. Our conclusion at the time was that this testified much more to the weakness of imperialism and the national bourgeois structure than to the discovery of something superior to a Leninist combat party.

(3) More than a mere guerrilla band was involved in the Cuban struggle. The July 26 Movement had an extensive organization. Its petty-bourgeois program enabled it to secure financial assistance in a big way from Cuban bourgeois circles. It was also able to operate quite freely

in the United States where it was actively supported by a large Cuban colony.

(4) The July 26 Movement proceeded to a considerable extent like a party based on a single issue -- armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship. Its appeal cut across class lines.

(5) The key leaders of this movement were of such high caliber that when the revolution reached the crossing point to socialism, they plunged ahead, splitting their own movement, and transcending the program they began with.

(6) In transcending their original program and declaring for socialism, they also transcended the tactic through which they had won. Just as every succeeding revolution in Latin America must take as its model socialist Cuba instead of the July 26 Movement as it was first formed, so in tactics it is compelled, if success is to be assured, to make an advance, developing means capable of achieving the mass mobilizations required to win a socialist revolution. This means putting politics in command. Technique, tactics, even armed struggle, must be subordinated to political consciousness, to political direction, to a clear political program. The key problem, consequently, is to build a combat party capable of seeing this and doing it.

(7) The Cuban leaders, although the logic of their own revolution calls for it, have not proceeded along this line up to now. The reasons for this are plain. Dependent on aid from the Soviet Union, aid which was absolutely essential to the survival of the Cuban revolution, they were confronted with the problem of the Kremlin's policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism and in particular its rabid opposition to Trotskyism. The course followed by the Cubans shows that they decided that if errors were to be made, they should be made on the side of caution so as not to jeopardize the flow of material aid. This explains why the Cuban Stalinists were not reproved for their gross attacks on Trotskyism and why Castro himself could make the kind of attack he did at the Tricontinental Conference in January, 1966. It explains, too, why the Cubans took such an ambiguous attitude during the May-June, 1968 events in France and why to this day they refrain from publicizing the role of the Trotskyists in the French upsurge. And it explains why Castro -- with very important reservations, it is true -- came out on the side of the invaders of Czechoslovakia. In short, the Cubans have not yet settled accounts with Stalinism. Until they have done so, it is misleading to say without qualification, as the resolution does in point 11: "This leadership by its attitudes, its actions and generalizations has contributed in a decisive way to the ma-

turing of a new vanguard."

(8) There is an immense anomaly in this failure to settle accounts with Stalinism, inasmuch as the Castro team won their victory in Cuba in face of the default of the Blas Rocas and their active opposition. One of the main lessons of the Cuban revolution is that it is now possible to outflank the Stalinists from the left.

(9) Instead of fostering an extension of this course elsewhere in Latin America, the Castro team sought to utilize the existing Communist parties. On the surface, it appeared feasible to repeat the political formula of the Cuban revolution -- but with a different combination of political tendencies from those assembled in the July 26 Movement in the struggle against the Batista dictatorship. The formula was to suppress the political differences with the Stalinists and form a combination on the single issue of armed struggle against the indigenous dictatorships and their imperialist backers. The basic idea was once again to make politics secondary to technique, to subordinate political strategy to the tactic of rural guerrilla war.

The results were hardly brilliant. No sector of the opposing camp was taken in by the camouflage. The lack of political clarity could only serve to sow confusion in the ranks of the revolutionists. Still worse, greater forces were now required to win; i.e., the masses in the urban centers. But the tactic itself was not designed to raise their political understanding, to organize and mobilize them. It banked on winning by pitting very small contingents in skirmishes remote from the cities. Moreover, the political confusion in the camp of the revolutionists involved a decisive issue in the new stage of the Latin-American revolution -- the role of Stalinism. Lack of clarity on this led to some very costly defeats.

The Cubans have made progress in overcoming this limitation but only through very painful experiences. It is the beginning of political wisdom to insist that revolutions in Latin America, or elsewhere in the world where similar conditions exist, cannot be won along a "peaceful" or "democratic" road, or under the leadership of an alleged progressive sector of the national bourgeoisie. The issue, once considered in the radical movement to be a hallmark of "Trotskyism," proved to be of key importance in bringing the Cubans to understand that Stalinism and organizations dominated by Stalinists are not reliable instruments of revolution. But by confining the dispute with the Stalinists almost exclusively to the issue of armed struggle, and limiting it even further to the question of rural guerrilla war, the Cubans gave precious political

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

The Cubans likewise conceded the field of theory to the Stalinists under the hardly laudable guise of ridiculing the "theorists" as against men of action, who don't need to learn about revolution in books inasmuch as they are practicing it with guns.

The Cubans even made the mistake of posing the issue in terms of a conflict between the men in the mountains and the bureaucrats in the city over who should have final command. Arguments were aduced concerning the technical difficulties of urban guerrilla war, the helplessness of the masses, the corrupting influence of the city, the difficulties and dangers of maintaining liaison, to explain why leadership should be in the hands of the men in the rural areas. The political issue underlying this obscure debate was very simple: should the struggle be led by men committed to a revolutionary struggle for socialism or by men committed to Moscow's treacherous foreign policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism? This was the key question no matter where the leadership was located under the exigencies of the struggle. But this issue, which should have been brought to the fore in order to clarify the dispute and to fight for a majority on the basis of it, was left in obscurity by the Cubans. The Stalinists took full advantage of the ineptness of the Cubans, or their hesitation at speaking out because of possible economic pressure from Moscow, to further obscure and bury the question.

The result of these mistakes was that even in such a favorable situation as the one in Venezuela, with the prestige of the Cuban revolution behind them, and the not immaterial advantages of state power, the Cubans ended up in their factional struggle with the Stalinists in a small minority.

(10) Immediately after the Cuban victory, the Trotskyist movement held that one of the most important tasks facing the revolution there was construction of a revolutionary Marxist party. This has

been borne out in the most decisive way by events and ought to be pointed out in the draft resolution on Latin America.

(11) The key task facing the vanguard in Latin America, as elsewhere, still remains the construction of a revolutionary Marxist party. This takes priority over all questions of tactics and strategy in the sense that these must be directed to achieving this end as the decisive link in the revolutionary process. It is not enough to say, as the resolution does in point 19, that "The existence and functioning of a revolutionary party, far from being an outworn schema of outmoded Marxists, corresponds to the concrete and ineluctable needs of the development of the armed struggle itself..."

The party is not a means to the armed struggle, as this sentence seems to say; the armed struggle is a means to bring the proletariat to power under the leadership of the party. Construction of the party must be viewed and presented as the central task, the main orientation, the almost exclusive preoccupation of the vanguard. And the explosiveness of the situation in Latin America does not lessen the need; it intensifies it.

* * *

In light of this, it is disorienting to present the party as an adjunct to the development of armed struggle. But this is what the draft resolution appears to do in the following aspects:

(1) In recruiting a minimum number of militants. Point 15 states, "It must not be forgotten that the...application of such a strategy requires first assembling a minimum of organized and politically homogeneous forces."

(2) In helping to solve the problem of liaison between the guerrillas and the masses. Point 18 suggests that the solution lies through special tactical applications of guerrilla war and through the development of immediate and transitional demands, the latter helping to mobilize and raise the political consciousness of the masses as well as create growing tensions that "also make it more difficult for the governments to concentrate their repressive forces exclusively in the zones of armed struggle." Either these political tasks are performed by the party, or the guerrillas themselves do it. In either case, these party tasks are conceived in the light of how they affect the achievement of guerrilla war and not vice versa.

(3) In helping to direct groups, temporarily unoccupied with revolutionary work, into fruitful fields. As point 18 suggests, a transitional program can be utilized to help "certain revolutionary or-

ganizations" which, while "having been formed for revolutionary combat and armed struggle...have been unable for conjunctural reasons to put their ideas into practice."

(4) In providing revolutionists with something to do in countries "where the armed struggle is not on the agenda at present." As indicated in point 19, they should "take advantage of the breathing space" to struggle "for the most favorable variant," seeking to build at least a solid nucleus on a national scale if a genuine, completely structured party with large mass influence is not already in existence (which the resolution considers to be "a very unrealistic perspective in almost all of the Latin-American countries").

In the four points above, the formulations in the resolution, taken in conjunction with the proposed tactical orientation, could give the impression that our movement does not conceive the party as the key link in mobilizing the masses for the conquest of power but simply as a useful instrument in the tactic of engaging in rural guerrilla war and as a constructive way to fill in time while waiting for an opportune moment to plunge into the really revolutionary work of armed struggle. If this impression is correct, then the draft resolution on Latin America would appear to be in conflict with the projected main resolution of the coming world congress which ends with the following reaffirmation of the basic position of our movement:

"The Fourth International has shown that even with still very weak forces important results can be attained in building an International. By doggedly continuing to build their own parties and their own International, revolutionary Marxists feel that at the same time they are making the most effective contribution to creating the mass revolutionary Marxist International which is indispensable in bringing the enormous revolutionary potential that has now appeared to realization as victories."

* * *

Section V of the draft resolution on Latin America, "Situation of the Revolutionary Workers Movement and the General Lines of Orientation," seeks to indicate the attitude to be taken toward other currents in the broad revolutionary movement on the basis of the general tactical formula of technical preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period. The final paragraph indicates that it is "the job of the various national revolutionary Marxist organizations to translate this general orientation into concrete formulas and guidelines." However, having laid down a gen-

eral tactical prescription for the entire continent, the draft resolution in reality has in advance fixed the tactics to be followed by all national sections, leaving up to them only the job of implementing the tactical formula on the local scene.

The tendency to lay down a blanket tactical prescription is so marked that the draft resolution even specifies in point 21 that "integration" into the "historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban revolution and the OLAS [and not by the Fourth International?] involves, regardless of the forms, working as an integral part of the OLAS."

As against this, the main resolution for the world congress states (in section VII): "The Cuban leadership's left turn between the Tricontinental Congress [conference] and the OLAS Conference created the possibility for a united front of all tendencies in the Latin-American revolutionary movement which agree with the general line of OLAS. The revolutionary Marxist forces have been able to take advantage of this possibility to broaden their field of action in countries like Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, and Guatemala."

The main resolution speaks of the "possibility" for a "united front," of the "possibility" for revolutionary Marxists to "broaden their field of action." The draft resolution on Latin America specifies: "working as an integral part of the OLAS." The main resolution leaves open the tactical question; the subsidiary resolution closes the question.

The impression given by this is that just as the main orientation advanced in the draft resolution on Latin America appears to be an adaptation to the orientation of the Cubans at their present level of development, so the prescription of working as an "integral part" of the OLAS appears to be an adaptation to the organizational level they have reached.

To make an organizational adaptation of this kind could have very serious consequences for the Latin-American sections of the Trotskyist movement, whose problem is precisely the one indicated in the main resolution -- to doggedly continue "to build their own parties and their own International." In what way becoming an "integral part" of the OLAS would help in building "their own parties and their own International" is hard to say. All the more so in view of the fact that the draft resolution itself notes in point 20 that the Castroist tendency "has not developed any important degree of organization and in fact the OLAS likewise has not succeeded either in finding a solution to the problem of crystallizing and consolidating organized new vanguards."

In the absence of a series of political and organizational prerequisites, to make the kind of sweeping organizational commitment proposed by the draft resolution is unsound. It would be wiser, one would think, to leave the field of relations with OLAS open, simply indicating as the main resolution does, the possibility of united fronts and a wider field of common action, a position that accords with the reality.

* * *

The inversion in the document by which tactics and technique are placed above political strategy leads to a deficiency in an area where the draft resolution could possibly have offered some very helpful suggestions for the coming period. In the two final paragraphs of section V, for instance, after stating that elaboration of the continental strategy "outlined elsewhere in this document" must be done in correspondence with "the concrete needs and potential of each country or group of countries at a given stage," the document states that this "also implies the need for a political program" of a transitional nature. The document does not deal with this need in a concrete way at all. The next sentence states that it is up to "the various national revolutionary Marxist organizations to translate this general orientation into concrete formulas and guidelines." It is true that there is some ambiguity here as to whether this refers to the continental strategy of preparing for and engaging in rural guerrilla war, to the problem of a transitional political program, or to a combination of the two. In point 18, however, this is made clear: "The determination of the themes of a transitional program for each given stage is clearly the task of revolutionists in the various countries."

The draft resolution on Latin America thus contributes exactly nothing, not even a suggestion, on the themes of a transitional political program for the immensely explosive situation facing our movement there.

Of course, it is the task of revolutionists in the various countries to work out the themes of a transitional program for each stage. But it is still more their task to work out the tactics for each stage. Since tactics are dealt with in the draft resolution, are in fact its main preoccupation, the question arises as to why it is silent as to possible transitional themes for the coming period. It would have been completely in the tradition and spirit of the Transitional Program adopted by the Fourth International in 1938 to have considered the question.

The answer appears to lie in the

nature of the concept at the heart of the draft resolution. Once it has been decided that "the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare, the term having primarily a geographical-military meaning," the question of transitional steps is narrowed to the extreme, becoming reduced even in the area of armed struggle. Even worse, the central concept of the Transitional Program drafted by Trotsky on the utilization of transitional slogans and transitional measures (including the field of armed struggle) to mobilize the masses and construct a combat party is hard to fit in with this "principal axis" if it can be fitted in at all.

The reasons for this are not difficult to discern. Trotsky's Transitional Program conceives the socialist revolution as carried forward by mass mobilizations, in the process of which a competent revolutionary leadership, organized in a combat party, is forged. The concept of rural guerrilla war as the principal axis for a prolonged period projects a small, heroic elite carrying the battle in the absence of the masses and in areas remote from the cities. Thus if the concept of rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period is adopted as the principal axis of revolutionary work, then the problem of mobilizing the urban masses becomes somewhat irrelevant, and along with it most of the Transitional Program.

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This probably explains, too, why the resolution pays so little attention to the developments among the youth in the urban centers in 1968, particularly the explosion that occurred in a capital as important as Mexico City. The meaning of the events there deserves the most careful analysis, especially with regard to their significance for transitional themes immediately applicable in Mexico but also worth studying for their possible bearing on similar or potentially similar struggles elsewhere in Latin America.

The May-June events in France clearly influenced the student masses and their allies in Mexico City, as the Mexican comrades have pointed out in their illuminating articles. Something of much deeper significance was also visible.

We have regarded the Cuban leaders as the first contingent of a new generation of revolutionists free from the crippling influence of the Stalinist movement. This was the main thing we hailed in the Cubans when they toppled the capitalist structure in Cuba. Arriving at revolutionary conclusions on the basis of their own thinking and their own experience, they were the harbingers of a great new development.

We are now witnessing a new phase of

this process on a world scale. It became unmistakable several years ago with the appearance in the United States of the widespread and militant opposition among the youth to the war in Vietnam and the response this received internationally among the youth. That the youth themselves have tended to link this with the Cuban revolution and its leaders has been shown by many of the slogans they have advanced and the high regard in which they hold Fidel and especially Che.

The May-June events in France were clinching proof of the importance of this development and its broad scope. After this came further confirmation from Mexico City. In fact today there are few areas in the capitalist world that are unable to provide their share of evidence.

There is absolutely no escaping the conclusion that for the Fourth International the crucial question it faces is its capacity to sink roots politically and organizationally in this sector. This holds on an international scale, including Latin America, perhaps Latin America above all if the draft resolution is correct in its estimate that a prerevolutionary situation exists there on a continental scale.

So far as the strategy of our movement is concerned, the main characteristics of this thrust of the youth in a revolutionary direction are (1) its occurrence in urban centers, (2) its involvement of considerable masses, (3) its tendency to try to link up with the workers or other sectors of the masses and to draw them into action.

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

If anything, it diverts attention from the key problem now facing the Fourth International. For in place of making a concrete contribution on such political questions as how to draw the masses of revolutionary-minded urban youth closer to the Trotskyist movement and how through them to come closer to the masses of urban workers, the draft resolution advances instead the idea of preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period "primarily in the geographical-military meaning" of the term.

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Another point to consider is whether the central concept in the draft resolution on Latin America, namely, giving a "geographical-military" orientation priority over political strategy, can be log-

ically confined to just one continent.

The Cubans have hardly viewed it that way, and certainly the tendencies immediately under their influence do not view it that way. They incline rather strongly to view it as an internationally valid orientation, except -- perhaps -- in the imperialist sector, about which they have little to say; and the sector of the degenerated or deformed workers states about which they have nothing at all to say so far as the struggle for a political revolution is concerned. It would be very difficult to find convincing arguments to persuade these currents that in the colonial world as a whole the tactic of preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period is valid only for Latin America.

In fact logic speaks for an opposite conclusion. If the draft resolution on Latin America were to be passed in its present form by the coming world congress, our movement would be hard put to explain why the orientation decided on as good for Latin America was considered to be bad for the rest of the colonial and semicolonial world. It would certainly be contended that such a position is inconsistent and that such a sharp geographical demarcation cannot reasonably be made.

* * *

Still another consideration must be weighed. Under the title of "An Insufficient Document," Comrade Livio Maitan submitted for the international pre-congress discussion a letter which he wrote to the members of the United Secretariat on May 15, 1968, offering some criticisms of the first draft of the main resolution. He raised an important question in his letter which may have a bearing on the reason why the draft resolution on Latin America projects the orientation it does. Comrade Maitan points to the theoretical achievements and the theoretical strength of the Trotskyist movement. Then he turns to its organizational weakness and the problem of overcoming it:

"But it is only by successes or revolutionary struggles at the head of a mass movement in one or several countries that we will be able to surmount our difficulties and present contradictions. What is expected from us from now on is that we demonstrate in practice the historical value of our movement and we will be judged essentially on this basis. This can appear, at bottom, to be an elementary truth, but it is a question of inspiring our whole activity with this recognition. It is a question more precisely of determining in what countries we have the best chance of a breakthrough and subordinating everything to the elementary necessity for a success in these countries, and even, if necessary, in a single country. The rest

will come later.

"There are, in fact, several countries where we at present have possibilities for an important breakthrough (youth movement in France, antiwar movement and youth movement in the United States, South Africa with a certain time) and we must unquestionably make an effort in the direction of India, but we must place everything above all on a sector of Latin America and you know very well which one. We must exploit the preparatory period of the congress to convince the entire movement to operate in practice, every day, with this perspective. Permit me to express myself a little paradoxically: it is necessary to understand and to explain that at the present stage the International will be built around Bolivia."

Comrade Maitan wrote this a few days after the battle of the barricades in Paris but before the mass mobilization in France had assumed such proportions as to create a revolutionary situation in which the Trotskyist youth succeeded in developing their initial openings into positions of key importance. That is why he says nothing about the meaning of the successes of the Trotskyist movement in France nor what this as well as the May-June events signified for the future of the Fourth International and the world revolution as a whole. "Parts" of his letter, he admits in his August 20 postscript, were "outmoded by events." Other parts, it should be added were outmoded by changes in the first draft of the main resolution. Yet Comrade Maitan still thought that certain of his ideas remained valid. Leaving aside the points which he believes were not fully taken into consideration in reworking the main resolution and some other more or less secondary items, it would seem that the chief point on which his views remained unchanged by the events in France (and Mexico City) was the view expressed in the two paragraphs quoted above. Moreover, he considered this to be so important that he submitted his letter as part of the preparatory discussion for the coming world congress.

Comrade Maitan appears to believe that the fate of the Fourth International now hinges on a "breakthrough"; that if this breakthrough can be obtained, the "rest will come later"; that it is possible that such a breakthrough can be achieved in several places, the most promising at the moment being Bolivia. Hence, he comes to a far-reaching conclusion: We "must place everything above all on a sector of Latin America..." The preparatory period of the congress must be utilized to convince "the entire movement to operate in practice, every day, with this perspective." (Emphasis added.)

It would seem undeniable that the orientation proposed in the draft resolu-

tion on Latin America of preparation of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale fits in completely logically with the view advanced by Comrade Maitan above. If we have interpreted correctly what he is saying, he contends that the entire Fourth International must now stake everything on securing and forwarding the material means to sustain rural guerrilla war in a selected country in Latin America. And if this is to be done effectively, the entire Fourth International must subordinate everything else to this task, including possible openings in other countries making different demands and requiring different tactics.

In short, the draft resolution on Latin America appears to have been drawn up on the basis of a quite different concept of the key problem facing the Fourth International and the orientation and tasks required to solve it than the concept expressed in the main resolution with its requisite orientation and tasks for the coming period. How the implicit contradiction between the two resolutions would be resolved in practice if both were adopted without either of them being substantially changed is hard to foresee.

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If we have misinterpreted Comrade Maitan's letter and read into it something which he does not hold, he will, of course, correct us. With this in mind, we venture to say that the essence of his position appears to us to be stated in the following sentence in his letter: "What is expected from us from now on is that we demonstrate in practice the historical value of our movement and we will be judged essentially on this basis." By "demonstrate in practice" he means that the Fourth International must achieve a "breakthrough" in the near future in "one or several countries."

There can be no question of the revolutionary sincerity of Comrade Maitan or his concern for the success of the Fourth International. His efforts to contribute with all his considerable abilities to achieving an organizational breakthrough is wholly in the tradition of our movement. Nevertheless, as we see it, he puts the question of the practical test of the historical validity of the Trotskyist movement in too narrow a framework. If we were to apply this same criterion to the First, Second, or Third International, it would have to be concluded that all of them failed to meet the test of history. Yet this is not the case, as we well know. The function of the International is to represent the long-range interests of the proletariat. The final judgment of the successive internationals will come, after the class struggle is won, when it is estimated what they contributed to overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism

on a global scale. It is the function of the Fourth International to keep its sights fixed on this target and to measure the outcome of all the battles in the light of how they slow down or speed up final victory in the class war.

Looking at the function of the Fourth International in this way, it is a mistake to assume that it has a gun at its head, that it must produce an immediate "breakthrough," that it is under compulsion to comb the world for possibilities of meeting the demand in a hurry.

There is a very real danger under the impulse of such considerations that the movement can become overcommitted in an organizational way at a preselected point; and, by the very investment in this choice, become caught up in false hopes there while becoming partially blind to a very real opening in a completely unexpected area. The exact spots of revolutionary breakthroughs, historic experience has shown, are notoriously difficult to predict.

Several other unfavorable factors come into play when leaders of the International feel under compulsion to produce an immediate organizational success of major proportions. A tendency develops to underestimate the importance of small gains and successes which can quite realistically be achieved. In certain situations these can add up rather rapidly to give political prestige and weight to a section of the movement. Disregarded because they are obviously not large or individually impressive compared to what one feels under compulsion to produce, the section can stagnate and never get beyond the most primitive of beginnings organizationally.

A compulsion of this kind also makes it more difficult to make a timely retreat when it is called for. The stupidities this can lead to are illustrated by the headline in a recent issue of Granma: "Retreat: A Word Eradicated from the Dictionary." The journalist who composed that headline forgot, for some reason, that retreat has not been eradicated from tactics and strategy in either war or politics.

Similarly the movement can become trapped in a commitment much beyond its organizational resources. When the inevitable accounting comes, the result can be demoralization of the cadres, who feel cheated of even the modest successes that might have been achieved had a more realistic course been followed.

This would be one of the grave dangers facing the Fourth International if it were to commit the whole movement to concentrating on the gamble of a breakthrough in a selected country by means of prepara-

tion of and engagement in rural guerrilla war for a prolonged period. The disproportion between the material resources available to the Fourth International and what is required to mount such a venture is very great. The Fourth International has access neither to sources of heavy financial support like those at the disposal of the July 26 Movement nor the means available to a leadership holding state power. The risk of a major defeat for the Fourth International would be correspondingly high; the chances for a breakthrough by means of this tactic correspondingly low. It should be added that if the Fourth International did have such resources it would be well advised to employ them along other lines much more likely to bring an early success in the current world situation.

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In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, we stress the following points:

(1) It is completely correct, and, in fact, highly productive to mobilize the entire international Trotskyist movement around single situations or single issues. Three examples can be cited from recent experience: (a) The international campaign in behalf of Hugo Blanco. (b) The attempt to coordinate antiwar demonstrations on an international scale. (c) The help secured for the French comrades in the May-June events.

What is to be particularly noted in these three instances was the way the campaigns helped the national sections which engaged in them.

(2) The same holds for mobilizing aid for a national section under heavy repression. Financial aid, in particular, must be sought to help sustain the key cadres and keep them functioning. Any number of instances of this could be cited from the history of the Fourth International. It is a perennial problem but also a perennial opportunity to build and reinforce the ties of international soli-

arity that bind the movement together.

(3) A section of the Fourth International may find that at a certain stage of the revolutionary process in its country, it is necessary and productive to engage in guerrilla war, as a specific form of armed struggle. The proviso is that it be conceived as a tactic entailed by political considerations, not as a new-found formula guaranteeing quick or certain success, and that it be within the means available to the section. This holds, it should be added, not only for Latin America but for similar areas elsewhere.

Finally, in view of the differences that have emerged over the relative place of guerrilla war as a tactic, it would be well to examine the question more specifically in relation to the Transitional Program. Our movement has already recognized that in certain countries, under certain circumstances, guerrilla war can play a positive role. However, it has not analyzed the negative consequences of guerrilla war if it is attempted in countries, or under circumstances, where it is out of place. Experience would now seem to testify rather heavily for the conclusion that while the appearance of guerrillas can signify a sharp rise in the class struggle, it can also mark a phase of decline, in which case it must be judged as a sign of despair and desperation, one of the symptoms of defeat.

As a consciously applied tactic, guerrilla war would seem to come under the sections of the Transitional Program dealing with the arming of the proletariat and the linkup between the proletariat and the peasantry.

A critical study of the varied experience with guerrilla war in a whole series of countries would be extremely useful to put this tactic in better perspective, to relate it properly to political strategy, and to counteract the rather widespread tendency to elevate it into a universal formula and even a panacea.