

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

volume x number 18

October 1973

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price 40 cents

The International Internal Discussion Bulletin is the English-language edition of the internal discussion bulletin of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

It is published by the Socialist Workers Party as a fraternal courtesy to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Bulletin Department, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N. Y. 10014

Draft Theses on the Irish Revolution

By Gerry Foley

[The following theses were drafted to serve as the basis for a discussion in the United Secretariat on the perspectives of the work of the Fourth International comrades in Ireland. They were discussed with the comrades of the Revolutionary Marxist Group and a number of changes suggested by them were incorporated into the draft, but a full discussion in the United Secretariat, with the participation of the Irish comrades, has not yet been held. The draft theses are not submitted for a vote at the coming world congress. Their publication is intended to help clarify the differences that have arisen within the Fourth International over analysis and interpretation of developments in the Irish struggle. United Secretariat members Abel, Adair, Hans, Juan, Pedro, Stateman and Therese have indicated support for the general line of the theses.]

* * *

I. Ireland's Uniqueness

1. Ireland is at once a colonial country and a disadvantaged fringe of the British capitalist economy.

(a) An explosive contradiction of imperialist-dominated societies, rural underemployment, has been largely solved in Ireland by emigration.

(b) A substantial measure of industrialization and development of the bases of a modern economy, such as electrification and transportation, has occurred in a distorted way as the declining population became more and more integrated into the British economy and as international capitalism took advantage of the relatively lower costs and favorable legislation in a country where the labor force is on roughly the same educational level as in Britain, and which is close to the important European centers.

(c) Substantial income has come into the country from large emigrant communities established in the prosperous centers of the English-speaking world. These include one half of all persons born in Ireland since 1900.

(d) The weak Irish capitalist class shares in the superprofits of imperialism and identifies its interests with the capitalist classes of the imperialist countries, in particular Britain and the United States.

2. The unevenness of capitalist development is compounded by imperialist domination.

(a) The Irish national bourgeoisie has failed to create an independent national economy.

i. The island remains divided into two states, one of which remains under direct imperialist control, cut off from the economic development of the rest of the country and more tightly integrated in a subordinate role into British industry.

(1) Despite its integration into the British market, the North's industrialization has developed on a different basis from industrialization in Britain.

[a] It was based on imported raw materials with correspondingly higher costs.

[b] Industrialization developed within the context of a colonial caste system, in which the dispossessed descendants of the older Celtic and Celticized population formed the mass of unskilled workers and unemployed, and the descendants of the plantation settlers formed the labor aristocracy. As a result both trade-union and labor political activity has been distorted and weakened and the society remained polarized around national differences.

ii. It has failed to break the grip of imperialism on the economy of the formally independent part of the country, and in the period since 1957 in particular imperialist ownership and control has increased, along with a corresponding subservience on the part of the Irish bourgeoisie. The imprint of neocolonialist dependence is deep in the society of the Twenty-Six counties, where the old Unionist community remains substantially unassimilated, recruitment for the British army is still carried on, the influence of the British mass media is expanding, and the old colonial aristocracy retains considerable landed property. Political domination by British imperialism of the 26 counties, although indirect, remains.

iii. In both Irish states there is a sharp unevenness between the center, the Lagan valley in the North and East Leinster in the South, and a sluggish hinterland.

iv. Irish society as a whole remains split by religious-national divisions that have provided a base for direct imperialist control and the maintenance of an unusual degree of clerical dominance and obscurantism.

v. The combined effects of imperialist domination and the subordination to the British economy have produced demographic distortions, reflected most notably in a higher percentage of the economically dependent age groups.

vi. In order to block the movement for national liberation that won a partial victory in 1919-21, harsh repressive legislation has been put in force in both North and South. These repressive laws are also used to suppress protests and industrial actions that have an especially explosive potential in the precarious Irish economy.

3. The following tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remain to be completed in Ireland:

(a) National unification and independence.

(b) The ending of repression dictated by imperialist interests and maintained in the last analysis by imperialist power.

(c) Elimination of the caste system created and maintained by imperialism.

(d) Secularization of society.

(e) Industrialization of a type that can develop the country and provide employment for an increasing population.

II. Features of the Irish Revolution

1. The new revolutionary rise of the class struggle has begun in Ireland as a fight against imperialism and for national liberation.

(a) The struggle against imperialism has begun as a

fight against the repressive system erected to block national independence; the masses have not, however, been motivated initially by a conscious aspiration for national independence and unity. They are reluctant for several reasons to resume the struggle for national freedom: the prolonged stagnation of the anti-imperialist struggle; the overwhelming power and proximity of the imperialist centers; the meager fruits of formal political independence in the Dublin-ruled area; and the possibility for mitigating the economic problems of the country through emigration to the imperialist countries and secondary development accruing from the country's close association with the imperialist centers. Despite the initial reluctance of the masses and the unevenness of national consciousness, the development of a major political, social, or economic struggle immediately raises the national question as a whole. The development of the struggle in the North has confirmed this once again, upsetting the projections both of the Stalinist reformists and the economist ultralefts, both of whom, basing themselves essentially on the reluctance of the oppressed nationalist community to renew the struggle for national unity and independence, hoped to avoid facing the national question, at least in the first phase of the fight.

2. The national and socialist revolutions in Ireland will be intimately intertwined.

(a) In the present struggle, the spearhead has been the oppressed nationalist community in the North, the group handed over to the most acute repression by the deal between the Irish bourgeoisie and British imperialism that ended the 1919-21 war of independence. Likewise, a major struggle by the working class or any other sector of the exploited masses arising around economic issues in the formally independent part of the country would raise the national question at a very early stage. Because of the weakness and dependence of the Irish economy, the workers and small farmers cannot hope to change their fate without struggling against the dependent position to which the country is condemned politically and economically by the international capitalist system. Furthermore, because of the weakness of the country vis-a-vis imperialism and particularly the weakness of the native bourgeoisie, the only effective way to fight imperialist control is through a deep-going mass mobilization involving the seizure of the key sectors of the economy by the workers and the popular masses.

The most advanced stage of the present struggle, the mass upsurge that followed the massacre of civil-rights marchers in Derry on January 31, 1972, has already marked out the most probable road for the Irish national liberation struggle and socialist revolution. In response to imperialist repression against the section of the Irish people suffering the most severe national oppression, the decisive sections of the Irish working class, whose development has been thwarted in more subtle and opaque ways by imperialism, staged the first general strike in the country since the crucial battle in Dublin in 1913. The working class turned to its natural method of fighting, using its economic power to combat imperialist repression. The same tendency was seen, although in much weaker form, in the protests against the Dublin government's crackdown on the militant nationalists in the fall of 1972.

Given the extent of direct imperialist control of the economy and the weakness of the native bourgeoisie, a mass

struggle against direct and indirect imperialist repression throughout the island will tend, as it gains momentum, to lead in the direction of the workers seizing all the key means of production, transportation, and communication. This is the only way the force can be mustered to combat effectively the overwhelming military, economic, and political power of British imperialism. The task of revolutionary Marxists is to prepare the way for this development, stimulate this dynamic, and impel the masses forward toward consciously reorganizing society on a socialist basis and integrating their struggle into the international revolution against imperialism and capitalism. It is by intervening in this process and helping to lead it that the best militants of the working class will be won and a capable leadership forged.

3. Only a revolutionary leadership of the highest caliber, a mass workers party on the Leninist model, combining the full arsenal of scientific socialism and worldwide revolutionary experience with an intimate and scientific knowledge of Irish society, and especially the working class and exploited sectors, can effectively lead this process to fruition. In a society as complex as the Irish, where the pattern of uneven and combined development is so intricate, and which is interlocked in manifold ways with the most powerful and highly developed imperialist centers, anything less than a Leninist party can only spread confusion and dissipate rather than concentrate the essential revolutionary forces.

4. Only a revolutionary mass mobilization of the decisive sectors of the workers and popular strata can provide the basis for a victorious armed struggle against imperialism and its native allies.

5. The Irish socialist revolution will be intimately intertwined with the struggle against capitalism in the imperialist centers.

6. The support of mass solidarity movements, first of all in Britain, secondly in North America, and also in Western Europe will be very important for the development and success of the Irish revolutionary struggle.

(a) Such support is important in Ireland where a small, economically and demographically weak population is pitted directly against the strongest imperialist centers. But this support is doubly important because of the special place of the Irish people in the imperialist system. Not only do the Irish capitalists benefit from the superprofits of imperialism but the large Irish emigrant populations, despite the persistence of significant national and religious prejudices in the particular case of Great Britain, are deeply integrated into the society of the English-speaking imperialist centers. As a result, among other things, the ideological pressure of imperialism on the Irish people is very great. The existence of substantial movements in the imperialist centers supporting the right of the Irish people for self-determination and challenging the arrogance of the imperialist rulers will greatly stimulate the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish people. In particular, they will help convince the Irish people that the course of imperialist development that has reduced them to an ever more dependent and marginal position is not inexorable and that it is possible, by fighting against the fate to which the capitalist and imperialist system condemns them, to help win a democratic, and therefore, necessarily, socialist world order in which they would be able to exercise the full freedom of self-determination.

III. Peculiarities of Irish Nationalism

1. The question of nationality is distorted in Ireland. The older Celtic and Celticized population subjected to national oppression by the English conquest have lost most of their original cultural distinctness and for historical reasons, have become identified primarily by their religion, Catholicism. The community that descends from the British settler population, planted as part of a war of extermination against the older inhabitants, is also identified by religion, Protestantism. Thus, the majority of the Catholic community identify to one degree or another with the resistance to the conquest and to the path of imperialist development, while the majority of the Protestant community identify with the conquest and with imperialism. The Catholic, or nationalist community, identify to various degrees with Irish Celtic culture, although the great majority retain little of it. The Protestant, or Unionist community identify with "British culture," favoring union with Great Britain although they differ markedly in their political and social behavior from the rest of the United Kingdom population.

2. The fundamental and continuous strain of Irish nationalism is opposition to the English conquest and refusal to accept the kind of society created by the conquest and maintained by British domination. In the age of imperialism, this tradition has revolutionary socialist implications, as the pioneers of Irish socialism, James Connolly and James Larkin, realized. In today's world, the only way the Irish people can free themselves from the crushing weight of imperialism and national exploitation is through a socialist revolution in alliance with the revolutionary class forces throughout the world that have the power to defeat the capitalists and imperialists in their main centers.

3. The two Irish communities have tended to become more and more alike, but the Protestants' historically privileged position has kept them from joining the struggle of the Catholics. The basis for Protestant separatism, therefore, is reactionary. There can be no right of self-determination for the Protestants as such.

4. For the foreseeable future, the revolutionary dynamic in Ireland will arise primarily from the struggle of the oppressed nationalist community, representing four-fifths of the total population of the island, to achieve its historic national aspirations, independence and unity, freedom from imperialist domination in all spheres of life. This dynamic, which is the dynamic of permanent revolution leading to a socialist revolution, can only be advanced by leading the nationalist population to fight unrelentingly for national liberation. Only the organized power of the working class is capable of carrying this process through to completion.

(a) For more than a century the national-democratic movement has attracted revolutionary-minded elements in the Protestant community to the struggle against the reactionary social system in Ireland. The national struggle, coupled with the struggle around more directly economic issues, has been the motor of all social progress. No advance whatsoever can be made through making any concessions to the proimperialist caste feelings of the Protestants, either by trying to put the national question in the background or by trying to give a "progressive" interpretation to the specifically Protestant tradition, which

is utterly and irredeemably reactionary, and has been so since the abortion of independent capitalist development in the Protestant community almost two centuries ago. Whatever propagandistic usefulness there may be in referring to the Protestant revolutionary ferment exemplified in the revolutions of 1798 and 1803, it is naive and ahistorical to believe that this tradition lives on in the Protestant community or that the long-dead dynamic of Protestant republicanism can be revived. Attempts to downplay "Catholic nationalism" so as not to "alienate the Protestants" only weaken the national liberation struggle of the oppressed community, whose most radical thrust for almost a century has been to consciously and completely reject the society created by the conquest. Such attempts, moreover, cannot attract Protestants who have not broken from their caste identification, since they correctly sense that any challenge to the established order in the economic as well as the political sphere threatens their special position.

Because of the distortion of Irish historical development by the English conquest and imperialist domination, as well as the proximity and interlocking of Ireland with the imperialist center, in the age of imperialism a united, independent capitalist nation cannot be built in Ireland. The possibility for capitalist national development in Ireland was probably ended forever by the failure of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1798. Any attempt to prevent the fight for national liberation leading toward a socialist revolution will render that struggle impotent, utopian, and sterile. In the age of imperialism, there is no solution for the contradictions of Irish development, for the dislocation and backwardness of Irish society, but a socialist revolution.

IV. The Present Stage in the Development of a Revolutionary Leadership

1. The Irish nationalist tradition offers a number of favorable conditions for building a revolutionary Marxist party. Opposition to the status quo is deeply rooted in at least a significant minority of the population and this includes placing a high value on willingness to sacrifice for revolutionary ideas no matter how remote their realization may seem. A considerable body of popular experience with various forms of revolutionary action, both positive and negative, is rather widespread, as was shown most notably in the recent struggle by the sophisticated techniques of mass resistance to repression adopted virtually spontaneously by the people of the nationalist ghettos in Derry at the time of the August 1971 internment raids.

2. Because of the difficulties and isolation of the struggle against foreign domination, among other factors, the Irish revolutionary tradition is highly contradictory and contains a number of debilitating weaknesses. For example, the historic identification of the oppressed nationality with Catholicism and the lack of continuous ties between the Irish liberation struggle and other revolutionary and democratic movements throughout the world have inhibited the spread of Marxist ideas among the leadership and ranks of Irish revolutionists. In particular, the contradiction between the conservative ideology of the Irish fighters and their revolutionary aspirations has traditionally been resolved by falling back on terrorism, which also represents

a continuation in some respects of the disorganized, primitive, and local resistance to the conquest and the forms of exploitation it introduced.

(a) The mystique of guerrillaism and military conspiracy has made it possible for generations of nationalist leaders to avoid the basic questions of class and social program.

(b) As a result also of relying on the military conspiratorial technique, the Irish revolutionary movements have failed to undertake the tasks of revolutionary mass organization and action. Instead they have tended to leave the political leadership of mass agitation in the hands of reformists and to engage in desperate military adventures.

3. Another important expression of the political backwardness of the Irish left is a romantic variant of economism. In its crudest form, this approach holds that the only way to radicalize workers is on issues directly affecting them as workers (wages, job conditions, arbitrary plant management, corruption in unions, etc.). It is reflected in a tendency to ignore general political and social issues that affect workers and other strata oppressed by capitalism.

(a) Although this economist approach is the result in part of a search for a more scientific theory than traditional nationalism and populism, in some respects it is actually a step backward, because it leads to disregarding the historical, political, and ideological contradictions of Irish society and Ireland's place in the capitalist world system.

(b) In a society marked by a permanent latent crisis stemming from a suppressed national revolution, and marked, too, by the fact that the prospects of industrialization within the capitalist context lie in still greater subordination to the imperialist economy, the economic approach leads away from revolution and toward reformism. This tendency is illustrated by the way in which the most consistent economic tendencies, such as the Irish Communist Organization and the wing of the Irish Social Democracy represented by Conor Cruise O'Brien and Michael O'Leary, openly support imperialist policy. The policy of the Communist Party is more contradictory, but in the North in particular, where the national question is posed most acutely, it is aimed at subordinating the national struggle to British reformist forces.

(c) In particular, in a society such as the Irish, marked by acute uneven development, economism leads to fragmented activity and away from the concept of a revolutionary party that can concentrate its forces on the weak points in the system as a whole in order to achieve strategic breakthroughs.

4. The first important advance over the "physical force," or terrorist, tradition was the IRA's turn toward mass struggle after the failure of the 1956-62 guerrilla campaign. This orientation was developed to its highest point when the IRA became the organizational backbone of the mass civil-rights movement in Northern Ireland in 1968 and 1969. In order to maintain the movement, the IRA leadership also had to defend it from economist and ultra-left attacks, as well as reformist opposition to militant mass action.

5. The development of the mass-civil-rights movements threw the system of imperialist control in Ireland out of balance and created the crisis that is continuing today.

(a) The civil-rights movement was able to achieve this result for the following reasons.

i. It was a form of organization that could attract mass participation. That is, its actions were formulated in a defensive way. Discipline was applied to avoid giving the police or Protestant extremists any way of justifying attacks on participants in actions.

ii. It formulated demands that in effect pointed to national liberation and social revolution. Such modest demands as "One Man, One Vote," proportional representation, an end to discriminatory practices in public hiring and the allotment of public housing challenged the whole system of caste privilege that the Northern state was created to maintain and on which it rests. In particular, the demand for the repeal of the Special Powers legislation, which empowered the police to arbitrarily arrest and indefinitely intern any person deemed to endanger the security of the state, and for the removal of the ban on open political activity by the militant nationalist groups as well as on displaying nationalist symbols struck at the heart of the counterrevolutionary state erected by British imperialism as a dam against the national revolution, which already in 1920 when the Northern statelet was established, was tending to go over into a socialist revolution.

The civil-rights demands were actually national liberation demands formulated defensively, that is, they did not call for the end of the partition outright but for ending the undemocratic system inherent in the partition of 1920 and the maintenance of direct imperialist control over part of the island. They tapped the resentment at the concrete effects of the partition that was felt by almost all the oppressed nationalist community regardless of their conscious beliefs about the possibility or even the desirability of a united Ireland, or of achieving the other historic objectives of Irish nationalism, such as freedom from imperialist control in all spheres of life. By organizing the masses of the oppressed people to challenge directly the taboos of the caste state, such as the ban on Catholics marching within the walls of Derry, the fortress and symbol of the plantation, the civil-rights leaders touched off a dynamic that raised the intimidated community off its knees and propelled it out of the control of the Catholic middle-class.

At the same time, these defensively formulated national-democratic demands were understandable to the people in the South, who had tended to forget about the oppressed minority in the North, and they were understandable to international public opinion.

The leaders of the civil-rights movement had a reformist conception that led them to accept explicitly the framework of the partition. But large sectors of both the Catholic masses and the Unionist population recognized instinctively that the logic of the civil-rights struggle was to destroy the Northern state. Thus, in spite of the leaders, the movement brought about a revolutionary upheaval.

6. The development of the revolutionary movement in Ireland and of the anti-imperialist struggle in general was set back by the split in the republican movement that occurred in 1969-70.

(a) The reason for the split was the political weakness of the IRA leadership and the pressures of anti-Communism, social conservatism, and traditionalist terrorist conceptions in the Northern nationalist community and among republican supporters in Ireland and the United

States — not the failure to defend the Catholic ghettos against the pogroms of August 1969.

i. The IRA leadership did not understand the dynamic of the civil-rights struggle. Its thinking was paralyzed by a "stages" schema that envisaged a democratic struggle first that would open up the way for winning the Protestant workers to a program of national unity and independence.

ii. It wrongly analyzed the reasons behind the reactionary attitudes of the Protestants, tending to put the blame on the Catholic exclusiveness of previous nationalist movements and the failure of these movements to appeal to the class interests of the Protestant workers, who were believed to be "radical on a trade-union and social level." It believed that it could win the Protestants over to the struggle for national liberation and socialism in "stages" by first calling for "democracy" within the Six-County content and by projecting militant struggles on purely economic issues, that is, by forgetting about the partition "for the time being" and by trying to redirect the most exploited and disadvantaged workers in the Catholic ghettos away from resuming their uncompleted national liberation struggle, counterposing demands for "democracy" within the Six-County framework and immediate economic improvements to it. The IRA leadership sought to convince the oppressed Catholics that the Protestants were equally exploited by imperialism and that they were their natural allies, in fact that they would not be able to make any substantial gains until they had won the Protestants to their side. It claimed also that the Protestants had the same national aspirations, under their pretense of loyalty to Britain, as the Catholics and that this nationalism would come to the surface if their anti-Catholic fears could be quieted.

iii. As a result of these misconceptions, the IRA leadership and its supporters were not politically prepared for the 1969 pogrom, and the leadership lost more and more support as its perspective of Catholic-Protestant working-class unity appeared increasingly dogmatic and utopian to the masses.

iv. The republican leadership's problems were particularly acute in Belfast where the IRA was traditionally viewed as a neighborhood defense force and was even less political than in the other parts of the country. This was complicated by the fact that the pogroms in Belfast took a murderous form, including the use of heavy-caliber weapons by the Unionist police.

v. The IRA's mystique as the "secret army" of the oppressed nationalist community, a mystique that the leadership continued to cultivate despite its leftward turn, gave the people unrealistic expectations about its military capacity.

7. The Provisional IRA that developed out of the split represented a regression to the "physical force" tradition.

(a) The core of the Provisional IRA was a coalition of apolitical militarists, romantic moralists, and socially conservative old-fashioned republicans. It coalesced around a number of essentially conservative ideas: That political campaigns and mass action were contrary to the needs of military conspiracy and guerrilla warfare and that raising social and political issues conflicted with the basic need of defending the Catholic neighborhoods (including getting financial and logistical support from conservative Irish Americans and elements of the Southern bourgeoisie); that only military activity was revolutionary, political

activity being reformist or disorienting by nature; that any departure from the rigid tenets of traditional republicanism, such as refusing to defend yourself in court trials and refusing to take part in any of the illegitimate parliaments legislating for Ireland, led inevitably to betrayal; that taking up material social issues detracted from the idealistic purity of republicanism; that divisive social issues should be avoided until after the British were driven from the country; that explicit opposition to the partition had always to be in the forefront of any propaganda.

Together with ultraleft adventurers, the core of the new organization included conservative nationalists who wanted (1) an organization that would confine itself to defending the Catholic communities without raising any disagreeable or divisive political questions; (2) an organization that could block the trend of the militant nationalist current toward socialism.

(b) The Provisional split was supported by a section of the Irish ruling class with the conscious aim of blocking the development toward revolutionary mass mobilization in the North and the South and of diverting the anti-imperialist struggle into forms that posed less of a threat to the Dublin government and to capitalism.

(c) The Provisionals developed a strategy for ending the partition based on a concept of Catholic communalism, the historic current that has sought only to enhance the position of the Irish Catholic community within the broad British system, as opposed to the radical nationalist current, whose general aim was to build a nation to replace the old religious communities and to free Ireland completely from British rule and influence. The democratic nationalists saw British imperialism as a whole as the enemy, and Orangeism only as part of the system. The Catholic communalists saw the reactionary political, military, and administrative circles in England, in which the old Orange landed aristocracy and the big bourgeoisie wielded substantial influence, as the barrier to an understanding with the London government and the main sections of the British ruling class. Following in the second tradition, the Provisional leadership apparently believed that only the Protestant bourgeoisie and the Orange patronage machine had a vested interest in maintaining the partition. From this they drew the conclusion that imposing political and economic costs on the British government through a campaign of disruptive bombings and terrorist attacks on the occupying soldiers would be sufficient to force imperialism to withdraw its backing of the Unionists and agree to a united Ireland. A section of the Southern bourgeoisie was also prepared to support some terrorism and threat of force in order to strengthen Dublin's hand in negotiating with the British authorities and enable the Free State capitalist class to defend itself more effectively against the pressures of the Northern crisis.

8. The section of the republican movement remaining loyal to the old leadership, now the leaders of the Official republican movement, assumed a sectarian and defensive attitude toward the militant nationalist feelings of the Catholic ghetto dwellers and also to some extent of the Southern masses, that is, toward the revolutionary dynamic of the national liberation struggle.

(a) The Official republicans reacted to the apparent success of the capitalists in manipulating backward republican elements in Belfast — in encouraging a split by

promising pure militarists and antipolitical and conservative nationalists guns and money if they would confine themselves to a military defense of the Catholic population and avoid socialist ideas and mass action — by developing a sectarian attitude toward the national struggle. They tended more and more to *counterpose* the struggle for national unity, which they stressed meant nothing in and of itself, to the need for a socialist or progressive Ireland based on the unity of Protestant and Catholic workers. They regarded the increasing polarization of the two communities in the North as a setback and strove to "cool things down," to get them back into the proper "stage." As a result they were not able to advance the nationalist dynamic and at every decisive turn they failed to grasp the revolutionary opportunities. Instead they put forward unrealistic "working-class" formulas such as "Trade-Union Defense Groups" which were supposed to maintain the peace between the two communities.

(b) Increasingly the Official republican movement became a magnet for young radicals attracted to Marxism but skeptical of the traditions of the national struggle and of the nationalistic feelings of the Irish people, tending toward either economism or romantic attempts to project a national-liberation struggle in Ireland along the lines of the "third world," e.g., Vietnam or Cuba.

(c) This sectarian trend was reinforced by the pressure of the Provisionals' emotional appeals for terrorist actions against the British, which led the Official leadership to emphasize its socialist ideals and the need for unity with the Protestant workers in order to draw a sharp dividing line between their organization and their rivals. The Official leadership never rejected terrorism but only restricted its use to a certain "stage" or a certain role in "defending" the mass movement. In order to hold their membership back from trying to compete with the Provisionals' terrorist activities, these leaders tended to use exaggerated claims that the Provisionals were alienating the Protestant workers. In this the traditional republican view that the Protestants (at least the popular strata of them) are deluded Irish nationalists, who must be won over to the national liberation movement at any cost, was reinforced by the economist principle of working-class unity at any price, including, if necessary, holding back the struggle of the most oppressed part of the class so as not to "alienate" the labor aristocracy.

8. Because of their misunderstanding and fear of the developing mass struggle against national oppression in the North, the Officials retreated in the face of the rapidly unfolding revolutionary crisis and became enmeshed in centrist contradictions. They were unable to lead the mass movement forward and by trying to confine it within preconceived limits, they seriously weakened its momentum, opening the way for the development of terrorism and the growth of the Provisionals. The increase in terrorism further demobilized the mass movement; in particular it alienated the decisive layers of the Southern population, isolating the Northern nationalists as well as the anti-imperialist fighters in the South.

9. With the decline of the mass movement, the broader militant nationalist current fell in behind the Provisionals, along with the less political and more activist young radicals, as well as ultraleftists and adventurers.

10. Despite the narrowing of their support, the Official republicans maintained their organized following, consoli-

dated and improved their organizational structure, and expanded their propaganda operations. Signs of a muted and contradictory process of political clarification began to develop.

(a) A policy document that stressed unity of the national and social revolution and rejected the concept of limiting the civil-rights struggle to the Six-County framework was passed in the 1972 Official IRA army convention and Sinn Fein *ard fheis* over strong opposition from Stalinist-trained and reformist elements.

(b) The Official republican book service began to sell and distribute Trotskyist literature and, in particular the pamphlet *Problems of the Irish Revolution* that criticized the organization's policy and record from a revolutionary Marxist point of view.

11. Despite their political limitations, the Official republicans have led every mass movement over the past two years.

(a) They were the organizing force in the rent and rates strike as well as the organizers of the march of 60,000 in February 1972 in Newry following the Bloody Sunday massacre, the high point so far of the struggle in the North. Only the Official republicans have made serious attempts to organize the masses in the Catholic ghettos to take the initial steps in administering and defending their communities.

(b) The Official republicans failed to meet the challenge of the struggle. They proved unable to take advantage of the June-July 1971 crisis in Northern Ireland to break the political hegemony of the Catholic parliamentarians. When the bourgeois nationalists were forced to leave the Belfast parliament and make a gesture of setting up an alternative regime, the Official republicans did not take advantage of this to force the conservative nationalists to go along with organizing a revolutionary united front of the oppressed population. Instead they denounced it as an attempt to "split" the Catholic and Protestant communities by creating a "Catholic parliament." Similarly when the Lynch government was thrown off balance by the explosion of anti-imperialist anger touched off by the Bloody Sunday massacre, the Official republicans could not put forward any slogan or perspective to advance the mass movement politically or to effectively expose the regime.

12. Although they grew relative to the Officials and absolutely as a result of the decline in the mass movement and of a general rise in nationalist feeling that the Officials failed to lead, the Provisionals themselves have also been left increasingly isolated by the demobilization of the nationalist community.

(a) The decline of the mass movement has enabled the Dublin government in particular to repress the Provisionals. But all governments involved, including the American, have stepped up their campaign against the entire Irish revolutionary movement, including the Provisionals.

13. As a result of its isolation and the increasing repression it is suffering from all sides, the Provisional coalition around "the gun" is beginning to come apart. A section of the leadership is trying to develop political forms of action, a course that raises the question of political program and alliances. At the same time, in the face of solid opposition from all governments and institutions of Irish society, many of the Provisional rank and file are moving toward more consistently and profoundly

revolutionary ideas. In particular, there is a tendency to turn to mass mobilization to fight the repression instead of relying on influence in high places and to insist on this even at the expense of alienating conservative and wealthy contributors.

14. The biggest obstacle to the development of a revolutionary current in the Provisionals is the guerrillaist orientation, reinforced by the Fenian military mystique. As long as the hopes of the organization remain centered on the commando group terrorist campaign in the North, the politicalization process will fail to develop.

(a) Political discussion will be discouraged on the grounds that it is a distraction from the war effort, that it causes disunity and undermines discipline.

(b) Political positions will be avoided that might alienate the conservative Irish-Americans who provide the money for arms.

(c) The Provisional leadership will see no need for a united front against the repression or for any other specific objective in the North or South with forces that do not support the military campaign.

15. The biggest obstacle to the development of a revolutionary socialist tendency in the Officials is the economist trend, which threatens to divert them away from the national-liberation struggle, which has immediate revolutionary potential, and lead them into a left-Social Democratic or frozen centrist position.

V. The Tasks of the Fourth International

1. The Trotskyist movement offers the only theory that can point the way forward to victory, the theory of the permanent revolution. It offers the only revolutionary method for mobilizing the masses, the method exemplified in the Transitional Program, it offers the only body of useful experience in the techniques of revolutionary organization. It offers the only approach capable of unraveling the complex ties of Irish society—historical, dialectical materialism.

2. Part of the task of building a revolutionary party in Ireland is to end the isolation of the Irish revolutionary movement by promoting the widest possible contacts between revolutionists in Ireland and the international left and fostering an international outlook. Of all existing left tendencies, the Fourth International is in the best position to do this.

3. A fundamental task of the international Trotskyist movement, which will help create a favorable climate for the growth of Irish Trotskyism, is organizing an effective movement to demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

In Britain the possibility exists for building a powerful mass movement in support of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. In North America, there is a potential for developing at least a significant, broad movement in support of the Irish struggle. In order to achieve this:

(a) The slogans of support organizations must make it clear that Britain has no right whatsoever in Ireland.

(b) The slogans of support organizations must make it absolutely clear that British troops cannot play any positive role in solving the problems of the Irish people.

(c) The slogans of movements in defense of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland must be capable of mobilizing forces broad enough to have an impact on general

public opinion and to affect government policy.

i. In Britain and North America such slogans must be primarily democratic, along the lines of calling for the governments involved to let the Irish settle their own problems and to end repression.

ii. Since Northern Ireland is still politically a part of the United Kingdom, the repressive legislation enacted against the Irish nationalist community is a direct threat to the British working class, and the struggle against these laws is an integral part of defending democratic rights of the working class in Britain.

iii. In Britain, a central demand must be for immediate withdrawal of British troops.

iv. The movements in defense of the anti-imperialist struggle must make it clear that the nationalist community in Northern Ireland is fighting a system of caste repression and that the conflict is not, in essence, a religious one. This means supporting the nationalist community unconditionally and exposing the reactionary nature of the caste system.

4. In the continental countries of Western Europe, where there has been no massive Irish immigration and the historical ties are more remote than in the case of the English-speaking states, significant movements can also be built in support of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. This is especially true because of increasingly close trade and political relations among the West European countries.

(a) In Western Europe also solidarity work must be built around democratic slogans in order to mobilize real political and material support for the Irish people and in order to effectively expose the British government.

(b) The movements in defense of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland have an especially important role to play in giving worldwide projection to the Irish struggle by presenting it to the proletarian vanguard as a part of the international struggle against the imperialist system in circles and regions where there has been no knowledge of the history and traditions of the Irish people.

i. An important part of this is translating the literature of revolutionary Irish nationalism and socialism into various languages and disseminating it.

5. In colonial and semicolonial countries as well as in Japan, any interest shown in the Irish struggle and any demonstrations in support of the Irish people will give a significant moral boost to the historically isolated vanguard in Ireland and encourage it to think in international terms. Such actions will also help to expose the British government by clarifying the imperialist character of its domination of Ireland.

6. In the East European workers states and the Soviet Union, the coupling of support for the struggle of the Irish and the struggle of the nationalities oppressed by Stalinism will not only help to clarify the democratic objectives of socialists in respect to small nationalities but help expose the treacherous nature of the Stalinists' nationalist demagoguery in Ireland.

7. The Fourth International can help the nucleus of Irish Trotskyists develop an effective Marxist organization in the following ways:

(a) It offers an international program and perspective.

i. The immediate international context is important in the case of Ireland, where the struggle for national liberation interacts directly with a whole series of countries.

Close collaboration with revolutionary organizations in the English-speaking countries in particular will be an important factor in the ability of the Irish Trotskyists to lay out a convincing perspective for winning the national liberation struggle and the socialist revolution. Moreover, since all the nationalist groups in Ireland are organized throughout the English-speaking countries, such international collaboration among Trotskyists is an important part of building a party that can assume the leadership of the national and social struggle in Ireland.

ii. Marxist analysis of the specifics of Irish society is still in an early stage. Because of the peculiar combined character of this society, many aspects of international revolutionary experience are relevant to this task. This is realized even by the non-Trotskyist left groups in Ireland, which draw on superficial analogies with the workers struggle in Britain, on the one hand, or with the struggles of the colonial countries like Cuba and Vietnam on the other. Through their participation in the Fourth International, however, the Irish Trotskyists can discuss the problems of the Irish revolution with the most conscious revolutionists from every sector of the world and draw directly on a fund of international experience available to no other group in their country. Such international collaboration can be extremely helpful in analyzing the intricacies of Irish society and its place in the capitalist world as well as in helping the Irish Trotskyists to orient themselves in a difficult and complex political situation. Likewise, through the Fourth International, the Irish Trotskyists can take the lead in ending the historic isolation of the Irish national and social struggle and in educating the heroic Irish fighters in the spirit of internationalism. Through the Fourth International they can develop a complete program for the Irish revolution integrated into the program of the world revolution as a whole. In this process, they will make important new contributions to the theoretical and practical arsenal of international Marxism.

iii. Involving the Irish Trotskyists in a fraternal way in the discussions of the international movement will enrich the political life of the Irish group and help them conduct systematic and fruitful political discussions so that they can serve as an example in this regard to Irish radicals moving to the left. At the same time, participation in an international organization will offer the Irish Trotskyists a wide range of concrete experience that can help them set the example for effective united-front work.

(b) The Fourth International must help the Irish Trotskyists develop their press and propaganda apparatus.

VI. The Way Forward for the Struggle in Ireland

1. The fight in Ireland has now entered a defensive phase as a result of the demobilization of the mass movement.

2. Since all the bourgeois institutions in Ireland have embarked on a course of repression, the main objective for the next period is to build a united defense movement throughout the country.

3. Any mass, militant civil-rights action in Ireland will be an anti-imperialist movement in effect. Now that the repression of the militant nationalist movement has ex-

tended to the formally independent part of the country, the fight for civil rights has become the spearhead of the anti-imperialist struggle throughout the island.

(a) This means that the demands of such a movement must in no way recognize the authority of Britain in Ireland. Since the British troops are the agents of repression in Northern Ireland, the demand to withdraw them is a civil-rights demand as well as an anti-imperialist one.

(b) At the same time, in a defensive phase in particular, it is unlikely that the focus of a mass movement can be direct opposition to the border, which is a key element of imperialist political control in Ireland.

(c) The fight against imperialism must start as a struggle against the concrete effects of imperialist political control and the denial of bourgeois-democratic rights. Within the context and dynamic of a mass civil rights struggle it will be possible to show that the fundamental democratic rights denied in the North can only be secured in an all-Ireland context and that the source of the threat to civil liberties in the South in particular lies in imperialist economic control and therefore indirect political control. At the same time it will become apparent that the only effective way the Southern people can defeat British repression is by seizing imperialist property.

However, since political struggle against imperialism in the South is still on a relatively low level, it is important for revolutionists to fight economist attempts to divert the attention of socialist republicans from the issue of repression, which is the concentrated *political* expression of imperialist control. In particular, it is important to explain that the economic struggle around wages and conditions of work, trade-union rights, housing, etc. *cannot be separated from the political struggle against repression of anti-imperialist fighters.*

From the start of the present crisis in Ireland, the fight against repression has been the driving force in a dynamic of permanent revolution. The civil-rights movement grew to massive size in the wake of attempts by the government to suppress or intimidate demonstrators. The police and Orange militia pogroms of August 1969 sparked off ghetto rebellions that led to conditions of incipient dual power lasting for many months in some nationalist areas of the North. The internment raids provoked the rent strike, a refusal by ghetto dwellers to pay any money to the state, and often any bills at all, challenging some of the basic prerogatives of capitalism. The massacre of thirteen civil-rights demonstrators by the British army in Derry sparked a general strike in the South.

Thus, from a revolutionary standpoint there is no contradiction between trying to reach the masses through the issues that directly concern them and defending even the most elitist nationalist fighters against imperialist and the pro-imperialist repression of the local ruling classes. In fact these tasks are inseparably linked. Socialists must take the lead, in fact, in defending the politically more backward nationalist fighters, both for the sake of the struggle as a whole and as a means of winning the conservative nationalists away from reliance on their lukewarm bourgeois supporters, since the bourgeois nationalists have shown their unwillingness to participate in a mass, activist campaign against repression.

June 28, 1973

Statement of Support to the IEC Majority Tendency

By Micha, Arie, Elie, Mikado, Nabil — Israeli Socialist Organization (Matzpen-Marxist)

The political discussion that is now taking place in the Fourth International should be the concern of every section and every member. Although we are still only a sympathizing group, although we are still numerically weak, and although most of our members have only identified with and collaborated with the Fourth International for a short time, we have decided that we must publicly express our position.

We don't think that the discussion in the International is counterposing ultraleft partisans of guerrilla war, on the one hand, and those who want to build a Leninist party on the basis of the Transitional Program, on the other. In fact, the discussion concerns the character of the period, the method of building Leninist parties in a prerevolutionary period, and the role of the Transitional Program.

We don't accept the position of the IEC minority tendency, which, we feel, is developing a propagandistic and sectoral concept of the Transitional Program, linked to a spontanéist concept of the relationship between the party and the masses: the party spreads ideas to the different sectors, the masses spontaneously carry them out. This kind of an approach has already resulted in tail-endist deviations that have nothing in common with

the Transitional Program of revolutionary Marxism. We ran up against this kind of approach with the position of our American cothinkers regarding a "democratic and secular Palestine," which meant uncritical support to a slogan that was the entire program of the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Palestinian resistance movement.

We are, on the other hand, in agreement with the basics of the IEC majority's call for the constitution of a tendency.

While we may not agree with all the positions of the International Majority Tendency, especially concerning the path followed in Latin America and the insufficient criticism of that path by the International leadership, we think the danger that today threatens the International is not ultraleftism, but rather the tail-endism characterizing the political line and activity of certain leaderships taking part in the International minority tendency.

That is why, despite our criticism of certain aspects of the concept of some of the leaders of the International Majority Tendency, we intend to proclaim our affiliation with this tendency.

August 10, 1973

The Mote and the Beam

A reply from the Political Bureau of the Ligue Communiste to the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party

The Political Bureau of the Ligue Communiste has examined your criticisms of the Ligue's electoral policy in March 1973, as well as the place of this letter in the tendency struggle preparing for the upcoming world congress of the Fourth International. [See IIDB, Vol. X, No. 14]

Your criticisms were summarized as follows in this letter:

"Our differences with the policy you adopted center on three questions: (1) the decision to call for a vote on the first round for all candidates of the 'far left,' i.e., those whom you define as 'candidates who reject the electoral and peaceful roads to socialism' (Political Resolution, *Rouge*, December 16, 1972); (2) the decision to call for a vote on the second round for the candidates of the Union of the Left, as opposed to the candidates of the Communist Party and Socialist Party only; and (3) the ambiguity of your attitude towards the Socialist Party as expressed by the decision taken at your last convention against characterizing the Socialist Party as a working-class party with a bourgeois-reformist program."

Before examining your criticisms, we would like to make a preliminary statement that we will return to at more length at the conclusion of our reply, and that has for us a fundamental importance. The statement is the following:

At no time in the eight pages of your letter do you take into consideration the political situation in France, the relationship of forces between the classes, their repercussions in the electoral arena, how the elections appear to the working masses, and how the Ligue can influence these class relations.

In discussing the politics of the Ligue, you make abstractions of the actual social and political forces; in discussing the Ligue's action concerning and in the course of the elections, you begin from what you call "principles" and "criteria." We shall have occasion later on to show what these are and where they lead you.

Our point of departure concerning the Ligue's intervention in the March 1973 elections was the existence in France of a powerful revolutionary upsurge of the masses, an upsurge that the leaders of the French Communist Party (CP) and the Socialist Party (SP) tried to channel, by means of the Union of the Left, into electoral and parliamentary paths. On the subject of the Union of the Left, you write:

". . . it would, in our opinion, probably be correct to designate the Union de la Gauche as an embryonic or incipient popular front. . . .

"We are not interested in the semantics of the question. Whether we should put the label 'incipient popular front' on the Union de la Gauche, or some other designation can be put aside as long as we agree on the essence: that the Union de la Gauche was, from its very inception, an electoral class-collaborationist project of the Stalinists."

We do not agree with this point of view, which constitutes the very pivot of your whole argument. You begin with what, according to you, is *in the minds* of the leaders of the CP and the SP: they are seeking bourgeois allies in order to form a coalition government. For the moment they have only been able to come up with the left radicals, who are insignificant, but "little minnows become big fish" when the time comes. The label of incipient popular front flows from this, and with it the policy Trotskyists must follow.

What is in the minds of the leaders of the CP and SP is one thing, and it is probably not as simple as you think! However, beginning from an analysis of the situation in France we have put forward a quite different conception of the Union of the Left. We have said that the Union of the Left was not, and could not have been, a new edition of the Popular Front, even if its program, like that of the Popular Front of 1935, was a program of reforming bourgeois society. Why did we say that? In 1935, the Popular Front was *necessary* for very important wings of the French capitalist class. On the one hand, faced with the rearmament of Hitler's Germany, they needed an alliance with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, they needed an economic policy of the New Deal type to assure the relaunching of the economy after years of crisis. In addition, there was also a working-class upsurge that the workers parties were already trying to turn to their advantage. It was for these reasons that the *Radical Party, the most important party of big capital*, which had governed the country for three decades, *sought a political bloc with the workers parties on the basis indicated above.*

Today, the foreign policy of French capitalism in no way requires an alliance with the workers parties. As for its economic policy, a policy of extreme yet absolutely necessary capitalist concentration—this is fought (although in vain) by the CP and the SP. There is at present no objective basis for an electoral alliance between any substantial wing of French capitalism and the workers parties. This is why no real bourgeois party, no appreciable current of French capitalism, has sought to associate itself with the Union of the Left. The Union of the Left has as its sole origin the reaction of the two parties that comprise it to revolutionary upsurge of the masses. In the face of such a pressure, the presence of a bourgeois party would seem to be of little use. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's attempt to revive the official Radical Party has resulted in failure. The same fate has met efforts to try to separate the Socialist Party from its alliance with the CP.

In fact, since May 1968 the French bourgeoisie has had much more need for a strong Socialist Party, one capable of counterbalancing the CP to keep the working class from being polarized around a single party, the CP, which would have nothing on its right in the working class, and which would thus risk being outflanked on

the left. The bourgeois politician in Mitterrand understood precisely that the policy followed for so long by Guy Mollet could only lead to the ruin of the Socialist Party. He understood that the SP could regain the ear of the masses only by breaking with the bourgeois parties (though of course not with bourgeois politics) and allying with the CP. We repeat: there is no wing of any significance of French capitalism in the Union of the Left. The left Radicals are only some remnants of the Radical Party of yesterday, local politicians interested in their local offices. They came to the Union of the Left after it was constituted and had adopted the Common Program. Moreover, if there were left Radical candidates, they were not there as such, but rather as having taken the place of about 40 SP candidates. The SP has taken them aboard as "fellow travelers," the counterparts of the "progressives" of the CP. It is worth noting that these politicians received fewer votes than the candidates of the Ligue and Lutte Ouvrière. If they are not yet integrated into the SP, it is because Mitterrand thinks that it is too soon, that they can still make gains within the official Radical Party, and that their entry is not desirable before the United Socialist Party (PSU) in turn rejoins the SP, which would facilitate his balancing act.

But the difference between the Popular Front and the Union of the Left does not consist solely in the fact that there is, for all practical purposes, no bourgeois party in the Union of the Left. The central difference is that these two electoral blocs do not formally have the same perspectives. We do not accord the slightest confidence to the proposals of the leaders of the Union of the Left, but we realize that their proposals nevertheless correspond to definite circumstances, and that they can have far-reaching consequences. According to the leaders of that period, the goal of the Popular Front was to bar the door to fascism. Our movement said at that time that an alliance of the workers parties with a section of the bourgeoisie could not attain this goal. Today, the leaders of the Union of the Left present their alliance as the means for realizing, by a parliamentary and peaceful road, an intermediate democratic stage of short duration for the transition to socialism. They do not say that because they want to; they say it because not only the present social crisis but especially the temper of the masses during this crisis place the question of the transition to socialism on the agenda as a concrete task of the day. This problem is widely discussed today, not in a general fashion but as to its actual realization. We must of course make use of the experience of the Popular Front to point out that if it was not permitted to stabilize some reforms within the framework of the capitalist system, there is even less reason to think that one can move to socialism by an accumulation of reforms within this system. But to base a campaign around stating that the leaders of the CP and the SP are seeking an alliance with the bourgeois parties would miss the real problem that the creation of the Union of the Left pretends to resolve: How to make the transition to socialism? That is why we have placed at the center of our campaign the following question: Electoral road or revolutionary road to socialism? And it is also for this reason that we would have liked to have formed a bloc of candidates supporting the revolutionary road to confront the Union of the Left.

You pay no attention to this analysis of the situation in France, and you put nothing in its place. But in so far as perspectives are concerned, you assert it may happen that the left Radicals or another bourgeois party, a more important force, will come to occupy a place of the first magnitude in the Union of the Left, sinking us back into a Popular Front more or less like the one of nearly 40 years ago. Won't the little fish grow larger if God gives it life? The "essence," the "ultimate goal" of the Union of the Left, you write, is to prepare for a "coalition government." We cannot exclude *a priori* such an eventuality.

Certainly, if unforeseen circumstances led to the entry of formations characterized as bourgeois into the Union of the Left, we would rectify this estimation. But for the present, we take the Union of the Left for what it actually is, namely an alliance of the two big reformist workers parties supported by the great mass of workers, an alliance that proposes a perspective of a peaceful march toward socialism, a perspective that we know to be illusory. We do not take the left Radicals for a real political formation but for that which they actually are at present: a collection of electoral parasites who represent neither a political force nor a social force. To the Union of the Left, we counterpose the perspective of revolutionary struggle for workers power. We have never at any time given our approval to the Union of the Left and its program, as certain formulations in your letter could lead one to think. The vote on the second round never meant, for anyone in France, approval for the program of the candidate for whom one withdraws. No implicit or explicit declaration on our part concerning the first and second round permits the slightest confusion on this point. We did, however, commit an error in the second round in not having called explicitly for no vote for the left Radical candidates, a small number of whom remained. Those candidates did not change our analysis of the Union of the Left, but it was necessary to oppose a vote for them because they were bourgeois candidates.

In your justification for making a distinction between the Union of the Left and the two parties that made it up, you introduced another argument, again one independent of the situation, applicable under any circumstances: "Whatever their relative weight in any particular country, whatever their conjunctural ups and downs in size and influence," you write to justify a vote in favor of the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties, "they [these parties] represent historical currents within the international working-class movement."

This sentence is correct, but it cannot justify electoral support on our part to these parties, independent of the circumstances. We know of no "principle" of this sort. There cannot be any question about voting for a bourgeois candidate, but that does not signify, inversely, that we vote for a candidate of a workers party representing a historical current in the workers movement in order to demonstrate class independence. Moreover, you introduce a "criterion" that contradicts this general principle when you criticize a second-round vote for the Union of the Left, saying that it was from the beginning a "project of class collaboration." Isn't the entire politics of the British Labour Party a "project of class collaboration," even if, given the political configuration in Great Britain, the question of forming a coalition with a bourgeois party has not come up in decades for the Labour Party? However, you

are for a vote in favor of the Labour Party (so are we, in general, but not by principle). Let us take another historical example. In 1918-19, in the course of the German revolution, the question was posed of whether to participate in the elections for the National Assembly. Rosa Luxemburg vigorously opposed the ultraleft abstentionist currents within the infant German Communist Party, but there was no question for her of the extremely weak CP of that period voting for the Social Democratic party, which had an enormous majority in the working masses and even close to a majority in the country. To do that would have meant voting in favor of the leadership of the counter-revolution of that period. Moreover, your formulation does not apply to the most frequent case, i.e., when the candidates of the two parties oppose each other. Our electoral intervention, like every political intervention on our part, can only be determined by starting from a concrete analysis of each situation. We shall return to this.

In your argument, you seem to stress a single point: the class nature of the Socialist Party. The class nature of this party has raised a debate in the Ligue that was not concluded at our Third Congress. A majority seems to have been won over to the definition of this party as a "bourgeois workers party," in the sense given to this term at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International and recently taken up again at a meeting of the political bureaus of the European sections. There are still comrades who do not share this point of view. But having said that, the differences between you and us concern the following point: for you, the class nature of the Socialist Party in France would not raise any problems.

This was a question that was already debated for some years within the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI), among longstanding Trotskyists, new adherents to the Fourth International. And for good reason! Since the end of the 1950s, the Socialist Party had been in a state of steady decomposition and had lost above all its working-class base. Within it, bourgeois elements (of the type like the old Radicals of the south of France) were becoming more and more dominant, the notables who had given their adherence to this party that was, during the Fourth Republic, the pivot of the bourgeois power as the Radical Party had been during the Third Republic. In 1958, the split that would lead to the creation of the United Socialist Party called into question for a moment the adherence to the Socialist Party of what remained of its working-class base. Moreover, this loss of confidence ran parallel to the decline of the industries (mining and textiles in the north of France) that served as the last bastion of the Socialist Party. From 1968 to 1971, the very existence of the Socialist Party was called into question. All these events raised questions about the nature and future of the Socialist Party. We have already said that Mitterrand understood that to build the party it was necessary to not only ally with the CP but also to break with the Radicals and the other bourgeois elements. He relegated to second place the old trade-union bureaucrats of Force Ouvrière [Workers Power—a trade-union federation], representing a reactionary and often obsolete section of the working class, in order to turn toward the leaders of the CFDT [French Democratic Labor Federation] in an attempt to find a base among those categories of salaried workers that are improperly called the "new

middle classes." The last word on the Socialist Party is still far from having been said. In any event, it is the study of the evolution of the Socialist Party that convinced the majority of the Ligue that the SP is a bourgeois workers party. Such a conviction could not have been acquired by starting from an *a priori* definition, ignoring the fact that there was a real problem to be resolved and that it was necessary to seek the terms of the solution in the present transformations of French society.

Let us turn to the reproach concerning the vote on the first round for the candidates of Lutte Ouvrière. You say that you agree with our attempt to obtain an "electoral agreement" to share electoral districts with Lutte Ouvrière and even with the OCI [International Communist Organization—the Lambertists], but that you disagree with the attempt to create an "electoral bloc of the far left." The electoral agreement would be a sort of "nonaggression pact," while the "electoral bloc" would rest on a "minimal program." (All the terms in quotation marks are taken from your letter.) We have no more desire than you do to get involved in questions of semantics. The electoral agreement that we reached with the Lutte Ouvrière rested on a minimal declaration against the electoralist road to socialism and did not include any "minimal program" or any "nonaggression pact." In the discussions in which representatives of the Ligue, Lutte Ouvrière, and the OCI participated, there was at no time any question of a "minimal program." The sole line of demarcation was constituted by the question whose importance we noted above: Electoral road or revolutionary road to socialism? We wanted to eliminate right from the start any possibility of an agreement even for a geographical distribution with the United Socialist Party as such, because of its equivocal position toward the Union of the Left.

In the electoral campaign, the Ligue Communiste publicized its full program wherever it was able to do so, including in the districts where it had no candidates. It did this in the meetings called by Lutte Ouvrière. It even openly criticized in *Rouge* certain features of the Lutte Ouvrière campaign. Would it have been better for programmatic clarification (as you say) to have called on the first round for a vote only for the candidates of the Ligue and not for those of Lutte Ouvrière? In the elections we found ourselves faced with an electorate of about 30 million, the immense majority of which is totally ignorant of the differences that divide the far left, and is not interested in them. Those who are interested in these differences follow them in other ways than in the electoral campaigns; and on this point, no one can accuse the Ligue of not conducting an unceasing ideological struggle within the far left. Its press and pamphlets provide irrefutable testimony of this. What programmatic clarification could we have brought to bear by refusing to vote on the first round for the candidates of Lutte Ouvrière? None that we can see, but we would certainly have given proof of ineffective sectarianism, all the more stupid when one knew that everyone, including ourselves, would total the votes of the Ligue and Lutte Ouvrière to measure the impact of the far left.

You also write that this "electoral bloc" of the far left is not unrelated to the concept of seeking to regroup the so-called new mass vanguard and transform it into a

revolutionary party, as proposed in the United Secretariat document *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe*.

In writing this you show that you have not understood what is in the document proposed by the United Secretariat and voted for by the International Executive Committee. In calling for a vote for the candidates who were in fact opposed to the reformist road and who were supporters of the revolutionary road (thus not just for the candidates of Lutte Ouvrière), we wanted to assemble the greatest force possible on the basis of posing an alternative to the Union of the Left. But no one among us dreamed for an instant that in carrying this out we would "regroup the so-called 'new mass vanguard' and transform it into a revolutionary party." This is an idea that Lutte Ouvrière, among others, put forward after May 1968. We fought this and counterposed to it the concept of unification around the Trotskyist program. We know that the revolutionary party will only be built on this program, and not through a regroupment on just any program. In fact, this was the central point in the debate at the founding convention of the Ligue Communiste over affiliation to the Fourth International. Several pamphlets have been published by the Ligue on this question. But experience has shown that in Europe there exist right now tens and even hundreds of thousands of men and women who have escaped the grip of the old reformist leaderships, and who are seeking to give a revolutionary solution to the social crisis that rages over this continent. This is a new vanguard, not a so-called vanguard in quotation marks, as you write. Despite its confusion and state of organization or disorganization, it is also an appreciable political force, above all when it unites in action. It is a force that makes an impression on large sections of the working class, including many rank-and-file working-class cadres who continue to vote for the old leaderships. It is certainly not easy to unite this vanguard in action. We have learned from experience that if we manage, in gaining political hegemony within this vanguard, to mobilize it around *certain points* of our program, we will be able to find a more receptive audience in the broad masses for the whole of our program and for our methods. It is only experience, not just the propaganda of our ideas, that can convince the broad masses. In any event, we never dreamed of regrouping the vanguard during the election campaign because there are strong currents in it that are hostile to any participation in elections.

Up till now we have responded to different elements of your criticisms. Behind them stands the profile of a deeper difference, a difference, moreover, that led you to take the initiative of introducing your letter into the international debate. We are even more delighted that one of the fundamental differences dividing the majority and minority has appeared in this manner. You begin from "principles" and "criteria" taken, of course, from the program that unites us in the Fourth International; but you use them without ever taking into consideration the circumstances and conditions. Whether it is a matter of Europe, Latin America, Vietnam, or the United States, you never begin by making an analysis of the objective situation, the social forces present, the relationships of forces, the tendencies asserting themselves in the develop-

ment of the society. Your "principles," your "criteria" thus become things in themselves; you have transformed the teachings of revolutionary Marxism into *dogmas* that you determine mechanically, independent of conditions and circumstances. For you a Socialist Party always remains a socialist party, no matter what happens to it. A Radical Party is always a radical party, whether it is a matter of the main party of French capitalism in 1935, or a tiny collection of parasites in 1973. A Communist Party is always a Stalinist party of "class collaboration," even when it is a case of the Vietnamese Communist Party, which is conducting a form of class collaboration that Nixon and Thieu find unacceptable. An anarchist is always an anarchist, forgetting that during the war in Spain our movement made a distinction between Durutti and Federica Montseny.

You reason as though history repeated itself, as though there were nothing new under the sun: there was once a Popular Front, there will be a new Popular Front. Abstaining from any concrete analysis, you surrender yourself to formal analogies and thus avoid giving revolutionary politics the concrete content it must have to start from the concerns of the masses and raise their level of class consciousness. Seeing a popular front everywhere, you have been led in your letter to slander (we cannot use any other term) the Ligue Communiste by writing: "the comrades of the PRT-U [Revolutionary Workers Party of Uruguay] made [in the 1971 elections] an error that resembles the error made by the Ligue Communiste in the recent elections in France." You reason by syllogisms: The Broad Front [Frente Amplio] in Uruguay was a popular front. The Union of the Left is an "embryonic" popular front. The Broad Front thus equals the Union of the Left and the Ligue Communiste is thus placed in the same category as the PRT-U.

Unfortunately, this reasoning begins by omitting the objective conditions. The Broad Front was much worse than the Popular Front of 1935. It was a bourgeois operation led by General Seregni to gain his accession to the presidency. He used the organizations claiming to be part of the working class in the way the candidates of the Democratic Party in the United States use the trade unions. You also forget (and this is really monstrous) that the PRT-U demanded that it be accepted in the Broad Front, renewing the operation of the POUM [Workers Party of Marxist Unification] toward the Spanish Popular Front in 1935, an action that our movement, with Trotsky at its head, characterized as a betrayal. Moreover, the PRT-U printed sample ballots in its name that carried General Seregni at the head of the list and included some members of the PRT-U as subordinate candidates. Independently of the proposals it was able to put forward during the elections, the PRT-U had thus subordinated its activity on the general political level to the Broad Front, a sordid electoral combination. Did the Ligue demand affiliation to the Union of the Left? Did it mix its candidates together with those of the Union of the Left? To say that what the Ligue did during the March 1973 elections is identical with the conduct of the PRT-U toward the Broad Front—this is, we repeat, a slander against the Ligue. It certainly was not your intention to do that, but this is a consequence of your method of raising "principles" into dogmas and forgetting the concrete in each situation.

You make a reference in your letter to your belief that our orientation could "miseducate" the members of the Ligue and other sections. We are not very fond of being given lessons in place of political arguments. But since you do it, you force us to say a few words on the matter. In the internal discussion bulletins of the SWP we have noticed several articles by supporters of your tendency who raked the Ligue over the coals, but we have seen nothing from them about the PRT-U and the Broad Front. That is, permit us to point out, the result of your "education" or of your "miseducation." It is true that we are plunged in a tendency struggle, and that the PRT-U is the very obedient little sister of the Moreno organization. This is the same Moreno who finds a way to proclaim the necessity of an independent workers pole in an election campaign under a dictatorship that outlaws even the Communist Party, while at the same time defending, in a discussion with Campora, a program similar to that of Perón in the past. It is easier for you to find the mote in our eye than the beam in yours.

Your letter contains the following sentences, which are very revealing about the orientation you would like to give the entire International:

"At this stage in our development the sections of the Fourth International have no other reason for participating in elections than to utilize the electoral arena for propaganda purposes. Our primary purpose is to take *our program* to the broadest possible layers of the working class." [Emphasis in original.]

It is perhaps here that the fundamental point of our disagreements lies. You refuse to write a document of analysis and perspectives when it is a matter of a continent like Europe under the pretext that the differences between the countries that make up the continent are too great. Yet you do not hesitate to set one and the same task for *all* the organizations of the Trotskyist movement, regardless of the objective conditions in which each one of them operates, and regardless of the forces at their disposal and of their place in the political scene of their country. The primary, essential task, according to you, for all the sections of the Fourth International, is to make propaganda for our program. Of course propaganda for the Trotskyist program is a daily task of all the sections of the International. But the fundamental task of building revolutionary Marxist parties does not begin here. According to you, there are no other tasks for our sections but "propaganda" in the class struggle. You are not supporters of the intervention of our sections as sections, based precisely on this program, concretized in conjunction with the objective conditions. You support the intervention of our militants in struggles only when they intervene in the mass movements and on the political level of these movements. Your letter confirms this position, which was already set forth in Comrade Mary-Alice's article on the European document.

To place oneself on the level of the mass movements is to proceed to an arbitrary, opportunist choice, because it leaves the field open to all the deviations possible, inside and outside of our organization. Moreover, in making a distinction between "mass work" seen in this way and the "propaganda" of the sections, what becomes of the program itself? A bookish abstraction. The Transitional Program in particular was not made solely to be taught,

learned by heart, or recalled in every article. It should be employed by our sections, which have to concretize it in relation to the objective conditions. Our sections, acting in their own name, have to introduce the slogans formulated in it into the class struggle. They ought to do this even during election campaigns.

Your sentences on this subject also show your dogmatic way of approaching the question. For you, an election is the same thing for all the sections, whatever their longitude and latitude, whether the election takes place on a local or a national scale, whether it takes place under conditions of political apathy or revolutionary upsurge of the working class, whether our section is weak or strong. Once again you eliminate the concrete conditions of the political action in order to guide yourself only on "principles" taken in themselves.

We can understand the difficulties that the rudimentary existence of political life in the United States causes for you, and in consequence, the use you make of the slightest electoral possibility to get out propaganda, general socialist propaganda such as the pioneers of European socialism did for decades. We can understand the difficulties in a country where certain points of our program — the dictatorship of the proletariat, workers councils — have not appeared. But in Europe, and more particularly in France, this kind of propaganda is no longer necessary — the workers are only too familiar with it. *It is the debate on the conditions of the transition to socialism that is on the agenda.* This is why the Ligue has always approached the question of elections in a concrete fashion. We have deliberately left to the side all sorts of elections that had no political interest. In the municipal elections, we intervened in the large cities, where it was not a matter of indifference for workers whether they had a CP or UDR [Gaullist] municipal government. We intervened, to the general surprise of the whole political spectrum in France, with a candidate in the 1969 presidential election, because we understood the enormous political interest it would create about the Ligue and the whole Fourth International, and experience showed how correct we were. As for the legislative elections, we actively supported the boycott in June 1968 and we ran a hundred candidates in March 1973.

Why this difference? In 1968 we boycotted the elections because they were the fruit of the betrayal of the movement of May by the traditional leaders of the working class. At that time the only possible slogan was "Elections-Betrayal!" In 1973 we participated in the first and second round, but not as simply an occasion to make propaganda. In the present situation in France, the results of the election could not be a matter of indifference, either to the working class as a whole or to our movement in particular. The March 1973 elections could not, of course, have done anything to change the social system; but their results, that is, the composition of the National Assembly, could have very important political consequences. If a Union of the Left majority had emerged from the elections, or even a parliament without a majority for either side, the situation, already critical for the bourgeoisie, would have become even more critical. If Mitterrand were tomorrow elected president of the Republic, as the candidate of the Union of the Left, the situation in France would

not be long in reaching an extreme sharpness. By the way, how would you distinguish between Mitterrand the candidate of the Union of the Left, and Mitterrand the candidate of the Socialist Party? Perhaps it is not without use to point out that the majority of the leaders of the Ligue Communist broke with the CP in 1965 because the CP had decided to vote for Mitterrand, the "independent" bourgeois politician, under the pretext that he had the best chance to defeat De Gaulle. For us, elections are not simply periods of propaganda; we place them in the political context that produced them and each time adopt an appropriate orientation, keeping in mind the principles of revolutionary Marxism drawn from the history of the workers movement. In no case do we begin with abstract "principles," with categories that are independent of reality; we do not have a unique model of entirely confining our sections to general programmatic propaganda. This orientation, which you are supporting, is not the one found in the political resolution adopted by the Ninth World Congress, and by you in particular. The orientation adopted by the Ninth World Congress includes precisely the concept of going beyond essentially propagandistic cadre organizations in order to become—given the most favorable circumstances for Trotskyism—organizations capable of being factors of influence in class struggles. It is your right to withdraw from this orientation, but it is necessary to state it openly and not conceal it behind a struggle against a supposed ultraleftism menacing the Fourth International.

We reject entirely the concept you defend of "principles" raised to dogmas. We heard this concept formulated with a certain eloquence by one of you at the last meeting of the International Executive Committee meeting. Principles, he told us, were for him the same thing as a stop sign when he is on the highway; it is necessary to come to a halt. But for us, principles cannot be things that paralyze us, that immobilize us. We always begin by analyzing the situation in which we find ourselves and the perspectives that flow from it. In this way we determine the social tendencies it is necessary to work with to bring the movement forward. Of course, in doing this we refer to the past and its lessons, to the principles our movement has drawn from them. We refuse, however, to transform these principles into dogmas; instead, we apply them according to the materialist method and in conjunction with the conditions of the class struggle, which are constantly changing. To use your dogmatic method of

applying principles, it would be necessary to build a computer, not a revolutionary Marxist party. The best pages we have read on the application of principles to revolutionary politics are found in the chapter on "Tradition and Revolutionary Politics" in Trotsky's *The New Course*. Reread it. Here are just a few passages:

"Marxism is a method of historical analysis, of political orientation, and not a mass of decisions prepared in advance. . . .

"The simple appeal to tradition never decided anything. As a matter of fact, with each new task and at each new turn, it is not a question of searching in traditions and discovering there a non-existing reply, but of profiting from all the experience of the party to find by oneself a new solution suitable to the situation and, by doing so, enriching tradition. It may even be put more sharply: Leninism consists in being courageously free from conservative retrospection, from being bound by precedent, purely formal references and quotations. . . .

"The weapon of Marxian investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal reference or of an accidental quotation. . . .

"Leninism is orthodox, obdurate, irreducible, but it does not contain so much as a hint of formalism, canon, nor bureaucratism. In the struggle, it takes the bull by the horns. To make out of the traditions of Leninism a supra-theoretical guarantee of the infallibility of all the words and thoughts of the interpreters of these traditions, is to scoff at genuine revolutionary tradition and transform it into official bureaucratism. . . ."

We believe that we have been genuinely faithful to the revolutionary tradition as Trotsky set it forth in these pages. We do not doubt that in acting in this way we have made errors and may again make them. But we see this as the sole way to have revolutionary Marxism and the Fourth International go forward. We cannot have confidence in formalist methods, the dogmatic application of "principles" in themselves that give rise to bookish propaganda, that encourage routinism, and that lead finally only to political passivity.

June 14, 1973
Political Bureau

Passed unanimously with Comrade Roger abstaining because of disagreement on the question of the nature of the SP.

Some Questions of Method Concerning the European Document

By A. Duret

Mary-Alice Waters concludes her criticism of the resolution of *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe* by stating:

"The discussion on European perspectives and orientation is not fundamentally about 'Europe.' It is about differing approaches to and perspectives on party building." (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 3, March 1973, "A Criticism of the United Secretariat Majority Draft Resolution on 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' — An Initial Contribution to the Discussion," p. 27.)

This is really one of the most clairvoyant of Comrade Mary-Alice's statements. In fact, her document and those that have been introduced into the discussion since the International Executive Committee (IEC) meeting [December 2-6, 1972] indicate more and more the real points of difference between the two tendencies. It seems that the center of the debate is actually focusing on an *estimation of the changes in the objective conditions* of the general framework within which the development of the Fourth International has been taking place since 1967-68.

It is this context, which determines the development of the Fourth International and its sections, that the Ninth World Congress sought to come to grips with in emphasizing the fundamental changes that had taken place. The main features of the analysis can be summarized in the following manner:

- the appearance of decisive factors that determined — and always determine — *the rise of world revolution*;
- emphasis on the emergence of what has been called a new vanguard with a mass character, which in practice escapes the control of the reformist and bureaucratic apparatuses;
- emphasis on the existence of objective possibilities that make both *possible* and *necessary* the transition from propaganda activity to an activity that attributes a decisive role to revolutionary initiatives.

These three facts were the fundamental axis around which the Ninth World Congress turned and the present discussion takes place precisely within this framework; in this sense, it is quite natural that it be presented as being related to the "turn of the Ninth World Congress." The debate on building revolutionary parties in Europe takes place entirely within this context, as we are going to show.

To avoid all spurious discussion, it is necessary to emphasize immediately the nature of the "European document." In fact, a series of criticisms made by Comrade Mary-Alice — or by Joseph Hansen in his most recent contribution (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 12, July 1973, "The Underlying Differences in Method") — seem to stem from a lack of understanding of the real nature of this document, even though in the last analysis they raise *disagreements with the method*

used in the elaboration of this document. Nevertheless, perhaps it is not pointless to dwell once again on the nature of the "European document."

It is not a conjunctural document that is supposed to give identical and immediate tactical instructions for all the sections. *On this plane*, the uneven development among the different countries is still too profound. The European document does, however, emphasize and single out the *qualitative changes* and the *fundamental tendencies* that actually operate on the economic, social, and political levels. It seeks, therefore, to *analyze the period* in which we find ourselves and, from there, to indicate *the general lines along which we should build the sections*. This implies, therefore, that building the party is viewed in *relation to the maturity of the actual class struggle*, and not on the basis of some *ahistorical* recipe, some technique that sagely prescribes propaganda and recruitment of cadres.

Finally, contrary to the impression M.-A. Waters would give, this document is also the *expression of the experience of the European sections* in recent years. Of course there is no such thing as an innocent reading of documents during a debate, but nevertheless, it has not been pointless to state the function of the European resolution and re-establish the real terms of the discussion.

I. A Classical Method

1. Comrade M.-A. Waters's criticisms center, at first, on the heresy of wanting to *develop a strategic orientation* for a continent, because, in fact, this is just what is involved. Thus she writes: "The document tries to develop a single continental orientation to cover more than 15 countries as different as Finland, Sweden, or Norway from Portugal, Spain, or Greece. This method of deriving a tactical orientation is wrong and unrealistic." (p. 5.)

Does the majority of the United Secretariat suffer from a disease called "continentalism," or, more simply, has it just adopted the classical method of Marxism for elaborating a document on *strategic orientation*?

In fact, the entire method used in this document conforms to a fundamental rule of Marxism, the one that *consists of starting from the general to go to the particular*, that consists of starting from the *laws of development* and then, on the basis of their analysis, *integrating the specific national circumstances*.

This method, one could even say, is the only way different sections can orient themselves and carry out an analysis of the concrete reality in their country. And to the extent that this analysis is integrated in the context of an understanding of the totality of the fundamental tendencies operating in reality, it will not impel them to either overestimate or underestimate the specific national circumstances. Outside of this method there is only one path: *eclecticism*, which consists in starting from the *multi-*

plicity of specific national circumstances and opens the door to impressionism and pragmatism.

Trotsky followed precisely this method when, starting from an analysis of a potential *qualitative change* in Germany, he developed the broad outlines of a tendency operating in Western Europe:

"In the era of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, which passed entirely under the aegis of capitalist offensive and fascist reaction, we wrote that if the German revolution did not grow directly out of the situation existing at the time and did not thereby give a new direction to the entire political development of Europe, then one could with complete assurance expect the replacement of the fascist chapter by a conciliationist chapter, in particular the coming of a labor government to power in England, and that of the Left Bloc in France. At the time this forecast seemed to some to be the sowing of . . . conciliationist illusions. (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 1, p. 9.)

This method, which consists of putting the emphasis on determining the tendencies that are operating on a continental scale (Europe in this particular case), is at the very least a classical element of Marxism. And it is precisely this method that justifies the act of projecting a strategic orientation for "entire continents." When you start from an analysis of fundamental tendencies, a strategic orientation *must* emerge. Lenin followed exactly this method when he wrote, in "The Collapse of the Second International":

"With the outbreak of the war of 1914-15, it (European socialism) entered the stage of revolutionary action; there can be no doubt that the time has come for a complete break with opportunism, for its expulsion from the workers' parties.

"This definition of the tasks the new era of international development confronts socialism with does not, of course, immediately show how rapidly and in what definite forms the process of separation of the workers' revolutionary Social-Democratic parties from the petty-bourgeois opportunist parties will proceed in the various countries. It does, however, reveal the need to clearly realize that such a separation is inevitable, and that the entire policy of the workers' parties must be directed from this standpoint." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 249-50.)

From the point of view of methodology, the European resolution follows this method as well. *No one, of course, would deny the differences* that exist between the different countries, the differences that exist between France, Italy, Spain, and Germany or Sweden. But the essential point—if one understands the function of such a document—is to emphasize the direction of the fundamental tendency *that has already emerged* in different countries (France, Italy, Spain, England) and that *will emerge tomorrow* in others. This is based, of course, on a reality none other than the relatively high *homogeneity* of Europe on the socioeconomic and political plane. It is only necessary to rapidly examine the discussions at the first three congresses of the Communist International to realize that the same method was used in the debates on the orientation of the European Communist parties. Moreover, it is incontestable that socioeconomic integration on a European scale was much less advanced then than it is today.

2. In reality, one can see that the debate should not focus on "continental schematism" but instead on the con-

tent of the fundamental tendency emphasized in the "European document," on the *characterization of the period*. In 1915, in the debate Lenin had with other socialist tendencies on *the strategic orientation of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war*, he already posed this problem very concretely, indicating that it was not a matter of determining whether or not it was warranted to set forth a strategic orientation, but of determining whether there was agreement on *the analysis of the period*:

"We are now faced with the following alternative: either we are really and truly convinced that the war is creating a revolutionary situation in Europe, and that all the economic and socio-political circumstances of the imperialist period are leading up to a revolution of the proletariat—in which case we are in duty bound to explain to the masses the need for revolution, call for it, create the necessary organisations, and speak fearlessly and most concretely of the various methods of the forcible struggle and its 'technique.' This duty of ours does not depend upon whether the revolution will be strong enough, or whether it will arrive with a first or second imperialist war, etc. Or else we are not convinced that the situation is revolutionary, in which case there is no sense in our just talking about a war against war." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 390, "Revolutionary Marxists at the International Socialist Conference.")

The debate, therefore, focuses on the content of the tendency, on the analysis of the period, although this is not always very explicit in Comrade Mary-Alice's criticism. Since she does not approach the question openly, her positions give us a glimpse of a disagreement and some contradictions.

Thus she states right at the beginning: "One of the gravest errors made in the European document is the mechanical way in which it tries to derive the central party-building tasks before each of the European sections of the Fourth International today from an analysis of previous revolutionary upsurges and from the need to prepare for the emergence of organs of dual power in coming prerevolutionary crises." (p. 15.) What is she driving at? It seems at least doubtful that she could mean to say that the determination of our tasks does not begin with an analysis of concrete reality! Does she have doubts then about the very analysis of "previous revolutionary situations," about their nature, their extent, their significance? This is not very clear.

We find ourselves tranquilized, however, when Comrade Mary-Alice writes, in what we might call the "majority style": "How is the perspective in Europe to be estimated? Are we in a period marked by a new rise of workers struggles? Of course. Is it correct to say that such a period will not last indefinitely, that if wave after wave of struggle is defeated the bourgeoisie will succeed in forcefully imposing its solutions? Of course. Is it correct to project the possibility of explosive new prerevolutionary crises and revolutionary upsurges in one or more countries in the next four to five years? Of course. Will such explosions have repercussions throughout Europe? Certainly. Are there exceptional opportunities before us in the coming period for party building? Absolutely." (p. 12.)

Well then, if we can expect that the precipitous rise of struggles will continue, if we can state that explosions on a level with that of May 1968 in France will occur, is it not correct, within this context, to not only "foresee this possibility" but draw from it the practical con-

sequences for all spheres? Of course the rhythms and circumstances can vary from country to country, but can we not orient the sections toward the tasks that *objectively flow* from such a situation? Why has Comrade Mary-Alice not taken a single step in this direction? Why does she quickly retreat behind accusations of mechanism and apocalyptic visions?

Once again, we believe that the answer must be sought in the disagreement over the period, a disagreement that reveals itself when the comrade states that the document underestimates certain effects of the "international détente." She writes: "The exact shape and extent of the new 'peaceful coexistence' deals between Moscow, Peking, Washington and the other imperialist powers will have consequences that are as yet only vaguely discernible. Paradoxically, the projection of a timetable abstracted from all major political developments of the class struggle on an international plane gives the European document an almost 'surrealistic' quality." (p. 13.)

To the contrary, however, the "European document" stresses the fact that a reversal of the situation is fundamentally impossible except to the extent that the decisive factors that determine the present situation undergo a change. By this we mean essentially: *a serious defeat of the working masses in Europe, or in a key sector of the world revolution.* And we see once again that what is stressed as determining a reversal of the situation actually expresses a disagreement on the *nature of this crisis* that the European document points out. Furthermore, the objections about the centrality of work in the working class or about concentrating on workers control as a strategic axis can only be justified to the extent that there is a difference over the characterization of the period. If this is not the case, they would then stem either from misunderstanding or from a debate that would more properly be verbal.

Since this whole question underlies the discussion, it is regrettable that Comrade Mary-Alice did not approach it directly and call into question more precisely and openly the estimation of the period made in the resolution of the United Secretariat majority.

3. While vigorously denouncing the European document's pretensions of projecting a strategic orientation of the whole of Europe, Comrade Mary-Alice—like Comrade Hansen in his latest document (p. 36)—does not fail to point out that the resolution also sins by its lack of a concrete program for trade-union work, women's liberation work, etc. "It even fails to sketch out a concrete program for the construction of class-struggle left wings in the trade unions today." (p. 5.) This statement is, at the very least, astonishing. On the one hand, the comrade states that "the alternative to 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' is not an omnibus counterdocument for all of Europe. We reject this approach. . . ." (p. 27.) On the other hand, she demands from the document the outline of a concrete program for trade-union work. It seems to us somewhat difficult to insist with such vigor, and at the same time, on these two demands.

In the last analysis, if one disputes the possibility of developing a strategic analysis on a European scale, how can one not dispute an attempt to outline a program of concrete demands for trade-union work? The presentation of a series of proposals and forms of action requires

precisely *a concrete analysis of the concrete situation of each country, at each stage.* Without that, one reduces the program to a list of good-for-all-occasion demands. Is it not precisely in adopting such a method that one falls into the trap of seeking to come out with a document that is *abstract, schematic, and rigid*, a document whose appearance of concreteness is based on a list of demands and not on a primary appreciation of fundamental tendencies and the outline of a strategic orientation? Here we have an ahistorical conception of party building that would prescribe dosages, more or less scientifically, from the magic recipe of party building—propaganda and the recruitment of cadres!

4. In the same context, Comrade Mary-Alice launches a vigorous attack on the "apocalyptic" vision contained, according to her, in the resolution of the United Secretariat majority. She writes: "The document advances a dogmatic timetable that gives all of Europe only four to five years before the 'decisive battles' are fought to determine which class will rule for the next historical period." (p. 5.)

Before taking up the fundamental question that appears here, it will perhaps be useful to place the statement the comrade is alluding to in its context in the document in order to avoid *falsifying* the real significance of the resolution.

Right at the beginning the document states: "But the fact that we are only at the beginning of the deepening social crisis, that neither the extent of unemployment nor the political level of the workers' struggles yet confronts the bourgeoisie with an immediate question of life or death, allows us to envisage a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought." (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 5, November 1972, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," p. 11.) In order to bring out the real meaning of this statement, let us clarify it by considering other passages in the resolution that focus on the same question: "As a result of a fifteen-year decline in the industrial reserve army of labor, the European proletariat has confronted this phase with firm ranks, a higher degree of unionization, and an increased confidence in its own strength. In these conditions, a rapid and crushing defeat of the working class is virtually ruled out. *We must therefore prepare ourselves for years of intense social struggles, in which there will be ups and downs, and for enduring possibilities of revolutionary upsurges, depending on advances in raising class consciousness and strengthening the revolutionary vanguard.* (p. 10. Emphasis in original.)

Since the misunderstandings on the meaning of the incriminating phrase do not seem to be due solely to chance, perhaps another citation will help draw out even more the profound meaning of the question of timetables. "In reality, the explosion of generalized mass struggles has deep objective roots in the social and political crisis confronting the regime. 'Errors' by the rulers can contribute toward touching off such explosions only in the sense of determining the precise moment and occasion, not in the sense of actually causing them or of being able in the long run to avert them. On the contrary, the preceding phase of such explosions has in general been characterized by the successive—or combined—use of *every* possible variant in policy on the part of the rulers—the repressive variant as well as the "reformist" variant. One of the factors

precisely determining when the explosion will occur is the exhaustion of all these variants and the unconcealable impasse of bourgeois policy that results. The question therefore boils down to this: Is the objective scope of the crisis in capitalist social relations such that *in spite of* all the lessons the bourgeoisie and the reformist apparatuses within the workers' movement have learned from the past, similar blind-alleys *have to periodically* (though obviously not constantly, nor even every two or three years) reappear? (P. 16. Emphasis in original.)

Thus it seems unambiguous that the meaning of the incriminating statement is nothing but the following: the precipitous upsurge in workers' struggles cannot go on indefinitely. Insofar as *there is no substantial crisis in working-class combativity*—and this is confirmed in France, in Italy, in Great Britain, in Spain—we are moving toward a more important upsurge, all the more so if the workers' standard of living is seriously attacked, something that has not been the case up till now. *More precisely*, we state that even apart from a decisive intervention of the sections of the Fourth International, it may happen that explosive situations will give birth to *embryonic situations of dual power*. And it is this that we should prepare ourselves for. The document does not state that these situations will lead to a socialist revolution, nor that we will be able to lead them to victory. It is content to define the objective possibilities of such situations and the necessity of determining our tasks on the basis of the dynamic of the entire context.

Finally, the document emphasizes that if no positive opening appears, that if a certain number of transformations do not occur during this period, *the general context of the class struggle will be transformed*. This will be expressed very concretely by the fact that the type of initiatives, the type of movements, that have become possible since 1968 (and that were not possible before then) will again become impossible. We will be entering *another phase* of the class struggle.

In no way does the document conclude that, in this case, only a fascist solution can occur, contrary to what the critique of the document would have one believe when it states: "Isn't it possible there can be new May 1968s that will not result in historic defeats on the order of fascism?" (p. 13.)

The document states nothing other than that we are entering a new phase, one that is *essentially different*. In fact, the very *nature* of the working-class upsurge implies that a victory of the bourgeoisie would be a victory of some consequence, of a scope sufficient to reestablish stability, the power of the bosses in the plants, the conditions necessary for an increase in the rate of exploitation and for assuring an increase in the rate of profit. Such a victory could lead to different variants running from a strong state; to a combination (as in Italy, for example) of a very definitely center-right, authoritarian government, with military elements; to a solution for England such as De Gaulle in 1958; etc. Furthermore, the document does not state that this will be the case for all the countries, but for those in which a working-class upsurge of real breadth occurs. It is clear, however, that whether the outcome leads in one direction or another, what happens in these countries will have repercussion on other countries. Any attempt to compartmentalize the situations in different European countries can lead us to dangerous

errors of perspective.

Once again it is necessary to insist on the fact that *this concept is the classic and correct method of Leninist analysis*. Trotsky himself stressed the importance of knowing how to understand timetables. He wrote in 1929:

"It is necessary to know how to distinguish the first symptoms, which for the moment do not go beyond the economic sphere, to adapt one's tactics to these symptoms, and to follow attentively the evolution of the process [*of the radicalization of the masses*]. At the same time, *one must not lose sight of the general character of our epoch*, which has demonstrated more than once and will demonstrate again that between the first symptoms of motion and the furious rush that creates a revolutionary situation, there are not necessarily 40 years, but perhaps five times or even 10 times less." (*Le Mouvement Communiste en France*, "Conjunctural Crisis and Revolutionary Crisis," p. 305.)

This concept is expressly based on what Trotsky called attention to in a systematic fashion: the existence of *cycles of struggle*, which are not mechanically linked to industrial cycles. And this is exactly what we are saying—that we are in a certain cycle of struggle that has an internal logic and will not last forever. At the time of the Third Congress of the Communist International, Trotsky stressed the existence of these *cycles of struggle, their tendency toward becoming generalized, and their own limits*. In his theses for the Third World Congress of the Communist International on "The International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern," he wrote:

"It is absolutely incontestable that on a world scale the open revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for power is at present passing through a stoppage, a slowing down in tempo. But in the very nature of things, it was impossible to expect that the revolutionary offensive after the war, insofar as it failed to result in an immediate victory, should go on developing uninterruptedly along an upward curve. Political evolution, too, has cycles of its own, its ups and downs. The enemy does not remain passive, but keeps on fighting. If the offensive of the proletariat is not crowned by victory, the bourgeoisie seizes the very first opportunity for a counter-offensive. The loss by the proletariat of some of its easily won positions produces a temporary depression in its ranks." (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 1, p. 260.)

On the existence and generalization of such cycles of struggle, Trotsky is even more specific when he writes:

"In its most general form, this cycle [in the life of the French proletariat] is characteristic not only for France, but for all of Europe, and in large measure for the entire world. What is characteristic for France is the relatively moderate amplitude of the oscillations between the highest levels and the lowest levels of the cycle. . . . First of all, let us establish that the figures for 1928-29 with regard to the preceding period in a way characterize the beginning of a new cycle in the life of the proletariat. . . ." (*Le Mouvement Communiste en France*, "What is the Radicalization of the Masses?" p. 294-95.)

The European document was elaborated on the basis of the same method. By concentrating its analysis on the qualitative changes occurring in the socioeconomic and political reality, it determined *the emergence of a new cycle of struggle*, one that manifests the classical tenden-

cies toward generalization but also obeys "internal" laws of development. In that sense, this concept is radically opposed to that of Comrade Mary-Alice. She remains in the sphere of total indeterminism and tends to consider the present epoch of rising working-class struggles in Europe as simply expressing the fact that there are more struggles, that perhaps there will be even more, but not that we find ourselves in a totally new cycle.

5. Since they have been accused of *schematicism*, the authors of the European document can, without great risk, ask the question: On which side does the schematicism lie?

Does the schematicism not lie, on the contrary, with those who propose a "*technique*" for building parties that has no relation to a clear definition of objective conditions, with those who propose a series of demands apart from even any precise characterization of the nature of the working-class upsurge in Europe, of its dynamic, of the nature of the cycle of struggle that today determines—to different degrees, according to the country—the life of the proletariat on a European scale? This can lead to outlining an intervention in the mass movement without considering the *objective perspectives*, and thus to an extremely diminished capacity (and thus an inevitable impressionism) to discern what is actually going to happen in the mass movement and the repercussions that this can have on the development of the level of consciousness of the masses.

After all, what does Comrade Mary-Alice mean when she writes: "One of the gravest errors made in the European document is the mechanical way in which it tries to derive the central party-building tasks . . . from an analysis of previous revolutionary upsurges and from the need to prepare for the emergence of organs of dual power in coming prerevolutionary crises"? (p. 15.) We can eliminate at the outset the question of disagreement on the period; we have already underlined this disagreement. What then? Is it a difference in method? We think so. The introduction of the adjective "mechanical" serves only to conceal the real question, since it is evident to every attentive reader that the resolution is swarming with warnings about mechanical judgments. The document itself is an expression of the rejection of every sort of mechanism. So the differences really rest on the method of determining the broad outlines for party building. But is it not the ABC of revolutionary Marxism that we start with the objective conditions to determine *our possibilities, our program, our demands, and our tactics for building the party*? Trotsky, in the Transitional Program, insisted on the fundamental character of this method: "The orientation of the masses is determined first by the objective conditions of decaying capitalism, and second, by the treacherous politics of the old workers' organizations. Of these factors, the first of course is the decisive one: the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus." (p. 74.)

It seems that for Comrade Mary-Alice, everything is much more simple! The objective perspectives that determine the mass movement, explosions of the magnitude of May 1968—which, by the way, she recognizes as possible—are not *determining factors for the practical orientation of our sections*. Thus, she writes, "Unfortunately, our central task is much more elementary than preparing for dual power. It is *recruiting and educating* the basic nucleus of cadres who will be able to win

a base in the working class and build a mass Trotskyist party capable of handling every political situation that arises, including the development of dual power." (p. 15.)

We do not deny the importance of recruiting and training cadres—this is one of the very functions of our strategy of winning hegemony in the vanguard—but we reject this ahistorical and abstract concept of building a revolutionary party. *The logic of this concept leads to the position that the nature of the period is somehow secondary*; and from there, what is to stop one from ending up stating that an objectively revolutionary situation is impossible to the extent that the party does not exist prior to the development of this situation? Fundamentally, this is the internal dynamic of a position that makes building the party an end in itself.

II. The New Mass Vanguard

Comrade Mary-Alice trains her second batch of criticisms on the concept of a new vanguard of mass character. On the one hand, the comrade emphasizes that "the term 'new mass vanguard' . . . is a confused and disorienting label. . . ." (p. 6.) On the other hand, she says that "the document rejects the possibility of building mass revolutionary parties before the projected showdown and mistakenly counterposes an orientation of winning hegemony within the 'new mass vanguard' or of 'transforming the vanguard' into an 'adequate instrument.'" (p. 5.) Let us examine these objections a little more closely.

1. We have already insisted on the centrality of the concept of the new vanguard of a mass character in relation to the Ninth World Congress. Seen in this light, the turn of the Ninth World Congress was made on the basis of the following two-part declaration:

- the actual existence of a new mass vanguard that, even if it were only viewed quantitatively, is a new phenomenon in comparison to all the developments since the period immediately following World War I;

- the deepening of the crisis of the capitalist system and the bureaucratic systems has diminished the degree of control of the bureaucratic and reformist apparatuses. *It flows from this that, on the one hand, a new rise in struggles and, on the other hand, the existence of this broad vanguard create the conditions for mass actions that escape the control of the traditional leaderships.*

This is the heart of the matter. One can either deny the existence of this broad vanguard and the new relationship that it implies between the revolutionary Marxists and the traditional organizations; or (and this is the actual case) one can question—without openly saying so—the extent and nature of the new rise of struggles that, in giving a new impetus to the broad vanguard, also acquire a new character in view of the existence of this broad vanguard. Here, once again, we find ourselves in a discussion of the character of the period.

2. Is the concept of a broad vanguard so new, so baffling, that it approaches revisionism? In point of fact, *this concept is one of the contributions of Leninism* and represents a historical reality. In the period immediately following the first world war, this vanguard was inside the Social Democracy and furnished the base of the Communist parties. At the end of the 1920s, it was inside the Communist parties, and it was toward it that the

Left Opposition centered its attention. In the 1930s, it emerged in the form of new layers within the Social-Democratic parties, and once again the revolutionary Marxist movement focused its work in its direction. The matter can be posed in the following way: depending on the location of the vanguard, on its dynamic in relation to the total context, *revolutionary Marxists develop different modes of intervention toward this vanguard*. Thus in 1919 Trotsky emphasized that the key question is precisely the relations between this working-class vanguard and the traditional organizations, and that the political *recomposition* of the working class is going to depend on the vanguard's break with these traditional organizations—a fact that demands a certain type of intervention toward it by communists:

"The official trade-union and party organizations, associated in the minds of workers with the idea of their emancipation, have become the instruments of capitalism. Because of this, the working class not only faces incredible organizational difficulties but also a veritable disaster in the realm of ideology; the difficulties it must surmount to break loose from this stand in proportion to the role the old organization plays in the life of vanguard working-class layers." (*Le Mouvement Communiste en France, "French Socialism on the Eve of the Revolution,"* pp. 58-59.)

In comparison to the various historical examples cited above, the *specific character* of the new vanguard of a mass character lies in the fact that it *has developed, in part, outside the traditional organizations, and, in part, outside the working class*.

In this context, it would be absolutely incorrect and fruitless to analyze it in a static fashion, using *categories that are strictly sociological* or electoral. It should be considered, instead, *on the basis of the dynamics of the class struggle*.

In the first place, *it is incorrect to try to reduce it to the radicalized youth*. In a number of countries, the *working-class layers* of the vanguard—the layers of workers who have *broken in practice* with the reformist organizations, the layers of workers who have *opposed* in practice the reformist leaderships—have, in absolute terms, a weight greater than, or at least equal to, the student layers, the layers of radicalized youth. This is the case in Spain and England.

The relative social composition of this vanguard can change, and the relative weight can shift. In Italy, for example, changes have come about since 1969 in the relationship between the student vanguard and the working-class vanguard; this has occurred in the context of a ripening of the class struggle. It is clear that since 1967 the student vanguard has played an important role in the development of forms of struggle and has, objectively, played a role in the politicization of layers of workers, with all the weaknesses we are well aware of. But since 1969, in the context of the extremely harsh confrontations that marked the entire period of 1969-73, particularly in the months that saw battles for contracts (the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973) unfold, a quantitatively and qualitatively new working-class vanguard slowly emerged and was forged. Unless this phenomenon is understood, any analysis of the struggles that unfolded in Italy these last few months is rendered useless. This working-class vanguard—which, since 1969, has itself been

changed and has been politicized—has known how to express the elementary demands of the class and play a decisive role in the leading of struggles. It has counterposed, in practice (*with limits* that are obvious), *class demands* to the *demands of even the most demagogic of the trade-union leaderships* (the "left-wing" tendency of FIOM [Metalworkers union]).

One has only to examine the process that led to the occupation of Fiat (the end of March and beginning of April 1973) to understand the breadth and the role of this vanguard. A single quantitative indication can help us to better understand the problem: despite the open opposition of the trade-union leaders, more than 5,000 workers *organized* the occupation; the pickets stopped the entry and exit of all merchandise. The nature of this working-class vanguard should not, of course, be mystified, nor should its weakness, its lack of *political education* (which should not be confused with politicization) be underestimated. But it is necessary to insist on its decisive role in the conduct of the struggle and in the confrontation in practice with the bureaucratic apparatuses. While a part of this vanguard is still within the Italian Communist Party, this does not mean that the CP leadership has, as it did in the 1950s, hegemony in the vanguard. What has actually happened is that given the lack of a sufficiently credible pole of attraction, a part of this vanguard has stayed within the CP and belongs to it. But *its activity* is carried out within the trade unions, in the delegate's councils, much more than within the party in the traditional sense. This has led it to confront very concretely the perspectives outlined by the CP leadership. Thus in Italy, after five years of struggle, a working-class vanguard has appeared that in some ways resembles the vanguard Trotsky described in 1936, when writing on France:

"That leaders have come forward in the industries and in the factories is the foremost conquest of the first wave [of strikes]. The elements of local and regional staffs have been created. The masses know them. They know each other. Real revolutionists will seek contact with them. Thus the first self-mobilization of the masses has outlined and in part brought forward the first elements of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred, revitalized, and regenerated the whole colossal class organism. The old organizational shell has by no means dropped away. On the contrary, it still retains its hold quite stubbornly. But under it the new skin is already visible." (*Whither France, "The French Revolution Has Begun,"* p. 154.)

As we have seen, the features of the broad vanguard in Italy have changed after five years of struggle; the way in which the student component and the working-class component of the vanguard with a mass character interact has changed. Today more than ever, this broad vanguard is a determining element for launching struggles and for changing the relationship of forces with the bureaucratic apparatuses, as well as for building the revolutionary party.

One sees clearly that any attempt to approach the question of the broad vanguard from a strictly sociological point of view, as Comrade Mary-Alice does, is an error that flows from a failure to understand the objective process of the youth and working-class radicalization in Europe. We do not deny that this *process is different* in different countries, that the rhythms of this broad vanguard's emergence and the modalities of its appearance

depend on a number of factors (level of struggle, class composition, weight of the Stalinist parties and the trade unions, interaction between working-class mobilizations and student mobilizations, etc.). It is essential, however, to understand the *function*, the *role*, this broad vanguard can have in modifying the relationship of forces between the revolutionary Marxists and the traditional organizations, between the leaderships of these organizations and their rank-and-file, etc.

3. Before taking up the strategy of "hegemony in the vanguard" and its "transformation into an adequate instrument," it seems necessary to briefly take up two questions.

If it is obvious that one must not in any way underestimate the hold of the traditional leaderships—a specific warning that appears in the European document—it would be just as incorrect to measure the strength of this hold *by means of strictly electoral criteria*. Adopting such a method could lead to a completely incorrect position in determining an overall revolutionary perspective in those countries where the dominance of the traditional organizations in the electoral arena is overwhelming (e.g., England). From the point of view of method, we must examine whether the workers break—in practice—with the traditional reformist or Stalinist organizations. It is from this perspective—and not the electoral perspective—that one must view the changes under way in the relationship of forces between the rank and file and the leaderships, between the revolutionary Marxists and the new working-class vanguard.

The second danger consists in trying to approach the phenomenon of this new vanguard using only *ideological criteria*. On the one hand, this new vanguard is far from being composed only of elements whose ideology is already crystalized and was acquired within one of the "revolutionary left" organizations. On the other hand, it seems to us that it is dangerous to believe that the various organizations that exist within this broad vanguard are "opponent organizations." This is what Comrade Mary-Alice implies when she writes: ". . . the 'new mass vanguard' contains . . . depending on the country, hundreds or thousands of individuals belonging to organizations of our political *opponents*." (p. 6. Emphasis in original.) Such a concept can lead us to a sectarian practice that not only cuts us off from an important part of the unorganized, *but also leads to destroying the potentialities of the broad vanguard and its capacity to have an important influence on the forward development of the mass organizations*. It is necessary to state clearly that we see a difference between the militants who make up the organizations of the broad vanguard and the reformist or Stalinist counterrevolutionary bureaucrats.

In fact, *in practice, in reality*, these militants work with us, with the revolutionary Marxist forces, whether it is a question of a fight for the formation of a strike committee or for the formation of a self-defense picket, or even in the trade-union arena, despite the important differences that may exist. In Europe, many examples have shown that insofar as we are *capable of taking initiatives*, we are likely to influence in practice the elements organized in, or sympathetic to, these currents (Maoist, Maoist-spontanéist, centrists of various stripes, etc.), even if we have not yet won them over ideologically, or will

never win them over. But we can go even further. *Unity in action* with them—which in no way impedes or restrains ideological battle with these currents—is often the very condition for being able to develop a movement whose weight constitutes a real political force and is likely to actually influence the evolution of the working-class masses still organized within the traditional organizations.

Here is one example. The appearance of a "strike committee" during the wildcat strike of the Antwerp [Belgium] longshoremen would have been impossible without an agreement among the diverse political elements making up the vanguard (from the Maoists to the militants of the CP); nor would the organization and development of the strike have reached the level it did. Another example—although one with a different relationship of forces between the different currents—is the high school and apprentice movement, in which the Communist League played a fundamental role in May 1973. It is thus a *contradictory relationship* that we are developing with the other currents of the vanguard, a relationship that implies both permanent ideological combat and unity in action.

In conclusion, it seems clear that any attempt to grasp the reality of this new vanguard on the basis of criteria that are *solely quantitative, sociological, or ideological* can only lead to an impasse. Using only these criteria it is impossible to account for a real phenomenon whose basic importance emerges only when one considers it in the perspective of the *possibilities of making use of the new vanguard as an instrument directed toward the traditional organizations*.

4. It is, of course, on this question of the *functional capacity* of the new vanguard with a mass character that Comrade Mary-Alice centers a great part of her criticisms.

First, she loudly proclaims the *dangers of substitutionism* . . . and since the European document says exactly the contrary, she shouts all the louder! The comrade writes: "The document rejects the possibility of building mass revolutionary parties before the projected showdown and mistakenly counterposes an orientation of winning hegemony within the 'new mass vanguard' or of 'transforming the vanguard' into an 'adequate instrument.'" (p. 5.)

We will not even take up the first part of this statement because this is in no way indicated in the European document. Let us come to the real problem. In neither letter nor spirit does the European document counterpose the task of building the party to the attempt to gain hegemony in the vanguard or to "transform it into an adequate instrument." *On the contrary*. Winning political hegemony in the vanguard does not, in fact, imply renouncing recruitment and the training of cadres. Instead, it implies just the opposite, the possibility of *accelerating the process of recruitment and training of cadres*. When this task is indicated as a central task, it is precisely, as the document says, ". . . in order to build qualitatively stronger revolutionary organizations than in the preceding stage. . . ." (p. 13.) Because, in effect, the acceleration of the process of recruitment requires a demonstration of our capacity to go beyond the propaganda stage to reach the stage of intervention. Today, within the new vanguard with a mass character—whose reality

is so undeniable that Comrade Mary-Alice can hardly contest it—the possibilities of recruitment are determined, *in part*, by our capacity to take initiatives, to propose initiatives and objectives to the mass movement, and to intervene in struggles. This has been confirmed—to different degrees—everywhere in Europe; and this is so precisely *because the broad vanguard has become aware of its capacity to launch struggles, even mass struggles.*

We refuse, however, to reduce the role of this vanguard to something that offers us an arena for recruitment, which seems to be the concept of our comrade when she writes: "The tactical flexibility required for organizing, recruiting, educating, and fighting to win the leadership of these different components of the 'new mass vanguard' demands first of all an understanding that we are not dealing with just one huge undifferentiated mass called 'vanguard.'" (p. 7.)

When we state the necessity of winning political hegemony in the broad vanguard—through our capacity for initiative and ideological combat—it is because we want to avoid seeing the forces there become dispersed and fail to use all their influence on the traditional organizations and on the evolution of the consciousness of the working-class masses still organized within the Social-Democratic or Stalinist organizations. Is one adopting a substitutionist position when one states, as the document does (a statement Comrade Mary-Alice carefully refrains from citing, although it pertains precisely to this point): ". . . to win hegemony within this new mass vanguard . . . requires a *constant political struggle* within this vanguard to transform it, making it *an adequate instrument for recomposing the organized workers' movement.*" (p. 14. Emphasis added.) Thus the term "adequate instrument" signifies nothing but *this obvious fact*: the new mass vanguard can—to the extent that we win political hegemony—assume a determining function in changing the relationship of forces between the revolutionary Marxists and the Social-Democratic and Stalinist parties, between the rank and file of these parties and their leaderships! Isn't this exactly what the Ligue Communiste succeeded in doing—following its uncompromising political battle against "Revolution!"—when it played a leading role in the May 1973 mobilization?

5. But Comrade Mary-Alice holds that this strategy, which consists of gaining political hegemony in the vanguard, leads to taking "the concerns of the vanguard" as the starting point for our political initiatives, rather than the objective needs of the working masses nationally and internationally." (p. 5.) Farther on, she emphasizes that "in reality they are adaptations to its [the vanguard's] political backwardness. The other [path] is firmly based on the *method* of the Transitional Program, which aims at mobilizing the masses in struggle, whatever their level of consciousness, and moving them forward toward the socialist revolution.

"Even when we are not yet able to mobilize the working masses behind our own banner (or the banner of a united front in which we participate), even though only the 'vanguard' is following us, we still organize that 'vanguard,' large or small, in actions that speak to the needs and consciousness of the masses, not the concerns of the 'vanguard.'" (p. 8. Emphasis in original.)

First, in order to eliminate any misunderstanding, it is necessary to state that we do not deny the possibility

of an *occasional counterposition* between the concerns of the vanguard and the *objective needs* of the masses. It is precisely for this reason that the resolution states clearly that the sections "can, after reaching a certain threshold, win a political following among a layer of young vanguard workers by means of two tactics that must be used as much as possible in the present stage: (1) organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, *do not run against the current of mass struggles. . . .*" (p. 24. Emphasis added.)

But what emerges from the statements of Comrade Mary-

Alice is that she sees, *in general terms, in a methodological fashion*, a counterposition between the concerns of the vanguard and the objective needs of the masses. But such statements contradict the entire Leninist tradition, which holds that winning over the masses requires precisely the methodology proposed in the European document. Lenin, in his "Speech in Defence of the Tactics of the Communist International" at the Third Congress of the Comintern, stated:

". . . the concept of 'masses' . . . is one that changes in accordance with the changes in the nature of the struggle. At the beginning of the struggle it took only a few thousand genuinely revolutionary workers to warrant talk of the masses. If the party succeeds in drawing into struggle not only its own members, if it also succeeds in arousing non-party people, it is well on the way to winning the masses. During our revolutions there were instances when several thousand workers represented the masses. In the history of our movement, and of our struggle against the Mensheviks, you will find many examples where several thousand workers in a town were enough to give a clearly mass character to the movement. You have a mass when several thousand non-party workers, who usually live a philistine life and drag out a miserable existence, and who have never heard anything about politics, begin to act in a revolutionary way. . . . When the revolution has been sufficiently prepared, the concept of 'masses' becomes different. . . ." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 475-76.)

We are saying essentially the same thing. If we are in fact capable of undertaking new initiatives, if we are capable of intervening in a correct way so that initiatives we stimulate not only *mobilize the new broad vanguard and raise its level of consciousness*, but are also *capable of being assimilated by broader layers*—then and only then are we changing the conditions necessary for a more extensive and more radical challenge to the hegemony of the reformist leaderships. In France, when we take the initiative of stimulating the formation of "strike committees" and "watchdog committees" to oversee the contracts—like at EGF in Brest—the militants of the Ligue Communiste were simply applying the European document. On the one hand, they took an initiative that corresponded to the concerns and needs of the working-class vanguard; on the other hand, they developed an initiative that could be assimilated by broader layers and that can then play the role of a catalyst in the consciousness of the working masses. In stimulating the self-organization of the movement of high school students, university students, and apprentices, the Ligue Communiste was developing an initiative that corresponded to the concerns of the broad vanguard—in this case a vanguard dominated by high

school and university students—while at the same time creating the model of a pre-soviet (the centralized action committees) within French social and political reality. And this can have important repercussions insofar as this "model" indicates and makes tangible the type of self-organizing that, within the framework of a big upsurge in the working class, the workers must adopt to centralize their struggle. In this sense, the self-organization of the high school movement goes far beyond the limits of the student movement and can have an impact on the development of revolutionary perspectives in France.

By adopting this method we will first, strengthen ourselves in the broad vanguard; second, develop the contradictions that exist between the concerns of the vanguard, the needs of the masses, and the objective needs of the reformist leaderships, of the Stalinist bureaucracy; so that finally, we shall be able to assemble the conditions for effectively influencing the masses during a later stage, a stage that specifically implies a ripening of the consciousness of the masses through a series of experiences that we can initiate or stimulate.

6. It is in this section of the European document that Comrade Mary-Alice believes she has discovered a shocking deviation! The resolution, in effect, *develops a concept of building the party in stages*.

Comrade Mary-Alice writes: "We do not proceed according to a two-stage theory—today we win the vanguard; tomorrow the working class." (p. 8.) In this regard we plead guilty; guilty, once again, of Leninist orthodoxy. Isn't it Lenin who wrote, in his famous work against ultraleftism:

"The chief thing—though of course, far from everything—the chief thing, has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of the Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy. All efforts and all attention should now be concentrated on the *next* step, which may seem—and from a certain viewpoint actually is—less fundamental, but, on the other hand, is actually closer to a practical accomplishment of the task. That step is: the search after forms of the *transition* or the *approach* to the proletarian revolution.

"*The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing. Without this, not even the first step towards victory can be made.* But that is still quite a long way from victory. Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least a sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish but criminal. Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the masses must have their own political experience." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 92-93. Emphasis in second paragraph added.)

We have already emphasized that initiatives stemming from the concerns of the vanguard did not in any way imply an adaptationist position. On the contrary, the initiatives are counterposed to the adaptationist position that consists, in effect, of not taking up and developing

the initiatives that are capable of making the broader layers conscious of their objective needs. So when we state that we are in an *intermediary phase* of party building, we do not mean that our sole aim is to orient ourselves toward the vanguard. On the contrary, gaining hegemony in the vanguard (the present phase) is precisely the condition for being able to influence the masses, for being able to intervene in the process of the maturation of their consciousness.

The present stage of party building is conveyed by the fact that while we are not yet able to win the masses directly, we are no longer in the phase where objective conditions restricted us *solely* to propaganda activity. Our task thus consists in gaining *enough strength* to go over to the next step—winning the masses. Given this perspective it is necessary—in the present phase—to win hegemony in the vanguard with a mass character. Furthermore, this phase corresponds to objective modifications in the term "masses"—as Lenin stressed—in the process of the maturation of the revolutionary situation. In fact, it would be totally utopian to imagine that an organization of 400 members could directly win 10,000 workers, following, for example, an experience of a reformist government in England or France! We think that if no pole of attraction exists that has acquired a sufficient credibility, that has demonstrated its capacity for intervention, it will prove impossible to gain tens of thousands of workers in the next stage.

It is the building of this pole—which then makes our hypothesis of winning important sections of the masses realistic—that we must devote ourselves to (taking into account the *diverse thresholds* that exist for the various European sections). If we are to attain this goal, we cannot reduce reality to these two terms: us and the masses! On the contrary, one must understand that underlying reality are the dialectical relations between us, the broad vanguard, and the masses (organized in the traditional organizations). As we stated at the beginning, the process of building such a pole is directly linked to the maturation of the actual class struggle and to the tasks that flow from it. One cannot come to grips with it on the basis of a schema that proposes party-building techniques that are good for all times and all places.

III. Once Again on the Transitional Program

We are not going to develop any great number of points on the question of the Transitional Program, because the essential things have already been said by Comrade Germain in his document "In Defence of Leninism" (pp. 47-48).

1. When we state that there is a relation between party-building methods and an understanding of the Transitional Program, we do it to emphasize the link that exists between building the revolutionary party and developing the anticapitalist consciousness of the masses. On the one hand, the development of this consciousness is only possible through experiences; but on the other hand, *not just any experience* is likely to develop into an anticapitalist consciousness, i.e., a *consciousness of the necessity of a socialist revolution*.

It is in this context that our statement about the possibility and the necessity of making a break with propagandism gains its meaning. Propagandism dominated dur-

ing the whole period in which objective conditions prevented us from taking initiatives that would be actually capable of winning over *broader* sectors than those organized by the revolutionary Marxists. Propagandism was thus characterized by the defense of the Trotskyist program. It is necessary to emphasize, however, that this propagandism can be supplemented with a defense of the immediate demands of the masses. Thus, even when one takes initiatives that add defense of the Trotskyist program to support for immediate demands, *one still remains fundamentally in the realm of propaganda, even if one is immersed in the mass movement*.

A break with propagandism means that we take initiatives in the broad vanguard that lead quite broader layers — *through their experience*— to an anticapitalist consciousness. This process of maturation of the consciousness—in a strictly defined sense—of broad layers obviously *cannot be launched on the basis of propaganda alone*. This *does not imply* that we are saying it is necessary to renounce propaganda. No. But it is necessary to do more than just that!

2. Underlying this concept is the understanding that the Transitional Program has a *double* function. On the one hand, it must be capable of producing a *qualitative development* in class consciousness, a development of revolutionary class consciousness. On the other hand, it must be capable of *responding to the need for strengthening* the revolutionary organization (recruitment). There is a strict correlation between these two functions, insofar as it is impossible that important development of the revolutionary organization will occur without a qualitative change in the class consciousness of rather broad layers. And since only experience makes it possible for sectors of a certain breadth to undergo this process of the development of consciousness, one has a better appreciation of the decisive role of initiatives in the broad vanguard aimed at arousing the mass movements. Without this, one reduces the process of party building to a linear accumulation of militants who are convinced by reading our propaganda. This is not something to be rejected, but it is certainly not sufficient!

Comrade Mary-Alice becomes a supporter of precisely this propagandistic concept, *a concept that blurs over one of the functions of the Transitional Program*, when, seeking to describe the "orthodox" position, she writes: "One can only conclude that the so-called tactic of 'winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard' must mean something other than simply striving to win the most conscious and dedicated elements to the sections of the Fourth International by proving that we have the only program, and perspective, as well as the ability, to lead the masses and the vanguard in the struggle to overthrow capitalism." (p. 14.)

3. Based on these statements, we can understand why Comrade Mary-Alice attacks the fact that the document emphasizes the *centrality of demands focused around the slogan of workers control*. Comrade Mary-Alice states in her critique that "the general error is reflected in the tendency to relegate all struggles except the demand for workers control to a decidedly secondary place." (p. 16.)

First of all, the document does not state that only workers control is capable of advancing the anticapitalist consciousness of significant sectors of the working class. It limits itself to emphasizing that in the present period of

the class struggle in Europe, *demands focused around workers control are the demands most likely to advance consciousness in a radical anticapitalist direction, to stimulate forms of self-organization in the working class*. We could be astonished at Comrade Mary-Alice's objection just from the point of view of orthodoxy, since, in the last analysis, is not the *concept of workers control the very backbone of the Transitional Program?*

Once again, however, one can place this criticism in the context of the disagreement between the two tendencies on the nature of the period. Because, as we said above, putting forward the concept of workers control flows precisely from our analysis of the period, from our statement that in the countries where social tensions are the sharpest, demands linked to workers control are no longer in the domain of propaganda but pass over into the domain of agitation. Let's take the sliding scale [of hours and wages]. Does this demand make sense in countries—and there are many—where the workers movement has already achieved the sliding scale (with limitations, of course)? In fact, what we are saying is that in most European countries—and even in Germany these last few weeks—every struggle around the demand for a sliding scale *points toward workers control*. And furthermore, this is where the transitional nature of the demand lies, insofar as a struggle around the sliding scale as such—as a struggle for higher wages—*is certainly not capable of provoking this qualitatively new maturation of class consciousness*.

Thus, we cannot but insist on the necessity of putting forward such slogans—at a time, moreover, when all the reformists, under the pressure of events, are trying to introduce the greatest confusion by advancing the ideas of self-management, participation, etc.—that are capable of being taken up by still-limited sectors of workers, but that can give rise to a *very rapid ripening, a leap forward, of the consciousness of the masses*. And this is precisely the point we have stressed: the necessity and the possibility of propelling and stepping up initiatives in the broad vanguard in order to give rise to experiences that—*given the context of the period*—can produce a qualitative leap in the consciousness of relatively broad sectors of the working class. This is based on the analysis Trotsky made of the relation *between the period and the possibilities for the ripening of class consciousness*:

"The class consciousness of the workers lags behind events, but class consciousness is not something made of the same materials as the factories, the mines, and the railroads; it is made from a much more flexible material, and under the blows of the crisis, under the weight of millions of unemployed, *it can change rapidly*. (*Discussions on the Transitional Program*.)

It is not difficult, then, to understand the profound reasons that dictate Comrade Mary-Alice's criticism of the central place the European document attributes to work in the working class. There shouldn't even be any question, for those who are even slightly familiar with the work of the European sections, of our "defending" ourselves or "demonstrating" that none of the sections have in any way underestimated, in practice, work and intervention in the peripheral sectors. Furthermore, it would be absurd—it would cut across the entire spirit of the European document, across the entire method (which we have explained sufficiently)—to say that the resolution

calls for all the sections to give priority, in an identical and undifferentiated fashion, to work in the working class. No response is necessary to this kind of criticism. In fact, and much more simply, *the central place of work in the working class* stems from an obvious fact—obvious at least to those who examine, if only superficially, the situation, the political life of a series of countries that are essential from the point of view of the class struggle in Europe: *the working class has been, is, and is becoming, the number-one protagonist in the political life of these*

countries. This banal statement does not seem to be unrelated to the importance the European document attributes to work in the working class!

It is quite true that the real differences center on the concept of party building. We can only hope, with the aim of advancing the discussion and strengthening the world movement, that the spurious issues, falsifications, and distortions will be expunged from the debate.

Switzerland
September 5, 1973

How Camejo Makes Lenin Say the Opposite of What He Writes

By Karl Andersson

In IIDB No. 8 in 1973, Peter Camejo, a leading figure in the so-called Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT), wrote an article with the title "Germain vs. Lenin." Judging from the title we expected that Comrade Camejo had decided to explain or defend the glaring insufficiencies in his article on "Why Guevara's Guerrilla Strategy Has No Future," which Comrade Germain presented at length in his article "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International." It would seem to us that considering the importance of the nature of Comrade Germain's criticisms—the Leninist concept of the combat party—that an explanation of Camejo's position would have a high priority.

Instead the militants of the Fourth International served an abstract, and as we shall see, un-Leninist lecture on Lenin's views on armed struggle and guerrilla warfare. With the help of selected quotations and his own interpretations, Camejo tries to show that Germain has falsified Lenin's positions for factional reasons. He even goes so far as to accuse Germain of consciously rewriting Lenin. Camejo's objectives are obviously to avoid answering Germain's criticisms by throwing up a smokescreen of pious invective. The only result is that he further exposes his lack of understanding of Leninism and the problems of party building.

For several years now the militants of the Fourth International have been treated to long and learned lectures about what Lenin and Trotsky really thought about armed struggle and party building. Most of the relevant passages have been quoted and dissected. But the quotes themselves answer that it is not through quotations that the debate can be decided but rather ". . . Marxism demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position." (Lenin, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 213-214.)

This, then, was Lenin's method of dealing with the problem of forms of struggle. In all his articles, he conscientiously explains on what basis he proposes different forms of struggle: the experience of the development of the class struggle itself, an appreciation of the period, and so forth. That this is also the method of the majority is easily demonstrated by a brief rereading of our docu-

ments—especially the documents by Comrade Germain. References to Lenin's or Trotsky's views have never been a central part of our argumentation.

Immediately preceding the reference to Lenin, on which Camejo bases a large part of his article, Comrade Germain has summarized his analysis of the development of the class struggle in Argentina during the last years in order to discuss concretely the activities of the PRT and PST. After describing the semi-insurrections, Germain states his own conclusions on what the perspectives of a revolutionary organization should have been.

"Surely a revolutionary party worthy of the name would see it as one of its main tasks to prepare the masses for new and bigger clashes, to organize and train armed self-defence detachments of the workers, to project and prepare—within the limitations of its own relatively weak forces—the transition from spontaneous, fragmented and locally isolated semi-insurrections into a nationally coordinated prepared and generalized uprising. . . . ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 15.)

Comrade Camejo, on the other hand, while admitting the existence of local uprisings in Argentina, does not comment on Germain's proposals on what conclusions should have been drawn by the revolutionary organization. Instead he tries to give the impression that Lenin's method—and the LTT's apparently—was to wait until the masses had *themselves* solved these problems (the organization of armed detachments and the generalization of the insurrection) before the revolutionary party could adopt an orientation. He says: "In 1906 Lenin recognized that the mass struggles had evolved from strikes to demonstrations, then to spontaneous barricade fighting, and finally to coordinated insurrectionary attempts and the beginning of mass armed struggle. Lenin's tactical proposals flowed from his evaluation that Russia was in state of civil war." ("Lenin vs. Germain," p. 12.) In Argentina the struggle never reached the level of armed mass struggle or civil war so obviously it was not in the tradition of Lenin to propose an orientation like Germain's.

In an article in *June 1905* (not 1906 but June 1905!), "Revolution Teaches," Lenin, referring to his book *What Is to Be Done* written in 1902, says:

"Consequently, the slogan of *preparations for an uprising* is already plainly advanced, but as yet there is no direct call to rise, no recognition that the movement 'has already led up to' the necessity for an uprising, that it is necessary to arm immediately, to organize ourselves in combat squads, etc." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 152.)

He goes on to explain that by *June 1905* even the Mensheviks had "recognized that the task of an insurrection is an urgent one, that a direct call must be made forthwith for the immediate organization of an uprising and for the

arming of the people." (Ibid., p. 153.) (The Bolsheviks reached this conclusion in January 1905.) In the same article Lenin quotes favorably a leaflet put out by the Mensheviks which calls for insurrection and the arming of the people. Lenin criticizes the leaflet for not explicitly calling for a provisional government. At no time does he suggest that this arming should be based on defensive slogans.

Obviously Lenin's orientation in the first half of 1905 is not based on the existence of a "state of civil war." According to Lenin, civil war began only after the October strike. The only significant event to which he refers in this article was the Odessa uprising. Instead he refers to *What is to Be Done*, where he already in 1902—in the process of the struggle for a vanguard combat party—explained the necessity of preparing for an uprising in the most concrete sense, of being able to see when the development of the class struggle *actualizes* the uprising and the party's role as leader and organizer of it. Lenin saw clearly in the first half of 1905 that the movement was breaking out of the "narrow bounds" of peaceful strikes and demonstrations. He continually urged the party *to take the initiative in this process*, both through agitation for the creation of small mobile armed groups, and the creation of armed detachments within the party. In his "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" Lenin explains that the Social Democrats were *not sufficiently prepared, not sufficiently offensive* in carrying this out.

Camejo tries to show that Lenin attached little importance to guerrilla warfare, considering it as only "partial, secondary and auxiliary" to the major forms of struggle and that even this interest depended on Lenin's incorrect analysis of the development of the class struggle. However, in the article cited by Camejo, Lenin explains the significance of *armed struggle* in its "clear connection" with the uprising, *with its preparation*. For instance:

"The phenomenon in which we are interested is the *armed struggle*. *It is conducted by individuals and by small groups*. Some belong to the revolutionary organizations, while others (the *majority* in certain parts of Russia) do not belong to any revolutionary organization. Armed struggle pursues two *different* aims, which must be *strictly distinguished*: in the first place, this struggle aims at assassinating individuals, chiefs and subordinates in the army and police; in the second place, it aims at the confiscation of monetary funds both from the government and from private persons. The confiscated funds go partly into the treasury of the Party, partly for the special purpose of arming and preparing for an uprising, and partly for the maintenance of persons engaged in the struggle we are describing. . . ." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 216.)

Further on in the same article Lenin polemicizes against the "incorrect, unscientific and unhistorical" practice of "analysing guerrilla warfare without reference to the circumstances of an uprising. . . ." (Ibid., pp. 217-18.)

In another article the same year he writes:

"Every form of struggle requires a corresponding technique and a corresponding apparatus. When objective conditions make the parliamentary struggle the principal form of struggle, the features of the apparatus for parliamentary struggle inevitably become more marked in the party. When, on the other hand, objective conditions give rise to a struggle of the masses in the form of mass political strikes and uprisings, the party of the proletariat

must have an 'apparatus' to 'serve' *these* forms of struggle, and, of course, this must be a special 'apparatus', not resembling the parliamentary one. An organized party of the proletariat which admitted that the conditions existed for popular uprisings and yet failed to set up the necessary apparatus would be a party of intellectualist chatterboxes. . . ." (Ibid., p. 354.)

The apparatus Lenin refers to are the combat organizations of the party. He saw clearly that the strikes, political strikes and demonstrations of that period were leading to confrontations with the state power—the police and army—that these confrontations would result in barricade fighting and spontaneous uprisings and objectively posed the question of the insurrection.

A Bolshevik conference of military and combat organizations held in November 1906 and reported approvingly by Lenin in April 1907 listed among the main tasks of the combat organizations: "(1) dissemination of a correct conception of an armed uprising and explanation of the concrete conditions under which an armed uprising may arise, proceed and be successfully consummated . . . (2) the technical preparation of everything necessary for the successful conduct of an armed uprising. . . ." (Ibid., vol. 12, p. 412.)

Far from admitting his "misjudgment" of developments after December 1905, Lenin, in an article written toward the end of 1910, argued that uprisings, political strikes and the unrest among the peasants and soldiers were the real "line of battle" in 1906. That "objective data prove that in the spring of 1906 there was such a serious upsurge of a real revolutionary *mass* struggle that the Social-Democratic Party was *obliged* to regard precisely that struggle as the principal struggle and exert every effort to support and develop it. . . ." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 386.)

Lenin speaks of the "Revolution of 1905-1907" and 1908-1910 as the period of the victory of the counter-revolution. Since the strength of the revolutionary offensive in 1905 was too weak "defeat was inevitable, but if the proletariat had not been able to rise at least *twice* for a *new* attack against the enemy . . . the defeat would have been still greater" (Ibid., pp. 385-88).

Lenin understood what Camejo and the comrades of the so-called LTT still fail to understand. A discussion of armed struggle or guerrilla warfare must be related to the preparation of an uprising, to an understanding of the period when "the movement 'has already led up to' the necessity of an uprising," or how existing spontaneous and fragmented partial uprisings can be coordinated, planned and turned into a national uprising—a revolution. Lenin understood the necessity of the party taking the initiative in these matters and *always* preferring "direct", "higher" forms of struggle, as long as there is a "shadow" of hope for success.

Of course Lenin admitted the possibility that the revolution was in decline after 1905. "But, pending final verification by experience, he continued to base his policy on a revolutionary prognosis. Such was the fundamental rule of that strategist. 'The revolutionary Social-Democracy,' he wrote in October 1906, 'must be the first to take its place in the most resolute and the most direct struggle.' Under direct struggle come demonstrations, strikes, the general strike, clashes with the police, the insurrection. Under roundabout methods—the utilization of legal op-

portunities, including parliamentarism, for the mobilization of forces. That strategy inevitably implied the danger of resorting to militant methods after the objective conditions for the employment of such methods no longer prevailed. *Yet on the scales of the revolutionary party, that tactical risk weighed immeasurably less than the strategic danger of not keeping up with developments and losing sight of a revolutionary situation.*" (Leon Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 88. Our stress.) This then was the method of Lenin according to Trotsky in 1939. Lenin did not abstractly counterpose the building of a vanguard combat party to the tasks posed by the class struggle. Instead he showed what such a party must do to develop and lead that struggle.

" . . . the Marxist is the *first* to foresee the approach of a revolutionary period, and already begins to rouse the people. . . . The Marxist is therefore the *first* to take the path of direct revolutionary struggle, marching straight to battle and exposing the illusions of conciliation.

" . . . Therefore, the Marxist is the *last* to leave the path of directly revolutionary struggle, he leaves it only when all possibilities have been exhausted, when there is not a *shadow* of hope for a shorter way, when the basis for an appeal to prepare for mass strikes, an uprising, etc., is obviously disappearing. . . ." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 351.)

Feeling that his arguments showing that Lenin's interest in guerrilla warfare were only incidental or a mistake might be insufficient, Camejo adds that in any case, "Lenin never advocated the formation of armed detachments autonomous from the mass movement". Camejo counterposes autonomous armed groups to an armed struggle which "arises out of the struggle of the masses themselves." What does this formula mean? We have already shown that Lenin advocated the organization of combat groups *before* the masses *themselves* had done so to any great extent. He assigned to these groups and their activities precisely the function of preparing for mass armed struggle through "organized, planned, ideological, politically educative armed struggle." (*Ibid.*, p. 232.) No one will deny that it is the experience of the class struggle itself which will bring the *broad masses* to an understanding of the need for arming. But the task of the revolutionary Marxists, the *vanguard* of the working class, is to foresee the dynamic of this struggle in order to intervene in it and lead it to victory.

The revolutionary Marxists base their line of activity on an analysis of the objective situation, on the objective tasks of the working class. There exists "normally" a gulf between the consciousness of the vanguard and that of the masses of workers. This gulf can be reduced by a combination of the development of the class struggle itself and the initiatives and activities of the vanguard. This gulf in consciousness and the necessity of the vanguard taking initiatives in the class struggle in order to reduce and to modify the relationship of forces is certainly not expressed in Camejo's formula of "arising out of the struggle of the masses themselves." And so by Camejo's counterposing the given level of consciousness of the masses to the initiatives of the vanguard, we are once again confronted with one of the central methodological questions in the present international debate. In a sense then Camejo did, after all, answer some of Germain's

criticisms of his insufficient concept of the party—by reaffirming them.

Camejo's mistaken conceptions and lack of understanding of Lenin's method of viewing the armed struggle becomes even clearer in his brief comments on Bolivia. He asks: "What connection Lenin's comments on the differences between the armed actions of pre-1906 and those during 1906" could have to do with the course of the POR in Bolivia around August 1971, when no guerrilla warfare or terrorism was involved. . . ." According to Camejo just a few paragraphs earlier, however, the POR was involved in guerrilla warfare (which he implies was more like the old terrorism) in 1969. Lenin spoke continually of the party *foreseeing* when the development of the class struggle would objectively create the conditions for an insurrection, and saw guerrilla warfare as a method of preparing for it. Does Camejo deny that the objective conditions for an insurrection existed in Bolivia in 1971? According to Lenin's method, which we have outlined earlier, such a denial would be the only reasonable explanation for Camejo's failure to see any connection.

But underlying Camejo's exposition is another explanation as to why the POR's activities—their attempts to prepare for an insurrection—appear to him as being un-Leninist, as being terrorism of the old type. "Lenin never projected that small revolutionary organizations should engage in guerrilla warfare. . . . Nor would Lenin ever dream of endorsing a scheme by which two organizations, each having no more than 100 members . . . would launch guerrilla warfare." What interests us here are not the various qualifications and insinuations which we have excluded from the quotes, but the recurring thought that the size of the organization or the extent of its mass support could be the deciding criteria for the forms of struggle it proposes and initiates. We will certainly not deny the importance of this factor—the strength of the party, its implantation in the working class—but there can be no abstract rule which tells us when the necessary minimum of forces have been assembled.

Unfortunately Camejo does not tell us how large or how influential the Bolivian organization should have been to undertake the preparation of the insurrection. He gives only two clues: 1) he claims that the POR was nowhere near the strength of the Bolsheviks in 1905-06; 2) he justifies Hugo Blanco's armed struggle since he led a mass peasant movement which had *itself* begun to develop into armed struggle. In the first case, Camejo obviously inflates the strength of the Bolsheviks, giving the impression that they were a "mass" party; in reality they had 4,000 members in 1905. (*Trotsky, Stalin*, p. 69.) Aside from the fact that many historians including Trotsky thought even these figures to be inflated, due to the factional struggle going on, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from them. The equivalent of 4,000 members in Russia—a country with 120 million inhabitants at the time—in Bolivia, with a population of three and one-half million, would have been not very far from the membership of the POR. But there is every reason to believe that Lenin would have advocated the same line of action in 1902 (according to *What is to be Done*) when the whole party, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks together, had at best 2,000 members. This numbers game solves nothing. There is obviously no absolute figure. Hugo Blanco's FIR in Peru certainly was in the POR's class

and not the Bolshevik's as for influence, so size cannot be a criterion of Camejo's support. We wonder where Moreno's group claiming 2,500 members would be placed in Camejo's scheme.

Apparently the only time when guerrilla warfare is justified according to Camejo's arguments is when the party has conquered the leadership of the masses or an important segment of the masses who have *themselves* begun mass armed struggle or civil war. For our part, we prefer the method of Lenin, which saw the building of the party and the winning of the leadership over the masses

as a function of a political orientation and initiatives, based on the objective needs of the class struggle at a given stage. We believe that this was also the method of our Bolivian comrades. If Comrade Camejo does not believe that there was an objective basis for an uprising in Bolivia, let him say so openly and prove it in a Marxist way, "by an economic analysis, by an appraisal of the political strivings of the various classes, by an analysis of the significance of the different ideological trends." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 352.) Only when he has proved that will he have the right to call on Lenin as his witness to prove our "adventurist" deviations.