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## Contents

- The Erosion of Peronism and the Central Task of Revolutionary Marxists, International Majority Tendency Resolution adopted by January, 1975, IEC** 2
- Draft Resolution on Argentina, by José Valdez, submitted to January, 1975, IEC** 15
- Program and the PST's "Specific, Limited Agreements", by Berta Langston and Bob Langston (Socialist Workers Party)** 19
- For a Change in Our Position on Cuba, by David Keil (Socialist Workers Party)** 26

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## THE EROSION OF PERONISM AND THE CENTRAL TASK OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISTS

[The following resolution on Argentina was presented for a vote by the International Majority Tendency at the January 27-30, 1975, meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. The vote was, *decisive vote*: for—26, against—14, abstaining—2; *consultative vote*: for—18, against—21.]

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### I. Triumph and Crisis of the Peronist Plan

1. The period that began in 1969, characterized by a rise in the mass movement and a change in the relationship of forces to the detriment of the bourgeoisie, is now undergoing a significant change.

The bourgeoisie has utilized the political and organizational weakness of the workers' movement to go on the offensive against those sectors of the revolutionary vanguard that had been the most active in the struggle against the military dictatorship.

The very broad and deep mass mobilization that began in 1969 did not find a path that would bring it substantial political victories. Instead it was channeled toward a bourgeois electoral alternative through Peronism, and is now in a partial ebb compared to the mobilizations of previous years. However, this is a conjunctural phase that is the prologue to more decisive confrontations in the not-too-distant future. The proletariat has not suffered a general defeat and its capacity to recover and its revolutionary potential remain intact.

2. The elections and victory of Peronism skillfully channeled the workers' and peoples' struggles against the military dictatorship. These large mobilizations could be used successfully thanks to an agreement between all the bourgeois parties and the armed forces in the government—an agreement around what was called the Great National Accord (Gran Acuerdo Nacional). For this operation to succeed, the bourgeoisie had to lift the proscription against Perón and his movement in order to provide the maximum credibility to the entire electoral process. The years of mobilization required that in this accord they use the maximum resources of the system and the figure of Perón, with Perón becoming the key to the success of these plans.

The elections, and the Peronist victory in them, strengthened the bourgeoisie's political situation, reinforcing its ideological domination of the workers' movement. What the masses saw as a victory over the dictatorship was actually a strengthening of the bourgeois forces. The elections answered a political demand of the masses—their hatred for the dictatorship. But because it was resolved through another bourgeois option, the resolution of their countless economic and social demands necessarily remained deferred.

In this sphere, the new government was to offer some concessions such as an improvement in the standard of living of the masses, which, rather than demobilizing the workers, would only satisfy them for a short time. In the end the government's response was to wage an even harsher repressive offensive against the revolutionary vanguard than the one carried out by the military dictatorship, with the aim of isolating the revolutionary vanguard from the masses and maintaining ideological control over them.

In short, the elections had a fundamental impact on the future course of events. The bourgeoisie tried to use them to make the masses feel that what was in fact a victory for the exploiters was a victory for the masses.

3. The short Cámpora period sharpened all the above-mentioned contradictions in the political process. The new government that emerged from the electoral victory needed to get its balance. This required freeing the political prisoners and granting a series of civil liberties that the population had not enjoyed for at least a decade.

This self-interested concession led however, to a subsequent rise in the activity of the masses, which gave those days their turbulent character.

Cámpora's fall was nothing more than the form resolving these contradictions, along the same lines seen earlier in the confrontations at León Suárez and in the Ezeiza massacre. All sections of the bourgeoisie, including the armed forces, were in basic agreement with these measures. In the mass movement, which it had become necessary to rapidly control and liquidate, they reacted as one.

Cámpora's fifty days was the last time the bourgeoisie showed its weak side. The masses, confused about the real meaning of the election results and lacking a real revolutionary leadership, were unable to take advantage of the situation to move forward in organizing independently.

4. Perón's take-over of the government provided solidity for the bourgeoisie's plans. As the leader, Perón operated as a pole of attraction that could gain the confidence of the great majority of the bourgeois sectors and the armed forces. It was on this basis that the president was able to create a broad front of political agreement, in which virtually all the bourgeois parties and the PST participated. The PST, although not representing these class interests, collaborated with the proposals of the government and the bourgeoisie in defense of "legality."

The stabilization of the bourgeois forces that accompanied Perón's assumption of power will give impetus to the reactionary and repressive development of the regime in order to contain the development of the mass struggles. The authority of the old leader of the bourgeoisie was used to "institutionalize" a broad package of reactionary laws that legalized the attack on and repression against the workers' movement and its organizations. This is precisely

what happened through the Professional Associations law, which strengthened the union bureaucracy; the Compulsory Arbitration law, which virtually annulled the right to strike; the changes in the Penal Code, through which all the repressive laws and decrees of the dictatorship that had been repealed as the Cámpora government's first act, were reintroduced.

With this legal base plus the political support of the opposition bourgeois forces, the government began to repress the radicalized wing of Peronism, made up of the Peronist Youth (JP) and the Montoneros, with the aim of making the ruling party more homogenous and definitively showing the masses where things stood. In carrying this out the government made use of the vacillations of those it aimed to repress, plus the betrayal of the reformists who were clearly tied to the government.

5. The nine months from Perón's accession to his death on July 1, 1974, was not, however, long enough for the Argentine bourgeoisie, which is accustomed to turn to the armed forces in every difficult political period, to solve the serious problem of its lack of centralization. It is precisely this pattern of the weakness of the bourgeois political forces that allows a political leader of Perón's type to play an unchecked and supra-party role.

The structure of the Argentine ruling class flows from an industrial economic development that is distorted and is basically dependent on American imperialism and on the large international trusts. Its congenital weakness has shaped the role of certain institutions in the country's life, like the armed forces and the trade unions. The armed forces have provided numerous presidents and pioneers of the country's bourgeoisie, like General Savio or General Mosconi, while the union movement has not only built itself into the essential ally of all governments, owing to its ability to control the workers' movement, but has also begun to provide a significant number of functionaries for the state apparatus who serve in the most diverse positions, as governors, ministers, or in the legislature.

The state apparatus is a basic axis of the life and survival of the "national" bourgeoisie in this country. This is the cause of the bonapartist character of the various governments of the Argentine bourgeoisie, although doubtless in some, like the Peronist governments, it is clearly visible while in others, like the Radical Party governments, it is more difficult to discern.

It is the bonapartist populist character of the Peronist government that took office on May 26, 1973, that has been a key feature in its being able to overcome the explosive social situation left by the military dictatorship. The electoral-front character with which the coalition of forces led by Peronism triumphed, plus the constant preaching in all his speeches, showed Perón placing himself above the inter-bourgeois disputes, and using all his authority with the masses to facilitate overcoming the critical economic and political situation of Argentine capitalism.

6. With FREJULI's coming to power, the big bourgeoisie and the armed forces aimed to use Perón's political authority over the working-class population. And essentially they aimed to take full advantage of the Peronist union bureaucracy's control over the organized union movement, in this way exercising dual control over the working class: political control through the figure of Perón, and union control through the CGT apparatus, with the added benefit that the union bureaucracy would see

itself clearly tied to supporting the official policy, thus eliminating the contradictions that always developed between the various bourgeois governments and the CGT bureaucrats.

On this basis it was possible to lay out a Development Plan like Gelbard's. This presupposed strong political control over the workers' movement, providing the big bourgeoisie and the armed forces with guarantees that it could be carried out, thus winning their support for the plan.

Of course Gelbard's plans did not contemplate definitely overcoming the deformed and basically dependent economic structure. Much more modestly, the plans sought:

(a) To develop the basic sectors of the national economy—infrastructure, steel, petrochemical, machine tools, etc.—to overcome the serious conditions of dependency that now exist.

(b) To obtain capital for these objectives from "non-traditional" sources, a measure tending to alleviate the pressure of the "classical" creditors. The objective was to obtain capital from Europe, Japan, and the workers' states.

(c) To draw, through legally compulsory measures, the income of the agricultural and cattle-raising sector toward the state banking system for use in the selective financing of investment plans and industrial development.

(d) A rigid policy of price and wage controls aimed at ending the domestically caused inflation which is fed by the low profitability and productivity of native industry.

Two objectives complemented the plan: a stable growth in the GNP, and a redistribution of revenues to give the workers a greater share in the national income. The fluctuations in the GNP in Argentina are a clear reflection, in general terms, of the stagnation of the country's economy. The rate of growth of the GNP in the last thirty years has been, on the average, scarcely over 1 percent, confirming this situation.

The 4.5 percent growth rate in GNP achieved in 1973 was a stimulus for the 1974 plans, which projected an increase of 6 percent. It is officially reported that this figure was reached. But the real distortions the economy has gone through in 1974, as well as the extra-invoicing maneuver which the industrial and intermediate enterprises carried out as a routine practice in order to adjust their books to the highest prices (inflating the quantities actually sold), makes the figure published by the government extremely doubtful.

7. Gelbard's plan failed in all its objectives. He didn't get the hoped-for investments from "non-traditional" sources, or those he did get, such as from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, were totally insufficient to achieve the planned objectives. He was unable to draw the agricultural and cattle-raising profits toward industry because he could never get the timid drafts of agrarian reform laws passed. The rigid control of prices and wages had to be broken at various times because of workers' struggles, but especially because of the activity of important bourgeois sectors that manipulated shortages, producing grave distortions in the price system. The inflation was successfully held at moderate levels (20 percent) in the government's first year, but rapidly climbed to more than 40 percent in the second, despite the passage of the Social Pact and the control over prices and wages this implied.

The big agricultural and cattle-raising bourgeoisie, in turn, launched continual attacks against the economic team and became the center of the struggle against all its plans. This sector was later joined by the trade-union bureaucracy, which was eager to conserve some degree of its ability to negotiate wages and, above all, was responding to the needs of sectors of the big industrial bourgeoisie who wanted to violate the ceiling on wages in order to justify a larger violation of the fixed ceiling on prices.

The big lie in this plan was that the workers, by supporting an incomes policy established through the so-called Social Pact between bosses, bureaucrats, and the government, would succeed in regaining their lost share of the national income.

While it is true that in 1973 this share did rise—1972: 35.9 percent; 1973: 42 percent—the reduction in the rate of inflation to less than 20 percent greatly aided this process. During 1974, on the other hand, according to official data, the rate of inflation rose to around 40 percent, while important financial sources asserted that it was actually over 50 percent. This situation, which was impossible to compensate for with the skimpy increases authorized during the year, is confirmation of the demagogy of the officially projected objective.

8. As the government's political and economic plan became more difficult to apply and as its objectives seemed more distant, the ideological resources of political domination were replaced by more open forms of repression, and toleration of the activity of the right-wing and reactionary sectors became more shameless. The starting point for this new phase of the government is clearly found in the provincial coup d'état in Córdoba. With obvious official tolerance, the chief of the provincial police, Lt. Col. Navarro, unseated Governor Obregón Cano, using the most meaningless and ridiculous arguments as justification.

The occupation of the city of Córdoba and the repression unleashed against the vanguard organizations and the "democratic" sectors of the bourgeoisie by the police, with the collaboration of fascist and parapolice gangs, was a clear sign of the new political period that was approaching.

The police coup in Córdoba showed the new methods that certain sectors of the government, which are daily gaining greater weight in the state apparatus, were willing to use. But at the same time it exposed the great weakness of the workers' movement, whose union leaders were unable to organize resistance against the reactionary offensive; the bending of CP reformism and of PST centrism; the ever sharper fluctuations of the PCR-VC; the impotence of populism (Montoneros); the PRT's incapacity; and the weakness of revolutionary Marxism. Under the best possible conditions for dealing the fascist groups a staggering blow, with the sympathy and support of the population, the revolutionary organizations showed that they had been surprised by the sudden attack. Furthermore, even organizations like the PRT, which make military activity a basic axis of their political life, did not respond to the situation in Córdoba, thus exposing the great contradictions between their military proposals and the concrete requirements of the mass movement.

9. The activity of the workers' movement continued despite similar intimidations. The months of March, April, and May 1974 registered notable advances for the forces of

the workers' vanguard—such as the victory once again of the brown slate in the Mechanics union in Córdoba, this time with a more radicalized leadership and a significantly higher vote total than the first time. Then there was the workers' and peoples' mobilization known as the "Villa-zo," in which the workers of the Acindar, Marathon, and Metcon metallurgical plants in Villa Constitución rose up against the union bureaucracy, occupied the factories, mobilized the entire population, and forced the government and the metalworkers' bureaucracy to call union elections.

The wave of struggles by workers and other sectors of the population, such as teachers and public employees, brought forth a rapid response from the government, beginning with Perón's June 12 speech, which was followed by a terrorist escalation of kidnappings and assassinations of leftist activists and militants, confirming the line already seen in the Córdoba police uprising.

The reformist and populist forces of the Peronist left urgently looked around for progressive openings in the government. Meanwhile, the centrist forces were torn apart with contradictions.

The clearest case is that of the PST, which strove to defend its legality, which was correct, but did so in a completely wrong way that led it to totally counterproductive positions. Thus, while it was meeting with Peron, his successor, and other bourgeois leaders in the highest level of government, three members of its organization were kidnapped and assassinated in Pacheco, in Buenos Aires province.

Perón's speech was successful in putting a stop to the majority of the conflicts. This fact showed, above all, that the bourgeoisie's ability to dominate the situation was based on the confusion of the working-class forces, which were in their absolute majority dominated by leaderships that were totally bureaucratized and tied to the official policy.

10. Perón's death rapidly produced a wave of insecurity in different sectors of the bourgeoisie. This encouraged a sharpening of the repression in the face of any possibility of loss of control over the situation. However, we cannot say that this repression is generalized and absolute over the entire workers' movement. It basically hits the vanguard and the most active elements of the class.

That this is possible flows from the political and ideological control the bourgeoisie still exercises over the workers' movement as well as the weakness of the vanguard's roots in the class. This situation allows the government to conjuncturally isolate those elements that attempted to carry out a struggle that the workers' movement was not prepared to wage. Thus there develops a combination of legalized repression by the police apparatus and the development of parapolice gangs. These last are formed by fascist elements recruited in the CNU, CDO, etc., and elements from the intelligence services of the state and the three branches of the military, which provide resources, organization, and coordination for the operations. This two-sided repressive activity engendered a militarist response in operations such as those in Villa María and Catamarca, where the PRT-ERP attempted to ambush various military units. The success in Villa María was heavily paid for by the massacre of sixteen militants carried out by the repressive forces in Catamarca.

Despite its being directed largely at revolutionary militants and only against a few worker activists and leaders, the escalation of terror and repression that has been officially unleashed has the obvious aim of cutting the ties that politically link the revolutionary movement with the mass movement.

The AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina) is a weapon created by the police themselves. The bourgeoisie covered itself through illegal repression, using this organization with total official support and stimulus. But in the face of the need for vaster operations and for establishing a clear agreement between the government and the armed forces in the field of repression, the establishment of the state of siege was decided upon, a measure that was approved by all sectors of the bourgeois opposition.

In this way the repressive escalation reached its highest level, while the working class flailed about because of its inability to defend its gains. In the last six months of the year the turn in the political situation has been decisive and the bourgeoisie's bloody offensive has resulted in more than 300 working-class and revolutionary militants assassinated and around 2,000 held as political prisoners, surpassing the figures during the military dictatorship.

11. In those six months the workers movement went from a stage of quite open spontaneous activity to a defensive struggle to preserve its forces against the harshest blows. The Córdoba SMATA won the wage increase for which it had conducted a heroic six-month-struggle, but it lost its union, and the whole leadership had to go into semi-clandestinity, legally persecuted by a judicial nullification. A similar thing took place with the Light and Power Union in Córdoba, whose leader Agustín Tosco continues to stay in the underground, and with the Graphics Union in Buenos Aires, which was dissolved while its leadership, headed by Ongaro, was detained and held incommunicado.

Some reactions such as at Citroen, Gráficos, and at Hidrófila were brutally repressed, with the police, goons, and groups of armed civilians participating. Despite all of this, some victories have been seen in this panorama, such as the one at Metalúrgica Santa Rosa and the recent triumph in the union elections in the Metalworkers Union in Villa Constitución, where, despite intimidation by the government and the bureaucracy, the ranks voted for the fighting, class-struggle slate composed of the leaders of the historic "Villazo."

However, it is not in these partial or relatively isolated successes that the resistance to the bourgeoisie's offensive manifests itself. A more general phenomenon has developed parallel to the repressive escalation, showing that the working class is not beaten and that it retains and is accumulating the strength for new confrontations. This form of resistance is what the bourgeoisie has publicly called "the guerrilla warfare of absenteeism." Thousands and thousands of workers all over the country have engaged in this form of struggle, which is unorganized and spontaneous but corresponds to the state of dissatisfaction and growing repudiation of the existing situation, unmistakably reflecting a willingness to struggle that is adapted to the difficult circumstances imposed by the enemy. In certain industries such as automobile, the indices of absenteeism have gone from an average of 3-4 percent to more than 20 percent; and in others such as textiles and garments, from 5-6 percent to more than 30 percent,

according to reports by the secretary of commerce, José Alloati. Moreover, according to the same official reports, this big wave of absenteeism has led to production declines that are even greater, with the drop varying between 40 and 60 percent.

One should not forget that the high rates of lost production might be officially inflated, being used as an excuse for their own inefficiency. But the real level of absenteeism that has been reached cannot be explained except as symptomatic of the beginning of resistance. It is a spontaneous form of response by the workers who have neither a political leadership nor a union organization that can support their rights.

12. Six months after the death of Perón the bonapartist government he led has deepened certain of the aspects that characterized it. Its repressive character has been accentuated at the expense of its populist features. The authoritarian features are no longer complemented by concessions, or the appearance of concessions, to the masses, and the disappearance of the "leader" speeds up this process. Thus the populist bonapartist government is being transformed into a repressive and police bonapartism with strong authoritarian tendencies, in which the legal institutions such as the legislature and the judicial system survive, but without being able to carry out any functions independent of the direct orientations of the executive branch.

Isabel Perón's bonapartism has adopted some methods from the fascist arsenal, aiming not only to repress the vanguard, but also to weaken, destroy, or neutralize the loyal rank-and-file workers' organizations such as the Internal Commissions and Delegate Bodies, while preserving only the large structures of the union apparatuses.

But it has been unable to publicly organize or mobilize gangs that, in the government's name, lay waste to the ranks of the workers' movement or its vanguard. It has lost so much authority among the people that only groups of mercenaries serve its repressive and terrorist objectives. Its fascist-like designs have been exhausted in proportion to the rapid decline in the government's popularity. The growing interference of the armed forces, paring away the government's real power, has become the best guarantee to the rest of the bourgeois forces that the different sectors will remain bound together now that the old leader who could do that himself is no longer around.

Under these conditions the repressive authoritarian bonapartism had to drop its populist pretensions and make all the necessary adjustments in terms of concessions to the various sectors of the bourgeoisie, with the aim of buying their aid and support for the government, which shows the loss of the strength and authority that it enjoyed at the beginning.

The changes in the government team, the substitution of Gómez Morales for Gelbard, and the changes made in economic policy, like the elimination of the policy of fixed prices, and the return to the Argentine bourgeoisie's old source of capital—the United States—reflect this situation.

A critical period is opening for the government installed by the March 11, 1973, elections. Its perspective is rapidly being exhausted and the bourgeoisie and reformism are turning toward setting up alternatives for this situation.

## II. The Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership

13. The determining factor in the present critical situation is not, basically, the impotence that the bourgeois

sie has historically shown. The revolutionary alternative to overcome this impotence has been placed on the agenda by a thousand events, and yet the revolutionary leadership, the revolutionary party able to channel all this immense potential into the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie's power has not been built and developed. This is the key to the present political situation.

For this reason, the analysis of the crisis of revolutionary leadership is not only a necessary component, a thing that must be done to understand this situation. It is the main responsibility of the revolutionary vanguard to draw up the needed balance-sheet of the role that has been required but still not fulfilled up to now.

14. At this time pro-Soviet Stalinism in Argentina is putting forward an approach that is consistent with its international and national tradition. In the March elections the CPA, one of the most right-wing and bureaucratized CPs in Latin America, pushed—through the APR—a bourgeois reformist alternative that was formally opposed to the dictatorship and to Peronism. However, a short time later it converted itself into a defender of the “people’s” government, which it supported in the September elections, trying to put together a current of “constructive opposition” along with bourgeois reformist and populist sectors (the JPA [Juventudes Políticas Argentinas—Argentine Political Youth Groups]) based on support for the government against a coup and defense of the “anti-imperialist” acts of Perón and later of Isabel Perón.

The right-wing offensive rapidly led the CP, faithful to its policy of conciliation with the bourgeoisie, to end its approaches to the centrist groups like the PRT-ERP. Now it joined in with the democratic whining which, through parliamentary protest and appeals to the “progressive” sectors of the government, hoped to preserve what were only some crumbs of the civil liberties the masses had won with their struggle.

Within the context of an all-out attack by the government against the revolutionary workers’ vanguard, however, this opportunist and conciliationist parliamentary left has been unable to save its organization from the repression. The response to the CPA’s insistent appeals offering the government its collaboration has been attacks on its local headquarters and the assassination of its activists.

15. The rapid deterioration of Isabel Perón’s police bonapartism has persuaded the CPA to work increasingly openly to set up a popular-front alternative that saves capitalism from its crisis and allows pro-Soviet Stalinism to build its hoped-for alliance with the “progressive” bourgeoisie.

A number of forces and organizations are moving toward this alternative (including some coming from Peronism—the Montoneros—as well as currents of the bourgeoisie.) But this does not provide a real solution to the Argentine bourgeoisie’s political crisis.

Radicalized Peronism (Montoneros) is not a valid representative of the bourgeoisie’s interests and the CPA is unable to show that it has the ability to exercise effective control over the struggles of the masses. The CPA’s despairing appeals to the “democratic” bourgeoisie to implement a popular-front solution to its political crisis are not credible to the bourgeoisie and don’t warrant the restrained support from it that is needed to build this

alternative solution.

16. In addition to the well-known phenomenon of the CPA’s policies in Argentina,—which have led it to become a left agent of the government—it is necessary to focus attention on the role of those Maoist organizations that have centrist characteristics but a pronounced rightist coloration, such as the PCR and the VC. These organizations, which distinguished themselves by their violent confrontations with the military dictatorship, and which idealized street-fighting and made it the basic tactic of their politics—“win the streets from the dictatorship”(!)—played an important role in the student mobilizations and also, in some areas like Córdoba, in the workers’ mobilization against the military government.

Their ultraleftism, however, was restricted to their struggle against imperialism and the dictatorship. They carried within them the seeds of the contradiction that later blossomed.

The role of these groups, which was important in organizing the struggle and confrontation with the military dictatorship, made a 180 degree turn after the March 11, 1973, elections. The activities and the role these groups played in previous years gave them a certain political capital which they have placed at the disposal and service of the new bourgeois experiment.

Cámpora’s anti-imperialist program, Gelbard’s plans, the recognition of Cuba—these policies, without consideration of the bourgeoisie’s reasons for adopting them, became the ties that bind these organizations and similar groups. They show as much patience in waiting for the official “anti-imperialist” struggle as they showed intolerance in the face of the dictatorship.

The opportunist essence of their politics is completely revealed in their lining up behind the bourgeoisie’s declared objectives. And although these organizations called for casting blank ballots in the elections, in their day-to-day politics they called for an ongoing vote for the government.

17. The rapid right-wing turn in the government’s politics and the abandonment of the whole anti-imperialist policy forced these groups to change the center of their expectations and their functioning. It was no longer possible to hope for many progressive steps from the government, but neither was it possible to make an about-face from the endorsement they had given to populism. The new focus of their politics then became no longer to hope for the government to move forward, but rather to defend it from anything that might put an end to legality and institutionalization. Their objective focused around the struggle against a “rightist” coup d’état and for the preservation of the gains already won.

Curiously, the further the official policy turned to the right, the more it became clear that the threat of a right-wing coup was only a smoke screen raised by all the reformists (with official support) to justify support for the government in spite of everything it was doing. This suicidal policy—suicidal not only for the organizations themselves but also for the sectors they influence—has ended up backfiring on them. Vanguardia Comunista has publicly complained through its press that it has not been invited to the multiparty meetings called by the government, showing a boundless eagerness to join the official chorus of the whole opposition. Meanwhile the PCR called for opposition to all coup attempts, supporting the Isabel

López Rega axis as constituting part of the anti-Yankee front.

This change from the former virulent confrontation with the dictatorship is simply the other side of the same coin. With their present capitulation, the previous record of these groups has provided huge benefits for the bourgeoisie. Today neither the government nor the bourgeoisie need anything from them and so the militants of these organizations are sought out in their homes, shot by parapolice gangs with total official backing, and they are prevented from publicly carrying out their political activity.

18. Among the organizations that made armed confrontation with the state the principal forces of their activity, the PRT-ERP is the Marxist organization that has been the most consistent. Already during the period of the dictatorship its activity, in the context of the precipitous rise in antidictatorial struggles, won it a significant degree of sympathy in sectors of the mass movement.

But the PRT-ERP lacked a policy that would enable it to understand the situation and it did not succeed in clearly differentiating itself from populism. It tried in opportunist ways—first through the rank-and-file committees and the provincial political parties, and then with the MSB and FAS—to provide a “democratic” response to the process of radicalization of the mass movement that was still on the rise in the preelection period and during the Campora government.

In this way its alliance with the CPA and other reformist currents led to the contradiction of trying to spread its influence in the mass movement with a quasi-popular-front program on the one hand, while continuing armed confrontation against the state apparatus on the other.

Broad sectors of the mass movement for whom the elections and Peronism’s victory had stimulated expectations and who had a great deal of confidence in the political process led by Peron, found this ambiguity incomprehensible.

The attacks on the Comando de Sanidad and on the Cuartel de Azul raised this contradiction to the level of absurdity, sowing confusion among the sectors influenced by the PRT, who saw no connection between an attempt to build a legal party—the FAS—and maintaining activity that de facto placed the PRT and its groupings outside the admissible limits of the system.

19. The delusion of trying to build a revolutionary army without regard to the situation or the concrete dynamic of the class struggle has led the PRT-ERP to a suicidal policy. Its activity, which is primarily based on armed actions against the bourgeois military apparatus, negates the mass movement’s more pressing need: to develop forms of self-organization that push forward the generalized activity of the masses to confront the government’s escalation of repression.

We revolutionary Marxists tenaciously fight against any conception of the masses spontaneously arming themselves. These concepts, in the final analysis, are “left” versions of pacifist reformism. However, we must also oppose adventurist or infantile concepts regarding a strategy for power. These concepts, while radical and within a revolutionary perspective, are sadly ineffective in preparing an armed mass confrontation against the

capitalist state such as will have to take place in Argentina.

In Argentina the proletariat, because of its social weight, plays a central role in addition to its leading role. In such countries we raise the absolute need to elaborate a concept of insurrection that, taking into account the real revolutionary potential of the proletariat and the popular masses, will be capable of raising the need for and the possibility of the assault against bourgeois power.

The basic weapon of the insurrection will be organizations modeled on workers’ councils and workers’ militias. They will not be some variant of the gradual arming of the masses, of the type of the ERP and groups like it. On the other hand, it is an inadmissible tactic to prepare the masses to respond after a coming defeat instead of for the broadest confrontation. This is also opposed to the dynamic of proletarian mobilization.

In the final analysis, the character of the mass resistance to the inevitable imperialist intervention against an attempt to build a new workers’ state in Latin America will depend on the quality and quantity of the working-class and popular masses that we can bring into the struggle at the time of the decisive confrontation.

Our conception has immediate consequences for the present. We must develop practical activity, experience, and consciousness regarding all forms of self-organization, of which self-defense is the expression in the military arena. Only through the development of practical activity in armed self-defense will the proletariat, when it puts itself forward as a political alternative to capitalist power and counterposes the higher forms of its workers’ councils to the forms of bourgeois domination, be able to transform its vanguard detachments into workers’ militias capable of launching a military offensive to destroy the bourgeois state.

20. Self-defense of the workers’ movement cannot be the central thrust of any guerrilla-warfare or reformist political approach. It is a slogan that flows from the day-to-day needs of the working class. And at the same time that it responds in practical terms to one of the forms of repression against the working class, it also pushes forward and develops consciousness regarding self-organization.

In practice the PRT as well as other militarist organizations hindered the working class from going through this necessary experience. There are myriad examples to illustrate this. But undoubtedly one of the most obvious examples was the attack against the whole population of Cordoba by Lt. Col. Navarro’s fascist gangs, which took place when that police chief staged the provincial coup d’etat. The PRT, which showed it could take the explosives plant at Villa Maria and the Azul barracks, also showed it was unable to confront these fascist gangs of armed civilians during the ten days of the Cordoba police coup.

This organization, like the others that follow a similar militarist policy, normally assigns itself the job of armed self-defense of the workers’ movement, which flows from the logic of its proclaimed goal of building a revolutionary army.

The character of this policy, which makes propaganda of arms its main thrust and tries to teach through individual example, lies exposed as being, in practice, a crudely substitutionist conception of the mass movement.

21. In the context of the present retreat, the failure of

this policy is shown in the breakdown of the ties of unity the PRT-ERP has established with important sectors of the workers' vanguard. This is what happened with the Movimiento Sindical Combativo (Fighting Union Movement—MSC), an organization of the militant unions in Córdoba, in which the PRT, through the MSB, actively participated during 1973, but which is today moribund.

Furthermore, the Frente Antiimperialista por el Socialismo (FAS), an open organization through which the PRT's members, allied organizations, and periphery acted, was its principal vehicle for trying to develop a line for the masses. At its last gathering, in Rosario in mid-1974, the FAS was able to bring together more than 15,000 people, which was its final concrete sign of functioning. After that a combination of crises in political relations with its allies (the break with the FRP and other far-left organizations) and the repression caused the disappearance of all this organization's concrete practical activity.

This major change in its situation has forced the PRT-ERP to establish closer relations with the far-left organizations that it had previously scorned because of their small size. This is the reason for its attempt to develop very good relations with these organizations through the Coordinadora Política Antirepresiva (Political Coordinating Committee Against Repression).

On the other hand, the PRT's leadership has not given up its goal of setting up an (inter-class) Popular Front that would be broader than the FAS. The latest course of the PRT leadership, set in December 1974, which called for the establishment of a "Democratic and Patriotic" broad front, has this objective. This proposal, which not a single section of the bourgeois opposition is inclined to take up, has harmful repercussions on broad sectors of the politically confused masses who have made up or now make up the rank-and-file of Peronism and among whom it is necessary to wage a fight for absolute working-class political independence.

22. With the crisis of the military dictatorship and the opening provided by the elections, an important political space opened up in which the PST was built. The old *La Verdad* group organized its participation in the elections following its fusion with the centrist group led by Juan Carlos Coral that came out of the Social Democracy.

But the criticism the revolutionary movement made of the PST was not based on the tactic of participation in the elections in and of itself. The revolutionary movement's criticism of this grouping from the beginning pointed to all the opportunist maneuvers the PST was involved in during the electoral campaign (remember its appeals to Peronism, the requirement that 80 percent of the Peronist slate be workers, and the meeting of the bourgeois parties with Perón at the Confitería Nino in which Coral participated in the PST's name). These maneuvers decisively shaped the character of the political perspective this party presented to the vanguard.\*

23. The opportunist practice and the restrictions that it complied with in order to be a legal party determined the basic features of its politics in an extremely difficult period

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\*This analysis of the PST and its present policy coincides with the public criticism made by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in December 1974, which was published in *Inprecor* No. 14-15 under the title "Statement of the United Secretariat."

for the revolutionary movement in Argentina. The PST confronted the process of rapid rightward evolution of the official policy by denying it was taking place, and attributing the whole situation to the activity of right-wing gangs which were preparing the ground for a reactionary coup. In this analysis the government was portrayed as being hemmed in between the activity of the ultraright and the ultraleft, which were creating the preconditions for a coup in the country and were concretely threatening "institutionalization."

As a result, the PST linked the need to defend civil liberties with defense of "institutionalization" against a right-wing coup.

Since it was completely obvious that if a right-wing coup took place the already curtailed civil liberties would be totally swept away, the PST linked defense of civil liberties to the "continuity of the government." This means that it committed the not at all insignificant error, which was recognized in its own publications, of identifying the "defense of a bourgeois 'structure'" with the "defense of democratic rights" (*Intercontinental Press*, September 16, 1974).

Providing proof of its good intentions, the PST became the champion of the antiterrorist struggle, placing the activity of both the fascist gangs and the revolutionary organizations in the same bag in its attacks. Although in the PST's publication (*Avanzada Socialista*) the criticisms of each were found in separate paragraphs, in the versions most widely circulated—those that appeared in the bourgeois press that the workers' movement and the population were exposed to—these subtleties have been directly suppressed, and they show a total identity with the official arguments. In practical terms, the political view put forward by the PST contributed to enhancing the credibility of the official rationale for the repression.

24. In fighting to defend "institutionalization," the PST became involved in a dynamic that led it to propose accords with the other (bourgeois) opposition parties, accords that were concretely embodied in the joint visits to President Perón and, following his death, to Isabel Perón.

These meetings were all characterized by their attacks on "terrorism" in general, through which the government succeeded in using the PST's opportunism to provide a framework of support for its own policy and to make a show of this support to the workers' movement. The result of these meetings was to absolve the government of responsibility in the kidnappings and assassinations, as well as in the repression of the activity of the workers' movement.

The meetings held by the eight parties, among them the PST, had major significance for the workers' and revolutionary movement. The PST played an indispensable role in these closed meetings by providing them with the needed credibility in the eyes of the population, something that the bourgeois parties would have been unable to successfully achieve, even with the inclusion of the CP, which was not directly invited. This is the source of the PST's dual responsibility in this "tactic."

The twists and turns in what *Avanzada Socialista* (the PST's paper) said, as well as the political corrections that Coral may have been able to make on TV, could in no way compete with the news items disseminated by the hundreds of thousands in the bourgeois press. Furthermore, it was not a question of a lie by the official press versus the truth in *Avanzada Socialista*. What was

involved was the undeniable fact that the PST, regardless of whether it did or did not sign a declaration with the bourgeois parties, showed in both its statements and its corrections that it was fighting for the "continuity of the government," i.e., that it was objectively linking itself to and relying on this government and, by extension, its policies, although it said the opposite.

Furthermore, the political consequences of the PST's meeting with the government have been totally negative for the PST itself: the argument that nonattendance at the gathering at the government house could mean loss of legality is the axis of this error. We can say that there are three categories of legality: (1) The one enjoyed by the PST, similar to that of the UCR, PI, etc., which entails free airplane tickets for trips within the country, appropriation of funds for electoral campaigns, etc. (2) The category that the CP has, which can be called "de facto legality," in which it can have a legal press, public headquarters, but not the advantages outlined in point 1. (3) The status of organizations like the PRT, which have had no legality except during the first days of Cámpora. Attending the meeting allowed the PST to keep the first type of legality, without, however, using those advantages to prepare itself in case changes in the government forced it into the second category. "Legality" of the first type was a tactical objective, which the PST confused with a strategy, thus not allowing it to prepare itself for the second type of legality.

However, if the PST, by not attending the meeting at the government house, had been the victim of any reprisals, it would have been able to make political capital out of this by exposing the official cynicism. The contrary situation has been totally favorable to the government. It used the PST for its ends and at the same time made it the victim of the parapolice repression. When the government no longer needed it, it went over to officially repressing the PST, arresting its leaders and members and having the police occupy its main headquarters.

25. The crisis that underlay the government's entire repressive policy reached new levels and the sickly "right-wing state" that survived was finally replaced by the state of siege. Through use of this tool repression reached new levels and the government put an end to the collaboration it was getting from both the PST and the CP, raiding their headquarters and jailing their leaders, forgetting their recent meetings and the heartfelt promises to respect individual rights and guarantees.

The bourgeoisie demonstrated the measures it can use to defend institutionalization, precisely at the expense of civil liberties, and the PST showed the heavy price that is paid for an opportunist and tail-ending policy when the interests of the masses are at stake. After its headquarters in the Federal Capital were raided and taken over by the police, the PST had to close all its public headquarters in the country and the circulation of its press was severely limited, awaiting guarantees that no one could or wanted to give it.

26. The organizations with the greatest influence within the mass movement are still the Montoneros, JUP, and other Peronist youth formations. Their bending to and direct association with the Peronist government have made them real brakes on the political development of the mass movement.

Their role as "left fellow-travelers" of the government inhibited them from making head-on protests against each official reactionary measure, and as a result they have ended up leading all the mobilizations into dead-ends.

Using skillful maneuvers, Perón openly confronted the JP Congressmen and bound them to support a series of anti-working-class laws. Retreating in the face of each blow from the government, which viewed them as a dangerous radicalizing element in the mass movement, little by little they lost a large part of their original forces and disarmed the rest in terms of any confrontation with the government's policies.

27. Caught up in this insoluble contradiction, the Peronist youth movement of the Montoneros and JP were forced to make a public break with the government once the situation made this step easier—i.e., after Perón's death. The Montoneros' "going underground," the rationale for which was the sharpening repression that was hitting them, was simply an acknowledgement of the lack of a clear conjunctural policy and perspective in the face of the government's crisis.

"Going underground" served to avoid concrete responsibility for the leadership of the mass movement. The "hard" attitude against the government resulted, therefore, in a deepening of the organizational weakness of the workers' movement. It meant the curtailing of an organization that had participated in the daily struggles and which despite its limitations had provided an important underpinning.

28. The present role of the radicalized youth organizations of Peronism is basically focused on preparing an electoral alternative for 1977, as Dante Gullo, the leader of the JP, stated.

Several "legal" variants are being put forward as possibilities. The basic thing is that through an alternative of this type the efforts and social base of these organizations are providing support for the popular-frontist proposal that reformism is fighting for.

The mobilization of the Juventudes Políticas Argentinas [Argentine Political Youth-Groups] (an organization made up of the youth groups of the CP, the PI, sections of the Radical Party, and the JP) has become the main structure through which the Peronist organizations carry out public interventions. And it is recognized that the JPA are at this point the cornerstone of the CP's attempt to push the notorious Popular Front.

29. Other Peronist youth organizations, although a minority, have assimilated the impact of the government's right turn, in the face of which they adopted a much more radicalized attitude from the beginning.

These organizations, especially the ones coming out of rank-and-file Peronism—the FAP (Fuerzas Armada Peronistas—Peronist Armed Forces), Comando Nacional, and MR 17 (Movimiento Revolucionario 17 de Octubre)—have begun a policy of alliances with the revolutionary left, especially in the mass fronts.

Without yet having concretely defined themselves as being in favor of building a revolutionary proletarian party, and without having deepened their break with populism, these sectors are objectively the most advanced elements of Peronism which are developing an anticapitalist political position.

The principal shortcoming of these most radicalized and combative sectors of Peronism is their lack of a rounded political perspective and of a coherent anticapitalist

working-class ideology, one based on a perspective of class struggle and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order.

30. The revolutionary left is made up of numerous groups spanning a broad spectrum of political positions. This layer of revolutionary organizations, many of which arose out of the explosions of the 1969-72 period under the denomination "socialist left" and others out of fissures and splits in more important organizations, represent at this time the product of an empirical process of selection in the country's political struggle. This has taken place between the two large experiences—the PRT-ERP's adventurism and the PST's legalism and opportunism, along with the experience with Maoism, which was tested and found wanting.

This broad sector, part of which functioned as a propaganda and agitational circle in the first phase of the 1969 struggles, was not in a position to take advantage of the favorable circumstances that opened up after Peronism's victory in the elections. They presented, in general, a critique of the electoral process as well as a critique of the opportunist tail-ending of the PST and the adventurism of the PRT, without being in a position to provide an alternative for the mass movement.

Within the framework of this revolutionary left we must include the organizations that support the orientation adopted at the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International. Today several groups that support the International Majority Tendency of the FI are organizationally separate as the result of differences which are not at all fully developed.

This situation of atomization reflects the contradictory development of revolutionary Marxism in Argentina as well as the weakness of the Fourth International in building a credible alternative that can transform the revolutionary Marxists into a pole of attraction for the revolutionary left as a whole.

31. One of the organizations that was recognized as a sympathizing section of the Fourth International and as a member of the International Majority Tendency was the Red Faction (Fracción Roja) of the PRT.

This organization went through a contradictory process of development as a result of the debate generated by the Tenth World Congress. The questioning of the erroneous elements of the Ninth World Congress as well as the need for a more complete balance sheet of the militarist and vanguardist experience of the PRT-ERP led to a struggle between tendencies in the Red Faction of the PRT that culminated in a split in April 1974.

This new crisis within revolutionary Marxism was an unfortunate occurrence that contributed to the exacerbation and further atomization of the spectrum of Trotskyism in Argentina.

32. Nevertheless, starting out from this critical situation, today the revolutionary Marxist organizations, and particularly those that support the positions of the Tenth World Congress, have begun to travel the opposite road. Since the Red Faction's split into two organizations—the LC and the LCR—both have carried out efforts to increase the area of their political agreement while at the same time carrying out activity aimed at drawing toward the Fourth International groups that had been outside it.

The LC held its first congress jointly with the Grupo Espartaco, resulting in an organization with greater potential to intervene through being able to broaden the

local perspectives of the original organizations into a perspective for national intervention. The Patria Socialista grouping, which arose out of the final splits in the PRT in 1972, later joined this organization.

The LCR in turn has made progress in its relations with the GOR, a Trotskyist group that is very close to, although still outside, the Fourth International.

The possibility for joint discussion by both organizations and the progress made toward a regroupment raise further questions about the validity of the split that took place, which even now causes bitterness and distrust, leading us to feel that a more harmonious regroupment of revolutionary Marxism would have taken place if the existing differences within the RF had been handled through a frank Leninist discussion and a correct concept of building the party and the International.

The rest of the Trotskyist organizations that make up the IMT of the Fourth International (LSR, FB, and, close to it, the LEARM) have generally agreed with the criteria put forward by the international leadership regarding the process of regrouping the Trotskyist groups in order to build a revolutionary Marxist party as the section of the Fourth International.

### III. The Central Tasks of the Revolutionary Marxists

33. The government's situation has deteriorated critically in the past two months. A crisis of confidence has arisen, with broad sections of the bourgeoisie feeling that they are less and less represented by the official positions and policies. This situation has scarcely improved with Gómez Morales's appointment as Minister of the Economy. Furthermore, the internal crisis of Peronism has unleashed a furious race between the party and the union bureaucracy for control of the state apparatus, adding instability to the official policy.

In addition, the internal changes in the governmental structure have increased the functions of Social Welfare Minister López Rega, who is now in charge of the Secretariat of the Presidency, a body recently promoted to the rank of a ministry, which has begun in effect to take over decisive functions of the executive branch. This situation has caused mistrust in the armed forces and sections of the bourgeoisie, who see these changes as signs of the government's obvious weakness and as a virtual replacement of the president.

Under these conditions and with a slow growth in the defensive struggles of specific sections of the working class (state, metal, etc.), and with national wage negotiations coming up soon, which were proposed as a safety valve for the critical social and economic situation, there is a widespread lack of confidence in the government's ability to get around all the approaching problems. A coup atmosphere has begun to develop, not with the aim of destroying institutionalization, but rather to save it from the very difficult situations created by the conditions the government finds itself in.

In this panorama, sectors of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, with the intellectual encouragement of Stalinist reformism and populism, have begun with increasing insistence to raise the need for Popular-Front type alliances between sections of the left and bourgeois forces. This has the "well-intentioned" aim of stopping the right-wing coup and saving the democratic gains achieved by

the masses, which this government does not seem capable of maintaining.

34. It will be very difficult for the political process leading up to the 1977 elections to take place without changes. We should not exclude the possibility of a more open form of intervention by the armed forces, which, while unable immediately to intervene in the way Onganía did in 1966, can attempt indirect forms.

This intervention could not be classified as a coup d'état, although it would introduce a different variant of the form that bourgeois domination takes. The participation of the armed forces in the state apparatus, more along the lines of Guido's interim government than of the Onganía government, would be the product of the bourgeoisie's political crisis and would, without brutally destroying the forms of bourgeois democracy, make a farce of them.

The role that the union bureaucracy played in all the earlier developments of workers' struggles has different characteristics this time. The union bureaucracy, which is totally integrated into the state apparatus as a basic instrument of the government's policy, is not willing to back up the workers' protests with an openly oppositional attitude toward this same government.

However, the union bureaucracy's contradictory role can create major frictions within the Peronist government, based on two fundamental aspects: (a) Its obstinate defense of its role as the leadership of the workers' movement, its role in wage negotiations, its control over social welfare, etc., which are called into question by sections of the state apparatus and by the dynamics of the Social Pact itself; and (b) this bureaucratized layer's growing ambition and its desire to increasingly worm its way into control over the state apparatus, a logical price that the bourgeoisie must pay its fundamental ally in controlling the proletariat.

One real impediment to the recovery of the working class's spontaneous struggles exists. As the government's crisis worsens and as the inability of the workers' movement to respond to the present situation on a national level is shown, delay in building a revolutionary leadership becomes increasingly evident.

In this situation, more than in any earlier phase, the recovery of workers' struggles is indissolubly linked to the process of restructuring the workers' movement, i.e., the development of a true class leadership.

Despite these factors, the political crisis of the government, which tends to worsen, is going to stimulate the development of defensive struggles in the workers' movement. These struggles will necessarily tend to broaden and spread to the whole country, without the centralizing forms of the Coordinating Committee of Unions in Struggle being discarded. The discussion over wage negotiations will be added to the conflicts that already exist, resulting in the opening of favorable conditions for the activity of the revolutionary vanguard, and especially of revolutionary Marxists, in this next phase of increased activity by the workers' movement.

35. The contradiction between this tendency for the defensive struggles to spread and the absence of an adequate leadership and bodies that help develop and spread these defensive struggles is at the present time perceptibly aggravated by the kind of repression the government is carrying out, not only through the union bureaucracy and its official repressive apparatus, but also through the activities of the parapolice gangs, the

undercover agents, and the activity of the clearly fascist groups that operate as informers for and collaborators of the police.

The indispensable role of revolutionary Marxists clearly flows from this situation. Their role is indispensable not only in the orientation and organization of the tasks arising from this situation, but also in the broad propaganda and agitation that leads to an understanding of the new characteristics of the repression and the nature of the government's offensive; and, flowing from this, of the need for new methods of struggle and organization to confront them. For this it is necessary to strengthen, clarify, and generalize the short experience the workers' movement has had in the last few months of the escalation of repressive terrorism in order to adopt specific methods of struggle and forms of organization that respond to the new conditions.

It will not be easy, in specific places and while the present conditions remain, to convoke factory assemblies or take forceful measures without previously having prepared and secured a rigidly clandestine operation and having adopted basic measures for the protection of the activists—protection against repression and kidnapping as well as assassination—in order to be able to maintain the continuity of the struggle.

This repressive political situation places on the agenda both the formation of clandestine rank-and-file bodies through which the workers' vanguard can function, and the carrying out of special forms of struggle and resistance in places where the repression is the harshest, forms of struggle that combine a slowdown in production with other measures which, as the *compañeros* of IKA-Renault have just shown in their struggles, achieve the objective of strengthening the mobilization of the workers.

36. The basic objective that the revolutionary Marxists must pay attention to is how to organize and spread the defensive struggles of the workers' movement, broadening the mobilization-front, and bringing together forces on the basis of the fundamental objectives that concern the workers, all leading to the establishment of the working-class united front.

This united front can only be the result of the confluence of the working-class and revolutionary forces, in which some working-class Peronist currents that have opposed the government's policies will have to take part. The establishment of this united front is the prerequisite for taking the initiative in the class struggle away from the bourgeoisie. However, neither the reformists nor the populists will enter a united front with the revolutionists unless the far-left organizations can demonstrate that they are able to put forward initiatives of united action that are capable of bringing the workers' vanguard (the internal commissions, delegates, rank-and-file organizations, workers' coordination committees, etc.) into action.

37. In a supplementary, but very important sphere of the country's political life, the tactic of on-going unity in action must also include the student movement, on the basis of the existing generalized rejection of the government's official policies regarding education. The breakdown of the new Peronist plan regarding the university has been shown not only by Ottalango's departure as rector of the University of Buenos Aires (UNBA), but also by the fact that the official policy has led to the establishment of an oppositional bloc that encompasses virtually all the political forces active in the university,

who are, as a whole, opposed to the government's policies.

In this situation, the bankruptcy of the populist leaderships, the going underground of the JP-Montoneros, as well as the absence of any kind of proposed revolutionary alternative for the student movement, has created the political opening the revolutionary marxist organizations need to try to make themselves into the most dynamic force that propels this front in opposition to the official policy with a clearly revolutionary thrust, supporting the struggles of the workers' movement.

Resistance to all the measures of the new policy that restrict access to the university is going to generate struggles and mobilizations that can link up with the development of the defensive struggles of the workers' movement. This, therefore, makes it necessary to unify the struggles in the confrontation with the government's policy.

38. Revolutionary Marxists will have to pay attention to the demands of those peasant sectors that are affected by the exacerbation of the crisis and constriction of the capitalist economy. By these sectors we do not mean the rural proletariat (rural peons, canecutters, etc.) who sell their labor power and whose aspirations are, with local exceptions, identical with those of the industrial proletariat. Rather we are referring to the small landowners who are struggling in a subsistence economy or agricultural producers who do not own the land, such as sharecroppers and tenants, etc.

Only the organization and mobilization of those sectors will make it possible to wrest from the government not only possession of the land (for those who don't have it), but also credit aid directed toward exploitation of the land, marketing, transport, and subsidies in order to be able to confront the unequal competition of the big producers while also resulting in an improvement in commercialization of agriculture.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the totally local or regional weight of these sectors which, as a whole, represent only 15 percent of the active agricultural population of 1,600,000 persons, the majority of whom sell their labor power.

39. The objectives of the struggles that must lay the foundations for the agreements for unity in action of the workers' organizations, as the basis for a united front, must include demands that raise the level of consciousness and deepen the mobilization of the masses within the framework of the transitional dynamic that lays the basis for the confrontation with state power as the only road of possible development.

These demands must include:

- a. For the immediate release of political, trade-union, and student prisoners.
- b. For the lifting of the state of siege and the abolition of all repressive legislation.
- c. For total freedom of assembly, expression, and press.
- d. For the disarming and dissolution of the special repressive detachments.
- e. For the immediate meeting of national wage negotiation boards, elected by mass meetings and by the rank and file, in order to discuss all the conditions of work, including wages.
- f. For an immediate raise of 100,000 pesos and a

minimum living wage of 400,000 pesos pegged to the cost of living.

g. For rank-and-file workers' democracy. For the recovery of all union bodies controlled by the bureaucracy.

h. For the rehiring of all those laid off under the Ley de Prescindibilidad [Law on Redundancy] and for defense of the right to work.

i. For the organization of armed workers' self-defense to protect the workers' organizations and leaders.

j. For the exposure and punishment of the fascists who work in the factories and universities exclusively as police agents and informers.

k. For the expulsion of the so-called "Ivanissevich Mission" from the University and the whole cultural field. For the fullest autonomy from all government interference in the functioning of the universities.

1. Revolutionary Marxists link the struggle and mobilization for these demands to the fundamental strategic objective, which is to unify the struggles of the workers, the students, and the entire population in order to overthrow the bourgeois government and set up a workers' government.

In short, in response to the degree and depth of the present crisis of capitalism, the direction in which all the political activity proposed by the revolutionary Marxists must lead is to project a clearly anticapitalist thrust—for workers' power and socialism—to the struggles around these demands.

40. In the present period the struggle for civil liberties will be a fundamental question for the revolutionary Marxists. In contrast to the centrist and reformist concepts, we must motivate this struggle with the method of the Transitional Program, not only in terms of program, but also in terms of its methods of activity. In this sense we must fight to convert the superstructural forms that united action agreements between revolutionary, trade-union, and people's organizations often take today into real forms of unity by the ranks, predominantly expressed within the workers' movement. Within this framework and with this methodology, we revolutionary Marxists must encourage all united forms of struggle against the repression, such as the present Coordinadora Política Antirepresiva, to transform it into a united expression of the coordination of the revolutionary political organizations. The example of the coordination that was carried out in support of the solidarity with the workers repressed at Hidrófila, which mobilized the factory compañeros in the area and in other factories, was a clear example of the important job this coordinating committee can carry out.

However, this coordinating committee is not, and cannot be the workers' united front required by the present political situation. It is simply the vehicle for the unity in action of the far-left organizations which, on the basis of a program, coordinate their various forces in the mass movement. The workers' united front is something broader, including the participation of the revolutionary organizations and, necessarily, the working-class and political organizations whose class character is proletarian even though their leaderships proclaim different aims. Only the building of this workers' united front can mobilize the fundamental forces of the working class to politically fight the repression and to take the civil liberties that the bourgeoisie denies them.

41. The present dispersed character of the workers' vanguard is the main obstacle to the development, in the

immediate future, of a frontal and generalized struggle to wrest control of the union apparatus from the bureaucracy. This dispersion has fostered the impatience of sections of the revolutionary vanguard who look for magical solutions to the present atomization of the organized workers' movement.

The perspective of incorporating the workers' vanguard into "class struggle" organizations that are seen as intermediaries between the party and the union bodies has been resurrected within a far left which, unable to bring about a realignment of the forces of the workers' movement, rehashes past errors of the international communist movement. The intermediary organizations that are artificially created by minority groups of revolutionaries can only be embryonic organizations that do not deal with the class's need to build and develop its political organizations. In the best of cases, these organizations succeed in bringing together only the periphery of the party that set them up, unless these organizations are allowed to have a program adapted to the average level of consciousness of the masses, with which the party would transmit a purely syndicalist consciousness within the class.

The restructuring of the workers' movement is not going to take place through the rise of new class organizations outside the bureaucracy-controlled CGT. Rather it will take place through the groups that the workers' vanguard will set up in the course of its struggle against the bosses and the bureaucracy for the leadership of the unions.

To the extent of our possibilities, revolutionary Marxists have to propagandize and systematize the experiences of the class, definitively orienting them toward the organizational political restructuring of the organized workers' movement. But their initiatives in action cannot develop unless revolutionary Marxists participate directly in the bodies created by the working class.

The rank-and-file groupings and the struggle coordinating committees in the unions where the bureaucracy has not been driven out are the foundation on which the restructuring of the workers' movement can be built.

In the rank-and-file groupings in the factories in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, in the Coordinating Committee of Trade Unions of the UOM, of SMATA, etc., all the political organizations in the workers' movement come together in united committees on the basis of a common program of struggle for the defense of the class's interests. Their united character gives them the form of united-front bodies, which we revolutionary Marxists must try to push to a generalized scale. The present task is to take these committees to a higher level, pushing their national coordination and giving them a concrete structure that will provide them with the cohesion needed to enable them to win the recognition of the masses as their natural leadership in the face of the sellouts perpetrated by the union bureaucracy.

However, the establishment of these bodies, in which there are reformists and revolutionaries and even sections of radicalized Peronism, will not automatically guarantee that the workers' movement will get a revolutionary leadership. This is why we revolutionary Marxists must not only push their development, but also complement this by implementing within them a revolutionary program that makes it possible to remove the influence of reformism and populism from the workers' vanguard.

But the activity of the revolutionary Marxists must not be limited to propaganda around their program; they are faced with the task of organizing a national revolutionary tendency in the union movement. Even if it cannot be set up nationally in the short run because of the weak development and weak roots of the revolutionary Marxist organizations, it should be put forward even now in situations and places where the mass influence of the revolutionary Marxist organization makes this possible, without this meaning the self-proclamation of phony vanguards.

42. In the university the revolutionary Marxists will employ a tactic that aims to deepen the process of radicalization that has been very widespread in the middle layers of the population, especially since 1969. This process of radicalization, which Peronism was only partially successful in channeling through the JP and related groups, has remained frustrated by the crisis of the government and of populism in the university. Meanwhile the crisis of capitalism in the country daily feeds this radicalization, which seeks and requires a form of political expression that only revolutionary Marxism can provide in a consistent manner. On this basis revolutionary Marxists will propose ongoing forms of unity in action in the university, the thrust of which is the building of a revolutionary current that raises the most deeply felt demands of the middle layers and projects them in a clearly anticapitalist and revolutionary sense, waging a political battle against reformism, populism, and centrism, which hold back the development and the spread of the radicalization taking place in these sectors.

43. The need for revolutionary Marxists to improve and adapt the party organization to the needs of the period is not solely related to the needs of the revolutionary Marxist organization itself in an ultrarepressive phase.

Fundamentally it is related to the objective we revolutionary Marxists assign to our intervention in the mass movement with respect to the development of consciousness and activity around self-defense, which we must be the first ones to put forward.

In order to be able to meet the needs of the situation we will have to improve the structures of the organization that are dedicated to carrying out certain initiatives for which we might have to resort to military measures.

This is true both with respect to the broad education of members and of the primarily working-class periphery in order to enable them to execute and carry out self-defense tasks within the workers' movement, and also with respect to carrying out tasks which, while they have the same thrust, require greater specialization.

Within this context and in a situation that has a defensive character, the revolutionary Marxists must develop specific military initiatives that help inspire the self-organization of the proletariat, tasks that facilitate the consolidation of consciousness regarding the need for an arming of the masses for self-defense. Actions undertaken by the workers against spies and police infiltrators in factories, or against fascist groups that are not direct adjuncts of the police apparatus, are the kind of actions that, because they have the potential of being recognized as legitimate by sectors of the workers' movement through their own participation or collaboration, serve the present objectives of the revolutionary Marxists regarding the mass movement.

However, our concept of these actions must leave no

room for doubt. In no way do these actions constitute the axis for building the party. We reject "armed propaganda" as a concept which, far from consolidating a real step forward in the development of the consciousness of the workers' movement, instead tries to provide a response by way of example. This is nothing but a substitutionist and vanguardist approach that has nothing to do with the real needs of the mass movement.

Furthermore, the response of the revolutionary Marxists to the reactionary terror cannot be an attitude based on individual action, nor on applying a sentence decreed by small vanguard groups, which reaches the absurdity of trying to sap the strength of or demoralize the repressive apparatus by liquidating its cadres.

44. Today the preservation of the revolutionary Marxist organization and its ability to continue to carry out its intervention is dependent on improving its underground and technical apparatus. The development of clandestine methods of functioning will allow the revolutionary Marxist organization to avoid unnecessary losses and setbacks that would decisively affect its revolutionary objectives.

The preservation and development of an efficient technical apparatus, concurrent with by-passing the handicraft phase, will make it possible to have a solid infrastructure that serves as a real underpinning for intervention.

45. For revolutionary Marxists political education of the membership has two basic aspects. The first is the education of the comrades as agitators, propagandists, and organizers so that political intervention in the mass movements is complemented by solid signs of growth of the revolutionary Marxist organization.

A second, and fundamental, aspect is to develop their theoretical training so that the membership can responsibly take part in the discussion around and development of the organization's line. Only a serious effort in this sphere can prevent inner-party democracy from becoming a sad caricature of itself.

#### **IV. A Step Toward Building the Party**

46. The revival of workers' struggles and the establishment of the new class-leadership present revolutionary

Marxists in Argentina with an essential task. That is to work to build the party, the revolutionary leadership recognized by the masses, as the central responsibility of this period.

For revolutionary Marxists this task can only be carried out within the framework of building the revolutionary party as the political leadership that the revolutionary process in this country needs.

47. The present spectrum of Trotskyist groups supporting the orientation adopted at the Tenth World Congress constitutes a ticklish and complex starting point for regroupment. This situation requires a precise tactic that can overcome the existing atomization, producing a process of regroupment on the basis of solid agreements that permit the building of the new Trotskyist leadership for the workers' and revolutionary movement.

Regroupment is a pressing need that is demanded by the critical situation of the revolutionary organizations supporting the International Majority Tendency of the Fourth International. Unless regroupment takes place in the near future, we will run the risk of a substantial delay in building a revolutionary Marxist leadership, with the grave danger that entails for the workers' movement in the present crisis of capitalism in Argentina.

48. Undoubtedly the coordinating committee of all the groups that support the orientations adopted at the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International is the first step toward reunification. However, the agreements that were made for united intervention in the mass movement and for joint distribution of *Inprecor*, while having created the minimum preconditions for this reunification, do not by themselves resolve the problem. The practical measures leading to reunification into a single centralized party within the Fourth International will have to flow from the common identification with the Fourth International and especially from the existing agreement on the central questions of the socialist revolution in Argentina.

49. The task of building the Argentine section of the Fourth International does not just consist of building a national leadership. Progress in building and developing a revolutionary Marxist leadership for the Argentine section is advanced through building and developing the Fourth International as the world revolutionary leadership.

## DRAFT RESOLUTION ON ARGENTINA

by José Valdes

[The following resolution on Argentina was presented for a vote by José Valdes at the January 27-30, 1975 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. The vote was, *decisive vote*: for—1, against—28, abstentions—8, not voting—5; *consultative vote*: for—0, against—28, abstentions—6, not voting—5.]

### General characterization of the period and the political conjuncture

The stage initiated by the 1969 *Cordobazo* has not yet ended. The workers' movement, channeled electorally into Peronism in 1973, has not yet suffered a fundamental setback. Its trade unions and its potential for united struggles have been maintained intact, as manifested by many general strikes in the last two decades.

Looking at the situation in social terms, there have been no important divisions within the working class, even though politically it has been divided between the "hard-core" ex-left-Peronists who oppose the bourgeois social pact (the Peronist Youth, the Montoneros, Tosco's class-struggle current in the Córdoba CGT and other provincial locals) and the Peronist "right," which presently holds the power of the bourgeois state apparatus.

The unity of the Argentine working class, its struggle potential—sometimes latent, sometimes manifest—will surface in future struggles to block the political project of the elite Peronist leaders in collaboration with the other fundamental bourgeois currents of the country, such as the old Radical Party of Balbín and Company.

On the other hand, the "gorilla" or fascist—or better yet, totalitarian—sectors of the armed forces will try (if they can get the support of the multinational corporations and U.S. imperialism) a new military coup. In the very short run, this seems like the least likely variant to succeed, even though the CP and the PST raise the specter or bogey of a military coup in order to justify their line of legalism and integration into the institutional bourgeois-democratic regime.

The bourgeoisie's most dynamic sectors, faced with a new upsurge of the workers' movement and pressed by the rates of profit and surplus value falling as a result of wage pressure, can propose a new political project based on another bourgeois solution, possibly expressed by a military-civilian cabinet: military control over the Ministry of the Interior—the key position from which the state can repress the workers' movement, and the left in general, free of parliamentary control.

### Economic situation

The world economic recession—its root causes and short-term consequences have been analyzed in Comrade Mandel's article "The Generalized Recession of the International Capitalist Economy" (*Inprecor*, January 23, 1975)—will have deep repercussions on Argentina's economic perspectives.

The growth rate—3.6 percent in 1972, perceptibly rising to 6 percent for 1974—will suffer a fall this year. Exports, which rose from \$1,935 million in 1972 to \$2,920 million in 1973, will drop, ostensibly due to the imperialist centers' need to reduce the imports and prices of foodstuffs and raw materials on the international market in face of the present world economic recession, in order to counterbalance their balance-of-payments deficit. The sharp drop in the influx of foreign exchange due to the fall in volume and prices of exports will oblige the government and the Argentine bourgeoisie to reduce their imports. This will affect the rhythm of investments and the importation of capital goods and equipment, already reduced over the past few years due to the limited accumulation of capital. This raises to a new level the crisis of technological transformation, which the Argentine bourgeoisie needs in order to face the aggressive competition of the Brazilian bourgeoisie in the Latin American market.

The diminishing influx of foreign exchange will also affect imports of semifinished products for light and semiheavy industry. The rise in prices of capital goods, machine tools, and semifinished products, aggravated by the worldwide energy crisis, lowers the Argentine bourgeoisie's buying power in these sectors, which, as Marx explained, are fundamental to the growth of the organic composition of capital. The relationship between variable and constant capital, which since 1960 in Argentina has leaned in the direction of constant capital (also known by the poorly-chosen term "fixed capital"), will fluctuate. That will affect the size of the reserve army of industrial labor and will have repercussions on the relation between necessary and surplus labor—not only on the absolute rate of surplus value indirectly and mediated through the lengthening of the workday, but also on the relative surplus value, which was accelerated in Argentina during the 1960s by the technological transformation and a major rationalization of labor in areas of commodity production necessary for the reproduction of the value of labor power.

The effects of the foreign debt will be felt more strongly than ever. The drop in the influx of foreign exchange will signify the impossibility of paying the accumulated foreign debt, the amortization, and the high interest, obliging the Argentine government to once again raise the question of renegotiating the foreign debt. And to the amortization and interest that the government must pay to the USA and to the Club of Europe in Paris must be added the 4.5 percent interest payments on the \$400 million loan from the so-called socialist USSR.

Nevertheless, the Argentine bourgeoisie still has a certain margin for maneuver because of the favorable balance of trade in 1973, which was the result of a \$1,000 million rise in exports that year. It can reactivate certain economic sectors by heavy state investment in areas of housing and infrastructure, as reflected to some degree by the 15 percent rise in cement production in 1974.

## The bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie as a whole, under the leadership of Peronism and the Radical Party, has supported the GAN (Gran Acuerdo Nacional—[Great National Accord]) as a means of confronting the upsurge of the working-class movement's combativity, which dates from the *Cordobazo* of 1969. The military "model" and its different variations (Onganía, Levingston, Lanusse) have for the moment been abandoned by the bourgeoisie. The crisis of bourgeois political leadership, which significantly sharpened in 1972, was temporarily overcome by Perón's return to power. Perón's return symbolized national-bourgeois conciliation and not—as Moreno, then in Peronist guise, used to say in *Palabra Obrera* (a "Trotskyist publication edited under the discipline of General Perón")—the opening of a concrete insurrectional movement toward a workers' and peasants' government (See *Palabra Obrera*, 1957-59).

Nevertheless, interbourgeois conflicts will begin to appear in face of the deterioration of the economic situation and the diminishing amount of surplus value to be divided up. The sectors of the bourgeoisie comprising owners of means of production in "light" industry (textiles, light metallurgical industry, foods, etc.), tied to the internal market, will seek more state funds in order to amortize the constriction of demand. The enterprises linked to multinational investments will ask for the same funds, thereby sharpening the interbourgeois conflict and posing the need of a different, "forceful" solution to overcome the eventual crisis of bourgeois leadership.

The pressure of the agrarian and cattle-raising sector of the bourgeoisie to obtain a rise in the price of its products will burden the urban workers and even the middle classes with the weight of absolute land rent and, even more so, of differential land rent, by raising the price of a kilo of meat, bread, and other derivatives.

The Catholic Church, seeking a new political "model" for Latin America after the failures of the Christian Democratic parties in Chile and Venezuela, will play a very important role in developing a bourgeois governmental solution.

## Characterization of the government

The Isabel Perón government is slowly losing the *sue generis* bonapartist character that the transitional Cárpora and Perón governments had. The *sue generis* bonapartist game of leaning on the masses to blackmail and pressure Yankee imperialism and the traditional oligarchy, has less and less importance in the projects of Isabel and Lopez Rega, her confidential adviser.

The present and yet-to-come repression against the workers' movement, which aims at intimidating it to stop its counteroffensive for higher wages (further aggravating the tendency of the rate of profit to fall), will liquidate the last vestiges of *sui generis* bonapartism.

In this way, if Isabel Perón's government continues to exist it will take on—in fact, is already taking on—the form of a classical bonapartist government, i.e., to a certain extent playing the role of arbitrator between the various bourgeois sectors, tending to mitigate bourgeois conflicts at two levels: (a) at the level of the dominant class in the strict social meaning of the word; and (b) at the level of the political superstructure of the Peronist, Radical, and

Christian Democratic parties, and the Federal Party led by Manriquez (Argentina's third electoral force).

## The proletariat

The process of upsurge sparked by the 1969 *Cordobazo* has followed an uneven and combined course expressed from time to time by explosive mass uprisings such as the *Mendozazo*, the *Catamarcazo*, the *Rocazo*, the *Santafecinazo*, etc., and the strikes of the sugar refinery workers in Tucuman. This upsurge was politically channeled into Cárpora's 1973 victory and Perón's return.

The trade union bureaucracy has succeeded in putting the brakes on important struggles, but it is losing more and more control over the rank and file, which clearly projects an antibureaucratic line in the workers' assemblies in the factories.

The most probable perspective is of an even greater upsurge in the combativity of the masses, the result of which will depend on the formation of a new class-struggle, revolutionary vanguard.

## The peasantry

The peasantry—in a precise sociological sense consisting only of small landowners, not including agricultural workers—will suffer the effects of the drop in demand for food products resulting from the empty pockets of the workers and urban employees. The peasantry can be mobilized in the country's interior provinces and in the farming areas surrounding the big and medium-size cities, around their immediate demands for more credit, more seed, and more fertilizer, and for the development of cooperatives that can compete with the big and middle-size landowners. The rural proletarians—closer to the urban workers than to the small peasant landowners—who work as permanent hands, or "golondrinas," in the big capitalist agricultural complexes on sugar, cotton, and maté tea plantations, and in the modern dairies, have put forward (and will continue to put forward) wage demands similar in their anticapitalist content to those of the urban proletariat.

## The student movement

The student movement, which acted as a detonator in the *Cordobazo* and other struggles since 1968, might once again violently explode, no longer only for objective reasons flowing from the deterioration of middle-class standards of living, but also for subjective factors such as the present radicalization of the ex-Peronist Youth and the growing left-wing in the universities and in the high schools, the latter at times proving to be more combative than the former.

## The reformist parties

The CP, faithful to its popular-frontist line, has supported the GAN from the start with only minor tactical differences that tend toward channeling the workers' movement and the de-Peronization movement, not into a struggle against the regime but toward an enlargement of its own social base for political maneuver.

Concerning the PST, this document supports the

characterizations and critiques of this party made in declarations number 1 and 2 of the United Secretariat in 1974.

### Strategy and tactics

Our unified Trotskyist organization—on the basis of concrete mass mobilizations in defense of immediate demands, but without capitulating to the so-called spontaneous manifestations of the masses—will creatively and actively combine methods of struggle characterized as “legal” and “illegal,” with the aim of sparking mass mobilizations leading to the creation of embryos of dual power.

Once again—and we are already tired of repeating this in face of the minority’s distortions of our position—we clearly criticize the conceptions of “foquismo,” “militarism,” “guerrillaism,” and any other “isms” that smack of Debrayism. We will make no compromise with, nor give in to any ultimatums of, small guerrilla groups who voluntarily pretend to substitute themselves for the working class as the sole driving force of the revolution.

If at a given point in this process the mass struggles lead to an ever more prorevolutionary (not prerevolutionary) situation, the role of the united forces of the Fourth International will be to eliminate all vestiges of political conservatism, of trade-unionist, economist styles, in order to push forward together—always together—the class-struggle vanguard of the workers, peasants, students, draftee-soldiers, and radicalized middle-class elements in a massive, nationally coordinated armed struggle leading to the proletariat’s conquest of power.

### Tasks for the mass fronts

Our Transitional Program—adapted to the specific characteristics of the Argentine workers’ movement and those conquests it has already gained through more than a half-century of urban struggles—in the present period will raise not only as propaganda slogans but also as agitational slogans and proposals for action (in the sense intended by our beloved Comrade Cannon, who recently passed away), the following points:

- The sliding scale of wages, with periodic adjustments, calculated not on the basis of the official rise in the cost of living but on the basis of surveys conducted by the CGT unions themselves through the so-called parity commissions elected by the workers’ assemblies in the factories; a sliding minimum wage according to the necessities of each family unit, not only for the workers but for wage earners in general.
- The sliding scale of working hours to confront the rising unemployment. Agitation around demands based on the gains won by workers in the refrigeration industry in 1952: Guaranteed-Time Pay; that is, the guarantee of payment for a weekly, bimonthly, monthly, or daily work schedule whether or not a full 48-hour workweek is actually accomplished.
- Nationalization of all enterprises not complying with the labor contracts established by the “parity commissions” and the establishment of workers’ control over them and, on a higher level, of workers’ management (in the sense proposed by Trotsky in the article he wrote on Mexico shortly before his assassination, so as not to reinforce illusions in the possibility of workers’ manage-

ment of certain enterprises while capitalism and the bourgeois state continue to exist).

- Nationalization of the big agrarian and cattle interests, especially the big meat, cotton, wheat, maté tea, and wood producers, and the establishment of workers’ control over them by the rural proletariat.
- The pro-workers-control commissions will denounce the flight of capital out of the country and will demand the prohibition of capital export by the national bourgeoisie and the capitalists tied to the investments of multinational enterprises.
- Nationalization of the banks, especially those linked to multinational enterprises, placing them under the management of the Federation of Banking Employees and its local units in each bank.
- For the people’s neighborhoods and the “shantytown” slums: (a) People’s stores in order to lower prices. At the same time, organization of boycotts and concrete actions by housewives against speculators, demanding a price freeze under the control of neighborhood committees. (b) Organization of the nonpayment of electric bills, as has been done before in Argentina.
- For the peasantry: (a) Small landowners: Noncompulsory cooperatives of small landowners, credit, abolition of mortgage on the *chacareros* and distribution of seed and fertilizer. (b) Rural proletariat, sharecroppers, and hired hands: demands raised similar to those of the urban proletariat, as previously mentioned.
- For the student movement: Promote a new university reform to challenge the bourgeois university—not only on the ideological content of the instruction, but also on the antidemocratic, hierarchical way in which power is wielded by the university administration—by demanding equal rights for students, professors, and workers in deciding the future of the university community.
- Specific regional demands: For the people in the provinces, especially those sectors of the masses most impoverished and exploited by the octopus-like centralism of the over-sized capital city, Buenos Aires. The local aspirations expressed during the *Cordobazo*, the *Mendozaazo*, and the *Santafecinazo* must be put forward at a new level, sharpening the conflicts with the centralism of the federal capital, historically expressed since the birth of the republic in the nineteenth century and repeated as a constant theme on various occasions during this century.
- National and international campaigns for the freedom of political prisoners. Organization of massive class-struggle response against the assassinations and invasions of union and left-wing political party offices.

\* \* \*

*To implement these tasks a precise tactical plan:*

- Support to the class-struggle tendency that has developed in important CGT unions, struggling daily against the bureaucracy. Patient and persevering work by our militants in these developing tendencies with the factory delegates and at the level of industry-wide union federations.
- *United proletarian front* with the left reformist parties, especially the PST, in order to reinforce the mass mobilization and radicalize the proletarian rank and file of the traditional reformist organizations, thereby unmasking in action the centrist character of their leaderships. This proletarian united front, at the top and bottom, must

clearly put forward—without mental or political reservations—the struggle for democratic rights, not abstractly, but for those liberties with class content, directly linked to the freedom of opinion of the workers' press, the right to strike, to organize unions, to put an end to the invasion of union offices. If certain sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and even popular layers of the Peronist and Radical parties are ready to fight for democratic liberties, the proletarian united front will be able to arrive at precisely defined practical agreements with them without conceding any global political agreement that would compromise the proletariat's class independence.

- *The revolutionary united front:* The united forces of the Fourth International will propose common actions and concrete agreements for united revolutionary fronts with those organizations that—like the PRT-ERP—really struggle against the bourgeois state, without capitulating or being pressured into adventurist actions cut off from the real struggles of the working masses.

- *The continental character of the socialist revolution in Latin America* preached and practised by Che Guevara is, now more than ever, on the agenda. Not only because the Castroists have abandoned it, but because it corresponds to the concrete form of coordinating the reawakening worker-peasant struggles in Peru, Columbia, Bolivia, Argentina, and now even in Brazil and Mexico.

The debate on the nature of the Latin American revolution, which was thought by the political vanguard to have been settled with the Second Declaration of Havana, while Che was still alive, must be taken up again today by a theoretical offensive. We must remember that the present policies of the Cuban CP leadership, creating illusions about the bourgeois-democratic possibilities of governments like those of Velasco Alvarado in Peru, Torrijos in

Panama, and Echeverría in Mexico, have misled former revolutionaries such as Héctor Béjar of Peru into class collaboration with the so-called “progressive” and “nationalist” sectors of Latin American society.

### The unity of Argentine Trotskyism

This is the precondition for carrying out these tasks. This unification cannot be delayed beyond the first half of this year and must include, without discrimination, all organizations that consider themselves part of the majority of the Fourth International.

This unification must not be obstructed by any kind of ultimatic proposals. The objective facts of the worldwide upsurge of the masses and of the reawakening workers' struggles in Latin America and Argentina push forcefully toward the need to unify our Argentine Fourth Internationalist forces.

The LC, as well as the LSR, LCR, GOR, FB, and LEARM, have reaffirmed, in written documents, their willingness to call for a reunification congress to be held in the near future.

Our IMT fraternally appeals to the Argentine comrades to fulfill their promises and words, affirmed in several meetings with official representatives of the international. For our part, we as international leaders will guarantee absolute respect for the democratic discussion through written documents and for the democratic representation of rank-and-file delegates from each of the organizations that attend the unification congress of Argentine Trotskyism.

José Valdés  
January 26, 1975

## Program and the PST's "Specific, Limited Agreements"

By Berta Langston and Bob Langston

It is difficult right now to make severe criticisms of the PST. For months, these comrades have been valiantly combatting the harshest, government-inspired repression. Some have been murdered by right-wing terrorists. Our Argentine cothinkers need—and of course they have—the complete solidarity of every organization and individual aligned with the Fourth International. But an element of that solidarity is the struggle for political clarity. The issues under discussion are of central importance to revolutionary theory and practice. Moreover, the PST leadership's implication that its policy regarding the role of bourgeois politicians in the fight for democratic rights is essentially analogous to the SWP's policy in the antiwar movement, and the SWP leadership's general endorsement of the PST comrades' documents in the present dispute, confer on the issues a special immediacy for us of the SWP.

Until now, the central contentions of the two sides in the discussion seem to be these:

The USec majority holds that PST policy in the struggle to defend the democratic rights of the Argentine working class has entangled the PST in an interclass bloc with the Argentine bourgeoisie. In this respect, the policy breaks with traditional Trotskyist conceptions of the methods to be pursued in the defense of democratic rights, particularly under conditions of the kind of acute economic, social and political crisis which, if it is not resolved by the working class through the establishment of its power, threatens to be resolved by a historic defeat of the working class, at least on a national scale. The break with the traditional conceptions has not been justified by any adequate analysis, asserts the IMT, and it is incorrect. This erroneous policy objectively hinders the struggle to defend democratic rights by obscuring the role of the Peronist government in leading the attack on the democratic rights of the working class.

The PST leadership, on the other hand, insists that they have not entered into any political bloc with any sector of the bourgeoisie. PST policy, the comrades claim, has been guided by the traditional Trotskyist method of the transitional program, applied to the concrete situation in Argentina. The central axis of their policy, they say, remains the struggle for the complete independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. The PST leadership further insists that the reason for the IMT's distorted view of the PST's policy is an adaptation to guerrillaism as a consequence of which the International Majority grasps neither the necessity to struggle for democratic rights nor the necessity to take account, at each step, of the level of consciousness, the mood, and the aspirations of the masses.

In our opinion, the IMT is right in this dispute. In this document, we will try to define as precisely as we can the sense in which the PST became involved in an interclass bloc with the bourgeoisie and to lay bare the connection between this political entanglement with the ruling class and an opportunistic misinterpretation of an important

aspect of the method of the transitional program to which the comrades have fallen victim.

At the heart of the revolutionary Marxist conception of the class line in politics lies that of *total* counterposition of the program of the proletariat to all the programs of the bourgeoisie. We should judge all our tactics in the light of this conception. The fundamental question to be posed of a possible tactic is always, Does this particular tactic advance or retard, over all, the process of the coming to consciousness of the masses of the working people that their real interests are diametrically opposed, in every respect, to the "solutions" offered by the parties of the bourgeoisie? In particular, in the sphere of propaganda, we always should explain our position in absolute opposition to the *programs* of the capitalist parties. On every concrete issue, we counterpose our world view and our solutions to the world view and proffered "solutions" of the capitalist parties.

This does not, of course, mean that we do not demand of the capitalist government that it do certain things, things that are objectively in the interest of the masses of the people, that is, things that follow from the program of the working class. And when the capitalist government takes a certain *measure* that we have demanded, we of course support that action; even the most reactionary government is capable of being forced to undertake certain progressive steps. But our support to such measures is critical; we explain that this particular measure is in fact in contradiction to the real program of the capitalist party wielding governmental power; that it is a *concession* granted by the ruling class in the face of an actual or threatened, socially disruptive mass mobilization. Even when we support a particular *measure* taken by a capitalist government, or when our demand that a particular *measure* be taken coincides with that of an opposition bourgeois party, we retain our posture of absolute disagreement with that government or party about everything at the programmatic, that is, general, level. We try to show concretely how this particular measure or demand was forced on the bourgeoisie, or some fraction of it, against its programs.

Likewise, we do not attempt the preposterous task of avoiding all relationships with bourgeois politicians. They are, after all, the central agents of the continuing political domination of the masses of people by the bourgeoisie. Whether we try to force the involvement of such individuals in an organization or action of the mass movement that we are seeking to build and bring political clarity to, or whether we demand their exclusion, is a tactical question—often a very complicated and contradictory one—to be decided in terms of the question, Which policy will best advance the masses' coming to consciousness? But always, our propagandistic contribution to that process includes total programmatic counterposition. Above all, when capitalist politicians are involved in the mass movement, we seek to demonstrate concretely that their objective function there—quite independently of any

questions of individual sincerity—is to retard the development of the movement, is to coopt it back into the framework of the politics of the bourgeoisie, which is programmatically opposed to what the mass movement is fighting for. We don't agree with the bourgeoisie about anything; we don't agree any more with it when its political representatives are involved in the same mass movement we are than we do when a bourgeois party raises the same demand we do. The revolutionary cannot ever treat its differences with the bourgeois parties as tactical ones; the differences are fundamental. We are never in a situation in which we have agreement with any capitalist party on any goal—no matter how limited—but disagree with it on how to attain that goal. Our disagreement with the “dove” wing of the Democratic Party was never that we were in favor of mass action while it was in favor of supporting its parliamentary adherents as a means of ending the war. Our disagreement was that the “dove” wing of the Democratic Party, as a faction or incipient faction of a capitalist party, supported the war in Vietnam—whatever its tactical differences with other factions of the bourgeoisie—and had to, because it was programmatically committed to the maintenance of imperialist domination in Southeast Asia. Of course, our differences with the masses of people who opposed the war but supported the Democratic “doves” was “tactical”; we patiently explained to them why it was impossible to advance the cause of peace by voting for the political representatives of a party that was programmatically committed to war.

Of course, total programmatic counterposition does not mean that every issue of the *Militant* has to include the *Communist Manifesto*, *Anti-Duehring*, and *State and Revolution*. We develop that counterposition around the central, concrete issues objectively posed to the working class. The SWP correctly grasped the Vietnam war as the central issue of American politics (and world politics) for an extended period. And it correctly developed that absolute programmatic counterposition around the Vietnam war issue. And because of that, the Party's policy was not class collaborationist, despite the presence of the “American Balbins,” Vance Hartke included, alongside us in the rallies, demonstrations and meetings of the antiwar movement.

We think the Party was wrong at certain points in the development of the antiwar movement to press as aggressively as it did to get the participation of bourgeois politicians. But we have always regarded our disagreements on this point as tactical, exactly because the Party never relented for a moment in its systematic and absolute programmatic counterposition. If it had, then in fact the antiwar movement would have ceased to be an arena of unrelenting struggle against the bourgeois war parties and would have become the beginning of an interclass political bloc based on a “peace” program, however much we continued to demand “out now” and to insist on the need for mass mobilizations.

These notions seem to us more or less elementary. We would have assumed until very recently that most comrades in the SWP would agree with them if anyone bothered to formulate them explicitly. Yet, this assumption now seems to be in question, because PST policy, and the PST's explanation of that policy, contradicts these elementary notions and the SWP leadership has in general endorsed the PST's position.

What is the PST leadership's general, theoretical conception of what defines the line between class collaboration and class independence? We know that the comrades of the PST are opposed to all kinds of popular fronts, democratic fronts, etc., but it is not so obvious just what kind of criteria they apply in determining whether a certain set of relations with bourgeois politicians is an incipient form of class collaboration or not. Despite the polemics that have gone on so far, the most explicit statement of their conceptions seems to be one found in an article that appeared last July in *Avanzada Socialista*. “The fact,” the article reads, “that in defending democratic rights our position coincides with that of non-working-class and nonsocialist currents and parties does not mean that we agree with them on anything else or on the way to defend these democratic rights.

“Our party will always agree with Balbin and the FAS lawyers in opposing by all means the suppression of the daily *El Mundo*. Balbin does this in the name of the bourgeois liberal constitution he supports. We do so in the name of workers' democracy and socialism.” The article goes on to say that “these convergences with bourgeois sectors can be expressed in the form of limited agreements, documents, statements, etc. A recent example was the rally organized by our party in condemnation of the Pacheco Massacre, in which, besides the left, almost all the bourgeois democratic forces participated.” (*What Course for Argentine Trotskyists*, Education for Socialists, June 1975, p. 54, col. 2).

Does the coincidence of the position of the PST with that of “non-working-class and nonsocialist currents and parties” mean to the comrades of the PST simply the fact that both they and the Radical Civic Union opposed the suppression of *El Mundo*, or does it mean that in their view there is some overlap between the program of workers' democracy and socialism that we support and the program of the liberal bourgeois constitution that the Radical Civic Union is committed to? Do the PST comrades understand the “convergence” expressed in a limited agreement to be the convergence of Balbin and Comrade Coral on a certain street corner at a certain time to join in protesting the murder of our comrades, or do they understand the convergence to be one—no matter how partial—between our conception of democratic rights and the conception of democratic rights inherent in the program of the Radicals? At the very least, the references to joint statements and documents must suggest to those advanced Argentine workers whose revolutionary education comes primarily from reading *Avanzada Socialista* that the PST perceives a certain programmatic solidarity—limited as it may be—between itself and the party of the Radicals.

If the PST comrades' general theoretical conception of the nature of the class line seems ill-defined, their practice, in certain respects, unfortunately is not. In the series of meetings in which the PST participated along side the other legal parties, including the RCU—a series of meetings which the PST has justified as being a weapon in the struggle to defend democratic rights—the PST leadership has presented the program of the working class in a way that establishes rather substantial areas of agreement between it and the program of bourgeois liberalism. We will examine three instances of this purported programmatic convergence.

The first concerns the function and nature of democratic rights. At the Multisectorial of Oct. 8, 1974, the PST presented a statement (*What Course . . .*, pp. 57-58), which opens with an explanation of the PST's participation in the meeting: The Party is there, not because it supports or believes in the possibility of "national unity"—and this, of course, is a cardinal point of differentiation from bourgeois democracy. Rather, the statement asserts, the PST is participating because it wants to defend the democratic liberties that had been won since the Cordobazo. And, as the PST always correctly insists, these democratic liberties were achieved as a consequence of the mass struggles and not as the result of any commitment to democratic rights on the part of the military dictatorship or the Peronist government.

But the statement then goes on to say, "The fundamental purpose of such democratic rights is to ensure the respect for the right of the masses to decide what government they want—which in this case is the Peronist government—and the fundamental respect for the right of all political parties to present their ideas to the masses." Now this is an almost chemically pure specimen of bourgeois ideology, the cement that holds together ideologically the internally contradictory programs of just about every liberal bourgeois party. And this the comrades of the PST presented in a situation that demanded the utmost clarity in counterposing the revolutionary Marxist conception of democratic rights to every bourgeois conception, precisely because the question of the defense of democratic rights of the working class against a global threat to them was objectively the central political question confronting the Argentine masses at the time of that Multisectorial—and remains so today.

It is not so that the "fundamental purpose of such democratic rights is to ensure respect for the right of the masses to decide what government they want." First of all, there is a fundamental difference in the fundamental purpose of democratic rights for the capitalist class and their fundamental purpose for the working class. And secondly, the comrades' statement is true with respect neither to the bourgeoisie nor to the working class.

For the ruling class, the "fundamental purpose" of such democratic rights as it has had to grant is to delude the masses into the belief that the government which in reality is the instrument of their exploitation and oppression, is the government they want, the government they have freely chosen. And for the ruling classes, the fundamental purpose of these democratic rights is not at all to ensure "fundamental respect" for the right of all political parties to present their ideas to the masses, but rather, by means of the delusion that the oppressive government the masses have is the government they want, to assure at least mass acquiescence in, if not active mass support for, a policy aimed precisely at limiting some political parties in presenting their ideas to the masses.

But for the working class, too, it is incorrect to say that the fundamental purpose of democratic rights is to ensure respect for the right of the masses to decide what government they want. For within capitalist society there is no way the masses can decide what government they in fact want. They will not be able to decide what government they want, in a real and not a purely illusory way, until the workers state is in process of establishment. But between now and then there lies the socialist revolution, not just the defense and extension of democratic rights. It

is true to say that for the working class the fundamental purpose of democratic rights now is linked to that future ability of the masses to decide what government they want, for the fundamental purpose of democratic rights now, for the working class, is to secure a social space, limited as it may be, in which it can develop the elementary forms of workers' democracy (trade unions, action committees, parties, etc.) that in some ways anticipate the proletarian democracy of the future workers state. The fundamental purpose of democratic rights for the working class is to provide the possibility of self-organization and of struggle against capitalist society. And in this, the opportunity for various political parties to present their ideas to the masses plays an important role. But it is only to the extent that this self-organization and struggle occurs that democratic rights are, in themselves, of significance to the working class. Outside of this self-organization and struggle, democratic rights are simply forms through which the oppressive power of the capitalist state hides itself from the view of its victims. Outside this self-organization and struggle, democratic rights are just ideological props of the governing apparatus of the capitalist state.

By failing to make these distinctions, by simply taking over the ideological heart of every bourgeois-democratic program and presenting it as an aspect of the program of the working class, the PST comrades have helped reinforce all the mass illusions about "government by consent of the governed." This is especially clear in the comrades frequently expressed insistence that one reason they defend the continuity of the Peronist regime against the ultraright is that it was elected by a majority of the Argentine workers. But that election was a bourgeois election, and the revolutionary party cannot assent to the legitimacy of any such election, for even under the freest, most democratic conditions, it is based on fraud and deception.

It is one thing to explain to workers that the revolutionary party is not going to try to overthrow a certain government because that government still has the confidence of the majority of the working class; that the revolutionary party can "make" the revolution only with and not against the majority of the workers; that the party will not attempt to organize an insurrection until it has the confidence of the majority of the workers—as disclosed, partly, it is true, in the votes the party wins in bourgeois elections, but above all in the positions of authority it is able to win in the mass organizations and the struggles it is able to lead through the mass organizations; that the party would fight side by side with anyone or any organization against a fascist attempt to seize power because a fascist victory would result in the destruction of those seeds of proletarian democracy upon which the future depends. It is something altogether different to say that the party defends the Peronist government against a fascist or right-wing coup *because it was elected with the support of a majority of the working class* (in a bourgeois election). The former stands on the legitimacy that the working class must produce for itself through its self-organization against the bourgeois regime. The latter stands on the legitimacy the capitalist state procures for itself by the deceptions of bourgeois democracy. That legitimacy the revolutionary party always wants to help undermine; but it can't contribute to that by speaking of

the "fundamental purpose" of democratic rights in a way that obliterates the class line.

By obliterating the class line in their presentation of the function of democratic rights, the PST transformed those meetings—that were supposed to be a weapon, however modest, in the struggle for democratic rights—into an interclass bloc with the bourgeoisie. Whether a correct political line could in fact have made it possible for the PST to utilize the Multisectorials as a weapon in defense of democratic rights, or whether with a correct political line it would have been possible for the PST to participate at all, we cannot judge; though we doubt it. But with the political line the comrades adopted, with their presentation of the program of the working class as overlapping the program of bourgeois democracy, the practical result of their participation could only be objectively to aid the very regime that was busily organizing the assault on the democratic rights or the working class legitimize itself in the eyes of the workers.

We are not demanding that everytime a PST propagandist or agitator speaks, he or she deliver a disquisition on political theory. But when such a disquisition is necessary—and it surely sometimes is necessary when the central political issue confronting the masses is the defense of democratic rights against a global threat to them—then Marxist and not bourgeois-democratic theory should be presented. The disquisition should express the counterposition of the program of the working class to those of the bourgeoisie.

The second area in which the PST has proclaimed an overlap between the program of the working class and that of the bourgeoisie is defined by the PST's support of the slogan of "institutionalization," with the proviso that it be understood "as the masses understand it." (*What Course for Argentine Trotskyists*, Education for Socialists, June 1975, p. 35, col. 2). It should be noted that the PST leadership and the USec majority generally agree on the analysis of the objective process to which "institutionalization" refers. (Cf. *What Course*. . . , p. 16 col. 2 and p. 33, cols. 1-2). What is essentially involved is a maneuver through which the bourgeoisie, confronted with the massive rise of workers struggles, has sought to contain those struggles by offering the masses, through their bureaucratic leaders, a quid pro quo: cool your struggles, codify that renunciation in the Social Pact, and in return we will offer you a certain improvement in real wages and some extension of democratic rights, above all the right to elect Peron or his agent president.

The PST raises the slogan of institutionalization alongside the bourgeois parties and the government—although, of course, they unambiguously reject any kind of "social peace" deals and have energetically advanced trade-union struggles in violation of the Social Pact. The comrades seek to justify this policy of presenting a programmatic convergence with the bourgeoisie in support of the regime against right-wing attacks while at the same time urging on struggles the regime is trying to destroy, by appealing to the method of the transitional program. They explain that one element in their overall policy is:

"To engage in an energetic defense of the 'process of institutionalization' as the masses understand it—not as the bourgeoisie and above all the Peronist government understand it. In voting for the 'process', the workers voted

for expanding democratic freedoms. We agree with the workers and with the feeling they expressed by their votes. We are pointing out to them that they must struggle to ensure that the process moves forward and not backward.

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

Let us examine the actual method proposed by Trotsky in dealing with a situation in which the masses of workers place a "progressive substance" in bourgeois slogans *because on their surface* these slogans may appear to serve their interests. The most explicit methodological recommendation is to be found in the section on "The Struggle Against Imperialism and War" of the *Transitional Program*. The problem is how to cope with the undeniable attractiveness to the masses of pacifist and chauvinist slogans and how to turn what is responsible for that attractiveness into a means of advancing class consciousness. We shall deal with the question in terms of the slogans of national defense; the treatment of pacifist slogans is identical.

(It should be kept in mind that here Trotsky is dealing with the slogans of national defense in the imperialist countries, not in the colonial countries or workers states. The analogy that we are establishing is between "national defense" in the United States and "institutionalization" in Argentina; it is *not* between "national defense" in the United States and "national defense" in Argentina. It is necessary to stress this point, since the PST leadership has insisted so strongly in their polemics that the IMT has failed to take into consideration the fact that Argentina is a semicolonial country. Yet, the PST comrades have failed to specify in any way how this fact is relevant to a situation in Argentina at present. The overwhelming majority of the population are neither peasants nor urban petty bourgeois but wage workers of one sort or another. The central political question confronting the masses is not a war of national liberation against an imperialist power; it is not a struggle even merely to limit the economic exploitation of the country by imperialism; it is not the battle against precapitalist propertied classes. In other words, it is not anything *immediately* determined by the uncompleted tasks of the democratic revolution. It is rather the defense of the democratic rights of the masses against the threat of the decimation of the working class as a class at the hands of the "national" bourgeoisie in collusion with imperialism.)

"The bourgeoisie and its agents," Trotsky wrote in that section of the *Transitional Program*, "use the war question, more than any other, to deceive the people by means of abstractions, general formulas, lame phraseology: 'neutrality,' 'collective security,' 'arming for the defense of peace,' 'national defense,' 'struggle against fascism,' and so on. All such formulas reduce themselves in the end to the fact that the war question, i.e., the fate of the people, is left in the hands of the imperialists, their governing staffs, their diplomacy, their generals, with all their intrigues and plots against the people."

This paragraph can be slightly rewritten to pose correctly the problem of "institutionalization" in contemporary Argentina: The bourgeoisie and its agents use the

question of the danger of reaction, more than any other, to deceive the people by means of abstractions, general formulas, lame phraseology: "institutionalization," "the defense of democracy," "assuring the continuity of the government against the threat of a right-wing coup," and so on. All such formulas reduce themselves in the end to the fact that the question of fascism and extreme reaction, i.e., the fate of the people, is left in the hands of the imperialists, their direct agents, the national bourgeoisie allied with them, with all their intrigues and plots against the people.

Trotsky continues, "The Fourth International rejects with abhorrence *all such abstractions* which play the same role in the democratic camp as in the fascist: 'honor,' 'blood,' 'race.' But abhorrence is not enough. It is imperative to help the masses discern, by means of verifying criteria, slogans and demands, the concrete essence of these fraudulent abstractions."

How does Trotsky propose to help the masses do this? Consider first the level of propagandistic explanation.

"Defense of the Fatherland?" reads the *Transitional Program*, "But by this abstraction, the bourgeoisie understands the defense of its profits and plunder. We stand ready to defend the fatherland from foreign capitalists, if we first bind our own (capitalists) hand and foot and hinder them from attacking foreign fatherlands; if the workers and the farmers of our country become its real masters; if the wealth of the country be transferred from the hands of a tiny minority to the hands of the people; if the army becomes a weapon of the exploited instead of the exploiters."

At this propagandistic level, Trotsky does not absolutely reject *any* idea of defense of the fatherland. So far, Trotsky's method and the method of the PST coincide. But Trotsky does absolutely reject ("with abhorrence") any *slogan* of defense of the fatherland, for that slogan incarnates a "fraudulent abstraction." And here, Trotsky's method becomes diametrically opposite to that of the PST, which is, itself to raise the slogan of "institutionalization" and then to try to differentiate that fragment of a progressive idea contained within it from the slogan as such by writing an article explaining that the PST supports the slogan because it understands it the way the masses do. Trotsky approaches the problem of differentiation altogether differently. He makes our support to defense of the fatherland *conditional*; we support defense of the fatherland under one slight condition—that the fatherland we are defending is ruled by the working class, is a workers state. That idea is popularly expressed: binding our capitalists hand and foot; the workers and farmers being the real masters; the wealth of the country transferred to the people; an army that is a weapon of the exploited instead of the exploiters.

By Trotsky's method, the question of institutionalization would be dealt with in general this way:

"Institutionalization?" —But by this abstraction the Argentine bourgeoisie and its imperialist senior partners understand the defense of their profits and plunder by buying the acquiescence of the Argentine workers in their superexploitation through offering them the right to elect the agent of their superexploitation. We stand ready to defend the institutionalization of democratic rights, if we first bind our capitalists hand and foot so they cannot any longer use the democratic rights to exploit us; if the workers and the farmers of our country become its real

masters; if the wealth of the country be transferred from the hands of a tiny minority to the hands of the people; if the army becomes a weapon in the hands of the exploited for the defense of the new workers' and farmers' institutions instead of a weapon of the exploiters."

At this general level, we see the way in which, for Trotsky, the progressive *sentiment* of the masses, which the bourgeoisie is able to appeal to in order to gain support for its completely reactionary program, is turned against the bourgeois slogan itself and not merely against the slogan "as the bourgeoisie understands it." For what the slogan refers to, in reality, is just exactly what the bourgeoisie understands by it (it cannot be otherwise, for the bourgeoisie holds the power) together with the ideological process, dependent on the progressive mass sentiment, whereby the bourgeoisie is able to turn the masses into supporters of their own oppression. And that is why we reject the slogan "with abhorrence." There is no way in which we can raise the slogan, "defense of the fatherland" (in an imperialist country)—or "institutionalization" (in Argentina today). We establish an absolute programmatic counterposition between the working class and the bourgeoisie to help the masses grasp the "concrete essence" of these "fraudulent abstractions."

Trotsky continues, in the *Transitional Program*: "It is necessary to interpret these fundamental ideas [e.g., support to defense of the fatherland on condition that the capitalists be bound hand and foot counterposed to the fraudulent abstraction of the slogan, "defense of the fatherland"] by breaking them up into more concrete and partial ones, dependent upon the course of events and the orientation of thought of the masses." The result of applying this method at the time the transitional program was composed was, in the United States, the SWP's proletarian military policy. Regarding Argentina today, it is well to recall a few important incidents in the recent course of events:

- Early in September, the Montoneros announced they were withdrawing their support of the government and (not understanding any other alternative to support of the government) were resuming guerrilla warfare;

- In February, a public split developed within the Peronist movement and Campora announced the formation of a new, "left" Peronist party in opposition to the government;

- In March, the metal workers of Villa Constitucion went out in a general strike against the government to protest the arrest of their democratically elected leadership, which, in January, they had elected in opposition to the CGT's bureaucrat slate; they formed defense guards and fought cops and right-wing goons in defense of their democratic rights;

- During the past month, a wave of strikes against the government has erupted which was gradually brought under the leadership of the CGT bureaucracy; at the same time, the bureaucrats saw themselves compelled to undertake intense agitation among the masses of union members to warn them against seeking any alliances with "leftists"; this strike wave has, at the moment, left the country almost without any government at all.

Yet, as recently as January 7 of this year, the PST leaders in their "In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter Number 2," insisted that "the crisis of Peronism in the workers movement has begun, but only just begun, and

that it is developing very slowly" (*What Course*. . . , p. 33, col. 3) and they found the USec's suggestion that they orient toward the workers united front in the struggle against reactionary violence "simply . . . ridiculous" on the grounds that ". . . obviously a workers united front requires mass organizations, not small parties. A workers united front with the Peronist unions, which are the only mass organizations that exist? But the fact is that a whole 'sector of fascism' draws its support from the Peronist unions, which in their turn support the government as do the workers. So then, should it be a united front of the Peronist unions against the Peronist unions?" (*What Course* . . . , p. 34, col. 2). In the event, the orientation of a small group of people several thousands miles away in Brussels seemed to be rather closer to the orientation of thought of the Argentine masses than did the orientation of the PST leaders.

But let us return to Trotsky's methodological instruction in connection with slogans whose essence lies in the fact that they utilize progressive mass sentiments to mobilize support for thoroughly reactionary purposes:

"When the small farmer or worker speaks about defense of the fatherland, he means defense of his home, his families and other similar families from invasion, bombs and poisonous gas. The capitalist and his journalist understand by the defense of the fatherland the seizure of colonies and markets, the predatory increase of the 'national' share of world income. Bourgeois pacifism and patriotism are shot through with deceit. In the pacifism and even patriotism of the oppressed, there are elements which reflect on the one hand a hatred of destructive war, and on the other a clinging to what they believe to be their own good—elements which we must know how to seize upon in order to draw the requisite conclusions.

"Using these considerations as its point of departure, the Fourth International supports every, even if insufficient demand, if it can *draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics, awaken their criticism and strengthen their control over the machinations of the bourgeoisie*" [emphasis added].

Can the slogan of institutionalization help "draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics," that is, politics of independent class action which is directed against the existing bourgeois government up and down the line? Surely not; it can only help draw the masses into passive politics, into dependence on the government to defend their democratic rights through "institutionalization." Can it awaken their criticism? Of course not; for the masses' practical criticism is struggle against the government, not defense of it against some as yet absent threat to it. Can it strengthen their control, that is, surveillance, over the machinations of the bourgeoisie? Certainly not; for what they are being asked to support with this slogan is precisely the central machination of the Argentine bourgeoisie in its efforts to impose its "control" on the Argentine masses.

And the slogan of institutionalization can no more attain these virtues by the PST raising it and then explaining that the Party understands the slogan the way the masses do than could the slogan of "national defense" have won these virtues in the United States before and during the second world war if the SWP had raised it and then filled the *Militant* with editorials insisting that it understood the slogan as the masses did.

The comrades of the PST, by raising this slogan, have

placed themselves programatically on the ground of the bourgeoisie; against their intentions, they have cooperated with the Argentine bourgeoisie in helping to foist a "fraudulent abstraction" on mass consciousness. It is this that confers on their participation in the meetings with the legal opposition parties—above all, with the Radical Civic Union—the character of an inter-class political bloc.

Finally, however, the PST comrades went further still in asserting a programmatic coincidence between the working class and the bourgeoisie, in their position, expressed within the Multisectorial bloc, on the nature since the Cordobazo.

To see this, we return to the PST statement to the October 8, 1974, Multisectorial. After presenting the bourgeois-democratic theory of the "fundamental purpose" of democratic rights, the statement continues:

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

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

"However, the threat of a comeback by oligarchic-imperialist forces at their worst is being aggravated, reinforced, and compounded at this moment by another danger.

"*This second threat is represented by a growing militarization of political life prompted fundamentally by the activity of the guerrillas and their mirror-image—the terrorists of the AAA and other organizations of the ultraright.*

"Many sectors objectively are pushing for such a militarization. Independently of the intentions of the protagonists, a dynamic leading toward a military coup has been set in motion. No matter what its ideological tendency may be—but especially if it is under the direction of the oligarchy and imperialism—this coup will have the effect of smashing the democratic rights of the masses.

". . . Normally, this kind of action [guerrilla warfare] ends up sowing the worst type of confusion in the ranks of the workers, as well as opening up the way for the most indiscriminate repression. *In this case it has promoted a militarization of the country that may lead very far, that may lead ultimately to eliminating the increasingly limited democratic freedoms that the masses won by their struggles.*" (*What Course* . . . , p. 57, cols. 1-3; all emphases added)

We summarize the elements of this analysis:

a) A coup threatens, one that would crush the democratic rights of the masses won since the Cordobazo by the mass struggles;

b) This danger is intensified by the militarization of political life;

c) This militarization is "prompted fundamentally" by guerrilla activity and ultraright terrorist activity;

d) The basic cause of this militarization of political life is, by implication at least, the guerrilla war, for the

ultraright terrorism is presented as being merely its "mirror-image."

This analysis adds something to the usual PST—LTF criticism of guerrilla warfare, which is expressed in the first sentence of the last paragraph quoted above. What it adds is the obliteration of the class line in the PST's criticism of "guerrillism"; what it adds, as summarized in the italicized sentence of the last paragraph quoted, is the presentation of a programmatic overlap between the working class and the liberal bourgeoisie in defining the *reason* to oppose certain kinds of guerrilla warfare—that the "militarization of political life" prompted by it may lead to the destruction of democratic rights.

Like all such concessions to the ideology of bourgeois democracy, this notion is illusory. At the general, abstract level, the PST comrades do not hesitate to insist on a correct, class explanation of the militarization of political life. In fact, at the very same Multisectorial meeting, Comrade Coral in his statement very succinctly states what, in general, "fundamentally prompts" this militarization. "The coup d'etat" he said, "is a full-fledged institution in the semicolonial countries of our continent. It is not inscribed in the constitutions because the liberals prevented this. But the ruling classes resort to it every time a mass upsurge, a sharpening in the class struggle, endangers the bourgeois power structure." (*What Course*. . . , p. 61, col. 1). When speaking at the level of a general, historical abstraction, the PST comrades correctly explain that what "fundamentally prompts" the militarization of political life is the mass upsurge that threatens to go beyond the limits which would be consistent with the maintenance of bourgeois rule and thus provokes a response of openly, generalized violence from the ruling class.

But when it comes to the concrete, immediate situation in which the democratic rights of the Argentine working class are at stake, this class analysis is forgotten and instead of it the Argentine masses are presented with the vulgar liberal "explanation" that guerrilla warfare and right-wing terrorism are the causes of the militarization of political life. It is true, of course, as the PST comrades indignantly insist that their statement "carefully distinguishes between the fascist-minded terrorists of the ultraright and the revolutionary-minded guerrillas of the ultraleft." There is no doubt that the PST leaders sympathize with the ultimate intentions and the ideals of the guerrillas, while they have nothing but hatred and contempt for the right-wing murderers. But when it comes to a *political*, explanation of the objective roles of the

guerrillas and right-wing terrorists, and not the expression of an attitude towards their respective states of mind, the differentiation the comrades make is limited to perceiving in the guerrillas a more basic cause of the militarization of political life that endangers the democratic rights of the masses; the ultraright terrorists are supposed to be but a "mirror-image" of the guerrillas.

But the correct approach, the one that maintains the class line, is precisely the concretization of Comrade Coral's correct general statement. Right now, in Argentina, both guerrilla activity and right-wing terrorism are specific forms of the militarization of political life that in one form or another is inevitable in a situation in which the bourgeoisie is unable to meet the demands of the mass upsurge sufficiently to contain it within the "normal," "peaceful" limits of bourgeois domination. The right-wing terrorists are precisely an instrument of the bourgeoisie—whether these terrorists know it or not—to crush the mass movement by decapitating the vanguard. And the guerrillas are a military expression—however inadequate—of the mass movement's effort to defend itself against the ruling class's attempt to crush it. This is so, even if the guerrillas are wholly wrong in their methods, confused politically, and organizationally isolated from the mass movement.

In these three crucial areas—the conception of the function of democratic rights, the central slogan to be raised in defense of them, and the definition of the threat to them—the PST comrades have presented the program of the working class as coinciding with the program of bourgeois democracy. They have done this within the framework of a series of meetings with bourgeois parties, meetings which they have presented as an instrument, although a subordinate one, in the struggle for democratic rights. They have thus defined a *political* basis of their "specific, limited agreements" with bourgeois parties in defense of democratic rights. The process, in fact, did not develop very far, but what the PST was involved in was an incipient political bloc with a section of the bourgeoisie. The SWP leadership endorsed the PST position on this question, and that endorsement presumably included the PST's analogy between its policy in the struggle for democratic rights and the SWP's policy in the antiwar movement. But in reality, we think, the SWP's antiwar policy was quite different; whatever tactical errors we may have made in our relations with bourgeois politicians, we maintained consistently a position of total programmatic counterposition to the bourgeois parties and factions. And that is the crucial difference.

July 28, 1975

# FOR A CHANGE IN OUR POSITION ON CUBA

By David Keil

The purpose of this short discussion article is to help convince the leaders and members of the parties of the world movement that Cuba is a *bureaucratized workers state* and the Cuban Communist Party is a *Stalinist party*—hence, that a *political revolution* is needed there to overthrow the crystallized privileged bureaucratic caste and a new, Trotskyist party is needed to expose and replace the Cuban Communist Party. After a discussion, the Fourth International as a whole should adopt this position and abandon its present unclear and basically wrong position of giving critical support to Castro and the Cuban CP.

The Cuba question is a very important one for the whole world movement to discuss. Reports say that the Organization of American States will meet in July to drop the blockade against Cuba. This would mark an end to the criminal U.S.-enforced isolation of Cuba, and a major victory for the Cuban Revolution. But it would also raise the question of unprincipled political concessions made to the U.S. by Castro and his policy of opposing socialist revolution in Latin America.

The Associated Press reported May 8 that after meeting with Castro, George McGovern said he had proposed “ping-pong” diplomacy with Cuba as had been practiced with China, and that Castro “Was very much interested.” (McGovern suggested baseball or basketball.) In the context of Castro’s political support to the capitalist regimes of numerous Latin American countries, this development is in part a reflection of the Cuban Communist Party’s long-standing support for the international Stalinist movement’s policy of detente. The Cuban policy parallels the policy of betrayal maintained by the Moscow and Peking leaderships. Now we will have to discuss it.

Much more could very easily be said in this document about Cuba and about the attitude of the Trotskyist movement. But first, members of the international leadership should have a chance to say what their opinions are. A key question is: what is the nature of the Cuban Communist Party—Stalinist, centrist, or revolutionary?

Those who believe that the Cuban CP is non-Stalinist, but who support the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction’s view that the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties are Stalinized, should compare these parties with the Cuban CP and explain what decisive difference exists, in their view. Those who think Castro might have become a Stalinist when he abandoned guerrilla warfare, but think the Vietnamese and Chinese CPs are non-Stalinized, should explain how the Chinese and Vietnamese leaderships are qualitatively superior to the Cuban. Either position will prove to be a self-contradiction when the facts are examined in light of Marxist theory.

Those who are concerned about the reactionary endorsement of the family in the new Cuban family code (see *Rouge*, April 25 and May 9, 1975) and are wondering if it might mean that Cuba’s “Thermidor” has arrived should take a careful look at the entire history of the Cuban revolution as well.

## I. A Bureaucratized Workers State

Many comrades say that Cuba is moving in a bad direction but that the process of degeneration has not reached the qualitative point of change. This point of degeneration, according to Trotskyist theory, is the crystallization of a privileged caste at the top of a workers state, a bureaucratic layer which sees its own interests as being in contradiction with those of the workers.

This point has already been reached. This is evident from the following undeniable facts: (1) There do not exist (and never have existed) any institutionalized forms of workers’ democracy in Cuba, either in economic decision-making or in politics; (2) Not only do privileges exist, but these have been formalized and approved for some managerial layers by the trade union congress in November 1973 (see *Granma*, Sept. 2, 1973 and Nov. 25, 1973); (3) Ranks have been introduced into the army, bringing into the open, as the 1974 Leninist-Trotskyist Faction political resolution noted, a “privileged officer caste”; (4) Only one party, the Cuban Communist Party, is allowed to exist, and this party has in every way identified the state with itself; the Cuban state apparatus has enforced the one-party monopoly; (5) Democratic rights are suppressed to such an extent that even expressing criticisms and dissatisfaction through poetry, as Heberto Padilla did in 1971 and before, results in imprisonment and self-denunciation; homosexuality has been singled out for legal prosecution.

What conclusions can be drawn from these facts?

From the lack of democratic forms, we can only conclude that the mode of rule is bureaucratic. Democracy can only exist through democratic forms; it cannot float mystically about the society without any material expression. In the absence of democratic rule, bureaucratic or despotic rule inevitably comes in.

Moreover, it is evident that bureaucratic rule in Cuba is not an error or an episodic occurrence but a conscious, consistent policy.

What social layer does this conscious policy serve? Not the workers; not the peasants; not the intellectuals—only the bureaucracy. In fact, a policy of *excluding* the workers from democratic decision-making can only serve a cohesive, self-conscious ruling layer—a *caste*. This bureaucratic caste has “balanced” itself between the classes in Cuba—between the workers and the peasants, mainly. The highest officials, such as Castro, claim they are needed, among other things—to fight bureaucratism! With his false “balancing” and “arbitrating” role, Castro functions as a Bonapartist representative of the Cuban bureaucracy.

No section of this bureaucratic layer has ever been known to propose real, specific measures of reform to eliminate privilege and mismanagement. There has never even been a partial and inadequate movement from above for “workers self-management” as in Yugoslavia or “de-Stalinization” as in the U.S.S.R. There have, however, been bureaucratic purges in the name of “anti-

bureaucratism." These purges only consolidated bureaucratic rule in the end.

The demagogic project of "People's Power" in the Matanzas, inaugurated in 1974, was not a real step forward. As Dick Fidler wrote in the July 22, 1974, *Intercontinental Press*, "The procedures adopted in the experimental elections in Matanzas would seem to indicate that the Cubans have chosen to pattern their formal decision-making machinery on the current practices in the Soviet Union and other bureaucratically deformed workers states, and not on the Leninist model of soviet democracy." (p. 981)

The very nature of the Cuban state structure, with a one-party monopoly of power and no opposition tendencies allowed, ensures that nothing but a complete reorganization of the state, through a political revolution, can bring about democratic rule. Fidler did not draw this necessary conclusion. Without a political revolution, the Matanzas reforms cannot mean anything.

As Fidler wrote, "Without the right of tendencies, 'consultation' and 'discussion' have little meaning; the mass organizations, and even elections, become simply vehicles for mobilizing the masses in plebiscites." However, Castro is not about to allow any pro-revolutionary opposition tendencies whatsoever. He cannot even imagine such an idea, as is proven in his interview with Frank Mankiewicz and Kirby Jones, published in 1975 in the book *With Fidel*. Asked if an opposition group could publish a newspaper in Cuba, Castro replied, "No . . . We do not allow the existence of a press that is against the revolutionary class or that publishes anything against the revolution." (p. 94) Thus Castro identifies all conceivable organized opposition as being "against the revolution."

Later Castro had to admit that in a country where everyone supported the revolution, counter-revolution was not a big risk, but this made no difference in the need to suppress opposition. For people to publish their own statements "isn't a risk, *per se*. It is a matter of principle." (p. 97) This principle will not be changed by a discussion with Castro, but by a political revolution.

Unorganized opposition or criticism, Castro said, is permitted, but it can only be expressed inside the Communist Party. "When the majority reaches a particular decision, the minority must accept the decision of the majority. There exists the right to disagree . . . Q. Without talking? A. Without talking any more, that is correct." (p. 96) Here is a chemically pure example of the Stalinist theory of "workers democracy." It is undoubtedly followed scrupulously in Cuba.

There is no public evidence today of any struggle whatsoever going on inside the Cuban leadership, contrary to what was the case in the U.S.S.R. both before the crystallization of the privileged caste and afterward. All is seemingly quiet in Cuba. Even though there is no one to represent them in the leadership, however, the Cuban workers know more about Stalinism and bureaucratism than anyone gives them credit for. They will begin the process of political revolution as soon as they feel strong enough.

There is plenty of evidence that Cuba is a bureaucratized workers state. The burden of proof is really on those who say Cuba is not yet a bureaucratized workers state.

Sometimes this is done by arguing that the worst excesses of Stalinist rule, such as the Moscow trials, are

not to be found in Cuba. (See Harry Ring, *Cuba and Problems of Workers' Democracy*, Pathfinder Press, 1972.) But by this logic, the U.S.S.R. must have itself become debureaucratized at certain quiet times and, even more so, Yugoslavia must not have become bureaucratized until recently, if at all. The "Prague Spring" likewise must have meant the (perhaps temporary) disappearance of the bureaucratic caste, by this erroneous argument. The very idea of political revolution is thrown into question.

## II. A Stalinist Party

The Fourth International has never taken a clear position on the character of the Castroist movement and the Cuban Communist Party. The 1963 Reunification Congress resolution implied that Castroism was a revolutionary-socialist tendency (being "unconscious Trotskyists," wanting to build Marxist-Leninist parties around the world, being susceptible to "the infusion of Trotskyist concepts," etc.—see *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, 1974 edition, pp. 42, 63, 73). But nowhere do the 1963 documents clearly characterize the Castroists or the Cuban party on programmatic lines as *revolutionary Marxist* (Trotskyist), *centrist* (revolutionary in words, reformist in deeds) or *Stalinist*.

Nor has anyone traced the evolution of the Stalinist apparatus of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP). Did it become a revolutionary party when it fused with Castroism? Did the Stalinist leadership cease to be Stalinist?

One who believes that the Cuban CP is not Stalinized, but who recognizes the obvious presence in it of Stalinist influences, is obliged to explain what form this influence takes—a "microfaction," a sizable faction, an almost-dominant faction, a mere trend of thinking. Who are the Stalinists and who are not? Is anyone fighting the Stalinists? How? This analysis was not made in 1963 or since.

Perhaps there have always been unclarified differences of opinion. Now they can be resolved.

In any case, the unclear and hence wrong position of 1963, implying that the Cuban party is revolutionary-socialist, must now be abandoned, to say the least.

Similarly, the resolution of the 1965 World Congress stated, "The Castroist current, whose influence is felt primarily in Latin America, constitutes an autonomous, fundamentally revolutionary tendency. It bows ideologically in neither Peking's nor Moscow's direction, as is particularly shown by its attitude toward the national bourgeoisies of the Latin-American countries." (*International Socialist Review*, Spring 1966, p. 45.) This was an optimistic illusion which did not correspond to the reality. In 1966, Castro made a vicious attack on Trotskyism at the Tricontinental Congress, thus bowing very deeply to Stalinism in the ideological field—a feat accomplished without using any new joints or muscles, one might add. This was a *Stalinist* speech.

It might be claimed that Castro didn't believe what he was saying or didn't know what he was talking about—i.e., he didn't know what Trotskyism is, or he thought Trotskyism was Posadas' tiny movement, etc.

In that case, Castro would have been making a Stalinist speech ignorantly or insincerely. Perhaps someone wrote it

for him. Castro's ignorance or insincerity would not change the Stalinist character of the speech, however.

At the 1969 World Congress, the Fourth International's line of making its own ideological bows in the direction of Castroism was followed to its logical conclusion by adopting the guerrilla warfare strategy of the Cuban CP. A large section of the world movement, following Peng Shu-tse's protests at the February 1968 International Executive Committee meeting, began to oppose this guerrilla line.

The 1974 Leninist-Trotskyist Faction political resolution states that in the 1960s the Cuban leaders "took an internationalist stand, fostering and supporting revolutionary struggles," though they were "not Leninists." According to this document, the errors of the Castroists included failing to move toward establishing forms of workers democracy and trying to maintain peaceful coexistence with bureaucratic tendencies. (See *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, 1974, Vol. XI. No. 2, pp. 15-16.)

It is impossible to tell from this document whether the Castro leadership is basically revolutionary and Marxist or basically centrist, in the authors' opinion. In any case, the line of the document's section on Cuba seems clearly to be to support Castro while advocating a change in his policy. The idea of a Trotskyist party in Cuba is not raised. This line must be *rejected*. It is inconsistent with the general correct thrust of the LTF resolution.

The General Political Resolution of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) does not discuss Cuba, so we must assume that the IMT leaders are satisfied with the previous line or are still working out their positions.

Since a political party in the working class can only be *reformist* (Stalinist or social-democratic), *centrist*, or *revolutionary-socialist*, the leaderships of the different tendencies and sections of the world movement will now have to decide which category the Cuban CP belongs in, based on the experience and analysis of the last fifteen years.

In discussing Castroism, the Trotskyist movement has unfortunately usually substituted impressionistic criteria for program. The main criterion in deciding the character of a movement or party is its *political program*.

In discussing the political program of Castroism, we must begin with its foreign policy. Castro's basic foreign policy has been to align Cuba with Moscow, while reserving the right to disagree on secondary questions in order to put pressure on the Kremlin for better political and trade terms. For example, Castro used the popularity of the Cuban Revolution to stimulate a "Castroist" movement in Latin America and even aided guerrilla movements. But this policy was dumped as the bankruptcy of guerrillaism became apparent to many of the participants. Castro has also tried to present Cuba as a leader of the "non-aligned" and "Third World" countries of the capitalist world despite the fact that Cuba is a workers' state. None of this has been especially objectionable to Moscow, which has itself supported guerrilla movements from time to time.

It is incorrect to believe, as Dick Fidler wrote in the June 2, 1975, *Intercontinental Press*, that "Cuba's enthusiastic acclaim for the Vietnamese victory indicates that its leaders continue to identify the defense of their own revolution with the extension of the world revolution." As

long as Cuba is blockaded, Castro has nothing to lose by blowing off steam at the U.S. When and if diplomatic relations are established, this will change. Moreover, the higher internationalist consciousness of the Cuban people was a factor for Castro to consider, whereas the lulled consciousness of the Soviet masses made it possible for the Kremlin to pass the Vietnamese victory by without much comment.

Castro has clearly aligned himself with Moscow and against Peking in the interbureaucratic Sino-Soviet dispute. In 1964, in a trip to the U.S.S.R., he signed a joint statement which condemned "factional and sectarian activities in the ranks of the Communist and workers' parties and in the international Communist movement." *World Outlook*, Jan. 31, 1964, wrote, "Castro also put his name to statements approving measures 'taken by the Central Committee of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] aimed at liquidating the differences in the ranks of the international Communist movement'" (i.e., Peking's differences).

Unfortunately, *World Outlook* did not draw the appropriate conclusions from the facts which it scrupulously reported.

As part of the world Stalinist movement, the Cuban CP supports numerous capitalist regimes in Latin America—more or less any that are willing to have diplomatic relations with Cuba. While Castro likes to call these regimes "anti-imperialist," they are in actuality *pro-imperialist* regimes whose function is to crush the workers in their countries. This policy could be called an error if it resulted from ignorance. But Castro and the Cuban CP are not ignorant about Latin American politics. In their case, it is a conscious betrayal, like the class-collaborationist policies of Moscow and Peking. Castro's betrayal is based on *reformist theories* and is *Stalinist* in character.

The Cuban CP's policy results both from the pressure of the Kremlin and from the narrow nationalist outlook of the Cuban bureaucracy, which wants peace with imperialism. Because the state is identified wholly with the party, diplomatic relations with Moscow lead to impermissible political support to the Kremlin's detente policy. Necessary concessions to capitalist regimes, such as diplomatic recognition, required to end Cuba's forced isolation, lead to political concessions such as support to the capitalists in the political arena. The disastrous outcome of this policy of supporting capitalist governments was demonstrated in Chile. But the Cuban CP learned nothing from Chile whatsoever.

Instead, the Cuban CP continued to support the "reformist" military regime in Peru. So hardened is the Cuban CP in this policy that *Granma*, its official organ, has covered the recent popular uprising in Peru completely from the regime's point of view, quoting General Velasco's view that the rising was a "rightist subversive plot" and giving no alternative view. (See *Intercontinental Press*, Feb. 17, 1975, for accurate coverage of the events in Peru; *Granma*, Mar. 2, 1975 for the Cuban CP's coverage.) Here is Castroism, our "revolutionary non-Stalinist tendency," in action!

Cuba is now in the process of completing a long diplomatic process of semi-negotiation, soon to become direct negotiation, with the U.S. imperialists, which will likely end up leaving no doubt about the Stalinist nature of the Cuban leadership at the same time that it will represent a significant victory in ending the forced

isolation of the Cuban revolution. The victory will be far overshadowed by the betrayal of the world revolution by the Cuban leadership.

In his interview with Mankiewicz and Jones, Castro fell all over himself in praising Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger. He contrasted Ford to Nixon in that Nixon was "personally" involved with counter-revolutionary Cuban elements. Ford, on the other hand, while having poor positions on Chile and oil, "has made other statements, favoring the continuation of the policy of international detente, which we regard as positive pronouncements." (pp. 146-47) If the detente is Castro's standard of virtue, he should give Nixon his due!

Castro likes Kissinger even more than Ford. "In general, we think highly of his capabilities. He is an intelligent and realistic man, and truly able—so that we are favorably disposed toward him. . . . It seems to us that there was not always total agreement between the policy of Kissinger and the policy of Nixon. You see, I do not believe that Kissinger has a personal position that is hostile towards Cuba, while Nixon undoubtedly had a personally hostile position towards Cuba. Besides, Kissinger has shown himself to be a realistic politician who undoubtedly has fought for the international detente." (pp. 147-48) Castro later repeated, for the benefit of his American audience, that Kissinger is a "fighter for detente and for the improvement of international relations." This left even Mankiewicz and Jones baffled.

Such stupidity about the top agents of U.S. imperialism is dangerous to the Cuban Revolution. But Castro may not really be so stupid as he sounds. It is just that he has the dirty job to do of speaking for a Stalinist party, the Cuban Communist Party.

The pro-imperialist essence of the foreign policy of the Cuban CP was well expressed by Raul Roa in his speech to the United Nations, October 7, 1974, published in *Granma*, Oct. 20, 1974. He explicitly endorsed the detente:

"This process, which has been tenaciously promoted by the Soviet Union as a complement to its policy of peaceful coexistence among different social regimes, strengthens and encourages, without a doubt, the age-old hopes for peace and international security and furthers the development of the struggle of people of other countries for their political independence, economic emancipation and social progress. Detente is one and, therefore, all countries of the world should reap its advantages."

In the same speech Roa supported the Portuguese government in its continuing neocolonial policy: "It is correct to trust in the commitments proclaimed in this very hall by the Foreign Minister of Portugal. The new Portuguese Government has backed up its verbal anticolonialist and antifascist policy with concrete deeds." The Cuban leadership was, of course, in a better position than anyone else to relay this demand of Lisbon and Moscow to the liberation fighters in the African colonies that they "trust the commitments" of the Portuguese imperialist bandits and lay down their arms.

The Castroists, in supporting the detente, cannot escape its logic. The detente, as Caroline Lund wrote in the *Militant* of March 14, 1975, "means aiding the imperialists in deceiving and crushing the struggles of the oppressed." Portuguese imperialism is only the first on the list slated to be given explicit support by the Cuban Stalinists.

This Stalinist foreign policy reflects the domestic policy

of the Cuban CP. Being the only legal party, it is fully responsible for all the undemocratic characteristics of the state and the institutionalized privileges which exist. It has advanced the remarkable theory that Cuba is today a socialist society—a new twist on the theory of "socialism in one country" which is the identifying trait of Stalinism. This year, the Cuban CP will be holding its first congress since its founding. This event will be well worth our attention and should help answer any questions comrades have about the character of the Cuban Communist Party.

### III. The Historical Background

The Castroist July 26 Movement came to power in 1959 as a radical petty-bourgeois-led movement for agrarian reform, democracy and national independence. Under heavy attack from U.S. imperialism, in October 1959 Castro broke up the bourgeois coalition government he had helped set up and replaced it with a workers' and peasants' government. Between August and October, 1960, capitalist property was nationalized under furious American military threats and actual invasions. A state monopoly of foreign trade and an economic plan were instituted. Thus a workers state came into being, contrary to the view of some sectors of the Trotskyist movement.

But, because of the strength of the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party (PSP), the absence of a revolutionary party and the absence of any forms of workers' democracy, and especially because of the backwardness and isolation of the Cuban economy and consequent total dependence on Soviet aid, it was born with deformations.

From the time of the victory in 1959, it was necessary to give privileges to state functionaries in order to attract people of the necessary training. But to prevent this layer of functionaries from hardening into a caste in order to defend their privileges, it was also necessary to immediately create organs of proletarian democracy. The Castro leadership, a petty-bourgeois grouping, did not move to do this. This is not surprising, since it had no understanding of the revolutionary process or the need to establish a workers' state—it did everything empirically. Moreover, the Stalinist party actively fostered the formation of a bureaucratic caste and furnished numerous state functionaries to lead this caste. In my opinion, the bureaucracy had hardened into a caste by the time of the 1960 social transformations.

Joseph Hansen, discussing China in his report, "The Differences Between the Two Documents," correctly identified the presence of a hardened caste with the absence of workers' democracy: "We have used the term 'hardened caste' and similar terms to designate the development of the bureaucracy to such a point in a workers state that it completely displaces proletarian democracy and establishes its own rule." This is what happened in the Soviet Union. But in Cuba, there was never any workers' or proletarian democracy to check the bureaucracy. Hence the workers state was born deformed, in my opinion. If there is evidence to the contrary, it should be brought forth.

A political revolution was therefore required. A second task was thus presented to the Fourth International, following the main task of unconditionally defending the Cuban Revolution against imperialist attack: the task of

patiently explaining the need for a political revolution. The first task was carried out; the second was not.

In 1961, Castro announced that the July 26 Movement, the Directorio Revolucionario (a student organization) and the PSP would unite to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI). On December 2, he announced that this would become the single party of the Cuban Revolution. It was a Stalinist party, as it turned out.

The Stalinist character of this formation was underlined by the state's smashing of the printing press of the Cuban Trotskyists, reported by the *Militant* of August 7, 1961. (Che Guevara later said this had been an "error," but he added that the Cuban Trotskyists were in any case against the Revolution because they opposed the Cuban CP. The democratic-sounding Castroist principle of "within the revolution, anything; against the revolution, nothing" in reality meant that revolutionaries were suppressed as "counter-revolutionary Trotskyists," while some of the worst counter-revolutionaries, the Stalinists, were free to run the state despotically.)

It was inevitable that the ORI would be Stalinist-dominated because, as Castro later said himself, of the three components only the PSP had any coherent organizational structure. Castro at the time stated that the PSP represented "the most advanced elements of the working class." (See the Fair Play for Cuba Committees pamphlet, *Fidel Castro Speaks on Marxism-Leninism* (December 2, 1961), p. 34.) In the same speech, Castro praised highly Khrushchev's 22nd Congress report. (p. 49)

As early as May 2, 1961, Castro made it clear that the new party would be the only one allowed to exist. The new constitution, soon to be ratified in late 1975, will institutionalize this political monopoly, but this comes as no surprise. In a speech July 26, 1965, Castro said that the Constitution "should define the concepts of party and administration and should, of course, say in so many words that political power is represented by the working people's party." (*Information Bulletin*, published by the World Marxist Review Publishers, #56, Oct. 20, 1965, p. 35.)

The Stalinists monopolized the trade unions as well. In 1961, the veteran Stalinist trade union hack and strike-breaker from the Batista period, Lazaro Pena, was elected to head the Cuban Labor Federation (CTC) under the single-slate system under which no opposition was allowed. (See Adolfo Gilly, *Inside the Cuban Revolution*, special issue of *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1964, pp. 13-14.)

An early example of bureaucratic privileges for members of the still-small Castroist party is given by the Dec. 2, 1963, *New York Times*. A shipment of electric irons from Eastern Europe was too small to meet the demand, so priority was given to party members. Such privileges must have been widespread and highly valued in the underdeveloped Cuban economy, blockaded as it was by the U.S. and under the compulsion to enforce rationing.

The salary differential in Cuba is high. Adolfo Gilly reported that one proposal made early in the revolution was for a minimum wage of 75 pesos per month and a maximum of 700 for Ministers. Another would have set the maximum at 500 or 550. (p. 11) The Stalinist writer Gil Green, in his book *Revolution Cuban Style*, writes that the average wage in one office is 154 pesos per month, while university professors receive 750 per month. The pension plan for farmers who hand over their plots to the state is 40 to 120 pesos per month.

Castro's denunciation of Anibal Escalante, a Stalinist leader, on March 26, 1962, was considered by the Fourth International to be the beginning of a revolutionary campaign against bureaucratism. It was nothing but a bureaucratic purge, however. Escalante was made the sole culprit and was not allowed to defend himself. Castro proposed no concrete measures to combat bureaucratism—except Escalante's bureaucratic ouster. (See *Fidel Denounces Bureaucracy and Sectarianism*, New York, Pioneer Publishers, 1962.) It is not surprising that the Kremlin and the majority of Cuban Stalinists supported Castro against Escalante. If Castro's speech had been a telling blow against bureaucratism, these Stalinists would not have applauded, as they did.

It has been argued that the Cuban leadership's foreign policy was "revolutionary" because of the Castroists' support for guerrilla movements and because this policy was not directly dictated by the Kremlin. The call for revolution in Latin America in the "Second Declaration of Havana" of February, 1962, has been cited as an example. But nowhere in this document is there a call for *socialist* revolution in Latin America. This basic programmatic document includes the explicit perspective that a section of the national bourgeoisie will take part in the "anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchic" revolution which is the stated aim of the document. (Havana edition, pp. 33-34.)

The programmatic essence of this declaration is thus the Stalinist two-stage theory, despite the revolutionary spirit which appears to animate many passages.

Guerrilla warfare is not something alien to peasant-based Stalinist parties, as we can see from China and Vietnam. The Castroist "guerrilla warfare strategy" was, like the Mao-Giap "theories" of People's War, a cover-up for the two-stage theory and class-collaborationism. While Castro was calling for revolution and supporting guerrilla groups in some countries, he was also lending support to the Mexican and Brazilian governments (until the 1964 coup, in the case of Brazil).

1968 represented in some ways a test and a turn to the right for Castroism: support for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, diplomatic silence over the Mexican and French revolutionary uprisings, abandonment of the guerrilla strategy. But it did not represent a decisive test or a qualitative turn. There were no great internal upheavals, no purges. Nor was 1968 a turning-point in world history. Stalinism was already entrenched in Cuba, organizationally and in the program of Castroism.

#### IV. Discussion on Cuba in the World Trotskyist Movement

There has been very little discussion of Cuba in the world Trotskyist movement since 1963. In December, 1973, a discussion article by Comrade Upendranath Roy of India appeared in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* (Vol. X, No. 25), arguing that Castroism is Stalinism and that Cuba is a deformed workers state. This was a good development as a beginning of a discussion.

Unfortunately, Comrade Roy praised a grouping which existed for a short time in the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Tendency. The RT later split and part of it became the Spartacist League, a sectarian group. The Sartacist League calls for a political revolution in Cuba based on its false theory that a workers state not under the leadership of a revolutionary party is automatically

deformed, and not on Marxist theory or on the facts. Its formally correct position on the nature of the Cuban workers state is therefore based on unscientific theories which lead it to this position by accident.

The RT, moreover, was an unprincipled bloc, factionally tied to the Healy leadership of the Socialist Labour League of England during the discussion of the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s. James Robertson, the leader of the wing of the RT which was later to become the Spartacist League, believed that Cuba was a workers state—deformed—but supported the Healyite faction which said that Cuba was still capitalist. He and his associates thus emulated the unprincipled cliquist Abern of the 1939-40 SWP discussion (see Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism* and Cannon's *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*) by making a factional bloc with those who wished to revise the Marxist theory of the state in practice by calling a workers state "capitalist" simply because of its deformations (Wohlforth and Healy did this on Cuba, Burnham and Shachtman on the Soviet Union). The SWP majority, led by Joseph Hansen, defending the Marxist theory of the state, pointed out that in Cuba the Marxist material criteria for a workers state (industry nationalized, state monopoly of foreign trade, and planned economy) had been fulfilled in August-October 1960. But Robertson agreed with Healy and Wohlforth that this was all "revisionism."

Robertson and his group have never been concerned with defending in a Marxist way their formally correct position that Cuba is a deformed workers state. Nor could such a thing be expected of a group like the Spartacists.

Moreover, contrary to the SWP, which unflinchingly stood up to the pressure of imperialism, the Robertsonites and Wohlforthites capitulated, advocating that the party go on a major public "campaign" in the U.S. against the leadership in Cuba just as the revolution was under furious imperialist military attack. Such action at that time would have been a stab in the back of the Cuban Revolution.

The Spartacists are still proud of their past unprincipled behavior, however, and have even made a Spanish translation of their miserable documents.

The Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, led by Pierre Lambert, supported the Healy position, believing that Cuba was a "phantom capitalist" state with a workers' and farmers' government (a transitional form). Perhaps some OCI members have reconsidered this position in the fifteen years since the nationalizations occurred in Cuba. This would be a very healthy development in the OCI.

The position of the main trend among groups calling themselves Trotskyist, represented by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, has already been noted. But the United Secretariat's largely uncritical support for Castroism was not unanimous. Comrade Peng Shu-tse, in a 1963 discussion article polemicizing against Healy, praised Castro but also pointed out some of the weaknesses of the Cuban leadership. ("Where Is Healy Taking the Socialist Labour League?", SWP *International Information Bulletin*, May 1963—I.) Peng wrote another article in 1969 protesting against the dangerous consequences of the United Secretariat's adaptations to Castroism and other petty-bourgeois leaderships. He wrote, "We, of course, support the Cuban workers' state against imperialisms like other workers' states, and we can on certain

specific issues even give critical support to the Cuban leadership against this or that tendency, such as, giving critical support to their attack on Moscow's line of peaceful coexistence and the peaceful road to socialism. On the other hand, we must thoroughly criticize all the Cuban leadership's weaknesses." ("Return to the Road of Trotskyism," *International Information Bulletin*, No. 5 in 1969, p. 21; also in *Discussion on Latin America*.)

In his document, Peng pointed out that the adaptation to Castroism was only one example of the Fourth International's adaptation to petty-bourgeois leaderships. For example, Peng pointed out, the Fourth International gave uncritical support to the Ben Bella FLN leadership in Algeria. In his polemic against Healy, Peng had also pointed out that the International Committee, which was mainly supported by British, French and American Trotskyists, had given similar uncritical support to Mesaali Hadj and the MNA in Algeria. Both the FLN and MNA leaderships were petty-bourgeois, not revolutionary.

The International Committee was the product of an unnecessary split in the Fourth International which took place in 1953 and was belatedly healed in 1963. A major issue in the split of 1953 was the adaptation to Stalinism by the leadership of the Fourth International around Michel Pablo. For example, the Fourth International of that time refused to characterize the Stalinist parties in China and Yugoslavia, led by Mao tse-tung and Marshall Tito, as Stalinist parties. Errors of adaptation to these parties were made by those Trotskyist leaders who became the International Committee as well as by those who supported Pablo and his revisionist theories.

The reunification of these forces in 1963 took place on the basis of a political program which was generally correct and of a Trotskyist character, but the documents of this Reunification Congress are incorrect on the question of Stalinism. For example, the 1963 resolution, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Situation in the USSR and the Other Workers' States," reprinted in *Education for Socialists Bulletin*, *The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism*, states that the concepts of Peking "prove to be on the whole more progressive than the Khrushchevist concepts, being analogous to certain theses of revolutionary Marxism." (p. 65) In actuality, Marxism was and still is the most feared ideological foe in the eyes of the Maoists, and the views of the Peking variety of Stalinism were in no way more progressive than those of the Moscow variety.

Likewise, the 1965 resolution on the Sino-Soviet dispute, published in the Spring 1966 *International Socialist Review*, states that the Maoists "display a decisive difference with Stalin, for example, the key concept of building 'socialism in one country,' advancing instead the idea of 'uninterrupted revolution.'" (p. 80) Maoism was said to be not Stalinism, but centrism. This idea was not shared by all those who attended the 1965 congress. (See Tom Kerry, *Anatomy of Stalinism*, *Education for Socialists Bulletin*.)

In 1969, the dispute between this wrong view of Maoism and the correct view broke out into the open. This dispute is still as fundamental as ever, despite a superficial agreement on the need for a political revolution in China. Unfortunately for the future fate of this apparent agreement, some who call for a political revolution still hope that a section of the Chinese bureaucracy, or even Mao

himself, can lead such a revolution. That is, they call for no political revolution at all, in practice. It is impossible to compromise ideologically with such a view.

From these examples, it is clear that the error of the Fourth International on Cuba is not isolated or unprecedented. Cuba is an especially difficult question, on which no one has had the correct position up to now. The error can be corrected on this question, as on China and other questions, without unnecessary splits or upheavals provided there is a full and democratic discussion.

Comrade Peng did not argue in "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" that the Cuban Communist Party was Stalinized. But especially today, a "thorough criticism" of Castroism based on serious study will inevitably lead to this conclusion. The cadres of the Fourth International should begin such a study now. If it is done in a Trotskyist way, as was the study of the Chinese CP by Peng, Joseph Hansen, and Tom Kerry and the study of the Vietnamese CP by Fred Feldman and George Johnson (see *International Socialist Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1969, July-Aug. 1973, April 1974, Education for Socialists Bulletins on *The Chinese Revolution* and *The Anatomy of Stalinism*, and discussion bulletins such as *Discussion on China*), then it will lead to the unavoidable result that the Fourth International will change its position on Cuba by recognizing the Stalinist character of the Cuban CP and calling for a new party to replace this party in leadership in Cuba.

On the nature of the Cuban workers state, the Fourth International's position is not at all clear.

A workers state can be healthy, as was the Soviet state in Lenin's period (despite the deformations, which Lenin

recognized and fought); or it can be bureaucratized. A bureaucratized workers state is known among Trotskyists as "degenerated" if it was once healthy and "deformed" if it never was. If we put a workers state in neither of these categories, healthy or bureaucratized, it means only that we are not sure which category is appropriate—because we think the state is in transition, for example.

The clearest characterization of the Cuban workers state so far made by Trotskyists has been the SWP's formula, "a workers state lacking the forms of proletarian democracy." This is obviously a transitional characterization, since no attempt has been made to put Cuba in a distinct permanent third category alongside "healthy" and "bureaucratized" workers states. In addition, the label does not say what the workers state *is*, only what it is *not*. Fifteen years is long enough to give a state such an imprecise label.

Now the time has come to draw the balance sheet on the Cuban Revolution and be more precise about the nature of this workers state. It is today utterly impossible to seriously defend the idea that Cuba is a healthy workers state, with or without democratic forms. It would be hard to conceive any mass struggle against the Stalinists in Cuba that would not involve a violent confrontation between the repressive state apparatus and the working class. Nor is it possible to conceive of reforming this state apparatus—it must be entirely reorganized in all essential features, i.e., subjected to the process of political revolution.

In my opinion, this has been true since 1960. Perhaps, on this, other comrades will have more to say.

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