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Fourth International

The Reasons for Founding the Fourth International

- Features - Ernest Mandel Archive -

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I. Conjuncture and structure

It has been alleged that the founding of the Fourth International had been determined by two predictions of Trotsky which turned out to be wrong. First, that the Second World War which was then imminent, would lead to a huge revolutionary upsurge by the international working class which would be greater than the one after the First World War and would largely bypass the traditional working class organisations and give a genuinely revolutionary current the historical opportunity for a decisive breakthrough. Second, that the Stalinist bureaucracy would come out of the war greatly weakened, if not overthrown, thereby losing its political stranglehold over the more militant sections of the international working class and anti-imperialist movement.

Undoubtedly these perspectives kept different groups of Trotskyist cadres in various countries motivated in the late 1930s and early 1940s. When they turned out to be wrong it had important consequences. Many of them broke with the Fourth International and often even with the workers' movement.

Others tried to adjust their continuing commitment to world revolution to a world which looked quite different from the way they had expected it to look a few years earlier. In order to still achieve that revolutionary goal, they thought it essential to revise essential parts of the Fourth International's program, both with respect to capitalism's further perspectives and the nature of the Soviet Union.

In any case the 1949-1953 period saw the biggest crisis in the history of the Fourth International which led to a disastrous split. It took the movement 10-15 years to overcome the negative results of the crisis, first through the 1962-63 reunification and then through May 68 and the subsequent radicalisation. Today the Fourth International, while still much too weak, is much stronger than it was in 1938, 1949-53 or in 1963.

This fact alone would already be sufficient to prove that all those who believe that the founding of the Fourth International was somehow connected to the short-term perspectives mentioned above are very much mistaken. History has proved again and again that any working class or revolutionary organisation, be it national or international, is built on quicksand if it comes out of a judgement on conjunctural circumstances or any other sort of analytical idiosyncrasies. Only those organisations with a program and activities corresponding to the historical needs of the proletariat, as expressed in many struggles for decades if not generations, are built on firm foundations. Such organisations will ultimately have a real influence if they also learn how to exploit opportunities and avoid disastrous mistakes.

The First and Second Internationals corresponded to the need for wage earners' class independence. This remains a key task of the class struggle as long as capitalism exists, as vital today as it was 125 or 90 years ago. The Third International combined that need with the aim of a revolutionary overthrow of international capitalism in the imperialist epoch. Today this is as burning a task as it was in 1914 or 1919.

The founding of the Fourth International corresponds to historical reality on an international scale of similar nature.

We have to examine in a scientific way, without personal or “generational” impatience, disappointment or discouragement, whether these historic needs are as real today as they were 50 years ago.

Trotsky's conjunctural articles – especially the more polemic ones – contain incomplete, imprecise or even mistaken short-term perspectives – just like similar writings by Marx, Engels and Lenin, not to speak of their later co-thinkers, even the most gifted ones. However, such errors are by and large absent from his main programmatic writings of that period, especially they three key ones: The Transitional Programme, The Manifesto of the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International of May 1940 (his political testament), and The Revolution Betrayed. The same is true of his three previous key programmatic works: his Critique of the Comintern Programme, Permanent Revolution, and his thesis The Fourth International and the War, which is too little read and studied today. [1]

This point can be easily confirmed by the following paragraph of the 1940 Manifesto regarding the historical schedule for Trotskyist perspectives:

The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings. A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective ... The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy. [2]

The same remark applies to the use of the word “period” throughout the initial chapter of The Transitional Programme.

But even stronger confirmation of the non-conjunctural reasons for founding the Fourth International, established by George Breitman, is that Trotsky and his main followers had already decided to found the Fourth International in 1936. [3] At that time war was not imminent and the European revolution had not suffered major defeats (with the exception of the Nazi victory in Germany). In fact, revolutionary victory was still possible in Spain and France. It would probably have prevented the outbreak of the Second World War. The huge Stalinist purges of 1936-38 could also have been prevented.

We also have reliable information that the decision to found the Fourth International was taken as early as 1933, with the Comintern's final demise as a revolutionary organisation, in the same way as Lenin's call for the Third International was made as early as 1914 when the Social Democratic parties capitulated. [4]

II. The basic contradictions of our epoch

The need to found the Fourth International derives from the fundamental contradictions which have determined the history of the 20th century. To be summarised in the following points:

- Since 1914, the capitalist mode of production has entered its period of historic decline. The huge productive forces built up by that system periodically enter into contradiction with the capitalist relations of production, the private mode of appropriation and the nation-state. This has led to a succession of grave economic depressions, of wars and of social explosions (crisis of basic social relations propping up bourgeois society). The longer the capitalist system survives, the more these successive crises threaten to destroy the basis of material civilisation and even the physical survival of humanity. Periodically, the productive forces are transformed into terrifying forces of destruction. While capitalism

in the 20th century undermines the fruits of past progress in parts of the world it blocks progress in other parts. The polarisation of haves and have-nots in each capitalist country, in spite of the resources available, is interconnected with a world-wide polarisation between relatively rich and relatively poor nations.

- The periodically explosive nature of the contradiction between the productive forces and the capitalist relations of production is also expressed through periodic rebellions of the human forces of production, i.e. outbreaks of working-class struggles which paralyse the functioning of the capitalist system and objectively put socialist revolution on the agenda. These types of struggles are much more than the normal attempts of workers to fight for their immediate interests. They represent an instinctive attempt by the proletariat to reorganise society upon a new social basis.

The basic crises produced by decaying capitalism/imperialism can only be solved in a positive way through the working class conquering power, destroying the bourgeois repressive apparatus and building a workers' state. In imperialist countries this implies the radical elimination of capitalist property relations, and in the less developed countries at least the beginning of such elimination.

But contrary to all previous social revolutions in history, a socialist revolution can only achieve its goals consciously. So the outcome of the successive waves of explosive mass struggles does not depend only on the objective social relationship of forces between the capitalists and wage earners. It also depends on the relative level of proletarian class consciousness and the revolutionary quality of its leadership.

These have proved to be inadequate in most cases. Therefore most 20th century revolutions have ended in partial or total defeat: "The crisis of humankind is the crisis of proletarian-revolutionary leadership." The 20th century thus unfolds as a century of crises and wars, revolutions and counterrevolutions.

- The first nationwide victorious socialist revolution occurred in October 1917 in Russia. It was victorious because under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, soviet power, the building of a workers' state, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, all solved the most burning political problems of the day – peace – and the key tasks of the national-democratic revolution. But the working class could not accomplish all these tasks and consolidate them (through a costly civil war) without at the same time trying to eliminate its own exploitation, in other words without starting to build a socialist economy and society.

While the USSR's modernisation and industrialisation led to spectacular successes, progress towards building a classless society was by and large stopped and actually reversed. The political counter-revolution triumphed in the USSR through Stalinism, resulting in a monopoly of political power being held by a bureaucratic caste. This led to a growing social inequality. Workers have lost all control over their working conditions and the appropriation of their production. These conditions create the material basis for a mass rebellion against Stalinism, for a new anti-bureaucratic political revolution. This revolution is part and parcel of the world socialist revolution.

- The mistaken policies of the social democratic and Communist mass parties and the trade union leaderships prevented the successive waves of explosive mass struggles of the 1920s and 1930s leading to victorious socialist revolutions. Their mistaken policies reflected major theoretical shortcomings but in the last analysis they express specific material interests, those of the privileged workers' bureaucracies. Reformists and Stalinists (including post-Stalinist bureaucratised CPs) subordinate the interests of the majority of workers to the defence of their own privileges, which in the best cases are camouflaged as the defence of the working class's historic conquests (which obviously have to be defended). While the bureaucrats claim to defend the workers' "strongholds" and gains won through struggle, in practice they undermine them. Defending gains must not be counterposed to the struggle for new radical advances of the socialist revolution wherever and whenever they become possible. Hence the need to build new working class parties. A real process of differentiation within the working class reflects this objective need. In each wave of explosive class struggle new natural leaders emerge from the factories, offices, neighbourhoods,

countryside, the unions and inside and outside the mass parties. But this potential new leadership for the working class becomes dissipated if it does not create the nucleus of new political parties. Their potential as new revolutionary parties is likewise at risk if the lessons of more than a century of workers' struggles are not assimilated or if easily avoidable mistakes are made. So it is necessary for revolutionary Marxists to root themselves firmly in the working class, especially its vanguard layers, and to fight for their programme, which embodies the whole historical experience of the world proletariat. New revolutionary parties need to be built on that basis.

- The growing internationalisation of the productive forces in the imperial epoch and the no less pronounced internationalisation of capital and the class struggle means that the achievement of socialism in a single country or a small group of countries is impossible. This does not mean that socialist revolution is impossible in a single country, even a relatively backward one, or that these countries cannot begin to build a socialist society. But in the course of the process they will be subjected to international capitalism's economic, military and ideological pressure. This will be reflected, to varying degrees, in internal splits which will at times block the road forward to socialism. The socialist revolution will begin by triumphing in one country, it will be extended internationally, linking up with the international class struggle and it will finally culminate in the construction of socialism on a world scale. The achievement of "socialism in a single country" is a reactionary utopia.

Just as "national-communism" is the organisational consequence of "socialism in one country" theory, so the building of a new International is the consequence of the theoretical understanding of the world character of the struggle in the imperialist epoch. Without the international organisation of the proletariat, national workers' organisations will sink even more easily into the morass of national-reformism and national-communism. Without the international organisation of the proletariat, the co-ordination and indeed the understanding of the international process of class struggle and the revolution will be infinitely more difficult, the defeats more heavy, the victories more costly and more often immediately put into question.

We are convinced these five key problems of the 20th century show the necessity for the Fourth International, for a new revolutionary International of the proletariat. Finding a solution to these five problems is just as crucial today as it was fifty years ago.

III. There is no perspective for capitalism

The main objection made against the theoretical analysis justifying the Fourth International – the objective necessity for the world socialist revolution to resolve humanity's crisis – is that it supposedly underestimates the capitalist system's adaptive capacities (and therefore of its at least partial capacity for future progress). How can one talk about the "agony" of the system that has gone through exceptional economic growth from 1948 to 1968 (even up to 1973)? How is it possible to deny that in the main imperialist countries, as well as quite a lot of so-called "Third World" countries during the same period, there has been an unquestionable increase in living standards, skills, and culture of broad proletarian layers? [5]

Our reply is that it is the critics of revolutionary Marxism and not Marx who have a totally partial and incomplete view of world reality since 1938 or 1948. It is they who are guilty of subjectivism, utopianism, even blind dogmatism.

Let us accept that Marxists may have indeed underestimated the international capitalist system's adaptive resources. [6] But a question immediately arises: what was the price of such adaptability? How can one draw the balance sheet of the last fifty years without including the 100 million dead of the Second World War without bringing in Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the millions killed in the colonial war since 1945, the holocaust of children dying of hunger and curable diseases in the Third World since 1945 (a figure much higher than those killed in the Second World War)? Is it a secondary problem, this enormous mass of human suffering; is the concept of "agony" so misplaced when we survey this overall reality?

True, the decline of civilisation is not linear or total. Unlike some infantile leftists, serious Marxists have never claimed that. Shouldn't we remember Lenin's famous phrase about there not being a situation where there is no way out for capitalism? Capitalism has to be overthrown. If it is not, then it can always sort itself out for a certain period at the expense of the exploited masses.

The delay in the world revolution has held back the tremendous contribution the human mind and human creativity could make to progress in the widest sense. But it has not stopped the human mind functioning. Science and our understanding of reality proceed apace. The fruits of such endeavours are as yet only partially diverted to ends that are destructive of humanity and nature. We continue partially to benefit from such progress as proved by the lengthening of life expectancy and the fall in infant mortality world-wide over the last fifty years.

But this progress in production and consumption, paid for by the infinite suffering which preceded it or which still accompanies it, can only be temporary, precisely because it has taken place within the framework of an economic and social regime racked by insoluble contradictions. The post-war "boom" was followed by a new long depression. [7] Marxists were not surprised by that, unlikely the reformist, neo-reformist (post-Stalinist) and neo-Keynesian acolytes of the capitalists. We had said this reversal of tendency was inevitable even before it actually took place. [8]

What remains today of the dreams of "guaranteed economic growth, full employment, and social progress"! Where are the real utopians if not in the camp of those who assumed that capitalism (sorry, the "mixed economy") was capable of ensuring all that? They have egg on their faces now with 40 million people unemployed in the imperialist countries, hundreds of millions underemployed in the Third World, a fall in the real income of at least 10% of the Western proletariat (the emergence of the "new poor" is part and parcel of this) and a fall ranging from 30% to 50% in real wages in most dependent semi-colonial and semi-industrialised countries.

Finally, while capitalism may have been able to more or less adapt itself to a world marked by the crisis of the decline of its civilisation, the threshold of inadaptability is gradually approaching. Few lucid men and women doubt that a new "adaptation" by world war, by the irresponsible development of technology, by the super-exploitation of the Third World, by the erosion of civil liberties (torture is already institutionalised in more than fifty countries), would threaten not only civilisation but the physical survival of the human race.

Formerly, the alternative was presented as "socialism or barbarism." Today it has taken the form "socialism or death." For it is impossible in the long term to avoid these disasters without ending the egotistical and competitive behaviour that flows from the regime of private property and competition, which inspires double moral standards and the incapacity of extending real solidarity to the whole of the human race.

More "nuanced" critics of Marxism label this line of reasoning as "excessive catastrophism." They do not deny the tendency for crises to multiply (social, economic, political, moral, military ones), which in any case would be a bit difficult since 1968. But they argue that these crises do not necessarily result in "final" catastrophes. Up to now they have been "absorbed" below the threshold mentioned above. There is mass unemployment, but it is proportionally less serious than during the 1930s. There is a "new poverty," but the unemployed and other marginalised people are not forced to sell their beds to buy bread. There is hunger in the Third World, but the population there is still growing and not declining, which proves that the great majority are not dying of hunger. The economic depression is continuing and getting worse, but a "soft landing" for capitalism is nonetheless not ruled out. The working class is still capable of resisting the most provocative attacks the capitalists throw at it, but it is said to be sufficiently weakened for the bourgeois restructuring plans to go through. The tendency towards a strong state is deepening, but it will not necessarily take the extreme form of fascism. "Local" wars are increasing in number, but they do not necessarily lead to world war, etc., etc. ...

IV. Only the working class is capable of overthrowing capitalism and establishing a socialist world

There is no other social force but the working class anywhere in the world capable of overthrowing international capitalism and establishing a social order founded on universal co-operation and solidarity. Here we are talking about the working class in the classic definition of the term (already mentioned earlier) [9] – all those wage earners economically obliged to sell their labour power in order to obtain their means of consumption, since they lack access to the means of production and do not own capital). Far from declining in numbers or becoming heterogeneous or having a greater segmentation than in 1914, 1939 or in 1954, it is today stronger and less heterogeneous than at those times. [10]

It is true that the billion-strong army of wage-earners throughout the world is not growing at the same rate in every country at all times, nor are their living standards and working conditions bringing them closer together than they were at all times in the past. The development of the working class does not progress in a linear way. It declines (and becomes de-skilled) in certain sectors, regions, or even countries while progressing and becoming more skilled in others. But there are no data that prove that the long-term, world-wide tendency is one of decline, far from it.

Already the number of wage-earners in the capitalist countries is higher than the number of peasants, even if we include the most populous Third World countries (India, Pakistan, Indonesia). Furthermore, this historic transformation has only taken place in the recent past. Just to put things in context, we should remember that when the October Revolution took place wage earners were scarcely 20% of Russia's working population. World-wide at that time peasants constituted 75% of the working population. Even in Europe, the United States, and Japan the proportion of wage earners was much smaller than it is today.

The fact that only the proletariat has the potential to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a social order based on solidarity and co-operation does not mean in any way that in the dependent semi-industrialised countries, and particularly in the most important semi-colonial countries, there is no need of allies in order to conquer and hold onto power. Even if they have become a minority in those countries, the poor peasants still represent an important social force. Peasants can engage in socially explosive struggles, and their main demands cannot be satisfied by the existing regimes. The worker-peasant alliance is still the main motor force for successfully carrying through a strategy of permanent revolution, the sine qua non for solving problems of under-development.

Furthermore, the specific combination of development and underdevelopment which characterises the emerging dependent semi-industrialised countries over the past two decades, has led to the growth of a particular social layer – the marginalised, semi-proletarian urban population, the shantytown dwellers surviving without proper jobs through irregular work in the “informal” economy. This social layer, often a majority in Third World metropolises (including in the semi-colonial countries), are often arbiters of political struggles in the short term. It can and must also be won as an ally of the proletariat through a permanent revolution strategy which takes up the fight for urban reform, an indispensable complement to the agrarian revolution.

Sometimes the impact of “new social movements” is brought up to cast doubt on the proletariat's role as the main potential revolutionary subject in the world today. Concerning the definition of “revolutionary subject” we should note the confusion of those who blindly worship the “new social movements” or those who systematically denigrate them by defining them as petty-bourgeois.

One of Marxism's seminal ideas, without which historical materialism loses all its potential to explain history, is precisely the concept of “social class” having an objective character. Social classes exist and struggle against one another independently of the consciousness they have of their own class and of their own historic interests (this

obviously does not mean the level of consciousness does not influence the development and end result of these struggles). A good proportion of American wage-earners see themselves as being middle class. This does not prevent them leading tough strikes against the bosses, sometimes in a harder way than the wage-earners of other countries who have a much higher level of class consciousness. They behave like wage-earners because they are wage-earners, even if they do not see themselves as such.

Viewed from this perspective the great majority of the people involved in the “new social movements” are wage earners, at least in the imperialist and dependent semi-industrialised countries. This is a quasi-automatic consequence of the social structure of these countries, given the very size of the “social movements.” The only social groups outside the proletariat from which they could recruit in a mass way would be housewives or school and college students. But these groups are a long way from being a majority either in the anti-war, ecologist, anti-imperialist or anti-racist movements. Only the student or school students’ movement – as a mobilised mass movement – has up to now been the exception.

Confusion arises because the “new social movements” are organisationally, and often ideologically, not really connected to the organised labour movement. In fact, in most cases it is the latter’s fault since it has been slow or simply refused to take up the defence of the objectives these movements struggle for. Hence we have fragmented and tangential movements. As single-issue movements they often mobilise big numbers. But at the same time their fragmentation facilitates their diversion into reformist dead ends. It is not possible seriously to defend the idea that students, housewives, or even Third World peasants have sufficient economic and social power to overthrow bourgeois states in the main centres. They can weaken this power. They are vital allies of the socialist revolution. This is especially the case with the feminist movement. Its liberating potential concerns more than half the human race, and its independent effectiveness is considerable. It mobilises an important sector of wage-earners and a growing proportion of the proletariat as a whole. However, these social movements cannot on their own bring about the socialist revolution. This victory is necessary if humanity wants to survive. Only the proletariat is socially capable of making sure this comes about. Any other project of overthrowing international capitalism is unrealistic.

Just as unrealistic is the idea that used to be quite popular on the left, but which practically nobody supports today anymore, that imperialism could be overthrown through a combination of strengthening of the “socialist camp” and of victorious revolutions in the Third World. To the extent this hypothesis implied a world nuclear war “won” by the “socialist camp” it was criminally irresponsible. It presupposed you could “build socialism” with atomic dust instead of with living men and women. Once this hypothesis was dropped the general approach was limited to the idea that a monstrous giant could be killed by cutting off a leg, an arm, and a few toes. Given the monster’s vast resources for equipping itself with very effective artificial limbs it is a remarkably silly position to hold.

Other critics reply that if the proletariat is the only potentially revolutionary subject capable of overthrowing international capitalism then the world socialist revolution becomes a utopian project, since the proletariat has shown itself incapable of carrying out any such revolution in any sort of advanced industrial country. In fact throughout the history of international workers movement a refusal to recognise the potential revolutionary role of the proletariat has nearly always led to the giving up of any revolutionary perspectives or activity. [\[11\]](#)

But is it really correct, on the basis of the concrete experience of the last fifty years, to assert that the proletariat has ceased to be the revolutionary subject as Marx predicted? Merely to list all the defeats in successive revolutionary crises is not sufficient to prove this argument. Not only is the historical period much too short to draw definitive historical conclusions [\[12\]](#) but Marx’s very analysis of the proletarian situation implied that the first wave of proletarian revolutions would be almost inevitably defeated. [\[13\]](#)

The correct approach to this question is quite different. We must not start from the metaphysical norms which reflect idealised visions of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution but from the real movement of the actual proletariat

in history. We should ask: is it the case that millions of wage-earners have continued to periodically (i.e. not every year or in every country) mobilise in struggles of such scope that the possibility of working-class, popular counter-power is put on the agenda – in other words a generalisation of dual power, of struggles that can lead to the overthrow of the bourgeois state and to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the classic Marxist sense of the term? Have these struggles a tendency to broaden or to get smaller in the long term? Have they a tendency to paralyse bourgeois power more than in the past or has the latter increased its ability to technically and materially defeat them? Do wage earners have a perspective of taking over the factories and centres of communication or is this less so than before? Do they tend more or less than in the past to move towards self-administration and self-management?

We just have to compare the 10 million strikers of May 1968 with the 3 million of June 1936 in France, the 10 million Polish workers in Solidarnosc in 1979-80 with the ½ million who were involved in the general strikes of 1905-6 or the 1918-1920 revolutionary movements in Poland, and those involved in the 1973-4 Portuguese revolution with the numbers participating in previous struggles there. We can see that at least in a number of countries (we do not say all countries) there is a clear tendency for the numbers involved to increase significantly.

It is certainly true that the scope of these explosive mass struggles is not enough in itself to bring about victorious proletarian revolutions. But it is enough to make them possible. But once you accept that these revolutions, the only chance to ensure the survival of the human race, are possible, then a refusal to fight to bring about the conditions for their victory appears unreasonable. It means literally playing Russian roulette with the physical survival of humanity. Never was the equivalent of the “Pascalian gamble” in relation to revolutionary political commitment as valid as it is today. By not committing oneself everything is lost in advance. How can one not make that choice even if the chance of success is only 1%? In fact, the odds are much better than that.

V. Without anti-capitalist theory and practice no anti-capitalist victory is possible

The fact that broadly-based mass struggles strong enough to put on the agenda the objective possibility of overthrowing the capitalist regime only break out periodically presents Marxists with the problem of day-to-day activity. In the long term you cannot be involved in revolutionary activity cut off from mass actions and activity having at least objectively revolutionary effects. Any attempt at revolutionary activity isolated from the masses, incomprehensible to them, even has, by and large, counterproductive consequences. Furthermore, any activity exclusively focused on reforms, limited to what is immediately achievable (if not brazenly reformist, limited to what is acceptable to the bourgeoisie [\[14\]](#)) has three disastrous effects.

It tends to mis-educate the masses, not preparing them for sharp turns in the situation, inevitable in our epoch. [\[15\]](#) So it means the masses approach pre-revolutionary and revolutionary crises without understanding what is necessary and possible. In the same way it tends to objectively hold back and fragment, even consciously break up mass struggles which threaten the consensus with the bourgeoisie, which go beyond the framework of the bourgeois state. It also tends to deform those organisations which follow such a line, making them less and less capable of understanding the future of capitalism [\[16\]](#) and of moving into revolutionary action when this becomes possible.

Various solutions have been proposed to this real difficulty. Retreating into (revolutionary) propaganda activity alone is obviously not a solution, An organisation which abandons any intervention into the real class struggle other than a propagandist one degenerates almost automatically into a Jehovah's Witness-type sect.

Retreating into an exclusive identification with actual ongoing revolution elsewhere in the world – following the

practice of the Comintern when it was controlled by the Stalinist faction or that of the Maoists – is also counterproductive. Such identification is useful and necessary as an indispensable feature of proletarian internationalism. But in no way can it replace an intervention into the class struggle of each country, starting from the objective needs and the real concerns of the masses, independently of what is happening in other countries.

Systematic and prioritised activity in the mass organisations and in the working class does not provide an adequate answer to the question. Certainly it is indispensable. But we come back to our starting point – intervention to do what, to carry out what activity?

If we combine everything that is positive about these three approaches (which are insufficient precisely because they are partial) we get closer to a satisfactory solution. It is summarised in what Trotsky and the Fourth International has called the strategy of transitional demands.

Starting from the immediate concerns of the masses, which in non-revolutionary situations remain by the force of things focused on economic, social, political, democratic, cultural reforms and on opposition to war and the tendency towards a strong repressive state, etc., revolutionaries show in practice they are the best organisers of these struggles, both in formulating their objectives and in action and organisational proposals. They try to ensure the maximum of success. But they combine this activity with systematic anti-capitalist propaganda, which constantly puts the masses on their guard against the illusion of continuous progress within the framework of the system. They warn them of the inevitable risk that these partial conquests will be cancelled out totally or principally and prepare them for the crises and inevitable reactions of the capitalists and its “democratic” state. Finally they outline the necessary responses to these reactions and crises. These alternative responses are crowned with proposals about power, working-class power against that of the bourgeoisie.

This is not a purely pedagogical/literary task, although this aspect of the overall strategy must not in any way be undervalued. It has an impact on the real class struggle insofar as it tends to constantly promote mass self-organisation, strike committees, neighbourhood committees, committees centralising these organs and national co-ordinating structures in the mass movements. These are the indispensable schools of experience for the masses, without which no overall transformation of these struggles into generalised dual power and (this is even more the case) towards the seizure of power, is possible in the industrialised countries. These are possible and necessary experiences even before the outbreak of pre-revolutionary crises.

Here is where the reformist conception and the revolutionary conception of politics constantly come into conflict, at least in the framework of bourgeois-parliamentary democracy and independently of the precise conjuncture. For the reformists (and the neo-reformists of all shades) politics equals elections and activity inside the institutions of the bourgeois state. Strikes are considered to be fundamentally “economic” and therefore outside politics, indeed apolitical. The same comment applies to their attitude to other forms of direct mass action (to the extent that the reformists and neo-reformists do not reject them entirely). So they have to be subordinated to electoral and parliamentary needs. This is the fundamental basis of reformist electoralism.

For revolutionaries, on the other hand, however important electoral-parliamentary activity maybe [\[17\]](#), it remains subordinated to the masses’ self-activity and self-organisation, which is the real practice preparing the emancipation of working people. The emancipation of the workers can only be the work of the workers themselves and not that of parties or trade unions, whatever their indispensable role in this – not to mention that of parliaments or local councils. That is what Marxism is all about.

Reformist strategy and revolutionary strategy are not only opposed to each other because the first writes off the inevitability, indeed even the possibility of revolutionary crises. They are in opposite corners when it comes to day-to-day activity in the class struggle even in a non-revolutionary conjuncture. Reformists more and more

subordinate the defence of workers' interests to "safeguarding the institutions" and "social equilibrium," in other words, to class collaboration. Revolutionaries defend at all times and against all forces the interests of working people and the political independence of the proletariat, not only from bourgeois parties but also with respect to the institutions of the bourgeois state.

The intransigent defence of socialist revolutions underway anywhere in the world is an integral part of the strategy of transitional demands. Above all it is a practical task since these revolutions generally are subject to many forms of aggression by imperialism. Their resistance and survival as well as their later trajectory depends in good part on the size of the international solidarity movement which responds to this aggression. Ernesto "Che" Guevara was even more right than we understood at the time when he lamented the insufficient solidarity given to the Vietnamese revolution when it was under such severe pressure from imperialism in the 1960s (and this continued to be the case in the 1970s after Che's assassination). Even if the Vietnamese revolution finally ended in victory it did so in such conditions and at such a price that its whole future was heavily "mortgaged." The understandable psychological/ideological reactions from people on the left faced with the Cambodian catastrophe and the way things turned out in Vietnam would have been much more sober if the world workers' and anti-imperialist movements' co-responsibility in the Indochinese tragedy had been included in their understanding of these events.

It is also one aspect of the general struggle to raise the level of class consciousness. Internationalism cannot be learned in books (except for a relative minority of individuals). For the masses it is gained through repeated activity. Solidarity action with unfolding revolutions is not the only practical form of proletarian Internationalism. But as long as the masses are not deeply involved in revolutionary activity in their own country it is the only way of raising consciousness to the understanding of revolution as a fundamental historical reality for the broadest layers. It is of key importance for their own future.

Given the enormous political experience of the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries and the economic reserves available to them it seems ruled out that the proletariat can seize power without a level of class consciousness and a leadership that has been prepared years beforehand. So the anti-capitalist component in the activity of the workers' movement is vital for the future. If there is no coherent anti-capitalist theory, no systematic anti-capitalist education, and no anti-capitalist activity by revolutionary organisations, then no victorious proletarian victory is possible in the imperialist countries and therefore there will be no solution to humanity's crisis, no future.

VI. The bureaucracy cannot introduce institutionalised socialist democracy

The inevitability of anti-bureaucratic revolutions predicted in the Fourth International's program has been historically confirmed since the Second World War. It has ceased to be a speculative idea. The explosive events of June 1953 in the GDR, of Hungary and Poland in 1956, of Czechoslovakia in 1968-69, of Poland in 1980-81 and partially in China during the 1966-86 period give the concept of political revolution an increasingly concrete form and content.

In fact an adequate perception of the future of bureaucratised societies in transition between capitalism and socialism is an integral part of the Marxist political armoury today. No correct international proletarian political activity is possible without such a perception. Also the perspective of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution and the consequent political strategy is opposed to:

-The ideology of "totalitarianism" and its allied anti-Communist and anti-socialist analyses and political positions. Presenting the USSR, Eastern Europe, and China as countries where the revolution has not brought any progress or in any case has brought more reaction and human misery than progress, is just not a tenable position given material

reality and its consequences for the masses' activity and attitudes. Painting a picture of the masses as either totally terrorised or totally "integrated" by the regime and therefore in both cases incapable of reacting and defending their interests whatever the circumstances can be seen to be quite false in the light of historical experience, including in the USSR.

-The idea of a strict parallel between the anti-bureaucratic political revolution and the socialist revolution in the capitalist countries, a parallel which is the corollary of any theory defining the USSR as a capitalist country. The events listed above have all shown the ease and rapidity with which the masses were able to dominate the bureaucracy, precisely because the latter is not a class, neither a capitalist class nor a "new ruling class." On each occasion the intervention of an external military force was necessary to prevent a rapid triumph of the developing political revolution, almost without serious cost in human terms. It is difficult to see what would be the military force "external" to the revolutionary process in the event of political revolution in the USSR, certainly not the Soviet army.

-The idea that bureaucracy – or (and this comes down to the same thing) healthy forces inside the ruling Communist Parties – would, "under the pressure of the masses," from their own perception of an unhealthy reality, or from a combination of both these reasons, radically abolish their own dictatorship, fundamentally democratise society and the state and establish a workers' regime of self-management and self-administration, that is, a regime in which real power belongs to and is exercised by the sovereign and democratically elected mass workers' councils has proved to be wrong. For revolutionary Marxists such councils must allow a plurality of political parties, the right of workers and peasants to elect whomever they want to the soviets and the right of those elected to join together around different platforms, in tendencies, factions, groupings of their choice. All experience since the coming to power of the Stalinist faction in the USSR confirms the invalidity of the self-reform hypothesis – whatever the growing diversity of forms of bureaucratic power and domination in the bureaucratised societies in transition between capitalism and socialism (the bureaucratised workers' states).

In no way does this mean the bureaucracy is incapable of carrying out any reforms, sometimes even very bold ones, when this is the price it will pay for its survival. The imperialist bourgeoisie and even the bourgeoisie of several semi-colonial or dependent semi-industrialised countries have incidentally shown a similar capability. Just think a moment of the workers' self-management set up by the Yugoslav CP in 1950, the concessions the Nagy faction made to the masses in Hungary in 1956, the reforms implemented by the Dubcek leadership in Summer 1968 in Czechoslovakia. Today's glasnost policy being implemented in the USSR is along the same lines.

But these reforms come up against an insurmountable barrier of social interests when they endanger the material privileges of the bureaucracy. Any real sovereignty of workers' and people's councils, indeed any restoration of unrestricted democratic rights for the broad masses, will tend to have the same effect. This is why the reform movement will stop before these thresholds are breached (generally, defined also by any challenge to the CP's monopoly of power). Even if it is initiated by a wing of the bureaucracy, it can only break these thresholds if it is transformed into a genuine "revolution" from below with powerful mass mobilisations and the emergence of various forms of self organisation by the proletariat and other working people.

The interaction between divisions within the bureaucracy, triggered by internal contradictions of the system as well as by the first signs of popular opposition, and the subsequent development of an autonomous mass movement is part of the real process towards the anti-bureaucratic political revolution since 1948. The role played in this by de-Stalinisation (de-Maoisation) initiatives, such as the spectacular one of Khrushchev from 1955-56, comprising not only the famous "secret report" to the CPSU's 20th Congress but also the release of millions of prisoners, must also be understood.

The Fourth International was almost alone among the tendencies of the international workers' movements to have had a generally correct approach to this vast historic movement, although it has been mistaken sometimes on conjunctural judgements. This meant it had a more correct analysis of the evolution of these countries and the international situation as a whole (particularly during the Korean war, the Vietnam war and when there was hysteria about the "imminent danger of war and extermination" at the beginning of the 1980s). It also permitted it to assign the

right importance to solidarity with the anti-bureaucratic mass movements in the bureaucratised workers' states (specifically Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1980-81) within a framework of trying to reconstitute the continuous unity of the world proletariat in line with the old maxim: one for all and all for one.

Above all it is a practical and political task, a duty all workers' organisations and in any case all international currents outside our own have failed to earn out. But more than that is involved. We need to understand that the anti-bureaucratic political revolution is an integral and an extremely important part of the world proletarian revolution, due to the far from secondary fact that a third of the world proletariat lives today in these countries and will participate in these revolutions.

Its importance for the world revolution is even greater today due to the profound discredit Stalinism and the post-Stalinist bureaucratic regimes, have cast on communism, socialism, and Marxism in general. Today it is the main subjective obstacle preventing the masses of the industrialised capitalist countries from committing themselves to the socialist alternatives.

Consequently there is an objective dialectic between progress towards the anti-bureaucratic political revolution on the one hand and progress to the proletarian socialist revolution in the imperialist countries on the other. The dialectic operates in both directions. In today's world no decisive progress of the world revolution is even thinkable without the unfolding of this dual dialectic. Without this victorious political revolution there will be no solution to the crisis in the USSR, Eastern Europe, or China.

VII. Extent and limits of the new revolutionary gains

Trotsky's prediction that the Second World War would end in a revolutionary upsurge even greater than the one after the First World War, and that it would generally escape from the control of the traditional organisations (especially the Stalinist parties), turned out to be inaccurate. But neither was it totally contradicted by what actually happened historically. There was a revolutionary upsurge, but it was more limited than expected, in Italy and France. There were new revolutionary victories but not in predominantly industrial/proletarian countries. These revolutions were led by parties of Stalinist origin (except for Cuba), but they had to break with Stalinism in order to lead these revolutions. These revolutionary victories have deepened the crisis both of the international imperialist system and of Stalinism but they have not led to the overthrow of either. This was the general historical context of the period stretching roughly from the end of the Second World War to May 1968.

The most infantile way of responding to the unforeseen turn of events was to deny it ever took place at all. Some comrades even went so far as to deny there had been a social revolution of unparalleled magnitude in China. Others, when pushed on it accept that there had been something like "a revolution." But since it was not "the" pure proletarian revolution we had been waiting for then it was not a "true" social revolution that broke with the imperialist/capitalist system. Instead we were dealing with the seizure of power by "petty-bourgeois" nationalists, or even by a "new ruling class" (which did not apparently exist until the moment it seized power!).

There is no point here in dwelling too long on these circumstantial analyses' idealistic/normative character that departs from Marxism methodology or on the sectarian self-justification underpinning them. A social revolution is characterised by a fundamental change in property and production relations. Can one seriously deny that such a change took place in Yugoslavia, China, or in Vietnam? A social revolution is also defined by the destruction of ruling class power. Can one seriously assert that in Yugoslavia, China, or Vietnam power is held by the same social class that held it in 1940? On what facts can one base the proposition that the petty-bourgeoisie, i.e., the peasants,

artisans, the “petty-bourgeois intellectuals,” are in power as a class in these countries?

But once you recognise these revolutions are authentically social and anti-capitalist ones leading to the development of new transitional societies between capitalism and socialism, albeit bureaucratised, and the creation of new bureaucratised workers’ states (these two concepts are synonymous for us) another theoretical difficulty arises. Trotsky said that Stalinism had definitively gone over to the side of bourgeois order in the capitalist countries. Now here we had three authentic popular revolutions involving the mobilisation of millions of men and women (tens of millions in China) which had certainly been led by parties of Stalinist origin. [18] Was Trotsky therefore mistaken on this question? Should all the traditional analyses of Stalinism by the Fourth International be revised?

Your answer to a large extent depends on the very definition given to Stalinism. This has to be materialist and not ideological. [19] Stalinism is the subordination of the interests of the proletariat and the revolution of each specific country to the interests of a privileged bureaucracy. Clearly, with their line of the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling classes the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Vietnamese CPs did not subordinate the interests of the revolution and the proletariat of their countries to those of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is also clear that neither did they subordinate these interests to those of some privileged Yugoslav, Chinese, or Vietnamese bureaucracy that did not exist at that time. Consequently these parties ceased to be Stalinist parties from the moment they decided to take a line of working towards the revolutionary conquest of power at the head of a powerful mass movement.

Furthermore, they were not only able to seize power because they had broken in theory and practice with Stalinism since they had refused to subordinate the revolutionary struggle to the interests, the injunctions and “theories” of the Kremlin, and they did this years before the seizure of power. Saying these turns were due just to the “pressure of the masses” reduces to nothing the decisive role of the subjective factor in the victory of a revolution. Indeed such a line of reasoning leads to a paradoxical conclusion: was it then the insufficient pressure of the masses which lies behind the defeat of the revolution in Greece, Indonesia, Chile as opposed to victory in Yugoslavia, China, and Cuba? Responsibility would then fall on the shoulders of the masses and not on the traitorous leaderships.

Reality is quite different. There was not less pressure from the masses (nor less severe counterrevolutionary threats) in Greece than in Yugoslavia, in Indonesia than in Indochina or China, in Chile rather than Cuba. There were parties which acted differently. On one side they consciously worked towards the revolutionary seizure of power, and on the other, (including the Stalinist Cuban CP, as opposed to the 26th July Movement) they deliberately refused to do so, invoking the theory of revolution by stages.

The fact that the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Vietnamese CPs broke with Stalinism to lead the revolution in their countries without having revolutionary Marxist parties must not be blotted out of the analysis on the pretext that the only thing that counts is the seizure of power. The partial and not total break with their Stalinist past meant the leadership of these parties still held bureaucratic organisational positions both in terms of their internal regime and their relations with the masses. Consequently these revolutionary victories were not accompanied by the institutionalisation of direct (soviet) workers’ and people’s power. From the beginning the party apparatus was identified with the state. Bureaucratisation and depoliticisation of the masses – both of which were reinforced by the rapid emergence of exorbitant material privileges of a new bureaucracy – become more and more firmly established. So we can legitimately speak of socialist revolutions bureaucratically manipulated and deformed from the start. True such definitions are unwieldy and a little complex but they do give a better account of a real historical process in all its complexity.

The non-revolutionary Marxist character of these parties has gradually become an obstacle to further necessary progress of the revolution both domestically and internationally. While the victory of the Chinese revolution severely upset the relationship of forces on a world scale, dealing a mortal blow to the colonial system as it existed in 1940 and as imperialism still wanted it restored in 1945, the actual political/ideological forms the victory took contributed a

great deal to the defeat of the Indonesian revolution and to the paralysis of the revolutionary movement in India. On a more modest scale, the pole of attraction represented by China, combined with the political/ideological confusion produced by Maoism (including in its final form of the cultural revolution), helped divide and weaken the revolutionary forces emerging in the imperialist countries out of the 1960s' youth radicalisation, particularly after May 1968. In the same way they lessened the possibilities opened in this period of a broader recomposition of the international workers' movement and politically destroyed dozens of thousands of revolutionary (or potentially revolutionary) cadres in Europe, Japan, and North America.

Later in Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua, authentic socialist popular revolutions took place that are clearly distinguished from the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Vietnamese revolutions because they were led by revolutionary parties coming not out of Stalinism but from differentiation's and development of anti-imperialist and socialist currents from their own countries. Consequently the processes of bureaucratisation of power have been much less in these countries compared to the others. Also limited and still insufficient steps have been taken towards an institutionalisation of workers' and people's power, more locally than nationally. As a result of these real differences, the Cuban revolution and the Cuban workers' state have continued to make revolutionary progress a long time after the seizure of power, a progress which has had a real influence on a part of the anti-imperialist and workers' movement in Latin America.

But here again the non-assimilation of the essential tenets of revolutionary Marxism has had serious political consequences. The absence of authentic socialist democracy in Cuba becomes increasingly a brake on further economic progress. The paternalist conception of the party involves serious risks of political and social conflicts. [\[20\]](#) The subsequent identification of the party with the state limits greatly the internal influence of the Cuban leadership for promoting the revolution in Latin America. Inevitable diplomatic manoeuvres of the Cuban state tend to influence if not dictate the tactical, even strategic, advice given to revolutionary forces in the rest of the continent. The lack of revolutionary victories up to now in Latin America weakens in turn the position of the Cuban state against imperialism, increases its material dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy and deepens the dynamic of crises in Cuba itself. The question of supporting the revolutionary Marxist programme as a whole is not therefore an insignificant or secondary detail even in the case of Cuba and Nicaragua.

Given the qualitatively different character of the Cuban and Nicaraguan leaderships one question is raised: could these cases be repeated and thereby pose the question of the emergence of a new revolutionary leadership of the proletariat on a world scale in quite new terms?

It is not serious to assert that in no country of the world can a revolution ever triumph without a revolutionary Marxist leadership. Revolutionary forces can emerge here or there within an essentially national or "regional" framework of differentiation as occurred in Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua. In order to assess this possibility you have to drop any dogmatic predispositions – either "positive" or "negative" – and concretely study in practice the choices, activities, and dynamic of such and such a revolutionary organisation (for example in El Salvador, Guatemala, or the Philippines). There is no ready-made answer in advance. It depends on the concrete practice of such organisations over a long period. But we are convinced we are talking here of only a few exceptions. To grasp this exceptional character we need to recall the particular conditions of the victories in Cuba and Nicaragua:

- The genuinely independent character of the revolutionary leaderships, above all, from the bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy.
- The weakness, demoralisation and extreme decomposition of the ruling classes.
- The weak tradition of proletarian self-organisation.
- The relative paralysis of imperialism given the unforeseen turn in the revolutionary process and the failure of its political manoeuvres.
- The superior political quality of the revolutionary leadership, acquired through long activity and growing authority among the masses, a precondition for successfully countering imperialism's political manoeuvres.

If we examine the situation in all the imperialist countries, in the dependent semi-industrialised ones, and in most semi-colonial countries, we can see that nowhere are all the above-enumerated factors to be found nor even a majority of them, which explains how the Cuban and Nicaraguan victories came under a non-revolutionary Marxist leadership.

VIII. Extent and limits of the recomposition of the workers' movement

The case of the Castroist and Sandinista leaderships must be placed in a larger context: the ongoing recomposition of the workers' movement in a growing number of countries. Historically this process began with the victory of the Cuban revolution, was brought to a brutal halt in Latin America with the defeats of the revolution in Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile, was relaunched with May 1968, the Italian "Hot Autumn" and the Portuguese revolution, and has continued since then, albeit at an uneven and spasmodic pace. It is the reflection of a rise in struggles partially escaping from the control of the traditional leaderships.

The most spectacular expressions of this are: the emergence of the Workers Party in Brazil, a mass-based, class-based socialist party with a programmatic orientation to the socialist revolution; the mass trade unionisation of black workers in South Africa; and the rallying of the majority of the Polish proletariat for a time within the ranks of the independent trade union Solidarnosc (and then, after its illegalisation by the Jaruzelski dictatorship, identifying with it). These three formations already influence millions of workers. One of their features is support for internal democracy and self-organisation qualitatively superior to that of the SPs and CPs. On a more modest scale a similar process is taking place in several Central American countries, in Mexico, the Philippines, Peru and Denmark. Although regroupments of the still small far-left forces which have a certain weight in the trade union movement and in the "new social movements" in certain European countries, do not come into the same category, they do indicate that something comparable is becoming possible in several countries. Everything indicates that countries like South Korea, several Eastern European countries, even Argentina could go through similar developments.

Of course, in most imperialist countries and in several dependent semi-industrialised countries the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses, whether political (reformist, neo-reformist, post-Stalinist) or trade union (particularly in the USA, Argentina, and Mexico) continue to be the main obstacles blocking mass struggles and the conquest of working-class political independence. Historical experience over the last fifty years confirms the lesson drawn from the revolutionary upsurge from 1917 to 1921 – this obstacle cannot be removed only through denunciation of the successive capitulations of these apparatuses to the bourgeoisie. These capitulations led to serious defeats of the working class. While such denunciation is correct and necessary it must be combined with a united front tactic intelligently applied by the revolutionary forces. In this way the revolutionaries will be seen as a resolutely unitary political tendency on all the questions and objectives of the masses' central struggles – in fact it must be the most unitary of all currents.

We should understand that the continued control of the reformist apparatuses over the workers' movements, not to speak of the working class, in the main imperialist countries is relative and not absolute. It is above all an electoral influence. Even here it is not as absolute as in the past, that is in 1945 or even in 1968 (apart from Britain where it has been maintained). [\[21\]](#) Furthermore, this electoral influence is rather a reflection of lesser evil options than a systematic opposition to fundamental social changes. Alongside this there is a growing scepticism seen particularly in the massive abstentionism of the American working class electorate, despite calls from the trade union bureaucrats each time for a vote for the Democratic Party presidential candidate. At the same time there is a real erosion in the traditional apparatuses' control inside the trade unions. The most spectacular example is in France, in this country the social democrats have received the most votes in their history and yet their presence in the workplaces is marginal (sometimes even less in absolute figures than the revolutionary activists). It is in a minority in most of the

trade unions.

In fact, if we look more closely we can detect a complex process of recomposition of the workers' movement (the relations between working people and its old and new organisations) is underway in practically all countries even if it does not have the same form in every case. You have developments inside the trade unions, inside the traditional political parties, the emergence of new currents and formations and progressive differentiations inside these formations. These processes link together in different proportions in the various countries and change from stage to stage.

Once again we need to understand and approach this real movement without pre-established schemas that are claimed to be valid for every country. We should look at what develops in each concrete case in terms of the real forces and opportunities to go forward in the building of new revolutionary leaderships of the proletariat. We have to take into account the specificity of the workers' movement, the mass movement and the class struggle in each country. No particular tactic should be rejected in advance – as long as the tactic does not disarm revolutionaries in their historic task of winning the majority of the working class to the fight to overthrow the bourgeois state and capitalism. [\[22\]](#)

While the level of real control of the traditional apparatuses over the working class and the mass movement is in the process of changing compared to the state of affairs after the Second World War, in the 1950s and even in 1968, there is yet no authentic mass revolutionary parties being built, parties consciously for the socialist revolution and preparing the masses for that end (the case of the Brazilian PT is probably the closest to that stage but even here the decisive test is still to come). This situation can be characterised as an intermediary situation characterised by a predominantly half-way political class-consciousness. Broad vanguards have emerged, having more advanced positions than the reformists and neo-reformists on a whole series of political questions, but they do not yet have an overall anti-capitalist political project.

There are quite a lot of reasons for this intermediary class consciousness of the (new) working class vanguards:

- the great disillusionment caused by the classic Stalinist (post-Stalinist) and social-democratic political projects which for decades have failed and led to repugnant compromises;
- the lamentable situation in the USSR and China which is by and large accepted as such by these vanguards;
- the disastrous military interventions in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Afghanistan as well as the horrific Pol Pot experience.

All this burden of negative experiences is not yet compensated by pilot experiences comparable to the October revolution or even the 1936 Spanish revolution, which could really sustain hope on a historic scale for the world proletariat.

But underlying this explanation which emphasises the weight of the subjective factor, there is also an objective materialist explanation. The building of mass revolutionary parties can in the last analysis only result from the real working-class movement, combined with an adequate intervention by revolutionaries. Now while there have been big class struggle movements at different times over the last decades involving the key sectors of the working class of some important countries (France, Italy, Great Britain, Brazil, Spain, Poland, Argentina, partially Mexico, just to list the main ones), some of the main armies of the world working class are absent from the political scene: in the USA, USSR, China, India, and to a large extent Germany and Japan. If the proletariat of these key countries either developed an independent political movement or even engaged in strong mass struggles – which in present conditions could scarcely be safely channelled by the traditional apparatuses – it would turn upside down the scope, pace, and content of the process of recomposition of the international workers' movement.

Meanwhile, revolutionary Marxists must continue to act while recognising the fact that the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat is not yet resolved in any of the imperialist or dependent semi-industrialised countries. Mass revolutionary parties still have to be built even if the conditions for their construction have become clearer and more realistic and if real progress has been made in several of these countries.

Revolutionary Marxists take their full place in the ongoing process of recomposition where it is happening and in ways relating to the specific situation of each country, with all the enthusiasm and loyalty that such a renewal requires. But nowhere in carrying out such tasks do they sacrifice the intransigent defence of their programme. This refusal to drop their programme is not sentimental faith or routinism and even less sectarian self-assertion. It reflects their deep conviction that if essential elements of the program are not assimilated then it certainly will lead the workers' movement into disastrous defeats. This does not mean in any way that this program should be considered already finished or that it does not require periodic enrichment in function of new objective demands and new experiences of the mass movement.

In the same way, while participating in the tasks required for the recomposition of the workers' movement, revolutionary Marxists do not sacrifice the building of their own current as a specific political-organisational task at all levels:

- forming a leadership and achieving its continuity;
- educating cadres;
- intervening in struggles;
- implanting the current as a priority in the workers and trade union milieu;
- creating an identity with a long-term political project;
- the ability to take political initiatives in a flexible way, etc.

This sort of approach is in turn justified by our opinion that a revolutionary leadership will only be built over a long period – at least in the industrialised countries and especially where the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have a long political experience.

Paradoxically, it is during non-revolutionary situations and phases that the essential contribution to building revolutionary leaderships and parties must be made. When the revolution starts there is too little time to go through certain stages of party-building. These tasks have to be well on the way to completion in the previous period.

IX. The challenge of internationalisation

The main weakness of the new organisations that have emerged or are emerging within the present process of recomposition of the workers' movement is their refusal to build simultaneously national organisations and an international organisation. In the best of cases this leads to a new version of "national communism." In the worst of cases this combines a misunderstanding of key aspects of the world class struggle with political positions that abandon or even betray the defence of the interests of whole sections of the international proletariat.

This deficiency is particularly striking since at the same time there is a literally dramatic "internationalisation" of crises and decisive problems of the survival of the human race. To a qualitatively greater extent than in 1914, 1939, or in 1945, these problems can no longer be resolved except on a world scale. The three main ones are: avoiding nuclear catastrophe; avoiding ecological disaster, and solving the problem of hunger and underdevelopment in the Third World.

Given the present level of our knowledge it has been established that a nuclear war (or a biological/chemical one),

even if only a part of today's arsenal of massive destruction were used, would mean not only the destruction of civilisation but of the human race itself. In these conditions preventing a world war (nuclear, biological, chemical) becomes the central strategic objective of the international workers' movement. If we fail in this objective, any project of world revolution or building socialism loses all meaning. You cannot build socialism on a lifeless planet.

Our differences with the radical pacifists do not relate to the objectives we need to achieve. We agree with them wholeheartedly on this. We recognise the vital contribution they have made to a new scientific, rational, and non-sentimental consciousness of the new conditions for the class struggle and revolutionary struggle today with the permanent threat of humanity's collective extermination.

Our differences with the pacifists turn on the necessary conditions for the definite elimination of this mortal threat. Revolutionary Marxists are convinced it is an illusion to think we can ensure peace in the world and avoid the nuclear (biological/chemical) holocaust without the overthrow of capitalism and the sovereign national state in the countries holding or potentially holding arms of mass destruction. It is a particular illusion to think partial arms agreements – however worthwhile and positive they may be – combined with a growing pressure from the mass anti-imperialist, anti-war movements, will be enough to avoid the nuclear (biological/chemical) holocaust. We criticise them at the end of the day not for exaggerating but for underestimating the gravity of the danger, at least in the long term.

The bourgeoisie has also become conscious of the implications of the suicidal threat involved in the massive use of such arms of extermination. Consequently, it does not see a world war as a "solution," however perverse and inhumane, to its crisis (starting with its economic crisis), as was still the case in 1914 or 1939. A dead bourgeoisie will not resolve the capitalist crisis by "selling" destroyed "commodities" to atomised "customers." So it is unlikely that any fairly rational leadership of a bourgeois state will deliberately unleash a nuclear world war.

But unfortunately this statement of facts is not the end of the question.

Firstly, as long as significant stocks of nuclear weapons remain spread about the world there is a permanent risk these arms might be detonated by accident, a risk that increases with the shortening of the operational responses and automatisation of the systems. So the precondition for a first threshold of guarantees against the threat of nuclear destruction of the human race is consequently not partial nuclear disarmament but total nuclear disarmament, the complete destruction of all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and the definitive and guaranteed ban on their manufacture. It seems ruled out that this can be achieved while capitalism survives. Prevalent military strategy in the imperialist countries and all the logic of the market, profit economy invalidates any hypothesis of real disarmament under capitalism.

Secondly, even if there were a total elimination of nuclear weapons the mere fact that there are hundreds of nuclear reactors in the world would transform a "classic" world war, or even a large-scale "regional" war in several key zones, into a nuclear holocaust since each of these reactors could turn into a sort of "nuclear warhead" under the effect of a "classic" bombing raid. Since 1945, local and regional wars, caused nearly always by imperialism, have already resulted in millions of deaths and have continued practically without interruption. It is an illusion to think the coming decades will be any different in this respect. As long as capitalism survives the threat of exterminating the human race will remain, whatever the level of consciousness world-wide, even among the bourgeoisie, of this threat.

It should be also understood that as the arms race continues, driven especially by the "long depression," [\[23\]](#) more and more devastating "classic" weapons are being produced. Already today "ordinary" artillery shells can have a destructive capability equal to the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tomorrow this capability could be even greater. The distinction between a nuclear world war and a "classic" world war is shrinking. Total (not only nuclear) disarmament is therefore a condition for the survival of the human race. Expecting this total disarmament without the abolition of capitalism is even more illusory than expecting nuclear disarmament without a

victorious socialist revolution.

Finally, while it is true that rational representatives of capitalism would doubtlessly not deliberately committing nuclear hari-kiri, it has been in no way proved that the bourgeois state is always and everywhere led by rational politicians. History has already given us the example of at least one great imperialist power – Nazi Germany – led by a fanatical adventurer, behaving more and more irrationally at the end of his career, who firmly opted for his own suicide and that of his class, state, and nation. It would be imprudent, to say the least, to claim such an extreme case would not repeat itself in similar historical conditions of economic, social, political crisis of the system and ideological/moral crisis of the bourgeoisie (just think of the American far right with its “rather dead than red” mentality).

So it is the outcome of the class struggle in the USA, France, Britain and tomorrow surely in West Germany and Japan which will decide what form of government and political personnel will lead these countries, as was the case in Germany 1929-33, and which will resolve the question of whether the nuclear holocaust becomes a tangible threat in the short term if the workers’ movement and the “new social movements” are crushed.

In the long term, there is no possibility of avoiding the destruction of civilisation and humanity through external pressure, the “balance of forces,” the strengthening of the “socialist camp,” the growing consciousness of the nuclear danger, etc. Only the take-over of all factories capable of producing weapons of mass destruction by the producers themselves, their collective resolution to destroy all the existing stocks of arms and of definitively preventing new production, is able to guarantee the survival of the human race in the long term. This cannot be guaranteed either nationally or on a continental scale. The establishment of the World Socialist Federation is the only conceivable solution for lifting the threat of extermination by war from humanity for ever. This can only be the result of the proletariat winning the class struggle in each of the key countries.

A “new reality” of recent decades has to be brought into consideration here, While most of the continuous wars we have seen since 1945 are the responsibility of imperialism and the international bourgeoisie, not all fall into this category. There have been several military conflicts between post-capitalist states (bureaucratised workers’ states): the Soviet-Chinese military conflict, the Vietnam-Cambodian war, the military conflict between China and Vietnam (the intervention of Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia has to be added here although this did not lead to a military confrontation).

Trotsky himself could not foresee this final and terrifying logic of the bureaucratic ideology of “socialism in a single country” and of “national communism.” The importance for the future of the human race of consistent internationalist education and activity without regional restrictions nor of “messianic national communism” of any sort only becomes more vital. Once and for all we must finish with the idea that in the world today there can be some sort of “bastion” to be defended over and above the need to ensure the survival of humanity world-wide. We have to work to turn the working class as a whole towards a consistent internationalism.

It is not necessary to repeat the detailed arguments concerning the problem of extermination by war when we refer to the threat of ecological catastrophe or of hunger in the Third World. Our differences with the ecologists or “third worldists” in no way centres on the extent of these threats. We totally share their concern on this. As with the pacifists we acknowledge their merit in having raised people’s consciousness on a question that is inherent in Marxism but which has been insufficiently articulated, concretised, and taken up by the organised workers’ movement (including sometimes by its revolutionary wing).

Our differences are all to do with the conditions for eliminating these dramatic threats. While supporting all struggles for immediate, partial, transitory solutions we think that “pure” ecologists and “third worldists” – i.e., those who are not socialist, anti-capitalist, and revolutionary – seriously underestimate the structural links between these growing threats and the maintenance of an economy based on private enrichment, competition, profit, capital accumulation,

the market economy, and the consequent social behaviour and mentalities. These problems will only be solved if there is a radical break with this logic. These problems can always re-emerge within the framework of the capitalist system and bourgeois society.

Faced with this “internationalisation” of humanity’s crisis, “campism” loses all credibility. This is particularly true when under Gorbachev (we cannot foresee his future either) the Kremlin masters are increasingly challenging such a position themselves.

The Kremlin bureaucrats have taken a step forward in dropping such criminal and inhuman utopias like the one they used to promise of “winning a nuclear war.” But they are not replacing this line with a much better alternative.

In fact there are only two coherent responses to the challenge of internationalisation. One consists in thinking that, given the threats confronting the whole human race imperialism, and large-scale capital (what the post-Stalinists reduce unscientifically to “the monopolies”) will gradually change their character. This argument suggests they will abandon their most aggressive and competitive practices, will stop behaving as imperialists and will accept progressive co-operative relations with post-capitalist societies, the Third World peoples and their own working classes. It is supposedly necessary to “encourage” them in this development, carefully avoiding anything that could exacerbate any sort of contradictions, especially dropping any revolutionary activity.

The other response starts from the conclusion that in the present stage of the crisis of bourgeois society the exacerbation of these contradictions is periodically inevitable whatever politicians, ideologists, economists or workers’ organisations do. Consequently, the only adequate answer to the challenge of globalization is to accept the seriousness of the threats and to adopt an orientation towards the only possible solution of the crisis – the creation of the World Socialist Federation by the successive victories of the proletarian revolutions in the main countries of the world (socialist revolution in the capitalist countries, anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the main bureaucratised workers’ states, and permanent revolution in the major so-called Third World countries).

The first response is based on a serious underestimation of the crisis of the system and of its terrifying dynamic. It is utterly unrealistic and illusory. The second is undoubtedly more difficult to get accepted in the short term by the broad masses. But it is the only realistic way forward. To the extent that the second tends to fit better with the real march forward of history it will also be increasingly better understood.

X. Without international theory, practice and organisation there will be no building of the World Socialist Federation

The delay shown by the main groups emerging today from the recomposition of the international workers’ movement in taking up a consistent internationalist commitment has a great many causes. Among the subjective causes we can mention in particular the bad experiences of the manipulative bureaucratic-administrative “centres” which go right back to the Zinovievist deformation of the Comintern. [24] The culminating point was reached with the Stalinised Comintern, then there was the Cominform, the attempts by the Kremlin to maintain a control over the “international communist movement,” the Chinese efforts to align Maoist groups on the twists and turns of Chinese diplomacy, etc. Scepticism certainly exists about the possibility of combining international policies valid for all countries with the specificity of the state of the class struggle in each country – a scepticism that has been particularly fostered by the bankruptcy of the Second International in 1914 in failing to hold a common world front against the war, despite all the solemn commitment entered into beforehand. But objective causes, which are at the end of the day more important, must be added to these subjective reasons.

For parties already in power, the unavoidable obligations of diplomatic manoeuvres involve the impossibility of totally taking into account the interests of the world proletariat, since at certain times and for certain countries there is a

contradiction between these interests and the immediate consequences of the manoeuvre. This does not imply that revolutionary Marxists have to condemn the necessity of such manoeuvres. It does imply the need for a clear separation between any state policies and the class policy of the world proletariat. It is impossible to achieve this separation if it is not organisationally institutionalised.

Lenin understood this. This was one of the reasons why he pushed for the rapid creation (some said at the time it was premature) of the Communist International, not to give Soviet Russia a supplementary instrument to manipulate, but on the contrary to counterbalance the obligation of Russian communists to manoeuvre as a state on the world political scene.

For Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and all the Comintern leaders it was quite straightforward that when Soviet Russia concluded the Brest-Litovsk peace accords with Germany and Austro-Hungary, the duty of revolutionary socialists in the three countries and elsewhere was not to defend this treaty but to denounce it as a diktat imposed on Russia by imperialism. When Soviet Russia later concluded an agreement with capitalist Germany at Rapallo, which even included the beginnings of military collaboration, the German communists did not suspend for one day their struggle to overthrow the German government and bourgeoisie.

But if one begins by refusing to distinguish between the state apparatus and the party, if the latter is generally identified with the former, if it follows that the international policy of the state and the party is not quite separated then the objective implications of what the state requires and the objective results of the state manoeuvres become an insurmountable obstacle to the creation of an international revolutionary organisation.

Another objective reality weighs down over parties and currents emerging from the process of recomposition of the workers' movement (elsewhere than in Cuba and Nicaragua) and this is that the identity of interest between the three sectors of the world revolution, which is an historic reality, is not yet part of the day-to-day experience of significant sectors of the vanguard, not to speak of the broad masses. The desynchronisation and largely autonomous development of mass struggles in these three sectors is an important obstacle.

At a given moment in 1968, it was possible to hope that the "Prague Spring" would have a unifying role, multiplying the combined effects of May '68 and the Tet offensive in Vietnam. The suppression of the "Prague Spring" is thus the political crime with the most unhealthy long-term effects in the long list of crimes committed by the Soviet bureaucracy since the Second World War.

Since then it is a fact that – just to take a few examples – the experiences of the masses and the revolutionaries in Central America is generally cut off from that of the Polish workers in Solidarnosc and from that of the British miners, the Fiat workers in Italy, the French railworkers or the West German steelworkers. Attempts to build bridges can be made by propaganda and solidarity activities. But that does not really replace a common mass experience or one simultaneously transmitted internationally. The very fragmented and partial character of the mass struggles and of the political progress of the vanguard in a number of countries contributes to the same effect. Finally, as we have already said above, the fact that some of the biggest national working class battalions are still absent from the scene of the battle has a big influence on the credibility of the project of rebuilding a mass revolutionary International.

In these conditions, only the Fourth International and a few small groups of equivalent size to its strongest sections, are fully behind a really universal class solidarity. Only the Fourth International has drawn the corresponding organisational conclusion – to simultaneously build national revolutionary parties and a world revolutionary party.

These obstacles will only be overcome as a result of new explosive developments of the class struggle in the key

countries, of new differentiations inside the developing revolutionary organisations and by new events, splits, regroupments, and unifications affecting the traditional mass organisations.

But the idea all these processes can lead spontaneously and automatically to the re-emergence of a real universal internationalism of the sort seen in the first years of the Comintern (less the hyper-centralisation and the tactical errors) has to be rejected as woolly-minded and spontaneist. There will be no new mass revolutionary international without a tireless battle for the building of an International here and now. There will be no new mass revolutionary International without the continued building of the Fourth International, even if the former will not be a simple growth out of the latter but will come out of wide-ranging regroupments.

We can extend the argument even further: there will be no World Socialist Federation in the foreseeable future – and therefore no salvation for humanity – without the prior experience of important sectors of the working masses with a mass revolutionary International functioning as such, that is as a real world organisation, bound by statutes (rules of functioning) freely accepted by all and involving at least partial limiting of sovereignty by its member parties (sections).

But you would have to believe in Father Christmas to think that after thousands of years of exploitation, oppression and violence by the strongest states against other ethnic groups, peoples, states, or weaker classes; after a century of imperialist super-exploitation and oppression against colonial and semi-colonial peoples; after centuries of racial discrimination, violence and even extermination; after a half-century of oppression and discrimination by the Soviet bureaucracy against various foreign nations and nationalities inside the USSR ... that all peoples, oppressed minority groups, working classes and revolutionary parties will automatically and freely accept without any afterthoughts such a limitation of sovereignty as something quite logical.

It seems indispensable that they first have to go through an experience teaching them that world-wide collaboration is possible on a strict basis of equality, where the “small” forces will not have less rights and powers than the “big” ones, where limits on sovereignty are applied first of all on the “powerful” before being placed on the “weaker,” where all discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic group is strictly forbidden.

Everything points to participation inside a mass revolutionary International as a place where this experience could be first acquired. The functioning of such an International – as is already the case with the Fourth International today – must be founded on a twofold principle: total autonomy for national parties in the selection of their leaderships and national tactics but international discipline based on the principle of majority rule (democratic centralism in the original Leninist sense of the term and not its Stalinist perversion into bureaucratic centralism) when it comes to international political policies.

If the first principle is abandoned it leads to Zinovievist manipulation or indeed blatantly Stalinist-bureaucratic methods stifling internal democracy and to a completely wrong process of selecting national leaderships whereby only the most servile followers of the “international centre” survive. But if the second principle is rejected, there is a risk of ending up with the terrible result admirably defined by Rosa Luxemburg: “Workers of the world unite in times of peace but cut yourselves to pieces in times of war!”

So the reasons behind the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938 all remain valid today. Let us summarise the results of our analysis. The survival of capitalism implies more than ever the risk of a succession of catastrophes threatening to destroy not just civilisation but the physical existence of the human race. Salvation can only come from the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist regime – its gradual disappearance by reforms is an inconsistent utopia – and its replacement by the reign of freely associated producers, federated on a world scale. Only the international working class is able to overthrow capitalism. But to do this it needs an adequate level of class consciousness and revolutionary leadership.

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The working class's periodic upsurges into direct action create at the same time the conditions for resolving the crisis of the subjective factor, on condition that revolutionaries have been active in the movement for long enough, effectively enough and on a sufficiently wide enough scale. They must simultaneously aim to build new national revolutionary parties and a new International.

On a historic scale the dilemma is therefore identical to what it was in 1938. Either the international proletariat remains generally fragmented into national sectors, fighting separate battles and essentially limited, defensive ones, not breaking except in a few countries the framework of the bourgeois state and bourgeois society.

In this case building a mass revolutionary International will fail but building new mass national revolutionary parties will also necessarily fail. In this eventuality humanity will be condemned.

Or the proletariat of the main countries will act as the French and Italian workers did in 1968-9, the Portuguese workers in 1973-4, the Czech and Polish workers in 1968 and 1980-1 and the Brazilian and Black African proletariat has done in the last few years. On condition that a sufficient number of cadres, solidly rooted in the working class, equipped with a correct programme and strategic vision, able to take appropriate political actions and initiatives, are grouped together in those situations, then the political, organisational, and geographical limits of the ongoing process of recomposition of the workers' movement will be progressively overcome. The building of new national revolutionary leaderships and a new mass revolutionary International will become possible.

Since we do not doubt for one second that the second eventuality will become reality, we do not doubt for an instant the future of humanity, the development of a mass revolutionary International and the victory of the Fourth International.

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[1] 1. This document is especially important because it projected a dual tactic (combined tactic) in the event of world war in the imperialist countries allied to the USSR and then in the imperialist countries attacking the USSR. The realism and necessity of this combined tactic was largely confirmed by the experience of the Second World War. Trotsky was practically the only one who thought through this tactic in such a way as to avoid any renunciation of the class interests and political independence of the proletariat in the imperialist countries allied to the USSR.

[2] *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40*, Pathfinder Press, New York, p. 218.

[3] See "The Rocky Road to the Fourth International", by George Breitman, BIDOM, New York 1988.

[4] See Lenin's article of 1 November 1914: "Situation and Tasks of the Socialist International".

[5] Presenting the considerable increase in the production and mass consumption of foodstuffs, textile products, consumer durables, medical services, education, etc., as "a development of the destructive forces" is obviously to invite justifiable ridicule.

[6] In his report to the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921, Trotsky outlined the hypothesis of renewed sustained capitalist growth in 25 years after the historic defeats of the working class and terrible slaughter and destruction. 1921 + 25 = 1946 ...

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- [7] We have tried to develop a systematic theory of “long conjunctural waves” inspired by Trotsky’s writings on this, in *Late Capitalism* and especially in a little ad hoc book, *The Long Waves of Capitalist Development* (Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- [8] This is the historical role played by inflation and the soaring debt in the last decades.
- [9] This is the definition used by Lenin, in the first programme of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party that he drew up with Plekhanov.
- [10] See our article on the future of work published in *Quatrième Internationale*, No.20 May 1986.
- [11] This is what happened to the most gifted intellectual collaborator of Trotsky, Jean Van Heijenoort, who broke with Trotskyism and Marxism on this basis in 1948.
- [12] Do we need to remind our readers that 200 years passed between the first bourgeois revolution (in Holland) and its victory in France in a “mature” and definitive form, consolidated by the industrial revolution?
- [13] “Now and then the workers sit victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.” Communist Manifesto, p.58, Marx and Engels, Basic Writings, Ed. L. Feuer, New York 1959. Also see the famous last paragraph of the preface to Marx’s 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, on the long term provisional and self-critical character of proletarian revolutions.
- [14] This is indeed the infernal logic of reformism: taking the dangerous step between what is immediately obtainable (cf. Bernstein: “the movement is everything, the end is nothing”) and what is compatible with the institutions of the bourgeois-parliamentary state, that is with the maintenance of a basic consensus with the bourgeoisie.
- [15] “The revolutionary character of the epoch does not lie in being able at every moment to achieve the revolution, that is, to take power. This revolutionary character is ensured by deep, sharp turns and frequent, unexpected changes in the situation ...” Trotsky, Criticism of the Comintern Program in *The Communist International After Lenin*, vol.1 PUF 1969, p.179 (translated from the French).
- [16] Here are two classic examples: Kautsky claimed in an article written for *Die Neue Zeit* that ultra-imperialism would make wars impossible. The article was published just after the outbreak of the First World War. The unfortunate Rudolf Hilferding stated in an article written for the SPD magazine *Die Gesellschaft* that thanks to an intelligent and wise tactic this party had prevented the alliance between the state apparatus and the Nazis and thereby stopped Hitler from coming to power. The article was published just after President von Hindenberg had chosen Hitler as Chancellor.
- [17] Following Karl Marx’s approach revolutionaries assess the precise value of any social legislation in terms of how far it extends to the whole of the working class and notably to its weakest sectors, the less well organised, the most exploited layers, those conquests which only the best organised and generally the best paid can win through direct action.
- [18] As for Albania and North Korea we still do not have enough information to judge to what extent the CPs seizure of power resulted from an authentic popular revolution or from a foreign military intervention as in Eastern Europe.
- [19] Defining Stalinism as parties founded on the theory of socialism in a single country is essentially idealist. It is also a source of obvious confusion. A great number of social democratic parties were supporters of “socialism in one country” without for all that being Stalinist.
- [20] Significantly, Fidel Castro assigns the responsibility for the disaster in Grenada on the “division” of the revolutionary forces. In reality differentiations within any victorious revolutionary movement faced with new problems and new choices are inevitable. Avoiding such differences ending up in the phenomena of degeneration like that of the Coard faction hardly could be the result of stifling differences inside the apparatus and the leadership. The remedy lies in respect for the widest internal democracy, with tendency rights. It also lies in the working masses, organised in their democratically elected councils being able to exert sovereign power.
- [21] Even if we leave on one side West Germany, where the Green Party gets 7% of the vote and is generally seen as being to the left of the

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social democracy we can look at Denmark where the SF party, clearly to the left of social democracy, has just won 13% of the votes nationally. In the proletarian capital of Copenhagen it nearly gets 25%, which added to the votes of the two smaller far left parties is more than the SP gets. We can also mention that even in France the three far left presidential candidates, according to a poll in *Le Monde* newspaper, received together (despite their division) 7% of the workers' votes. This is a new phenomenon.

[22] Under the heading "The new epoch requires a new International" the Open Letter for the Fourth International drawn up by Trotsky in 1935, includes the following passage: "It would be a fatal mistake to prescribe a single path forward for all countries. In function of the national conditions, of the degree of decomposition of the old workers' organisations and finally of the state of their own forces at any given moment, Marxists (revolutionary socialists, internationalists, Bolshevik-Leninists) can operate sometimes as an independent organisation, sometimes as a faction inside one of the old parties or trade unions. Of course in every place this faction work is never anything else but a stage towards the creation of new parties of the Fourth International, parties which can be formed either as a regroupment of revolutionary elements from the old organisations or from the action of independent political groups." Leon Trotsky, *Oeuvres*, vol.5, p.355.

[23] This does not at all contradict what we said above. While nuclear world war is obviously not a solution to the capitalist economic crisis, the arms race is certainly a "market of substitution" for large-scale capital in a climate of crisis. It will continue then, independently of any considerations on the suicidal character of a nuclear war.

[24] The Zinovievist regime which flourished in the Comintern after 1923, in particular involved changing national leaderships by brutal interventions (sometimes purely administratively) of the international leadership inside the Comintern sections.