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Socialism or Barbarism - On the Eve of the 21st Century

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This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an [original draft](#) proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The Manifesto of the Fourth International

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations - to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder - of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

The world is at a crossroads. The knowledge and productive capacity exist to satisfy the basic material, social and cultural needs of our whole planet. But hunger and homelessness grow even in the richest countries. Countless millions suffer premature death or crippling effects from preventable diseases, industrial accidents, pollution. As a result of such practices as infanticide against female babies, medical neglect of women, overwork, and other forms of discrimination in many poorer countries, it is estimated that there are 100 million women missing from the world's population today.

The gap between rich and poor is widening. In 1960 the gap separating the richest 20% of the world's population and the poorest 20% was 1 to 60. In 1990 it was 1 to 150.

Above all, the threat of self-destruction - from accumulated nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons or as a result of the poisoning of the ecosphere - looms over humanity. Yet despite continued opposition and struggles against oppression - taking different forms in each of the three sectors of the world: the imperialist countries, the "third world," and the countries of the East - the international capitalist system (imperialism) that is the root cause of all these evils seems more strongly entrenched than it has been for decades. Its ideological "victory over socialism" - falsely identified with the bureaucratically dominated societies in the USSR and Eastern Europe - is widely proclaimed.

This is above all due to a crisis of credibility for socialism as an international perspective in the eyes of the masses -

a crisis that has been developing at least since the beginning of the 1980s. It is a result of the mass awareness that Stalinism/post-Stalinism, social democracy, and populist nationalism in the "third world" have all proven bankrupt.

The specific form taken by the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorships, without an advance in the direction of socialism, contributed powerfully to this. And the crisis blocks in turn any immediate solution to the burning problems of humanity by giving a fragmentary and discontinuous character to massive popular protest movements.

In the final analysis the dangers that threaten humanity can only be resolved if the alienated, and alienating, character of human work is overcome in a decisive manner, if the great majority of men and women become masters and mistresses of their destiny in production, in consumption, and in their communities. To this end they must conquer the power to decide that destiny consciously, freely, and democratically. Herein lies the meaning of a "self-managed society" and of a superior civilization which is, for us, the essential content of socialism.

I. The stakes

1. The widening dangers

Despite agreements to reduce nuclear weapons, the arms race continues. The destructive power that is accumulated ends up being used, with barbarous consequences. There have been more than 100 so-called "local" wars since 1945 causing more than 20 million deaths. Imperialism's brutal aggression against Iraq in 1991 revealed the full murderous consequences of this arms race. Enormous military stockpiles, including biological and chemical weapons, and the proliferation of nuclear power stations likely to be transformed into so many nuclear disasters, even in a conventional war, could physically wipe out the human race.

The greenhouse effect, the destruction of the ozone layer, the devastation of tropical and temperate forests, the poisoning of oceans, rivers and reservoirs, air pollution, the progressive loss of topsoil, the massive elimination of living species which are currently disappearing at a rate 1000 times greater than they would naturally, the choking of cities and degradation of the countryside- all these threats combine to undermine the basis for humanity's physical survival.

Famine increasingly threatens entire peoples - not because agricultural productivity is inadequate, but because it is too high to guarantee sufficient profits in the richest countries, where the state hands out subsidies to systematically reduce farmland. This "sustains prices," but at the risk of eliminating the whole of humanity's grain reserves should there be several successive bad harvests.

The long international economic depression since the beginning of the 1970s has been disastrous for living conditions in nearly all the "third world". According to an official report of the United Nations, using a very conservative definition, there are presently one billion poor people in the world.

In the imperialist countries, the effects of the crisis - though increasingly visible - have so far been limited by the social protection won by decades of workers' struggles and the strength of the working class. Nonetheless, unemployment has shot up: there are now 40 million unemployed in the richest countries, compared with 10 million at the beginning of the 1970s. Millions of "new poor" represent 10% to 35% of the population, depending on the country.

The growth of casual labour, instability, marginalization and insecurity in society are expressed on the political terrain by the trend towards a strong state and the restriction of democratic freedoms and trade-union rights, as well as by

the growth of racism, xenophobia, attacks on women's rights, gays, and the resurgence of a neo-fascist extreme-right. Torture and state terrorism are systematically practiced in more than 60 countries in the world, some imperialist countries among them. In the "third world", the fight against repression - including abductions and disappearances - gives a wider meaning to the struggle for democracy today, over 150 years after the formal abolition of chattel-slavery. One million people are once more enslaved around the world.

The exploited and oppressed will not let themselves be passively dragged towards the catastrophes that threaten their future and even their survival. In the last few years, millions of women and men have participated in mobilizations against war, nuclear weapons and militarism, for the defence of the environment, in defence of labour rights, for the self-determination of oppressed nations, against racism and neo-fascism, against austerity and unemployment, against imperialism, famine and the scourge of the "third world" debt, against the privileges and dictatorships of the bureaucracies.

This points to a way out of the crisis that safeguards the possibilities of social emancipation and fulfils the liberating ideal of human rights, including not only civic and political rights, but also social rights- to work, to a decent standard of living, to dignity, to healthcare, education and housing.

Neither the capitalist jungle nor the bureaucratic dictatorship can meet this challenge. An international socialist solution to the crisis of civilization will be based on the overthrow of these systems. The possibility of this comes from the combative and innovative potential of the proletariat and the oppressed.

The idea that patient sacrifices and sensible reforms are enough to ward off the danger is a deadly illusion. Reformist preaching has never prevented crises, avoided wars or contained social explosions. And it will never do so in the future. A failure to fight has always proven far more costly than struggle.

2. No soft landing out of the depression

The illusions of those intoxicated by the postwar boom - who believed in a peaceful capitalism guaranteeing social justice, full employment and continuously rising real wages - have already come crashing down. Those who foresee a gradual way out of the depression through more patience and more sacrifices by the exploited do not understand the intimate link between the catastrophes threatening us and the intrinsic logic of a generalized market economy, the very essence of capitalism: exacerbated competition with no regard for its overall effects on society; the never-ending pursuit of short-term profits and the drive to accumulate private wealth, without taking into account their human costs and the irreparable damage inflicted on nature; the extension of competitive and aggressive behaviour in relationships between individuals, social groups and states; generalized egoism, greed and corruption, the law of the jungle and the "weakest to the wall"!

The present long depression is the result of this pitiless capitalist logic. It does not exclude phases of economic upturn. But such upturns mean an ever-growing transfer of the cost of the depression onto the "third world" and the most destitute in the imperialist countries. They do not succeed in reducing unemployment even in the rich countries. This is already an endless nightmare for the poor and those left on the scrap heap.

If, during the decades following the war, the recessions have been less drastic than they were during the preceding 50 years, the trend has been for them to become more severe since the 1970s. The international capitalist economy has not succeeded in overcoming the dilemma: either increased inflation or increased crises of overproduction. A new bank/financial crash of the 1931 type, if it remains improbable, is not excluded.

Technological development based on the whims of competition and profit, or bureaucratic irresponsibility - and not

any “uncontrollable perversity” of technology or of science in and of themselves - is leading us to disaster. This results from the subordination of science to the narrow imperatives of short-term profit expectations, provoking an apparently irresistible growth of intrinsically dangerous technologies. In capitalist society decisions which seem rational given the limited concerns of individual capitalists, corporations, regions, etc., can turn out to have totally irrational and destructive consequences for society as a whole.

Even if it is illusory to believe in the automatic benefits of scientific progress, humanity still does not need less of these things, but more science that is in harmony with an awareness of long-term social interests and a technology that is subject to the collective intelligence and morality of the associated producers - which implies the objective of universal human emancipation and solidarity. We do not need a return to obscurantist superstitions and myths.

The struggle to win human rights on all continents is at the heart of this battle, because in a society where the ruling principle is respect for capitalist property and the priority of profit, it is simply impossible to guarantee basic democratic and social rights for all. The workers’ movement must turn the campaign for human rights against the bourgeoisie and become the most resolute defender of democratic liberties. But it will only win confidence and authority if these same principles are applied in its own ranks and if it refuses to accept any violation of them in countries where it is in power.

Powerful interests oppose universal disarmament; block a solution to the pollution of air, sea, and land; prevent the elimination of hunger, misery and the desperate anxiety of everyday life; and make it impossible to eliminate alcohol and drug addiction which are the murderous antidotes to this anxiety.

It is illusory to imagine capitalism without periodic crises of overproduction (22 since 1825). This means, of course, the production of more than can be sold at a profit, not more than can be used by human beings. Such a phenomenon is a veritable insult to humanity given the billions of people around the world whose most basic needs are not satisfied. It is illusory to imagine capitalism without unemployment, without poverty, without discrimination against women, young people, the aged, immigrants and national minorities, without racism or xenophobia. These things cannot be avoided tomorrow any more than they were yesterday.

The growing internationalization of productive forces involves a tendency toward the internationalization of capital. This implies above all a growing globalization of the main problems of humanity which can now only be resolved on a world scale through a world socialist federation.

But despite its broad temporary hegemony on the international political scene, imperialism is incapable of mastering this internationalization. Torn apart by inter-imperialist competition, which is aggravated by the depression, trapped in the framework of existing national states, challenged by important sectors of the world population, imperialism is unable to actually crush its own people as fascism did yesterday.

But we do see the development of a strong state, sowing the seeds of a racist pre-fascist culture. In the face of this reality, blindness is impermissible. Refusing to clearly see the current dangers - along with who and what are responsible for them - is just as irresponsible and cowardly today as it was before Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

3. Catastrophe is already on the march in the “third world”

In the dependent countries, where the vast majority of the world’s population lives, barbarism is already at work. Capitalism cannot be judged simply by looking at the living conditions of a small minority of the world’s population - the middle classes and the highest paid workers in the richest countries.

With few exceptions, the countries of the "third world" have suffered a disastrous decline in living standards over the last ten years, resulting in subhuman living conditions.

Absolute pauperization has often gone beyond that experienced in the 1930s, and is less and less cushioned by subsistence agriculture. The purchasing power of wage-earners has been reduced by around 50%. In the poorest countries, the calorie intake of half the population approaches levels that existed in Nazi concentration camps of 1940. Endemic unemployment has reached up to 40.5% of the potential work force.

In these countries fifteen million children die every year from hunger, malnutrition and the lack of healthcare and medicines. Every five years, this silent massacre claims as many victims as World War II -including the Holocaust and Hiroshima. This is the equivalent of several world wars against children since 1945: that is the price paid for capitalism's survival during this time.

The resources to feed, care for, house and educate these children certainly exist on a world scale - provided that they are not squandered on arms spending, that they are distributed to benefit the most destitute and that control over them is taken out of the hands of those whose sole consideration is their own thirst for private riches.

Pollution is now being deliberately exported. "third world" countries are becoming a cheap dustbin for dangerous, non-recyclable industrial waste. There is growing desertification, faster destruction of tropical rain forests and the transfer to poorer countries of industries that are particularly harmful to the environment. All of this rapidly creates even worse ecological disasters than those already affecting the richer countries.

The search for hard currency to finance debt and the systematic development of export agriculture to the detriment of staple food crops for domestic use worsen trends of malnutrition and famine. The poor countries are now exporting capital to the rich ones. And this does not even take the effects of corruption into account, the embezzling of funds and public grants by "third world" ruling classes for private gain. A concentrated expression of dependence and underdevelopment, the debt's iron vice strangles the poorest of the poor above all.

The struggle against the debt - for the immediate and complete cancellation of both principle and interest - starts with day-to-day opposition to prevailing policies of wage austerity which exercises a terrible pressure on purchasing power, to massive cuts in public education and health budgets ordered by the International Monetary Fund, to the broader dismantling of the public sector and to ecological havoc tied to the savage penetration of capital.

Workers, peasants and the underprivileged of the towns and shantytowns have resisted this unbearable deterioration in their living conditions. In Latin America, Asia and Africa there have been successive waves of strikes, land occupations, peasant revolts and urban explosions of pauperized and marginalized masses. There have also been electoral victories, general strikes, community struggles, attempts at political and trade-union organization independent of the state and the bourgeoisie, as well as some efforts to create pockets of armed resistance.

4. The crisis of the USSR, and Eastern countries

This crisis has been maturing for years. Mikhail Gorbachev's policy did not provoke it, but simply brought it out into the open. In the USSR and Eastern Europe, it was manifest particularly in a slowdown of economic growth; in increasingly pronounced technological backwardness compared with the imperialist countries; in social stagnation and regression, in the appearance of new, widespread poverty; in deep moral and ecological crises; and in the brutal loss of credibility of political institutions.

Added to this were the growing absence of a motivation to work, a pronounced decline in social engagement - a turning back toward private life and conformism in important sectors of the masses - which undeniably prolonged the life of the bureaucratic dictatorship. These tendencies were only partially and insufficiently compensated for by a rebirth of workers' self confidence confined to the level of the enterprise and by a rebirth of autonomous public opinion within small groups.

This crisis represents neither a crisis of capitalist overproduction, nor a crisis of socialism.

Capitalism presupposes that not only labour power, but also the large means of production must constitute commodities, which can be bought and sold on the market. It presupposes that money capital is the point of departure and the goal of reproduction. But none of this has characterized the economy of the ex-USSR.

Real socialism is inseparable from a high productivity of labour, and a satisfaction of the consumer needs of the masses. It presupposes the greatest democracy for the largest numbers of people, the free confrontation of ideas, the independence of mass organizations from parties and from the state, the exercise of power by the masses themselves and self-management. Socialism has never existed in any of these countries. Associating the word socialism with bureaucratic monstrosities - such as the Gulag; growing inequalities; generalized corruption; reinforcing women's confinement within the nuclear family; and stifling bureaucratic control of young people, science and literary and artistic creation - was not the least of Stalin's crimes.

This is a specific crisis of a post-capitalist transitional society, crushed by the weight of a privileged and parasitic bureaucracy which has usurped power from the workers. The crisis has been characterized by an increasingly explosive contradiction between the fragments and the potential of social progress, on the one hand, and the economic chaos, inequality, oppression and corruption resulting from bureaucratic dictatorship on the other.

To save its political power, the source of its privileges, the bureaucracy can undertake reforms. But, in spite of any initial success, the attempted reforms of Tito, Khrushchev, Mao and Deng all reached a dead end. Gorbachev's efforts suffered the same fate. But they had already made possible a deep social differentiation, including within the bureaucracy. We have thus seen in the USSR the emergence of political and social forces inclined towards capitalism as well as a reawakening of mass activity at the base of the workers' movement. This is unprecedented since the Stalinist counterrevolution.

The way in which the masses in Eastern Europe and the USSR reacted to the growing crisis changed gradually from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s. Revolutionary Marxists were very late in recognizing that change. The attitude of the masses affected the short- or medium-term possibility for an outcome favourable to socialism. Of course, one important factor in this was the continuing repression. Intellectuals and especially working-class dissidents were severely attacked and gradually broken. The repression wiped out the socialist potential that was present in Solidarnosc during 1980-81. But what was really new in the equation was the objective results of the system's growing crisis which started to manifest themselves during these years. The masses' living conditions began to deteriorate. They became more and more aware of the bankruptcy of bureaucratized state semi-planning and pseudo-planning, which they mistakenly identified with socialist planning, because of the bureaucracy's claim to represent "really existing socialism" - a claim that was, furthermore, endorsed by bourgeois propaganda.

In addition, the failure of the international working-class movement to rally in support of previous anti-bureaucratic struggles between 1953 and 1981 contributed to this process. When the Eastern European bureaucratic states finally crumbled the insurgent mass movement looked not to the world working class but to the international bourgeoisie, for both ideological and material sustenance.

As a result of these factors, the continuity between the East German uprising of 1953, the Polish workers mass upsurge of 1956, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the "Prague spring" of 1968-69 and the socialist self-management potential of the workers explosion in Poland of 1980-81, was broken. By the time the Stalinist (post-Stalinist) dictatorships collapsed, the East European masses no longer had any independent political class alternative that they could turn to. The initiative was left exclusively to the various factions of the bureaucracy, including its openly pro-capitalist tendencies, and the "liberals" - new middle and petty-bourgeois layers who favour the "free market" for reasons of private accumulation.

By crushing basic democratic freedoms and individual liberty, the bureaucratic regimes have given all bourgeois political institutions - falsely identified with "democracy" - a new value in the eyes of the masses. But even the first attempts at privatization and openings to international capital, the beginning of capitalist restoration, has meant harsh austerity policies. A full restoration of capitalism would represent a historical regression with catastrophic social consequences - adding tens of millions of unemployed and impoverished people to the present "new poor" in these countries. The more the new regimes push in that direction, the greater becomes the likelihood of fierce mass resistance, especially among workers and youth. We can expect generalized resistance against attempts to worsen the conditions of women, particularly attacks on abortion rights. Faced with such resistance, the supporters of all out economic liberalization, far from maintaining even the present forms of democracy, will be forced to resort more and more to new restrictions of democratic liberties, indeed to authoritarian repression if the balance of forces permits.

The generalization and consolidation of these rights requires institutionalized workers and popular power. In the absence of this type of power, given the magnitude which mass resistance can be expected to take, there will be a protracted period of chaotic instability in these countries, during which the conditions for a workers' victory might gradually mature.

Therefore, in the USSR and Eastern Europe it will take some time and experience in struggle before workers can reconquer their political class independence and the level of consciousness necessary for such a victory.

5. The transition to socialism excludes the rule of the market

Faced with a massive economic crisis in the USSR and Eastern Europe, significant sections of the working population - East and West - are today resigned to the idea that the domination of the market is a lesser evil than bureaucratic chaos. From that to extolling a "market socialism" is only a step, one that has been taken by nearly all the reformist and neo-reformist ideologues.

But the idea of "market socialism" is a contradiction in terms. In a truly socialist society, freely-associated producers will themselves determine what they produce, how they produce it and how they distribute it - at least in their main outlines. Democratic management of the economy, conscious and collective determination of what priorities to satisfy and the means to get there, is incompatible with the blind rule of the market and competition.

Before the communist society of abundance - that is the fulfilment of all rational human needs- comes into being, any economic system will always be constrained by a relative shortage of productive resources. This means that certain needs must be met at the expense of others. Those who control the social surplus product - ruling classes, or castes like the Soviet bureaucracy - have the power to decide, in the final analysis, the priorities in the use of those resources that are still relatively scarce.

In capitalist society, these decisions are taken by the big companies and the very rich, that is by the imperative needs of profit and accumulation of private capital. The "laws of the market" are refracted by these constraints and necessities. Luxury second homes are built while there are millions of homeless people even in the so-called rich

countries. There are 1.7 billion people without access to running water while there are hundreds of thousands of private swimming pools in California alone. Massive investment is made in producing less and less useful - sometimes dangerous - gadgets while even the most elementary needs of several billion human beings remain unsatisfied.

In the bureaucratically-dominated Soviet Union and similar economies, these priorities in the use of resources were imposed in a despotic and arbitrary manner, which led to enormous and growing waste.

In a socialized economy managed by the producers/consumers/ citizens themselves, however, these priorities will be democratically decided by the toiling masses. The priority needs thus determined will be the basis of the plan. Democratic socialist planning is indispensable for ensuring that these priorities are respected. It can prevent economic trends from imposing themselves "spontaneously" behind the backs of the workers, and ensure that they are consciously determined - particularly in questions of employment; the duration and intensity of work; growing equality; priorities in health, education, protection of the environment and culture. It is this relationship between planned, democratic self-management and the satisfaction of consumer needs which makes a real socialist economy superior to capitalism - even in its "welfare state" guise. This is linked with a combination of diverse forms of property, municipal and regional collective property for the large means of production and exchange, cooperative and private property for the smaller.

The associated producers will liberate an enormous potential of creative and inventive work processes, of careful and thrifty managers -when they see in practice that this can ensure freely available, high-quality goods and services. From this point the "enterprise spirit," in the rational sense of the term, which under capitalism and the rule of the market is the preserve of a small minority of private property owners (usually less than 10% of the active population in the most industrialized countries), will be extended to the vast majority of producers. Basing itself on the enormous potential of computer technology, further encouraged by the possibility of a radical reduction in the work week and an increasing socialization of domestic tasks, taking into account all ecological considerations, the self-managed, democratically-planned socialist economy will show itself to be more efficient, more rational and more humane than the most advanced capitalist economy.

The Yugoslav experience has tragically confirmed that "workers' self-management" -limited to one firm -and market economy are mutually exclusive in the long term. Workers could benefit from important prerogatives at a factory level, including the power to fire their manager. But as soon as the factory's future depends on its market performance, which in turn depends on a myriad of factors independent of the workers' will (including the initial technological level, the extent of the product's monopoly, the differentiated access to credit, the no less differentiated access to hard currency allowing the import of machines, raw materials and spare parts), these workers can find themselves penalized by the market regardless of their efforts. Their workplace may even be driven to bankruptcy. What will then remain of self-management, except the workers' "right" to fire themselves?

In the transition from capitalism to socialism, recourse to market mechanisms remains necessary and useful, especially in sectors where an insufficient objective socialization of work means that the basis has not yet been laid for collective ownership: handicraft industries, some distribution and service sectors (such as repairs), and so on. The market can serve to eliminate shortage by breaking monopolies that fail to take consumer needs sufficiently into account in agriculture, retail trade and certain services - on condition that private monopolies do not begin to substitute for state monopoly.

But this recourse to the market can only be positive in the framework of a conscious effort to gradually reduce such relations and to ensure the rule of a multi-party socialist democracy which leaves, in all spheres, power of decision in the hands of the masses. The use of a stable currency and the partial and provisional functioning of the market must therefore take place within a democratically planned economy - that is to say, a combination of political

decision-making which guarantees that the partial market mechanisms do not increase social inequality or undermine the system of social protection that assures every citizen the satisfaction of basic needs and does not worsen the conditions of women who are particularly vulnerable both as workers and as consumers. This assumes a strengthening of socialist democracy, of public control over all aspects of economic and social life.

Without real political control by the workers, even the partial strengthening of market mechanisms - far from going in the direction of openness and democratization - would reinforce bureaucratization and corruption in the state apparatus, the risk of political expropriation of the proletariat by privileged layers.

None of these problems can be resolved through pre-established schema or simplistic formulas. Revolutionary Marxists approach them in an open and undogmatic way, wanting to learn from practical experience and adjusting their positions over time according to that experience, constantly exchanging views with other progressive currents and with the most combative sections of the masses in these countries.

The construction of socialism is a long-term process, a genuine historical laboratory in which there is no predetermined path nor any infallible pope to guide history. Mistakes are inevitable.

The power of the masses to overcome mistakes through a broad socialist democracy, and the determination of revolutionaries to make sure that their practice conforms strictly with their principles, are the main guarantees that such errors will be rapidly corrected and will not hold back the march of progress.

6. Wage labour remains alienated labour

The bourgeoisie prides itself today, especially in the imperialist countries, on having successfully "integrated" the workers both as consumers and as citizens. One can question the degree to which this has actually happened, but the claim certainly has some basis in fact. The long suppression of democratic freedoms in the bureaucratically dominated countries, as well as their incapacity to satisfy the masses' needs for high quality consumer goods, lends additional support to bourgeois propaganda in this field.

However, in the light of experience over the last decades no one can claim that capitalism, even in its richest and most "enlightened" form, has been able to convince workers to accept their role as producers in bourgeois society. Wage labour is doomed to remain alienated labour, trapped by each capitalist firm's search for profits. Workers' needs remain subordinate to the bottom line. They remain constantly under threat of temporary or permanent unemployment, the fear and reality of income loss in the event of sickness, infirmity and old age.

Wage labour is inevitably linked to social inequality. Whether wages are low or high they are always spent in immediate or delayed consumption. They do not enable the workers to accumulate financial fortunes making it possible for them to live without having to work. This remains the privilege of the capitalist class.

There is also inequality in the fulfilment of consumer needs -especially housing, healthcare, education and culture. Social inequality under capitalism is also inequality of sickness and death.

But wage labour is above all alienating and alienated in the labour process itself. In order to subordinate labour to the needs of profit, capital must subject wage workers to constant control during the production process. It must try to control the use of their time on the job. Workers are slaves of the machine and the clock, more and more in the office and in service industries as well as in the industrial plant.

Even when new forms of work organization in industry, like the so-called “quality circles” and small teamwork, are substituted for the conveyor belt system - and this has only happened up to now in a minority of workplaces - workers do not become masters of the production process. They still do not determine what is made, how it is made, or by whom it will be consumed. Whether this is accomplished flagrantly or subtly, they remain cogs in the machine, bossed over by a hierarchy of petty and high-ranking masters.

Under wage labour, output and profits remain goals in and of themselves. Productive activity is not a means to develop the whole creative potential of all working women and men. It remains essentially a way to acquire money.

It is not surprising, under these conditions, that the great majority of wage earners, having become alienated human beings as a result of their main daily activity, also remain frustrated and alienated as consumers. Mass culture more and more takes the form of passively absorbing images (such as from television) rather than actively engaging the mind through reading or genuine social interaction. It is not at all remarkable that people increasingly look for a way out of their daily frustration through alcohol and drugs, trying to drown fatigue, monotony, solitude and the lack of hope.

No society producing such effects can be a free society. Human freedom can only be based upon an abolition of wage labour.

The universal alienation of men and women especially includes their separation from the natural environment. Living in an increasingly artificial milieu removed from nature, they face growing barriers to understanding the way humanity and nature interact.

It also includes an alienation of human nature itself, a negation of the human being as a social and political animal prioritizing richer and richer relations with other human beings, and no longer subordinating this to the irrational accumulation of less and less useful material goods.

The disalienation of work is neither a pious wish nor a fantasy. It is the goal of the real movement of opposition to all forms of exploitation and oppression which develops in the very heart of the existing society, even if in a fragmentary manner.

Revolutionary socialists do not approach this real movement with pre-established criteria. We do not judge it according to whether or not it can be co-opted by the established order, is gradualist or non-gradualist. Given its emancipatory nature it has the potential to strike at the very heart of bourgeois society (active strikes). The task of revolutionary socialists is to realize this potential and to stimulate it through our support and through practical political and theoretical initiatives. We try above all to progressively unify this movement until it attacks the bourgeois disorder in its entirety.

II. Obstacles to be overcome

7. Socialism's crisis of credibility

The exploited and the oppressed continue to put up resistance against the evils of imperialism, capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. But for the moment, that resistance is combined with a generalized crisis of credibility regarding the possibility of a socialist solution. This has been developing for at least a decade.

This crisis has its roots in a new awareness on the part of both the broad masses and their most politically advanced vanguard layers that there is a complete practical and political bankruptcy of both Stalinism (post-Stalinism) and social-democratic reformism, as well as of populist nationalism in the "third world." Therefore, no model for overall social reorganization is considered realizable by masses of people today. This fact not only eliminates the reference to the Russian October revolution in mass consciousness, but even the hope, very widespread since before World War I, that socialism, i.e. a classless society fundamentally different from capitalism, could be realized through an accumulation of electoral successes and reforms.

Under these conditions, many mass struggles are tending to become fragmented. Workers often participate in them as private citizens or isolated individuals, not feeling a connection to the workers' movement.

Socialism's crisis of credibility is, however, not absolute. It has a stronger grip in countries with a traditional mass labour movement - where the burden of past disappointments, disenchantments and defeats weighs heavily. Places like Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, are characterized by a relatively young and fresh proletariat, unburdened by such concerns. The crisis likewise tends to be less pronounced in certain South Asian countries.

Women have never identified as strongly with the traditional workers' organizations because these organizations have for decades tended to ignore women's specific concerns and a predominantly male leadership has almost universally expressed patronizing and dismissive attitudes. Therefore, women involved in struggle today are also less likely to be discouraged by this crisis of credibility.

In addition, older generations are more likely to suffer from it than younger ones.

But, whatever its weight may be, the negative effects of the crisis are noticeable everywhere. To understand the reasons for this, two essential factors must be appreciated.

For one thing, broad masses became aware for the first time during the eighties of the recent grave crimes of Stalinism (the repression of Polish Solidarnosc; Pol Pot's crimes in Kampuchea; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the repression of Tienanmen Square, etc). The same decade saw the most shameful capitulation by Social Democracy in the face of the employers' austerity offensive (France, the Spanish state, Portugal, Holland, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Austria, New Zealand, Sweden, Greece, Finland, etc.)

Under these circumstances, the attachment of the working class to its traditional mass parties -already more tenuous than in the past-took a qualitative turn. Less and less do such parties embody the hope of a breakthrough towards socialism. They are now viewed as essentially a "lesser evil" choice, subject to wider and wider fluctuations in the votes they receive.

In addition, the past decade has not seen generalized mass struggles with an anti-capitalist potential. This is quite different from what happened in the sixties and seventies. There has not been a single victorious revolution since Nicaragua in 1979. There has not been a single revolutionary explosion in an imperialist country since the Portuguese revolution, nor a prolonged general strike. There has not been a generalized workers' upsurge in the East against bureaucratic dictatorship since the Solidarnosc explosion in Poland in 1980-81.

The scepticism of the masses with regard to an alternative social model is thus fed not only by the obvious political bankruptcy of the traditional Stalinist, post-Stalinist and Social-democratic apparatuses. It also reflects an instinctive awareness of a deterioration in the relationship of class forces on a global scale, at the expense of the proletariat. This is undeniable - although it is less severe and universal than various propagandists make it appear - and it puts a brake on any overall political commitment by broad masses of workers and other oppressed peoples.

8. Consumer society and privatization

The long postwar "boom" has been accompanied in most imperialist countries, and to a lesser degree in some semi-industrialized dependent countries, by an increased capacity of the "middle classes" and the upper strata of wage earners to buy durable consumer goods. In fact, the massive sales of houses, household equipment and automobiles - very often on credit - fuelled that "boom" to a large extent. The resulting transformation of consumer habits takes the form of an increased turning inward, or "privatization" of individuals.

One should not radically condemn this transformation of consumer habits. Its partially liberating dynamic - especially for women, yesterday condemned to back-breaking housework - is undeniable. It is profoundly reactionary to assume that access to a minimum of comfort implies "becoming bourgeois." No serious socialist ever preached deliberate self-denial. Women and men need not be doomed to produce their livelihood by the sweat of their brows.

The echoing of such superstition by certain radical ecologists is likewise unjustified. It is false to assert that there is not enough in the world to assure all its inhabitants a minimum of comfort. The earth can feed the world population foreseen for the beginning of the 21st century. Such goals can be reached if existing resources are rationally used; if waste and the output of harmful goods, weapons to start with, are radically suppressed; if enough resources are devoted to discover new environmentally friendly sources of energy, technologies and products to substitute for the present system of waste and pollution. It is simply inhuman to defend economic choices which deliberately sacrifice present human needs and even survival on the altar of some alleged priority of future generations - which nobody can precisely define today.

But the positive effects of increased consumption among some layers of the working population also have their negative counterparts which erect new obstacles on the road to emancipation.

Capital's control over the output of durable consumer goods leads to growing waste and irrational use of resources. Individual consumption is encouraged at the expense of collective consumption (social services). The quality of products is systematically undermined in order to make rapid replacements necessary. Artificial "needs" are stimulated. Frenetic overconsumption of "new products" is promoted through advertising and market techniques, exploding the myth of "consumer freedom." Late capitalism breeds a permanent atmosphere of unsatisfied needs, which feeds a permanent generalized frustration.

In addition, growing privatization in the sphere of consumption more and more deprives individuals of the elementary fabric of human relations. The rule of crude egoism, of "every person for her or himself," which is already a source of unbalance, crisis and growing irrationality in the realms of out-put, of income and of work, now extends its havoc to the spheres of consumption and leisure.

This privatization plunges people into an even deeper solitude, cynicism and psychological depression by reducing their capacity for mutual communication, affection and reciprocal sympathy - things which become possible when life revolves around a collective unit, be it large or small. This creates new and serious obstacles on the road of acquiring socialist consciousness, of engaging in the fight for a qualitatively superior social order. These obstacles are not insurmountable, but they are real. Concrete strategies to overcome them must be worked out.

In the "third world" countries, the striving for a "consumer society" is above all manifested in the urban centres. This is less a result of a growth in income - except for a very small minority of the population - as it is of the overwhelming image of "the consumer model" of the metropolitan countries disseminated through the media (radio and TV). In rural areas, this tendency is much less pronounced.

9. The decline of the “countercultures”

The tendency towards privatization and the connected, generalized decline in collective modes of thought and action among sectors of the toiling masses has had its severest result in a decline of working class “counterculture” in the more industrialized countries.

The ruling ideology in any class society is the ideology of its ruling class. It would be an illusion to hope that the proletariat, deprived of sufficient economic power, could conquer ideological hegemony before overthrowing bourgeois society. But stating that bourgeois ideology is the ruling ideology in bourgeois society does not imply that it is the only one. At least three ideologies coexist there: that of the bourgeoisie, that of precapitalist classes, and a working class “counterculture” which is at least partially inspired by socialist values.

The extent of this counterculture varies from period to period and from country to country (in certain countries even from region to region). But during the epoch of a growing mass labour movement, from the 1890s until the 1950s, it was, in its own way, hegemonic among workers in numerous imperialist countries and in several semi-industrialized ones.

This “counterculture” was based upon the values of solidarity and cooperation. It influenced, inspired, gave hope and perspective to tens of millions of human beings. To a large extent it determined their daily behaviour.

It was institutionalized in a network of organizations encompassing children, youth, adults, retired people, throughout most of their lives: trade unions, political parties, People’s Houses, pioneers (children), youth and women’s organizations, societies for mutual protection against illness and disability, sport organizations, theatrical societies, choirs and musical ensembles, chess clubs and other leisure groups. The mass trade unions were the most important of these organizations. Together they encouraged at least a beginning of political consciousness and of electoral choices, even if they didn’t determine these things directly.

With privatization resulting in a “consumer society”, this network began to come apart. The mass trade unions were less undermined than other organizations, but they too have been weakened. All the other networks suffered a decline, some a disastrous one.

What happened to the workers’ press is the most dramatic expression of this process. In the past, there were more than 100 daily papers published by the labour movement around the world, with a press run in the millions. Today, those social-democratic parties which are still powerful on the electoral front, like the German SPD, the British Labour Party, the Austrian SP, not to mention the French and Spanish social-democrats, all of whom score around 40% of the popular vote, do not have a single daily paper left.

This decline of the working class “counter-culture” has certainly not been accompanied by an immediate parallel decline of votes for the reformist workers parties. It is even consistent with occasional increases in votes by workers for these parties as “lesser evils”. But the decline means that sectors of the working class are more susceptible to “solutions” inspired by narrow self-interest, and thus to reactionary demagoguery. The expanding influence of racist and xenophobic ideologies and of far-right formations in certain minority sectors of the proletariat demonstrate this dangerous trend. And this is all the more true since the traditional workers’ parties make scandalous concessions for purely electoral purposes.

In the countries of the “third world” the cohesion at the heart of the village community, even where it is undermined by the caste system as in India or by a growing social differentiation, has also constituted a serious counterweight, blocking a total domination by prevailing bourgeois ideology and values.

In the former USSR and Eastern Europe, the decline of a workers' culture and of the value system properly associated with it has very specific causes: all of the monstrous discredit that the Stalinist and post-Stalinist dictatorships have brought down on communism, on Marxism, on socialism, which have been identified wrongly but effectively with the misdeeds of the dictatorship. The result has been a profound ideological/moral crisis which in its early stages undermines, in these countries also, the inclination of the masses to counterpose themselves to the ideological values of the bourgeoisie.

Reactionary and retrograde ideological tendencies invade the vacuum thus created: superstition; religious fundamentalism; chauvinism; the cult of violence; the open rejection of universal human rights; opposition to equality of the sexes and contempt for women; xenophobia and especially racism - contempt, if not hatred with regard to a substantial part of the inhabitants of the planet.

To say that the decline of countercultures based on cooperation and collective solidarity has this negative character is not the same as rejecting the right of individuals to develop their own personality. "Collectivism" and "individualism" need not be counterposed to each other. What can be counterposed is a socioeconomic collectivism that creates the indispensable material framework for the emancipation of all, and bourgeois individualism which only assures the material possibility of individual freedom for a small minority of society.

10. The new stage in the crisis of working-class leadership and its objective roots

The crisis of humanity is, in the final analysis, a crisis of working-class leadership and class consciousness. The Fourth International proclaimed this truth at its founding conference, in the "Transitional Programme." Nothing has happened since 1938 to refute that historical diagnosis; quite the contrary.

But socialism's crisis of credibility, already lasting for a decade, adds a new dimension to this crisis of leadership and consciousness. The weakening control of the traditional apparatuses on the working class, especially in factories and offices, in the trade unions, in the "new social movements" - something which is incontestable - has not, for the most part led to the emergence of new mass parties on the left, nor to a serious strengthening of revolutionary organizations.

The masses are generally about any broad social project distinct from "welfare state" capitalism. This tends to fragment mass protest and revolt. And that, in turn, reduces their duration and facilitates the process of mass sentiment being recaptured electorally by the traditional apparatuses.

For the same reason, the centralization of experiences and the accumulation of cadres - even the maintenance of an average level of militancy - become more difficult. On a world scale, tens if not hundreds of thousands of active and exemplary militants - cadres and leaders of workers', feminist and antimilitarist struggles, movements of solidarity with "third world" peoples - have broken in recent years with the Communist and social-democratic parties. But in the present context, most are sceptical about the possibility of creating something better. They retire to local or occasional activities, or to private life.

This represents a serious loss from the point of view of rapidly reconstructing strong revolutionary organizations. It also represents a serious loss for the class as a whole, as these militants and cadres embody a treasure house of experience in struggle.

The objective and subjective causes of this trend must be understood.

Since the 1970s, there has been a gradual change in traditional conditions of employment, of labour organization, and of class struggle - especially in the older industrialized countries. A massive shift from manufacturing and mining jobs to those in the service sector has taken place. This included a partial reduction of the numbers employed in the largest factories. Labour organization based on the assembly line, which made possible embryonic forms of workers' control over the work rhythm is less and less the norm.

An inherent part of the transformation of the capitalist economy has been a progressive feminization of waged work. The growing possibilities for women to obtain an independent income through such means is certainly a step toward their emancipation. At the same time, however, in most cases this is accompanied by a worsening of their material conditions (the double workday) in view of the difficulty they have involving men in domestic tasks and the absence of a satisfactory network of social institutions to take responsibility for a good part of traditional housework. It increasingly subjects them to the constraints of alienated and mechanized work which is now more and more becoming a reality in the service sector where women are predominantly employed.

The situation is, moreover, marked by a pronounced lag in the feminization of the trade unions. That makes it all the more difficult for women to get paid the true value of their labour, or even to organize a fight around this question.

Simultaneously, there has been an increased bureaucratization of traditional workers' organizations, and their bureaucracies are more and more tied to state and parastate bodies. Some of these governmental institutions have even become the main prop of traditional workers' parties, at the expense of their ties to the workers themselves.

Flowing from this is a growing crisis of identification by important sections of the working class with the organized workers' movement, as well as a growing internal crisis of that movement itself.

Workers were suddenly confronted with new conditions. They were not able to react spontaneously in a massive way. They were thus thrown on the defensive by the generalized employer and government attack, to which their traditional organizations largely capitulated. This has led to a widespread disorientation.

While the low point of this retreat seems to be behind us, time and at least a little success in defensive struggles will be necessary before these subjective effects can be overcome.

Despite this, the response of workers to the capitalist offensive already begins to adopt new radical forms: active strikes; broadening of strike actions in order to involve consumers; increasingly "subversive" attitudes towards the state.

Gradually, the workers' movement will reestablish itself on a new foundation, in all probability based on a growing convergence by more combative sectors of the mass movement, fighters for women's rights, the most visionary layers of the youth, and groups of workers who are today outside organized labour - combined with radicalizing sectors of the new social movements.

The essential task for revolutionary socialists is not only to participate in this radicalization, to stimulate and help organize it, but also to overcome its fragmentation and its still occasional character, to generalize it, and to help the workers' fight back rediscover the road to and the values of generalized solidarity, to deepen it by prioritizing the defence of the most vulnerable sectors of the class: women, immigrant workers, oppressed nationalities, youth, unemployed, old-age pensioners, the sick and disabled. The necessity is posed of reorganizing permanent structures and new networks of struggle.

The undeniable rise in the living standards of many workers during the postwar "boom" has nourished conservative reflexes among some - in both the positive and negative sense of that term. They tend to give priority to a defence of

their own economic and social position even if this is sometimes interpreted to mean making alliances with their own ruling class rather than with other oppressed and exploited peoples. Again, it will take time to overcome this obstacle to genuine solidarity which, in the end, is even an obstacle to the defence of those past gains it is intended to preserve. The attack on the living standard of these layers, which is inevitable if the present depression continues, is one factor which will force working people to confront this dilemma.

Finally, after 1975 the possibility existed for many "veterans" of struggles in 1968 and later years to successfully find a place for themselves in bourgeois society (a possibility which is destined to decline in coming years). This meant a loss of numerous precious activists who could be expected to participate in and support working class struggles, and a loss of militants and cadres for revolutionary organizations.

But the countervailing trends and forces are also important. In the long run they favour a positive solution to the crises of revolutionary leadership and of proletarian consciousness.

Except during exceptional, revolutionary moments in history revolutionaries are always in a minority among wage earners. The proletariat has always been strongly influenced by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies, as a result of the very contradictory reality of bourgeois society itself.

In the difficult but exalting uphill historical struggle of reformulating the socialist perspective and making it credible again in the eyes of a large vanguard and broader mass movement, revolutionary socialists start today with some advantages which their grandparents did not enjoy. The hold of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses on the class is weaker than in the twenties, thirties and forties. The barbaric, inhuman character of imperialism/capitalism and its so-called "values" is much more widely recognized. Broad sectors of the youth tend to question them in a radical way.

It is up to socialists to take advantage of this new situation, to conduct a struggle that is vital for the future of the human species: to transform the proletariat once more into the battering ram of the fight against capitalism. A victory in this is not at all assured. It will require much hard work, imagination, and sacrifice. It will be long and difficult. But it is both possible and necessary to undertake the struggle.

III. The goal: total emancipation

11. The overall purpose

A radical solution of the world crisis involves challenging the generalized market economy, private ownership of the means of production and exchange, production for profit, the sovereignty of nation states and the bureaucratic grip over systems of social protection. All of this implies a democratic, pluralist, self-managing world socialist federation.

The real potential inherent in human intelligence and generosity can blossom only under a genuinely socialist and democratic regime - where science and technology are at the service of human needs, and submitted to open and critical public control. All the benefits of culture and higher education will be completely and freely available to everyone for the first time. This will result in an explosion of cultural creativity, the liberation of a gigantic reserve of still-unexplored intellectual energy. Scientific development will contribute to liberating women and men from the burden of fragmented, repetitive, mechanical, monotonous work which is physically and mentally destructive. But this demands that technology be used creatively, which is inconceivable without accountable, collective behaviour of freely-associated producers and without generalized planned self-management.

A different motivation for economic activity can gradually come about based on the interests of all in a continuous reduction of mechanical, repetitive work, experienced by most simply as forced labour. The realization of a new citizenship, for the first time establishing society's control over a state and administrative apparatus destined to wither away, requires a radical reduction in working hours. A four-hour day would effectively eliminate the need for a professional bureaucracy, allowing workers sufficient time to truly manage society themselves. Without this, self-management remains largely a fiction. Implementing it will have a powerful impact on the entire world. This pilot measure of the socialist revolution - at least in industrialized countries - is not a utopia. There is a solid objective basis for it.

Even conservative sources estimate that at least 50% of the total productive potential is unused or used for destructive and harmful ends (arms), or simply wasted. With the rational and productive use of already existing resources, respecting ecological needs, it would be possible to simultaneously reduce the hours of work, move towards the abolition of misery and underdevelopment in the "third world," while also improving the quality of life and eliminating poverty in all countries.

Today, a significant minority already questions the so-called "work ethic," along with the goal of accumulating more and more material goods, as the supreme purpose of human existence. For millions, to work less in order to have a more purposeful life is becoming a higher priority than simply pursuing a less and less meaningful increase in consumption. For millions of women and men who have become conscious of the threatening ecological catastrophe, the quality of life, protection of the environment, a respect for the natural world of which we are an integral part, the conquest of human dignity, have become higher priorities than the unlimited accumulation of material things.

The overall goal which we pursue is the increased emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence which today bear down on us. Socialism will be self-administrative, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, antimilitarist, internationalist, and it will abolish wage labour - or it will never exist.

This implies most importantly that all of the requirements of the broadest socialist democracy be realized, that the election and replacement of governments depend on a genuinely free choice - with a choice, therefore, between diverse possibilities -based on universal suffrage.

12. Only the proletariat can construct a society without classes

Men and women wage workers, forced to sell their labour power, represent the only social force capable of finally paralyzing and overthrowing capitalist society on a world scale and successfully building a new society based on the cooperation and solidarity of the vast majority of the population. This is why the working class, thus defined, is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed in the struggle for socialism.

It is true that in the older industrialized countries the percentage working in large manufacturing and mining enterprises has declined, compared to those working in the so-called service sectors. But one should not exaggerate the weight or consequences of this trend, nor its long term subjective effects upon the working class and the labour movement.

If traditional concentrations of workers in the automobile, steel, mining and the metal industries have become partially weakened, they have by no means disappeared. If employment has strongly increased in the so-called service sectors, many of these really represent branches of industry - such as telecommunications and transport. New important massive concentrations of wage-earners now exist in these areas. The industrialization and mechanization of labour in these jobs makes such workers more militant than in the past. And bank workers, telecommunication

workers, workers in the energy sector, can today paralyze the capitalist economy and bourgeois society more efficiently than the industrial workers of yesterday.

More numerous and capable than ever before, the world proletariat now comprises more than one billion human beings. The dominant tendency everywhere in the world is for wage work to expand, not contract, including in the most developed countries. Of course, this expansion is not the same in every country, region, industrial sector or branch. Growth in one area is often accompanied by a relative decline in another. But the overall result of these movements is in the direction of an expansion, not a decline.

For the proletariat to gradually acquire the experience and the consciousness necessary to conduct - at the decisive moment of prerevolutionary and revolutionary crisis - an uncompromising struggle against capitalism, propaganda and agitation for transitional demands, and whenever possible a beginning effort to implement these demands, remains necessary now more than ever. Such demands include the fight for wages which go up automatically as prices rise (the "escalator clause"), workers control over production, the opening of the books of large companies, the expropriation of banks and the "commanding heights" of the economy, the suppression of the military budget, as well as an expropriating tax on the largest private fortunes and estates. Likewise, the policy of the united front - especially against attacks on human rights, and against the rise of the extreme right, etc., - remains absolutely necessary.

The specific transitional demands should always start from the real day-to-day concerns of masses of people, to think through what demands can be raised at any particular point in the struggle, in order that they might realize for themselves the need to fight for the overthrow of capitalism and the conquest of power.

The proletariat has been heterogeneous since the origins of wage labour. The divisions within the working class result from a segmentation of the labour market. Along with the conscious policies of the bourgeoisie and its capitalist states there is also a basic reality of uneven and combined development of productive forces. These factors maintain and reinforce the divisions within the working class. They are expressed from one end of the planet to another in wage differentials between old and young, men and women, workers and unemployed, citizens and immigrants, skilled and unskilled, manual workers and intellectuals, workers of different ethnic backgrounds, more and less industrialized countries.

The present crisis leads to deepening differences and inequalities. The explosion of youth unemployment in a number of countries produces a layer that has never worked. This combines with immigrant workers and women who have been pushed out of the labour market, along with similar victims, to create a sub-proletarian layer that is marginalized and finds itself outside the framework of traditional proletarian solidarity. The beginnings of a dual society in the industrialized countries with an unprotected part of the proletariat reduced to unstable conditions of existence similar to those of 19th century cities or the "third world" today correspond to a deliberate plan by capital to weaken the labour movement once and for all. Opposing this with the demand for full employment through a radical cut in working hours-with no loss of pay or speed up of production - is a central task of the workers' movement.

On the other hand, the internationalization of productive forces, the advent of multinational corporations and the third technological revolution objectively favours a gradual convergence of workers' demands, connections, struggles, and organizations of all countries.

The proletariat includes the mass of agricultural workers, of whom there are several hundred million in the world. Their social weight has declined relative to the total active population, but their absolute numbers are rising in countries like India, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt, Pakistan and Mexico. There is a fuzzy boundary which both separates and unites the proletariat in the cities and the semi-proletariat in the countryside (independent peasants who do not have enough land to earn their living year-round, and are forced to take on temporary paid work), including poor

peasants. The potential for mobilization among these social layers has already been demonstrated in the growing movement of land occupations, putting land to productive use. This will be an integral part of the socialist revolution in these countries.

The same goes for the vast mass of marginalized semi-proletarians in the cities of the "third world," who represent one of the most explosive forces in conflict with the social order. They can serve as a base to be manoeuvred by populist, reactionary forces. But, even though up to now workers' organizations and the proletariat as a class have seldom acted as allies of these disinherited -defending their material and social interests, promoting their own self-organization - the fight for "urban reform" can become one of the driving forces of the permanent revolution in the under-industrialized countries, alongside the fight for agrarian reform.

In a number of key capitalist countries - notably the USA, India, Mexico, Argentina, Egypt and Iran - the proletariat has not yet won its political class independence. Overwhelmingly, it continues to be represented politically by populist, if not traditional bourgeois forces. In these countries, the struggle to conquer this political independence remains a primary task.

13. The Proletariat, its allies, and the "new social movements"

The working peasantry in the "third world" countries, despite its gradual decline, continues to number more than one billion human beings. It is the most important ally of the proletariat in the struggle against capitalist rule. Together with a part of the marginalized population of the cities and a fraction of the urban petty bourgeoisie, it can be mobilized for anti-imperialist objectives. It is an integral part of, if not the main actor in, the emancipation of these countries.

During the past few decades social movements have developed in many countries around issues such as women's rights, ecology, peace, antiracism and gay and lesbian liberation, on the margin of, and sometimes in contradiction with, the workers' movement. They express a deeper and broader awareness of the multiple facets of oppression under capitalism and in bureaucratic societies. They have involved large sectors in struggle, especially young people.

The working class and the organized workers' movement needs to commit itself fully to these struggles. Since it has not done so up to now, these movements have developed autonomously for the most part, and the responsibility for this lack of connection lies above all with the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement - though also, to some degree, on the weakness of the revolutionary left and the backwardness of its approach to these questions.

Actively participating in these movements and conscious of their anticapitalist potential, we fight for a strategic alliance with workers' struggles and with the workers' movement. At the same time we respect the legitimate autonomy of these social movements which cannot simply be subsumed within the workers' movement as such.

In the imperialist heartlands, as in "third world" countries and in the Eastern countries, the proletariat - alongside the poor peasantry - is the force with the power not only to overthrow the existing order but to lay the basis for a new society based on freedom and human solidarity. However, while the bourgeoisie is even better organized internationally than it was in the last century, the working class is less so. It is necessary to overcome this crisis of political leadership through the development of new generations of militants, the assimilation of lessons from the past, the accumulation of new partial victories that can help the masses to regain confidence in themselves, the reestablishment of dialogue - interrupted for too long- between workers in the capitalist countries and those in the bureaucratized societies, and a thoroughgoing reorganization of the mass movement and its most advanced layers.

14. The struggle against women's oppression

The feminist movement is a response to the oldest oppression known by humanity. It defends the interests of more than half the human race and is an essential dimension of all struggles for human liberation.

Women make up 53% of the world's population and, counting both wage and domestic work, put in the majority of working hours realized in the world. But when it is remunerated, women's work is very largely undervalued in comparison to men's. Women are generally excluded from positions of power and decision-making responsibility. In most societies they are kept in a subordinate position and are often not even able to make basic choices about their own lives.

The responsibility for the care and upbringing of the next generation falls on women's shoulders. They are called on to do this even without the necessary economic and practical means, and most of the time without any substantial support from men. This situation puts women in a very vulnerable economic and social position, where they suffer degradation, health hazards, violence and sexual abuse.

Although the situation of women varies from country to country - and although there has been significant progress in terms of contraception and labour rights combined with a higher level of remunerated employment in most advanced countries - it is still true to say that women everywhere are victims of economic super-exploitation and political subjugation. They are the first to be hit by all sorts of disasters: droughts, poverty, war, economic austerity, depression and unemployment. Women are the most vulnerable section of the toiling masses. Thus, women and children make up 85% of the tens of millions of refugees in the world.

The fight against women's oppression is, therefore, a fundamental part of the overall struggle for social liberation. It is not simply a question of democratic demands or civil rights - important as these things are. Ending women's oppression is an essential part of any successful struggle for a better society. This includes the absolute right for women to control their own bodies, the right to abortion and contraception on demand and the right to adequate economic and social support in the bearing and rearing of children, full equality at work and in job training, sexual freedom, freedom from sexual and sexist abuse and violence, and an end to domestic servitude.

We give unqualified support to the struggle and the self-organization of women to end their subordination. We unreservedly recognize the right of women to decide their own fate. This battle is an integral part of the struggle for socialism: There can be no genuine women's liberation without socialism - that is, without the abolition of both capitalist and patriarchal private property. And there can also be no socialism without women's liberation. While half of humanity is oppressing the other half, neither will be free. As part of our commitment to this two-sided task, revolutionary socialists, men and women, must fight for the feminization of all the bodies which run society, including those of the workers' movement and their own political organizations.

15. The fight for gay and lesbian rights

In each sector of the world lesbians and gay men have organized autonomously in defence of their rights, against state and street violence, ideological repression and heterosexist attitudes and practices that permeate all of society. Often taking the form of struggles for democratic rights, the dynamic of lesbian and gay liberation struggles can strike further than simple legal equality for sexual minorities. It is a challenge to one of the most deep-seated prejudices that exists today and therefore contributes to the fight against all kinds of prejudices and divisions amongst working people. It is also a challenge to the patriarchal family and the imposed sexual division of labour that are pillars of women's oppression and a mainstay of social control in both the advanced and dependent capitalist countries as well as in the bureaucratic societies.

Socialism must have, as a clear and forthright goal, the liberation of all human beings from the sexual repression that

distorts their individual development. Revolutionary socialists therefore encourage, and participate in, the struggles of lesbians and gays and should support their demand for complete legal protection against any discrimination based on sexual orientation.

16. Without socialism there can be no effective struggle to save the environment

Marx and Engels perceived the destructive tendency of capitalist production in relation to nature. Toward the end of his life, Engels developed a clear vision of the high price humanity was in danger of paying for its mechanical domination over natural forces. But these anticipations of an ecological consciousness were scarcely developed by the organized workers' movement and were also ignored by Marxist theorists after Engels. On the contrary, the workers' movement, including its revolutionary wing, allowed itself to be pulled along by a conception of socialism that did not include ecological costs in its economic model.

Today's socialists, therefore, owe a great deal to today's ecologists, including the "Greens", who have resurrected and expanded on the ecological consciousness of 19th century socialists. The correction of this aspect of socialist doctrine is a task of self-criticism, and an indispensable responsibility.

But it is also indispensable to note the gradualist and neo-reformist origins of the green parties, which proceed like their social democratic counterparts, or like the Stalinist and post-Stalinist Communist Parties in the imperialist countries. They rely on a philosophy of "realpolitik" and participation in the daily administration of the bourgeois state and capitalist economy. This makes it harder and harder for them to remain faithful to their initial ecological creed. It also renders them incapable of understanding that no struggle to wipe out all of the menaces which threaten our natural environment is possible without overturning capitalist rule.

It is clear that the main obstacle to resolving such problems is not a lack of scientific knowledge, but the fact that pollution continues to be more profitable than ecologically sound alternatives. In addition, imperialism's role - keeping "third world" peoples in misery, therefore in need of immediate solutions to basic problems of survival and unable to take future generations into account - helps create such problems as destruction of rain forests, poaching of endangered species, and agricultural/horticultural practices which contribute to desertification.

In a society founded on the search for profit and the pursuit of private riches, dominated by competition, egoism, and short-term economic success, resources are employed without regard to the long-term consequences and, therefore, without regard to their consequences for the environment. There will always be those entrepreneurs who will evade any legal restrictions inspired by ecological concerns in order to accumulate private profit.

All legislation which tries to reduce the ecological cost of current production in the name of "making the polluters pay" cannot have any more than a partial effect. In cases where "the polluters" are the most powerful corporations, they will transfer most of the burden of these costs back to the consumer.

An effective struggle against pollution, a systematic defence of the environment, a consistent search for renewable resources, a strict economy in the employment of non-renewable resources would therefore require that decisions concerning investment and choices about production techniques be taken out of the hands of private corporations and transferred to a social collective which can decide them democratically. It requires also that such private interests have no power to interfere with these choices and priorities. This, then, requires the creation of a society without classes.

A real, democratic, socialist regime will have to concern itself with ecological questions, and not merely with the suppression of private property in the commanding heights of the economy. Still less can it be a

bureaucratically-dominated post-capitalist society. The experience in the ex-USSR and similar countries demonstrates the tragic manner in which bureaucratic pretentiousness, arbitrariness, and irresponsibility, can create ecological catastrophes at least equal to those caused by capitalism.

The demographic explosion in the "third world" is considered by some as one of the principle causes of the threats that bear down on the environment. This reasoning, based on hasty extrapolations, is more than dubious.

In reality, the demographic explosion is neither permanent, nor due to some ethnic-racial necessity or cultural inevitability. It is a product of misery, and of the absence of a suitable infrastructure for social protection. Children are used to replace that infrastructure.

It is even a product of the oppression of women, of pregnancies that are imposed on them, of their illiteracy, of their insufficient education about family planning, of their inability to gain access to contraceptives. The fundamentalist wing of the churches, above all the Vatican, carry a grave responsibility in this regard.

There will not be rational control over demographic growth without socialism and without a decisive advance toward the liberation of women.

17. The struggle against national oppression

The national question remains one of the most explosive in the world. In the "third world" some countries (Puerto Rico, Antilles, Kanaky ...) remain colonies. But even for the rest, mere "decolonization" has not led to real national sovereignty. Through mechanisms ranging from direct politico-military domination to financial, technological and cultural dependence, they remain under the thumb of imperialism. In fact, the dependence of these countries is worsening as a result of the debt and measures of privatization/denationalization, especially those imposed by the IMF.

Under the pretext of fighting against drug trafficking, imperialism is redeploying its direct military presence in Latin America, a phenomenon that is likely to be extended to other regions of the world. The control of television and radio communication by the multinationals and the imperialist states - including the production of programs and their diffusion by satellite - is a growing method of cultural manipulation. The creation in many parts of the "third world" of purely artificial states and the encouragement within them of ruling and nationalist elites set up by imperialism, leads to the division of nationalities between several different countries and numerous oppressed national and ethnic minorities.

Even in the imperialist heartlands where the process of forming nation states began in the 18th century, oppressed national minorities exist (Black people, Latinos and others in the United States, the peoples of Quebec and Ireland, the oppressed peoples in the Spanish state ...). In many such cases this oppression has fueled powerful mass national liberation movements. All attempts to resolve these problems through a combination of brutal repression and limited political reforms have come up against the resistance of the peoples concerned. The idea, now current, according to which such questions can be resolved in the framework of rejigging the European Community is an illusion. On the contrary, the economic, social and territorial imbalances provoked by the Single European Act are likely to create a resurgence of unresolved or badly solved national demands.

In the USSR and Yugoslavia in particular, the crisis of the bureaucratic regime which developed in the 1980s has also been expressed through an explosion of national demands and mass movements. This clearly demonstrates the incompatibility between real national democratic rights and a bureaucratic and police dictatorship using national chauvinism as an integral part of its ideological arsenal. The continuing forms of national oppression in these

countries are extremely varied. The masses' antibureaucratic aspirations have often found a general political expression through nationalist demands, including linguistic, cultural, economic, ecological aspirations and the demand for national sovereignty and/or independence.

Concrete political solutions to the national question cannot be defined in a general way, but only case by case, starting from revolutionary democratic principles. Revolutionary Marxists are above all internationalists. We always defend the common interests of workers of all nationalities, without subordinating them to particular national or parochial interests. We fight against all forms of racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, hatred and ethnic contempt and discrimination, repression, and all violence in regard to any national "racial" or ethnic group, whatever their objective roots or subjective motivation.

But the starting point of all real internationalist policies must be a radical distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed, whose struggles we solidarize with unconditionally, and the nationalism of the oppressors, which we oppose irreconcilably. This means the unconditional defence of the right to self-determination of oppressed nations - that is, their right to independence or to organize themselves in a sovereign way either in union or as part of a confederation with other nations, freely consented to and freely reversible in all cases. To this end the workers in the dominant nation must vigorously support the struggle of the oppressed nation, not only to strengthen the fight for basic democratic rights, but in order to weaken the state which also oppresses them.

There is, however, a distinction between mass movements for the right of national self-determination, which we support unconditionally, and nationalism as a political ideology and doctrine, including among oppressed nationalities.

Bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist forces, as soon as they come to power, begin questioning, restricting or even denying basic national and democratic rights to other peoples. Pretexts have been manifold: state security, guaranteeing unity, linguistic necessity, restoring historical borders, making foreign aggression more difficult, assuring stability, etc. Thus, this kind of nationalism rapidly transforms itself into an oppressor and often becomes expansionist after conquering state independence - as the example of Yugoslavia tragically demonstrates.

In addition, revolutionary Marxists oppose any nationalist ideology, even of an oppressed nation, which is based upon the creed of class collaboration, of solidarity of the nation's employers and wage earners (or bureaucrats and workers) against the "foreign enemy". This is contrary to the need for international solidarity between all toilers, regardless of colour, nationality, gender or creed.

It has only been in those countries where the struggle for national independence has been combined with a fight for socialism - for example in Cuba and Nicaragua - where such dangers have been avoided to any significant degree. The clearest example is the way in which the Sandinista government, after serious initial mistakes in its dealings with the Indian populations on Nicaragua's East Coast, was able to correct its policies and attempt, even under the very difficult circumstances of the contra war, to establish relations based on mutual respect and solidarity. This is living proof that the slogan of national independence, and the mobilization of masses of people around that question, is not necessarily in contradiction to internationalist goals and perspectives.

Revolutionary Marxists struggle for a world without frontiers, for the abolition of all types of privileges, and for the integration of all nations in a world socialist democracy, where a common universal culture and all national and ethnic cultures will flourish together. This ambitious objective demands not only the abolition of all national or linguistic privileges, and all forms of domination exercised over even the weakest nations, but also a correction of centuries of national and racial oppression through "affirmative action" in favour of oppressed nations. Only then can a strict equality be established between all nations.

The struggle against national oppression is thus inscribed in the perspective of democratic socialism. It means the working class puts itself at the head of the struggle against national oppression, that it does not consider itself external to this cause but behaves as the vanguard of the oppressed nations and "races" while maintaining its internationalist solidarity with the struggles of all workers, including those of the oppressor nation.

18. The fight against militarism

One of the most striking developments since the 1960s has been the emergence of mass opposition within imperialist countries against rearmament and wars carried out by their own bourgeoisies. In the cases of Algeria and Vietnam, ordinary French and U.S. citizens played an important, and in some ways decisive, role in forcing an end to the slaughter. The anti-missiles movement in Western Europe during the 1980s was the largest mobilization of youth in the history of these countries.

For revolutionary Marxists, any mass action that puts obstacles in the way of intervention by imperialism into the affairs of smaller nations is a positive development. We will work with all our might to stimulate and build such movements whenever the opportunity to do so arises - stressing especially the right to self-determination of oppressed nations. We oppose all attempts by the imperialists, including under the auspices of the U.N., to determine the future of countries in the "third world" or in Eastern Europe, contrary to the principle of the right to self-determination of all nationalities. There is no legitimate role whatsoever for the U.S., Capitalist Europe, or Japan, in determining the future of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, or the Pacific Island region.

Recently many countries of Europe and Japan have seen the emergence of radical movements among the youth rejecting the bourgeois army, military service, and production of weapons. These movements attack the bourgeois state at its roots, because its military apparatus is its essential foundation. They also represent a potential threat to the military-industrial complex, another vital prop of the bourgeois state. Therefore, such movements merit the complete support of revolutionary Marxists.

19. Relaunch the struggle for internationalism

During the last few decades, there has been an accelerating internationalization of productive forces. Less than seven hundred multinational corporations dominate the world market. They are increasingly escaping the control of any government, including those of the main imperialist powers. They transfer their investments, production and distribution centers from country to country solely in order to maximize profits. This internationalization of the productive forces of capital, of services, of the division of labour, leads to a growing internationalization of the class struggle.

By creating the first workers' internationals over a century ago, the socialist movement was able to take the initiative. Bureaucratic conservatism and chauvinism have led to a retreat, to collaboration with "national" bosses, to turning away from an effective international fight against the trusts.

In the imperialist countries, this regression of internationalism sometimes takes the form of classical chauvinism: "the Germans", or "the Japanese", or "the Mexicans", or "the Americans" - exploiters and exploited all mixed up together - are supposed to be the cause of the unemployment which affects "us"! It can also take the new form of lining up on the side of a Europe of the trusts and bosses, an affluent "Euro-chauvinism", which is nothing but a variant of this reactionary nationalism.

The only adequate response to the global strategy of the multinationals is international solidarity by the workers of every country against their own national bosses as well as foreign ones. This can develop through coordinating

trade-union activities across frontiers, fighting for raising the wages and improving the working conditions of the worst-off workers rather than lowering those of workers who enjoy a higher living standard. Far from damaging the possibilities for industrialization and jobs in the "third world", such coordination could replace a "model of development" that is based on exporting low wages with an alternative centred on eliminating poverty, enlarging the internal market and the massive transfer of up-to-date technology to these countries.

The entire workers' movement in the creditor countries should take up the slogan for a cancellation of the "third world" and European debt, actively mobilizing around it. That is an obligation of basic solidarity with the poorest and most exploited. Internationalism today is also a fight against the division of the working class - with all of the racist and xenophobic consequences such divisions can have inside the imperialist heartlands themselves (in particular against immigrant workers), and the fascist dynamic that could develop out of it.

Revolutions are not exported, any more than they are the result of conspiracies by "subversive international centres." Imperialism has imposed and imposes regimes of exploitation and dictatorship, of misery and humiliation. It is against these regimes that the masses rise up, without anyone having to manipulate them. On the other hand, counterrevolution has been and is being exported, by the imperialists.

There has not been a single fight against the domination of capital (from the Russian, Finnish, German or Hungarian to the Spanish and Yugoslav revolutions), against the yoke of colonialism (from the Chinese and Indochinese revolutions to the African wars of liberation) or against neocolonial tyrannies (Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador and so on) that has not come up against military intervention, or threats, by the imperialist powers.

Confronted by this imperialist aggression, massive international solidarity has proven its effectiveness at decisive moments. The Swedish labour movement prevented its own capitalism's war of intervention against the declaration of independence by Norway in 1905. The Russian Revolution was saved by the British labour movement from being crushed by British imperialism -intervening on the side of Poland in 1920. Mass solidarity put a damper on threats of military intervention against Cuba and Nicaragua, although without succeeding in breaking through the economic blockade inflicted on these countries.

But in many places, such as Indochina and Nicaragua, the price exacted by counter-revolutionary interventions has nevertheless been extremely high. It has left destitute peoples, with ruined economies incapable of assuring rapid improvements in living standards. Militant solidarity in its different forms can help bring about the quickest possible victory at the lowest cost, and is a necessary response to the internationalization of the counterrevolution.

Capitalism's social crisis increasingly takes on a global dimension. No serious solutions can be offered on a national level to questions such as disarmament, energy, the destruction of the biosphere, hunger and disease in the "third world." These plagues can, and must, be attacked in each country. But they can only be vanquished on the scale of the whole planet.

Gorbachev abandoned the reactionary myth of building socialism in one country or a single camp, emphasizing the globalization of vital problems. His diagnosis was more realistic. But he did not draw the same conclusions as Marxists, according to which only the world socialist revolution can resolve the crisis of humanity.

On the contrary, Gorbachev's approach leads to another reactionary myth, which says that it is possible to resolve humanity's problems by increased peaceful cooperation with imperialism. But any compromise with or capitulation to imperialism which contributes to the survival of that system makes the drift toward disaster inevitable in the long run.

20. For the reconquest of hope, the right of every individual to dignity and to pursue happiness

The bourgeoisie hypocritically accuses socialists of wanting to sacrifice the individual's right to pursue happiness on the altar of "utopias", or "state compulsion". The practices of labour bureaucracies - whether of the Stalinist, post-Stalinist or social-democratic variety - have undoubtedly fed this mystification. But the cynicism of the claim is obvious.

It is bourgeois society and not "socialist utopia" which strangles the unfettered development of individuality for the overwhelming majority of this planet's inhabitants - not only in the "third world" but also in the richer countries. Material restrictions and constraints, social inequality, alienated wage labour, a manipulated mass "culture", television-guided consumption, the lack of any real possibilities to choose freely in nearly all domains of social life, are the cause of this strangling.

It is necessary to turn the legitimate struggle for individual freedom and happiness against bourgeois society and its rotten "values", as we do with a consistent struggle for human rights. On these questions neoconservative pseudo-liberals are caught in a basic contradiction, as were their more progressive ancestors in the 18th and early 19th centuries: Everybody has the right to pursue individual happiness - except when this conflicts with the "iron laws of market economy", that is, a defence of the interests of capital. We reject the idea of eternal economic laws, unavoidable constraints of economic "efficiency" from which nobody can escape. Given the present level of material wealth and labour productivity, the planet's inhabitants are perfectly capable of making a conscious choice between different priorities in the use of even relatively scarce resources. All men and women can and will conquer the liberty to make that choice on the basis of the right to individual happiness, to a real fulfilment of their own human potential.

Conservative neoliberals sing the praises of a society where unequal access to wealth is explained by differences in individual merit. In fact, however, this "meritocracy" hides the reality of social inequality based on exploitation and oppression. To those who have much, much is given. Those who start with little or nothing, continue to have little or nothing. The "merits" of greed, corruption and crime as part of the process through which the rich and super-rich create and maintain themselves expose this hypocritical lie of meritocracy.

To these mystifications we counterpose equality of social opportunity as the basis for each individual to pursue happiness in her or his own way. No social structure, no social power - neither state despotism nor marketplace "efficiency" nor patriarchal social institution - should be allowed to impose so-called happiness on individuals against their own wishes.

Along with the struggle for physical survival, this is the principle driving force motivating socialists today.

At the heart of the fight for socialism is the fight for a society where the free development of all depends upon the free development of each individual human being. In a world tilting toward disorder, scepticism, cynicism, and demoralization as its real future, the struggle for socialism also includes as part of its basic purpose a struggle for the rebirth of hope and happiness.

21. We are revolutionaries!

The establishment of real and democratic socialism can come about only through a complete break with capitalist and bureaucratic regimes, their overthrow through mass mobilization - in a word, revolution.

The balancesheet of the century that is drawing to a close demonstrates not simply the bankruptcy of Stalinism. It likewise exposes the bankruptcy of social democracy, with its increasing integration into the structures of the bourgeois state apparatus, its loyal and brutal management of imperialist interests and its sacred union with its capitalist partners. It also shows the failure of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism in the "third world", which is

incapable of bringing about real national independence and social emancipation. The twentieth century has not been a century of gradual and peaceful progress. It has been a century of revolutions, wars and counterrevolutions.

The masses act in a revolutionary fashion only on rare occasions, when driven by necessity. But when they can no longer tolerate the intolerable, they become transformed, breaking the circle of submission in a process of revolutionary crisis. And such crises are periodically inevitable.

The task of those who are conscious of this reality is to aid the daily accumulation of mass experiences, to help bring together and educate the most combative forces, promoting goals that can lead to a revolutionary victory in order to prevent counterrevolution - aware of the high price which the exploited and oppressed have paid for the failure to make revolutions over many years.

Both exploiters and governments talk about revolution as if it were synonymous with violence and terror. But to do this they falsify issues and responsibilities, adding together the cost of revolution and counterrevolution. And yet the "order" which they uphold is one of daily violence, sexism, poverty, hunger, forced labour, and war - much more devastating than any revolution. Counterrevolutions and totalitarian dictatorships (fascism, Nazism!) or semi-fascist dictatorships -to which they often lead - have historically unleashed violence that dwarfs anything real revolutions can legitimately be held responsible for.

The millions of deaths in the Gulag are not the responsibility of the Russian revolution, but of the Stalinist counterrevolution. The American bombing of Indochina caused more death and destruction than the Vietnamese revolution itself.

One hears that the era of revolutions is over, that it belonged to a bygone age, that they have become impossible in the face of an imperialist superpower armed to the teeth. But this has all been said before. And then the Cuban revolution triumphed over the barbaric imperialist colossus, the Vietnamese liberation struggle put an end to American intervention using unprecedented methods, and the Nicaraguan revolution overthrew Somoza in the backyard of the world's policeman.

The preachers of "lesser evilism" still say that it is better to put up with capitalism and its ravages than to risk totalitarian and supposedly irreversible bureaucratic dictatorships. Only yesterday, they were still claiming that "under communism" the monster state had devoured and forever paralyzed society. But now we see this society reawakening and fighting back. It is overthrowing the bureaucrats and breaking their yoke.

A new historical chapter is opening, in which the long-term positive effects of Stalinism's disappearance as an obstacle will manifest themselves.

* In Eastern Europe and the USSR, new mass struggles will erupt on two fronts: for democracy and against privatization. In the course of these struggles, the strategic goals of a revitalized political labour movement will gradually emerge: independence of the mass organizations from the state; no monopoly on political power for any faction of the bureaucracy; separation of political parties from the state; exercise of power through democratically elected bodies of the toilers and citizens; ensuring representation and equality for women and national minorities; dismantling of all repressive forces; general-ized, planned self-management and self-administration.

* In the imperialist countries, revolutionary strategy will combine the heritage of the first half of the century with that of the sixties and seventies, from May 1968 in France to the Portuguese revolution: We can expect to see more in the way of mass movements relying on their own strength and self-organization, including around working class struggles, autonomous mass movements of women, antimilitarist campaigns by the youth, and struggles around

questions relating to the overall quality of life.

* In the dependent countries, crucial experiences, victories or defeats, have confirmed that there are only two alternatives: either socialist revolution or a caricature of revolution. This does not imply any underestimation of national or democratic tasks, nor a confusion between the beginning and end of the revolutionary process. It does not eliminate the possibility of alliances, but it excludes any subordination of workers' and peasants' struggles to the so-called national bourgeoisie.

The danger of bureaucratization is not inherent only in political parties. Its roots lie in the existence of the state as a professional organ of power, in the living and working conditions of the working class and in the effects of the division of labour on the workers' movement. Trade unions and associations are no less exposed to this danger than parties; the media demagogues, even "non-party affiliated", are no less bureaucrats. The only way to control and progressively reduce the risks of bureaucratization - they cannot be totally eliminated - is through a consistent and sustained activity by the rank and file, encouraged through internal democracy at all levels of all organizations, trying to combat and correct the social, gender and cultural inequalities in their ranks and also to draw the lessons of historical experience. This can be done with education and a collective practice that increases awareness and participation, a growing and continuous activity of members without which internal democracy remains largely fictitious, and the assimilation of the lessons of historical experience, notably in the domain of institutional guarantees for workers' democracy (the right to form tendencies!).

22. For new mass revolutionary parties, for a revolutionary mass international

The official revelations of Stalin's crimes by the Soviet authorities highlight the meaning of the unremitting struggle led by the Left Opposition after 1923 and the Fourth International since its foundation, in 1938, against the bureaucratic degeneration of the CPSU and the Communist International. Thanks to the steadfastness and courage of those who, in the USSR, took up the struggle against Stalinism, thanks to the determination of Leon Trotsky and those who, alongside him, contributed to founding the Fourth International, today we can look workers of the ex-Soviet Union, China or Eastern Europe in the eye without shame or guilt.

The construction at one and the same time of revolutionary organizations in each country - rooted as much as possible in their national realities - and of a revolutionary international is for us a question of principle which corresponds to objective conditions and to the needs of the imperialist epoch. For revolutionaries as much as anyone else, being determines consciousness. Simply participating in international solidarity, supporting struggles in other countries and exchanging experiences, however necessary, are insufficient by themselves.

It is only by actively building an international together with revolutionaries from other countries and collectively developing its programme that we can realistically hope to see the world simultaneously through the eyes of the Soviet woman worker or the Chinese students struggling against bureaucracy; of the super-exploited toilers, peasants and women in the "third world"; of the British miner, the Japanese auto worker or the North American electronic technician.

Then we can consistently take our stand on the side of the antibureaucratic movement in the East, on the side of the oppressed crushed by imperialism, as well as on the side of workers in the imperialist centres struggling against the bosses and their state; then we can keep as our only guide and compass the general social and historic interests of the proletariat, and not some particular, diplomatic interests of states, "camps" or "blocs".

Today, although national revolutionary organizations exist that are struggling sincerely and sometimes heroically for the abolition of exploitation in their countries, there is unfortunately no significant current outside of the Fourth

International that puts the construction of a revolutionary international immediately on the agenda.

The reluctance of other revolutionary currents to build an international organization has deep roots. The failure of the Second International, and the chauvinist capitulation of its main parties and leaders when World War I began gave credence to the idea that internationalism consists only of good intentions and breaks down in practice when mass parties face critical situations.

The experience of the Communist International after Lenin's death, with changes in orientation - and of leaders - dictated to member parties, has aroused strong and legitimate distrust towards the danger of international bureaucratic centralism. The equally disastrous experience resulting from a failure to make a distinction between the party and the state, or subordinating "fraternal parties" to the diplomatic and state interests of the diverse "socialist" countries - whether they be Soviet or Chinese - has re-inforced concern for national independence among a number of revolutionary organizations.

Finally, the material weight of the bureaucratized states has weighed heavily on the international workers' movement, including on revolutionary organizations. It has meant compromises in order to keep material aid flowing and avoid a political confrontation. Some have ignored tasks of internationalist solidarity with workers and peoples who were victims of the bureaucracy.

But in our increasingly interdependent world internationalism is not a simple moral imperative; it is an immediate tactical and strategic necessity. Building an international is an essential task that cannot be put off until tomorrow. The Fourth International today is an irreplaceable instrument, the only one we have for advancing in this direction, even if only in a modest way.

We know that the construction of mass revolutionary parties in a series of countries and the building of a mass revolutionary international will not necessarily take place at the same tempo. Every time the possibility arises in a country to build a democratic mass workers' party independent from the state, the bourgeoisie, and/or the bureaucracy, in which the right to form currents internally around political debates is guaranteed, and every time an organization exists whose objectives and direction in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism we share, we have no reason to stand aside while cultivating the identity of a sect. On the contrary, we propose bringing all revolutionaries together in the same democratic organization on a national level, the better to take initiatives together towards reformist or left populist currents, propose unity in action at all levels against imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy.

But as long as we cannot convince our revolutionary comrades or partners of the necessity and the timeliness of working immediately to build a revolutionary international - founded on a programme to defend the interests of the exploited and oppressed in every country and collective action along these lines - we claim the right to do this openly ourselves.

Thus, agreement on the project of the International is not a precondition for building national parties together with other currents as soon as there is agreement on basic tasks and practical work. But there is no Chinese wall separating national and international politics. In a world where the class struggle is more than ever international, the first is not the only immediate problem and the second is not just a question for the future.

Faithful to the fundamental principles of the Communist Manifesto, no special interests separate us from the whole of the proletariat. We do not proclaim any special principle with which we try to shape or mould the workers' movement. We distinguish ourselves from other workers' parties only on two points: in the various national workers' struggles, we assert and put to the fore interests that are independent of nationality and common to the whole proletariat; and in

the different phases of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, we always seek to represent the historic interests of the entire movement.

We believe that the daily practical work of all socialists, at all times and in all places, must strictly conform to what Marx called a categorical imperative, that is their moral commitment to fight for the elimination of all conditions which alienate, humiliate, and oppress human beings, whatever the social forces responsible for these abominations. Socialism's crisis of credibility can only be overcome if we act in such a way.

The Fourth International calls for a united struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression everywhere in the world; for socialist and pluralist democracy; for a planned, self-managed economy based on the satisfaction of people's needs by freely-associated producers taking over the large-scale means of production, of exchange and of communication; for total, universal disarmament; for women's liberation and equality between the sexes; for international and internationalist solidarity; for the protection of the planet and the survival of the human race.

May 1992

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