INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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

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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 materi-al, social and cultural needs of our whole planet. But hunger and homelessness grow even in the rich-est 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 gulf 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 labourtion 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 tum 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 bro-ken. By the time the Stalinist (post-Stalinist) dictatorships collapsed, the East European masses no longer had any independent political class alternative that they could tum 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, Swe-den, 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, sub-ject 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 dy-namic - 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 as-sert 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 immedi-ate parallel decline of votes for the reformist workers parties. It is even consistent with occasional in-creases 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 reac-tionary demagogy. The expanding influence of racist and xenophobic ideologies and of far-right for-mations 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 consti-tuted a serious counterweight, blocking a total domination by prevailing bourgeois ideology and val-ues.

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 tum, 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 re-cent 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 partici-pate in and support working class struggles, and a loss of militants and cadres for revolutionary or-ganizations.

But the countervailing trends and forces are also important. In the long run they favour a positive so-lution 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 pet-ty-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 strug-gle.

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 cul-tural 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 ac-cumulating 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 pursu-ing 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 envi-ronment, a respect for the natural world of which we are an integral part, the conquest of human dig-nity, 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 real-ized, 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 ca-pable 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 op-pressed 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 in-creased 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 in-dustrial 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 rela-tive 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 begin-ning effort to implement these demands, remains necessary now more than ever. Such demands in-clude 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 ex-propriating 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 industrial-ized countries.

The present crisis leads to deepening differences and inequalities. The explosion of youth unemploy-ment 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 centu-ry 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 corpora-tions 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' organi-zations 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 labourtion 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 canters 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 imperi-alists.

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 of-fered 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 possi-ble 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 indi-viduality 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 pet-ty-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 monopo-ly 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 represen-tation 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

"For a revival of Internationalism!"

1 January 1996

Despite the decline of its relative economic power, the United States is trying to fully restore its capacity for international political and military action, which had been limited for a long time by its defeat in Vietnam in the 1970s and the victory of the revolution in Nicaragua. The invasion of Grenada, the military operations against Libya, the intervention in Panama, the support given to the Nicaraguan counter-revolution, the increased support given to the Zionist state confronted by the Palestinian intifada and the threats against Cuba, all show the USA's desire to bring the peoples of Latin America - and those of Asia, Africa and the Pacific - into line. The Arab-Persian Gulf crisis gives the USA an opportunity to reaffirm its role as the world police.

The gravity of this situation should not be underestimated. Never since the

Vietnam war have the imperialist powers brought together such military resources in one theatre of operations. Never since the Korean war have they been able to deploy them under United Nations cover. Never have they been able to intervene on this scale with the backing of the USSR and China. And social democracy (through different Western governments) is participating directly in this operation at a scale, in many respects, unprecedented.

An ability to mobilize against imperialist interventions

All those who continue to fight for internationalism must face up to bigger responsibilites today. They must deal with the most urgent tasks: imposing an end to the war and the withdrawal of imperialist troops form the Gulf region. But they must also prepare for new outbreaks of aggression in other parts of the world by bringing together a substantial ongoing force to mobilize against such attacks.

Numerous western military bases have been established, from Asia to Africa and Latin America. Among others, they shelter American, British and French troops. Rapid intervention forces have been set up in the imperialist metropolitan centres, able to take themselves anywhere - particularly to the Third World. If we want to avoid the endless repetition of bloody interventions, continuous since the Second World War, this worldwide mechanism must be dismantled.

The world economic crisis accentuates these tensions, thereby making more probable new military adventures in the dominated countries. Attacks on economic, social and political rights are stepped up. Western governments are imposing austerity on workers. Hunger riots are multiplying in the Third World. Bureaucratic repression, as in the USSR and China, remains a threat. It will, of course, take time to overcome the disorientation caused by the experience of Stalinism, by its crimes and by its failure. In these conditions there is a great danger of the peoples' and workers' movements becoming demoralized, thrown onto the defensive, and revolutionary struggles isolated. There is a great danger that still more social and political struggles will become disoriented and be led astray, degenerating into the blind alley of ethnic, communal or religious confrontations.

The obligation of solidarity

To face up to this situation, it is urgent to begin new internationalist solidarity actions.

Internationalism is a duty (of solidarity) towards all the exploited, all the oppressed, all those who struggle. It is necessary for their fight. They should be able to count on it - both before and after victory - because the pressure exercised by imperialism never lets up, as was illustrated yet again by the policies followed by Washington against revolutionary Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Nothing is more dramatic than to see a Third World people rising up courageously for national and social liberation remain isolated in the face of imperialist intervention. Or to see a young victorious revolution worn down by a diplomatic and economic blockade by Western powers, bled dry because the international workers' movement measures out aid with an eyedropper. Or to see big workers' strikes suffocated because the bourgeoisie has been able to find elsewhere what the workers in its own country refused it, because the trade-union movement has been incapable of uniting in international action.

The duty of solidarity recognises no frontiers.The upheavals that have shaken Eastern Europe since the end of 1989 demonstrate the extent to which the democratic character of the socialist project must be fully restored to give it renewed vigour. This cannot be done without maintaining constant support for the struggle by the workers of these countries, the Soviet Union and China, for political and social rights. The bankruptcy of Stalinism should make it possible to end the identification of socialism with bureaucratic regimes, thus giving new inspiration to the whole international struggle.

The Western powers have been able to take advantage of the crisis of the Eastern European regimes, as is illustrated by the capitalist reunification of Germany. The economic collapse, the brutal abandoning of social protection measures, the uncontrolled expansion of the market and of unemployment, the activity of the multinationals, are likely to give birth to a new Third World in the heart of Europe. But the opening of borders favours links between workers', feminist, ecologist and anti-war organizations. This is a unique opportunity to develop a battle in which solidarity goes beyond the line of East-West division inherited from the Second World War.

Against the most backward prejudices

For all those working to radically transform our societies, internationalism is not just a practical requirement. It remains an essential value :the antithesis of xenophobia; of racism and chauvinism; of hatred of others: a fundamental component of all socialist and humanist culture. Internationalism is an ethical commitment as much as a political one.

Internationalism thus starts in one's own country, in the struggle against the most backward prejudices: in intransigently taking up the defence of male and female immigrant workers and of oppressed communities, their political rights, their cultures and their languages. In fighting for the real right of nations to decide their own fate.

Pressures in the

world today

Internationalism is also an answer to the pressures of today's world realities.

Going beyond countries and continents, the world today is characterized by a growing interdependence on the economic front, of ecological balance, of military relations, of the nuclear threat. The brutal changes that repeatedly occur within the world market have increasingly devastating social effects. New forms of technological and financial dependence bear down on the Third World. Man-made "natural" disasters multiply and have more and more serious consequences. The big questions of our time - from imperialist domination to poverty, from the danger of war to the destruction of the environment - are, from the outset, posed at an international level.

The bourgeoisies of the imperialist countries have made no mistake in this respect. They multiply the consultations and institutions that allow them to act in concert to stifle revolutionary struggles and to maintain their domination over the dependent countries. The "G7 Summit" of the seven richest countries acts as a real world board of directors. The International Monetary Fund uses debt as blackmail to dictate economic measures to the governments of the Third World, condemning whole populations to scarcity and famine. In order to undermine the combativity of workers in struggle, the multinationals threaten to move their investments to other countries. The European powers are consolidating the Europe of Capital against the struggles and social needs of the working class. They all agree that workers should be made to pay the cost of the economic crisis. They all agree that the gains of previous workers' struggles, whether social security, maintaining their buying power, job protection or trade-union rights should be challenged.

The European bourgeoisie talks about ensuring the free circulation of products and people inside the "single market". But at the same time it is reinforcing security and authoritarian measures that restrict the right of non-Europeans to enter Community territory. The hunt for immigrants will be fiercer than ever. Despite the humanitarian proclamations of heads of state, the status "political refugee" has already been seriously attacked. And Western police forces are cooperating more closely than ever in the struggle against "terrorism". The imperialist bourgeoisie is preparing for us a world that will be even less free than it is today.

We are confronted with a paradoxical situation. A century ago, the workers' and socialist movements was the bearer of the "new idea" of internationalism. Today, these movements seems to be even incapable of effectively coordinating social struggles for elementary rights for men and women workers. Today it is the bourgeoisie, despite the sharp contradictions which set its different national components against each other, which is, increasingly, organizing itself on an international level.

An alternative policy

Those countries with bureaucratically-centralized economies, from China to the USSR, after an initial period of growth, are being hit hard. For many people, the socialist perspective has lost its credibility. The very hope for a more just and humane society is now being challenged. The ideologues of the established order take advantage of this to laud the virtues of the capitalist market at the very time when the right to work and to health for all is at question in the imperialist countries and a real crisis of decomposition is threatening in a growing number of capitalist societies in the Third World.

To give socialism back its credibility, the false dichotomy between capitalist market economy and bureaucratic planning must be broken. There must be another form of growth which gives working men and women real control over socio-economic priorities and whose driving force is the satisfaction of human needs. This third, truly socialist and democratic, road implies a profound change in international relations, and not simply in national policies of economic development.

Internationalism is indispensable to the application of such an alternative growth policy.

It is possible to move forward along this road today. In Europe this means to counterpose to capitalism's choice - the 1992 Single Market - the workers' choice; fighting together for the social, cultural and political rights of all the people's of the continent, East and West. It means giving a new stimulus to the fight against debt - a yoke that now hangs around the neck of East European as well as dependent countries - which is an essential element of the international economic crisis. It means deepening the fight for the rights of workers and young people, for women's liberation, for equality between nations, for the defence of the environment, against nuclear power and the danger of war. And it means defining a different aid policy for the Third World in the imperialist countries.

The Western policy of "aid" to the so-called developing countries is defined in terms of the interests of the multinationals. It aims to consolidate the alliance between the imperialist metropolises and the neo-colonial bourgeoisie, who grow fat on corruption and embezzlement of public funds. It thus perpetuates dependencies… dependency of the dominated countries within the world market and dependency of the people on the existing regimes It is in Africa, perhaps, that the consequences of this situation are worst. This because the balkanisation of the continent means division into mini-states incapable of ensuring their own economic survival. Revolutionary socialists in Africa must coordinate their forces to renew a militant anti-imperialist pan-africanism, to counterpose to the current development a free confederation of the peoples of Africa.

In Latin America we are witnessing a new offensive by US imperialism under cover of the Bush Plan, which is supposedly setting up a "free trade" zone from Alaska in the north to Tierra del Fuego in the south. This project aims at profiting from the

defensive situation of the continent's workers in order to consolidate US hegemony. Its consequences will be disastrous for the entire working class in this part of the world, including in the USA and Canada. A united fight has to be undertaken on a continental scale to stop this plan being put into operation, and to defend and extend social conquests.

1992 will be the 500th anniversary of the start of the conquest of Latin America. In opposition to those who want to use this occasion to rehabilitate colonialism, it is important to show, particularly in the metropolitan centres of the former world empires, that anti-imperialist solidarity remains on the agenda. It is also important to make more widely known the struggle led by the indigenous communities of the continent against the destruction of their natural environments, against repression and super-exploitation and the disintegration of their communities and cultures… or even indeed direct genocide.

The responsibility of revolutionaries

The internationalist fight is not an easy one. It comes up against considerable obstacles. The synchronization and convergence of struggles does not happen naturally; the situation differs too much from one country to another. Each political, social and revolutionary movement has its own history, its own framework of national development.

In particular, the workers' movement does not currently possess any form of organization which can stand up to that of the big multinationals. The bourgeoisie knows perfectly well how to play on divisions among the proletariat to try systematically to break their capacity for international solidarity. It uses, and abuses, the fear of unemployment and competition between wage earners. This is particularly dangerous today, in a situation where the crisis, already ravaging the peoples of the Third World, is now bearing down on the working class in the West, leading to a revival of ethnic or religious conflicts and of the most irrational forms of racism.

This internationalist struggle is all the more difficult as it has to be fought against the stream. Revolutionary internationalism has been in decline for a long time. It has been buried by the social-democratic parties, which turned back to the nation states and supported colonial or world wars involving their own bourgeoisies. It has been condemned by the bureaucratization and Stalinization of the Comintern, by the subordination of the Communist parties to Moscow's diplomatic interests, by the division of the world communist movement - as well as by the dramatic isolation in which too many national liberation struggles have found themselves. The "tragic solitude" of the Vietnamese, faced with the American bombings, denounced by Che Guevara (in his vibrant Tricontinental appeal) continues in the "tragic solitude" of the Palestinians and many other peoples in struggle today.

The truth is that workers' and progressive organizations pay far less attention to coordinating their struggles than do the bourgeois governments. The European trade-union movement has not yet been capable of undertaking an overall campaign within the EC to defend workers' interests, despite the preparations for the Single European Market, and indeed its imminence.

A living tradition

But internationalism is not a wild dream. It is a real possibility. It showed its strength during the major struggles of this century. Just after World War I, an extraordinary upsurge of internationalism followed the victory of the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Third International. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) represented a real tragedy. The victory of Francoism and the march towards world war were made more possible by the international isolation of the Republican camp. But the epic of the International Brigades, formed by activists from all progressive and revolutionary currents, fighting alongside the peoples of the Iberian peninsula (regardless of the specific political orientations of their members) remains a real example for us all.

Since then, despite slowness, failures and abandonment, anti-imperialist solidarity has more than once brought real help to national liberation struggles: the aid networks for the Algerian revolution; the worldwide mobilization against the US war in Vietnam; and, more recently, the movement against apartheid in South Africa and the support for the Central American revolutions. Workers' solidarity has been demonstrated more than once, such as in the defence of the Polish workers' movement in 1980 and (although it was unfortunately insufficient in relation to what was at stake and what was necessary) during the big British miners' strike in 1984-85. The vigour of the anti-missiles and anti-war movement in the first half of the 1980s also testifies to the internationalist resources that we can count on.

1968 - the year of the Tet offensive in Vietnam, of student struggles in Mexico and Argentina, of the general strike in France, of the big workers' struggles in Italy and of the "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia - symbolized the internationalist spirit of the 1960s' youth radicalization. This receptiveness of young people to internationalism is a precious potential. It is still shown today in a number of countries: in the anti-racist and Third World solidarity movements; in the Nicaraguan work brigades and in the campaigns against debt.

Today, the living tradition and potential of internationalism are expressed as much in the development of new social movements, in the international meetings of the women's movement, in the immediately international dimension of anti-nuclear, pacifist and ecologist mobilizations, in the coordination of the struggle against debt in Latin America, in the regional initiatives taken by progressive movements in Asia and in the Pacific. In a number of regions of the world it is also expressed in a new feeling of solidarity between indigenous communities and peoples suffering from oppression and cultural

genocide, in the active development of the Christian base communities and in support for the final anti-colonial struggles such as that of the French-dominated Kanaks.

Despite all the difficulties, the fight to revive internationalism is one that is both necessary and realistic. It plunges its roots into a venerable and living workers' tradition. It is enriched through new experiences. It benefits from considerable potential resources among young people, the women's movement and contemporary struggles.

It is our duty to carry this fight forward in the best way possible.

Organizing ourselves

To do so we have to organize.

Without concerted action, internationalism will be stillborn. In order to act together, the largest number of people must be involved.

In the trade unions, international relations must not be solely the prerogative of the federal and confederal leaderships. Meetings of direct workers' representatives from the same multinational or sector should be organized. Inter-union solidarity that ignores frontiers should become the rule.

The same goes for the social movements, meetings between non-governmental and popular organizations, peasant and community associations, feminist movements, student and youth movements should be stepped up.

A dense network of international relations should be formed at all levels: from grass-root groups to national structures; from associations to parties; from North and South and from East to West

Internationalism and International

What is true for trade unions and associations is true for political parties. To nurture an internationalist consciousness and a truly internationalist practice they also need an international organization.

For a long time the sections of the Fourth International have been involved in building such an International. Not because they all want to be the same. Each national organization has its own political profile, its own united front relations and its own responsibility and competence to make decisions. Each tries to learn from the history and tradition of struggles of its own people.

Our organizations joined the Fourth International, because they are internationalist and because they pursue the same goal - all of them fight for socialist democrary. This in order that:

– the essential lessons of the history of the workers' movement are not lost, but transmitted to new generations, in new countries;

– activist organizations from all continents meet on an equal footing, and so that new experiences of contemporary struggles are shared by everybody;

– they can educate themselves in an internationalist spirit and express this essential element of an overall revolutionary perspective in action;

– they can better defend organizations hit by repression and give more help to developing revolutionary forces where these are still non-existent or embryonic;

– and so they can orientate themselves politically, given the necessity of having a militant knowledge of world reality in order to understand the upheavals that are taking place.

It is also to prepare the future, to make a first step towards the goal of building an International with member organizations that are revolutionary parties with a real mass implantation. We know that we are not that organization. Our sections are too weak to claim that. But we hope that, thanks to our political traditions and our international structure, we will be able to play an active role in preparing for this future International.

This, building a new international, is probably the most difficulet of all internationalist tasks to achieve and the one that will take the most time. No revolutionary current is sufficiently strong today on a world scale to do it alone. But we think that it is also one of the most important tasks. This is why we want to win other revolutionary organizations and political currents to this perspective. To work together to build a revolutionary International rooted in mass struggles in every continent.

In solidarity and unity

The first internationalist act is active solidarity. There is no point in waiting before acting together. It is in this spirit that the Fourth International is launching an appeal for united action to all revolutionary and progressive oganizations and to all activists.

Internationalist solidarity is united by nature

Our sole guide should be: effectiveness. Effectiveness demands unity: to defend those who struggle, those who suffer, those who are hit by repression we must bring together our forces.

Solidarity should enable each of us to go beyond ideological and organizational sectarianism in action. Over and above political divergences, it should bring all organizations and movements, all those who are ready to be involved, together in common campaigns.

Faced with repression, in defence of human rights and struggles, nothing should divide solidarity.

Solidarity should be united in its forms and in its objectives, giving support to all those who fight, without deepening the divisions that sometimes exist in the different components of a popular struggle.

Solidarity must be lasting

Long-term solidarity activity must correspond to the protracted struggles of the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world. Unity must guarantee dynamism and the continuing nature of an internationalist engagement.

Solidarity must be free of state-imposed constraints

In today's world, state apparatuses have great weight. Like popular movements, revolutionary organizations can be led to try either to win the support of foreign governments or to obtain their neutrality. In this field as in others the solidarity movement must help them.

Solidarity should not depend on the ups and downs of the diplomacy of a capital of the so-called socialist camp, whether Moscow or Beijing, or of European social democracy. To prove that it really expresses internationalist, revolutionary, values and that it is not simply at the service of the particular interests of a government or a party, it must be really independent of governments.

Popular struggles must be supported unconditionally: whether these are liberation struggles in Salvador, in the Philippines, in the Basque country or Eritrea; or workers' struggles against capitalist Europe; or the anti-apartheid fight of Black people in South Africa; or Polish, Russian or Chinese workers' struggles for their political and social rights.

For all that, solidarity should not hide reality. To fight effectively today against the imperialist war policy in the Middle East in a spirit of internationalism, it is necessary to have denounced and to continue to denounce the liquidation of opponents and the massacre of Kurds by the Iraqui dictatorship. The crimes of Saddam Hussein must not be covered over.

Learning from each other

Internationalism is an irreplaceable occasion for learning from each other.

Each organization has to draw lessons from the history of the international workers' movement, of national liberation struggles, of the success and failures of popular struggles, of revolutions and counter-revolutions. Political discussion and the exchange of experiences between different movements and national parties are indispensable.

We are convinced that our programme and analyses deserve to be known. They express a living, militant international reality, a historical continuity that we consider to be precious. But we also know that we are indebted to the experiences of other currents, that we have learned from other movements, for example in the recent period, from the ideas of feminism and the thinking of the ecology movement.

International cooperation should make it possible to compare analyses and orientations, strategies and programmes which will be an enriching experience for all. This was the imperative need expressed at the major meeting of Latin American left organizations held in July 1990 in São Paulo, Brazil.

Internationalism demands respect for the political and organizational integrity of each national party, it requires reciprocal relations and mutual support. Political differences are often important between different political organizations. They cannot be ignored, in order to be overcome them they must be discussed. Joint action should help to overcome them. Over and above the differences and divergences we all belong to the same camp, that of the exploited and oppressed.

A school of democracy

By acting together in solidarity, we will show that we know how to respect pluralism in the progressive and revolutionary movement and how to overcome factional practices that have been so damaging. Through unity we will learn to have more respect for the democracy and autonomy of the workers' and other people's organizations.

Then, through example, we will contribute to give a new credibility to the socialist project.

Real internationalism is a living school of socialist democracy.

Bring together our forces!

Fight together to give new life to true internationalism!

A Manifesto: Only socialism can ensure the survival of humanity

1 January 1996

I. The world crisis

THE WORLD is at a crossroads. The knowledge and technical means exist to conquer hunger and disease and to satisfy the basic social and cultural needs of our whole planet. But, inequalities grow and catastrophes threaten us. At the same time mass mobilizations of workers and oppressed peoples can gradually free themselves from the control and recuperative capacity of the conservative apparatuses. This assumes that the deep credibility crisis of a socialist perspective will be overcome, which will not happen automatically and requires time. It is when these two conditions are combined that the masses will bring to the forefront, and no longer in fragmented struggles, overall political and social goals which open up the possibility of a civilisation superior to both capitalism and bureaucratic dictatorship.

Despite nuclear arms-reduction measures, the arms race continues. The weapons accumulated end up in use, with all the barbarous consequences that ensue. There have been more than 80 so-called local wars since 1945 causing more than 20 million deaths. Imperialism's brutal aggression against Iraq revealed the full murderous consequences of this arms race.The existence of enormous military stockpiles, the development of biological and chemical weapons and the proliferation of nuclear power stations likely to be transformed into so many nuclear explosions, could physically wipe out the human race. The multiplication of fatal "technical" accidents is evidence of the dangers inherent in the capitalist profit logic, as it is of bureaucratic irresponsibility. The greenhouse effect, the destruction of the ozone layer, the devastation of tropical rain forests, the poisoning of oceans, rivers and reservoirs and air pollution - all these threats combine to endanger 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 for agro-business and the big farmers in the richest countries. In these countries, the state hands out subsidies to systematically reduce farmland "in order to sustain prices", at the risk of eliminating the whole of humanity's grain reserves after several successive bad harvests.

The long international economic depression since the beginning of the 1970s has been disastrous for the living conditions of the peoples in nearly all the Third World. 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 is often falling towards levels that existed in Nazi concentration camps.

In the imperialist countries, the effects of the crisis have been checked until now by the social protection won by decades of workers' struggles, and the social 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 25% of the population, depending on the country. Growing 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 (particularly trade-union rights), as well as by the growth of racism, xenophobia and the resurgence of a neo-fascist extreme-right. Torture and state terrorism are systematically used in more than 60 countries in the world, among them some imperialist countries.

The convulsions towards which international capitalism is heading will combine with the specific crises in the USSR, the People's Republic of China and Eastern Europe. The growing awareness of the damage done by bureaucratic mismanagement and the acknowledged impasse of authoritarian and irrational economic "planning" have reinforced the idea that there is no viable "alternative social model" to capitalism. Not only ideological and political currents, but social forces - the new middle bourgeoisie and currents within the nomenklatura and the intelligentsia - are engaged in a struggle for privatisation and the restoration of capitalism.

But the reawakening of mass activity, above all by the working class, shows that nothing is decided yet, except in East Germany where capitalism has been restored by the absorption of this country into imperialist West Germany. Anti-establishment forces are emerging from the crisis in a double-pronged fight: against the remaining power of the bureaucracy and against privatization of the economy.

The division of the world that came out of World War II is now past history. It is no longer possible to present the dividing line in the heart of Europe as a natural frontier between two permanently estranged worlds. Simultaneously, the lead weight of Stalinism that weighed so heavily on the workers' movement and on the mass movement the world over is lifting. This double thaw will gradually liberate enormous energies once suppressed by the subordination of the exploited and oppressed masses' interests to those of states, "camps", blocks, diplomatic manoeuvres and specific interests. In the short-term, the disarray within the workers movement caused by the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, which did not lead to the victory of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution, gives backing to the capitalist ideological and political offensive on an international scale. But this will be gradually counter-balanced by the effects of the economic crisis, the increase in tensions between imperialism and the "Third World", and the upturn of the mass movement in several countries, as has been strikingly confirmed by the Gulf war.

In the longer term, the internationalization of production and the division of labour, cultural exchanges and the rebellion of oppressed nationalities are breaking up the framework of existing states. The world political system is being shaken up at the same time as the American imperialist and Soviet bureaucratic leaderships have

increasing difficulty in dominating the whole world as they would like, in spite of their agreements.

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 and nuclear weapons, for the defence of the environment, for the right to abortion, for the self-determination of oppressed nations, against racism, against austerity and unemployment, against imperialism, famine and the scourge of the Third World debt, against the privileges and dictatorships of the bureaucracies.

We must struggle for a way out of the crisis that safeguards the possibilities of social emancipation and completely fulfils the liberating ideal of human rights. This includes not only civic and political rights, but also social rights - the right to work, to a decent standard of living, to healthcare, education and housing. Neither the capitalist jungle nor bureaucratic dictatorships can meet this challenge. Only through their revolutionary overthrow can the unfolding possibilities of a socialist and internationalist solution to the crisis of civilization - based on the potential for struggle and innovation of the proletariat and the oppressed - be successful. The idea that patient sacrifices and sensible reforms are enough to ward off these dangers is an illusion. Reformist preachings have never prevented crises, avoided wars or contained social explosions. Resignation has always been infinitely more costly than struggle.

II. There is no easy capitalist solution to the crisis

The illusions of those intoxicated by the post-war boom, who put all their faith in a social and peaceful capitalism guaranteeing full employment and continuous rises in real wages, have been destroyed. Those who believe in 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 the generalized market economy. This is the very essence of capitalism: exacerbated competition with no regard for its effects on society overall; the never-ending pursuit of short-term profits and the accumulation of wealth, without taking into account the human costs of this mad race and the irreparable damage that it inflicts on nature; the extension of competitive and aggressive behaviour in relationships between individuals, social groups and states; generalized egoism and corruption, the law of the jungle and the "weakest to the wall!".

The long depression that started at the beginning of the 1970s is the result of this pitiless logic. It does not exclude phases of economic upturn. But these 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. The long drawn-out nature of the depression is already an endless nightmare for the poor and those left on the scrap heap. A new, long-term expansion would depend on soaring capitalist profits, a major defeat of the working class, the total reintegration of Eastern Europe, the USSR and China in the world market and a qualitative advance in the economic efficiency of the bourgeois state. None of this has happened. None of it is going to happen in the foreseeable future.

It is the technological development subject to the whims of competition and profit or to bureaucratic irresponsibility that is likely to lead us into disasters, and not the "uncontrollable perversity" of technology or of science in and of themselves. The subordination of science to the narrow imperatives of short-term profit expectations provokes an apparently irresistible craze for technology and the growth of intrinsically dangerous technologies. A combination of a partial, fragmented and mutilated rationality and increasingly explosive global irrationality is winning out alongside capitalism in every domain. Humanity does not need less science or less technology. It needs more science that is in harmony with an awareness of long-term social and historic interests, technology that is subject to the collective understanding and control of the associated producers. It needs collective control over the economy and the future of society through conscious decision-making, based on the knowledge of men and women and not on a resigned submission to "the natural course of events", to supposedly eternal economic laws or a return to obscurantist superstitions and myths.

The struggle to win human rights on all continents is at the heart of this battle. In this struggle, there is no Chinese Wall between the conquest of civil and political rights and of social and economic ones. In a society where the ruling principle is respect for capitalist property and the priority of profit, it is impossible to guarantee that everybody fully and totally enjoys basic democratic rights. The workers' movement must become the most resolute supporter of democratic freedoms, turning the campaign for human rights against the bourgeoisie. 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 these rights in the countries in which it is in power.

Powerful interests are opposed to universal general disarmament, to preventing air, sea and land pollution, to ending the hunger, misery and desperate anxiety of daily life or to overcoming its increasingly murderous antidotes, such as alcohol and drugs. There is no lack of knowledge and resources for putting an end to these plagues. But the interests opposing this have state power at their disposal. The bourgeoisie tries to keep one step ahead by regulating the right to strike, limiting trade-union freedoms for whole categories of workers, controlling the freedom of the press and reinforcing the prerogatives of its political executive, repressive forces and secret services in the name of "internal and external security". The power of the world's masters must be overthrown. The economic strength on which it rests must be taken from

them in order to safeguard the future of the human race.

It is illusory to imagine capitalism without crises of overproduction - veritable insults to humanity given the hundreds of millions of human-beings 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. Since the beginning of the industrial era, periodic crises of overproduction (22 since 1825!) have been inherent to the capitalist mode of production. They cannot be avoided tomorrow any more than they were yesterday. In the face of these lessons, blindness is impermissible. Refusing to clearly see the current dangers is just as irresponsible or as cowardly as it was before Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

III. Catastrophe is already looming in the Third World

The dangers hanging over humanity are already clearly apparent in the dependent countries. Here, 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 - while closing one's eyes to the living conditions of the large majority of people in the capitalist countries.

Apart from a few exceptions, the semi-colonial and dependent countries have suffered a disastrous decline in living standards over the last ten years. A regularly employed wage-worker often earns each year the equivalent of an average monthly or even weekly wage in the imperialist centres.

In the Third World countries, 15 million children die every year from hunger, malnutrition and the lack of healthcare and medicines. Every six years, this silent massacre is causing as many victims as World War II, including the holocaust and Hiroshima. The equivalent of several world wars against children since 1945: this is the balance-sheet of capitalism's survival. The resources to feed, care for, house and educate these children certainly exist on a world scale. On condition that they are not squandered on arms spending. On condition that they are redistributed to help those most in need. On condition that their allocation is no longer entrusted to the grasping interests of chemical, pharmaceutical and agro-industry multi-nationals, and to arms manufacturers' thirst for enrichment.

Pollution is now being deliberately exported from the imperialist heartlands to Third World countries, which are becoming a cheap dustbin for dangerous, non-recyclable industrial waste. This means growing desertification, faster destruction of tropical rain forests and the transfer to these countries of industries that are particularly harmful to the environment, which rapidly creates even worse ecological disasters than those already affecting the richer countries.

The search for hard currency to finance debt interest and the systematic development of export agriculture to the detriment of producing basic foodstuffs worsen trends of undernourishment and famine. The poor countries are now exporting capital to the rich ones, not to mention the effects of corruption and embezzling of funds and public grants by the ruling classes in the Third World for private gain. A concentrated expression of a relapse into dependence and under-development, the debt's iron vice thus strangles above all the poorest of the poor. The struggle against paying the debt begins with day-to-day opposition to the policies of wage austerity, which put a terrible pressure on purchasing power; to the massive cuts in public education and health budgets and the dismantling of the public sector; to ecological damage linked to uncontrolled capital penetration and to the absolute priority given to exports to the detriment of food cultivation.

Workers, peasants and the underprivileged of the towns and shantytowns are resisting 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, attempts at political and trade-union organization independent of the state and the bourgeoisie, as well as some pockets of armed resistance.

IV. The crisis of the non-capitalist bureaucratized societies

This crisis has been maturing for years in the USSR, China and Eastern Europe. Mikhail Gorbachev's policy did not provoke it, but simply brought it out into the open. In the USSR and Eastern Europe, this crisis is seen particularly in a slowdown of economic growth, in increasingly pronounced technological backwardness, in social stagnation and regression, in the appearance of new, widespread poverty, in deep moral and ecological crises, in the brutal loss of credibility of political institutions, in the renaissance of independent political opinion, and in the first independent political demonstrations by sections of the masses.

Reformist tendencies then appeared inside the ruling bureaucracy. They are striving to save the bureaucracy's power and privileges by means of sometimes radical reforms in the economic as well as in the political, social and cultural arenas. The regime's crisis is neither a crisis of capitalist overproduction, nor a crisis of socialism. Real socialism is inseparable from the greatest possible democracy for the largest numbers of people, the free confrontation of ideas, the independence of mass organizations from the parties and the state, the exercise of power by the masses themselves and self-management. It has never existed in these countries. Associating the word socialism with bureaucratic

monstrosities - such as the Gulag, growing inequalities, generalized corruption, and bureaucratic control of young people, science and literary and artistic creation - was not the least of Stalin's crimes.

But still less do these countries represent any variety of capitalism. The crushing weight of a privileged and parasitical bureaucratic layer usurping workers' power in transitional societies produces a specific form of crisis. There is an increasingly explosive contradiction between the potential for social progress and the economic chaos, inequality, oppression and corruption resulting from bureaucratic dictatorship.

To save its political power, the source and ultimate basis of its privileges, the bureaucracy can undertake reforms. But, in spite of their initial success, the attempted reforms of Tito, Khrushchev, Mao and Deng have all ended in a dead end. Gorbachev's efforts are doomed to the same fate. They have already made possible a deep social differentiation, including within the bureaucracy, with the emergence of political and social forces inclined towards capitalism on the one hand, and a reawakening of mass activity at the base of the workers' movement, unprecedented in the USSR since the Stalinist counter-revolution, on the other.

Confronted by a dramatic slow down in economic growth and alarming indicators of social regression, and fearing an increase in irreversible technological backwardness in relation to the richest imperialist countries, the bureaucratic leaders are in an equally weak position in relation to both imperialism and to the masses in their own countries. This is the root of the contradictions in their policies.

Thus, disarmament initiatives are positive, even if they are determined by an attempt to reduce the burden of military spending on the Soviet economy rather than an internationalist policy. We support de-Stalinization. We support the rejection of the doctrine of "limited sovereignty" - the pretext for Soviet military interventions into East Germany, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. We welcome the de facto recognition of basic political freedoms - even if they are limited and partial - which the workers can and must seize in order to widen the democratic opening and build their own unions and organizations independent of the bureaucracy.

But at the same time we denounce the negotiations and summits between the "big powers", carried out on the backs of peoples in struggle and often with the shared concern of snuffing out centres of revolutionary resistance in Central America, Southern Africa or in Palestine. We fight against the so-called free-market economic reforms, which, sooner or later, will lead to increased social inequality, a resurgence of mass unemployment and the social scourges resulting from it. We fight any - even limited - return to authoritarianism and repression, for example in relation to the nationalities in rebellion.

By crushing basic democratic freedoms and individual liberty, the bureaucratic regimes have given all bourgeois political institutions - identified with democracy - a new value in the eyes of the masses. But the attempts at economic liberalization and the openings to international capital mean austerity policies and inequality, provoking opposition from significant sectors of young people and workers. Faced with this resistance, the supporters of out and out economic liberalization - far from identifying it with a pursuit for democratic openness - will be tempted to resort to new restrictions of rights, indeed to authoritarian repression if the balance of forces permits.

The generalization and consolidation of democratic rights requires institutionalized people's power, soviet power, which includes the right of workers to determine priorities in terms of allocating resources: self-management combined with democratic planning and the power of councils.

V. "Market socialism" is impossible

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 massive recourse to market mechanisms 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 Western reformist ideologues and by a number of "economic experts" and ideologues of the bureaucracy in the East.

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. 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 needs - comes into being, any economic system will always be constrained by a relative shortage of productive resources. This means that certain needs are 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 relatively scarce resources.

In capitalist society, these decisions are decided by the big companies and the very rich, that is by the imperative needs of profit and accumulation of 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. Massive investment is made in producing less and less useful - sometimes dangerous - gadgets while even the most elementary needs of hundreds of millions of human beings remain unsatisfied.

In the bureaucratically-dominated

Soviet economy and similar formations, these priorities in the use of resources were imposed in a despotic and arbitrary manner, which led to enormous and growing waste and lack of proportion.

In a socialist economy managed by the producers/consumers/citizens, these priorities will be democratically decided by the toiling masses. The priority needs thus determined will be the basis of the plan. Socialist planning is indispensable for ensuring that these priorities are respected. Market mechanisms subordinated to the plan will give consumers the greatest possible control in order to ensure a free choice of high quality consumer goods. But this subordination to the plan should prevent trends in economic development flowing from laws which impose themselves "spontaneously" on the workers but ensure that they are consciously decided, particularly in questions of employment, and the duration and intensity of work, in growing equality, in priorities in health, education, protection of the environment and culture.

It is this relationship between democratic, planned self-management and the satisfaction of consumer needs which makes a genuinely socialist economy superior to the capitalist economy, including in its "welfare state" form.

The associated producers will set free an enormous creative and inventive potential of careful and thrifty managers, when they see in practice their ability to ensure that high quality goods and services are freely available. From this point the "enterprise spirit", in the rational sense of the term, which under the capitalist regime 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 industrialised countries), will be extended to the vast majority of the producers. Basing itself on the enormous potential of computer technology, further encouraged by the possibility of a radical reduction in the working day and week, taking on board 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 however much its worst features are ameliorated by the "Welfare State".

The Yugoslav experience has tragically confirmed that workers' self-management - even 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 sack 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' decisions (among others, 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 sack themselves?

In the transition from capitalism to socialism, recourse to market mechanisms remains necessary, including in sectors where an insufficient objective socialization of work ill prepares collective ownership: handicraft industries, some distribution and service sectors (such as repairs), and so on. They can serve to eliminate shortage by breaking monopolies that are not encouraged to take consumer needs sufficiently into account in agriculture, the retail trade and certain services, on condition that private monopolies do not substitute for state monopoly.

But this is only conceivable in the framework of a conscious effort to gradually reduce market relations and the adoption of political democracy as the main regulatory factor. The use of money and the partial and provisional functioning of the market must therefore take place within a democratically planned economy - that is, within an overall political decision-making structure that ensures that partial market mechanisms do not exacerbate social inequalities, do not operate to the detriment of the least well-off in the population and do not cut into the system of social protection that assures the satisfaction of the basic needs of all citizens. It presumes a strengthening of democratic socialist mechanisms, of public control over all the structures of economic and social life.

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

VI. Only authentic, democratic and pluralist socialism can solve the world crisis

A radical solution of the world crisis involves challenging the generalized market economy, private ownership of the means of production, the sovereignty of nation states and the bureaucratic grip over systems of social protection. It implies the perspective of a democratic, pluralist, self-managing Democratic World Socialist Federation.

The potential for progress inherent in science and human intelligence can only blossom under a truly socialist and democratic regime, where science and technology are at the service of men and women, and submitted to open and critical public control. Culture and further education will be completely open to everyone for the first time. This will not only result in a boom in the consumption of culture, but also in cultural creation, the liberation of a gigantic reserve of still-unexplored energy. Scientific development could 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 is

used creatively, which is inconceivable without accountable, collective behaviour of freely-associated producers and without generalized self-management.

There is constance resistance by the exploited to the illdoing of captialism. But it is hampered by the idea that there is now no longer any viable "model of society" beyond capitalism. This idea is fed by two things. First, the prejudices that have been propagated for thousands of years by the ruling classes: "there have always been rich and poor", "without the incentive of private profit, nobody would work"; and for two centuries by the bourgeoisie: "the market is a good thing because it is natural"…. As if the market was not a human institution, only recently generalized and forged out of the pillage and violence of primitive accumulation!

Already today significant minorities are challenging "the work ethic" and the unlimited accumulation of material goods as the supreme goal of social life. For millions of workers, for many young people and intellectuals, working less to live their lives differently is more important than working long hours in order to consume more. For millions of men and women conscious of ecological dangers, the quality of life, protection of the environment and respect for the nature of which we are part are more important than the unlimited accumulation of possessions.

The second factor, more difficult to overcome, is not bourgeois ideology but the painful experiences endured by the international working class. After the double failure of Stalinism and social-democracy, with its pretension of changing capitalism gradually and peacefully, the international working class will not re-appropriate the revolutionary socialist project through a simple battle of ideas, necessary as that is. It will only succeed through new formative experiences, new practices and new partial victories capable of throwing off the weight of past defeats and disillusions. A society of free and equal women and men, liberated from the constraints of wage slavery, oppression and exploitation, is more than ever necessary and possible. On condition that productive resources, human and material, are redistributed according to criteria of solidarity incompatible with the dictatorship of the market; and on condition that this redistribution goes alongside a new technological revolution that respects sources of wealth (natural and human).

A radically different motivation of economic behaviour could be based on the interests of all in a continuous reduction of mechanical, repetitive work, which is experienced by most producers as forced labour. The realization of a new citizenship, for the first time establishing society's control over a state and administrative apparatus fated to wither away, supposes a radical reduction in working hours, in fact by half. A pilot measure for all socialist revolutions, this demand is not a demagogic pipe-dream. Even conservative sources estimate that at least 50% of the total productive potential is unused or used for destructive and harmful ends (arms production), or simply wasted. With the rational use of these resources for productive and useful ends for humanity it would be possible to move towards the abolition of poverty and under-development in the Third World, while at the same time qualitatively improving workers' living standards in today's advanced countries. By using all available human resources, this objective is perfectly compatible with a radical reduction in working hours on a world scale, thus giving everyone the necessary time to participate fully and actively in democratic self-management and self-administration.

Initially, planning - even bureaucratic - allowed the USSR to be transformed in the space of only two generations from an under-developed country into the second-strongest power in the world. What has failed in the USSR and Eastern Europe is not socialist planning. It is the hybrid combination of bureaucratically-centralized "planning", the survival of important market mechanisms and the search for private consumer privileges by the bureaucratic managers of the state economy. This is the root of the chaos and the growing social injustice.

Pluralist and living socialist democracy, the free confrontation of different priorities, the independence of political and social organizations from the state apparatus are not luxuries reserved for the richest countries that the poorest countries must put off until better times. For all socialist revolutions they are a functional necessity for overcoming contradictions in the economy, reducing inequalities and conquering injustices by developing the means to overcome difficulties through collective awareness. Men's and women's civic and social rights, a state based on law, unrestricted political democracy, democracy of the associated producers, democratically-centralized planning and the necessary but limited recourse to market mechanisms are all complementary for building a socialist society. Just one missing link in this chain is enough to pervert the whole process.

VII. The struggle for socialism is based on the united mobilization of the proletariat and its allies

Men and women wage workers, forced to sell their labour power, represent the only social force capable of paralysing and overthrowing capitalist society and building a society based on the cooperation and solidarity of the vast majority of the population. This is why only the working class in the broad sense of the term can be the backbone of all the exploited and oppressed in the struggle for socialism.

During the past few decades social movements such as those around feminism, ecology, peace, anti-racism and gay and lesbian liberation, have developed on the fringe of - or even in contradiction with - the workers' movement. They reply to the new or worsened contradictions caused by the effects of the crisis in capitalist as well as in bureaucratic societies. They

express a deeper and broader awareness of the multiple facets of oppression, and have succeeded in a positive way in incorporating very large popular sectors into the struggle, in particular young people. The feminist movement is a response to the oldest oppression known by humanity. It defends the interests of more than half the human race. It is an essential dimension of all struggles for human liberation. The socialist society that we want must satisfy the demands and objectives advanced by the social movements: real equality between women and men, sexual freedom, respect for the environment and the establishment of harmonious relations with nature. The working class must fully take up these struggles.

The fact that this has not been the case is the responsibility of the traditional workers' organizations, but is also due to the weakness and errors of the revolutionary vanguard. Actively participating in these movements, we fight for their convergence with workers' struggles and for the workers' movement to become conscious of the legitimacy and subversive potential of these movements, at the same time respecting their autonomy.

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

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 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.

The heterogeneity of the proletariat has existed since the origins of wage labour. It is accompanied by divisions which result from the segmentation of the labour market. Along with the intentions of the bourgeoisie and its states, the combined and uneven development of productive forces have always resulted in maintaining and reinforcing this division of the working class. It is expressed from one end of the planet to another in wage differentials, the differences between old and young, men and women, workers and unemployed, "nationals" and immigrants, skilled and unskilled, manual workers and intellectuals.

But the internationalization of the productive forces, the advent of multinational corporations and the third technological revolution are promoting the gradual convergence of struggles between workers in the Ruhr or Los Angeles, in São Paulo or Bombay. On the other hand, the crisis leads to deepening differences and inequalities. The explosion of youth unemployment in a number of countries produces a sub-proletarian layer that has never worked, that is marginalized and outside the traditions of proletarian solidarity.

The beginnings of a dual society, or something even more fragmented, 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, corresponds to a deliberate plan by capital to weaken the labour movement once and for all. Opposing this with the demand for reabsorption of unemployment via a radical cut in working hours without loss of pay or work speed ups is a central task.

The proletariat - that is, all those forced to sell their labour power - 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. A blurred frontier both separates and unites the proletariat in the cities and the semi-proletariat in the fields (independent peasants who do not have enough land to earn their living all year round, and are forced to take on temporary paid work), including poor peasants. The potential for mobilizing these social classes has already been demonstrated in the growing movement of land occupations, indeed in 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 at odds with the social order. They can serve as a base to be manoeuvred by populist, reactionary forces. But, although the workers' organizations and the proletariat as a class have until now seldom acted as defenders of these disinherited, defending their material and social interests and stimulating and helping their own self-organization, the fight for "urban reform" can become one of the motor 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 remains politically structured by populist forces, if not traditional bourgeois ones. In these countries, the struggle to win this political independence remains the primary task.

In the imperialist heartlands, as in Third World countries and the bureaucratic states, the proletariat - alongside the poor peasantry - is the only force capable of laying the basis for a new society. However, while the bourgeoisie is better organized internationally than in the last century, a mass workers' International no longer exists. It is necessary to

overcome this crisis of political leadership via the development of new generations of militants, the assimilation of lessons from the past, the accumulation of new partial victories that can help them to regain confidence, the re-establishment 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 political vanguard.

VIII. The struggle against women's oppression

Women make up 53% of the world's population and, counting both domestic work and waged work, carry out the majority of working hours realized in the world. On the other hand, when it is remunerated, women's work is very largely undervalued in comparison to men's. In addition, women's economic decision-making power bears no relation to the work they do. They are kept in a subordinate position and are not even able to control their own situation. The responsibility for the care and upbringing of the next generation falls on women's shoulders. They do this without the necessary economic and practical means, and most of the time without men's support. This situation puts women in a very vulnerable position economically and socially, subject to degradation, health hazards, violence and sexual abuse.

Although the situation of women varies from country to country, it is still true to say that women everywhere are victims of economic exploitation and political subjugation. They are the first to be hit by all sorts of disasters: droughts, poverty, war, economic austerity measures. Women are the most vulnerable section of the toiling masses. Thus, women and children make up 85% of all the refugees in the world. The fight against women's oppression is a fundamental part of the social struggle. It is not simply a question of democratic demands or civil rights - however important these aspects. 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 on demand, full equality at work and in training, sexual freedom, freedom from sexual abuse and violence, and ending their exclusive responsibility for domestic work.

We unstintingly support the struggle and the self-organization of women for ending 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: No women's liberation without socialism - that is, without the abolition of both capitalist and patriarchal private property. No socialism without women's liberation: while half of humanity is oppressing the other half, neither will be free. 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.

IX. The struggle against national oppression

The national question remains one of the most explosive in the world. In the Third World countries, beyond those remaining colonies (Puerto Rico, Antilles, Kanaky …), "decolonization" has not led to full national sovereignty for the countries concerned. Under forms going from direct politico-military domination to financial, technological and cultural dependence, they remain subjected to imperialist hegemony. These countries' dependence - with all its implications (policies of privatization/denationalization) - is tending to worsen under the yoke of the debt. Under the pretext of fighting against drug trafficking, imperialism is redeploying its direct military presence in Latin America, a phenomena that is likely to be extended to other regions of the world. The control of audio-visual communication by the multinationals and the imperialist states, with the production and diffusion by satellite of programmes, gives them growing means for cultural manipulation. The colonial carve-up of Third World states and the specific formation of ruling elites, as well as the nationalist elites set up by imperialism, leads to the existence of nations that have been carved up and oppressed national and ethnic minorities.

Even in the imperialist heartlands where the process of forming nation states has continued for more than a century, oppressed national minorities exist (Black Americans, the peoples of Quebec and Ireland, the oppressed peoples in the Spanish state…). In the case of Ireland or the Spanish state, this oppression has fuelled powerful mass national liberation movements. The attempts of the British or Spanish governments to resolve these problems through a combination of brutal repression and limited political reforms have come up against the refusal of the peoples concerned. The idea according to which these questions can be resolved in the framework of re-jigging the European Community is an illusion. On the contrary, it is possible that the economic, social and territorial imbalances provoked by the Single Act will create a resurgence of unresolved or badly solved national demands.

The current crisis of the non-capitalist bureaucratic regimes is also expressed by an explosion of demands and mass national movements. They show the incompatibility between national democratic rights and a bureaucratic and police dictatorship of which chauvinism has been an integral part. The continuing forms of national oppression in the countries in question are extremely varied: domination of peripheral nations by the bureaucracy of the majority nation; constraints exercised by a "big brother" bureaucracy over neighbouring states of the same nature; oppression of national or ethnic minorities by majority nations inside states or federated republics that are themselves dominated… The masses' anti-bureaucratic aspirations have found a global political expression in national demands, in which linguistic, cultural, economic, ecological aspirations and the demand for

national sovereignty are invested.

Concrete political solutions cannot be defined in a general way, but only case by case, starting from revolutionary democratic principles. Revolutionary Marxists are above all internationalists. They always defend the common interests of workers of all nationalities, without subordinating them to particular interests. They fight against all forms of racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, hatred and ethnic contempt and discrimination, whatever their objective roots or subjective motivation. But the starting point of all real internationalist policies must be the radical distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressors, on the basis of an irreconcilable opposition to the latter and unconditional solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors, while unceasingly combating the deadly poison of chauvinism. This attitude must be translated into 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 in a federal or confederal framework with other nations, freely consented to and freely reversible. To this end the workers in the dominant nation must demonstrate their unconditional solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed nation, not only to strengthen the fight, but also in order to weaken the state of their own class oppressor.

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 tutelage exercised over the least nation or ethnic group, but also a righting of centuries-old wrongs of national or racial oppression by "positive action" in favour of oppressed nations. Only then can a strict equality be established between all nations, languages and ethnic groups. 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 while maintaining its internationalist solidarity with the struggles of all workers, including those of the oppressing nations.

X. A revolutionary internationalist answer to the crisis

During the last few decades, there has been an accelerating internationalization of productive forces. Multinationals, several hundred of which alone dominate the world market, are increasingly escaping the control of any government, including those of the main imperialist powers. They transfer their investments, production and distribution centres from country to country in relation to the sole criterion of maximizing their profit. The internationalization of productive forces, capital, services and the division of labour leads to a growing internationalization of the class struggle.

By creating the first workers' internationals over a century ago, the workers' movement was able to take the initiative. The conservatism and chauvinism of the bureaucratic apparatuses have led to a retreat and to collaboration with "national" bosses, and a turning away from an international strategy of counter-attacking the trusts.

In the imperialist countries, this regression can take the form of classical chauvinism: the Germans, or the Japanese, or the Brazilians, or the Americans - exploiters and exploited mixed up - are supposed to be the cause of unemployment! It can take the new form of lining up on the side of the Europe of the trusts and bosses, an affluent "Euro-chauvinism", which is nothing but a variant of this reactionary nationalism. The only useful response to the global strategy of the multinationals is international solidarity by the workers of every country, against their national bosses as well as foreign ones. This can develop through coordinating trade-union activities across frontiers, fighting for the upgrading rather than downgrading of wages and working conditions in various countries. Far from damaging industrialization and job-creation in the Third World, such coordination could replace the "model of development" that is based on exporting low wages with one centred on eliminating poverty, enlarging the internal market and the massive transfer of up-to-date technology to these countries.

Not content with simply demanding the total and immediate cancellation of the Third World and East European debt, we agitate for the workers' movement and the working class in the creditor countries to make this their objective and mobilize for it. It is an obligation of basic solidarity with our least favoured and most exploited class brothers and sisters. It is a fight against the division of the working class, its racist and xenophobic consequences inside the imperialist heartlands themselves (in particular against immigrant workers), and the fascist dynamic that could develop out of this.

There is not a single fight against the domination of capital (from the Russian, Finnish or Hungarian to the Spanish and Yugoslav revolutions), against the yoke of colonialism (from the Indo-Chinese revolution to the African wars of liberation) or against neo-colonial tyrannies (Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador and so on) that has not come up against military intervention or threats by the imperialist powers. Imperialism has put these colonial or neo-colonial regimes of exploitation and dictatorship, poverty and humiliation, in the driving seat. This is what the masses rise up against, and not because of some plot by a "subversive international centre".

Revolutions cannot be exported. On the other hand, counter-revolution is being exported under the cloak of pacts and imperialist or bureaucratic alliances. Confronted by this

aggression, the value of massive international solidarity has proven its worth. It saved the Russian revolution in 1920. It contributed to the defeat of American imperialism in Vietnam. It put a damper on threats of military intervention against Cuba or Nicaragua, although without succeeding in breaking through the economic blockade inflicted on these countries.

In Indo-China and Nicaragua, the price exacted by the counter-revolutionary interventions during many years is extremely high. It has left their peoples destitute, along with ruined economies that are incapable of assuring a rapid improvement in living standards. Militant solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles, along with economic and military aid that can help bring about the quickest possible victory at the least cost, are a necessary response to the internationalization of the counter-revolution.

The social crisis increasingly takes on a global dimension. No serious solutions can be given on a national level to the crucial questions of disarmament, energy, the destruction of the ecosphere and 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 has abandoned the reactionary myth of achieving the building of socialism in one country or a single camp, emphasizing the globalization of big problems. This diagnosis is more realistic than those of Stalin, Khrushchev, Mao or Deng, but it does not draw the same conclusions as Marx and Engels, according to which only a world socialist revolution transforming the main industrial countries can resolve the crisis of humanity.

On the contrary, the stress that Gorbachev puts on globalization stems from another reactionary myth, according to which it is possible to resolve the big problems through stepping up peaceful cooperation with imperialism. Insofar as this policy exercises pressure over the mass movements in the direction of a compromise with imperialism, it contributes to perpetuating two oppressive systems: without revolution, the democratization of the bureaucratic workers' states, like the socialization of capitalism, is just a dead-end illusion.

XI. No socialism without revolution, no revolution without a revolutionary party

The establishment of real and democratic socialism can take no other path than that of breaking with capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships and overturning them via mass mobilization - in a word, revolution. The balance-sheet of the century that is drawing to a close is not simply the failure of Stalinism. It is just as much that of the failure 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 holy alliance with its capitalist partners. It is likewise that of bourgeois nationalism in the colonial countries, which is incapable of bringing about 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 counter-revolutions - unhappily much more tumultuousthan even the most lucid revolutionaries had ever imagined.

The masses do not always act as revolutionaries but only occasionally, through necessity, when they can no longer tolerate the intolerable, when they are transformed and break the circle of submission during a revolutionary crisis. These crises are periodically inevitable. The task of a vanguard conscious of this reality is to aid the daily accumulation of mass experiences, to help to bring together and educate the most combative forces and to draw out those goals that would lead to victory in a revolutionary crisis rather than leading to counter-revolution, for which the exploited and oppressed have paid a high price over long years.

Both exploiters and governments identify the revolution with violence and terror. They cloud issues and responsibilities and confuse revolution and counter-revolution. As if their order was not one of daily violence, poverty, hunger and forced labour - much more devastating than any revolution. As if counter-revolutions and the totalitarian dictatorships (fascism, Nazism!) or semi-fascist dictatorships to which they often lead have not unleashed violence and caused incomparable losses. The millions of deaths in the Gulag are not the responsibility of the Russian revolution, but of the Stalinist counter-revolution. In eight years, imperialist aggression against the Nicaraguan revolution created as many victims as the Somoza dictatorship did before the revolution, without mentioning the American bombing of Vietnam. Who can estimate the cost of resignation and lost revolutions?

One hears that the era of revolutions is over, that it belonged to a heroic bygone century, that revolutions have become impossible in the face of the strength of imperialist powers armed to the teeth. And yet the Vietnamese liberation struggle put an end to American intervention using unprecedented methods. And yet the Cuban revolution triumphed over the barbaric imperialist colossus. And yet 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 irreversible bureaucratic dictatorships. Yesterday, they were still claiming that "under communism" the monster state had devoured and destroyed society. But now we are seeing this society reawakening and fighting back. It is overthrowing the bureaucrats and breaking their yoke.

A new chapter of history is opening:

– In the countries of Eastern Europe, new pages are going to be written, not starting from scratch, but from the experiences already accumulated in 1953 during the East Berlin strikes, in

1956 during the Polish and Hungarian uprisings, in 1971-1976-1980 in Poland and now today in all these countries, in the USSR and China. The strategic elements of the political anti-bureaucratic revolution are being drawn out from all these struggles: the independence of mass organizations from the state, democratic guarantees against privileges and the political monopoly of the party, separation of the party and the state, the exercise of power by democratically elected bodies, the disbanding of repressive forces, self-organization and self-defence, generalized self-management....

– In the contemporary imperialist states, revolutionary strategy will combine the heritage of the first half of the century (democratic demands, workers' control over production, dual power, general strikes, division of repressive apparatuses, self-defence, insurrections) with that of the 1960s and 1970s, from the French May to the Portuguese revolution: generalized social self-organization, aspiration to self-management, autonomous women's liberation movements....

– In the dependent countries, crucial experiences, victories or defeats, have confirmed the alternative: either socialist revolution or a caricature of revolution. This neither implies an underestimation of national or democratic tasks, nor confusing the beginning of the revolutionary process with its goal. It does not eliminate the possibility of alliances, but it excludes any subordination to the so-called national bourgeoisie. More recently, in the light of the Nicaraguan revolution, Latin American politico-military organizations have traced out the path of a synthesis going beyond both the conception of the revolutionary "focus" and "prolonged guerrilla warfare", defining new relationships between political and mass organizations and the armed struggle, between guerrilla struggle, prolonged warfare and mass insurrections, for those countries where the armed struggle remains an indispensable dimension of revolutionary combat due to the nature of the regimes in place.

The building of a new revolutionary leadership remains on the agenda. It means overcoming the legacy bequeathed by Stalinism, reformism and petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism. It means political and cultural reconstruction, through new forces coming into struggle, through the reorganization of the social and union movements and through the regroupment of new vanguards. In a number of dependent countries, the reorganization of the workers' movement has already gone well beyond a small vanguard and has massively affected the trade-union and political movement. In the imperialist heartlands themselves, the working class is from time to time reviving experiences of self-organization.

The danger of bureaucratization is not inherent 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 within itself 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 internal democracy in all organizations which endeavours to correct and combat the social and cultural inequalities in their ranks, mainly by education and a collective practice that increases awareness and participation of all their members.

XII. For new mass revolutionary parties and a new mass revolutionary International

The official revelations of Stalin's crimes by the Soviet authorities highlights the meaning of the unremitting struggle led by the Left Opposition 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 Soviet, Chinese or East European workers in the face without shame or guilt. Faced with the Stalinist counter-revolution, only our current saved the honour and the continuity of communism.

The simultaneous construction of revolutionary organizations in each country, as well-rooted as possible in their national realities, and of a revolutionary International is a question of programme. For revolutionaries also, existence determines consciousness. Necessary as they are, international solidarity, support for struggles and exchanges of experience are insufficient. It is by building an International together and developing its programme collectively that we can see the world simultaneously through the eyes of the Soviet worker or the Chinese struggling against the bureaucracy, through those of the super-exploited toilers, peasants or women in the Third World, through those of the British miner, the Japanese auto worker or the American teacher. It is only in this way that we can always be simultaneously on the side of the anti-bureaucratic movement in Eastern Europe and on the side of the oppressed crushed by imperialism, as well as on the side of workers in the imperialist cities struggling against the bosses and their state; that we can keep as our only guide and compass the general social and historic interests of the proletariat, and not the 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, unfortunately there is 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 was declared, have given credence to the idea that internationalism only consists of good intentions and breaks down in practice when mass parties face critical situations. The experience of the Communist International after Lenin's death, dictating changes in orientation - and of leaders - to member parties via decisions emanating from the "centre", has aroused strong and legitimate distrust towards the danger of international bureaucratic centralism. The equally disastrous experience of non-separation between the party and the state, and of the subordination of "fraternal parties" to the diplomatic and state interests of the "socialist homeland", whether it be Soviet or Chinese, have reinforced concern for national independence among a number of revolutionary organizations. Finally, the material weight of the post-revolutionary bureaucratized non-capitalist states pressed down heavily on the international workers' movement, including on revolutionary organizations, concerned with keeping material aid flowing and with avoiding political confrontation - even if this meant putting internationalist imperatives concerning those workers and peoples who are victims of the bureaucracy to one side, with the evident risk of slipping towards "national communism".

However, in an increasingly interdependent world, internationalism is not a moral rule but a strategic necessity. Building an International is an essential task that cannot be put off until tomorrow. The Fourth International today is an irreplaceable instrument for advancing in this direction. We know that the construction of mass revolutionary parties in a series of countries and building a mass revolutionary International will not necessarily take place at the same tempo. Every time that the possibility arises in a country to build a democratic mass workers' party independent from the state, the bourgeoisie or the bureaucracy and guaranteeing tendency rights, and every time an organization exists whose objectives and direction in the struggle for winning power we share, we have no reason to stay on the sidelines and cultivate the identity of a sect. On the contrary, we propose bringing revolutionaries together in the same democratic organization, the better to turn together towards left reformist or populist currents and 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 fighting to build a mass revolutionary International founded on a programme of defending the interests of the exploited and oppressed in every country and joint action along these lines, we claim the right to do this openly ourselves.

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 tasks and practice. 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 topical question and the second simply 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 establish any particular principle on which to model the workers' movement. We only distinguish ourselves from other workers' parties 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 whole movement.

We call for a united struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression everywhere in the world; for socialist and pluralist democracy; for an economy based the satisfaction of people's needs by freely-associated producers taking over the large-scale means of production and communication; for total, universal disarmament; for women's liberation and equality between the sexes; for the protection of the planet and the survival of the human race.

"New world order" or international instability

1 January 1996

The reduction of the Soviet Union to the rank of a regional power could on the other hand sharpen inter-imperialist tensions over the question of international leadership. From now on the United States, Europe and Japan are going to feel they have a free hand to establish neo-colonial domination not only in the regions traditionally considered as their zones of influence but at a worldwide level.

Through impetuous development of the productive forces, even though this was at the cost of growing impoverishment of the Third World, capitalism has exacerbated the contradictions of the closed and bureaucratically planned economies and ruined the hopes of "catching up and overtaking" the West once announced by Khrushchev. The collapse of the bureaucratic regimes under the impact of the awakening of the workers and peoples of these countries, and also the pressure of the world market, is turning at first to imperialism's advantage. The overthrow of the dictatorships is a victory of the oppressed, but the affirmation of trends towards capitalist restoration is a defeat for the historic interests of the exploited. This victory however does not offer a

real solution to the long wave of stagnation and economic crisis that started in the mid-1970s. For that capitalism would have to win new space and new markets larger than simply Eastern Europe, while even here it is already running into serious obstacles.

The existence of the bureaucratic dictatorships in Eastern Europe was capitalism's best guard against socialist aspirations in the developed countries. Their collapse thus opens up new perspectives. The era when the international workers' movement situated itself in relation to the victory or degeneration of the Russian Revolution is coming to an end. While the Russian Revolution as a formative experience constitutes a historical and programmatic contribution that will always be necessary for a real project of socialist transformation, it no longer represents the central strategic reference in relation to which revolutionaries throughout the world define themselves.

The founding programme of the Fourth International made a synthesis of the Bolshevik experience and of the struggle against the Stalinist degeneration of the first victorious socialist revolution. This gain remains necessary but it is no longer sufficient. The failure of the bureaucratic command economy, the lessons of recent revolutionary struggles from Poland in 1981 to Sandinista Nicaragua, the power of democratic aspirations at a world wide level, make it possible to identify aspects of the programme that has to be put into practice to make the socialist project attractive and credible on the threshold of the 21st century.

The desire to decide consciously on one's fate has become the characteristic feature common to popular movements, whether in Eastern Europe, the imperialist metropolitan centres or the dependent countries. The perspective of a democracy which is not limited to the right to vote and parliament, which brings together citizen and producer, full participation in decisions and full control over their implementation, expresses the evolution of societies where the broadest democracy appears not only as a condition of justice but also of economic efficiency. Increasingly complex societies cannot be managed by a system of economic centralization and monopoly of information, reducing democracy simply to the political domain. Generalized self-management is taking shape as the socialist alternative to Stalinism. Conceived not simply as a fragmented management of production units that ignore each other, but as an overall and decentralized mode of regulation, this perspective is the only one that can provide an answer both to the dictatorship of the market and to that of the bureaucracy. The revolutionary programme of our epoch will be the synthesis of new experiences of the exploited and oppressed at an international level. The Fourth International contributes its share of experience, of theoretical and political continuity in this struggle.

II. The general framework

In 1989, after decades of repression and paralysis, the masses of Eastern Europe suddenly made their appearance on the historical scene. But 1990 has seen imperialism throw itself into the breach, mark some points in Eastern Europe, and win a striking success with the absorption of the German Democratic Republic by the Federal Republic. US imperialism has profited from the weakening of the Soviet bureaucracy and its open cooperation to intervene massively in the Arab-Persian Gulf in order to impose its conception of the new world order. These contradictory developments express changes which had started well before the upheavals in Eastern Europe.

- Since the mid-1970s, the gap between labour productivity, capacity for economic innovation and broad social reproduction in the USSR/Eastern Europe and in the imperialist centres has increased in favour of the latter. The bankruptcy of the bureaucratically planned economies of Eastern Europe is the result of a structural crisis: since the end of the phase of intensive accumulation, this system has not been able to rival the imperialist countries in terms of productivity. Since the mid-1970s, rather than getting smaller this gap has again increased to the advantage of the latter.
- Without undergoing an historic defeat, the workers' movement in the imperialist centres has suffered enough partial defeats to allow the bourgeoisie to regain the initiative.
- In the eyes of millions of workers, the bankruptcy of Stalinism damages the credibility of the communist project as a project of classless society and the revolutionary strategy for getting there.
- Social-democracy has been an equal failure in its claim to bring about a radical reformist transformation of society, undermining the credibility of the socialist project itself.

This degradation in the relationship of forces is illustrated by the imperialist unification of Germany, the electoral failure of the Sandinista Front and developments in Central America, the negotiations in Southern Africa, the threats against Cuba, the marginalization of independent socialist alternatives in the first

elections in Eastern Europe, the weak levels of activity of the workers' movement in the USA and Japan and its defensive situation in Western Europe. Revolutionary movements have been pushed onto the defensive on several fronts of the international class struggle.

However, nothing is consolidated or stabilized.

The crisis of imperialist leadership is not resolved. The project of capitalist restoration in East Europe, the USSR or China is confronted by considerable economic, social and political obstacles. The long wave of economic stagnation that started in the early 1970s has neither been overcome nor controlled. The deteriorating situation in the dependent countries means that social explosions are on the agenda.

It is thus world instability and not a new world order which is well and truly on the agenda. This augurs major confrontations, whose outcome depends on the capacity of the workers' movement to win back its independence vis à vis the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, and to define a project drawing on the lessons of the big failures this century. But the impasse of reformist policies in the capitalist countries and the bankruptcy of the bureaucratic system result in doubt being cast on any socialist project. This loss of credibility does not prevent social explosions, fightbacks or big democratic mobilizations, but it puts a brake on this social energy being crystallized around a new revolutionary project of social transformation and weighs heavily on the development of class - consciousness.

III. The Gulf war, a concentration of the trends and contradictions of the new situation

For the first time since the Vietnam war, US imperialism has taken the risk of massive military intervention. In doing this it has benefited from the active support of the other imperialist powers, the cover of international institutions and, for the first time in such a case, direct collaboration with the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies.

For imperialism, there are several elements at stake in this new test of strength. They are:

- Ensuring strengthened control over oil supplies, and protection of the states whose function of directly recycling oil dollars into the imperialist economies is more necessary than ever, particularly in relation to needs to finance the American budget deficit and the investments required by restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe.
- To reorganize the imperialist military machine, to give it a new legitimacy, and to reorientate it in direction of the dependent countries.
- To nip in the bud the struggles for popular liberation or even the remains of populist or nationalist resistance by the bourgeoisies of the third world tempted to profit from a world reorganization to extend their regional influence to the detriment of imperialist interests.
- Finally and above all to counterbalance by military supremacy its economic decline faced with Japanese and German rivals, demanding from them and its oil partners in the Gulf, to finance its military effort, that of its auxiliaries as well as trade advantages.

This operation is not without risks for imperialism itself, and could even lead to a regional flare-up with worldwide repercussions.

It it is not the cause of a new recession whose indices were already perceptible beforehand, both in the United States and in Britain, the Gulf crisis nevertheless highlights the structural fragility of the world economy and categorically gives the lie to the triumphalist proclamations on the "end of the crisis". The war could embroil the whole region without offering a speedy overall solution.

A protracted war would economically weaken the powers the most involved, and would revive the rivalries between the dominant imperialist powers seeking a new leadership. The effects of the Gulf war and the efforts to impose a new world order could stimulate a new wave of anti-imperialist struggles. In the United States and in many of the allied forces' countries, the first mobilizations against the war and for the withdrawal of troops have shown the possibilities of a powerful anti-war movement.

IV. The decomposition of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe and its repercussions

- The fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the Soviet regime's convulsions are the major political event since World War II and the Chinese revolution. The generalized crisis of the bureaucratic system has not spared any of the countries concerned, underlining its historic failure.

The mass uprisings in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania, expressing democratic aspirations and a rejection of a system based on privileges and oppression, have released a formidable social energy. In this sense, they signified a beginning of anti-bureaucratic revolution.

Aiming to use reforms to unblock Soviet society and avoid the risk of the same social explosions brewing in Poland, Gorbachev's policy has remained on the fence. The social roots of the crisis of bureaucratic rule and the attempts at reform lie in the antagonism which sets bureaucracy against proletariat in societies which have changed. Bureaucratic management, which expresses the form taken by specific exploitation within these societies, in in contradiction with cultural, technical and social development and puts on the agenda an attempt to restructure the form of domination.

In no case has it been able to offer an attractive outlet for popular aspirations to a better life, which are expressed in an increasingly independent way. At the same time, Gorbachev's attempt to forestall the avalanche of political and social crisis by a political reform preceding an economic one, the space opened up by the reconstitution of public opinion and forms of independent political organization, and Soviet disengagement causing the wall of fear of military intervention to fall, have all contributed to precipitating the explosion.

An international equilibrium has been upset without a new one in sight. What is beginning is not only a crisis in Eastern Europe, but a crisis of the international relationships established at the end of the war that could lead to profound national and social crises. Relaunching the policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism ended in a global negotiation of so-called regional conflicts, to the detriment of revolutionary forces.

– These upheavals are already fuelling evolutions inside the international workers' movement.

Social democracy is, for the time being benefiting from the repellent role played by the bureaucratic dictatorships. It tends to appear as a guarantor of a "third way" - that of a democratic and reasonable capitalism.

The "crisis of the international communist movement" has reached a critical point. The social base of the traditional Communist parties has been eroded. Their links with the Soviet bureaucracy have loosened and gone through serious crises.

A broadly open range of organizations and currents, who have their own history and experience, are searching for a political path independent of Stalinism and social democracy: condemnation of Tiananmen, positive reaction to the fall of the Berlin Wall, critical support for the Cuban revolution, an indissociable anti-imperialist and anti-bureaucratic position.

But positive crystallizations of this recomposition remain tiny and dispersed for the time being. The appearance of a socialist, internationalist opposition in Eastern Europe could give them a second wind.

– Stalinism has not been a simple detour from a pre-established historical path, or a simple parenthesis that will be closed. Its monstrosities hang like a millstone and its ghosts haunt the present. The project of socialist liberation carries these burdens - for the overwhelming majority of workers the very words no longer have the same meaning or promise as they did at the beginning of the century. Those peoples massively rejecting Stalinism are not only mobilizing against totalitarian dictatorship and for democratic freedoms. They also express the awareness of economic and social failure, seeing capitalism solely through the prism of its performance in the main imperialist centres. We have not finished paying the price for Stalinism. Memory and hope must be rebuilt.

Political revolution begins with democratic demands (free elections, multi-partyism, trade-union independence, freedom of expression, national self-determination) common to both those forces struggling for socialist democracy and those who want capitalist restoration. These two roads part, however, not only in terms of the social content of the struggle but around the very conception of democracy.

a) Throwing off the bureaucratic yoke frees contradictory currents. Accumulated experiences, from the uprisings in Poland and Hungary in 1956 to the Solidarnosc congress in 1981, passing by Czechoslovakia in 1968, led to the belief that the social base of state-owned property favoured a dynamic of self-management and socialist democracy against the logic of capitalist restoration.

b) This hope has not been confirmed by current developments. In the majority of cases (with the exception of Poland and the strike movements in the USSR), workers have mobilized as citizens around demands of political democracy and not as an independent workers' movement as such. Forms of self-organization have remained much more embryonic than the 1956 Hungarian workers' councils or those expressed at the 1981 Solidarnosc congress. Nuclei of socialist, anti-bureaucratic movements - like those that arose in Hungary in 1956 or in Czechoslovakia - have been dislocated by bureaucratic repression. The situation today is marked by the marginality of revolutionary currents and the weakness of socialist, or even class-conscious, currents.

c) While the August 1980 mass strike and the establishment of Solidarnosc opened the way for mass anti-bureaucratic movements, the relative isolation of the Polish workers and their political disarmament allowed the bureaucracy to inflict a partial defeat via martial law. Although this was insufficient for crushing the social movement, it was enough to atomize it, break its dynamic and influence the political development of the oppositions all over Eastern Europe.

d) The national and democratic demands of nationalities are an integral part of the anti-bureaucratic revolution. They express the legitimate rights of peoples which have suffered centuries of repression. But their current dynamic exposes the workers' movement incapacity to

embody an overall solution and offer a socialist and internationalist solution to the crisis affecting these countries.

e) In spite of their heterogeneity, currents favourable to capitalist economic restoration have the initiative for now. The evolution from the Solidarnosc that organized the strikes to the government supported by Solidarnosc that is opposing them, the trajectory of political currents like the KOR, and the result of the GDR elections are so many indices of the changed situation.

– The situation which has developed since 1989 in Eastern Europe stems from the structural crisis of societies under bureaucratic rule, but also from the international situation of the 1980s. The system established by the bureaucracy has shown itself incapable of any long-term competition in the development of productive forces with the capitalist metropolitan centres. Economic waste appeared as the direct product of bureaucratic power. On the basis of democratic demands (free elections, multi-partyism, trade-union independence, freedom of expression, self-determination of nationalities) different logics are expressed for the overall solution: socialist democracy or integration into the fold of Western capitalism. This difference comes out again in the conception of democracy; either the extension of the power of citizen-producers to all domains in the framework of a system of generalized self-management, or its limitation to a parliamentarism modelled on that of bourgeois institutions in the West, opening up the social field to the appetites of capitalist forces and mafias emerging from the bureaucracy.

During previous experiences, from the risings in Poland and Hungary in 1956 to the Prague Spring and then the formation of Solidarnosc in 1980, we saw a dynamic of self-organization and the partial emergence of socialist solutions. The demands for autonomy in running the enterprises and for market reforms were in the context of a confused aspiration for self-managed socialism. Today, faced with the economic debacle and the dynamism of Western capitalism, they are leading to illusions in the virtues of the free market. However, the unequal and combined development of capitalism on the international level will demonstrate the impossibility of Eastern Europe reaching Western levels of development. These countries can at best hope for relative and unequal development, at the cost of mass unemployment and rapid increase of social inequalities.

V. The specific crisis of the bureaucratic regimes

– It would be false to look at the USSR's development retrospectively through the prism of the years of so-called "stagnation" at the end of the Brezhnev era. The Stalin or Khrushchev years were ones of colossal change, marked right from the beginning by the deformations of building socialism "in one country". Under the whip of the bureaucracy, the pangs of primitive accumulation were reproduced in super-quick time. The authoritarian and bureaucratic character of planning, like the attempts at reforms, has always been a relative brake on the development of the productive forces, and above all maximized their social cost. But during a certain period it did allow rapid development of the productive forces, extensive economic growth and the consolidation on this basis of the bureaucracy's rule.

– After the first phase of accumulation and heavy industrialization, the diversification of production and improving distribution and consumption took on more importance. Bureaucratic conservatism, the lack of democracy and the logic of building socialism in one country or one camp, are an obstacle to the generalized application of new technological innovations. The braking effect then tends to become a total block. From the mid-1970s, the growth rate declined spectacularly in all the planned economies in parallel with the crisis in the imperialist countries. Plummeting raw materials' prices worsened the situation. While easy credit in the 1970s contributed during one five-year plan to maintaining consumption, the debt crisis - at first hidden - broke out forcing Eastern Europe to accept IMF-imposed austerity policies (with dramatic consequences in Romania). In addition, Soviet and East European budgets were strained by the relaunched arms race. The imperialist bourgeoisies respond to the crisis by seeking new increases in productivity and the introduction of new technology, at the cost of mass structural unemployment. On the contrary, bureaucratically-planned economies are obliged to maintain job security without being able to compensate for the lack of competition by the voluntary mobilization and democratic initiative of associated producers.

– Despite the appearance of unemployment, these societies remain characterized by the right to work, the non-market character of labour power and the labour shortage, the distribution of essential goods and services at low cost, and incomes largely unrelated to the work actually done. All these characteristics were marked both by the drastic reduction of market mechanisms and bureaucratic domination. Deeply corrupted by bureaucratic parasitism (bad jobs, wastage, bureaucratic work organization, distribution crippled by privileges and corruption), these gains are far from satisfactory. However, this form of distribution and job security are a determinant element in the social relationship of forces.

Post-war social gains (education, health, housing) have already suffered from the effects of stagnation and budgetary difficulties. The result has been a regression in living conditions, felt all the more because they suffer from immediate comparison with the richest capitalist countries of Western Europe and from a crisis of the legitimacy of bureaucratic rule. This social degradation is a heavy burden for East European workers, for their self-confidence and their conviction of being able to resolve their society's problems via socialist democratization on the basis of state-owned property structures. Its effects have added to the dead-end sentiment resulting from previous economic reforms and the repression of the attempts at anti-

bureaucratic revolt.

– The big hopes of the Khrushchev era, the promises to catch up and overtake imperialist countries' living standards before the end of the century, are a long way away. Perspectives for restructuring Comecon's economic links have become less and less credible. The gap between developed capitalist countries and planned economies, reduced in the post-war period, is widening again. In comparison with the Western Europe - not with all the capitalist countries, which include the poverty of the third world as a condition of their functioning - the gains of "actually existing socialism" are seen as relative or insignificant. They cannot be safeguarded by defending the existing system of planning, but only by developing them in a qualitative way, through the introduction of democratic control over production, urbanization, the environment and all the fundamental aspects of social reproduction.

VI. Bureaucratic reform, capitalist restoration, at what price?

– The first wave of the anti-bureaucratic revolution did not lead to the taking of power by the proletariat, nor even to some form of an organized, alternative political power: the process of self-organization has remained limited; the former order is only being challenged partially in the enterprises and workplaces. Neither has it led to the bourgeoisie taking power. There are sectors of the traditional petty-bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and bureaucracy who aspire to becoming a ruling class and leading a process of capitalist restoration for their own gain. But for now their social strength is too limited to envisage leading a transition to stability against the tide. Thus, the bureaucracy has suffered a defeat and been fragmented, to different extents depending on the country. Some institutions have been dismantled or destabilized. But in general the bureaucratic apparatus continues to exercise power.

– The defeat of the Party-State, illuminating the bureaucracy's social weakness and heterogeneity, totally exposes the recently fashionable rhetoric about "totalitarian expansionism". The parasitic bureaucracy does not represent the advent of a new mode of production; however, this does not mean it is incapable of any historical initiative or energy. Brought together by the exercise of political power and the defence of its own privileges, it is condemned to a balancing act between international imperialism and the proletariat and the revolution. In the crisis it divides between reformist, openly restorationist and conservative or neo-populist currents in proportions that depend on the social function of its different component sectors as well as national and international relationships of forces. In the present context, a growing section of the East European bureaucracy, no longer believing in the survival of a reformed system and noting that Gorbachev is giving up control over the Eastern bloc countries, hopes to be able to convert its privileges into capitalist property in the framework of a return to the market economy.

– These parasitic privileges constitute a basis of accumulation too limited to be transformed into national capital, to buy enterprises offered for privatization and turn the top layer of the nomenklatura into a new bourgeoisie competitive with its rivals in West Europe. The buying up of enterprises by ex-members of the nomenklatura can only provoke fierce resistance by workers full of illusions about promises of the "market economy". Capitalist restoration is not limited to the penetration of foreign capital, to privatizations or joint ventures. The appeal to foreign capital, some privatization and recourse to market mechanisms could happen under social control by subordinating them to publicly-discussed criteria and ensuring that reconversions protect the right to jobs, education and health for all. Private investment, limited privatization or appeals to foreign capital alone are not enough for capitalist restoration.

- This would mean the overall re-establishment of social regulation through the market, mass unemployment, industrial restructuring, dismantling basic social gains and the brutal reinsertion of these economies into the world market. For the restorationist process to be consummated, power has to be taken by a constituted capitalist force, the main state machinery reorganized, and above all social relations subjected to generalized market production governed by the law of value.

- Neither should the restorationist counter-revolution be envisaged as the flip-side of socialist revolution. It has other bases and mechanisms. Once the coherence of institutions is broken down, the pressure of the world market is fully felt. For now, the bureaucracy's defeat has gone as far as a partial challenge to certain cogs in the state machinery (political police), but this has not been dismantled, nor has power been conquered by a coherent social force capable of carrying through such a project. Privatization and capitalist penetration still remain limited. They will be sure to provoke a great deal of resistance among industrial and agricultural workers.

There is already an obvious difference in the interest taken in these different countries by Western capitalists. Investors are more interested in Czechoslovakia, which has reached political stability and a relatively solid economy, than in devastated, uncertain Poland, not to mention Romania. The Eastern European countries are advancing towards different fates.

– The domination of state power by pro-capitalist forces is an essential instrument of this transformation. But the main restorationist force resides in foreign capital - already exercising massive pressure through the IMF and the banks - which is organizing for a reconquest. The present dynamic of the challenge to bureaucratic power is marked by the programmes of liberalization and privatization subordinated to IMF logic. But the process runs into considerable obstacles. Its colossal cost requires the use of capital already mobilized to compensate for the American deficit or for investment in the dependent countries. Restoration could only be achieved at the cost of installing new forms of dependence in the very heart of Europe and the appearance of intra-continental under-development. Far from these societies making their late entry into the privileged club of developed capitalist countries, they would have to take a subordinate and dependent place in the new world hierarchy that is taking shape through the crisis.

– A completed restorationist process would mean deep social differentiations, in which there would be some winners but a majority of "losers" - particularly women, threatened with exclusion from directly productive activity and already the target of obscurantist religious offensives. It will mean big conflicts and divisions of interest within the ranks of the bureaucracy, bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Convinced of the need to destroy from top to bottom the monstrous state of the bureaucracy by a mobilization which would give back their full rights to the workers, we work for the social movement to respond to their democratic aspirations by presenting an alternative opposed equally to capitalist restoration and bureaucratic reshuffling. We fight for a socialist project enriched by a radical critique of Stalinism, a critique of productivism, of alienated labour, and unbridled pillage of natural resources.

- With the development of the revolutionary process, yesterday's liberals are revealing themselves as today's authoritarians: real dismantling of the repressive apparatus and the officer caste; right to democratic organization for soldiers. Abolition of all bureaucratic privileges and rejection of new privileges based on money. Multi-partyism, real equal rights, trade-union independence, right to work and to existence.
- We defend neither the USSR's bureaucratically-imposed frontiers, nor the degree and content of bureaucratic nationalizations: self-determination for nationalities and respect of their right to independence, the only way of preserving the possibility of a free association of socialist republics freed from bureaucratic control.
- We link the demands for political democracy to their social content: rejection of privatizations, presented as a miracle solution, and their social effects (unemployment); rejection of the IMF and its diktats, of political conditions for aid and loans; cancellation of the debt; defence of the perspective of a democratically-planned economy within relations of equality, in the framework of confederated European institutions; development of international organization of the working class and social movements; development of a programme of generalized self-management at the level of production units (work places, industrial sectors) and at a territorial level (towns, regions, nationalities); production management by the workers, election and right of recall of supervisors and management; autonomy for communities, making possible real social control over housing, urban planning, health, education in the context of self-managed and ecological development plan.
- Democracy cannot be identified with parliamentary elections: primacy of direct democracy over representative democracy, recallability of elected representatives, direct representation of social units able to exercise such control on the basis of their collective practice in the workplaces,

neighbourhoods and villages.

– The first largely spontaneous stage of the anti-bureaucratic revolution shows the need for a revolutionary party capable of fighting against both the bureaucracy and restorationist forces, of defining a project for a socialist and democratic society, of renewing internationalism and fighting against the world's dominant ideologies.

- At present, the first task remains conquering political class independence, including in the oppressed nationalities, promoting everything that goes in the direction of building a workers' party independent of the bureaucracy and imperialism, independent and democratic trade unions (creating independent unions or winning back the old structures), developing experiences of control and self-organization.
- In the same way as unity in action for democratic demands includes liberal sectors, on the strict criterion of a united and effective mobilization for precise goals, a united-front approach against privatizations, militarization or IMF diktats is addressed to all trade unions, social movements and parties no longer tied to the state.

There are several possible hypotheses: future capitalist restoration; a relaunch of the anti-bureaucratic revolution; deterioration and social dislocation; or a sharp, repressive check. The most likely scenario seems to be a period of convulsive political instability, social reorganization and partial confrontations, if not fragmentation. In this process protagonists will be defined and weapons forged for the struggle which are today barely embryonic.

Although it concerns the same basic contradictions, developments in the USSR are distinct from those in the rest of Eastern Europe. Despite the Stalinist counter-revolution and the fact that challenging Stalinism often leads to questioning the revolution itself, the revolutionary origin of the Soviet Union is still influential. The beginning of the workers' mobilizations in summer 1989 began to produce political differentiations and to influence minority currents concerned with building socialist organizations implanted among workers and striving to form independent unions. Bureaucratic crystallization is also a lot deeper and more widespread than in other countries. Conservative currents hold powerful positions. They can exploit national conflicts by trying to mobilize Russian workers against the independent movements. The scope of the national questions and the damage done by bureaucratic oppression increase the specificity of Soviet society.

Having experienced the most powerful movement of working class independent organization in the last decade, Poland still occupies a specific place. The situation there is still marked by the contradictory effects of workers' victories (formation of a mass union independent of the bureaucracy, marginalization of post-Stalinist political forces), and by the defeats that they have suffered (martial law, fall in living standards , submission to imperialist diktats by the government formed in 1989 on Solidarnosc's initiative). In a context of economic collapse, the compromise between the Jaruzelski regime and the Solidarnosc leadership contributed to breaking the upsurge of struggles in 1988. An autonomization of the Solidarnosc leadership from its base and declining levels of consciousness and organization left the field open to the development of populist political currents, drawing their identity both from the most retrograde political traditions and the demagogic defence of certain popular demands. However, the survival of a tradition of democratic working class organization could mean that, on the basis of new struggles, political forces will appear that draw their inspiration from the gains of Solidarnosc in 1981.

VII. The democratic challenge in China

The difficulties encountered in economic recentralization and reversing the centrifugal forces freed during the period of reforms have obliged the Chinese Communist Party leadership to feel its way, unable to restabilize its power.

The political unrest and social discontent arising from decades and highlighted by the 1976 demonstrations, the passive resistance of workers and peasants, and economic stagnation especially in agriculture compelled the ruling bureaucracy to attempt economic reforms that combined a partial relaxation of its control over the economy with the maintaining of its monopoly of political power. Since 1978 the idea of re-establishing the commodity nature of the means of production and labour power has become stronger. Power has been partially decentralized at the level of factory managements and provincial administration, constraints on the peasants have been relaxed, the coastal regions have been opened up to foreign capital (which has facilitated a flow of resources from the hinterland to the coastal regions and then out of China), and the bureaucracy has wanted to make the workers and peasants pay for the price of these reforms through encouraging social differentiation. Certain price controls have been abandoned and a free market set-up for some categories of means of production. Despite a substantial initial and short-term rise in average living standards, such measures have been confronted by a sharp rise of popular resentment against price rises and subsequent fall in living

standards. Disillusion with economic reforms that benefited mostly the already privileged intensified pressures for political liberalization and democratization. Within the bureaucracy itself, although a tiny portion was quite prepared to shift its basis of power to a new form of ownership, the bulk still based their rule primarily in the bureaucratic control over the nationalized means of production.

The explosion of the 1989 movement for political democracy and the subsequent developments in Eastern Europe were alarming warnings to the ruling bureaucracy. The bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements that have emerged and grown in the past decade of reform, concentrated in the coastal regions, are too small and weak as yet to counter the power of the central leaderships. The central leadership of the bureaucracy is still decisive in its control over the main resources. However, the massive people's protest in 1989 has prompted the bureaucracy to tighten its political rule and temporarily halt its offensive on the basic gains of the worker and peasant masses without however reversing its policy of economic "liberalization".

In the final analysis, the bureaucracy saw no other way out except to grant further concessions to foreign capital and domestic capitalist elements and to step up its attacks on the working class and the peasants, at the same time as bureaucrats at all levels look for individual ways out given the uncertainty of continuing bureaucratic rule in the old way. Within the bureaucracy, the balance of power and the overall dynamic of return to capitalism continue to go against the central leadership's endeavour to contend decentralizing pressures. The working class's emerging response since 1988 and during the democracy movement to the attacks on them, underline its increasing role in countering the restorationist dynamic.

The movement for political democracy that erupted in the late spring of 1989 marked a milestone in the people's ongoing process of struggle against the bureaucracy. The mobilization of students and urban masses in most big cities was also partially a reaction to the ten years of economic reform, corruption and growing social inequalities. For the students, the workers and their allies, the predominant demand was for political democratization which they conceived as the only way out for the economic stagnation and social regression. The role of the Communist Party began to be openly questioned and challenged, paving the way to a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the party/state. In the short term, the June 4 crackdown and the subsequent repression were intended to eliminate the embryonic autonomous organizations of students, intellectuals and workers as well as dissuade any popular resistance. In the medium term, however, the recourse to brutal military repression by a discredited bureaucracy rules out in the eyes of the people possibilities of self-reform by the bureaucracy.

The student struggles were a forerunner to the intervention in the political arena by the urban workers. The workers began to mobilize causing partial disintegration of the party and state apparatuses. There were also instances of workers going to the suburbs to ask peasants to come out in support of the students. In this way the 1989 movement was a continuation of the spontaneous movement for democracy that started in 1976. In 1978-81, during the Beijing Spring period, dissidents, mostly urban workers who were former red guards during the Cultural Revolution, organized themselves into small groups and conducted lively discussions on alternatives for China's development. The central theme of most samizdats of this period was political democracy coupled with self-management and economic planning. Some of the activists of this period who were released from jail were active in the 1989 movement. The 1989 movement also highlights the weaknesses of a workers' movement caused by longterm atomization, crushing of class consciousness, years of economic reforms and ideological assault, and despair arising from the apparent lack of alternatives. These have to be overcome during the further unfolding of the political revolution both to root out the bureaucracy and to defend social gains of the working and peasant masses against capitalist restoration.

VIII. German unification

- The Federal Republic finally absorbed the German Democratic Republic on 3rd October 1990. The conditions in which this unification took place underline the turn in the international situation. The restoration of capitalism in GDR territory, the extension of the political power of the West German bourgeoisie over the remains on the Stalinist dictators-hip broken by the popular movement of Autumn 1989, the formation of a strengthened imperialist German state constitute a victory for imperialism and a shift in the relationship of forces in Europe to its advantage.

- This rapid outcome is the result of a combination of several factors:

  - The comparative deterioration of the economic and social situation in the GDR, in the framework of a structural crisis common to all the bureaucratic command economies. From the middle of the 1980s at the latest, the GDR system was on its last legs,. The level of productivity was 50% lower to that in the Federal Republic. The lower and middle layers of the bureaucracy had gone from a loss of confidence in the leadership to a loss of confidence in the system as a whole, at the same time as opposition movements were emerging.

  - While the first mobilizations, up to the opening of the wall, were essentially anti-bureaucratic and led by

currents identifying with socialism, there was nevertheless no recognized, rooted, experienced leadership prepared to orientate this fight both against the bureaucracy and against imperialism; the confidence of the working class in itself and it its capacity to run society was destroyed by years of bureaucratic crushing and worn out by the feeling of economic failure.

- In these conditions with the existence of a national sentiment frustrated by the punishment of partition and the humiliating supervision of Germany imposed at the end of the war by the victorious imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy, for most Germans unity at any price seemed to offer the only immediate perspective, without the social cost of it being discussed.

- The economic and financial strength of the FRG exercised a great attraction on a population suffering social regression and without any hope of improvement in the East.

– Opposed from the outset to the partition imposed on Germany, the Fourth International has always stood for the perspective of a unified and socialist Germany.

- In the imperialist countries we stood for the unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops from the two Germanies, and against the claims of the victorious Allied powers to decide the future of Germany.

- We also defended the unconditional right to self-determination of East Germans including if this led to unification with imperialist Germany and we would mobilize against any attempt to deny the exercise of this right by force.

- On the other hand, while defending the inalienable right of the East Germans to choose their future, we have said that we were not for "unity of Germany" just like that, that we were against the capitalist unification of Germany represented by the Kohl plan and the consequences this would have for the workers in unified the Germany and that the GDR workers should answer Kohl by proposing their own conditions for unification: the guarantee of full employment, maintaining social services and low rents, keeping the right to work in the Constitution, retaining the right to abortion, refusing to restore landholdings to the pre-1945 owners, etc. They should seek to increase links with the West German workers' movement to fight together for the 35 hours, the establishment of a fund for wage equalization, the right to vote for immigrants on both sides, the abolition of the political police and discriminatory employment laws in the West, demilitarization…

– The consequences of this unification rushed through on the conditions of the West German bourgeoisie can already be seen. The costs of reunification rise from month to month. The trust company established by West German managers to run 8,000 enterprises (6 million employees) in the East has massively eliminated jobs and transformed what remained of the industrial apparatus into a subsidiary of the big imperialist companies. Productive investments remain slight which the consumer market is overrun by products from the West, provoking a severe crisis in agriculture. The East is becoming an annexed under-developed region of second class citizens. Its exports have collapsed since its traditional clients have been obliged to pay in strong currencies. The number of jobs fell by 10% between the opening of wall and the unification; several hundred thousand East Germans are now going to work in the West, some illegally or as temporary workers. The day of unification, the acknowledged rate of unemployment in the East reached 17%, one of the highest in Europe. Thus Germany has been politically unified, but not socially or economically.

The growth of unemployment in the framework of the unified state worsens the relationship of forces between the classes throughout the country. The anti-refugee and anti-immigrant legislation is worse. Within two years criminalization of abortion will be extended to the East. Unified Germany's membership of Nato will allow the Atlantic treaty to to extend its presence to the Polish borders.

– Politically, unification benefited the rightwing parties. It appeared as a success achieved by Kohl. In the West the socialist current within the SPD

has practically disappeared. The DKP has been swept away. The majority of the Greens have shifted to the right. However, the effects of unification could feed some fightback and provoke industrial explosions. Bourgeois circles are worried about the cost of the operation and its compatibility with European commitments. Finally, while capitalist unification of a political defeat for the workers' movement, the attempt to make the workers pay for it is likely to run into the resistance, particularly in the West, of a powerful, strongly organized working class very attached to its gains. The bourgeoisie has therefore agreed to run this risk.

The central task now is therefore to unite struggles and demands in the East and West: for a general reduction of working hours; for the defence of public property in East Germany under control of the workers; for bringing wages into line with those in the West through establishing a special fund to pay for this; for the continuation and extension to the West of the free social services of the former GDR; against paying for unification by reducing the social budget, for a reduction of the military budget; for a demilitarized Germany in a denuclearized Europe.

IX. Shock wave in the third world

– The crisis and sharpening competition are deepening inequalities within and among the imperialist countries, and between them and the planned economies. They condemn most dependent countries to a new spiral of under-development. This situation is an integral part of the conditions of international capitalist functioning. It is the necessary backdrop for the "miracles" put forward to seduce workers in Eastern Europe, China and the USSR about the splendours of the market. More than 700 million human beings suffer from absolute poverty. The gap between imperialist and semi-colonial countries is growing. The "market" condemns the overwhelming majority in these latter countries to a spectacular deterioration in their living conditions. The growth of imperialist economies relies on this increased oppression. The weight of the debt serves international organisms as a political weapon to impose discipline and a modernization of poverty, denying the national sovereignty of countries that barely ten years ago seemed to be the best placed for hoisting themselves out of the rut of under-development. Latin American countries have become net exporters of capital (debt servicing and capital flight) to the profit of the imperialist metropolitan centres. The African continent is sinking into despair and risks breaking up. The Indian sub-continent may be ravaged by ethnic conflicts. The Middle East remains a powder keg. Social explosions and popular uprisings are on the increase.

However, the bankruptcy of the non-capitalist planned economies means both a crisis of economic perspectives and the loss of what was mistakenly seen as a rearguard: "the socialist camp". This increased isolation of national liberation struggles from a state and diplomatic point of view has not been compensated by a new rise of militant internationalism. The marginality of the solidarity movements with Nicaragua and El Salvador (compared to the role played by the anti-war movement at the time of Vietnam), the feeble reactions to US intervention in Panama and the redeployment of US military bases in Latin America under cover of the fight against the drugs traffic, like the French interventions in Africa, illustrate this.

– It was in this context that the FSLN lost the elections in Nicaragua.

- The Sandinista revolution triumphed in a small country, a producer of some agricultural goods and severely deformed by long years of oligarchic and imperialist domination. It was less possible than elsewhere to envisage building socialism in a single country, or even implement an self-sufficient economic policy to begin a transition. The only possibility for the Sandinista revolution, other than massive recourse to foreign aid and falling into a new dependency, was to begin accumulation on the basis of its agricultural exports and initial industrialization through transforming agricultural raw materials into manufactured products. Such a perspective was mortgaged by the war effort imposed by US aggression (50% of the budget, destruction of hard-currency generating harvests), and the resulting deformation of the economy.
- The impossibility of victory for the Salvadoran revolution in 1980/81, the US intervention in Grenada in 1983, and above all the serious defeat of the Guatemalan revolution in 1982, condemned the Sandinista revolution to lasting isolation. From 1985, the process of negotiation between imperialism and the bureaucracy on regional conflicts also left their mark. These negotiations, culminating in the Malta summit, left imperialism a free hand to intervene in Panama and put the Nicaraguan revolution under siege via the so-called "low-intensity" war, aiming more for

political and economic strangulation than military victory.

- In these conditions, the Sandinista leaders were obliged to bank on the long term. Forced into a war economy, they wanted to preserve diversified international relations and avoid rapid socialization measures which would have had an internal political significance but unpredictable economic effects. Despite the aggression, they gave an example to the whole world by not giving up democracy, political and trade-union pluralism and by holding general elections in 1984 and 1990.

The democracy maintained to the FSLN's honour is not identical with the holding of free elections under strong international surveillance. Formally "free" for the observers, in conditions of an economic blockade, blackmail for credit, military pressure on the borders, these elections were much less free for the Nicaraguans. The result obtained by the FSLN after 10 years of war demonstrates its legitimacy among the Nicaraguan masses. But the democratic mechanism chosen by the Sandinistas has all the limits and the inconveniences of bourgeois parliamentarism: separation of executive and legislative powers (thus strengthening presidential power); delegation of power for six years, without the electors having any means of control. Direct democracy would have been able to give Nicaragua a form of people's power, respecting political plurality but guaranteeing permanent control by citizens and the recallability of elected representatives.

– The threats against the Cuban revolution are becoming clearer. The Cuban economy, heavily socialized since the expropriation of the American multinationals, was on the verge of bankruptcy at the end of the 1960s. It only kept afloat at the cost of agreements with Comecon and Soviet aid. The reduction of this aid could provoke a social and political crisis. Despite serious bureaucratic crystallization, Cuba cannot be compared to the East European bureaucratic dictatorships. Both because of social gains in relation to other countries on the continent and its anti-imperialist role, the leadership retains a revolutionary legitimacy. Defending the Cuban revolution in the face of imperialist threats by no means implies an acritical attitude to its leadership. On the contrary, it means supporting and developing democratic demands in Cuba itself: for real political pluralism in the structures of people's power, the right to free expression and information, independence of the unions from the state, the separation of party and state.

– For more than three years, the Palestinian people have been engaged in a permanent uprising in the territories occupied by the Zionist state since 1967. This Intifada is a major turning point. It is the first time that the Palestinian masses have stopped counting on the bourgeois Arab regimes or on the struggles of the Palestinians of the diaspora and themselves entered into a generalized struggle, created their own instruments of mobilizations, setting up all sorts of people's committees able to draw all layers of the population into the daily struggle. The Intifada is thus a permanent challenge to the Zionist occupation forces engaged in an escalating repression which international opinion can no longer pretend to ignore. It offers a living example to the masses in the Arab countries exposed to the treason and inertia of their own governments. It demands more active solidarity with the Palestinian cause from all workers and anti-imperialist movements: for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967, the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and to the establishment of an independent state on their territory and their right to return to all the territories from which they were expelled.

- The massive immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union to the Zionist state has thrown them into a new murderous trap. The imperialist governments and the Soviet bureaucracy have agreed to channel this immigration by refusing most emigrants the right to choose where to go and not leaving them any other choice than to reinforce the colonization of occupied Palestine and to swell the ranks of cannon fodder for Zionist expansionism. It is therefore necessary to fight against anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union in order to eliminate the reasons that push Soviet Jews towards mass emigration, and to demand that all countries in the world open their borders to the new wave of emigration of Soviet Jews and that the Israeli state lets them leave for the country of their choice.

- The International affirms its solidarity with the Lebanese national resistance which is fighting against Israeli occupation and its local agents in southern Lebanon. The International is for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from this country.

– In Africa, the weight of the foreign debt, combined with the corruption of the ruling classes which have pillaged their countries, are leading to an absolute pauperization of the workers, peasants and popular layers. After more than 30 years of one-party regimes in most countries, mass mobilizations are forcing the neo-colonial bourgeoisies in power to accept multi-partyism, freedom of expression and association, the principle of free elections. These mobilizations are the result of internal factors (insupportable effects of the so-called adjustment policies of the IMF, the growing discredit of repressive and corrupt ruling circles) and external ones (echoes of the fall of the Stalinist dictatorships, imperialist manoeuvres to avoid the risk of sudden falls of its local allies).

However, in the absence of an independent revolutionary workers' movement, these movements are usually under the hegemony of bourgeois populist parties, some of which identify with social-democracy. The inability of these leaderships to propose alternative solutions to the crisis than those of the IMF, as well as their compromises with the regimes in power, leads them to oppose the democratic aspirations of the peoples, to oppose their rights to food, health, education, work and culture.

– Capitalism is not confined to the imperialist metropolises. Already economic liberal experiences in the third world mean a worse disaster than for the planned economies of Eastern Europe. The 1970s rhetoric about the "new economic order", the transfer of technology, "self-centred" development and a Marshall plan for the third world is going up in smoke. The combined effects of the economic crisis and the new international relationship of forces accentuate unequal and combined development between countries and within countries. New forms of dependency (technology, services) are growing, causing profound agrarian and urban crises. This turn confirms the failure of reformist and populist leaderships in an open world economy and prepares the way for the development of reactionary religious populism or desperate chauvinism. The workers' movement, which in some countries is developing dynamically in relation to the industrialization of recent decades (Brazil, Korea, South Africa), is also in some places experiencing decomposition (Peru, Bolivia).

The tasks which flow from this are:

a) a continuing international campaign for cancellation of the debt;

b) mobilizations against military intervention and imperialist bases (in Lat in America, Philippines, Africa);

c) continuation of solidarity activities with Nicaragua and Salvador, and especially the anti-apartheid struggle;

d) defence of the Cuban revolution against imperialism.

e) The mobilization for an end to the Gulf war and for the defeat of imperialist aggression are obviously the central tasks. The United States wanted, prepared and planned this war from the outset, rejecting any possibility of a negotiated solution. The "liberation of Kuwait" and "defence of international law" which has been so often and for so long flouted by the US and its allies, in Panama as in occupied Palestine, are simply a pretext to crush Iraq. The US obtained the cooperation of their imperialist allies, the negotiated complicity of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, the support and blessing of the corrupt and dependent regimes of the Third World, including among the Arab regimes.

Just recently they armed and supported the Iraqi dictatorship in its aggressive war against Iran. They closed their eyes on the persecution of Iraqi oppositionists and the massacre of the Kurdish people. After eight years of war, at the cost of completely running down the economy and of hundreds of thousands of victims, the Iraqi dictator came to ask for what was due to him from his hidden partners: an increase in oil prices, a reduction of his debt, access to the sea. The invasion of Kuwait was his reaction to their refusal. It was not a national liberation war nor a war to emancipate the peoples concerned but a brutal invasive act in line with the image of the Iraqi regime.

The imperialist powers took this as an excuse for a major operation of which the increasingly openly-admitted goal was nothing other than establishing a "new order" or a new "Pax Americana" in the region and worldwide. In reality, the march towards this new order started with the carpet bombing, the killings and the tumult of the war. These announced the new imperialist division of the world which will itself bring new conflicts.

The aggression against Iraq was already a large-scale experiment of new killing machines. New electronic gadgets are in use, tons of bombs are piling up, the threat of tactical nuclear weapons is brandished, while there is a wellorganized manipulation of international information by the military. For the imperialist coalition the aim was to eliminate a regional power that could threaten their oil interests and counterbalance the power of the Zionist state, the main regional ally of the United States. In exchange for its loyal services, the Zionist state will have a free hand to push forward its action against the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, including by the deportation of the population by one means or another.

Faced with this barbaric enterprise, we are unconditionally for the defeat of the imperialist aggressors, in solidarity with the Iraqi people, victims of terror bombing as well as with the Arab peoples who, in their respective coun tries, are rising up against their aggression and the regimes which are contributions or covering it, under pretext of a shameful neutrality.

In the imperialist countries and the countries belonging to the coalition, we work for the development of a powerful and united movement against the war, for an immediate stop to the bombings, and for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the troops. We oppose the war effort and its financial and social consequences. We call on soldiers, military reservists, young people, to refuse to participate in this war in any form and we are in solidarity with soldiers disciplined for refusal to obey, mutiny or desertion.

In the Arab countries, we develop the mobilization against imperialist intervention and against the corrupt regimes allied to imperialism. We demand that the governments which pretend to be neutral to contribute their support to the Iraqi people, starting by breaking the embargo which is reducing them to starvation. We are for breaking the isolation of Iraq by increasing the fronts against the imperialist presence and its allies. At the same time we combat any illusions in the mass movement concerning the regime of Saddam Hussein.

We counterpose world wide solidarity with struggles against all oppressions to the new world order of the oppressors.

X. Crisis of leadership and inter-imperialist conflicts

* The crisis of bureaucratic dictatorships does not mean that the crisis of bourgeois leadership is overcome. The unprecedented concentration of economic power is not necessarily expressed in the emergence of a new hegemonic imperialism. Three competing poles are tending to organize on a

regional basis. The economic decline of the United States, in spite of sectoral recoveries, has continued to the advantage of the Japan and Germany. Even if the dollar's role is now shared by several currencies, American imperialism remains because of the existence of a single state, an internal market and an overwhelming military power.

* European construction is founded on the internationalization and concentration of capital. But since the beginning of the crisis there have been just as many, if not more, mergers between European and Japanese or American capital as inter-European mergers, depending on the sector. However Europe has more or less passed the test and European integration was relaunched at the end of the 1970s (European monetary system, election of the Euro Parliament), then in the mid-1980s (extension, Single Act, exploration of monetary union). But the European project comes up against the management of the social relationship of forces in the framework of the old nation states: how can there be a real single commercial market without unification of the social dimension and thus a risk of unification of the working class across the continent? The explosion in Eastern Europe adds to these already existing difficulties, forcing a redefinition of the European project.

* The imperialist countries have enjoyed relative peace for half a century, but the counterpart has been more than 140 inter-state or ethnic conflicts whose human cost is estimated at more than 20 million victims. The collapse of the imaginary danger coming from the East leaves the enormous Atlanticist military apparatus exposed and without a legitimate role. The results of the Swiss referendum on the abolition of the army is one indication of this. Governments fear a rise of anti-militarism, particularly as détente in Eastern Europe starkly reveals the functions of third-world policing devolved to various special, rapid intervention forces, introduced some 10 years ago.

The USSR has been reduced to a major continental power riddled with internal conflicts; France and Britain are second-rate military powers. Germany could play a preponderant role in Europe in line with its economic strength if it committed itself to an active international military policy. Only

US imperialism can today claim to play the role of world cop. It has used the pretext of the Iraqi intervention in Kuwait to reaffirm this military supremacy and dictate its conditions to its allies. Despite the increasing number of international conferences, the partial reductions in nuclear arsenals and peace declarations, this crisis on the contrary illustrates the still active intrinsically warlike tendencies of imperialism and the threat of war.

â€¢ Withdrawal of all troops and foreign armies from Germany.

â€¢ Dissolution ofNATO and Warsaw Pact.

â€¢ A denuclearized Europe.

â€¢ Disbanding imperialist intervention forces and the abolition of professional armies.

â€¢ Defence of democratic rights for soldiers and young people's right to refuse military service.

* The perspective of a United Socialist States of Europe has a new relevance in the current crisis, replying both to plans for European imperialist unity and to the explosion of Eastern Europe:

â€¢ Against an anti-democratic Europe, a Europe of the rich; dissolution of technocratic institutions in Brussels; rejection of agreements for a Europe run by police; initiatives for a pan-European People's Assembly.

â€¢ Defence of democratic rights, in particular for women (right to work, abortion rights), immigrants (right to vote, equal rights); against racism, xenophobia, sexism.

â€¢ Right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, East and West.

â€¢ Upwards harmonization of social rights to the highest level, East and West; defence of social benefits, free and good quality social services; the right to work and to a decent standard of living.

â€¢ Ecological pact with a nuclear moratorium, stopping industrial pollution, protection of rivers, seas and forests.

XI. A new world hierarchy of domination and dependence

* The evolution of the relationship of forces in East European societies is

not taking place in a vacuum. It is determined both by the specific economic and social crisis of these countries, and by the new international relationship of forces that are shaping up. The crisis does not signal a fatal collapse of the imperialist economy. Its central element is a new division between profits and wages, a new distribution of profits and the creation of a new world hierarchy. The capacity of the imperialist bourgeoisies to hang onto the political initiative and successfully reconquer East European markets depends a lot on the outcome, or rather on future sudden developments, of the economic crisis.

* The 15 years of profound turbulence experienced by the capitalist world since the reversal of the expansive wave have resulted in important changes in the balance of forces.

â€¢ The end of the 1970s saw a contraction of trade in the centre and an upsurge of credits linked to petro-dollars towards the dependent countries and Eastern Europe. For these two regions, the 1980s turn was dramatic and has resulted in the debt crisis and a more direct subordination to the IMF. They have suffered from a deterioration in trading terms, shrinking world markets for raw materials (a consequence of new technologies in the traditional raw materials' economy), and the rise of the dollar in the first half of the decade, along with interest rates. After 1985, third-world countries suffered additionally from the consequences of the USSR's crisis.

â€¢ As the decade unfolded, while world trade developed in volume at an annual rhythm of 7%, exchange rates benefited the producers of manufactured goods, whose share of world trade increased from 53% in 1973 to around 80% at the end of the 1980s. The only dependant countries to benefit from this growth were essentially those of South-East Asia. This growth, conditioned by the opening up of the American market, contrasts with the fate of other newly-industrialized countries, whose situation has worsened.

â€¢ The US/Japan/Europe complex will in future concentrate two-thirds of research and development capacities, almost all new technologies, more than 90% of world investments and nearly 95% of the capitalization of world stock markets. Within this, the USA has seen its world role deteriorate to the benefit of Japan and West Germany.

* In the imperialist centres, restructuring has been stepped up via the application of free-market policies since the 19$Os turn: increased unemployment, de-indexation of wages, challenging of collective agreements, development of flexible, part-time and insecure work. Changes in productive processes and in methods of financing the economy have helped to boost profits.

â€¢ But they still come up against the narrowness of markets and real increases in interest rates, leading to increased costs for borrowing and bigger returns from financial placements, in turn resulting in less productive investment.

â€¢ In the framework of the upturn, elements of a new mode of accumulation are coming together in the imperialist centres: new mass consumer products, even if the markets will be more fragmented and differentiated than those for automobiles or domestic electrical goods; new production techniques, work organization and wage relations (flexible hours and pay). But: a) all this does not assure a continual spiral of production/consumption: problem of market openings at a time when the dependent countries are strangled by the debt, or where the pressure of austerity policies continues in the imperialist countries;

b) nor does it yet mean a new generalized and systematic relationship, which could be crowned by a new mode of state regulation playing a comparable role, in new continental spaces, to that played by Keynesian policies in the framework of the post-war nation states.

â€¢ International cooperation between the big central banks and governments has increased since 1985/87. But it cannot make up for the absence of a really dominant imperialist pole with a supra-nafional authority managing an inter national currency. European integration will allow the currencies concerned to be stabilized, but the internationalization of economies will continue to gnaw away at the efficacity of Keynesian measures.

* The upturn in the main imperialist countries since 1982 conceals a desynchronization of conjunctures and considerable world indebtedness, notably in the USA:

â€¢ American growth after the 1979-82 recession was achieved on the basis of an unprecedented balance-of-payments deficit (massive financing from Japanese capital), expressing both the change in the social relationship of forces (tax support to companies) and increased military spending. At the same time, the American trade deficit is an expression of the US market's role as the main outlet for products from Asia and the structural weakness of the US economy.

â€¢ While world unemployment growth and the deterioration of the relation ship of forces vis a vis the trade-unions allowed a certain recovery in company profits, final consumption was maintained thanks to a general fall in savings and a considerable growth in consumer credit.

â€¢ Massive cash injections in the economy after the October 1987 crash avoided it leading to recession. The crash came after several years of austerity policies and low investment levels, but with a progressive recovery of profit margins. These first of all served to reduce companies' indebtedness. But from the beginning of 1987, in the perspective of the Single Market, increased productive investment sparked off a dynamic that the crash alone could not. European growth has remained strongly self-centred, with a big development in inter-Community exchanges.

â€¢ World trade really took off in the 1980s, but this is essentially the effect of the relations between OECD countries and the dragons of the Asian region, together with a decrease in trade with the dependent countries and Eastern Europe (outside of the

FDR). Direct investments in the USA (coming mainly from Europe and Asia) fed this growth and wrong-footed the protectionist tendencies manifest in the USA.

â€¢ The manifest slowing down of growth since 1989 in the USA and Britain will not spark off a generalized and synchronized recession if it is thwarted by indigenous sources of growth in Japan and Europe. But reductions in military spending or increased fiscal measures to reduce the US balance-of-payments deficit could snowball, and the speculative character of financing the deficit could then precipitate a major crisis.

* Despite the gains made, imperialism is a long way from having reached the necessary conditions for a prolonged economic upturn, like that of the 1950s/1960s. The reintegration of one or several East European countries into the world market is insufficient. On the other hand, a qualitatively new situation would be created if imperialism succeeded in reconquering the Soviet Union and/or China.

â€¢ The dominant bourgeoisies are obviously very interested in getting involved politically and economically, but for the time being bankers and private investors remain prudent in the face of an economic abyss and political and social instability (lack of reliable representatives and control over the social movement, volatility of electoral relationship of forces).

â€¢ Available capital that could play the role of the dollar during the post-war Marshall Plan suffers from the lack of a unified political will and a monetary tool.

The 1980s upturn does not mark a new expansion profiting everybody, but a deepening of inequalities and a transfer of the costs of the crisis onto the weakest. Indeed, it is impossible simultaneously to finance investments in the imperialist centre, help Eastern Europe to come back towards the market by cushioning the social effects of this “liberalization”, and help the third world to absorb the blows.

* The imperialist bourgeoisies have succeeded in going onto the offensive by inflicting partial defeats on their working classes, winning the collaboration of the reformist leaderships in the name of national interest and transferring a large part of the cost of the crisis onto the third world. This is expressed today in their plans for the capitalist reunification of Germany, building an imperialist Europe, driving back the revolution in the so-called regional zones of conflict with the blessing of the Soviet bureaucracy, and in their aim of reconquering East European markets.

However, nowhere have the defeats suffered by the international workers' movement taken on the dimension of an historical defeat. The relationship of forces remains unstable. Despite the disorganization of the traditional workers' movement in the imperialist centres, there are still important reserves of social resistance. The situation of the workers' movement in the main imperialist countries has a strong influence on other fronts at a time when the crisis of the planned economies — long identified with socialism — is plunging many revolutionary movements into confusion.

For this unstable equilibrium to tip one way or the other, either the bourgeoisie will have to win some overwhelming victories in the key imperialist countries or it will have to defeat the resistance to the market economy that will occur in Eastern Europe. This situation could be turned around rapidly if a new deepening of the crisis coincided with the start of independent workers' activity in certain East European countries — particularly in the USSR.

From this point of view, developments in the USSR, China and Germany will play a determinant role.

* In spite of sporadic explosions in those sectors hit hardest by the crisis, privatization and the deterioration of public services, in the I 980s the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries has once again made the running (carving up the labour market, flexible work, general decline in unionization and class consciousness). There was an upturn of struggles in Europe at the end of the 1980s (much less so in the USA and Japan), set off by the central bourgeoisies' capacity for negotiation based on resources provided by the upturn. There was no cumulative dynamic of reconstituting a vanguard: revolutionary forces were isolated and the left oppositions in the traditional parties weakened or defeated. Electoral disaffection was expressed in abstentions and the rise of the Greens, but also in the rise of an aggressive extreme-right. Unlike the 1 950s, this extreme-right not only expresses the rancour of a traditional petty-bourgeoisie condemned by modernization, but also the disarray of certain sectors of the working class. In these conditions, the struggle against racism and xenophobia is a central and long-term task.

* The defeats inflicted on the working classes of the imperialist countries, the compromises accepted by their reformist leaderships and the introduction of new technologies and forms of work organization are destined to increase differences in labour productivity to the detriment of the dependant countries and the planned economies. In these conditions, sharpened international competition has a greater negative impact on the living conditions of workers in these countries.

â€¢ In the bureaucratized workers' states, we are still only seeing the beginning of the reorganization of the independent workers' movement, probably on a bigger scale in the USSR (the miners' strike, for example). The question remains as to how the relationship of forces will work out in the framework of this reorganization and what its tempo will be: the development of class consciousness in these countries was different when capitalism was contested at its centre by millions of strikers and a strong anti-war movement (as was the case at the end of the 1960s) from that of today, with defensive, dispersed struggles and no project for social transformation.

â€¢ In the third world, violent social explosions have erupted in profoundly different situations. In Brazil, South Africa and Korea a new, combative proletariat exists. At the same time, in other countries de-industrialization,

burgeoning informal sectors and urban marginality predominate. In a world economy that is more internationalized than ever, traditional populism is at a dead-end. In some countries its decline is boosting reactionary, religious populism or desperate chauvinism. From the point of view of reorganizing the vanguard, the collapse of the so-called socialist "camp" will call for major reclassifications

Socialist revolution and Ecology

1 January 1996

For most of their history, the traditional reformist leaderships of the workers' movement have ignored or trivialized ecological problems. Even today the learning process is painfully slow and difficult and is often limited to mere environmental repairs.

On a self-critical note it must also be said that even the revolutionary currents in the workers' movement - ourselves included - needed to rethink their position before coming fully to grips with the explosive potential of the ecological dimension in late capitalism.

The work done by many different campaigning groups and the green parties in putting the ecology question back on the agenda - despite the rejection of this question in the workers' movement - must certainly be acknowledged. Many of their proposed solutions however have an illusory character because they fail to recognize that the destruction of the the environment is deeply bound up with the capitalist profit motive or, in the transitional societies, with bureaucratic rule. Taking ecological dangers seriously means looking beyond the profit motive or bureaucratic rule towards a democratically planned, socialist society.

II. The facts of the ecological crisis

The ecological crisis, a result of the impact of human beings on nature, has reached proportions which call into question the survival of the human race. Because of the economic interests of a tiny minority, we are confronted on the one hand with an increase in new forms of production, the ecological consequences of which have not been adequately investigated, and on the other hand with the blatant continuation of older forms of production, though their harmful effects are already known. The backdrop to all this is technology's growing impact on nature, i.e. its increased ability to disrupt or destroy ecology.

The industrial revolution, a product of the development of capitalism in the 19th century, increased environmental pollution through emissions and industrial waste, at the same time creating additional health hazards for working people and the urban population as a whole. In general, it amplified ecological shock waves of human origin. But the ecological crisis of today is not a linear result of industrial development since the 19th century. It is the result of a qualitative leap which came about within the framework of the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, through the massive increase in the use of oil and the enormous development of the automotive industry, and through the development of the chemical industry and its generalized penetration of every sector of human activity, especially agriculture by means of fertilizers and pesticides. This qualitative leap has been reinforced since the 1970s by the economic crisis of the bureaucratically planned economies, which has exacerbated the irrational aspects of their functioning, and in an especially dramatic way by the combination of economic crises and unbridled, wild industrialization in the "Third World."

Air pollution

The most important air pollutants are:

1. Substances that result from the combustion of fossil fuels (coal and oil); these are primarily sulphur dioxide, oxides of carbon, and nitrogen compounds.
2. Carcinogenic organic substances, such as benzol or formaldehyde.
3. Heavy metals, such as mercury, cadmium and lead.
4. Microscopic asbestos fibres and dust emissions.
5. Chlorinated fluorocarbons.

These substances are emitted into the air by means of industrial production processes, vehicles or consumer goods. The unchecked and seemingly uncontrollable growth of the automobile as a means of transportation has made it the main source of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, well ahead of private and industrial heating systems. Motor fuels are also the main source of benzol and lead. Formaldehyde, mercury and asbestos are industrial pollutants, but they also occur in common consumer goods and building materials (formaldehyde and asbestos) and in electrical batteries (mercury).

The concentration of these substances in the air can be over a thousand times greater in urban areas than in rural ones. Air pollution has become a plague in the big cities of the rich countries and has taken on especially gigantic and anarchic proportions in those of the poor countries. It has resulted in an alarming increase in illnesses of the respiratory tract in urban environments: pseudo-croup (pseudo-diphtheria) in children,

asthma, bronchitis and lung cancer.

Asbestos has led to a very high cancer-related mortality rate among dockyard and construction workers. Due to the latent period of these types of cancer, the true dimensions of the problem will only be revealed in the years to come. The discovery of the dangers of asbestos has led to a strong reduction in its use in the rich industrialized countries; in the "Third World", however, its use is on the increase.

Sulphur dioxide and the nitrogen oxides are the cause of acid rain, which is responsible for the gradual destruction of the forests in the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

The increase in the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere via the burning of fossil fuels and the burning of the felled forests will in all probability result in climatic warming in the 21st century, causing geographical upheavals with catastrophic local effects on the economies of human communities (the greenhouse effect). Predictions based on current trends indicate that these climatic changes will combine with an increase in the carcinogenic ultraviolet rays reaching the earth's surface. This increase is caused by the accumulation of a number of pollutants in the higher atmosphere, especially the chlorinated fluorocarbons. These are emitted primarily by spray cans and broken refrigerators. Initially harmless, they rise into the upper atmosphere, where they trigger chemical reactions that allow a higher percentage of ultraviolet rays to reach the surface of the earth (destruction of the ozone layer).

Water pollution

This planet's water is being used as a gigantic waste dump for the byproducts of human activity - both domestic and industrial/agricultural byproducts. Most heavily affected are the continental waters, rivers and lakes, although rivers and coastal cities are increasingly contributing to the pollution of the oceans. The most serious consequence is an accumulation of heavy metals, mercury, cadmium, etc. plus highly toxic organic compounds in the sediment, and more importantly, in the water itself, the accumulation of fatty substances, nitrates and phosphates, resulting in the unchecked growth of certain aquatic plants. When these plants decompose, they consume the oxygen in the water, turning it into a mass grave for the creatures living in it. This deteriorating situation is increasingly affecting the oceans, all the more so given their direct pollution with astronomical amounts of oil from oil bore holes and ships, and the dumping of toxic, chemical and radioactive wastes.

In addition to water pollution there is also soil pollution, which is both a result and cause of certain forms of air and water pollution. Associated with this pollution of the soil are the consequences of the agricultural practices determined by the constraints of the market economy: intensive cultivation (abuse of and dependence on fertilizers and pesticides), monocultures and crops unsuitable for local ecosystems and climatic conditions, etc. We are confronted with the massive destruction of the soil on a global scale resulting from the combined effects of pollution, exhaustion, dessication and massive erosion, which is bound up with the economic and social causes of the hunger affecting 500 million people in the "Third World".

The destruction of the forests

Among the more dramatic revelations of the ecological crisis, the global destruction of the forests is an especially disturbing factor due to the extent of its consequences. Tropical countries are particularly affected. In the industrialized countries the area covered by forest remains relatively stable, although the forests are slowly dying off due to a lethal combination of air, soil and water pollution. In the "Third World" countries however it is deforestation which is characteristic of the ecological crisis. Between 1980 and the year 2000 the "Third World" will have lost 40% of its forest area. In view of the special characteristics of the tropical rain forests (1/3 of the world's plant mass, extremely thin topsoil) this deforestation will have terrible consequences:

- At the local level, due to the mutually compounding effects of dessication and erosion, it will severely intensify agrarian crises and hunger.

- On a global scale, the burning of felled trees will intensify the greenhouse effect.

The industrial catastrophe

The devastating consequences of human activity can also be seen in the form of large-scale accidents or the potential risk of such accidents in industry - for example in chemical or nuclear power plants.

Given its special nature and the unfathomable extent of the possible negative consequences and especially its long-term effects, the nuclear industry represents a particularly alarming example of wrong decision-making in the development of the forces of production, especially in view of the existence of alternative solutions to the problem of energy supplies.

Conclusion

The combined elements of this ecological crisis do not create new priorities which marginalize "traditional" economic, social and political problems. On the contrary, they are closely interwoven.

The relationship between the destruction of the Amazon and the struggles of the rural and urban dependent population in Brazil or between the deforestation in the Himalayas, the social balance of forces in Bangladesh and the natural catastrophes (floods) in that country illustrates the close interplay between nature and politics. The ecological crisis is a dramatic, ongoing phenomenon, exhibiting regional and partial catastrophes, cases of irreversible damage mixed with cases of potentially reversible damage - be it in the short or medium-term future, or in two to three hundred years (the age of many trees). Everything depends on what human communities consciously decide to do.

III. The structural causes of the environmental crisis

The destruction and pollution of the environment expresses a failure to organize properly the social life of a mass of human beings in the biosphere. As the preceding rough outline of the global environmental situation shows, over the past few years this failure has not only grown but become clearer. In the last two centuries and especially in the 20th century, the globally dominant form of the organisation of social life has been determined by capitalist relations of production. The entire population of planet earth has become increasingly dependent on the capitalist market economy via the extension of waged labour and the intensified capitalization of all sectors of life. To this extent, an evaluation of the environmental situation is primarily an evaluation of the capitalist mode of production.

This also applies to those parts of the world which, after more or less intense anticolonial, anti-imperialist and anticapitalist liberation struggles and revolutions, have placed themselves off limits to the capitalist market economy. All the attempts to build a planned economy based on the social possession of the means of production are in reality still dependent to a high degree on the global economic relations determined by the imperialist powers. Via the global market, division of labour and trade relations, the capitalist law of value still influences the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia and Cuba.

Nevertheless, there are a number of additional reasons which cause these countries to be especially hard hit by the ecological crisis.

Capitalist production, though it cannot escape natural laws, enters in some respects into fundamental contradiction with nature and its processes of development. Social production is a complex of processes involving the exchange and conversion of materials and energy. This complex is determined - within limits set only by the earth's relation to the rest of the universe - by the laws of thermodynamics. According to these laws energy and matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but can only change their form. Moreover the processes which bring about these changes are irreversible and tend to a universal and random distribution of energy and matter (the law of entropy). Under capitalist conditions, the organization of nature is increasingly deformed by economic needs. It is ever more finely divided into components that can be organized to produce commodities. The quantitative aspect of the law of value - the labour - time/money relation - overrides all else. Qualitative, "holistic" relations cannot enter the equation.

At the same time capitalist production is based on the shortest possible reversible processes through which capital invested can expand. The incessant repetition of capitalist production, squeezing the last drop from resources, and its increasing compartmentalization as a precondition for economic "quantification", raise entropy unnaturally fast. The result of this contradiction is that the capitalist mode of production imposes an alien rhythm on natural processes. The exploitation of existing resources cannot take the time needed for their natural production and regeneration, and commodity production can pay no heed to the existing forms of social life it encounters. The territorial expansion required to maintain production, secure new energy sources and transport routes must ignore natural environments and plant and animal communities. The cause of this destructive type of development is therefore not capitalist irrationality, but precisely its own inherent logic. Social-democratic demands for "qualitative growth" are thus caught up in "utilization logic": qualitative growth and the law of value are mutually exclusive.

Whilst capitalist production is determined by an increasing compartmentalization of the existing environment, the social order and property and power relations within it are marked by increasing centralization. Today a group of multinational concerns determines the fate of the most remote corners of the earth. The capitalist conceptualization of time and space is further reinforced: the earth is divided up into industrial zones, tourist areas, trade zones, bases of raw materials, and so on. Concern for the past is as lacking as provision for the future.

Capitalist rationality determines the actions of individual capitals. Because of competition between different groups of capitals, however, the system as a whole is irrational. The ingenuity involved in developing production, as well as in the economical use of resources and environmental protection, stops at the factory gates. This results in the environmentally damaging effects in all those areas where "nobody" considers themselves responsible: air, water and soil. Competition also leads to the regular crises of overproduction; enormous amounts of energy and materials are invested in commodities that cannot be sold. In addition, the market also imposes products such as advertising, drugs and armaments, superfluous as use values, but yielding hefty profits as exchange values. In the end, competition and the struggle for profit and extra profit is the source of actions illegal even according to capitalist rules - ignoring environmental restrictions, poisoning products, skimping on product testing, falsifying the description of contents, illegal waste dumping, and so on.

Over the last 150 years, the capitalist mode of production has already resulted in enormous changes in the composition and distribution of the soil, raw materials, water and in particular of the atmosphere, which prove that the rate of entropy increase caused by capitalism is reaching levels no longer compatible with the continued existence of the earth and the human community. At the same time, alternative paths of development are being prevented and actively combatted.

The environmental crisis in the imperialist metropolises

The “economic deformation” of pre-existing natural social and historic conditions is at its most advanced in the developed capitalist countries. The compartmentalization of production and the simultaneous centralization of property relations has reached its highest level in these countries. Commodity production has become the absolutely determining force throughout society. At the same time, social processes of production are broken down still further up and property relations - kept in motion by competition between the owners of the means of production - become ever more centralized. This has lead to the same major environmental problems in all the imperialist states - proof that these problems are not the result of “breakdowns” and “failures” but are the international result of the logic of the system.

– Economic development down to the last square centimetre, with industrial zones, trade centres, shopping centres, dormitory towns, tourist or leisure centres and administrative regions, lengthens travel time even though needs are relatively fixed. This, along with transportation policies based on individual transport via internal combustion engines, has resulted in a chronic over-reliance on the automobile in all major cities and the threat of the total breakdown of the transportation system.

– Centralized property relations, particularly in the field of energy supply, have resulted in an orientation towards large-scale fossil fuel or nuclear power plants. This means an energy supply which places a huge strain both on the atmosphere and on human health, and which is also thoroughly irrational with respect to the economical use of energy. The need to sell as much energy as possible is diametrically opposed to a policy of minimal entropy increase.

– The increasing compartmentalization of production and the self-centred rationality of individual capital bear decisive responsibility for the waste problem. It is becoming increasingly “cheaper” to throw away, deposit or incinerate things not needed for production. Mountains of waste and toxic waste in particular have become the symbol of the capitalist version of the affluent society.

– Under capitalist conditions, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries have become an embodiment of the effects of the compartmentalization of the production process. Elementary biochemical processes and materials become independent bearers of profit-making. The consequences are on the one hand a major change in the natural distribution of materials - the much-quoted creation of a second “artificial” nature - and on the other hand, the acceleration, inflation and increasing independence of biological processes, without so much as a clue about the potential consequences.

But the consequences of these fundamental environmental problems do have names: urbanization and the destruction of the landscape, transport collapses and air pollution from individually-owned internal combustion vehicles, toxic pollutants from and dependence on the chemical industry, destruction of the atmosphere by power stations burning fossil fuels and by radioactive pollution from atomic energy, ever-growing mountains of waste. Capitalism is not able to reverse this “mistaken development”. That would mean the careful use of resources becoming the sole guide to action, something which contradicts the fundamental principle of capitalism. If resources in capitalism are “freely” available, like water, air, soil, then they are used, wasted, poisoned, largely without the controlling authority of the dominant social relations. They are - not only in the economic sense “external factors”. If however they are “tied in” in the capitalist sense, i.e. the object of private profit interests, or in other words, if they are “economically quantified”, then the fundamental scarcity of resources is only experienced by the buyer. Those who offer them for sale have a fundamental interest in expansion and resist all savings or economies.

The imperialist states have equally demonstrated that system-immanent correction is an impossibility. Such correction is either connected with extensive social planning and regulation, which is resisted not only in the current capitalist campaign for deregulation, or is based on the erroneous assumption that the law of value is somehow able to distinguish between “good” (i.e. environment-friendly) profit and “bad” profit. The imperialist states are thus condemned to a policy of trying to patch things up after the event, which can only claim limited success in the realm of tangential repair and containment measures such as filters and the cleansing of exhaust fumes and liquid wastes.

However the imperialist states are also faced with the challenge of a growing movement for the protection of the environment. Under pressure from these movements, a number of state regulations and guidelines have been introduced which, although they have succeeded in noticeably reducing environmentally harmful production, have also been money well spent for the imperialist states in terms of damping protest.

Capitalist production also shapes the consumer. To this extent, individual human behaviour is a factor which adds to the environmental crisis and inhibits its solution. The credo of bourgeois ideology that “people are responsible for the crisis” plays directly on this factor. Individual changes in consumption however can only exercise a small influence on the fundamentally anti-environmental nature of capitalist production.

The environmental crisis in the dependent countries

The sober conclusion of a study conducted by the UN environmental organisation, that the environmental problems of the “Third World” are problems of poverty, can only be said to be completely accurate when we include the fact that this poverty is not the result of some quirk of fate but the direct result of the policies and economic activities of the imperialist states. Although it is possible to turn the facts around and transform the environmental crisis of the imperialist states into a consequence of the “affluent society” instead of the market economy, the connection between the economic and ecological crises in the dependent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America is quite

clear. For millions of people in these countries, the increasing destruction of the environment and their biospheres and the daily struggle for survival forms a direct and shared experience. Over 500 million people are malnourished; 40 million die every year of hunger or hunger-related illnesses. Almost two thousand million people have no regular supply of clean drinking water, resulting in the deaths of 25 million annually. 1.5 million people suffer from an acute lack of firewood, which is often the sole source of energy. The supply of food, water and heating fuel - the three most important conditions for physical existence - is severely out of balance in these parts of the world. The UN estimates that some 500 million people are "environmental refugees," forced to leave their traditional homelands because of drought, floods, soil erosion, displacement by agricultural export production and other "environmental factors." The environmental crisis in these parts of the world is thus by no means a "time bomb" or some "future" problem, but an existential crisis in the here and now.

The decisive cause of poverty and the environmental crisis is the capitalist mode of production. The familiar dependencies on imperialism and the imperialist-dominated world market have subjugated the ecology in the dependent countries to a form of economic exploitation which is more direct and brutal than has been the case in the imperialist countries. The dividing up of nature according to the dictates of the world market and the interests of multinational corporations in these countries is in even greater contradiction to historically developed social structures and traditional ways of life. The effects of the "time-space regime" specific to imperialism in these countries can be fundamentally characterized as follows: an infrastructure that is almost exclusively oriented to the needs of the centres of imperialist-dependent economic activity. Bound up with this is the allocation of "raw materials centres", trade zones, tourist zones, plantations and pasture land for export production. The enormous pressure exerted on the victims of these processes and the displacement of other lifestyles and social functions literally onto the neglected rural areas is incomparably greater than the also largely involuntary processes of environmental and population transformation in the capitalist metropolises.

Thus, from an ecological point of view we can also see the fatal effects of "the law of combined and uneven development" in the dependent countries. The world market is transporting its environmentally destructive dynamic, its most highly developed contradictions with nature even into the most "backward" parts of the world. And the effects there are incomparably greater, the forces to oppose them incomparably weaker. We can establish a number of structural characteristics of this development:

– The direct exploitation of raw materials for the world market (minerals, wood, cotton, rubber etc.) and the concomitant development of the land by means of transport routes, railways, power stations, etc.

– The transformation of land into crop or pasture areas for export production via the rigourous clearing of forest land, characterized by a high degree of dependence on and pollution from artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

– Both of these processes make the land question the most pressing problem of most dependent countries. The rural population is being displaced to areas of land incapable of supporting long-term settlement and agriculture. They are forced to clear forested areas and apply farming methods which themselves accelerate the rate of land destruction and soil erosion. Deforested mountain slopes, burnt-out areas of tropical forest, settlements in drought and flood areas, the removal of fertile soil layers all result in long term climatic changes, famine and "natural catastrophes".

– Increased urbanization brought about by the specific economic structure and the land problem. According to UN estimates, the cities in the dependent countries are growing three times as fast as in the rich capitalist countries. The extent of the familiar environmental problems, so destructive to nature and life, are to be found in even greater proportions in these cities. Air pollution stemming from automobiles and the burning of fuel for heating and cooking purposes represents an acute threat. The quality of the water supply and the sewage disposal systems is the second major problem of the cities in the dependent countries. The third is waste disposal. In most of the major cities of Asia, Africa and Latin America, waste is simply thrown onto trash heaps or burned in the open.

– Energy supplies are a basic problem of existence for a large part of the population in the dependent countries. The annual labour time taken up by a million and a half people just in the search for firewood (or other combustible materials such as dung, rubbish etc) has been multiplied many times over, in some cases up to 190-300 work days per year. In many places all of the wooded areas, particularly on the rural outskirts of the towns, but also in many other areas, have been destroyed, primarily due to lack of fuel.

– The most commonly named problem of the dependent countries is the debt owed the imperialist banks and governments. With regard to the environmental crisis, this means increased orientation towards export production and an increase in acute poverty and exodus from the rural areas. At the same time no means are available to finance conservation measures. The World Bank and the IMF are thus instrumental in making people and nature pay an ever greater price for the debt crisis.

This finds a cynical counterpart in a whole number of direct acts of destruction of the natural environment and other environmental crimes perpetrated by imperialist concerns. Dangerous production lines for example (especially in the chemical industry) are often transferred to the dependent countries, where there is not only cheap labour but also an environment which can be freely polluted. Toxic and radioactive waste from imperialist countries is frequently disposed of in the dependent countries.

The governments of most of the

dependent countries are helpless in the face of the environmental crisis. Their attachment to imperialist interests and their own class interests and privileges serve to increase economic dependence and exacerbate the environmental crisis. Even certain international aid programs (against famine, environmental catastrophes or the latest proposals for a partial cancellation of debt in return for environmental measures) end up becoming a welcome source of additional income for the ruling elites in the dependent countries.

A solution to the environmental crisis in the dependent countries is unthinkable without independence from imperialism. If the solution to the most urgent social problems in the form of modernization "bought" with credits and debt has proven to be a failure and has actually worsened the problems it set out to solve, then the effect on the environment has been even worse. Poverty and economic dependence forces millions of people into environmentally highly destructive forms of behaviour which represent their sole chance of survival under the present circumstances. The process of anti-imperialist, "permanent" revolution will necessarily have to take on the problems of the environment and link them with the program against capitalist exploitation in order to successfully build alternative, socialist relations of production.

The environmental crisis in the transitional societies

The wave of political transformations in the transitional societies since the accession to power of the Gorbachev faction in the USSR has made clear that the situation of the environment under the conditions of a bureaucratic centrally-planned economy is by no means better than elsewhere. At least with regard to air, water and soil pollution and the problems of the urban centres, the situation is even worse than in the imperialist metropolises.

One, but only one, reason for this is the fact that these societies were only partially able to overcome the capitalist law of value and the accompanying objective pressures it exerts on production. In a significant number of key sectors of production, there is an unbroken dependency on capitalism and the world market. The economic quantification and exploitation of natural resources for an export-oriented economy and dependency on capitalist products and technologies have also led to fundamental destruction of the environment in these countries, to an extent that is even comparable with the situation in the dependent countries.

At the same time, a considerable amount of natural and social resources had to be used in the direct defence against imperialist aggression. From Churchill's "the Bolshevik baby must be strangled in its cradle" to "cutting the head off the Soviet chicken" in the statements of the US government on the "contra" war in Nicaragua, the necessity of centralized military defence has had a decisive influence on the development of the transitional societies and on the orientation of their production.

All of the currently non-capitalist societies began their development under conditions of economic underdevelopment, or even of great poverty. Their "socialism" was a distribution of want, whose difficulties grew with their failure to topple the imperialist powers. "The battle for production", the short-term improvement of economic results with scant regard for ecological goals - assuming these were even acknowledged - determined the starting conditions of these societies.

It is therefore not wrong to claim that capitalist production is also fundamentally responsible for the environmental crisis in the non-capitalist societies.

A number of causes of the environmental crisis in the transitional societies are also to be found in the specific structures of these societies, in the establishment of a bureaucracy which appropriates a considerable part of the social surplus product for its own personal consumption and privileges and maintains its monopoly of power by means of a ubiquitous repressive apparatus and an ideology which falsifies the ideals of socialism. From the time of its foundation, the Fourth International has analyzed and criticized these relations, which determine the system of the transitional societies. Today, in the wake of the existential crisis of Stalinism, they are becoming known throughout the world and are allowing people for the first time to get an idea of the real situation.

The planned economy is an attempt to develop an economy of labour which is directly social in character. In contrast to capitalism, where it is the market which decides on the usefulness (i.e. "saleability") of labour, the non-capitalist societies attempted to determine social need first and plan production accordingly. It is self-evident that this can only succeed when all of the different needs and interests of the people are drawn together in a process of democratic decision-making. The need for democracy becomes even more essential when it is a question of distributing objectively present shortages across society. The bureaucratization of the transitional societies however systematically reduced democracy. The multiplicity of social and national, cultural and economic needs of the people were unified by force in a central plan dictated from above. The fundamental features of this plan had to consist of purely quantitative standards and growth rates, since all the qualitative aspects had been buried along with democracy. Hence, the transitional societies' orientation towards quantitative increases in production was almost greater than that of the capitalist societies, initiated as it was solely by government or party decree and enforced by means of repressive measures. The protection of resources and the environment only occurs in such plans in quantitative terms (number of sewage plants, filters, amount of budget expenditures, etc). Such planning is by its very nature full of mistakes and enormous errors with a corresponding wasting of resources, which are only discovered when those "at the top" take notice.

The exclusion of the mass of people from social planning and the establishment of a repressive and hierarchical power structure lead to the stifling alienation of the people

from production. The interest in social property was reduced or even repressed. At the same time there developed a system of hypocrisy and deceit in which "plan fulfilment" was "achieved" in a purely illusory way with countless tricks and swindles. This system of illusory plan fulfilment and shadow economy is the cause of an enormous waste of resources and the deliberate ignoring of ecological relations.

The individual parts of the plan are also dictated by the interests of the bureaucratic blocs behind them, resulting in the systematic giantism so typical of the Soviet Union and comparable countries. The bigger, the more centralized and global a project (e.g. the river rerouting projects in Siberia) the more it expresses the power of the bureaucracy. Bureaucrats for environmental protection have only been in existence since the 1970s, but they are without influence, little departments stuck like afterthoughts onto the main administrations. Such bureaucracies offered no room for ecological self-interests to grow. The brown coal mines of the GDR or the irrigation projects in the USSR are examples of the resultant planning failures and destruction of entire landscapes.

The ideology of the bureaucracy preaches a kind of obligatory optimism and faith in progress. The result of this ideologically ordained, top-down "socialism" was an internalization of its opposite, i.e. of capitalist consumerism in the minds of the masses. The answer to this consisted of promises like the "competition between the two systems" or the "overtaking" of the western societies. Capitalism's ecologically devastating consumption and modernization models were rehabilitated and adopted as centrally important ideological goals, consequently determining the form of the central plan.

And even when alternative ideas and models of socialism which took the environment into account did exist, they were administratively opposed, repressed and eliminated. Every form of opposition, no matter what issue it centred on, was a threat to bureaucratic rule. The only models accepted by the bureaucracy were those based on the quantification of natural resources (i.e. similar models to those of conservative bourgeois economists). But these were not very successful, because quantitative accounting of the value of forests, air, the environment etc. were either arbitrary or so "dynamic" that they did not fit into the rigid plans of the bureaucracy.

The Stalinist bureaucrats thus made a major contribution to extending the influence of capitalist production way beyond what was objectively necessary. Their whole model of society combined pre-capitalist, "feudal" elements of privilege and despotism with promises to be more successful than capitalism. The development of genuinely socialist social relations was systematically prevented.

Only today, after the democratic opening of the bureaucratized societies and their profound crisis, are environmental groups and a socialist opposition emerging and showing what could be possible under a democratically-planned economy and self management. Up against the secretly cultivated "advantages" of capitalism in the minds of the masses, however, it is increasingly - if tragically - obvious that they do not (yet) have a chance.

IV. Ecology and the workers' movement

The founders of scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, discuss society's relation to nature at several key places in their works. The Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875) sums this up as follows:

"Labour is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is indeed of these that material wealth is composed!) as labour, which itself is merely the expression of a natural force, namely human labour power." (Translated from the German edition of Marx and Engels Works [MEW], Vol.19, p.15).

The formulation "labour is the source of all wealth and all culture" is classified as an empty "bourgeois phrase" which has no place in a socialist program.

In his trenchant analysis of the "civilizing role of capital" in Capital Marx notes that:

"Capitalist production therefore only develops the technique and combination of the social process of production, by simultaneously undermining the source of all wealth, i.e. the earth and the worker." (MEW, Vol.23, p.529)

It cannot and should not be denied that even the Marxist classics were marked by an "overly optimistic" view of things. Occasionally at least, one detects the notion that through the development of the natural sciences, environmental problems will largely be eliminated.

"The enormous strides made by the natural sciences in this century have increasingly enabled us to recognize even the more remote after-effects at least of our most normal productive activities, and thus to control them." (Frederich Engels, "Dialectic of Nature", MEW Vol.20, p.453).

The generally speaking well-thought-out position of the founders of scientific socialism on the relation of society to nature was increasingly buried under the parallel advance of reformism in the ranks of the workers' movement. Just as reformism was integrated step-by-step into bourgeois society and came to accept its central institutions (state, army, laws, etc.), so it also took on point for point those productivist models, those "bourgeois phrases" against which Marx's verdict was directed.

In a telling statement of the social-democrat dominated German Metalworkers' Association at the turn of the century it was asserted that:

"The quicker the development of technology, the sooner will the capitalist mode of production have reached the point where it makes itself impossible and will have to be replaced by a higher form of production."

The objective room for political manoeuvre of the leadership of the young Soviet Union was undoubtedly very limited. Civil war raged, several imperialist powers were intervening militarily, the country's economy was in ruins. The situation was characterized by famine and scarcity of even the most essential goods. The speedy development of production was therefore an urgent necessity, on which the fate of the revolution depended. The victory of the German revolution would have opened up the possibility of international cooperation. Yet the Soviet Union remained isolated.

The increase in productivity was achieved largely by traditional methods (iron discipline of the workforce, dictatorial powers for plant managers, competition, piecework, Taylorism). The objective difficulties and pressures of the situation were generally played down, a virtue made out of necessity. Lenin was highly aware of the ambivalence of bourgeois progress. This understanding of the contradictory nature of bourgeois technological production completely disappeared in the Stalin era. Productivistic idolatry reached a grotesque climax and the reckless over-exploitation of people (the Stakhanov system) and nature (the projects to reroute the Siberian rivers) became the standard.

The fact that up to the present day the socialist revolution has been unable to win a victory in a single developed capitalist country and the resulting necessity of concentrating on the development of the forces of production, repairing (civil) war damage and containing famine and poverty was a considerable contributing factor to the failure to further question the way in which the structure of the productive forces was conditioned by bourgeois productive relations.

No surprise then that a working class politically weakened by fascism, Stalinism, cold war and the "economic miracle" did not stop to question the historically given model of production. It was rather scientists, small groups, local movements, the Club of Rome, etc, i.e. people and organizations outside of the workers' movement, who warned of the consequences of the idea of "nature as a supermarket", in which you could just help yourself. The general political positions of these critics was often confused, even reactionary, which made it easier for the traditional leaders of the workers' movement to denounce them and write them off as "crazy".

And so it was only with the arrival of the anti-nuclear power movement that the traditional leaderships were confronted with broad progressive forces beyond their control.

The continual recurrence of ecological catastrophes, the growth of movements for the protection of the environment and their (partial) successes and processes of political formation (Green parties) etc. have all led - with parallel differentiation in the bourgeois camp - to a range of positions in the workers' movement. Apart from isolated revolutionary groups who subject the current relation of society to nature to a fundamental analysis, and deduce from this the need for a "break" with the given framework of political, social and technological conditions, we can make out three main currents in the workers' movement:

- The "stonewall faction", which wants to carry on as though "nothing has happened". Even this faction has had to make certain changes to its positions in the light of the catastrophic ecological developments. They therefore call today for exhaust emission standards, catalytic converters, state regulation, etc. They have in no way changed their short-sighted perspective, but merely agree with environmental "repairs", especially when there is money to be made out of them.

- A technocratic current believes that environmental problems can be dealt with via high-tech solutions. In reality, this often means merely passing the problem on to someone else, with no explanation for example of what is supposed to be done with the huge amounts of used filters, sludge from sewage works and other "residues". Peter Glotz of the SPD opts for cooperation with the "end-of-the-pipe-technology" faction of capital. An "alliance between the traditional left, the technical elite and the thinking minority of growth-oriented capitalists" is supposed to lead to "socially directed innovation". He explicitly warns against questioning private ownership of the means of production.

- The third current, which can perhaps most readily be described as "ecological reformists", is also very careful not to talk about property relations. Capitalism, described rather shamefacedly as "industrial society" is - once again - to be cleansed of its "excesses", this time with regard to its crimes against the environment. Erhard Eppler, a past president of the "Basic Values Commission" of the SPD, notes in this context that:

It is more than ever social democracy's task to undertake a new reform policy of democratic, humane and ecological corrections to industrial society.

On the positive side, it can be noted that in a number of countries entire trade unions or at least sizeable minorities in them are opposed to the "peaceful" use of nuclear power (the CGIL in Italy, the NUM in Britain, etc) and are also showing increased sensitivity to ecological issues in other areas (the CUT in Brazil, IG Metall in West Germany, etc.).

The current policies of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union are creating contradictory conditions for ecological issues. On the one hand, there is more room for control, ecological initiatives, protest movements, etc. On the other hand, the forced introduction of the "market economy" means that profit criteria are gaining ground on ideas that orient towards the use value of goods.

V. Achievements and limitations of the ecological movement

The fundamental achievement of the ecological movement, which has brought about a profound change of consciousness with regard to environmental questions, is the

recognition of the significance of the destruction of nature by capitalism. The destruction of nature has taken on dimensions which threaten the whole of humanity. Here - as in the question of the prevention of global nuclear war - it is a "question of survival for the whole human race." Yet in contrast to nuclear destruction, this is a question which is always "news," and which is daily getting worse and ever more obvious in its manifestations: climatic changes, the ecological disequilibrium of the Mediterranean and the North Sea, etc.

Yet at the same time, this fundamental achievement is also - viewed dialectically - its fundamental limitation. The recognition of the importance of these issues for the human race as a whole is accompanied by the attempt to solve them in a class collaborationist way, precisely avoiding the appropriate means of struggle (class war against capitalism).

Another gain of the ecological movement is the questioning of the notion of Progress. This also showed up a weakness in the Marxist analysis of late capitalism: we can no longer speak of a positive development of the forces of production, as was the case at the beginnings of capitalism, only restricted by the framework of capitalist appropriation or rather developed to the disadvantage of the proletariat. Capitalism, which has "survived" for a lot longer than ought to have been historically "necessary" for the development of the forces of production, is beginning increasingly to transform the productive forces into destructive forces, in order to thus divest them of their "explosive force" with regard to the relations of production. That also means however, that they cannot simply be "freed", i.e. used for the good of all in a socialist society, but that a critical selection is necessary. This is no mere theoretical question, but a profoundly practical one with regard to the plans of the Stalinist bureaucracies to "overtake capitalism." In addition, there was for the first time a more detailed analysis firstly of the material side of production (the use values), looking at which products are ecologically and socially desirable etc; and secondly of alienation in labour: the blind isolation of work on the production line versus smaller more "comprehensive" units. Yet even these achievements have their dialectically negative aspects in the rejection of "large-scale industry", "economic growth" and the literally reactionary desire to regress to simple commodity production and exchange.

The ecology movement brought the "utopian" dimension back to politics after the retreat of the movement formed by the 1968 upsurge. It took up the discussion around fundamental change of the social system and different ways of living and producing. In the above-mentioned discussion on the use-value side of products it picked up on ideas of socially useful production, developed new social utopias as well as propagating concrete "plans for change."

Yet such utopian projects were all too often to remain limited due to the lack of clarity about the nature of the capitalist economic system. Thus without the conscious propagation of anticapitalist positions the Utopias of the ecological movement have the inherent tendency to slip into petty bourgeois utopianism (comparable to the early socialists).

An undeniable achievement of the ecological movements was (and still is today, only in a more limited way) the mobilization and at least partial radicalization of broad masses, especially in countries where the working class is or was on the defensive and the class struggle generally underdeveloped. In countries such as Austria, but also Switzerland and West Germany, the development of such concrete and militant forms of struggle as large-scale demonstrations, blockades, occupations as well as the use of political forms such as mass petitions, days of action and referenda were closely connected with the development of the ecological struggles. In spite of a continuing lull in the class struggle there were still a number of gains made in this area (successful referendum against nuclear power in Austria, etc), which had a generally positive effect on resistance culture in these countries and at the time of the large mobilizations also strengthened the radical left.

At the same time however these mobilizations were in most cases also directed against the traditional workers' movement, which tended to side with capital in the defence of ecologically destructive projects. The isolation from and even hostility to the organizations of the workers' movement is therefore the major weakness and limitation of these mobilizations.

In a number of countries, the ecology movement pushed through numerous reforms which had the effect of partially decelerating the explosive increase in environmental destruction. This can be seen in the almost total stop in building new nuclear power plants, in the reductions of individual chemicals (halogenated hydrocarbons, fertilizers, etc), in the development of exhaust emission standards for cars and industrial plants, etc. A growing capitalist environmental industry has developed, and demands for ecological reform are even put forward and fought for by bourgeois parties. In this respect, a section of the ecology movement underestimated capitalism's ability to integrate oppositional movements and committed the old mistake of believing in an "automatic" development of the crisis.

Yet at the same time, and in spite of all the reforms and environmental industries, the global damage to the environment is greater than ever before. The pollution of the seas,, the destruction of the tropical forests, the destruction of the ozone layer clearly indicate that the reforms are at most merely serving to imperceptibly slow down our progress on the road to global catastrophe. From this perspective, ecological destruction points beyond all attempts at reform towards a fundamental transformation of our society.

A section of the ecology movement, including parts of the peace and women's movements, has organized itself as a political party. The necessity of a solution affecting society as a whole has been recognized, and organization is taking place beyond the level of committees, etc. On the other hand the Green parties (with various differences) also clearly manifest the fundamental limitations

of the ecology movements: in part they see themselves as “classless” and have no concept of the working class as a revolutionary subject, hardly any contact with the trade unions, etc. The limitations in terms of content and social composition thus determine the boundaries of the ecology movement. Given that it neither has a comprehensive revolutionary program, nor does it base itself on the working class as revolutionary subject, it falls well short of its aim of being a new revolutionary movement and a force which can replace, or at least inherit the place of the working class. Nonetheless it remains, except for the numerically very small explicitly bourgeois or reactionary groups, an important ally for revolutionaries in the global struggle against the capitalist profit system.

VI. The ecological crisis in bourgeois class rule

The destruction of the vital basis of human community by the nowadays familiar effects of capitalist production on the climate and the quality of the air, water and soil has reached a new dimension for bourgeois class rule and its ideology. The reasons for this are:

– The global nature of the ecological crisis, which can only be identified as a common evil within the competitive logic of capitalism

– The origins of the ecological crisis are partly to be found way back in history, and are partly the result of the combined development of a number of individual factors, i.e. it is difficult to precisely define its temporal and physiological origins. The overcoming of the ecological crisis also requires amounts of time and investment that would render all ideas about bourgeois input-output cycles completely inoperative.

– Finally, the oppressed and exploited classes can only be made to foot the bill for the ecological crisis to a relatively small extent - in contrast to the classical economic crises, the social evils of capitalism and even the consequences of military conflicts. Even so we must be clear that particularly in the dependant countries the consequences of the ecological crisis will necessarily be borne first and foremost by the poor and oppressed classes; all the more so given the combined effects of social, economic and ecological crisis.

The growing recognition of the environmental crisis and the resulting emergence of the environmental movement from the early 1970s to the present day has meant a massive attack on one of the central concepts of bourgeois ideology, namely on the idea that bourgeois property relations and the capitalist economic order would make “progress for all” possible, and that the ongoing subjugation of nature was per se a good thing, and that all the problems connected with that were capable of being solved.

Even if the criticism of the environmental destruction and the mass protests against individual environmentally harmful projects only rarely attacked the capitalist order directly, a broadly-based mistrust in the bourgeois idea of progress established itself nonetheless, along with the search for a new model of social development and a “new way of thinking” which quickly attracted a large number of scientists and experts.

The bourgeois governments answered the protests and mass mobilizations with the familiar repressive arsenal; faced with this ideological challenge, the Seventies saw a series of attempts to modernize bourgeois ideology regarding destruction of the environment. The first of these attempts to become internationally known was the 1972 Club of Rome report, which detailed the increased environmental destruction and demanded an international policy coordination on the questions of population growth, waste of raw materials and the destruction of the environment. The report, entitled “The Limits of Growth” was joined by a whole number of similar studies, the best-known of which being the “Global 2000” report to US President Carter. The effects of this report cut both ways. On the one hand, bourgeois science and ideology started to talk about the environment and started arguing about predictions and demands. On the other hand, this lent greater strength to a pessimistic vision of the world’s future thus stimulating the ecology movement even more. The concrete order of global capitalist economy lost its image of superiority and finality, its functioning was beginning to be questioned from the inside outwards. At the same time, the practical political consequences of these studies were comprised of catalogues of demands for global planning and political regulation of the economy. This brought them into sharp contradiction with the capitalist market economy and the economic liberalism and deregulation attempts of the governments, which were globally on the advance at the time.

By the mid-1980s at the latest a second offensive in bourgeois environmental politics was required, which this time was able to take on the contradictions primarily in the field of practical politics. One expression of this can be found in the Brundtland Report (“Our CommonFuture”)passed by the UN General Assembly in 1988. This is alreadycompletely determined by bourgeois self-consciousness and asserts that despite the unfortunate fact that capitalism pollutes the environment, the necessary repair measures can be developed. The report demands forms of global development that take greater account of environmental questions. Its proposed solution to the crisis is comprised of a combination of repairs, limits on the production of toxic substances and on further destruction of natural resources as well as the development of new, “soft” technologies. This is also explicitly seen as a source of economic growth, i.e the multinationals will be able to make good profits out of it. These are supposed to be the elements of further, well-balanced “sustainable growth”.

A number of bourgeois governments explicitly welcomed the Brundtland Report. The parties of the Socialist International in particular felt their stance confirmed by the inclusion of many social democratic ideas in the report (environmental protection as a

future growth industry, more and more binding treaties, state redevelopment programmes, etc). From an ecological viewpoint the repairs suggested by the report are extremely limited. Nowhere is there mention of the radical solutions necessary even for the largest problem areas (protection of the rain forests, the Antarctic, nuclear energy use).

Nowadays practical environmental policies are a fundamental part of the work of every bourgeois government. As a rule this is comprised of establishing limits for air, water and soil pollution. On top of this there are the plans for step-by-step reduction of the upper limits and the disposal of hazards from past production. These are the subject of international agreements. Yet such politics are in the last resort mere patchwork - always insufficient from an ecological viewpoint and lagging way behind the real level of destruction. Of increasing importance however are the political and economic programmes which lay claim to represent some form of "ecological market economy". The attempts to get the capitalist economy to orient to practical environmental conservation of its own accord have so far remained mere theory. Conservative economic theoreticians (especially in the USA and FRG) are propagating the idea of an environmentally friendly market economy via the introduction of certificates which would entitle the bearer to a certain amount of pollution. These could then be bought and sold like shares, and their price would thus regulate the protection of the environment. Previously "free" nature could thus be "utilized" and would then find its place in the company accounts.

Only marginally more tested in practice are the environmental taxes called for by both conservative and reformist politicians. A levy on the use of energy, air, water and important raw materials is intended to encourage savings. Yet without intervening into price policies (and hence increased state control) such levies will be a tax on the incomes of the masses, who will bear the brunt of it all. Politicians however steer well clear of such follow-up measures.

Equally theoretical are the primarily social democratically influenced programmes for worldwide capitalist recovery via state programmes for environmental redevelopment and development of new technologies. The idea of environmental conservation as the motor for a new wave of capitalist "modernization" will certainly remain an illusion, even if such policies were able to make any headway against the proponents of conservative deregulation and the short and medium term interests of the companies.

In addition the field of bourgeois state environmental policy is marked by the enormous disparity between the poor and the rich states. If the imperialist states have succeeded over the last decade in containing at least some of the more serious forms of pollution and destruction, then the lack of funding in the poorer states - together with the individual interests of firms making profits precisely from the damage they do to the environment - has meant the failure of even the most elementary necessary steps.

VII. Political organization in the ecology movement

The era of purely ad hoc activity in the ecology movement is long gone. More and more countries have Green organizations or parties. In Western Europe they are represented in the parliaments of such different countries as the FRG, Austria, Sweden, Italy and Portugal. There are also Green parties in the dependant countries (e.g. Brazil and Turkey) and in the transitional societies (GDR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia).

The emergence of Green organizations and parties cannot be sufficiently explained by the reference to impending or future ecological dangers. Any analysis of their origins must include at least the following contributive factors:

- The general lack of perspective of the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement (especially in the face of increasing signs of crisis) and the widespread continuation of their blinkeredness, not only in ecological questions.

- The lack of a revolutionary breakthrough in Western Europe after 1968, the fragmenting of the radical left and the general decline in radical politics; the long-term suppression and the "burn-out" of diverse opposition movements in Eastern Europe.

- Our own political mistakes and our failure in many countries to become a hegemonic force on the radical left.

- The understanding that the existence of disparate "movements" is in itself insufficient and that an overall political alternative is necessary (without questioning the autonomy of the different movements).

It would be a mistake to try to lump all the different aspects of Green politics together. They all have their own specific character, depending on their country of origin, political culture, concrete historical origins. The spectrum ranges from a strong bourgeois and petty bourgeois influence, through reformist groupings right up to the dominance of left alternative, eco-socialist currents. In general, and with all due caution, we can say that:

- They are an attempt at political organization to the left of the social democratic and communist parties, and in most questions are to the left of the traditional leaderships.

- Although they often have a social composition of up to 75% dependent wage workers, they do not consider themselves as part of the workers movement.

- Not least because of their antipathy towards the "old" workers' movement their ideology is often muddled and confused ("we are neither right nor left", and borrows considerably from "small-is-beautiful" theories etc).

- Although often originating as a loose electoral platform with the ecology question as a central point of reference, once voted into parliament, the Greens have often developed critical positions on a number of other questions (e.g. social policy, the arms

race, the “Third World” etc.).

– In most cases, the parliamentary faction of the Green party stifles the activities of party as a whole, which only serves to increase the tendency towards parliamentary trivialization of the partially revolutionary positions of the “movement”.

In this respect the Greens are an almost classic example of a transitional phenomenon. Arising as they did in a period of generalized crisis in the workers’ movement, the Greens have up till now been unable and indeed unwilling to see the proletariat as the decisive agent of social change. Their actions are thus marked by a combination of correct criticisms of social in-iquities in certain areas together with illusory “reform” strategies. In the day to day politics of the West German Greens for example the main emphasis is on mere reforms instead of fundamental social change: they are increasingly becoming bogged down in the organs of parliamentary representation, and place less and less emphasis on extra-parliamentary mobilization, thus developing elements of a “substitutionalist” politics. Uncritical retention of this trend would lead the Greens to a complete loss of their utopian element and put them on the road to becoming yet another “reform party.”

Without a doubt, the Greens will sooner or later be faced with the necessity of “showing their true colours”, i.e. with acute situations which require an unambiguous class stand. It is however fruitless to speculate on when such situations might arise, the course they might take and to what extent the decisions of the Greens might come together to change their character.

Revolutionary Marxists do not judge political protagonists primarily by what they say, what their program is or how they see themselves, but by their real function in the class struggle. In general it can be said that the emergence of Green parties and organizations has not had a retrograde effect but has in many cases increased the left’s room to manoeuvre.

We maintain our fundamental position that there can be no short cut around the traditional workers parties and that for this reason the united front orientation remains valid. In a whole series of countries, revolutionary parties with a strong mass base will only emerge when there are splits in the social-democratic and communist parties and class-struggle currents emerge in the trade unions.

Given the present level of class struggle in Western Europe and the degree of political differentiation there is currently no country in which such process is directly on the agenda. However in some countries green protest movements and parties have arisen, which have managed to attract the votes of and to some extent have even organized the majority of the society’s critical potential. It would be fatal to ignore these parties. We should, by contrast, develop an active political orientation towards them: joint actions, discussions of their theoretical positions, etc. Each section should concretely examine whether entry and encouraging the process of differentiation from within is a valid option.

VIII. The Fourth International and the environmental crisis

As shown in section IV, there is a precedent in Marxist thinking for a radical ecological critique of capitalism. Nonetheless, this issue was not noticeably present in the early period of the Fourth International, as was the case with most of the forces in the workers’ movement. It is for example quite pointless to look for mention of the issue in the Transitional Programme of 1938, the International’s founding programmatic document.

In the period following the Second World War, revolutionary Marxists were well aware of the destruction of the environment and of air and water pollution, but they saw it as one of many destructive consequences of an exploitative and inhuman system and not as a global phenomenon which was destroying the fundamental conditions of life of the planet.

This changed in the early 1970s when the self-destructive tendencies of capitalist productive relations became a broadly-discussed topic, taken up even by bourgeois ideologists. At the same time, articles and studies written by members of our movement appeared.

The major test for the parties of the workers’ movement came however with the emergence of the mass movements against atomic energy, in particular in Japan, Western Europe and the USA.

Practically every section of the International was involved in this mass movement, yet only a few sections were able to successfully consolidate their work on ecological issues when it came to the decline of the movements.

The experience of these movements did however make its presence felt in the debates of the International’s last World Congresses. Whilst there was no mention of environmental issues in the resolutions to the Tenth World Congress, this was to change by the Eleventh Congress in 1979. Here the struggle against nuclear energy is seen as a “question of survival for the working class”, with the task of the International and its sections being “to strengthen the movement, by drawing the industrial working class into the struggle”. The positions were elaborated further for the Twelfth World Congress in 1985. The resolutions undertook a relatively extensive analysis of all three sectors of the world revolution and the main resolution called on the International and its sections to “take up the environmental question increasingly in propaganda and general activities” and to undertake “joint actions with the environmental movement”.

Today the Fourth International considers the destruction of the environment as one of the most acute dangers facing humanity, a modern version of Rosa Luxemburg’s famous “socialism or barbarism” idea. The International sees it as one of its major tasks to win the workers’

movement and its organizations to the struggle against the destruction of the planet, and it wishes to show the way to joint actions between the ecological and the workers' movements, not merely against the various forms of environmental destruction but also against the system that spreads it. The International wishes to participate in the discussions of the ecology movement and destroy the widespread illusions in the possibility of a "clean" capitalism.

The International is also participating in current struggles in a number of countries, for example against the destruction of the rain forests in Brazil or against the Laguna Verde nuclear power plant in Mexico. Some of the Western European sections have contributed to the building of socialist wings within the Green parties, others play an important role in the ecological movement. In the analyses of the Fourth International, the ecology question is seen as one of the major issues around which the present restructuring of the workers movement is centred.

All this does not mean that there are no problems in integrating this "new issue" into the work of our movement. Many members have continued to see the environmental crisis as one of capitalism's many contradictions, which can only be solved by a proletarian revolution. They do not see the close connection with the daily struggle for the survival of the working class, against inhuman living and working conditions and against the threat of war. Most sections have only worked on environmental issues when other social forces have brought them to the headlines. It is possible that the improved base in the industrial working class has made some sections more susceptible to the ideological pressure of reformism, including its systematic neglect of questions of vital, existential importance - a brand of reformism difficult to take on, when there is a low level of struggle.

The result of this has been that the debate in the International has only developed relatively slowly. Whilst other currents and individuals have been examining the question of socialism and ecology for decades, revolutionary Marxists have been almost silent. It is increasingly clear that Marxists must make special efforts to apply their method to these issues. It is just not possible to take up a few of the elements of an ecological critique and to give them a coat of "red" paint.

The Fourth International does not just want to make a contribution to the discussions about concrete ecological policies, but also aims to take forwards the political and organizational steps necessary for mass activities. For it is only by means of mass mobilizations that the present conditions can be changed and the working class become the agent of social transformation, a class "for itself".

IX. Action programme

On a global scale, there are a huge number of initiatives and movements against the over-exploitation and destruction of nature. The Fourth International supports or is involved in these initiatives and movements - critically in part, given the often confused general political ideas of some environmentalists. The experience of the ecology movement shows that only broad mobilizations and mass protests can achieve widespread awareness and real change. The Fourth International therefore aims to make it a major part of its work to achieve the participation of the workers organizations in these struggles. Conflicts which endanger both the health of the workforce and the environment can offer, along with other struggles, the opportunity for joint action.

We are for the full independence of the ecology movements from the bourgeois state and the bureaucracies of the transitional societies. We work within them without wanting to manipulate them. Furthermore we believe that even in a free and pluralistic socialist society the ecology movement, like the women's' movement, must remain autonomous from the political parties and the state institutions, given that the socialization of the means of production alone can be no guarantee of dealing with the threat to natural resources.

In solidarity with, and as members of the environmentalist movements we wish above all to emphasize two aspects: firstly that even relatively small attempts at ecological improvements come into conflict with capitalist property relations, or the rule of the bureaucracy in the non-capitalist countries. It is not artificially grafting the idea of social transformation onto a radical ecological critique, but understanding that it represents its logical consequence. Secondly, that to put ecological critique into practice requires the historical subject which thanks to its objective position is potentially capable of building a society free from the exploitation of human beings and nature: i.e. the working class. A working class, however, that sees itself as the champion of the fight for the protection of the environment. We want to fight for the creation of such a reciprocal link between the ecology movement and the workers movement.

The following is intended as an outline of some of the most pressing ecological problems, whose resolution represents a question of life or death for humanity. All these questions require internationally coordinated action. This is where we want to concentrate our resources - e.g. within the framework of transnational campaigns - to develop our alternatives and to show, as is our belief, that they can become reality.

Demands

– A radical break with the exploitative system of agricultural export production in the dependant countries which produces famine and poverty.

– An immediate ban on the entire nuclear power cycle.

– An immediate ban on the production and use of toxic and dangerous substances such as chlorinated fluorocarbons and asbestos.

– No economic exploitation of the Antarctic.

– No to the destruction of the tropical

rain forests and to the fatal pollution of the forests in the industrialized countries.

– Stop all agricultural practices which destroy the soil in the industrialized countries.

– Stop dumping waste into the seas, rivers and lakes.

– Prevent dangerous - and in the "Third World", with the slaughter of the Amazon Indians, even genocidal - nuclear power projects such as Kararao (Brazil) and Sardars Sarovar (India).

– Ban all toxic waste transports and on the transfer of hazardous production processes to the dependent countries.

Alternatives

– A system of agriculture in dependent countries that is primarily oriented to securing the basic necessities of the population.

– Production of goods for civilian instead of military use.

– Useful and planned use of energy instead of over-exploitation of non-renewable energy sources: development of alternative energy sources such as solar and wind energy, energy from biological sources etc.

– Ecological farming

– Development of public instead of private, individual transport systems, especially local transport and railway.

– Filters and sewage works etc. are insufficient. What is required is a fundamental industrial conversion which forbids environmental pollution right from the start.

– A policy of recycling and radical avoidance of waste.

How can the alternatives be put into practice?

– Thoroughgoing land reform in the dependant countries.

– Total cancellation of the debts of the countries maintained in a state of underdevelopment, and of the transitional societies.
– Development of alternative energy plans by the environmental and workers movements together with progressive scientists.

– Elimination of business secrets, which serve for example to disguise real emission levels of chlorinated fluorocarbons; compulsory introduction of records detailing materials involved in production and right of access to them.

– Programme of public works for the conversion of production.

– Set up "ecological dual power" via workers' control of production; workforce to have the right to veto production that is hazardous to health and the environment.

– Transfer of the key areas of the economy to public property under the control of the workers, consumers and environmental movement.

– Set up ecologically compatible production based on the principle of satisfying needs instead of the profit principle or the rule of the bureaucracy

– Fight for a free, democratic, pluralistic, self-managing socialist society.

Europe 1992: Bourgeois plans and workers' perspectives

1 January 1996

Although at first the collapse of Stalinism could benefit capitalism and social democracy ideologically, and widen the direct or indirect sphere of capital domination, over time there exist a number of destabilizing elements for the imperialist system itself. These fantastic mass movements, mobilizing tens of thousands of workers and youth, also illustrate the explosive charge of democratic demands and the challenge to privileges.

These events change the world situation profoundly, and give the political and social situation in Europe a fundamental role.

The upheavals in Eastern Europe are combined with a thoroughgoing reorganization of the political and economic situation in Western Europe. The perspective of integrating capitalist Europe, and the political and social future of the societies in the East, will not be resolved independently. Both have important implications. Even if at first the question is above all one of political and ideological correlation, the socio-economic factors will play an increasingly important role. For all that, the outcome of struggles in Western Europe will remain essentially determined by the class conflicts that will unfold in each country.

It is not only the existing states and regimes that try to resolve these problems by proposing various organizational deals, from the "common house" to the project of a European confederation. They are also raised for all the political or social movements trying to elaborate a coherent framework for analysis and action. While the course of struggles remains basically determined by the national political situation, social conflicts in Europe increasingly interact and thus require a new overall thinking.

The political conditions for our intervention in Europe, as well as for all revolutionaries and radical

militants in the unions and social movements, have therefore changed. This new situation demands a great deal of analysis; it will introduce new discussions around both political perspectives and strategic questions.

The problems of building the Fourth International in Europe have evolved. The dialectic of struggles between Western and Eastern Europe has been reinforced and modified. New ways of building our movement throughout Europe are gradually taking shape, in the perspective of revolutionary parties rooted in their national reality.

2. The world economic crisis is accompanied by a change in the organization of capital with the appearance of new dominant sectors, changes in the international division of labour and in the forms of domination over third-world economies. European capitalist countries are at the centre of these changes.

In this context, the ruling classes are reorganizing by searching to put into place elements to resolve the crisis.

a) Some new technologies have been applied to production, above all in the area of production techniques themselves, and they have sometimes changed work organization dramatically in industries and the service sector. Profits have been partially re-established since 1984 and the rate of exploitation increased. The questioning of protectionism and the opening up of markets is redefining the terms of competition between different sectors and firms. Mergers and takeovers are accelerating, leading to a colossal strengthening and centralization of capital.

The economic depression does not only mean austerity policies, unemployment and increased poverty. It has contributed to modifying the composition of the proletariat and to shaking up the workers' movement. A new socio-political framework has been sketched out, different from that in which the West European workers' movement was consolidated during the previous 30 years of growth.

b) States have continued to lose their capacity to define their own "national" economic policies confronted by the growing internationalization of economic processes. This exacerbates the contradictions between new requirements to exploit capital, the confines of national states and their continuing social regulatory function.

The Single European Act (SEA) is seen by the bourgeoisies and European multinationals as a dynamic element that could help them out of the crisis. The social relationship of forces are therefore not only played out at factory or workplace level or in terms of strike activity: the stakes are so high for the SEA and the project of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) that they will weigh on the future relationship of forces.

c) But while the bourgeoisie has made some advances in establishing a new, European context for capital-work relations, the application of new technologies and work organization, none of this is yet sufficiently extensive and nothing has crystallized out in terms of a state structure.

During the crisis up until now, the bourgeoisies have only very rarely carried out a frontal attack against the workers as a whole: profits have been substantially reduced for a whole period but have not collapsed; moreover the strength accumulated by the working class in the preceding period would have made any over-eagerness by the bourgeoisie to go for a rapid showdown adventurist. In spite of numerous debates on the role of the state, the ruling classes have not needed to dismantle the "welfare state". For now, in response to state indebtedness they have been content to qualitatively reduce its scope, something that has hit only a section of the population. In Europe, neo-Keynesian policies have never been totally abandoned. Some of the late 1970s' projects of using the crisis to dismantle fundamental social gains have given way to a more prudent strategy: more of a gradual erosion by stages than a frontal attack.

This is one of the major difficulties for the bourgeoisie: the contradiction between the need to substantially decrease social spending and labour costs while prioritizing the maintenance of general conditions for realizing surplus value. A new equilibrium would need a much more radical change in the world relationship of forces against the working class. Nothing of the sort has yet occurred, even if it is true that some elements of such a deterioration have begun to appear.

d) The other possible perspective for the capitalists could be that of opening up East European markets, beginning with the Soviet Union, alongside the possibility of making sizeable new investments. The bourgeoisie is using the crisis of the Stalinist dictatorships to give itself new political and economic possibilities. The absorption of East Germany by the Federal Republic symbolizes this link between the problems of European integration and the political changes that have occurred in the East.

However, there is already a gap between desires, feasibility and accomplishment. The first steps towards productive investment - substantial and not marginal - in these countries will give rise to new social contradictions even before there is any question of re-establishing capitalism as the dominant mode of production. The bourgeoisie will draw out from the crisis of the Stalinist dictatorships new political and economic resources for itself.

e) The crisis of US hegemony has deepened over the last ten years. The German and Japanese economies have become higher-perfoming in many sectors than that of the USA, and have carried along some European economies in their wake. The events in Eastern Europe are helping to undermine the old "Atlanticist" dependencies and allegiances. The whole imperialist defence doctrine is under discussion today.

This is the context of the discussions about a possible European confederation (including some or all of Eastern Europe) or on the role of the CSCE, as the new all-inclusive framework for imperialist-controlled European security.

The Gulf war also touched on these questions by aggravating the discussion among the Western bourgeoisies on the future of Nato, the possible independence of a specifically

"European" military set-up and on sharing the arms markets.

B. The threat of the Single Act

3. The Single Act corresponds to the new needs for exploiting capital. Its goal is to create a vast market free from all protectionism, throwing production norms, national regulations, fiscal systems and the conditions in which labour is exploited into free competition. For certain sectors or products, it expresses the collective needs of European industry in the face of Japanese and US competition. But the Single Act also expresses the new needs of the international market in terms of deregulation, restructuring and production alliances that are increasingly realized on a world scale. The idea is to drastically reduce protectionism between OECD countries, leading to sharpening competition and industrial reorganization. So mergers and takeovers do not concern only those between European firms aimed at creating a uniform "European capitalism", but in reality involve the whole industrial and commercial system in the imperialist countries.

4. In this context privatization and deregulation policies have been intensified (including on social protection).

– The social cost of such restructuring has never been taken into account in the elaboration of the Single Act. Far from immediately favouring a homogenization of the industrial fabric, working conditions and social protection, the big market exacerbates regional and social disparities, and none of the a posteriori compensatory mechanisms can seriously pretend to ameliorate the effects of the market.

– Far from resolving unemployment, the Single Act first of all implies a vast movement of restructuring - in industry and the services - leading to job losses. In the new market conditions job creation will not reabsorb structural unemployment or reduce the numbers of those left on the scrap-heap.

The "free circulation" of labour announced by the Single Act remains a utopia that bears no relation to the mass of wage-earners. On the contrary, the divisions in the labour market remain marked, while the circulation of capital is accelerating. This aggravates the disparity between the availability and the demand for jobs.

– The free circulation of capital means revising fiscal systems which reinforce the inequality between income from work and capital. Competing national regulations and norms will increase the downward pressure on wages. It sets different working classes against each other on the grounds of their own bourgeoisie's "national" interests. It increases challenges to statutes, social rights and protection. It also means competition between social regulations, and so particularly opposes the idea of a common social "platform". Nor will the liberal logic that inspires the whole project escape the arena of management. The reduction of production costs, the development of temporary, part-time and flexible work, the new ease with which production can be decentralized and so on are integral parts of the mechanisms being established. This is why it is useless to simply want to "amend" the Single Act by adding on some corrective social measures. But this is exactly the aim of the "Social Charter", made up of generalities and "recommendations" that have no more chance of preventing the bosses' attacks and overcoming inequalities than the recommendations contained in the Treaty of Rome had in their time.

5. The project of an Economic and Monetary Union confirms the necessity for the dominant sectors of the European bourgeoisie to push ahead with economic and political integration. It is also an attempt to bring about a lasting solution to financial and monetary chaos that would otherwise be provoked by the free circulation of capital. But such a process will not be realized without a simultaneous political integration. Without such a more or less combined process the whole system is nothing but a house built on sand.

The recessive wave emanating from the USA and already encompassing some European countries is a very serious threat to this difficult operation, since it is absolutely not certain that a European pole around Germany and the Deutschmark will become strong enough in time to avoid this danger.

– This absence of a European state is gradually becoming an objective limit to economic integration. It has become a major problem at a time when the new opportunities in Eastern Europe have revived competition between European bosses. It is a heavy handicap in terms of the bourgeoisie's necessity for common policies concerning defence, security or immigration control, or when it is necessary to make the EC appear as the nucleus of concentric European institutions, including the association of some of the Eastern countries. It is exacerbated by the unequal development inside the EC itself, between West Germany on one end of the scale and Ireland, Greece and Portugal on the other.

– The same problem is found concerning relations with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries. They increasingly have economic relations with EC countries. Measures have already been taken more or less aiming for an alliance. Mergers and combines are increasingly affecting both EC and EFTA firms. But total integration cannot take place while the problems of political integration, defence and "neutrality", and legislation remain unresolved.

– This difficulty exacerbates the crises inside the bourgeois parties and produces various about-turns in government policies. It divides "national" capitalist sectors from sectors whose interests are largely international. The dilemma stems from the contradiction between objective needs and the difficulty of going beyond the national states, which for the bourgeoisies remain an instrument both for carrying out their domination over the working class and for strengthening their position in relation to international competition, including inside the EC. Abandoning national prerogatives in order to strengthen common institutions is not an easy

choice, in particular for the strongest of the bourgeoisies, the German bourgeoisie.

– The question of European institutions concentrates all these issues - the respective role of states, the European Parliament, Commission and Council. All these structures have been set up behind the backs of the populations concerned. None of them can pretend to be democratic.

– In spite of all these difficulties there is already a strong coordination of economic and monetary policies, notably inside the European Monetary System (EMS) where the German Mark plays a pivotal role. There is no doubt that a section of the ruling classes and some governments have shown a clear political desire to overcome objective barriers and as rapidly as possible try to find ways to a proto-European state (whose first stage will be to give the Commission executive power), combined with the existing states. There is now the project of speeding up political integration by following the timetable of EMU in order to be capable of responding to what is at stake in Eastern Europe and the integration of the GDR.

– It is also an attempt to promote growth in Germany and, consequently, in the EC in order to distance themselves as much as possible from the risks of recession.

– The question of the absorption of East Germany is causing new contradictions to appear. The "unification" operation is complicated and strewn with pitfalls for German imperialism and for the whole EC in terms of monetary disorder and the costs involved. The possibility of carrying through at the same time the EMU and the integration of the GDR in the long term will depend on the world economic situation and on German workers' reactions to the social effects of unification. This is also an attempt to encourage growth in Germany and thus in the EEC in order to ward off as far as possible the risks of recession.

This question, while constituting a relative bloc to the integration of the European Twelve, cannot alone provoke a failure or a reversal in the long term of the need for European unification.

6. The EC is heading up the economic and political offensive towards Eastern Europe, as much on the level of proposals for aid, loans and investments as on that of projects for a "confederation" or "federation".

– But these projects imply that the Community itself will have resolved its own problems of political integration in order to play a role as such. This leads to new tensions inside the Community itself, given the comparative advantages belonging to the different countries and bourgeoisies respectively vis à vis Eastern Europe.

– The question of bringing these countries back into the capitalist fold remains a very speculative political project for the bourgeoisie itself. Meanwhile, West European firms and governments have to try to find some openings and win business concessions in exchange for their loans, a partial transfer of technology and convertibility of currencies. They operate in relation to these countries using protectionism, industrial decentralization in search of lower wages, loans given after IMF, World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) interventions, loans with strings attached, and the acquisition of holdings or takeovers resulting in redundancies. For this social peace, political stability and a compromise with governments to broaden investment possibilities is rapidly needed.

– This will introduce a new situation in these societies, notably massive unemployment and big differentiations in wages and status. This is going to raise the questions of unequal exchange and subjection to policies decided elsewhere in a new form (different to that of the dependencies vis à vis the USSR).

– The possibilities for aid are, moreover, limited. Investments depend on guarantees offered to investors by the imperialist governments, and they will be given in priority to the countries offering the best infrastructures and most social stability.

7. Unified capitalist Europe itself will continue to be a Europe of women's inequality, of racism and the exclusion of immigrants. Because of the profit logic, it will continue to be unable to solve the big ecological problems, although these are posed at an international level. It will continue to be incapable of resolving the right to self-determination of subjected nations and nationalities, in particular in the North of Ireland and Euskadi, or in colonies such as New Caledonia.

– There is not, strictly speaking, a "European" imperialism. But the EC has found a way of acting in the name of common interests on a series of questions touching on relations with the third world. This Europe, maintaining protectionism vis à vis certain products, is no longer capable of respecting its engagements in the framework of the Lomé Convention. It is incapable of sorting out the debt question, whose social cost is paid by the working populations in the countries concerned. The race for slices of the market, the application of new technologies and the manipulation of interest rates that most European bosses and governments participate in have disastrous consequences for most third-world countries.

It is from the same sort of viewpoint that efforts are made to speed up collaboration between arms manufacturers and to accelerate the establishment of an integrated European defence system.

C. Crisis in the workers' movement and new struggles

8. The establishment of the Single Act is a challenge thrown down to the European workers' movement and to all the social movements. The European workers' movement is, moreover, facing this new international conjuncture in a difficult situation.

– The economic crisis and austerity policies have gradually modified the socio-political conditions in which workers are struggling. In a majority of European countries, the following factors have created a new restricting and difficult context that has helped to divide or isolate struggles: the appearance of a very high level of structural unemployment (above all, youth and long-term unemployment); the development of insecure employment (above all for women and young people), short-term contracts and intermittent work; the decline of collective sectoral negotiations in some countries; the growth of flexibility; the development of external subcontracting; the reduction of numbers employed in the big companies; the crisis, and even disappearance, of certain working-class communities around traditional industries; and, finally, the modification of the industrial fabric. The old strong industrial sectors, whose workers' won many social victories (sliding scale, union rights, collective agreements, social security and so on) that were rapidly extended to the whole of the working class, have gone into crisis and have not yet been replaced or are not yet in a situation to play this role once again.

– These changes have taken place in a particular political context: after the checking of the Portuguese revolution; the controlled transition in the Spanish state; the impasse of the historic compromise in Italy; the failure of the Union of the Left in France; the disastrous austerity policies of the British Labour Party from 1976 to 1979, which helped Thatcher to defeat them; and the disastrous experience of governments led by social democracy in the 1980s (France, Sweden, Greece, Spanish state).

– All this has not happened without leaving its mark on struggles, on their intensity and, above all, their political consequences. The effects have been felt in all the European countries, at different times, through a marked decline in strike activity.

– There have been some important defeats, sometimes with cumulative effects on the whole workers' movement in a country. There has been a visible exhaustion of the generation of the workers' vanguard of the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. Among the layer of advanced workers - that is, the workers' vanguard in the struggles - the idea of socialism has lost support, even more so given that in the preceding period there was not a sufficient accumulation of revolutionary forces giving a credible reply to scepticism and a rejection of the Stalinist model.

– Poverty, job insecurity and social marginalization have hit broad sectors of the population, particularly immigrants and "second generation" young people. The educational system rejects them, the workers' movement is not interested and finds itself incapable of responding to their expectations. Their social revolt takes specific, often violent, forms, and constitutes a new, complex problem of organization and politicization. As the social and economic crisis gets worse this will be a lasting problem and a big question for anyone who really wants unity and mobilization of all the oppressed.

– For several years in a certain number of countries we have seen the growth of extreme-right fascist currents without the workers' movement knowing how to prevent it. Racism has been on the rise, with a marked increase in working-class electors voting for extreme-right parties. These fascist forces, who are beginning to address workers specifically and try to use all aspects of the social crisis and the rottenness of bourgeois parliamentarism, will be a stable feature of the new political situation.

Class consciousness has been weakened by all this. And this situation has led to a weakening of both trade-union and political rank-and-file structures, reducing the arenas where class solidarities are crystallized and reproduced.

– Such is the heritage of the recent past. But the particularities of the economic crisis (which have however left the bourgeoisie some economic room for manoeuvre), as well as the scope of the gains and positions won by the workers' movement during the previous 30 years, have for the moment prevented this being translated into a lasting political and social defeat of the working class.

– The bourgeoisie has remained on the offensive, exploiting a favourable relationship of forces. But men and women workers have resisted: they have prevented the bosses' projects being completely implemented or have defeated them. The same goes for women who have also seen their abortion rights threatened, or for young people confronted by austerity policies in education.

– We have also seen over recent years (unequally according to the country and above all in an unsynchronized fashion) rather significant outbreaks of sporadic struggle. This has not only taken the form of the most intransigent fightbacks but also wage demands in line with the enormous profits made in the recent past, or the demand for reduced working hours. On the basis of these struggles and the relative phase of expansion recently, in some countries or sectors there has been a resurgence of unionization.

Some new types of struggle have appeared, notably in the public services (healthworkers, teachers…) or the most feminized professions, indicating that a renewal of the strong sectors of the working class was underway.

However these struggles take place in a very unequal fashion throughout Europe. We have also seem new forms of self-organization developed to counter the bureaucratism and crisis of the union movement. However, in the absence of a political outcome and overall perspectives these movements sometimes lead to sectoral isolation.

Although they have been massive and very determined, the big struggles of the 1980s have still not led to the cumulative development of a new vanguard generation which would make possible a qualitative leap in building our organizations.

– There have also been a whole series of struggles among young people, beginning with important university and school strikes against austerity

policies in education. They show that around concrete demands there is an immense potential for social protest although once again these mobilizations have not represented a political radicalization among young people equivalent in subversive consciousness to that of the end of the 1960s.

– Strong mass movements have been able to develop on trade-union, feminist, anti-militarist or other terrains, mobilizing tens or hundreds of thousands of people. Such movements will continue to develop. But in their development they will also continue to suffer from the absence of credible political possibilities for the satisfaction of their demands.

Conditions are therefore difficult. Structural factors linked to socio-economic changes combine with the attitude of the trade-union and reformist party leaderships. It is certainly not the case that the working class and a section of young people have no capacity left to engage in overall struggles against the bosses' policies. But the traditional leaderships oppose this perspective; they block any possibility of convergence of partial struggles, which is the only way of inversing the political and social processes set in motion by the crisis.

Big social confrontations and new mass experiences will be necessary to overcome all these handicaps. And the role of revolutionaries in encouraging these processes will be determinant.

9. Under the effects of the crisis, of partial defeats and reformist politics, the organized workers' movement - trade-union and political - has suffered a series of setbacks and is going through important internal transformations today. The crisis of management and dialogue based on Keynesian politics worsens this turmoil.

– In general, the reformist leaderships have been incapable of consolidating the initial struggles against austerity measures. Aside from demagogic measures and propaganda, they have been unable to reply positively to the changes taking place in the proletariat by organizing the unemployed, women, young people or immigrants, as the situation demands. The increasingly pressing demands for democracy and control have been ignored in favour of increasing cynicism, manipulation and corruption inside the ruling bureaucracies.

10. The trade-union movement has not escaped from this crisis.

– Until now, its scope has been very varied depending on the country, since the rate of unionization of wage-workers in Western Europe varies between 5% and 85%. These qualitative differences are explained by specific trade-union and political histories, or by the various degrees of institutional integration. Not all unions have suffered equally from a loss of efficacity and credibility in confronting new social and economic challenges.

– However, everywhere we are seeing a loss of militant resources and an increasing gap developing between the bureaucracy and the base. In every country, to various degrees, the economic and political crisis of the union leaderships has opened up a new situation in terms of relations between workers and unions and the way in which unions organize the rank-and-file. There has been a total impasse of union strategies and an absence of left alternatives sufficiently credible to change the situation.

– The union bureaucracies are looking for a way out of the crisis by increasingly accepting the choices of European capitalists, and by emphasizing their service functions to the detriment of a class-struggle, democratic and unified trade unionism. "Realism" is spreading and has bit by bit acted as a line of compromise with capitalist projects.

– The European TUC - a bureaucratic apparatus par excellence above the national trade-union movements - reflects this crisis and this inability to adapt to the new challenges via its functioning, projects and policies. It is more preoccupied with finding ways to discuss with the European Commission than engaging in a real fight around demands against the whole of the Single Act. It is busier going along with social democracy's European policies.

All these accumulated delays can only end in big setbacks and retreats for the unions in the face of the growing internationalization of production and the bosses' strategies.

– Even when the level of unionization is very low in the workplace or in general, trade-union organizations continue to be a framework for the long-term debates about strategic orientation running through the workers' movement. This in recent years there have been several examples of a rise of workers' struggles and progress recorded by oppositional forces in the trade unions. In periods of deeper crisis, the weakening of the trade union constitutes a mortal threat to the workers' ability to fight back. Strengthening the oppositional currents in the trade unions is therefore a concrete and immediate condition for their survival. Revolutionary socialists have to step up their fight to organize such opposition currents around immediate demands for the democratization of the union and around a platform of demands which is in practice opposed to the rightwing policies of the union bureaucrats.

11. The social-democratic parties have confirmed themselves as perfect managers for the bosses' policies. They propose themselves as the main political force with the will and capacity to establish the Europe of the Single Act.

– This is not just a conjunctural policy. It corresponds to a new adaptation by the social-democratic leaderships to the new conditions created by the capitalist crisis. It also highlights a certain number of structural changes at the heart of these leaderships, with a symbiosis between the traditional workers' bureaucracies, technocratic factions (petty bourgeois and bourgeois) of the state and public services and managers of the private sector. Theories about the need to build a "New Left" and the new social bloc (including the most modern and enlightened bosses), correspond to these transformations. Unable and unwilling to develop a real policy to defend social gains, social democracy

has substituted an ideology of the "new citizen" and of "democracy", and has abandoned the last vestiges of a class analysis. It has accepted, or has itself orchestrated, policies of privatization, limitation of trade-union rights, increased military spending and so on.

– The working class composition and activist layers of the social-democratic parties have dramatically diminished. But their political and electoral influence has tended to increase in most countries, accompanying the retreats in class consciousness and growing scepticism towards socialism, and partially capitalizing on the crisis of the Communist and far-left parties. Their electors do not have confidence in their projects of big reforms, but even so they sometimes appear as a minimum guarantee in relation to the projects of the right-wing parties, or as the lesser evil. When in power they practice austerity policies and do what the ruling class expects of them. Today's social democracy is reformism without reforms, weighted down with new contradictions, the bearers of internal conflicts - including into the trade-union movements that they control.

12. The Communist parties, for their part, have experienced a massive crisis.

– During the last few years, in most countries - notably those where the CPs have been in a minority in relation to social democracy for a long time - these parties have either collapsed or exploded, sometimes to the point of nearly disappearing.

– In those countries where the CPs have remained mass parties, sometimes majority ones, the crisis has taken various forms combining massive membership losses, total political disorientation, a complete inability to reply coherently to capitalist projects and an incapacity to propose an alternative and credible line on the economic and social crisis, in particular for the trade unions.

– Above all, they have suffered dramatically from all the effects of the Eastern European regimes' crisis and from the disgust they have increasingly inspired among workers. These parties, which grew again after the World War II in reference to the divisions in Europe, have been definitively destabilized by the new world situation, while Gorbachev has no more need for these "fraternal parties" as a transmission belt.

– Centrifugal forces were reinforced as soon as a section of the apparatuses integrated themselves permanently into bourgeois state institutions and when links with the Soviet apparatus lost all their substance.

– The crisis of the CPs partially removes an obstacle that revolutionary Marxists have had to confront for the last 60 years. But, for a time, it could provoke new confusion and demoralization, notably in the trade-union sectors influenced by them. In a number of CPs, the idea of renouncing any ideas of radically transforming society or renouncing the "Communist" tradition has been common in the majority currents of the leaderships who are seeking to keep their electoral support and present a more "realistic" profile. But this has also been the case for the minority oppositional currents who have been dragged towards social democracy under the pressure of the crisis and the lack of perspectives.

– The development of discussions and splits in the CPs is also determined today by what's happening in Eastern Europe. There, the extreme weakness of those currents claiming to support socialist democracy does not help to give a correct interpretation of Stalinism for those critical sections inside the CPs.

– No substantial and stable left current has yet come out of the crisis of the CPs in Europe, apart from the Greek CP for the moment. A collection of currents inside the CPs are trying to transform themselves into radical forces, centred around "new values" of the "Red-Green" type, aiming at sections of the Greens, the social movements and even the far left. This situation, combined with the weakness of revolutionary Marxists, has negative ideological consequences among certain layers of advanced workers and youth.

13. The Green parties have appeared in the last period as movements winning important electoral victories thanks, in most countries, to the votes of workers and young people. They are often the consequence of a new change taking place inside the left. For example, a section of their activists come from the traditional workers' parties and the far-left.

Up to now, these parties, particularly electorally, have partially captured the discontent and frustrations born out of the political practice of the social-democratic and Communist parties. Faced with the scale of ecological dangers, threats of nuclear war, racism, poverty in the third world and so on, they have appeared as searching for an alternative society on the base of a radical reformism. These parties as such, or a section of their base, are sometimes prepared to get involved in other struggles.

Although the formation of the Green parties could represent a hope for the regroupment of the non-reformist left, in many cases their electoral gains and their integration into institutions brought about new contradictions. In certain cases this has already led to a rapid adaptation to parliamentary politicians' games or to an ideology of "neither left nor right". This could lead to big divisions within them, leaving disoriented a section of their base which demands satisfactory answers both on ecological struggles and a more overall understanding of the misdeeds of capitalism.

14. Among the new forms of political and social activity that have appeared in the last period figure social movements which, around questions of feminism, anti-racism, anti-militarism, pacifism or ecology have been able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in Europe. Some very important political and social struggles have taken place on these questions, playing a leading role in the activity of sections of the youth, and sometimes posing serious problems to governments. However, these movements have also suffered from the lack of central political perspectives:

– The autonomous women's movement is experiencing an unequal and

difficult development, and socialist-feminist currents have declined. There has been a crisis in the peace movement and it now needs to find new themes following the changes taking place in Europe and particularly after the Gulf war. The ecology movement is very dispersed, extremely heterogeneous. The anti-racist movements maintain a real audience among a section of young people, but they will have to respond to new challenges with the rise of the far right.

– For revolutionary Marxists, these social movements are not simply timely opportunities. They represent a phenomenon of new social solidarities in the context of the current capitalist crisis. As for the feminist movement, it represents the permanent historic need for women's self-organization to fight all the specific forms of their oppression.

It is therefore necessary to build these movements and lead them under the form of permanent, democratic and unitary structures, at the same time carrying out anti-capitalist educational activity within them. In general, we have a lot of catching up to do in our elaboration and propaganda on questions of defending the environment. Solidarity with the third world will continue to mobilize important forces. Themes against poverty in the third world, the question of human rights and the struggle for peace will continue to mobilize a series of people.

– Some of these movements that were born at the end of the 1970s or the beginning of the 1980s have been tests in terms of the crisis of the traditional organizations of the workers' movement. In different ways, according to the country, they have often been a means of getting involved in social actions which were barely or not at all under the control of the traditional bureaucratic leaderships.

– However, the question of the links between these movements and the workers' parties or unions has come up. The latter should have taken their place, as such, in these movements, while conserving their independence, unity and democracy. But, generally, the reformist leaderships have balked at taking on their responsibilities. They became involved in these mobilizations belatedly, or joined in with the goal of manipulating them and draining them of all subversive content. The more the workers' movement has dragged its feet in contributing to these movements and intervening on these questions, the more it has suffered the consequences in terms of losing credibility, particularly among young people.

D. Build our organizations, build the International

15. The political developments in Eastern Europe have already had an important effect on the political debates inside the West European workers' movement. In the early stages the effects are contradictory: they have accelerated the crisis in the Communist parties and put an end to any final illusions in the Stalinist regimes. At the same time, for the majority of workers they have increased disillusionment in the fight for socialism and reinforced the confusion between democratic freedoms and bourgeois parliamentary democracy, identified with the market economy.

– The struggles in the East are unfolding when the workers in the developed capitalist countries have already suffered 15 years of economic crisis and various setbacks. Illusions about the Western model are not, for the moment, contradicted by the echo of a revolutionary movement in Western Europe, the USA or Japan. In the present conditions, there is no synchronization of two revolutionary workers' movements - one carrying out the political revolution to re-establish a democratic-socialist project, and the other involved in large-scale, political, anti-capitalist struggles.

16. New tasks for revolutionary Marxists flow from all this, but also new conditions for building our organizations in Western Europe.

– The social and political crisis and the weakening of the workers' movement have led to our forces stagnating, if not regressing. So it is with still modest means, but sometimes with a broader social implantation than in the past, that we must continue our efforts.

– The crisis of the workers' movement is not reducible simply to the problem of replacing a failed leadership by a new one, potentially existing and already being crystallized in the heart of the struggles and traditional organizations (parties and unions). It is going to be a much longer process of rebuilding forces and reorganizing the working class at all levels - social, trade-union and political. This will pass through a prolonged process of accumulating experiences, with the emergence of a new generation of advanced workers and radicalized youth.

– In general, the exercise of trade-union and political bureaucratic control over all the activities of the working class and the youth is increasingly difficult. Thus, new forms of radicalization occur in a combined way both inside and outside the traditional organizations. But the present crisis of the workers' movement should not be interpreted as though the old leaderships have already been subjectively bypassed. Although having more and more problems in concretely organizing a militant and working-class base, the reformist parties - beginning with social democracy - continue to have a majority influence electorally and via the trade-unions. Sometimes, particularly in Western Germany, the main European industrial country, the trade-union leaderships still have considerable control over struggles. It is therefore necessary to have a line of intervention that takes this reality into account, as well as the level of consciousness of the broad sectors still controlled by the traditional leaderships. This should allow us, as possibilities open up, to combine party-building tactics inside or outside the traditional organizations (including in the revolutionary left, the Greens or among currents leading the social movements).

17. In the present conditions our

organizations must get used to patient, long-term work.

– In spite of the struggles and our propaganda efforts, it remains difficult to recruit to our organizations and to qualitatively increase membership. In spite of the progress we have made in terms of our implantation and sometimes our improved capacities for agitation, we must still give a big place to education and propaganda.

– The rightward evolution of a number of oppositions or splits from the reformist parties, the slide to the right of the Green parties and the crisis of the far-left puts revolutionary Marxists in a difficult situation. These are the same general reasons which favour a crisis of disorientation both of far-left forces and of oppositional, critical currents in the reformist parties or breaking with them. In the last few years, working-class struggles have not been able to exert enough pressure on these currents to make them keep - or return to - a radical, anti-capitalist orientation. The political difficulties specific to the period have made them more vulnerable to impressionism, to a loss of confidence in workers' struggles and an adaptation to "realism". Our own weakness has also weighed negatively on their evolution. The fact that until now currents in Eastern Europe inspired by democratic socialism remain in a small minority accentuates the confusion of those breaking with the CPs or with social democracy in Western Europe.

– In general we can say that the crisis of the left also opens new possiblities for addressing the members of other organizations. We must seize these possibilities. We should participate in the discussions within the left. We should take initiatives for practical joint campaigns. The important precondition for any united initiative in a timer of decline and dissolution for big sections of the left is politically arming ourselves and clearly understanding our goals.

The crisis of the far-left and all the centrist currents also makes our policy of alliances and regroupments more difficult and uncertain. When these are possible, in each case it is a question of a specific orientation. In the current political situation, it is now more difficult to have decisive tests in the course of the class struggle which ensure the longterm success of these convergences.

So we have to be able to carry through such processes by our own political contribution and the specific, non-sectarian activity of the International in relation to our partners.

– Our political perspectives are still situated in a non-revolutionary period. The crisis itself poses the question of unity in sharper terms. This makes it possible for our organizations to take unitive non-sectarian initiatives and to find renewed forces for intervening and touching new circles. But massive social upheavals are not on the agenda in capitalist Europe on a scale that would develop the political and social bases for the emergence of small revolutionary parties regrouping even some tens of thousands of members.

– We follow the real process of differentiation as it is concretely manifested in each country, without rejecting any opening that has acquired mass influence and composition as "petty bourgeois" or "bureaucratic". Above all, we do not judge developments purely by ideological criteria, but in light of the objective effects they have on the unfolding class struggle, on the differentiations inside the working class and on the crisis in the traditional parties.

– We must continue or strengthen attempts to implant our organizations in the workplaces (industry or the public sector). We must reassert the importance of our trade-union work. The question of building a trade-union opposition standing for democratization of the unions and a fight against austerity remains a priority tasks for our sections. But given the background of the current crisis in the unions it is not sufficient simply to oppose the line of the bureaucrats. The opposition currents should take responsibility for building and organizing the union as such. The opposition is vital for attracting broader and broader layers which are turning away from the unions, considering them as simply the property of the bureaucracy.

In trade-union work it is important to take up a series of political question, such as what is happening in Eastern Europe. A specific task is also to win support in the unions for solidarity tasks. The need to fight against the consequences of growing capitalist integration multiplies these tasks.

– New forms of organization and campaign are necessary to address the most marginalized layers (unemployed, certain layers of young people and immigrants). We consider this as a task of the whole workers' movement. But today our organizations should already be trying to take this kind of initiative.

– The feminist activity of our parties has to be strengthened and must take into account the appearance of workers' struggles with a strong female composition (the resolution on the women's movement in Western imperialist countries takes up these points).

– Building revolutionary youth organizations - in forms appropriate to each country - must remain a priority so that we have the means for a specific intervention and for recruitment in all the movements where young people are active; and, in addition, to create the conditions for education and generational renewal in our ranks. The leaderships of sections must pay much greater attention to this and assure the continuity of the youth work. There must continue to be activity directed towards high schools and universities, places where there is a very great concentration of young people, confronted with government austerity policies.

– Building broad, united movements to mobilize against fascism and racism is an urgent task and absolutely central task in many countries, in which our sections can and must play a central role.

The Gulf war has moreover opened up a new situation. The new and decisive challenges posed during this war must be answered. The formation and more generally the participation in anti-war or anti-militarist movements is a priority task for all our organizations. They could provide new experiences of political activism and thus encourage

the politicization of sections of the pacifist movement.

We should, while respecting the rhythm and needs of the movement in each country, aim for united, joint European initiatives around all question of militarization.

– Within several states, oppressed people are fighting for their emancipation and the recognition of their national rights. Their demands go from use of their national language to independence.

Three of these peoples (Ireland, Euskadi and Corsica) have maintained a high level of mobilization of the mass movement. The organizations which lead them have been capable of waging mass political and electoral campaigns.

The framework of the existing states has proved to be unable to satisfy the demands for emancipation. The introduction of the Single European Act, despite some possible administrative reforms, will only increase their dependence.

We are part of these struggles and we support them within the ruling states, particularly through a continuous intervention in the trade-union movement. We defend unconditionally the right to self-determination, including independence. In this framework we defend the immediate interests of the workers as well as the perspective of a socialist solution to all national questions.

The Conference of the Stateless European Nations (CONSEU) is a first unitive initiative for joint campaigning activities. We are in favour of such an approach continuing.

We should establish a reputation as defenders of the oppressed nations, so that their most consistent representatives turn towards us, considering us as their natural allies.

18. The workers' movement remains riddled with national and sectarian prejudices. In these conditions, the European "social dialogue" is a trap and a dreadful illusion. The bourgeoisie's project must be opposed by an intransigent defence of demands and gains. In the EC and EFTA countries, workers' parties and unions must oppose the Single Act and the whole project of European integration. The workers' movement has nothing to win by co-managing these policies. What is necessary first of all is a relationship of forces based on social mobilizations, coordinations [strike committees] and solidarity going beyond national frontiers.

– It is urgent to spell out a plan to defend the trade-union movement when restructuring and international mergers are increasingly dividing union organization. It is vital to explain incessantly what these European policies will lead to in order to educate workers and create the conditions for a united struggle. All the initial experiences of consultation and coordination between unions inside the multinationals should be exploited and extended.

Against the capitalists' Europe we put forward:

a) The necessity for a new internationalism, that is, the development of all forms of solidarity, coordination and campaigns that break with national isolation and oppose the bourgeoisie's projects. Our approach is to start from the day-to-day demands in each country and to demonstrate in practice their convergence. We encourage solidarity initiatives across multinationals and sectors. The same goes for meetings and initiatives of combative union sectors who want to fight against austerity policies and against the Europe of the Single Act. We must encourage European-wide links and initiatives by feminist, anti-racist, peace, anti-militarist and ecology movements, as well as all the movements among youth.

We undertake similar activities vis à vis the struggles and the independent movements in the Eastern Europe states, because struggles against the Single Act should not lead to a blinkered view of internationalist tasks. We aim to promote all possible convergences between mobilizations in the East and the West. We also welcome all possibilities of organizing forums for discussion and meetings between left organizations in East and West Europe.

In the different countries the bourgeoisie's plan must be opposed by a radical refusal to lose any social advantages in the name of competition in the European market. There must be the organization of a permanent fightback against austerity policies in order to defeat them. Current economic developments in Europe are not a justification for turning to so-called national or indeed chauvinist solutions. On the contrary, the situation requires that demands express common goals and needs (35 hours, on night work, democratic rights, self-determination and so on). In the more backward countries on the question of social rights, the left can fight for the most advantageous norms won elsewhere. Little by little we should spread the preoccupation of having struggles which converge between the different countries.

b) Propaganda for an alternative to the bosses' Europe: the United Socialist States of Europe. For us it is a transitional approach of socialist education within our conception of the world socialist revolution, against all exploitation and oppression. This socialist propaganda will only have any chance of being gradually understood by new radicalized generations if on many subjects we know how to start from immediate demands to then give them a very concrete and detailed transitional content (ecology, education, national rights, direct democracy, equality between men and women, health, and so on). This is a way of clarifying, on the basis of struggles, the vision of another society, counterposed to the populist and demagogic answers of the far right.

The Fourth International and its parties in Europe must be in the vanguard of all these activities. It is by doing this boldly that we can demonstrate the usefulness of our organizations and the validity of our internationalism. We must improve the functioning and relations between our parties so as to create the best conditions for this: collaboration and elaboration by sector, joint campaigns and initiatives, the youth camp and so on.

19. The process of German unification under the auspices and to the benefit of the FRG is a new element in the European situation and the relationship of class forces. The absorption of the GDR by the FRG would be first of all a victory and a strengthening of German imperialism. This, combined with an advance of European integration, would have important political, social and ideological effects both in Germany and also throughout Europe. Moreover, for a whole period this will modify the hierarchies and relationships of the political, economic and military forces within the EC.

The effect of this unification at first would be to create new divisions and exclusions in the working class and to increase political confusion.

It is important to ensure that the workers increasingly advance their own demandsin the face of the capitalist appetites of the West German bourgeoisie. The workers' movement inGermany and in Europe as a whole must refuse to carry the costs of unification to the benefit of the big industrial companies and the banks. Particularly within the former GDR, there has to be a fightback organized to mass unemployment, to attacks on the system of social protection, to reductions in real wages, to rights won such as to abortion,. The principle of powerful, independent, democratic trade unions must be defended. The cut-price sales of enterprises to West German or foreign capitalists should be denounced. Wages should be immediately brought into line with those in West Germany. Finally, there should be a refusal to pay the bill for a unification which serves the big industrial groups: against the drop in public spending on social services, education, etc; for a stop to military spending.

Military pacts must be denounced and mobilizations organized for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Germany, for the withdrawal of American troops and armaments from Europe, for the de-nuclearization of Europe, for the immediate reduction of military budgets, against the militarization and dragooning of young people, and against the project of European defence. Just as it dominated the beginning of the 1980s, the struggle against militarism could become one of the key battles of the 1990s in Western Europe.

20. The political discussions that will continue to develop in Eastern Europe will be centred around big questions such as economic reform, trade-union perspectives, workplace management, demilitarization, women's right to work and to abortion, ecological questions, freedom of political expression and, sometimes national and regional questions. This should also enable us to demonstrate that such questions are also on the agenda in Western European countries: social protection, trade-union rights, ending military spending, the right to local referenda around popular initiatives such as the protection of the environment or the right to self-determination, and so on.

Pro-market and privatization policies are widely applied in Eastern Europe, and at first divide workers by satisfying the expectations of a section of them in terms of consumption and income. But they rapidly give rise to new discontent in countries that are not used to unemployment and big wage differentials. Selling off national industries cheaply to Western investors or dismantling firms that are decreed to be non-profitable, inflation, the policies of the multinationals, the IMF, the World Bank and the EC, attacks on social security and the appearance of nouveaux riches - sometimes give rise to disapproval. Even before the beginnings of a capitalist class develops, the supporters of the market will be confronted by a strong imperialist pressure in total contradiction with their nationalist and populist professions of faith.

On all these questions it is extremely important that our organizations in capitalist Europe play a central role in terms of information and propaganda and show themselves capable of organizing active solidarity with those who are fighting back. This should be part of the normal activity of our European sections in the new continent-wide context.

21. In spite of the specific tactical problems of building our organizations we are confronted by problems that cannot be substantially resolved without an overall consideration of all the changes in Europe and thus without a collective European framework for elaboration. For example, this relates to anti-militarist work, to our policies at the time of European elections, to solidarity work with social resistance in Eastern Europe to imperialist policies and market mechanisms; to the activities of the social movements (feminist, ecologist, anti-racist, youth movements and so on); or again in relation to changes in the trade-union movements and new forms of workers' struggles.

To deal with these problems we have to promote meetings between comrades working in the same sector or in the same areas of mass work insofar as this is practically possible for us. But what is needed above all is a stable system of collaboration, dialogue and reflection between the section leaderships. We need at least one meeting a year for delegations from Political Bureaus for both an exchange of experience and the preparation of joint activities. Our aim is to establish eventually a network of cadres who are capable of following through increasingly important activities in a European-wide framework.

Western Europe: Changing forms of the struggle for women's liberation

1 January 1996

Breaking with a tradition of indifference or distrust towards feminism by our movement, the text advocated building independent women's movements in every country according to the rhythms and particularities of local situations. It affirmed the strategic character of building such movements as an indispensable condition for challenging women's oppression and achieving real socialism.

Since then we have to note a decline of "organized feminism", but this does not mean a generalized decline in women's radicalization. The centre of gravity of radicalization has changed, as have the channels by which it is expressed. The essential question facing feminists is to find ways of linking up with the new generations of radicalizing women in order to build feminist movements that preserve the gains of past years and that can once again have an influence on the political scene.

The decline can probably be explained by two interlinked factors. The economic crisis has altered the overall balance of forces in favour of the bourgeoisie; reformist organizations have accepted the logic of austerity. In some countries, the media have been pushing the idea that we are now in a "post-feminist" era, where equality between the sexes has already been achieved. In this context, which is also marked by a relative lack of workers' activity in many countries, the weakness of the women's movements meant that they could not swim against the stream and impose anti-capitalist demands; winning genuine women's liberation seemed to be a utopian idea.

During the 1970s it was possible for the various currents of the women's movement to unite and engage in mass action in alliance with trade-union and democratic organizations nationally and internationally to win and defend women's rights, such as abortion. The granting of legal reforms slowed down this type of mobilization.

Our analysis of the nature of women's oppression has not changed. The absolute need to build an autonomous movement - the only guarantee that there is a radical and effective struggle against oppression - has in no way disappeared. What remains is to make tactical adjustments to a new conjuncture.

I. The changes in women's situation and different bourgeois policies

The general trends in the social situation of women described in the 1979 resolution remain fundamentally valid today, but new elements should be incorporated:

- Continuation of the massive participation of women of all ages and from all family situations in the labour market, although their integration into waged work takes place fundamentally through part-time work. Wage discrimination and sharp segregation between "masculine" and "feminine" jobs - running through training, promotion, working conditions, etc. - is continuing and even deepening.

- Better technical possibilities exist for women to control reproduction, but in the majority of cases these are limited by laws limiting women's right to decide.

- Continuing massive presence of women in public education to the level of high-school graduation and university entry. Mixed schools have not meant real co-education. Women's presence is limited to humanities faculties, and in any case diminishes sharply in higher levels.

- The development of legislation which postulates formal "equal rights", outlawing discrimination, penalizing sexual violence etc., without taking positive steps to enable women to overcome their historically disadvantaged position.

- An increasing choice by women to live alone, with or without children, as seen in the number of divorces requested by women, single-parent families, women living alone, etc. Obviously this situation does not always represent a free choice - insofar as it is does, it is made possible by women's increased economic and legal independence.

- Black and immigrant women continue to suffer from racism, which combines with and reinforces their oppression as women.

- Greater social recognition and rejection of maltreatment within the family and the sexual violence which men use against women.

- Increasing participation of women in public spaces until now reserved for men; exclusion has been replaced by integration in unequal conditions in all spheres of public and social life.

- Liberalization of sexual habits and customs, recognition of women as sexual beings, although this is still not expressed in greater sexual equality between men and women.

All this reflects the political activity of feminist organizations and has meant an important development of women's consciousness, their personal autonomy and self-esteem; and a change of the socially established stereotypes for men and women. All these elements have created a situation which is different and more complex - because contradictory - than that of 1979.

This reality has been noted by those who defend the social and economic

order, forcing them to re-elaborate their discourse so that it seems more in tune with the new situation. It has also led to a differentiation in the policies developed, although there is obviously a basic and firm agreement to preserve the family institution, the fundamental pillar of oppression, and to keep women in the workforce in a particular form. But the bourgeoisie is far from having a single, clearly-defined plan to achieve its goals.

A. Changes in the traditional family and different bourgeois policies

The changes indicated above have introduced important fissures in the traditional model of the family, determined by the seclusion of women in the home, dedicated to domestic tasks and care of the children, and by the relations of domination which existed within it.

Some of these changes are:

– the increase in the number of non-married, cohabiting couples;

– the large increase in the number of single-parent families;

– the soaring divorce rate;

– the increase in the number of lesbians and gay men living open and proud lives;

– the decline in the birth rate, reflecting women's change of attitude to bringing up children as their only preoccupation;

– The increase in legal complaints for domestic violence is an important indicator of the change in women's self-esteem, and the cracks made in women's relationship of emotional and sexual dependence on their husbands.

This change in women's consciousness and the social rejection of this most brutal expression of women's oppression has also demanded greater attention to the problems which exist in the family: media attention and campaigns around battered women in the 1970s; exposures of physical and sexual abuse of children; the problems of children of separated parents. However, there are not sufficient of the social services necessary (battered women's centres, etc.) to meet the demand.

There are a number of different bourgeois responses to this situation which also reflect national particularities:

a) Constant promotion of the ideal of the happily-married couple in a permanent union, with a mother responsible for the home and two children, despite the fact that most women work. This is particularly the case for the white working-class family. Capitalism is less concerned with defending or promoting the unity of black and immigrant families, which it will happily break up through immigration laws, deportation orders or police harassment.

Another aspect is the European bourgeoisies' insistence on the "dramatic consequences" of the falling birth rate. The need to "reverse this trend" is used to reinforce the idea that women's fundamental role is within the family, producing children (directed at white women). At the same time this prepares the ground for cuts in social spending and throwing the burden - especially of the care of old people - back into the family, under the pretext that there will not be enough workers to contribute to social security funds.

b) Certain sections of the bourgeoisie have become more flexible on questions such as the status of children born outside marriage or legal recognition of cohabiting couples. This flexibility aims at incorporating the structural changes in the way people live their lives into the system, because capitalism requires the continued existence of the nuclear family as the general model even if different variations can be accepted.

No alternative to this style of living exists on a mass scale. The indices given for the "crisis of the family" can be countered in different countries by various elements including the rise in the number of marriages, the possibility to register "illegitimate" children in the names of both parents, the incorporation of certain types of "acceptable" homosexuals (white, male and middle class) into the norm through offering a possibility of "marriage", and so on.

c) Some openly reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie use the "crisis of the family" to press for measures of moral order - in Europe this often includes the idea of a maternal wage, eroding the incomes of single parents and attacks on lesbian and gay men. These currents are still markedly on the extreme right of the political scene, even if some churches have put themselves in the vanguard of this struggle but they have had some success in the British state and in Germany, and they do influence more mainstream bourgeois thinking on the family. In the United States, they have a larger mass base and have been openly encouraged by successive governments.

Those who do not adapt to the nuclear family or the dominant sexual model are often considered marginal, while women who accept the more or less established rules of social behaviour are considered more favourably.

B. Women's massive presence in the workforce on terms determined by their specific oppression

Contrary to the most pessimistic predictions, the economic crisis has not led to women being pushed back into the home. In all the European countries, women's economic activity continues to rise. Even if the rate of women's unemployment is higher than men's everywhere, nowhere has there been a systematic attempt - as there was during the 1930s - to replace female workers by male ones.

The reasons for this are evident. Outside of women's own increased

reluctance to return to the home, it is the change in economic organization over the past 40 years that is responsible for this new attitude of the bourgeoisies. The development of the tertiary sector has led to the creation of a large female workforce, not highly skilled but sufficiently so that they cannot be replaced from one day to the next by an unskilled metalworker or a redundant miner.

In addition, women's low wages encourage the bosses to keep these workers. This continuous entry of women into waged work has taken place on varying scales according to the country. But the forms that it takes are determined everywhere according to the situation of domination over women. Modern capitalism faces a contradiction for it is dependent on female labour outside the home, but it is also dependent on "free" female labour inside the home.

The precarious conditions in which women are integrated into waged work form a whole which goes from discrimination in professional training, in hiring conditions and wages, and which finishes in the feminization of poverty.

The expressions of this specific insertion of women into the world of work are as follows:

a) Increase in part-time work

In countries with the highest levels of female employment part-time work has reached its highest levels. Part-time work is most likely to be exclusively female: 80% of all part-time workers are female, and in West Germany and Denmark the figure rises to 95%. The majority of women workers in Britain - the first European country to promote part-time work on a large scale - are part-timers. This carries with it low pay, low status, high productivity levels and lack of union organization and maternity rights.

Lack of adequate child-care facilities for children below school age is the key factor that forces women into part-time work. Although it seems the only possibility for them others - particularly young women - want to work full-time but cannot get jobs.

Trade unions in Europe have generally not responded to the special needs of part-time workers.

b) Job segregation

The expansion in female employment has not been spread across the occupational jobs and groupings. Job segregation has even increased with the rise in women's rate of activity and is the key factor in their lower average pay. Women are predominantly employed in the service rather than industrial sector. Among semi-skilled women workers, many of them work separately from men in jobs like wiring and routine assembly work. Nor, despite anti-discrimination legislation and changes in education, have we seen women breaking into male-dominated jobs or a marked increase of women working in the top professions.

c) New technology

A quiet revolution is taking place using new technology to structure and restructure the hierarchical sexual division of labour at work, at a time when the workers' movement is on the defensive. These changes are geared to the interests of a capitalist, imperialist and patriarchal society.

Introduction of new technology not only brings job losses but also a deterioration in women's working conditions. According to recent surveys in the tertiary sector, women just do not have the "promotional characteristics" - post-entry qualifications, an unbroken service record, geographical mobility - to take advantage of the new managerial and administrative opportunities. Men are more often encouraged to retrain, while women are left to occupy the lesser-skilled jobs (such as computer operators rather than programmers).

d) Flexibility and the reorganization of work

To get the most out of the new machines capitalists are demanding that workers work around the clock - introducing shift work, weekend work and attempting to lift the ban on nightwork for women. An increasing number of firms (banks, insurance) are also proposing to exploit women's dual role by installing terminals in their homes.

The arguments used to try and convince women workers to accept flexible hours are not the same as for male workers. The argument directed at women emphasizes the possibility to combine "their" family responsibilities with waged work. For men, the arguments emphasize increased leisure time.

All the attacks outlined above go in the direction of introducing flexible jobs, hours, wages and employment patterns. The ruling class tries to creates a divide between a small minority of skilled workers - usually male, of the dominant nationality - and an increasingly large marginal layer of unskilled, precariously employed workers made up of women, a section of young workers, immigrants, and unskilled males, who only have temporary jobs and are not covered by social security. It needs to cement the sexual division of labour at work as it reorganizes production to achieve these aims.

e) Unemployment and social security

Since 1974 there has been lower economic growth and higher levels of unemployment than at any time since World War II. In nearly all countries the proportion of women registered as unemployed is higher than for men - in Austria, Greece and Portugal the unemployment rate among women is double that for men. (Of course, official statistics mask the full scale of female unemployment as many women fail to register as unemployed.)

No capitalist state ever recognizes women as workers on equal terms with men. One example is the series of measures taken recently in various European countries that tend to exclude even more women from social security coverage, while married women without jobs have never qualified for benefits. The new restrictions on unemployment benefits give priority to heads of household (usually men). Such measures reinforce the fiction that a woman's place is in the home and that women's work only provides a "supplement" to family income. They deny women's

right to economic independence.

C. Attacks on abortion rights and women's right to control their own bodies

a) The USA has been at the forefront of the attacks on the right to abortion with the recent attempt to reverse the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling, which gave women a constitutional right to abortion. This frontal legal attack is combined with grass-roots fanatical mobilization by extreme sectors of the "Moral Majority" and evangelical churches, taking the forms of burning down clinics and physically preventing women from entering them. However, it now seems that the Republican Party will downplay its hardline opposition to abortion which unexpectedly turned out to be a vote-loser.

This offensive has also developed in a less frontal way through attempts to limit existing laws: reducing time-limits or limiting women's right to decide, giving greater power to parents and husbands or lovers, demanding parental permission for minors, etc. Attempts to restrict the laws meet massive rejection expressed in mobilization. In some countries, (Belgium, Spanish State) there have been big mobilizations to broaden the scope of the existing laws.

Another line of attack is the severe restrictions on health service resources making access to abortion difficult.

The badly-named pro-life organizations, whom we should better call "pro-foetus", are developing an international campaign with extensive means and economic resources, as well as counting on the support of sectors of the political, judicial and medical establishment. They are attempting to erode the social climate favourable to abortion created by the activity of the feminist movement. These forces use a discourse that tends to criminalize and culpabilize women, using the communication media, schools etc, with particularly aggressive rhetoric and propaganda.

However, abortion as a right is never secure under capitalism as it conflicts so strongly with the subordinate role ascribed to women in our society. In fact, all legal changes on this front have failed to give abortion to women as a right - instead it is framed in legislation as a "necessary evil" of the modern world. We have certainly not seen the end of such attacks. But, at the same time, the bourgeoisie knows that it has to reckon on women's ability to fight back against any challenge to this right, limited as it may be. The great majority of women now consider that this is a fundamental element in their battle for independence.

There have also been a series of attacks on other aspects of women's rights to control their own bodies, around issues of surrogacy, new reproductive technologies and donor insemination.

b) The response of bourgeois governments to the AIDS epidemic consisted of a wave of hostility particularly directed against the male gay community, with demands for the registration and segregation of victims and potential victims. While US figures show that while only 8% of AIDS victims are women, in New York it is already the primary cause of death for women of child-bearing age. The extension of AIDS beyond the gay community has forced most Western governments to take it more seriously. This has led to some sex education campaigns about "safe sex" in the mass media or in the schools. However, the right wing uses this issue to attack sexual freedom in general. It has also been used to reinforce racist ideology.

D. Public spending cuts

A symptom of the economic crisis is the tendency of the capitalist class to cutback on the costs of reproducing the labour force. Social services are more expensive than women's unpaid labour in the home.

The state aims to transfer the burden of these services back onto the individual family. Attacks on maternity rights, creche and nursery provision, health and community services not only increase the level of female unemployment because these are female intensive areas, but they also step up the unpaid work and the oppression of women in the home.

E. Women in the bourgeois political arena

a) Legal rights

Throughout the 1970s most governments (right or left) - under the pressure of women's mobilizations - introduced a series of major legal reforms on women's rights, although American feminists' attempt to enshrine equal rights in the constitution was defeated after a hard battle. However, these laws have generally had little practical impact. The deepening economic crisis has made governments even less willing to bear the costs themselves or to impose the extra costs involved upon employers. But these laws have had an important effect in raising women's expectations and willingness to struggle.

b) Women as voters

The changing social position of women has been accompanied by a change in their pattern of support for the existing political parties. Before World War II the general pattern was for more women than men to vote for right-wing parties. A gender reversal is now underway.

A number of parties of both right and left have engaged in wide-ranging tactics to win over women voters. This has taken a number of forms, including pseudo-radical feminist arguments ("re-evaluating motherhood", reconciling work and family life), establishing ministries for women's rights, feminizing their image, etc.

c) Women in bourgeois political institutions

The absence of women from representation in the legislative assemblies and government has led to increasing demands for reform. A number of bourgeois parties have responded with proposals to increase the representation of women, but it is remarkable how little impact this has so far had. There has been a small increase, reaching 20%-28% in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, but not exceeding 10% or 12% in the other imperialist countries of Europe.

II. Reformist strategies in relationship to women

The reformist leaderships are caught in the contradiction between maintaining their traditional relationship to the base of the mass workers' organizations, and thus to women at the base beginning to express specific aspirations, and their general logic of "managing the capitalist crisis".

The reformist discourse varies from country to country. The general framework tends to be a pro-equal rights position, but without being prepared to take the positive action necessary to make them a reality. In some countries the argument is that "the basics have been won". In others, where a more specifically feminist gloss is given to reformist ideas, we see arguments developing for women's low pay to be alleviated through an incomes policy. Increasingly, the reformist leaders, both in and out of power, are being pushed rightwards - accepting the logic of the capitalist crisis and refusing to fight against the basic inequalities women face at work and in society. To the degree that the labour movement confines itself to the narrow, economist concerns of the traditional industrial sectors of the working class, the parties of the ruling class will have some success in recruiting layers of women behind their own fake "feminist" banners.

a) The trade-union leaderships

a)The paper policies adopted by many unions over the last twenty years in themselves were quite progressive and could represent a real step forward for women. But the specific structures in the trade unions nationally, locally or in the workplaces (women's commissions, officers or secretariats) usually receive no real support from the leadership and the real battle is often for thorough implementation of these policies. Hence their effects and achievements have been limited, though not negligible, in areas such as equal pay, sexual harassment and childcare.

On many occasions, the trade-union leaderships have turned their backs on women's demands, ignoring or even opposing them, thus deepening elements of conflict between working class men and women. This helps to justify the relations of domination which exist between men and women in the working class, and makes convergence with the feminist movement more difficult. The French unions have not mobilized an active opposition to the imposition of flexibility and part-time work, and the disappearance of the CGT women's monthly journal Antoinette is final evidence of this union federation's policy to stop all specific work aimed at women. In Belgium we saw women workers left to fight alone at Galerie Anspacht in Brussels and at the Bakaert-Cockerill steelworks near Liege over the introduction of part-time work and the loss of jobs. In Italy, the FIAT union did not oppose the introduction of nightwork for women.

b) The leaderships of the reformist parties

In 1979 we noted that social democracy and Stalinism (particularly the latter) were slow to respond to the rise of the modern feminist movement, and that their response was influenced by two factors: i) commitment to the family; and ii) the need to maintain and strengthen their influence with the workers' movement.

Since 1979 the inter-dependence of the struggles of women and the workers' movement has necessitated a more developed response. Women as voters, as trade unionists and as political activists comprise an important political entity that these parties have to consider. Most parties have adopted and developed policies formally supporting women's equality, in some cases including immigrant and black women and lesbians, although the policy that has flowed from this has been patchy and partial. The reformist leaderships in some countries have shown a willingness to incorporate leading spokespersons of the feminist movement as researchers, journalists, counsellors, MPs and top civil servants in women's ministries or committees of local councils. This is made possible because the socialist and feminist revolution which many women were expecting - along with the rest of the left - did not come about and women still wanted to see changes here and now.

i) The Socialist parties

Most Socialist Parties have adopted specific "positive action" measures, albeit superficial, aimed at winning women's votes, and particularly increasing their representation as parliamentary candidates. The left currents within these parties have sometimes been able to use this opportunity to pass progressive measures.

Social-democratic governments particularly have attempted to integrate feminists into institutional work, encouraging moderate feminism oriented simply to obtaining small reforms, producing changes which appear the natural result of the evolution of a democratic society, blurring the role and combativity of women in winning these changes. However the gains are real, however small, and they may be used as a lever on social democracy.

The creation of women's ministries or institutions emerges from the need to give an institutional response to the social pressure of women. The French and Spanish experiences show that women's ministries, although long on speeches about equality, in practice accept the traditional sexual division of labour and are no guarantee that women's interests will really be defended, particularly in the context of austerity policies. Their lack of executive capacity and respect for official policy put clear limits on their

activity, but their existence can be positive in reaching broader layers of women. The contradiction between their formal and practical positions can provoke debate and differentiation between the women in these parties, some of whom are prepared to engage in united action.

ii) The Communist parties

The current upheavals in Eastern Europe and the discrediting of Stalinist rule have thrown most CPs into crisis. However, we should not expect any significant about-turns in the CPs' policy and practice on women.

They will continue either to deny the need for women's autonomous organization and struggles or push a (sometimes very sophisticated) rightwing version of gender politics, for example arguing for a "feminist incomes policy" which increases women's wages at the expense of men's. However, as their crisis provokes significant ruptures and departures we can hope for a questioning of traditional policies and a greater readiness from some layers to get involved in united feminist struggles.

In conclusion we can say that the impact of the women's liberation movement, its lasting effect on political consciousness and the political agenda, have made it impossible for the mass organizations not to respond in some way, however inadequately, opening up increased possibilities for united action with women from these organizations.

III. Women's radicalization and self-organization and the autonomous women's liberation movement

The birth of the women's liberation movement reflected the profound structural change in the lives of the mass of women. The feminist movement succeeded in revealing the social character of women's situation and giving an expression to the revolt of women as a gender. Despite the changes that have occurred, women's lives are characterized by discrimination, subordination and oppression. All these factors mean that the basis for women's activity and radicalization of women continues.

Many of the ideas expressed by the movement have been accepted by a big majority of society. At the beginning of the 1980s, there was a decline and a disintegration of the movement, sometimes as the product of integration into institutional and/or social service work, or dilution into different types of sectoralized organizations. In many cases women's organizations continue, although isolated and focused on concrete and/or one-off activities. Today, except in the Spanish state, there are no national coordinating structures of women's groups, which implies an element of weakness of the movement, a sectoralization of the struggles and demands. But women's active resistance to concrete attacks on their rights has continued and new organizations have emerged on specific themes or initiatives of temporary coordination, allowing optimism for the future.

Women's greater participation in various types of struggles - in the unions, political parties and other movements - is a feature of the situation. Although this has not always been translated by an organizational strengthening of the movement the potential exists for this and for a political expression of gender consciousness.

In many countries there has been a greater convergence between the struggles waged by women on their problems as a gender and those of the whole of the workers' movement; the workers' organizations are a point of reference for many women to solve their problems. As a relatively new active force in the workers' movement, many women can be more combative than the workers' movement as a whole and challenge the class-collaborationist policies of the bureaucracy. The investment of feminists in the labour movement is aimed at transforming the labour and mass movement to make them reflect women's needs and to make it possible for women to become a permanent part of these organizations.

A. Women wage-workers

In several countries in Northern Europe large numbers of women have joined the trade unions as they entered the labour market over the last period. In some countries this has even helped prevent a dramatic decline in trade-union membership of the kind experienced in the 1930s. In Scandinavia, the level of women's unionization reaches 50%, and in Britain, Italy and Belgium it is around 30%-33%. In France, given the overall weak rates of unionization (5% in the private sector, 10%-12% in the public), the number of unionized women is very low, almost nil in some sectors.

a) Women trade unionists

The active participation of women workers has played a key role in a series of workers' struggles. In West Germany women workers in the steel industry have been in the forefront of the campaign for a 35-hour week. They adopted as their own the demand for a 7-hour day, first articulated by social-democratic women in Sweden in 1972.

The strike that took place in the National Health Service in 1982 in Britain involved large numbers of women workers and won significant solidarity from other workers, such as miners, firefighters and teachers.

The women in Denmark's unskilled all-women union (KAD) played an exemplary role in the near general strike that took place in Easter 1985 following the break-up of negotiations between employers and the main trade-union federation. The women's union took the initiative to form an inter-union strike committee on one of the industrial estates, and it was here that the strike held out longest. The women successfully forced the trade-union bureaucracy to release funds for

the strike.

Working-class women also fight for their specific demands. In 1984 for example a group of women workers in Asturias (Spanish state) demanded to be employed in the mines, where the men from their communities have always worked. With the support of the women's secretariat of the CCOO, and against the media and the UGT, they won and a group of them were finally employed in surface work, winning the support of their fellow workers.

At a more generalized level, we saw at the end of the 1980s a wave of struggles in majoritarily feminine professions - particularly nurses - which affected most West European and North American countries.They brought a whole generation of women to the front of the social scene. Among other things, they demanded recognition of their professional qualifications - highlighting the inequality between their situation and that of male technicians, and refusing the status of handmaidens to doctors - thus going beyond simply demanding women's right to work. In addition - particularly in France - they developed structures of self-organization to control their struggles from top to bottom.

b) Solidarity struggles

Two examples of women's involvement in solidarity struggles with strikers are:

– The Spanish steelworkers' wives who organized a women's coordination to build support for the struggle at a national level against the Gonzalez government's decision to close the Sagunto steelworks, which were the mainstay of the local economy. They often adopted vanguard positions which were more radical and action-oriented than the steelworkers who were threatened with the loss of their jobs.

– Born out of the NUM dispute with the Tory government in 1984-85, the Women Against Pit Closures movement was a nationally-organized autonomous network of women's groups based in the mining communities. These groups had to fight for the right to have their own bank accounts, representation in NUM branch meetings and the right to picket alongside the men. Many of the women were miners' wives and new to active politics, yet their resolution helped to ensure that the dispute lasted so long, won so much support against Thatcher, and made links with other movements such as CND, Greenham, black and immigrant groups, lesbian and gay groups and international campaigns.

This movement arose, of course, in the rather particular context of the vanguard role of the miners' union, the length and intensity of the struggle and the relatively homogeneous nature of the mining communities. But beyond this specificity it should be emphasized that it was a dramatic example of the political power of working-class women in action, and an example for other women in Britain and elsewhere.

B. Feminist work in the trade unions and their feminization

a) Under the pressure of women's organization, and in order to keep or win women members, many trade unions have been forced to make small concessions in representation or broaden their debates to include such questions as a guaranteed minimum wage, abortion rights, sexual harassment at work, the portrayal of women in the media, specific demands of black or lesbian women, etc.

But the greater presence and participation of women in trade-union struggle and activity has not always led to a strengthening of their organization within the unions. Often these attempts clashed with the negative attitude of the trade-union bureaucracy and sometimes had to confront the distrust of the majority of the membership. Or, as in the Spanish state, they succeeded in maintaining special structures, but faced problems in terms of concrete activity. Equal opportunities committees and programmes exist in many major unions, but these are not the same as positive action.

Women's mistrust of trade-union organizations is such in certain countries that they have developed structures of self-organization outside the unions. The most striking example was the French nurses' coordination during the winter 1988 strike.

b) Women realize that for their struggles to be supported and their needs as women to be acted on, the representation of women has to increase at all levels of the unions.

There are a number of reasons for the under-representation of women in the labour movement:

– the sexual division of labour means that most women are in the least organized sectors;

– the history of the workers' movement, and the chauvinism of the traditional leaderships;

– the large proportion of women in the "informal" sector in certain countries.

In Britain, NUPE, a municipal and health workers' manual union, ran a successful campaign in the late 1970s to encourage women - the majority of their members - to become shop stewards. In West Germany, women in the printing and textile unions raised the demand for quotas in union structures in proportion to their numbers in the union. In Italy, the male leaders of the CGIL themselves criticize the limited presence of women in the leadership, because they are alarmed by the low level of activity or, indeed, the disaffection among women.

C. The mobilization of women in the social movements

One of the striking aspects of women's radicalization in the last decade is their mass participation in the social movements - in ecology, peace movements, in solidarity committees with liberation movements or aid to

the third world.

A particularly important example was the women's peace movement that developed in many European countries out of the anti-missiles struggle. Women were attracted to this movement both on the basis of a general appeal around disarmament, and because of the links - highlighted by feminist coalitions in the Spanish state and Britain for example - between militarism and patriarchy. The forms of organization this movement adopted were networks of women's peace groups, mass action initiatives, and coordination at an international level - forms learnt from the women's liberation movement. Many women, particularly young women, gained their first experience of feminist ideas in such formations. In many cases women were at the forefront of the most dynamic mass actions, as at Greenham Common.

a) Black and immigrant women

Struggles against racism have often involved black and immigrant women in a prominent way, and they have taken up their specific oppression: pinpointing sexual harassment; discrimination in housing, jobs, health and education; immigration laws; specifically racist violent images of women's bodies and violence towards black and immigrant women; and racist assumptions about black and immigrant men involved with rape and violence.

They have taken up the specific oppression they suffer due to the family forms and culture of their own communities, and launched campaigns against excision and infibulation of women and girls. Black and immigrant women have been at the forefront of placing anti-imperialist questions before the whole women's movement.

Where black women's organization is more developed, for example in Britain and North America, they have challenged many assumptions of white feminists - for example, taking up the issues of fertility control as they affect black and immigrant women such as forced abortion and sterilization. This has been in the context of xenophobic speeches from forces like Le Pen in France, and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, on the fear of being "swamped" by the "alarming" fertility of black and immigrant women. They have challenged the idea of a consensus among women, stressing that they cannot put gender before race and class.

b) Young women

The feeling that men and women are equal and that women are not oppressed because of their sex is much more deeply rooted among young women today, and talk of the women's liberation movement seems "old-fashioned". However, they can be attracted to a movement capable of developing the "traditional" themes of feminism: contraception, sexuality, violence, which enable women to radicalize quickly and build specific organizations to carry out their own feminist activity in the neighbourhoods and educational establishments.

In the recent student mobilizations young women played a more active role, as they do in the peace, anti-racist or Green movements. In France, young women of North African origin have unquestionably play a vanguard role in anti-racist mobilizations. Through this political activity they can become aware of their oppressed situation in society, in the family and in the labour market. The contradiction between their assumption that they are equal and the reality when they find that their movement is dominated by men can provoke a sharp reaction and a turn to organizing among themselves as women.

In a country like the Spanish state the youth mobilizations have given birth to groups of young women whose struggle focuses on questions such as sexuality, violence, education, etc.

It is important to explain that the solution to this oppression is a collective fight, and not an individual one or an individual search for a career. A collective fight must include those young women who are outside the education system, who are unemployed and for whom the only future seems to be to find a male breadwinner.

c) Lesbians

The fragmentation of the women's movement has been largely reflected in the lesbian movements. There are a few exceptions and there are also some countries where the lesbian community is only now beginning to grow and organize.

The fragmentation of the women's movement often involved major disagreements over issues of lesbianism and sexuality. The failure of socialist feminist currents to adequately respond to the issues and demands raised by lesbians has contributed to the relative hegemony of radical feminist ideas in the lesbian movements.

The weakness of the feminist movement is also a major factor of the de-politicization of the lesbian communities. Although lesbians remain generally much more political and radical than their gay male counterparts, the late 1980s saw the emergence of a growing preoccupation with style rather than with women's liberation on both sides of the Atlantic.

On the other hand, the campaign against the British Section 28 involved the largest lesbian and gay rights demonstration ever in Europe and was one of the most dynamic campaigns against the Thatcher government in recent years. It was notable not only for the fact that it was led by lesbians, but also the support generated in the labour movement and internationally.

D. The left parties

Women's presence in the non-revolutionary left parties has become stronger by a combination of radicalization of women in the traditional base of these parties - that is the growth of their aspirations as women under the influence of the women's movement - and the entry into these parties of certain layers of feminists previously organized in the women's movement. These woman were in search of a seemingly more "effective" alternative to the women's movement, once the period of big united-front struggles was over. New political formations (such as the

Greens) can also have a certain attraction for women who are seeking an overall political alternative but who reject the traditional parties which often have a very "masculine" image.

a) The traditional workers' parties

Women have organized at rank-and-file level, for example in the British Labour Party, the German SPD and Norwegian social-democracy, to fight for policies corresponding to their needs as women and for greater representation. We have already underlined the possibilities opened up for joint action by the contradiction between this battle and the attitude of the leaderships. The women's structures in these parties sometimes take more radical positions on general political questions than the parties themselves.

b) The German Greens

In this party autonomous women's caucuses exist and leadership bodies are elected on the basis of gender parity. Speakers in meetings are taken on the basis of equal time for men and women. The all-woman leadership of the parliamentary fraction caused an enormous stir when they publicly challenged the sexual harassment of men in their own party. Taking on the politics of gender does not however avoid the debate about political strategy, and women will often be found to have different political views about the priorities in the struggle and what alliances the Greens should make.

E. The feminist movement

Traditional feminist themes re-emerge from time to time as new subjects of mobilization, sometimes in response to attacks on rights already won, sometimes as concrete demands to broaden these rights.

For example, in 1982, under the left government, the French feminist movement mobilized to impose the reimbursement of abortion by the social security. In 1985, women from the entire Spanish state decided to collectively defy the government's restrictive abortion law. This campaign has inspired a resurgence of activity among women on a whole host of other issues surrounding their oppression, and strengthened the national coordination led by the far left. Two thousand women in Germany met to discuss new reproductive technology, and in November 1989 120 women from all over Europe came to the Socialist Feminist Forum in Sweden. International Women's Day can provide a focus for involving all currents of the movement in united initiatives.

Different examples demonstrate the strength of the autonomous women's movement when it is able to take initiatives on questions which rally broad layers of women and bring behind it sections of the traditional organizations of the workers' movement. The self-organization of women within the labour movement is a key mechanism for effecting the necessary political interaction between the movements of women for their liberation and the organizations of the working class.

The changes in women's situation have provoked a political differentiation in the movement. This greater differentiation has been shown on the theoretical terrain. Among the new theoretical themes some - related to questions of race, class, imperialism and sexuality - show up the different situations that exist among women. Feminists' differing attitudes and relationship to the state and its institutions have also provoked discussion. Other discussions arise with new problems (for example the new reproductive technology), or on themes such as sexual violence.

The development of the struggle against men's sexual violence against women, touches one of the most vulnerable aspects of masculine domination. We situate the origin of this violence in women's oppression and raise the necessity for it to be considered as a social crime, placing the accent particularly on women's self-organization and self-esteem. Another line has been developed which situates sexual violence as the origin of women's oppression and elaborates a series of demands which include an anti-pornography movement, censorship, strengthening the police and demands for stiffer prison sentences.

The development of fundamentalist ("back to nature") alternative currents (who consider industrialization of any form as totally negative) has had a strong impact on feminist thought. The possible implications of new reproductive technologies have stimulated these discussions. These "naturalist" tendencies, profoundly anti-science, demand a serious response on our part.

At the core of these ideas is the view that women's oppression is a product of biological differences, reflected in the cultural sphere, and not a result of the social and economic organization of society. Such an analysis involves a retreat from the early perspective of modern feminism that argued that femininity and masculinity were socially constructed and could therefore be changed. Instead they advocate creating "women's space" within the framework of existing capitalist society.

The process of differentiation has produced a variety of currents among which we can identify:

– Radical feminists who, on the basis of their analysis of the existence of sexual classes, consider the struggle between the sexes as the only element in the struggle for women's liberation.

– Various strands of bourgeois feminism, chiefly characterized by their strategy of making gains for small and privileged layers of women through an alliance with the ruling class and its parties.

– Reformist feminists, who either do not take into consideration the factors which determine women's condition as a gender or consider them as a product of the dominant ideology or reduce them to the economic aspects. They have the perspective of reforming the state and thus place the struggle for women's liberation simply in the context of reforms and a "democratization" of society.

– Socialist feminists who see the struggles of women as more closely linked with the struggles of the labour

movement.

– Revolutionary Marxist feminists - including ourselves -: we try to integrate into our theory, analysis and political practice the different contradictions which shape women's reality (gender, class, race), situating women's struggle in a revolutionary perspective and recognizing the importance of an alliance with the labour movement as a whole.

We should emphasize that the frontiers between these different currents are relatively fluid and the categories can often not be rigidly applied. Moreover, our relationship to these currents can vary: on some questions we have united-front work with radical feminists. At the same time the ideas of radical feminism, for example, have a stronger impact on women when the workers' movement turns out to be incapable of responding to women's aspirations.

IV. The orientation of revolutionary Marxists

Confronted with those who deny the specific oppression of women, who situate it in the cultural terrain, who consider it a product of biology or think that it is possible to do away with domination, subordination and oppression in the framework of this society, we affirm the existence of a material and social basis for gender oppression and the need for women to constitute themselves as a social subject, with their own political expression. The feminist movement makes possible the reaffirmation of women's identity, both individually and collectively, and is the only movement able to give a political expression to women as a gender.

The process of feminist consciousness-raising is complex and takes very different forms: on the basis of the contradictions generated by participation in social production or in the public sphere; on the basis of a political practice in other movements which makes possible a greater reflection and understanding of their particular reality and conditions for participating in the struggle; on the basis of a process of individual affirmation in the search for their individuality. All these roads can lead women to fight for their economic, emotional and sexual independence. But this often individual rise in consciousness will not become a collective strength if it is not transformed into collective consciousness, into a desire to change her own reality and that of other women.

Women's liberation work is not simply a sector of work in itself but something that must influence every other area of our work and our entire organization. Every section has to identify the layers of women that they are going to work among on a consistent basis. This is necessary in order to be in a position to take political initiatives to defend and extend women's rights.

Starting from their aspirations and the radicalizing movements in which they participate, we do everything possible to ensure that women become conscious of their specific problems, encourage their self organization to defend their specific interests and thus strengthen the autonomous women's movement.

We also take initiatives each time we can in the workplaces and unions to defend and extend women's rights. We systematically highlight the link between women's domestic responsibilities and their position in the workforce. We support women's right to self-organization and representation within the labour movement.

A. Central axes of our work

We intervene in defence of women's rights, particularly those of the most exploited women - black and immigrant women, women workers, young women and women of the oppressed nationalities. We particularly emphasize:

– The fight for women's right to control her own body, participating in campaigns against any legislative backsliding on abortion and contraception; and for liberalization of laws in countries where abortion is still not a right.

– Intervening around the themes of violence against women (rape, battered women, against any kind of sexual harassment in the workplaces or trade unions…) through campaigns explaining the issues or by participating in women's or social movement structures concerned with these questions. Our objective is that laws should be introduced which defend women's rights and define violence against women as a crime.

– The fight for shorter working hours, with no loss of pay. This brings women into the fight against unemployment and flexibility and responds to women's need for leisure and time for their own personal needs.

– Wage equality between men and women, and the recognition of women's qualifications. We link wage demands to the themes of the right to work and economic independence for women, including through a national guaranteed minimum wage.

– Refusing all forms of temporary employment. We understand that some women choose to work part-time, but we emphasize the dangers (low wages, marginalization, de-skilling) and we are resolutely against imposed part-time work. We encourage collective struggle against super-exploitation in the form of temporary work, home-working and insecure "fill-in" jobs and for full rights to time off, job security and trade-union activity for part-time workers.

– For education, training and retraining programmes that make it easier for women to gain the necessary skills to challenge their traditional employment patterns. For positive action, including where appropriate quotas in employment and training.

– Demanding the abolition of all discriminatory measures limiting women's rights to social security.

– Participating in campaigns for the maximum extension of social services

(crèches, nurseries etc.), we continue to propagandize for the sharing of domestic tasks.

– Opposing all discrimination against lesbians and defending women's right to freely define and exercise their own sexuality.

B. Our participation in building an autonomous women's liberation movement

What we have said before shows the decisiveness of the existence of an independent feminist movement, able to carry forward struggles on all aspects of women's daily lives, that is against their specific oppression, particularly inside the family.

This is the condition for consistently defending the specific interests of women and for transforming the trade unions into revolutionary instruments. This can only be achieved if there is a radical questioning of the traditional divisions of the working class, beginning with the sexual division of labour.

The form or shape of such an independent women's movement will vary from country to country, depending on history and present struggles. But the need for continuity - that is, passing on theoretical gains, strategic debates, the experience of previous struggles - makes this a permanent and central question. Without that - and one can see this in our own ranks and in particular in our youth organizations - we will be faced with a very alarming steps backward from the programmatic gains of the 11th World Congress.

The way forward is not simply given by the overall political situation. We do not give up actively contributing to building trade unions and forming class-struggle currents within their ranks on the pretext that political perspectives are difficult. Nor do we abandon our full involvement in building an independent women's movement where we defend our line and where we struggle to be a part of the leadership.

Latin America: The strategic challenge for the revolutionary left

1 January 1996

2. In some countries, economic policies aiming to respond to this crisis situation have been implemented, linked to bourgeois political projects.

a) Attacks on the old populist state. The policy of import substitution accompanied the development of strong states (Bonapartist or military dictatorships) with a strong intervention in the economy. The weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisies was partly compensated by state interventionism, which developed a sector of the economy. While initially this helped generate an indigenous bourgeoisie, it later became the main obstacle to both national and foreign private investment. The populist state also created an important social infrastructure, a product of big workers' struggles. From the end of the 1950s to the mid-1970s, workers' real wages rose, and although unemployment was high it was more a result of emigration from the countryside to the town.

The state was "slimmed down" little by little, with important sectors of production re-privatized. There has been a gradual disinvestment in education, health, and so on. The effects speak for themselves: diseases that had disappeared in most of our countries are beginning to reappear; the proportion of doctors per head is being reduced; 88 million Latin Americans exist in conditions of total poverty.

b) The foreign debt has generated an article of faith: the essential thing is to export. This determines everything. Export fever supposedly aims to:

i) generate a mechanism for obtaining foreign currency, primarily to service the debt and also because it is more difficult now to get foreign loans;

ii) reach a surplus commercial balance of payments as a supposed means of economic health.

The Latin American bourgeoisies have used several means for increasing exports. One is lowering production costs with the objective of attracting foreign capital. Even Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea are beginning to establish factories in some Latin American countries. The attack on living standards has been brutal. In the last five years, workers' real wages have fallen by 27%.

c) Export fever currently provides no incentives for small- and medium-scale industry, significantly reducing the domestic market. The informal sector has grown, and while it is true that it has always existed, in some countries it has become a key sector of the economy. In Peru it contributes more than 40% of GDP. In Uruguay, this sector was practically non-existent before the dictatorship but now amounts to more than 20%. In Mexico the figure is around 34%.

3. Although this restructuring has meant a relative incorporation of new technology - particularly in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela - this has not been a fundamental element. These have been:

– Attacks on "old-style" trade-unionism aimed at reducing the weight of the trade unions and the old union bureaucracies in the productive process, thus changing labour relations.

– Attacks on collective bargaining and labour legislation.

– Technological changes in some countries and certain sectors (steel, cars, oil, petro-chemicals, telecommunications, financial systems), causing a considerable rise in unemployment and confirming the dependent and semi-colonial character of our countries.

– The establishment of regional agreements, in particular Bush's call for a free trade zone from Canada to Tierra del Fuego. This policy of imperialism and the associated bourgeouisies intends to inflict a historic defeat on the working class of America by using the Latin American working class as a means of pressure to lower wages in Canada and the United States. It also intends to use these latter as a lever to step up the productivity of the Latin American working class.

All this has meant a modernization of poverty and an overall attack on social gains, illustrated not only in Bolivia and Peru, but also in Mexico and Argentina. This attack has not just been against populist policies but has also tried to eliminate the social gains won in revolutionary processes (in Mexico in 1910-1917 and then in the 1930s, in Bolivia in 1952) or mass mobilizations (Peronism in Argentina, the struggle in the regime of Vlasco Alvarado and since against the dictatorship in Peru).

Obviously, nobody has had the last word. The foreign debt is the principal factor acting against the Latin American bourgeoisies. It is significant that despite the respite it gave, the renegotiation of the Mexican debt did not fundamentally resolve anything. This is the material basis for the instability of the bourgeois parties and their governments, affecting both the old ruling apparatuses like the PRI, APRA or MNR, and "novel" projects like the PMdB.

II. Political transformations of the ruling apparatuses

1. Just before Reagan took office, imperialist representatives elaborated a counter-revolutionary conception called "low-intensity conflict". Although this was said to correct many errors in former strategy, in general it was a continuation of previous policies:

– The Vietnam war represented a defeat for the USA's method of confronting revolutionary movements: a strictly militaristic approach in which revolutionary conflicts were resolved via the direct intervention by the US army. US intervention in Vietnam not only did not defeat the revolution, but it stimulated a political movement in the USA that provoked a deep crisis in the system of political rule.

– The old Pentagon anti-Communist vision analyzed revolutionary organizations from a militarist outlook: guerrilla nuclei with a simple strategic vision, generally isolated from big urban concentrations. The Vietnam defeat and the transformation of revolutionary guerrilla organizations into politico-military organizations required an approach responding to political questions as much as to military ones.

– These two elements made some politico-military transformations necessary:

a) The installation of constitutional regimes with a certain degree of legitimacy. In their terms "to fight for the hearts and minds of the people against the insurgents". In some cases overthrowing dictatorships has been part of this approach.

b) Plus a dual policy of transforming local armies so that they themselves confronted the insurgent forces, and using the same army to fight for the "hearts and minds of the masses", through the creation of strategic hamlets - if this did not work support for politico-military organizations was undermined with "scorched earth" policies.

The presence of North American troops or police, as well as the extradition agreements with certain Latin American states, like Colombia for example, are becoming more and more crushing and pose the problem of sovereignty on the political and military plane.

The pretext for this has been the fight against drug trafficking. This pretext has allowed the installation of military bases in Peru and Bolivia, the existence of thousand of police in Mexico in violation of all its laws and the imprisonment of dozens of Colombians in US jails, which do not respect their most basic human rights

2. After a few years the dictatorial regimes and those installed by coups d'état in the 1960s and 1970s began to wear out. The indigenous bourgeoisies gradually withdrew their support, considering their goal - sweeping out the communists - to have been attained.

After several years of misleadership, a recomposition of the popular movements also began. The combination of traditional forms of struggle, like the general strike, with civic actions for democracy gradually weakened the dictatorships. This situation led to the local bourgeoisies and imperialism understanding the need to ensure a transition to constitutional regimes that preserved the basic structure of the state apparatus, in particular the army.

This project had some success, particularly at first, but its limits very soon became obvious. The economic crisis was fundamental in preventing the stabilization of these regimes. The internationalization of capital and the role played by many Latin American countries in the international division of labour, as well as a bourgeoisie that only acts as a junior partner, means that the only thing they can offer to the populations as a whole is "modernization" seeking so-called insertion into the 21st century. This will not stimulate any support from the masses.

We can draw certain conclusions

about the crisis of bourgeois projects:

– First, bourgeois nationalism is in crisis. It is experiencing an Indian summer in certain countries (Mexico, Argentina), but this simply confirms the general tendency. The rise of Cardenism is a product of the worst crisis of the most solid nationalist project in Latin America. The announcement of a shock plan by Menem in Argentina, and particularly his ferocious criticism of Alan García ("we are not going to make the same mistakes as Alan García, we are not going to confront the IMF"), are a clear demonstration of the limits of nationalism. Nationalism before being in government is one thing; nationalism while in government is something else.

– Second, certain sectors of imperialism and the bourgeoisie have tried to develop political projects that keep their distance from the old nationalist ideals, presenting them as champions of modernity, or have even succeeded in substantially modifying the old populist parties, such as the MNR in Bolivia and the PRI in Mexico.

They have sought to link old nationalist projects to the Second (Socialist) International: for example, the PRD in the Dominican Republic, the Liberal Party in Costa Rica, the APRA in Peru, the MIR in Bolivia, Brizola's PDT in Brazil, the ADN in Venezuela, the Michael Manley's Jamaican PNP, and - even though they are only in the process of possible integration - the UCR in Argentina and the Partido Colorado in Uruguay. Obviously this does not mean that there has been a change in the class nature of these parties: they are still bourgeois parties. They want a better image in the mass movement and the world economic community. Just like the Christian Democrats and the neo-liberals, these parties seem to have the approval of imperialism (on condition that they do not insist on flirting with populism, of course). They have a weakness that flows from their position midway between nationalism and neo-liberalism.

– Thirdly, right-wing alternatives have begun to emerge, although only around individuals. They may use party names, but they place themselves above party structures, even criticizing them very harshly. The examples of Fujimoro in Peru or Collor de Mello in Brazil point in this direction. With an ethical and moral discourse trying to distance itself as much from populism and the left as from the right, this type of candidate is presented by the most pro-US currents as the only real option.

The economic crisis is the initial block for all these projects. Their weakness makes it possible for left electoral fronts - such as the Frente Amplio in Uruguay or, more importantly, the Frente Brasil Popular (hegemonized by the PT) in Brazil - to be seen as governmental alternatives by important sections of the population. We know that an FA government in Uruguay (the case of the PT is totally different) would not solve the fundamental problems of the population. Nonetheless, at the level of consciousness and organization, a vote for the left may lead important sections of the masses to politically break with bourgeois parties. Even electoral projects with a clearly bourgeois character, such as neo-Cardenism in Mexico, inevitably carry along with them social confrontations.

This is one of the best proofs of the semi-colonial character of most Latin American countries. It is not simply loss of monetary sovereignty, but above all loss of national sovereignty. Insofar as they yield to an alliance with imperialism, dismantling nationalized industry, Latin American governments increasingly lose their populist and anti-imperialist character. They become regimes with democratic facades, but with increasing reliance on the army and police, and with a doctrine of national security to prepare for possible eruptions. So-called national security policy represents one of the worst dangers for the mass movement. This policy even tries to create snares for social organizations through infiltration and provocation.

III. The mass movement and its political expressions

1. A reorganization of the mass movement has been under way since the late 1970s. This process does not only reflect the changes in the model of accumulation, but also the beginning of a change in the relationship of forces between different currents in the mass movement:

– The reorganization of the CGT in Argentina starting several years before the fall of the dictatorship. Just months before the fall several general strikes erupted.

– The spectacular case of Brazil. The PT was formed in the midst of a huge strike wave in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The CUT now plays a key role in the reorganization of the Latin American workers' movement and not only because Brazil is the country with the main concentration of workers.

– The struggle against the dictatorship in Uruguay, mainly conducted by the PIT. The organization of general strikes constituted the backbone of the struggle for democracy.

– A series of strikes in Paraguay, with increasing political possibilities for the MDP (which has now fused with other organziations to form the PDP). Since the fall of the dictatorship, the formation of the CUT has made it possible to bring together dozens of trade unions. It is within the CUT that the battle between the reformist and the democratic revolutionary organziations to know who will win the majority of Paraguayan workers will be carried out.

– The relaunch of the CGTP in Peru, shortly before fall of Morales Bermúdez' dictatorship. The teachers' struggles, the formation of the SUTEP and its later incorporation into the CGTP, and the development of class-struggle currents within the miners' and workers' trade unions, such as Moraveco and Diamante, made it possible for the CGTP to play an important role in the general strikes and in the formation of the Comandos Centrales de Lucha (central command

of struggle).

– The reorganization of the COB in Bolivia, immediately after the fall of the García Meza dictatorship in 1981. At first it organized the great majority of the Bolivian people: workers, peasants (Tupak Katari), students, housewives, and so on. However, after the Marcha del Hambre (hunger march) and the failure of the general strike, as well as the sectarian policy that led to surrendering the leadership of the organization to Juan Lechín, the COB stopped playing an important role. This, along with the economic policy implemented by the MNR government, led to the COB's deterioration, which very much reflects the Bolivian situation.

– The formation of the Colombian CUT in 1987 was an important step. Although it was confederation formed on the basis of an agreement at the top, it made it possible to organize the vast majority of workers. First, it ended the dispersion of workers in five different confederations, although this is still not directly reflected in struggles. Thus, there was not a united response to the CUT's call for a general strike in 1988. Similarly, the CUT has not taken up a series of central political questions, such as the struggle for respecting human lives. Although formally it has decided to support this type of campaign, in practice the CUT leadership has been an obstacle to involvement in them.

– The coordination of different confederations by the FUT in Ecuador. Unlike most countries, it is the key element for organizing a big number of general strikes.

– The formation of the UNTS is another example which makes it possible to talk of a recomposition of the mass movement. Based on a structure similar to the COB, it has organized all the exploited and oppressed of El Salvador: workers, those in cooperatives, urban dwellers, peasants, women, and so on. Its formation was the sign of a major correction by the FMLN and was just as important as the formation of the Front itself. This is even more important given the former practice of Salvadoran revolutionary organizations, which always tried to impose their hegemonic projects, preventing a process of united self-organisation of the mass movement. But this is not simply an organizational advance. The UNTS is ever more clearly a central tool for taking power, even more than is understood by certain currents within the FMLN itself.

– In Mexico, after a long period of disarray, a thoroughgoing trade-union recomposition is starting to take place. The strike of the teachers' union, which organizes more than 1.2 million workers, and the gradual weakening of the trade-union bureaucracy, offer a real possibility for a qualitative leap forward.

To be sure, the scale of the neo-liberal attack on the standard of living of the workers, as well as the deterioration in working conditions and the increasing limitations of the traditional implements of struggle, have imposed a defensive dynamic on the workers

2. In respect to other social movements, the situation is even clearer. The recomposition of the peasant movement has been very significant.

– In Mexico, there are several independent peasant organizations, which have hundreds of thousands of members. However, the task of forming a unified peasant organization independent of the state and the parties still remains on the agenda. This is the sector where state control has been most relaxed since the first radical mass actions. Recently there have been land occupations with increasingly developed forms of self defence, and organization in productive projects without accepting co-option by the state. This movement has also been characterized by its readiness to advance in forging the worker-peasant alliance.

– In Peru, the CCP has been a bastion against the reactionary plans of the APRA government. The defence of agrarian cooperatives and the struggle for land have been central to their organization. The formation of the peasant rondas, real self-defence mechanisms, has enabled them to stand up to the landowners and force respect for their organization.

– In Brazil, the emergence of the landless peasants' movement was the expression of one of the central struggles of the mass movement. After some timid governmental declarations, the bourgeoisie decided not to advance on the question of agrarian reform. In practice, the most violent confrontations of recent years in Brazil have been in the countryside. But we should also point out the close links between the CST, the PT and the CUT.

– In Colombia, the struggle of the peasantry is closely linked to the politico-military organisations, which guarantees a higher level of radicalisation than for other social movements. Even if some of the guerrilla organisations have had a focoist orientation in the recent past, they are currently rediscussing their attitude to the peasant movement in which it was considered to be simply as logistical rearguard mechanism. This process of change is, however, continuing.

3. A dynamic urban-dwellers' movement has developed in recent years, as a result of the economic crisis and the failure of industrialization in the cities and agrarian reform in the countryside. It combines peasant and traditional working-class methods of struggle: occupying land for house-building, involving a considerable degree of confrontation and violence; participating actively in general strikes; providing a certain haven for the political activity of a large number of trade-union activists who cannot meet in their factories or trade unions, because of the dangers of being sacked.

The urban-dwellers' movement is not qualitatively different from the peasant movement. Behind it lies the inescapable problem of Latin American cities. As the struggle for agrarian reform plays a fundamental role in the strategy of permanent revolution, so the struggle for radical urban reform today becomes a transitional democratic demand that cannot be resolved in the framework of dependent capitalism. Just as the bourgeoisie cannot resolve the

problems of industrialization or agrarian reform, it now confronts a new insoluble problem: urban reform.

In some countries the urban dwellers' movement has a greater capacity for mobilization than others. In Peru, the formation of the "cuatro conos" of Lima, with their "pueblos jóvenes" (squatter settlements - literally "young towns"), is regarded with great distrust with the inhabitants of San Isidro and Miraflores. When the "pueblos jóvenes" demonstrate through Lima, the country's rich have a glimpse of what will happen during the insurrection.

In Central America, this sector has been the basis for the development of revolutionary organizations. It played a key role in the Sandinista revolution, particularly in Managua and Masaya. In Mexico, it has always been closely linked to the left and has escaped PRI control. It played a key role immediately after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, which was a real step forward.

4. Another emerging movement in Latin America is undoubtedly the women's movement, which has not evolved exclusively out of gender demands. But in the fight against attacks on living standards women's political and social action has created the political conditions for making significant advances in the process of their self-organization. This has happened in Peru in the struggle for the Glass of Milk, in Chile in the fight for democracy and against hunger, and in Mexico's local neighbourhoods.

This has gradually highlighted the need to take this as a starting point for generating an autonomous women's movement fighting for its specific demands, to feminize the struggle. The meetings of Latin American women are a pointer in this direction. We have to start from today's level of consciousness, but simply remaining at this level favours the possibility of these movements being coopted by different governments.

5. A consciousness of ecological problems is also starting to develop. The gradual destruction of the Amazonian forest, the devastating atmospheric pollution in Mexico City and to a lesser extent in São Paulo, the pollution of seas and rivers, and, especially in Mexico, the struggle against building nuclear plants, have given rise to an ecology movement that has tended to link itself naturally to the broader social struggle.

The critical economic situation has forged a link between the struggle against the destruction of the Amazonian forest and the PT in Brazil rather than favouring the emergence of Green parties. In other cases, as in Mexico, it has encouraged the self-organization of ecologists on a really pluralist basis, without the domination of any single political current.

This movement is growing because of the huge devastation of natural resources. It also has an anti-imperialist thread, given that imperialism is behind the destruction of nature and the modification of different habitats.

6. The ecclesiastical base community movement has emerged with an impressive capacity for organization and mobilization in the very heart of the Catholic institution - although not only there. It questions the basis of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and its relationship to exploitation and oppression. The church of the poor does not only mean a moral option but fundamentally a politico-moral option. The communities do not simply seek to have a caring/helping vision, but above all a vision of change. This is why they actively participate in mass actions that raise the need for an overall political transformation of society. Very often, the base communities study socialism and Marxism much more seriously than the left organizations themselves.

However, it would be a big mistake to have a utilitarian vision of the base communities. They should be looked at and analyzed as part of the forces fighting for the liberation of our peoples. And while we should seek to influence their evolution - and learn from them - we have to maintain the same type of respect for their autonomy and independence as we do for other social movements.

– Finally, in the last two years we have seen the emergence of a powerful indigenous movement in different countries of the American sub-continent, in which millions of Indian men and women are fighting for their most basic rights. This movement has already given a first example of what can be won through a rising of the indigenous population in Ecuador, and then with the holding of the First Continental Conference pof Indian Peoples which wazs attended by representatives from some 20 Latin American countries.

Given all these elements, it is very difficult not to share the idea that there is a process of reorganization of the mass movement underway in Latin America. That is to say, we are not simply dealing with a specific trend, but with a general dynamic.

IV. The relationship of forces

Since the Nicaraguan revolution there has been a change in the relationship of forces between social classes. The domination and political control of the national bourgeoisies was a product of the crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s, as well as of the Stalinist parties' popular-frontist policy. Today, the situation has substantially changed.

Some decades ago, the development of nationalist currents and the objective situation meant that the bulk of the workers identified with pro-capitalist policy. The mass movement was essentially under the control of nationalist currents, which used mobilizations only in order to ensure that part of the economic surplus did not leave the country. The mass movement today tends to express itself independently from the big apparatuses of bourgeois rule. This transformation is the central aspect of what is happening today.

This process started with the Cuban revolution. However, its effect was rather marginal in relation to the big battalions of the working class. Castroism in the 1960s was above all a sign of the crisis starting in the

reformist parties, especially the Communist parties, and the radicalization of student youth.

The Sandinista revolution and the emergence of the PT - both in 1979 - made it possible for the mass movement to make a qualitative leap forward. At the same time, the revolutionary left (which survived) is being transformed. Having made a profound self-criticism of its "focoist" and militarist deviations, it has started to work publicly and openly within the mass movement, or developed politico-military organizations.

But this is not the only change in the relationship of forces. There is also a change in the relative influence of reformist (especially CP) and revolutionary currents in the workers' movement. The CPs today are in deep political crisis, marked by two main tendencies: either almost total adaptation to bourgeois or petty-bourgeois populism (equivalent to the social-democratization of the European CPs), or contradictory assimilation of the positions of Shafic Handal (leader of the Salvadoran CP).

However, this process has been modified recently by perestroika. Handal's positions are no longer important, but the Stalinist apparatuses are once again unashamedly promoting a policy of class collaboration as a result of the counter-revolutionary meaning of perestroika in international policy. Even in countries where the CPs had maintained a certain stability and control (to a greater or less extent) over the workers' movement, the crisis of perestroika today has affected their base. Thus the three CPs which were exceptions are also today experiencing serious difficulties.In Chile and Colombia, the CPs have experinced a series of splits, although in Uruguay the Stalinists maintain a significant political and electoral strength.

But the problem is not solved. Indeed, some revolutionary currents, particularly those that have gained a certain mass influence, are going into crisis, mainly because they have not found a strategic perspective allowing them to offer a revolutionary alternative to the masses. Some general aspects that have led to a weakening of the revolutionary left, at least temporarily, are:

– Cuba in the 1960s was the great example for the peoples of Latin America, but today serious doubts about the Castroist leadership are emerging. The imperialist offensive against Cuba on democracy is starting to have an impact in some sections of the masses. This, together with perestroika's success in the mass media and some sections of the movement and the clear democratic sentiment of the masses, provoke a certain distancing from the Cuban leadership.

It is also obvious that Castro's attitude to the Latin American bourgeoisies and some governments has been rather opportunist; for example, the big favour he did the Mexican government by approving the electoral fraud.

But the main problem is the question of democracy and the attitude taken to events like those in Poland or China. It is not only a matter of "imperialist propaganda". Today as never before, the revolutionary left is forced to give a clear answer about what type of democracy it wants to build. In most countries, the schema "let the leadership decide" has stopped functioning. The struggle against corruption in the populist or modernizing governments, against gangster-like trade-union bureaucracies, against violations of human rights, has made a very strong democratic consciousness possible. Cuba is not an example in this sphere.

– The economic crisis in Nicaragua was a serious blow to the vanguard. There is still a great respect for the Sandinista leadership and its defence of democracy; but each currency devaluation, rise in inflation, sacking of thousands of workers, or announcement of austerity plans were a severe blow to the Latin American revolutionary left. It was very difficult to explain that in our own countries we struggle against this type of plan but that they were applied in Nicaragua. We are aware of imperialism's responsibility, and that the solution to Nicaragua's economic problems does not lie there but in the extension of world revolution. But for big sections of the Latin American masses, this sounds rather abstract.

– Perestroika is creating new problems for revolutionaries because it is helping anti-communist propaganda (the failure of communism) and pro-market ideology. Perestroika, in practice, is a sort of peaceful coexistence, but much more dangerous than in the past. The starting point is simple: everything can and must be negotiated. Thus its main protagonists are the bourgeois mass media and governments who are talking about using the Afghan or Angolan model in Nicaragua or El Salvador. This ignores the fact that there is no comparison between the forces in these countries.

The main problem is the debate on strategy in the revolutionary vanguard, and a crisis in certain revolutionary organizations in key countries like Peru, Chile and Colombia. Some of the strategic problems posed today for the revolutionary vanguard are:

– The character of the revolution. The traditional debate around revolution by stages or socialist revolution appeared to be closed, judging by Handel's self-criticism, Ortega's declaration on the character of the Sandinista revolution and the socialist definition of the PT. However, the pronouncements by commandant Tirado Lopez on the supposed end of the cycle of anti-imperialist revolutions and the need for coexistence with capitalism, denote a debate on perspectives in the whole of the Latin American left. The electoral defeat of the FSLN, the loss of all support from the so-called socialist camp and the intensification of imperialist intervention have prompted a questioning of the traditional strategic schemas. The initiative has been taken by a new "realism", which questions the viability of a perspective of revolutionary upheaval and which generates demoralisation in the face of the new challenges of taking forward a project of an alternative social order in the current international context. In a certain way it follows on from the former campist illusions and the limits noted in the

Cuban and Nicaraguan experiences of overcoming conditions of economic underdevelopment. But this is only part of the problem, which is posed today concretely: what weight should the struggle for democracy and an independent nation have in a revolutionary strategy?

Because of a certain reaction against populist demagogy and Stalinist reformism, and an overly class-oriented reading of Che Guevara "socialist revolution or the caricature of revolution", the revolutionary left neglected the struggle for democracy and the defence of the oppressed nation. A workerist current considered that our countries had changed their nature from semi-colonial to semi-industrialized or, worse, "sub-imperialist". It was even stated that the only significant contradiction was the waged worker/capital one, leaving totally out of the reckoning the contradiction between the oppressed nation and imperialism.

In a certain way, the Sandinista revolution brought everything back into place. The struggle for democracy and national liberation were the fundamental characteristics of the July 19 revolution. The weakness of the Nicaraguan working class and the type of dictatorship very much determined the force and character of the struggle. But we emphasize that, regardless of the degree of industrialization of different countries, the struggle for an independent nation and for a democratic project are central questions that may very often spark off revolutionary crises.

– The revolutionary subject. The de-industrialization process in some countries and the bourgeois austerity offensive, especially on questions of unemployment and redundancies, have meant that the working class, with the exception of Brazil, has lost a certain political weight. In Bolivia, Uruguay, Peru, Chile, Venezuela, and even Argentina, the working class has lost power. This does not mean that the bourgeoisie has regained control over the workers' organizations. It means that, in the struggle of those at the bottom of the pile, the working class does not have the same capacities of attraction and organization as it had previously.

This has reopened the debate about the revolutionary subject and the nature of the revolution in Latin America.

As it arises and develops from the inexistence of a bourgeois democratic revolution, the dynamic of permanent revolution is different from that of anti-capitalist revolution. The strategic questions are posed in a radically different way. There are endless particularities both in the driving forces of the revolution and the type of state they have to confront. This has revived the idea of using the concepts of "the people" and "popular" or "people's", which have a different connotation in Latin America than in the imperialist metropolises. All those at the bottom of the pile (the poor, workers, peasants, poor urban dwellers, the unemployed, etc) - the immense majority of society, excluding only the bourgeoisie and the oligarchy - are considered "the people". It is true that bourgeois nationalists and Stalinist reformists had so extended the concept of "the people" that only the foreign investors were excluded. But the Sandinista revolution and some of the left's practice since then have started to resolve that contradiction.

It is also clear that if there was a break from a class-oriented (we would say "a truly people's") outlook, there would be the risk of confusing the character of the revolution - analysis of the revolutionary subject - with the nature of the party, or, worse, with giving up a project of socialist political independence, so that those at the bottom no longer exist independently but in function of a fraction of the bourgeoisie.

– Alliances, political fronts and party. The economic crisis itself and the declining importance of nationalist currents naturally lead to posing the question of possible alliances with certain sectors of the bourgeoisie. This is obvious from the formation of broad opposition fronts that are usually established on the basis of the need to fight for democracy. Bourgeois populist currents obviously seek to take advantage of the democratic feelings of the masses to attract them.

The alliance policy of revolutionary forces starts from the obvious fact that as bourgeois parties and governments begin to decline, those on top divide and ruling mechanisms break down, giving the possibility of isolating the most retrograde forces. But this concept is full of dangers. There is the possibility that left organizations themselves will give the bourgeois populist currents a representativity that they did not have before. Thus the best arena for establishing this type of alliance is in action. Usually, establishing electoral agreements with bourgeois forces is profoundly wrong. What is contested in elections is the question of government and which class should govern; agreements with bourgeois forces on joint candidates and programmes create illusions in the masses about the possibility of halfway solutions that do not necessarily imply a rupture. We are not talking about agreements on fighting electoral fraud, which are totally correct.

It is very important to make progress in forming political fronts that unify class-oriented (peoples') and revolutionary organizations and the vanguard around agreement on the needs and tasks of the period and the revolution to win control of important sectors of the mass movement from the populist bourgeoisie. These fronts are therefore the basic instrument in the fight for hegemony in possible alliances or in society. They have a function that is not just conjunctural, but long-lasting.

This has led several revolutionary organizations to discuss what type of party to build. Once there is a level of implantation that makes it possible to lead tens or hundreds of thousands of social fighters, the pressure to make the pressure to make the qualitative leap from a nucleus of a party, with hundreds or thousand of activists, to a mass revolutionary party becomes a permanent anxiety. A typical example is the PUM in Peru. It leads the CCP, the class-oriented current in the trade unions, some trade unions and the urban-dwellers' movement, with a big influence in the women's movement and the largest left parliamentary group. But it is still a party with no more than 2,000 active members. Other revolutionary parties are or

could be in similar situations, like the Mexican PRT, A Luchar in Colombia or the MLN in Uruguay.

Several responses to this question have been begun, reflecting the need to adapt political projects in response to the changes we have noted in the composition of the revolutionary subject and to the new dynamics in the mass movements in our countries. Experiences like that of the PT in Brazil and the building of the MPP in Uruguay show the diversity of the responses arising from different national situations. It is nevertheless clear that it is not possible to resolve this question simply by an effort to politically and organisationally dilute the revolutionary projects and that the problem of growth to mass parties is determined in the last instance by a process of maturation of the mass movement itself.

– The military strategy of these revolutionary parties. We can establish two categories:

a) The politico-military organizations. On the basis of a criticism of "focoism" immediately after the Cuban revolution, of the reformist, legalist and gradualist conception of the Communist parties and of the insurrectionalist, workerist vision of some Trotskyists, these organizations underwent a qualitative transformation, developing a mass policy directed at taking power. The mass strength of organizations like the Salvadorans, Colombians, and in some periods the Guatemalans, is undeniable. These currents have an important specific weight even within the trade-union organizations and major confederations.

These organizations start from the idea that revolutionary strategy is a whole in which political tasks combine with military tasks in a natural way with no apparent contradiction. Their history shows that they have an undoubted capacity for mass mobilization. However, their trajectory has been marked by the problems of this conception.

b) The unarmed revolutionary organizations. Their strategic hypotheses are much more approximate. The relationship to the mass movement is more natural and fluid. In practice, the struggle is for self-organization and the formation of big confederations in different sectors of the movement (which does not exclude a hegemonic practice). However, once a certain level of implantation is reached and there is a real possibility of confrontation with the police or army, or the degree of instability of the bourgeois parties or governments opens a political crisis of the ruling apparatuses, thus creating favourable conditions for revolutionary upheavals, being organized in a party steeped in parliamentarism and the institutions in general, and confined to a practice of struggle for minimal demands in the mass movement, becomes an obstacle.

– The transition. The Nicaraguan situation, the debate on perestroika and rectification, the debate on the risks of bureaucracy, the proposition that the revolution does not solve the problems of underdevelopment and so on, have led to a debate on the problems of transition.

The richness of the Nicaraguan democratic experience is a vital source for the Latin American left. But its terrible economic situation has led to a certain rethinking. There is a strong ideological tendency to identify the market with democracy, as if the latter could not exist without the former, and to say that the market is the precondition for solving poverty and hunger. Nobody in Nicaragua today challenges the idea that the laws of the market have had full play, and that this has sunk the people further into poverty, rather than saving them from it. It is obvious that the decisions taken by the Sandinistas in this field have been overdetermined by the actions of imperialism and the bureaucratized workers' states. Nonetheless, it is an overwhelming reality.

The Cuban model for the economy has to be vindicated. There is no possible comparison between the social situation in Cuba and the rest of Latin America. In this respect, statistics are still useful to demonstrate the superiority of a non-capitalist economic system, despite its deformations.

But this does not solve the problem of democracy, around which the Latin American revolutionary left is beginning to be particularly sensitive. Its reaction to the Tiananmen events was a first sign that something is changing deep down.

– The difficulties in consolidating the revolutionary left. These strategic debates are determined by the international context and its repercussions in our sub-continent: the break-up of the "socialist camp", imperialism retaking the initiative, the isolation and crisis of Castroism and the Castroist currents, the strengthening of gradualist and realist ideology, a certain downturn of bourgeois institutions and the emergence of social-democratic currents within revolutionary and class-struggle parties.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was welcomed by the bulk of the left and revolutionary parties. To some extent, they took a position that tried to stop the bourgeois governments and the right appropriating what was happening in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the collapse of the "socialist camp" has very profound consequences in the development of strategic thinking.

Until recently, the Latin American left made a dogma of the "socialist camp" as the rearguard of the revolution. Criticism of the bureaucracy was allowed in private, but publicly the "camp" had to be defended. In this vision, the socialist camp would neutralize a possible US intervention. This was inscribed in the idea of a revolution limited to national borders.

Today the "socialist camp" no longer exists. And the bulk of the revolutionary left, educated and trained by Castroism, has lost all international reference points. For Fidel, imperialism, particularly the USA, is the sole enemy. This determines his whole policy. His yearning for the "socialist camp" starts from the idea that the destruction of the Berlin Wall has changed the balance of forces in favour of imperialism, a view that the Costa Rica Accords and the US intervention in Panama confirmed for him.

This is a distorted outlook that nevertheless partly reflects reality. Perestroika, more than the fall of the Berlin Wall, has had absolutely negative repercussions in Latin America. The resurgence of gradualism and institutionalism are only the most obvious expression of this. Some years ago, the crisis of the Latin American CPs was expressed in the emergence of Handalism (vindication of the revolution, criticism of the stagist vision, etc.). Today this is totally overtaken by perestroika.

Of course, Castro's conclusion is totally wrong. In identifying socialism with the dictatorial governments in Eastern Europe, not distancing itself from these dictatorial governments and not changing the hierarchical and bureaucratic relationships in Cuba, Castroism has become isolated. No revolutionary organization can solidarize with this vision as it risks becoming a dead-end in its own country. It is not possible to fight for democracy and at the same time defend the one-partyism and bureaucratic relationships existing in Cuba. Castroism is becoming an ever more archaic and and less attractive ideology. But this does not mean that the revolutionary left has made real progress. The emerging social-democratic currents in the left organizations seek not only to exorcize Castroism, but revolution itself. For them, the world situation is so complex that it is only possible to promote economic and social modernization through parliamentary democracy (consensus). Such currents have emerged in the PCM, MIR, PT, Venezuelan MIR and even in the Mexican PRT's ranks.

The situation becomes still more difficult with acts like the Sandinista government signing the San José Accord, and even worse with Humberto Ortega's explanation. Everybody knew Nicaragua's terrible economic situation and the importance of ending the war for the Sandinistas. But this does not justify such a political act. The San Isidro Accord was a direct product of perestroika. For Gorbachev the Salvadoran revolution is the "fly in the ointment", the reason why he put pressure on Cuba and Nicaragua to support him.

The danger threatening the Cuban revolution today must be added to this. It seems that Gorbachev has decided to bring the Castro leadership into line by gradually withdrawing economic aid. The aim is to force a change in attitude or provoke a social explosion. There are many differences with Eastern Europe. Fundamental sections of the masses support Fidel. But Bush is much more worried about restoring capitalism in Cuba than in Rumania, Hungary, Poland or even Czechoslovakia. Cuba is an open wound for the US. It is a symbol to be destroyed. This is why the media is doing so much to prepare the millions of Cuban exiles living in Miami for US intervention. Defence of the Cuban revolution is a priority task. Cuba is also a symbol for us. But defending the Cuban revolution means generating a political movement pushing for the necessary changes. The revolutionary left must address the Castro leadership and demand democratization.

Several of these standpoints were discussed during the Conference of Left Parties and Organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Brazil in 1990 on the initiative of the PT. This meeting very possibly marks the end of a cycle and the beginning of something new, that is, among other things, that the Latin American left demonstrates its desire the confront the present situation with a critical and self-critical attitude. This would make it possible to develop a new way of thinking free from dogmatism, fantasy and schemas.

Finally, but fundamentally, we have to analyze the significance of the electoral defeat of the FSLN.

Imperialism operated an economic stranglehold which led the Sandinistas to implement a policy of economic adjustment which had harmful consequences on living standards for the mass of the population. This was implemented through two readjustment plans. The first was launched in February 1988, and in some ways already meant an aggressive policy towards the population. However, this plan still maintained three central aspects: a significant harmonization of wages; subsidy, and thus price control, of 45 basic food products; and the continuation of a policy of stable employment. This proposal was carried through alongside a mobilization of the population, especially on the question of monetary modification. Still, at that point the population still had a great deal of confidence in the Sandinista government. This plan lasted only four months due to unprecedentedly high inflation rates and a certain amount of de-capitalization.

Later, in June 1988, a new plan was introduced which increased the burden on the workers in the countryside and the city. In this plan, the number of basic food products subsidized was reduced to only four (rice, sugar, oil, soap), accompanied by an indiscriminate liberalization of prices without any concomitant wage rises for the workers. At the same time, the first cut was made in the number of state employees, increasing unemployment and under-employment, plus indexation (to inflation) of interest rates on credits to the APP and small peasant sectors. The combination of these two adjustment policies led to the almost total bankruptcy of the Nicaragua economy by the end of that year; inflation reached 36,000% - 100% per day. GDP decreased by 9%, while GDP per capita dropped by 12.1%. The value of exports fell by 15.5%, while that of imports rose by 9.1%.

This adjustment policy meant further impoverishment of the people without any popular mobilization, which is why many called it a "plan without the people". Comandante Carión pointed out that the era of great social reforms had passed, and that the driving force of economic improvement was to come from foreign and private investment. To achieve this, they had to represent themselves to the investing sectors as credit-worthy, and thus the social aspect of the revolution had to be stopped.

We can point out that the pressure from the so-called socialist countries grew unbearable for the Sandinistas. it was felt all the more harshly as overall aid from Eastern Europe to Nicaragua had reached $7,000 million. This was very little for in comparison with Nicaragua's needs

but seemed very high to the Soviet technocrats. That is why the Soviet bureaucracy is so happy about UNO's victory. It is significant that for the Soviets, Señora Chamorro's victory simply represents savings in oil, dollars and weapons. The return to normality means that Nicaragua returns to the orbit of imperialism's "responsibility", not only in the political arena but also and fundamentally in the economic arena. This element should not be forgotten in analyzing the Sandinistas' view of what was possible and why they had to reformulate their relationship with US imperialism.

Aid from Eastern Europe was not enough to make the Nicaraguan economy function. The defence effort made GDP fall by 15% and the war left accumulated damages of $12 billion. On the other hand, in the last few years, there has been an even greater deterioration in the exchange mechanisms for raw materials exports, as well as a significant reduction of the land surface dedicated to producing cotton. And all of this took place in the context of the US trade embargo. To this we have to add the direct damage caused by Hurricane Joan, which was estimated at $700 million. The Sandinistas concluded that they urgently needed to open credit lines from the United States and end the trade blockade. It was within this perspective that they brought forward the election.

– The economic and social effects of such a crisis have been impressive. Public investment fell by 66% between 1987 and 1989. Jobs in the public sector were cut by 35,000, GDP per capita fell by 27.4%, real wages - taking the base of 100 in 1980 - were reduced to an index of 11 in 1987 and as low as 5 in December 1988, falling further to 1 in January 1989. This is to say that readjustment plans followed the same criteria as in the rest of Latin America, but with a central difference: there was no input of fresh hard currency that could ease the situation in return for implementing these plans.

This situation had important consequences for the relationship between the FSLN and the masses. Most leaders of the mass organizations decidedly supported the readjustment plans. One of the clearest examples of this was the attitude of the CST (Central Sandinista de los Trabajadores) which publicly supported the redundancies in the state sector. Another example was that of the Juventud Sandinista which supported the reactionary restructuring plans for the university, similar to those in other Latin American countries (leading them to lose some elections). Some government ministers even had to point out to the leaders of mass organizations that they should take some distance from certain economic projects that the government was forced to initiate. But reality was very complex.

However, today it would be too Manichean to hold the leaders of social organizations responsible for something they did not decide. The Sandinistas tried to bridge this abyss with the cara al pueblo ["face the people" public meetings for dialogue between Sandinista leaders and the masses - Translator's note]. It is well known that very often the local Sandinista leaders prepared the cara al pueblo to question the government's central policy, interventions were organized and more than once they won important concessions. Daniel Ortega was obliged to modify his economic policy under the pressure of these assemblies. However, in the long run, these small expressions of people's power did not manage to develop and express themselves through the big mass organizations. A section of the Sandinistas thought that these consultations replaced the need to really consult the workers but reality demonstrated a fundamental truth. In moments of revolutionary euphoria (when there is unlimited confidence in the vanguard) democracy of this type appears as sufficient. However, when the crisis explodes, this type of plebiscitary democracy not only does not function, but very often generates more dissatisfaction. The problem is that it is necessary to develop direct democracy (creating an organizing structure where the social organizations can exercise their power) starting in the period of revolutionary euphoria, because later on it is much more difficult.

In a certain way there began to be a separation between the FSLN and the masses, especially between the social organizations and the masses. What was most worrying in the last electoral campaign was the famous closing rally of the FSLN campaign. More than half of the participants voted for UNO, even though they had attended the rally, as well as many previous demonstrations that had affected the whole city. Let us consider what it means when 35% of the inhabitants of a capital city participate in a mobilization. What we have to ask is why they participated and why they subsequently voted for UNO.

In large sectors of the population a certain fear and rancour began to develop in regard to the Sandinista cadre in the social organizations. Many people who had participated in that rally did so simply under social pressure, in order not to be shown up in front of their leaders. These leaders asked the workers to mobilize to support the austerity plans of the government, and at the same time some of them already started to have a standard of living slightly different to that of the workers as a whole.

– But this was not the central factor determining the vote for UNO. The five years of war and the continuation of obligatory military service weighed heavily on the consciousness of the population. Important sections of the people drew the following conclusion: a victory of the FSLN will not only not end the war but, on the contrary, lead to its intensification.

There is a weakness in the usual analysis of the Nicaraguan situation. Everybody said that the Contra had been militarily defeated, and thus that a key element of the US strategy of "low-intensityconflict" had stopped functioning. However, reality was totally different. Undoubtedly the Contra had no military perspective if viewed as the key instrument for taking power, but it is very difficult to think that this was the imperialist vision. For them the Contra was an element of destabilization which played a key role in the formation of a solid civilian instrument. In this respect, Cardinal Obando's role has been fundamental. We should look for the explanation of UNO's victory (from

the point of view of its forces) in the light of the division of labour between the Cardinal and the Contra.

The war meant almost 50,000 dead - 1.66% of the population. Transposed to France we would be talking about more than 800,000 dead, and more than 3.5 million in the USA. To this has to be added the number of wounded and mutilated, and also those who were evacuated or who lost their homes. This means that almost every Nicaraguan home concretely experienced the effects of the war in one way or another. It was in order to end the war that the majority of Nicaraguans voted for UNO.

– These are the elements which fundamentally explain the defeat. Nonetheless, we have to point out another very important element. The only way in which a people can accept the type of poverty and difficulties experienced by the Nicaraguans is if they have a very big decision-making power over what is done. An adjustment policy that provokes a drop in living standards can only be accepted if it is decided by those who are going to be centrally affected by it. For us, the problem is not the number of nationalizations carried out by the Sandinista government. Nicaragua is often spoken of as if it was France or Japan. Of course, the Nicaraguan government made mistakes in terms of economic policy, and those mistakes significantly influenced the mood of the masses. But to think that in a country like Nicaragua nationalizations could have solved the social problems of the population is not to understand what underdevelopment means. If the Sandinistas carried out that economic policy it was fundamentally due to the limits of the international situation.

Giving Cuba as an example can be very good for public rallies, but the situation was totally different. The Cuban revolution coincided in time with moments of euphoria of the Soviet bureaucracy. Nikita Khrushchev was firmly convinced that the USSR would in a few years overtake the USA's work productivity level. Soviet aid to Cuba was out of all comparison with the aid given to Nicaragua. A policy of collectivization of the means of production inevitably requires significant international aid (if you do not want to immediately fall into the abyss).

We think that the fundamental weakness was the very limited existence of direct people's power. After the 1984 elections no form of direct representation of mass organizations developed again. The disappearance of the Council of State distanced the organized masses from the spheres where the fundamental decisions were taken. It was thought that the question was solved by recruiting most of the social leaders to the Sandinista Assembly (a sort of central committee of the FSLN). Obviously, this was not so.

The FSLN gradually developed, and in a way theorized, the importance of elections as we know them in the capitalist world. We did not explicitly point out the limits of this path. We should not make the opposite mistake today by criticizing the Sandinistas for having held this type of election. We express our admiration for the way in which the Sandinistas maintained - in a situation of counter-revolutionary war supported by US imperialism - the fundamental political freedoms and the democratic character of the process as a whole. However, the democratic mechanism chosen by the Sandinistas had all the limits of bourgeois parliamentarism: separation of executive and legislative power, which led to strengthening presidential power and the delegation of power for a significant period (6 years) without the the electors having any means of control. These two elements alone reflect the limits of parliamentary democracy. Thus we have to demand democracy at the base, that is to say people's democracy, which in Nicaragua could have adopted the following form: the municipalities would have been the power base, guaranteeing the existence of multi-partyism and freedom of elections, with also the free recall at any moment by the electors who would have permanent control over their representatives. It is obvious that this formula would have saved the Nicaraguan people from having a reactionary parliamentary majority elected for six years, when a great number of those who voted for UNO will be sorry or are already sorry they did so, without having the possibility of changing this majority in the institutional terrain. Only a general strike or the creation of a popular movement of such vigour that it would impose new elections could change this majority. The method we are talking about is by principle opposed to the idea that a government is legitimate once and for all. The limit of years that parliamentary democracy of bourgeois origin always imposes really reflects the limits of its democratic vision. The legitimacy of a government is won daily.

This raises a question to discuss in the Latin America revolutionary left (which was hard hit by this defeat). One of the key elements in answering those who say farewell to anti-imperialist revolutions is to make these criticisms of the FSLN. Building direct people's power is still a goal to be realized. Only this type of regime can lay the basis for resisting imperialist aggression, through the workers of the countryside and city taking their fate into their own hands.

– The Sandinista electoral defeat has of course given rise to a discussion on the type of revolution that it was, the type of state it created and what exists today. The Fourth International must take part in this discussion, but it should not make this its only interest. The discussions on what happened and what to do to win back the government are of such richness that we would be wrong if we limited our discussion to that subject. However, it is necessary to say several things about it.

The Nicaraguan revolution was, more than anything else, a national, popular, democratic and anti-imperialist revolution where the class struggle demands were not the central ones. This is not unimportant. This limited class struggle profile was not due, as some sectarians could think, to the weakness of the leadership or a policy of alliances with the leadership. The explanation is a little deeper. The Sandinista strategy for taking power was the only one possible in a country like Nicaragua. This strategy was determined by the type of society and the level of consciousness of the population. The Sandinistas achieved something that still inspires the Latin

American revolutionary left: this is to be the vanguard in the struggle to refound (or actually found) the Nation with an autonomous and sovereign project in relation to imperialism. The social content and driving forces of this project were democratic and popular. The particularity - and what marked it out from other Latin American and generally third-world revolutionary processes - was the socialist and revolutionary character of the FSLN. That is to say that the FSLN developed the beautiful idea of José Carlos Mariategui that the work of Latin American revolutionaries is to fuse the highest point of the social scientific thought of the developed world (Marxism) with Indo-American reality. This was the great achievement of the FSLN.

Daniel Ortega pointed out that the Sandinista revolution had been socialist, and this is absolutely true from the point of view of the path it took. The sole possibility for "refounding" or "actually founding" the Nicaraguan nation as autonomous and sovereign in relation to imperialism, was through a socialist perspective. That is to say the building of a socialist society in Nicaragua started on July 19, 1979.

In our analysis and our political vision of Latin America it is important to take into account the concept of the pueblo ("people") as not only the sum of sectors that form the driving force of the revolution, but also the ones are going in the direction building another society where exploitation will not exist. The people are those underneath, the poor of Latin America. The Sandinista revolution was a revolution of the poor, of those from underneath and the state that was formed answered to them.

To think that the Sandinista revolution did not qualitatively modify the type of state that existed under Somoza is not to understand anything about the revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial world. It is to live by and for schemas.

The Fourth International characterized the state born on July 19, 1979 as a "workers' state". This category - like all analytical categories including "bourgeois state - covers very different realities. For us the Sandinista state had a proletarian nature, which was determined by workers', peasants' and people's power. From this characterization we can draw two conclusions: 1) in the framework of this new state, the backbone of the advance to socialism was the Sandinista armed forces and the popular militia; 2) for the bourgeois counter-revolution to triumph it would have to dismantle this state and rebuild the bourgeois state destroyed since the fall of Somoza.

The fundamental thing is to understand that July 19 was a qualitative change in the state framework, that this change was determined by the type of revolution (popular democratic) and that socialism began to be built on the basis of this state.

This state has not been changed by the victory of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. What we are experiencing is a contradiction between the UNO government and the state apparatus of the revolution. This contradiction will tend to be resolved in the framework of an advance of the revolution or the triumph of the counter-revolution. In conclusion, the elections of February 1990 signify a serious political defeat for the FSLN. The revolutionary state has not been dismantled, but the coalition of counter-revolutionary forces which UNO represents has seized the government and other important positions within the state apparatus. Broad popular sectors have found themselves disorientated and demoralised. The FSLN has quickly reactivated itself, affirming its decision not to give up control of the army and to defend the social gains, relying on popular mobilisations. Negotiations with the Chamorro government have been begun with the aim of realising these aims.

One year after the elections, it is difficult to predict the outcome of this stage, in which the revolution is threatened. There have been big struggles and strikes against the policy of the government, which have been supported by the army and in which, despite the orders of the government, the army and police have not acted as forces of repression. This gives us some hope.

But at the same time some serious events have occurred which put the social and political gains of the revolution in danger: among other things, massive disarmament of the population, the privatisation of a large part of the public sector and the repression of officers in the Sandinista popular army (EPS) who had supplied the FMLN in El Salvador with weapons of defence against air attack. Such measures weaken the revolution. Solidarity and dialogue with the FSLN are more necessary than ever.

The new world situation creates further difficulties for the revolutionary left. Nonetheless, the political relationship of forces is still favourable. In the short-term, reformist currents cannot hegemonize the mass movements. The economic and social crisis itself limits the possibilities for these gradualist currents, all the more so that the Latin American bourgeoisie is now confronted with new competitors from Eastern Europe seeking imperialist credit and investment. The revolutionary left, with almost 30 years of experience and significant mass implantation, is confronting a new challenge: to make the revolution in an era when everything seems to be negotiable, even principles, (at least, that is what the Kremlin neo-bureaucrats try to make them believe).

V. Our orientation

It is obviously impossible to offer a single orientation for all our sections. There is no one single model for party building nor a single line for party building valid for all times and all places. It is now clear that the Nicaraguan revolution and the constitution of the Brazilian PT gave rise to attempts to repeat these two experiences. We are for building big mass revolutionary parties, but there are countless different variants possible for getting there.

What we can do is discuss our concrete experiences and draw out some lessons. In a schematic way we can talk of four different types of party building:

– The emergence of a mass workers' party like the PT made possible the growth of a revolutionary Marxist current within it that works in the most loyal possible way to build it. Their party is the PT and its (our) interest is to help the revolutionary socialist positions to win ground within the party.

The growth, the successes and the tests passed by the PT confront us - along with the other party activists - with the need to start thinking strategically. The electoral successes, and most of all the fact that a PT government does not sound a crazy idea for big sections of the population, pose a series of difficult problems.

If the PT does not start a debate quite soon on how to implement a policy of breaking with capitalism, there is a risk that the most conservative, social-democratic-type currents will attempt to build a party that "finds" its place in Brazilian society by winning islands of power at parliamentary or municipal level. But with our weight within the PT we can have a decisive role alongside other sectors in consolidating a revolutionary vision.

– The Mexican PRT has basically developed as an independent revolutionary party with mass influence. Before the emergence of neo-Cardenism, we were close to obtaining the convergence of the bulk of the revolutionary left around the PRT. It had achieved such a level of hegemony that the revolutionary left turned around its initiatives. The integration of the left into neo-Cardenism, into the PRD, has been a very significant step backwards in the process of forming a revolutionary alternative.

The PRT is now the only nationally present socialist organization. In practice this poses, at least in the near future, a party-building perspective that depends on building the party itself. However, it will be crucially important to take a series of initiatives towards the PRD, which, although bourgeois nationalist, has a very important left base. We must establish a privileged alliance with it, aiming to draw out the radicalized cadres, essentially in the course of the mass struggle.

To achieve a growing-over of the social organizations, most initiatives should be on the basis of seeking unity. At the same time, there should be a thoroughgoing ideological debate with the neo-Cardenists, especially those who identify with workers' struggle. The PRT is seen as the second option by many Cardenist sympathizers. If, as we expect, the PRD gets into difficulty because of the contradiction between the radicalization of its supporters and its electoralist policy, it will again become possible to promote a policy of regroupment.

– Entering revolutionary organizations already existing or in formation. This is the path followed by our Colombian section. Our comrades went into A Luchar on the basis of political agreement, basically around the situation in Colombia. In many ways, A Luchar summarizes the recomposition process of the Colombian revolutionary vanguard, with all its strengths and weaknesses. It includes several leaders of the CUT, the peasant movement and other mass organizations.

A Luchar lacks clarity on its own character: mass front of a politico-military organization or a revolutionary party with mass influence? A clear answer to this question would be a qualitative step forward.

There is also the problem of the current situation in Colombia. The dirty war launched by the government significantly limits the space for political activity. For the bourgeoisie, the unstable situation obliges them to wipe out the communists. The people's movement has not succeeded in creating an organization capable of successfully stopping the repressive activity of the bourgeoisie and the government. Our comrades can play a central role in the democratic struggle, which does not just mean elections.

– Participation in a revolutionary political front while maintaining an independent existence. At this level, the experience of our Uruguayan comrades in forming the MPP through the convergence of several currents - the MLN-Tupamaros, the PVP, the MRO and good section of independent individuals - is very important.

The MPP emerged from the crisis of the Frente Amplio, following its policy of respecting the transition as conceived by the military and the bourgeoisie, that is the installation of a democracy under military guidance. This crisis culminated in the withdrawal of the PGP and Christian Democracy because of their electoral expectations. The other factor was the PCU, which was eager to play the role of championing negotiations with the traditional parties as the "only possibility for taking Uruguay out of its deep crisis". So it had to demobilize the masses, thus becoming the main obstacle to the movement. The MPP is emerging as a grouping of the sectors still in struggle, which promoted the referendum, and made progress in forming local committees, becoming in practice the promoters of big mass actions.

The MPP faces three important challenges: elaborating an overall alternative to the retrograde conservative project; being a factor in the recomposition of the Frente Amplio on a totally different basis; and becoming a revolutionary reference point for the masses.

Of course, the MPP still confronts countless problems, particularly a hegemonist vision that may make it appear more of a manoeuvre to create a certain relationship of forces than a useful instrument for revolution. Our proposals and alternatives must be posed openly and we must continue building the PST in the framework of the MPP as one of the guarantees of its evolution.

There have been advances in the diverse forms of building a revolutionary option. Fourth International forces in Latin America, although small, are not insignificant. One of our central objectives since the first meeting of the Latin Americans PBs has been achieved: we are an integral part of the revolutionary vanguard and everything seems to indicate that, unlike in the past, we are starting to accumulate experience of building revolutionary parties. Propagandist factionalism and sectarianism are being banished from

our political tradition. We do not deny that our forces are still very weak or that we are virtually absent in key countries for the Latin American revolution. But today, without wanting to fall into sterile triumphalism, our organizations have more confidence and more possibilities to play a significant role in the evolution of political events. Unlike in the past, we do not want to sell models or political projects that create false expectations.

In Brazil there is a great opportunity, but the challenges are immense and the answers still few. In Mexico, our party has passed a significant test and has many cadres with important political experience but, at least on the ideological front, it is going against the stream of the usual expression of the mass vanguard today. In Uruguay, our party, although small, was not only able to exist under the dictatorship but has also played a fundamental role in the reorganization of the vanguard, even though the relationship of forces among revolutionaries is still very unfavourable. In Colombia our nuclei of comrades - saved from the liberal shipwreck of the PSR - have a significant political authority and a high level of political education and are taking part in the beginnings of the reorganization of the revolutionary vanguard, which has the big disadvantage of taking place in a very bad social situation. In Chile, Argentina, Venezuela we also have small groups of comrades facing very difficult situations. Finally, in Ecuador we have two organizations with real possibilities of playing a role within the vanguard, but they have to step up their efforts to find a common framework for political action which does not seem likely in the short term.

Our organizations have a place in the Latin American revolutionary vanguard. We are part of it; we share many of its vices but also many of its virtues. And we are proud of this. We do not have any interest in a separate existence simply to reaffirm a certain self-proclamatory vision. Where the process of reorganization of the revolutionary vanguard makes it possible to create revolutionary parties, this should be the priority place for our activity and growth. The Fourth International was created for the revolution and everything should be subordinate to this objective.

Latin America: Dynamics of mass movements and feminist currents

1 January 1996

1. The Latin American peoples are subjected to imperialist domination, with the corresponding poverty and distorted development of our societies. But the relationship with imperialism is changing, continually creating more social, economic and political contradictions leading to the emergence of new movements and a rise in the consciousness and strength of the masses - among them women - about their capacity to change things.

The last 30 years have seen deep and sudden changes in our countries, changes that have transformed the face of the sub-continent and the life of its peoples, in particular those of women:

- massive migration to the cities has resulted from the structural crisis in agriculture and the uneven industrial development;

- semi-proletarian masses have emerged in the big cities as another group of the dispossessed;

- the model of capitalist accumulation based on import substitution has changed to that of secondary export and modernization;

- the debt crisis;

- the erosion of the populist state;

- imperialism has implemented a strategy of low-intensity conflict - controlled transition from military dictatorships to “democratic” civilian governments combined with repression;

- later, the invasion of Grenada and panama and the growing use of US military bases directly on Latin American territory, often with the excuse of the “war against drugs”.

All of this has meant growing impoverishment, increasing violence and the exacerbation of social differences and contradictions.

At the same time, the triumph of two revolutions, in Cuba and Nicaragua, despite the problems they are experiencing, represent a possibility for change in the eyes of the masses in the sub-continent.

It is in this context, that of the 1980s, that Latin American women have entered onto the political scene of the sub-continent.

I. The crisis, the state, the church and women’s oppression

2. In the context of the economic crisis the responsibility for family spending and domestic work, socially assigned to women, has increasingly become more difficult. Hyper-inflation means housewives in the cities having to go from market to market searching for the lowest prices, eating less so that their children can have a little more and facing the anguish of simply not having anything to give their family at mealtimes. In the countryside, domestic work is increased by the work involved in caring for animals and preparing products to sell.

The lack of basic public services in the Latin American countryside means that domestic labour has to be carried out in brutal conditions. It means covering huge distances to find water or wood, and chronic and endemic suffering from curable diseases, especially for children. In the poor urban neighbourhoods women carry out their domestic work very often without water or electricity, in insalubrious conditions, without enough schools for their children, without medical facilities. Women's workload is multiplied by these conditions.

3. The growing pauperization of the masses has forced women to seek an income so that the family can survive.

In the majority of Latin American countries, from 1950-1980 the percentage of women in the workforce went up. In addition, in the majority of cases where we have data, between 1975 and 1984 women's participation in the workforce increased in relation to the total active population.

4. The possibilities of peasant women finding paid employment have decreased, forcing women to become unwaged tenant farmers, day-workers or tenants at the same time as taking on the tasks in the home.

5. In some cases, for example Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay, women have gone into industry in significant numbers. But, even in these cases, women generally go into all-female departments where they suffer discrimination in work conditions, wages and promotion opportunities, while at the same time continuing to do "women's work" in the home (double work day).

With the sole exception of Brazil, women who enter the workforce swell the ranks of the active population mainly in the service and informal sectors. For most of them this means more work, but not a proletarianization in the exact sense of the word. These changes are very evident in many large cities, where in recent years the numbers of itinerant salespeople, beggars and prostitutes have increased. With a dearth of stable salaried jobs, women have gone into the streets to earn their living any way they can.

Women and the state

6. With the economic and political crisis, the Latin American bourgeoisies and their governments are continually trying to create new bases of consensus to maintain their domination over society. Insofar as women have increasingly entered public life over the last few years, although the majority still find themselves locked away in the home, the bourgeois governments try to legitimize themselves in women's eyes, negotiating with the organized women's movements and presenting themselves as champions of women's democratic and civil rights. This has meant an ideological offensive from many governments and bourgeois forces towards women in general, demonstrated by their electoral discourse and in the appointment of women to state posts.

7. In some countries, like Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Uruguay, the ruling bourgeois parties have encouraged the creation of institutions and organisms whose objective is to develop programmes specifically directed at women as the oppressed sex. The majority are devoted to research, propaganda and proposing legal reforms, without having any executive powers as such.

8. Most countries adhere to the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. This has been followed by the express recognition at a constitutional level of equal civic rights for men and women.

In addition, many governments have introduced legal changes on their own initiative concerning to formal equality and social rights, such as divorce.

The modernizing offensive of many states is reflected in the labour field, where they evoke "egalitarianism" with the aim of making it easier to exploit women even more, and thus helping to legitimize their economic policies.

9. It is at the level of their economic programmes that governmental policies are increasingly affecting women's lives.

In many countries the state has implemented programmes which tend to legitimate and institutionalize the informal labour market: training and loans so that women can earn additional income without leaving the home. This disguises unemployment, saves the bosses paying workers and makes it more difficult for workers to organize.

Some governments have introduced temporary employment programmes originally directed at men. But it has been women who have filled them, without any job security and receiving "emergency" wages.

Alongside their modernization programmes, some governments have set up plans "to combat extreme poverty" using voluntary female labour power to carry out public works.

10. In many countries, the state has carried out an aggressive population-control policy, using the indiscriminate distribution of contraception and forced sterilization. This policy is often directly tied to its dealings with international financing agencies and requests for foreign credit. The lack of left alternatives defending women's right to decide on having children makes it that muich easier to apply this policy whose goal is to lower the birthrate and convince the population that its poverty is because "we are too many".

11. Some governments have established specialized police centres for dealing with battered and raped women. The aim is not only to try and put over the image that they are champions of women's well-being, but also -and especially - to broaden and legitimize their repressive apparatus.

The church

12. The weight of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America is enormous - politically, socially and culturally. But during the last 20 years the church in Latin America has been thrown into crisis. This is shown by the existence of various currents within it, including that aligned with the Vatican and its theological and political orientation,

and the current known as liberation theology, with its many tendencies.

The hierarchy linked to the Vatican in general supports measures tending to maintain the current ruling system, and thus has a very conservative position in relation to women - for example opposing legal changes on divorce, contraception and abortion. In various ways it promotes a policy of strengthening the existing family system and the submissive role of women within it.

The current identified with liberation theology is in general linked to the process of self-organization of the poor masses. As a general rule, a very high proportion of the members of the Church base communities and bible study groups are women. Because of this some priests are more sensitive to the specific oppression they suffer and the need to take political action around it. But their political vision is limited by the contradiction between their adherence to a traditional moral view from which they do not distance themselves and women's concrete and changing needs, especially concerning sexuality, motherhood and fertility control.There have been few theological contributions from women's point of view and its relation to the overall road to liberation envisaged by this current.

In the last few years there has also been an increase in the activity of different protestant groups in Latin America. There are liberation theology currents among them which have had an important femionist theoretical production, particularly in academic spheres. However, most of them are evangelical sects characterized by an extremely conservative social and political outlook, which is particularly reactionary in relation to women.

The family

13. All these changes in society have had profound effects on family life for the whole of the Latin American masses. There are strong pressures towards the disintegration of the family, with no material possibility of adopting the bourgeois family model in practice.

In the countryside, millions of families still make up productive units, generally with a rigid distribution of roles according to sex, placing women on the lowest rungs of the power hierarchy when it comes to decision-making, both formally and in practice. But women are nevertheless part of the productive community, although this is relatively isolated from the rest of the world.

At the same time, 26 million indigenous Americans, mainly concentrated in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala and Mexico, maintain their own customs, traditions and ways of communally taking responsibility for productive work to different degrees. The pressures on these nationalities to abandon their culture are enormous, but they are resisting "Latinization".

However, the structural crisis of agriculture and a relative capitalization of the countryside exercise a strong pressure towards the disintegration of the peasant family as a self-sufficient unit of production, without this meaning its transformation simply into a unit of consumption.

With the concentration of the population in the Latin American cities and the strengthening of capitalist relations of production, within the big and small bourgeoisie and sections of the industrial proletariat a bourgeois family has formed. However the big majority of the emigrados do not form part of the working class properly speaking: quite simply, underdeveloped capitalism has no other use for its labour force than as a gigantic reserve army of labour.

But even in those families where one or more members manages to get a paid job (as a manual or white-collar worker), it is rare that the wage is enough for each worker to maintain their own nuclear family, even though they are obliged to face the labour market as individuals.

In other cases the pressures are such that the family simply disperses, giving rise to the mass phenomenon of abandoned children. In addition, women are increasingly becoming heads of household.

Alongside this, the crisis generates tensions at a social level, leading not only to an increase in the number of assaults and rapes but also to more and more violence within the family.

II. The dynamic of the Latin American women's movement today

14. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the first organizations of women as such appeared on the basis of an initial identification between women in the same immediate community who shared immediate problems and common concerns. This led to traditions of:

- women organizing in support of workers' struggles since the last century.

- women's struggles for the right to work, particularly in "women's" industries which have produced thousands of experienced cadres for the workers' movement in general.

- local mothers' clubs to deal with specific community problems.

There is also a certain tradition of women organizing around their demands as a sex. Bourgeois women organized from the end of the last century around the right to education, access to the professions and, in some cases, around the right to vote. But in the framework of the general peaks of the class struggle there were mass women's organizations based in the working class which fought for demands like the vote, land, work and education for women in the popular layers.

15. In the 1970s and 1980s many feminist groups emerged of the type also emerging in Europe, the USA and Canada, and influenced by them. Although in Brazil there was the emergence of a mass feminist movement for a short period at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, in Latin America this process was not at all general and did not generate the building of an organically

constituted movement with a mass character

The majority of these groups were characterized by ideological and theoretical discussion, and concentrated their activity principally in consciousness-raising and propaganda, introducing for the first time for many years the "woman question" into intellectual and left circles and society as a whole.

However, even though in some cases the work of the feminist and consciousness-raising groups was able to stimulate a mass response, it did not result in building general structures with a more permanent character among different layers of women active at the time, which could have maintained the continuity of a specific movement.The activities of feminist groups were also concentrated in the big cities or even, in some countries, limited to the capital cities alone.

The dedication to discussing and propagandizing around "themes" related to women's oppression - housework, violence, sexuality, abortion - did touch on vital issues for all women. But because they had a fundamentally propagandist vision and of building the movement by the multiplication of small groups this made it difficult to establish a platform that could unite the groups, or that was attractive and accessible to the majority of women.

The vast majority of women were, and are, permanently organized around the question of the survival of themselves and their families and around the question of democracy, their situation determined by the semi-colonial character of our countries and the resulting poverty. In addition, the middle layers have not suffered from contradictions in a sufficiently massive way to provoke a louder response in this sector, which is relatively big.

This situation led to a crisis of political perspective for the "autonomous groups", and in many cases to their disappearance or absorption in governmental projects.

16. But some groups and many individual women began to create other types of instruments to express their feminist concerns:

a) Aid and/or educational institutions, mainly financed by international agencies. Their central activities vary a lot. They do not always explicitly define themselves as feminist, but they have an important weight in feminist currents through their work, made easier by the funding they receive.

b) Non-funded projects of support/relations to women (centres providing various services, social activities, meetings, film clubs, local groups, or work with peasant or indigenous women, for example).

c) Groups publishing various journals.

d) Christian women's groups.

e) Trade-union commissions or groupings.

f) Women organized inside left political parties.

All these expressions of feminism have prospered in the 1980s insofar as their work has been guided by an attempt to relate to Latin American reality today and women's day-to-day lives.

17. The daily life and world outlook of millions of Latin American women have been transformed. They have been forced to emerge from the shadow of the home and throw themselves into public life, trying to sustain their families via activities they would never previously have contemplated.

A whole generation of young women has been raised in conditions of crisis, in general by mothers who have lived through these changes. For this reason, their frame of reference in practice is not the model of a woman whose life is confined to the four walls of the home.

At the same time, the extension of public education and the penetration of the means of mass communication into the countryside and the city in recent years has meant that millions of women's horizons have been broadened- although sometimes in a distorted way.

18. With their growing participation in the labour market, millions of women have been forced to try to find a collective solution to deteriorating living standards and democratic rights - given the impossibility of finding individual solutions. Consequently, they are increasingly involved in political and social movements in general, which can involve millions of women, often giving them their first experience of struggle.

At present, the majority of women are organized in relation to their social situation, around their living and working conditions (family survival, conditions of domestic and paid work), and around the most brutal political problem, the struggle against repression, for human rights and democracy.

In the last 15 years, new movements have emerged whose base of support and activists are almost exclusively women: the urban struggle and the fight for freedom for political prisoners and the disappeared.

The popular and civic urban movements fight for solutions to the problems of housing, services and high prices suffered by millions of people who live in extremely precarious conditions. Women, being responsible for all aspects of family care and mostly not having paid jobs - with its corresponding absence from the home - are both the most motivated and the most available to participate in this type of movement, which is centred in the neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, women are the rank-and-file driving force for the committees of relatives of political prisoners' and the disappeared, mainly from identification with their role as mother and wife and their responsibility for freeing their children, husbands and brothers from the clutches of repression.

The development of trade-union and peasant struggles has also involved many women. In sectors where there is an almost exclusive concentration of working women, thousands have taken to the streets for the first time.

Peasant and indigenous women, on

the other hand, often organize as women to take up problems linked to the need for better conditions for carrying out domestic work and for the well-being of their families, such as fighting for their own rights to land and loans, and the need to have their own income to increase family revenue.

19. This entry into public life in distinct forms and at different levels creates a contradictory dynamic at the level of women's consciousness: the majority go into public life as wives and mothers; a minority, but a politically significant minority, enter as young women workers.

Leaving their homes and neighbourhoods, they come up against the government, the employers, the trade-union bureaucracy, the para-military groups and the local bosses in the countryside and the city. In sum, they do exactly what prevailing values say a woman should not do.

The central contradiction which millions of Latin American women confront is the need to fulfil the traditional role of women in the family, in the home, and in domestic work in its fullest sense, and the impossibility of so doing given general living conditions without breaking with this tradition. The existence of this contradiction is the objective basis for the perspective of building a mass women's liberation movement in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Conditions are being created at a mass level which open up the possibilities for an increase in women's consciousness of their oppression as women. When they take to the streets, motivated by both necessity and solidarity, this brings them up against obstacles for realizing their objectives. If they realize them, if they succeed, they have to change their behaviour, their conception of themselves, their conditions of struggle. To establish new conditions of solidarity, and thus improve the conditions of struggle, they have to confront their own oppression as a sex. There will be no positive solution to this contradiction without breaking with the social, political and personal conditions that create and maintain the traditional model of women - as mother, wife and housewife - on the basis of the political struggle of the masses, of which women are in the front ranks and the leadership.

This contradiction is sharpened by:

- Today the mass of women have access to the means of mass communication and, despite its deficiencies, millions of women also have access to formal education. By both these means, they are aware of the enormous possibilities offered by today's world for individual development at the same time as the models which are presented for women - both traditional and "modern". This new knowledge, and the models themselves, are in open conflict with the reality of their lives.

- For the first time; millions of women have access to contaception, which makes it possible to envisage controlling their own bodies, and to make choices concerning maternity and sexuality no longer determined by procreation, despite all the risks implicit given that they have this access because of a policy of controlling births that is dangerous in its motivation, and undemocratic in its application.

- The establishment of governmental programmes on sexist violence, at the same time as being a way of broadening and even legitimizing the repressive apparatus of the state, also legitimize the social character of sexist violence, the testimonies exposing the brutality and high number of cases which exist.

- Bourgeois propaganda around women's equality - albeit to back up a birth-control policy, to win votes, to legitimize a regime in the eyes of the international community - introduce at a mass level as never before, and in some cases for the first time, the idea that women and men have equal rights before the law and in society. At the same time, within the independent mass organizations which struggle against state policy and the bourgeoisie, and particularly those raising the banner of the struggle for real democracy, women encounter discrimination and marginalization in most cases both from the rank-and-file and from the leaderships.

20. But recognizing these contradictions and overcoming them through a conscious struggle for liberation is not automatic. It depends on many factors in the social struggle, on the degree of organization among women and of the class struggle in general: the general relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the workers; the capacity of the bourgeoisie and its state to propose demobilizing and self-legitimizing policies to women; the development, strength and relations of the revolutionary and reformist organizations with the women's movements that emerge and their positions on the question of women. All these factors influence the development of a sector of the women's movement capable of linking up in practice the project of building a mass movement with a feminist character and the more general starting points of radicalization and mobilization of women. However the existence of this contradiction is the objective basis for the advances of the last few years towards building a political women's liberation movement in our continent.

21. In general, the central dynamic of the situation today in Latin America points to this contradiction being resolved favourably. Women are participating as never before in political and social struggles; they are organizing increasingly as women by social sector; there exists a growing and renewing feminist fringe or pole of the women's movement; and non-bourgeois political organizations are increasingly under pressure to confront their traditional anti-women's liberation positions. Taking into account the advances and setbacks in each country in terms of its specific situation, the general dynamic is towards the formation of mass women's movements with the emergence of a large number of groups of different types which , as part of their platform of struggle and basis of unity, increasingly tend to raise gender demands in combination with demands relating to survival and democracy.

22. In the course of the struggle for their immediate demands, the mass of women continually confront obstacles flowing from their specific oppression:

they are restricted by "not having permission" to go out of their houses to activities, having nowhere to leave their children, feeling guilty for "abandoning" them, being insulted by men in meetings of the movement; their organizations are weakened by the competition among women and the lack of self-confidence and training of their members.All these obstacles are worse inside mixed organzaitions of women and men. Also they are even more despised and humiliated by the authorities than men, and they raped by the police and military. These obstacles have to be overcome in order to go forward. Sometimes they constitute such an insuperable obstacle that thre is a regression in the struggle. But at other times they lead to attempts to propose practical solutions in the form of collective demands.

In these cases the natural leaders of many women's movements, and often the organized women's groups themselves, search for elements which explain the existence and the dynamic of the obstacles in order to be able to overcome them. Moving closer to more feminist sectors in general gives them the possibility of understanding and building the necessary instruments of struggle and organization to confront their contradictions as women. At the same time, many feminist groups have been participating in the popular organizations. On the other hand, in the last ten years a significant number of feminist activists have emerged within the political parties who have succeeded in maintaining a much more organic presence in the women's movement, over and above their struggle to change the mentalities of these parties on gender oppression.

All this has begun to generate a social and political recomposition of the feminist pole in the women's movement. Undoubtedly many active women still mistrust feminism. But many others are beginning to identify with it as such, identifying with feminist ideas and recognizing their usefulness for understanding and changing their reality. On the other hand, the traditional feminist sectors can no longer deny the "feminist legitimacy" of women who combine their activity in the women's movement with party activity, as they tended to do in the past.

Empirical proof of this recomposition can be seen in the increasing attendance by women from the popular sectors in the Encuentros Feministas Latinoamericanas y de Caribe (Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meetings) from 1981 to 1990. It has been this combined dynamic of contradictions in women's struggles in the popular sectors for class demands and the interaction with feminist layers of the women's movement - including more and more who are primarily mobilized around class demands or as party militants - which has made it possible in many sectors to put forward gender demands in the programmes of struggle and as the basis for the mass mobilizations of women in the last few years.

23. The forms of coordination between the different sectors of the women's movement vary a lot in their objectives, scope and duration.

Sometimes permanent coordinations exist, fundamentally to provide a space for political discussion, contact and mutual support rather than around actions or campaigns, although these can result from the same coordinations.

Other forms of coordination, which at times combine clearly feminist forces with both political parties and the broader women's movement, have emerged in the context of particular national political situations.

A series of working networks have also been formed both at national and sub-continental level around the campaigns or ongoing activities of their members. In many countries, contacts between feminist groups have been limited to local, regional or national conferences, sometimes resulting in information networks between groups being established without the existence of any common political platform.

The majority of women who are involved in permanent coordinations tend to be so on the basis of their social situation.

Although at the beginning of the 1980s the initiative for events around March 8 or November 25 or other general activities was taken by layers linked to the small feminist groups, the social composition of these these activities and the initiatives for them are much more frequently start from women linked to the popular and trade-union sectors of the movement.

On the level of the sub-continent, there have been various contacts and opportunities for discussion, basically in the Encuentros of Latin American and Caribbean feminists and the three conferences of the Continental Women's Front Against Intervention. There has also been a multiplication of international meetings and events which play the same role. It is in this type of event aht the Cubans and Nicragauans have had growing contact with the Latin American feminist pole.

24. The general dynamic of women's lives today is: a) that more women than ever before are entering social and political struggle; and b), that they find themselves objectively in contradiction with their oppression. But in making the big jump from transforming these conditions into a political movement of women for their liberation, there are a series of political problems that have to be analyzed and overcome:

a) The diverse demands of women in struggle

Women's initial demands usually have a specific local focus, which makes it difficult to unify their struggles. This lack of unity and, for the same reason, contact with many more women, not only creates difficulties for winning the immediate struggle but impedes their thinking about their oppression as a social question.

However, although there are immediate demands that unite the women of a whole sector, this does not mean that a general political movement takes shape which sees itself as a women's movement. Obviously, the unity of women organized as such, even by sector, has a big multiplying effect in other sectors. But, insofar as the movement is not politically extended to unify

women from different sectors, there is a big danger that even stronger sectors can see their gains pushed back.

Finally, where the different popular organizations advance gender demands these are also very different and difficult to unite in struggle. And it is in struggle and through progress around their concrete rights that women will appreciate the usefulness of organizing for their demands as a gender.

b) Clientelism and self-helpism: two dangers in building the movement

Women, particularly in the neighbourhoods and peasant communities of Latin America, have two ways of surviving: by making demands on external agencies or trying to find a solution through their own resources.

Placing demands on the state in relation to social and political problems has the enormous advantage of putting the responsibility where it should be, on society as a whole and its institutions, and more easily gives mass action a political character. Successful struggles and mobilizations advances both their overall consciousness and their strength and confidence in themselves.

Practice has taught us, however, that reliance on the state is not without its dangers. On the one hand there could be a clientelist dynamic and, on the other, in partially winning certain demands women can become absorbed into administrative tasks of providing services.

The other form of self-organization for assuring survival, that of self-solution/self-administration, has the advantage that it is a process of cooperative self-organization which presents immediate solutions to urgent problems and gives greater value to domestic labour, creating the seeds for its socialization.

But it also has two real dangers: the legitimization of the established role of women as those responsible for domestic tasks and family well-being, and apolitical self-helpism.

c) The difficulties for the political participation of women workers

It is clear that there is no automatic correlation between the mass entry of women into the labour market and their involvement in political and/or trade-union struggle as workers:

– They basically work in "feminine" industries and sectors, such as services and in the informal sector in general. As in the rest of the world, their jobs are often similar to the work they do in the home, or require great meticulousness.

– The informal sector usually means working in isolation or in small workshops, where there is very often a paternalist relationship with the employer or boss.

– Even in those cases where women have entered big industry, the majority have to put up with a double workday as well as having other restrictions in the time they can allocate for trade-union or political participation.

– The working woman continues to see herself primarily as a mother and/or wife and not a worker, even when she is the family's only breadwinner.

– Fellow workers often apply pressure to prevent her participating actively in trade-union life; and the trade-union leaderships are not only unconcerned by women's specific conditions, but frequently openly block women's participation.

– Most women who become trade-union activists are unmarried or childless. Because of this, they usually identify less with the majority of women workers.

Aside from these difficulties, in many places little attention is given by revolutionary organizations to women's trade-union work.

For all these reasons, the organization of working women has not increased at the same tempo as their incorporation into the labour market.

d) The state's attempts to coopt

In the case of countries where the state has a relatively aggressive policy towards women, the need to respond with alternative political proposals that strengthen the mass movement is obvious. Without presenting a political alternative to state initiatives it will be increasingly difficult to maintain class independence, because the state will appear to be more useful than the movement in the eyes of the masses.

e) The predominance of sexism in the leaderships of the mass movement

Insofar as the initial rise in consciousness of most women comes through the struggles of the more general movements, usually led by male leaderships, the machismo of these latter is a big obstacle to their advance. This is particularly important in the absence of a specifically women's political movement which raises at a national, unified level the gender demands that women in various sectors are beginning to put forward today. In its turn, the leaderships' sexism is an obstacle to building this movement.

25. Over the last few years, the non-bourgeois mass leaderships have changed their approach to women's situation and their role in society and in struggles.

In many countries the crisis of the Communist parties includes questioning the old Stalinist conception of the women's movement as an "auxiliary" to the mass movement in general.

At the same time, revolutionary organizations are discussing revolutionary strategy, a discussion in which the role of women and the struggle against gender oppression is also raised, at least potentially. However, in almost all cases these leaderships reject this point as part of the strategic discussion and strongly resist any serious consideration of the subject.

However, within all types of left political parties there are feminist nuclei and currents emerging which are putting forward different alternatives around the need for women to fight for gender demands. They influence the orientation of their parties, not only in line with their

political capacity, but also in function of the more or less democratic traditions of discussion, the social insertion of the party and its overall political capacity to recognize and confront the real problems of women in struggle.

26. The discussions within the women's movement and its feminist pole have evolved positively, passing from the initial examination and affirmation of basic points on oppression to defining the routes for building mass women's movements around their specific demands.

Elements of broader debates on politics and society in general influence this discussion. Thus, existing political tendencies exert a certain pressure on the discussion on feminism:

– Modernizing bourgeois ideology, which legitimizes competence as a social norm and reduces democracy to the relationship between the citizen and the state, divorcing it from social classes and problems.

– Social-democratic positions, today accompanied by a poltiical offensive throughout the sub-continent, which support gradualist and institutionalist tactics.

– Imperialist propaganda which identifies market mechanisms with democracy on the one hand, and socialism with dictatorship on the other.

– Perestroika and the crisis in Eastern European countries, which as well as reaffirming the false distinction market/democracy vs. socialism/dictatorship, has brought pressure to bear on revolutionaries, thus weakening the influence of a perspective of revolutionary rupture as a solution to the problems of the Latin American masses.

Given these pressures, some feminists have been incorporated into bourgeois projects, particularly with the controlled transitions to democracy that have taken place in several countries. Given the weakness of feminism and the anti-feminist positions of the majority of the socialist and left oppositions, they have placed their confidence and/or decided to work in bourgeois women's projects in order to "really change women's situation" in relation to the regime. Among many of them positions predominate based on the necessity and possibility of "democratizing the state", and creating "space for women" within it. Others identify with ideas around the "feminine essence" as something morally superior to the "masculine essence", which is one way of denying the need to build an autonomous mass women's movement.

However, the great majority of feminists are independent of the bourgeoisie and the state, and consider themselves as being in some way on the left, with a broad range of positions that identify with the elimination of capitalism and a socialist perspective. In this sector, which in general takes the broad women's movement as its point of reference for the struggle against gender oppression, the debate is particularly diffuse, thus making it difficult to characterize the currents within it.

Under discussion, among other things, are:

– The relation between gender oppression and class exploitation/oppression.

– The struggle for democracy and feminist demands.

– What sort of power do women want?

– Women as political and social subjects.

– The validity or not of the concept of the vanguard in a strategy for change.

III. Our orientation

27. Confronted with any form of oppression, the only solution is the self-organization of the oppressed to fight it. The case of women is no different. It is the independent self-organization of women themselves that can impose reforms to the law and to current government economic policy, and changes in the social and political organizations of the masses, to improve their immediate situation and encourage and create better conditions for their continued struggle. On the basis of self-organization, as the fundamental foundation of their liberation movement, they can reach the numerical strength and political development necessary for having a favourable influence on future events, both today and after the revolution.

It is only through a process of self-organization that women can succeed in transforming themselves, collectively and individually, in public and private, in such a way that the traditional role filled by women can be replaced with a new concept and a new reality of what is woman, creating this through the struggle itself.

28. A thoroughgoing, consistent feminist struggle is not simply to achieve formal equality between women and men, but to completely revolutionize relations between them, eliminating the historico-social construction of gender. This change cannot be fully realized in the framework of class society, particularly in the present Latin American context of exploitation and oppression in countries that are dominated by imperialism. In this sense, it is in all women's interest to struggle for the overthrow of the oppressive patriarchal capitalist system and for building a socialist, democratic and pluralist society. Only such a revolution and a new society can lay the bases for completely eliminating the oppression currently experienced by women.

However, women's oppression is not automatically eliminated either with the anti-capitalist revolution or in post-capitalist society. For women to be able to transform their own lives, to be revolutionary subjects in the taking of power and the overthrow of the present bourgeois regimes, and to have the strength to favourably influence the events in a post-revolutionary society, it is necessary now that they build a political movement based on their demands as a gender.

The formation of this movement will transform them into a political subject,

which fights for its own interests; women's objective historical interest in eliminating patriarchal class society laying the basis for their transformation into a revolutionary subject. This transformation could in practice go along with the political development of the movement itself and its vanguard.

29. To build this movement today, we have to start from the conditions, the forms of organization and the demands that women feel to be theirs, whether they are gender demands or not. Self-organization of women by social sector around their most pressing demands is an essential element in strengthening women socially, collectively and thus individually, creating greater possibilities for the development of consciousness of gender oppression, even though this is not automatic.

Undoubtedly, women's struggle for their own demands will be closely linked to the struggles of all working people, even with the rise of their own political movement. In building this movement general class demands will combine with gender demands as the basis of unity. Nevertheless, this dynamic will certainly include ups and downs in the promotion of specifically feminist demands.

A better level of organization of the popular movement will encourage greater recognition of women's struggle for their own demands. This is because a better level of coordination and unity not only means more chance of winning but also a higher level of politicization, the establishment of a more global basis for unity and an understanding of the need to organize in an ongoing way, not just for tackling one problem but a whole series of problems.

In practical terms, it also creates the possibility for a better division of labour within organizations of struggle and for giving more attention to seriously analyzing their reality.

The coming together of forces whose objective is extending women's consciousness of their specific oppression is more effective in reaching larger numbers of women. But there is no mechanical relationship between the general popular movement and women's advance. Women have to have their own political expression. And they will only succeed if there is a conscious effort in every movement to promote the growing discovery and politicization of gender oppression, which we can call the feminization of the demands, organization and political dynamic of the women's movement.

30. In the very process of building the movement, different problems are raised:

a) Given the diversity of demands, which reflect not only different needs but also different levels of consciousness, we must take every opportunity to bring together struggles and establish a system of demands that can move towards the formation of an increasingly clearly defined political movement.

b) Given the dangers of clientelism and self-helpism, we have to reinforce the internal democracy of both the mass organizations in general and the political space and organizations for women, as well as ensuring democratic functioning in the women's movement as a whole. On the other hand, the political nature of women's demands should be emphasized - they cannot be met by charity - along with the absolute necessity of keeping the movement independent from the bourgeoisie and the state.

c) Despite the difficulties faced by women workers in terms of their political and trade-union participation, this should not lead to the conclusion that their involvement in the women's movement is not central. The numbers of women who have gone into the labour market has meant that, despite all the obstacles to their participation, more women are active in trade unions than ever before. And when they enter into a collective process of consciousness raising and struggle around their oppression as women as well as workers, they advance politically more rapidly and consistently than other sectors because of their living and working conditions and their numerical concentration - in sum, their social situation.

d) Given the attempts of the state to coopt the women's movement, particularly its feminist pole, in addition to strongly maintaining its autonomy for historical reasons there must also be political perspectives for the type of changes considered necessary from now on at governmental level. We should promote the following criteria for these within the movement. Distinguishing between two things: services that the state is obliged to provide with the greatest control on the part of the users; and a position of accepting or promoting the state organizing women (the example of the Women Today programme in Argentina). In the case of legislative proposals, it is more feasible to maintain the independence of the women's movement in proposing or supporting this or that draft law. But at the level of the executive (ministries for health, justice, social or family welfare), the form of the relationship between the movement and particular state programmes is more complicated. If we demand a programme of maternity healthcare, for example, and win it, we cannot simply leave the state to determine its form, content and application. But neither can the movement take full responsibility for it. The criterion that we can adopt is proposals for and vigilance over such programmes, but without accepting direct responsibility for their functioning.

In the case where the left controls municipalities, the objective of its programmes should be to increase the possibilities for self-organization of the movement, as was done with the Glass of Milk programmes in many municipalities in Peru. The simple implementation of the programme, without women's self-organization, will neither guarantee its future nor strengthen the women's movement or the long-term objectives of the left itself.

e) Because of the prevailing sexism in the mass movements and their leaderships, mechanisms have to be established within them to increase women's space and promote discussion - not only around concrete action proposals and demands, but

also around the origins, manifestations and solutions to women's oppression: that is, a theoretical discussion.

31. To enable this process to move forward, the feminist pole in the women's organizations and movement has to be strengthened:

a) Strengthening the recomposition of this pole to include more women leaders of the mass movement so that they - along with the women of the autonomous groups, the non-governmental organizations, the political parties and the youth who today would like to get involved in this struggle - can forge a real vanguard of the whole women's movement.

b) Establishing more opportunities for political and theoretical discussion in the vanguard through conferences, coordinations around concrete campaigns, publications, seminars, and so on.

c) Orienting this pole so that its priority becomes the relationship with the general women's movement, so that it can:

– take advantage of each opportunity to put forward unifying gender demands;

– take advantage of each opportunity to unify the women's movement;

– ensure the continuity of the movement;

– encourage reflection and theoretical production - a collective memory for the movement;

– develop independent alternatives to the proposals of the bourgeoisie and the state.

To do this there has to be the development of a political alternative within the feminist pole in alliance with other sectors which have a simular vision. If other revolutionary currents and parties which are today absent from this political elaboration become convinced of feminism this will also help the development of this alternative.

If the clearly feminist expressions of the women's movement are weakened, in time the organization of the mass of women will also tend to be undermined. The mass sectoral organizations will tend to disperse or be manipulated for other ends, which implies a political weakning which will in time lead to an organic erosion.

32. The reason for the existence of our organizations is to be a useful political instrument for our peoples organizing themselves, proposing and implementing their own projects as a nation in line with their interests, against the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.The revolution and the new socialist society that we seek to create can only be the work of the toiling people as a whole, and for this reason our revolutionary Marxist current has a conception of feminism that encompasses a profound transformation, the subversion of the existing order.

For this reason we must be the foremost promoters of the women's liberation movement and of the discussion within the mass movement and the left - particularly the revolutionary left - around the necessity of building this movement and the ways of doing so.

33. In nearly all our sections women's work is being reorganized and we are reformulating our political perspectives for building the women's movement.

This fits into the general framework of the need to tackle the question of building our organizations with greater effectiveness, and is part of this task. In particular, in relation to women's work the reorganization must confront the following problems:

– To a greater or lesser degree, our sections did not understand the central dynamic of the radicalization of the majority of women and have had to make a turn towards the mass sectors, working on the basis of immediate demands.

– The fact that feminism did not develop on a mass scale, the non-centralization of the general women's movement as a political movement and the sexist pressures of society as a whole are strong countervailing pressures to our maintaining consistent feminist positions.

– Today there are many comrades, men and women, who have not been formed in our programmatic feminist vision and this makes the elaboration of a concrete political orientation for the movement difficult.

– All this means that the objective difficulties which all women comrades face have been inadequately considered by the leaderships, leaving comrades to confront them individually.

– Consequently, little effort is made to include in political leadership tasks.

Obviously, the possibilities for each section resolving this situation vary with its social insertion and accumulation of cadres and the degree of progress in forming a leadership team.

34. Our general objective must be to elaborate concrete political strategies and implement them in the struggle itself. But to do this we need to:

a) educate comrades in our feminist programmatic vision;

b) clarify our theoretical positions in line with the central discussion in each country, in order to intervene with the greatest clarity;

c) develop adequate organizational forms in each case to:

– ensure efficiency and not overload comrades doing women's work with tasks;

– ensure that the whole of the party, and in the first place all women comrades, participate in elaborating the political orientation for women's work.

d) Counterbalance, within the limits of our possibilities, the obstacles which confront women comrades:

– making it easier for comrades who are mothers to participate;

– special education measures for women comrades;

– consciously promoting women to

take on tasks, in particular seeking to establish a proportional relationship between the number of women on the leadership bodies and the membership, which will mean using a system of targets or quotas in elections.

Positive action and partybuilding among women

1 January 1996

Introduction

There are three possible approaches in considering the importance of the real integration of women and of the struggle against sex discrimination in political organizations and in particular in our organizations.

First, from the point of view of the class struggle, that is the general political struggle. The integration of women is essential if we really want to achieve the unity of workers, of the proletariat. We cannot ignore the situation of women. But in building real unity of all the oppressed, we have to work with the various contradictions that still exist among the oppressed under patriarchal capitalist domination, resulting from women's oppression and subordination. Today there is another element - the increase in the number of women in the organized labour force, a change in the social composition of the proletariat with a more acute differentiation in the exploitation based on sex differences - but this is an additional reason, not the fundamental one, for adopting an aggressive policy to integrate women into revolutionary organizations.

Second, from women's point of view, our presence and effective participation in political organizations is a fundamental aspect of developing our identification as revolutionaries. If we start from the need to incorporate individual members, in practice, over the long term, this identity is extremely weak if there are not a large number of women as it can then only be created by male discourse. This is why we are not talking about creating appendices to the revolutionary political project that give women a space, but about a construction which also involves women, in which the struggle against gender oppression is more than a programmatic discourse, but the transformation of daily practice in the field of gender with the development of the political elements necessary to transform society.
In such a perspective the very presence of women, in both numerical strength and real political weight, is essential because, together with the development of the women's movement, this is the only guarantee that the demands and needs of women will be present with the radical dimension necessary to a revolutionary process. The experience of revolutions in various countries demonstrates this clearly. However liberated from patriarchy the male comrades are, any political organization or project of social organization in which women are not represented on an equal basis reproduces the forms of domination of women and their exclusion from public life.

Finally, from the point of view of the total socialist project that we want to develop, we cannot talk about socialism only in male terms, in which women will remain in the same sort of social division and roles, where they maintain a split personality and are potential and daily victims of the power and violence of men.

We also have to respond to the present situation in the workers' movement and in society. There is an organized pressure, a pressure from women, not only for the integration of feminism and women's demands, but also for a numerical increase of women in political and trade union organizations. This stems from the pressure of the organized women's movement and from the objective changes which have taken place over the last decades in the social situation of women: at the level of education, the integration in the labour market, the extension of contraceptive means, some alterations in the structure of the family.

The bourgeoisie in various regions, in Latin America, in Europe and probably in other parts of the world, has been rather flexible and rapid in responding to the pressures created by this new situation. It has tried to broaden the base of its rule by adopting some aspects of feminist discourse and even by allocating some token spaces to women. Despite the limits of such policies, they have been made more successful by the weakness of our response. This is particularly so when, as in the majority of the cases, we have limited ourselves to the adoption of a discourse defending the rights of women without changing our political practice or increasing the effective presence of women in the spheres of power in our own organizations.
The social democratic parties have made progress in the sense of establishing quotas of women in their electoral lists or in the party leadership bodies. It is true in general that these measures have not been accompanied by radical demands for the social transformations necessary to end women's oppression. But it is also true to say that they have been more daring in their proposals to increase the number of women than most revolutionary parties and than our own sections.

We will attempt to briefly explain the difficulties in women's political participation and the obstacles deriving from these.

In political organizations, there is a general dynamic of exclusion of women. The "natural" dynamic is not the presence or participation of women but rather the reproduction of the social dynamic of discrimination and exclusion of women from public spaces.

First we can say that the division between private and public continues within our political organizations and our political vision itself. The social role attributed to women - primarily within the family and in private reproduction - prevents women from developing social and political participation on an equal footing. This is also a central element in the construction of our personality: the way in which we perceive the possibilities or absence of possibilities of entering into public life. Women's participation in political life demands a break from their education and socialization in order to enable them to move into a space which is not normally assigned to them. This division, taken at the level of a party, implies that the male comrades have enormous difficulties in relating to women as political beings and reproduce the way they divide between public and private in their relations inside the party. For this reason we accept a schizophrenic behaviour in which there is no coherence between public and private life. This is a source of permanent tensions between men and women in their relations inside a political organization.

The second question is related to the sexual division of labour. It is obvious that the clearest part of this division is the permanent allocation to women of domestic work, of responsibility for the family and home. Although there have been some progress in some countries, the bulk of domestic work and responsibility still falls on women. For most activists this bourgeois ideology which forms the family structures remains practically intact, essentially because of the privileges and facilities it offers men in their political relations. This aspect of the sexual division of labour deprives women not only of time for political activity but also absorbs most of our personal, political and intellectual energy.

Within parties this type of division is reproduced in many ways. The women do the menial work, and the men do the political work. Within political organizations we reproduce the same mechanisms of depreciation of women's work as in the labour market. It is like the reverse of the tale of King Midas: whatever we touch is devalued. The best example could be the different value given to organizational work when done by men or by women.

The third point relates to the continuation of patriarchal power established inside parties. This patriarchal power, power of men over women, manifests itself by the maintenance of an immense authoritarianism of men: women's discourse is devalued, and must be backed up by a man; in some cases, leaders use their position to obtain emotional and sexual privileges from women.

These are some of the elements that create this dynamic of exclusion of women from the political organizations.

Why this discussion is necessary in the Fourth International today

Most women comrades agree that they joined revolutionary parties to make a revolution that was both socialist and feminist. This is why we want to build parties that are socialist and feminist, and why we have put this discussion on the agenda as part of the discussion on building the Fourth International. A combination of internal and external, positive and negative, factors make it necessary to return to this discussion:

– The International as a whole failed to consolidate politically and organizationally the gains made in the debate on women's liberation at the 1979 World Congress. There has been a general decline in the political level of debate and education in the sections, and a process of depoliticization particularly on the questions of women's liberation. The debate on special measures was left unfinished and arrived at some mistaken conclusions.

– The sections were slow to analyse the changing character in the workforce and what effect this had on the political recomposition of the workers' movement. While we were able to state that in the current economic crisis women would not be driven from the workforce, we tended to underestimate the significance of the ideological offensive of the ruling class on questions of the family, reproduction, sexuality and racism. Consequently, we were unprepared for their effect on the workers' movement.

– In several countries in Western Europe and the United States a downturn in the mass activity of the independent women's movement has taken place, in other cases the women's movement, under the impact of the economic crisis, has moved to the right. All too often the sections have reacted to these events by deprioritizing women's liberation work. But when trade unions are on the defensive revolutionary organizations do not conclude that it is impossible to recruit working people. And even when there is a downturn in the women's movement or the feminist current is weak, this is not an excuse to put our feminist goals on the shelf.

– In some countries in the Third World there has been a massive process of women's organization around demands of the general struggle. When women from popular sectors began to mobilize, at the same time several of our sections started to do broader work both in unions and in other mass sectors that were on the move, amongst them women. However, this implied an enormous pressure on the women comrades who worked in specifically feminist groups to leave them because they were not "mass" organizations. Faced with this pressure, many comrades abandoned work in specifically feminist sectors, or left the sections. In this way, we lost trained women cadre and later

found ourselves without participation or very often legitimacy in the feminist sectors of the women's movement when they began to move nearer to the mass movements and with a big backwardness in our level of discussion on feminism both inside and outside our organizations.

In those cases where - on making the turn to these mass women's movements - feminism became secondary, positive action measures were also weakened and women militants' situation inside the party suffered accordingly. There is also an organic discontinuity in our organizations: sections have appeared and disappeared since 1979.

– In general, the sections did not foresee these sorts of problems or think about how to help comrades to confront them. We were not conscious of how much women developed out of their direct experience as participants and leaders of the women's movement and therefore we did not take conscious measures to pass on those lessons and skills to younger women members, especially as they were unable to obtain this experience directly.

– In Western Europe we have seen the development of young women as political leaders in youth organizations. This indicates that positive action can have an impact on changing the revolutionary party as well. Two factors explain the capacity of revolutionary youth organizations to incorporate young women into leadership structures. Most importantly, youth groups are constantly preoccupied with leadership renewal. The search for new leaders places emphasis on conscious leadership development. This sets the stage for allowing young women to think of themselves as potential leaders and to receive the necessary training.
Second, young people's consciousness has been influenced by feminism and they have less need to cling to past habits. Young women are more insistent on change, young men are at least a bit more open to change.

In Third World countries, young people constitute a considerably larger proportion of the population than in industrialized countries. While the great majority of young women have not been directly influenced by feminism, they have been brought up in a period of economic and political crisis which has objectively presented them with a situation where women are more present in public life than were previous generations. Nevertheless, women continue to be subjected to the most brutal forms of oppression. At the same time, a large number of children and adolescents continue to have children themselves, which means their social and political integration takes place in ways more similar to that of adults than is the case for young women in developed countries. This is one of the reasons why neither youth movements nor youth organizations in solidarity with the Fourth International have developed. The development of young women as revolutionary leaders generally occurs in the framework of the adult organizations, which implies specific contradictions in their participation and the need to pay particular attention to their development.

In addition, most young people are freer of responsibilities than they will ever be again. This is particularly true for women. Therefore the skills and attitudes gained during this period of rapid change will be important for years to come. If women gain political confidence as leaders in the youth organization, this can provide an essential framework for advance in the revolutionary party.

– Many sections have decided to adopt some form of positive action plan following debates over the lack of full integration and\or loss of women members. These plans vary according to each national situation. Examples include inviting women's commissions to Central Committee meetings, establishing women's fractions on a national basis, holding special educationals on women's oppression, setting various targets to increase women's participation in leading bodies, holding special meetings where women can discuss and monitor a positive action plan.

The efforts that have been made in the last few years by some sections to change the situation using goals or quotas of women in the leaderships (particularly at national level) have shown that:

– It is possible in the majority of sections to considerably raise the number of women in leadership bodies; there are women capable of taking on these tasks and if they were not assigned to them previously it was because of the obstacles which existed.

– In the bodies in which more women are incorporated than previously as a result of this mechanism - insofar as this is accompanied by a discussion among them of the problems they face as militants, and the party continues to build the movement - this can improve the conditions for their political work. If more account is taken of the need for women's training, internal discussions on sexist violence take on another tone and relationship of forces, their needs are legitimized as needs for the leadership body (and not personal ones) in relation to meeting hours and forms of discussion; our external policy on women can be discussed with greater insistence and precision, etc. In summary, the conditions are created for establishing a relationship of forces between women and men which create conditions making it possible to change the unfavourable situation for women, and thus help the positive development of the organization as a whole.

However, even in those cases where women have been in a majority in leadership bodies, they have not had the same power as the men. For example, they have lacked the informal networks and political authority of the longer-serving men. The men still set the tone of the meetings and determined the political agenda. Even when women were quite numerous in the leadership, they frequently suffered from overwork and felt less effective. They saw that they had less back-up within the organization than the male comrades. Thus, positive action has not solved all the problems - in fact it has often helped to identify new ones.

– In most Third World countries where we have sections, women militants face additional types of problems in

their political work: parties prefer men to establish relations with other parties because of misogynist traditions and sometimes justify excluding women from leadership on this basis; the lack of acceptance of women in public spheres; difficulties women face in fulfilling political assignments because it is often dangerous or illegal to be out at night or to travel. In cases of clandestine groups or where cultures isolate women's lives to an extraordinary extent or when the feminist movement is weak or not present at all, as in many Third World countries, the difficulties of women militants become greater. Also, recruiting women becomes more difficult.

– The general problems of leadership functioning often find their sharpest reflection among specifically oppressed layers within the party: women, youth, immigrant workers, members of oppressed nations and races, etc. This reveals both an unhealthy process of leadership selection and a weakness in finding ways to help members who face specific social obstacles to their political development. Informal discussion and collaboration between comrades to prepare meetings and decisions are important aspects of collective working, but a process from which women are usually excluded. Informal discussions with women comrades usually deal with questions other than the political discussions and decisions to take. Even when proposals are to be put forward that concern a woman comrade's political responsibilities or tasks it is not an automatic reflex on the part of male comrades to consult with her.

– Given limited resources and time pressures, sections often merely reproduce society's sexual division of labour. The criteria for selecting leadership are frequently biased against the selection of women because it has an inbuilt set of assumptions based on a "masculine" model that have not been consciously analysed. For example, when women comrades are proposed for tasks, sometimes the limits on their activity because they are mothers comes into the discussion. In the same discussion, on proposing a male comrade for this task, the discussion does not take into account that he has children, which may or may not limit his ability to take on this task. Underlying this is the tacit acceptance that childcare falls on the woman comrade, not on the male comrade. It is also common for there to be stricter criteria for evaluating women, not only in terms of their political capacities but also, in some cases, their personal behaviour.

These obstacles mean that leadership selection tends to eliminate women from these responsibilities, depending on the level of the leadership body: there are fewer women in local leaderships than in the base; fewer in the regional than local leaderships; fewer in the national than in the regional; and fewer still in the international than the national.

Given the competitive atmosphere in leadership bodies and a lack of self-confidence among women, women in leadership positions who manage to survive are sometimes forced into traditional "helping" roles, relegating themselves into seeking advice from a male mentor with more knowledge and experience or ending up by taking refuge in the technical aspect of their task.

– Political debates aimed at discussing women's problems and issues have often been hijacked for other purposes or, alternatively, women have been forced to discuss their concerns within the straightjacket of a factional framework, given that they did not have the power or experience to transform the overall climate of the organization.

We have perpetuated styles of debate that do not create forums in which genuine discussion can take place. Instead of being able to move forward on the basis of these discussions, debates become battlegrounds in which "winning" involves using forms of psychological terrorism to "smash" your opponent. Faction fights often had the effect of either demoralising women, causing them to withdraw from the leadership, or encouraging women to adopt these norms of behaviour to "prove" themselves equal to men.

This intimidating atmosphere is also difficult for many male members to deal with but unlike most women they try to overcome these problems by adjusting to the competitive mechanisms and conforming to male leadership models.
Thus it is clear that a central problem is the lack of collective functioning, which reinforces the existing sexual division of labour. (Weakness in collective functioning is also revealed by other divisions such as between youth and adults, workers and intellectuals.) It is not always possible for women to challenge such forms of functioning head on - in fact, it takes a great deal of leadership experience to figure out how to organize a successful challenge.

– Women face specific problems because of their day-to-day responsibilities and their social conditioning. Of course women come into revolutionary parties from different social and educational backgrounds, with different sexual orientations, and at different ages and periods of struggle. Therefore they have differing levels of experience, knowledge and self-confidence. Women do not always manifest their lack of confidence by timidity - the opposite can occur. Placed in positions of responsibility women can also react by becoming defensively aggressive.
But however individual women have dealt with the sections' leadership structures, the present structures of the organizations indirectly discriminate against women. If we do not adopt and monitor positive action plans, this process will only continue.

– An uneven consciousness on the problems facing women has been a historical problem for the Marxist movement. It has led to a different appreciation of feminism and what constitutes "proletarian morality." Issues such as sexual violence and intimidation have not been fully discussed and resolved in our movement. But the positive and negative experiences of several sections provide the basis for our drawing some definite conclusions regarding unacceptable behaviour towards women comrades and women in general.

Much that is said here has general implications for party building and is not the exclusive experience of women members. We would argue that a positive action plan represents a break with spontaneist conceptions of party building. There cannot be a policy of feminization without a worked-out project of building the revolutionary organization as a whole. The debate around positive action can be used to strengthen the whole organization, its apparatus, education and collective functioning.
Some conclusions flow from this debate:

a. The national sections need to be alert to new forms of women's radicalization and the political evolution of debates in the women's movement.

b. Sections need to stress their socialist feminist goals more boldly.

c. Women in the sections need to wage a collective battle, with the support of the whole organization, to transform the way in which the sexual division of labour manifests itself within the party.

d. Key to building a collective leadership in revolutionary parties is an awareness of how the sexual division of labour manifests itself. The only way that can be overcome inside the revolutionary organization is through a monitored program of positive action. The development of a collective leadership will not come about spontaneously, but only through a series of thought-out proposals.

Past experiences - women and the revolutionary Marxist movement

This section will outline some specific features of women's past involvement in revolutionary parties:

Under capitalism the rise of the class struggle led to a rise in women's self-activity and involvement in radical and socialist movements. The founders of Marxism contributed certain bases to a materialist understanding of women's oppression. However, the Marxist points of view in relation to women's self-organization have evolved with time according to the degree of pressure exercised by the mass of women, both within the party and in society as a whole.

At the beginning of the century, revolutionaries usually opposed the autonomous organization of women, arguing that women need to be organized as communists. But as a way to get around Bismarck's repressive laws, socialist women in Germany organized separately from men and a vibrant political movement developed. Certain specific forms of women's activity were maintained even when the law was changed (for example, celebrating International Working Women's Day, publication of a women's magazine).

Lenin, Clara Zetkin and other leaders of the Third International discussed a broader approach, particularly during the debates on the united front and work within colonized countries. Specific measures to organize women workers included women's departments of the party and women's journals. The backing of the international bodies of the Second and Third Internationals was vital to combat backwardness in different national situations. Special measures were adopted to organise women's work in the colonial world. (See Resolutions of the Third Congress of the Comintern, 1921)

Today we are committed to organizing women around their own needs (economic, social, ideological). This means building an autonomous women's movement on a revolutionary basis. We emphasise campaigns that involve masses of women in action and project the need to build alliances with other social movements, especially working to deepen the ties between the women's movement and trade unions. In countries where the majority of women first become active in their social sector, as in the Third World, we emphasize mass action and the need to unite women as such around their gender demands. We also seek to attract women to the revolutionary party.

In the past individual women were prominent within a variety of revolutionary parties. These were primarily intellectuals who led unconventional lives, the most well known being Alexandra Kollontai and Rosa Luxemburg. Their biographies illustrate that the lives of women revolutionaries were full of personal dilemmas. But they were forced to make a stronger break with conventional morality and family life than male revolutionaries of that time and place. Clearly one vital ingredient to their survival as political people was the network of female friendship and support they built.

Modern feminism has begun to unearth information about the role of working class women in earlier socialist and working class movements (for example, utopian socialism, the suffragette movement, the German Social Democracy) but their participation was still much more limited than the possibilities open to women today.

The changing pattern of women's lives, the continued entry of women into the paid workforce, the influence of feminism, the greater cultural and political level of the mass of women and increased access to fertility control make it far more possible today to win broad layers of women to revolutionary parties, and to see them develop as leaders, than ever before. Nonetheless, the stages of women's lives and the fact that women are still the primary child-rearers means that women are still more often expected to make choices between being a mother and being a revolutionary militant, not to mention taking a leadership role in the organization. We need to do what we can to lessen the impact of the special problems women face and convince individual party members through our practice that we are serious.

Women and the

Fourth International

Our information on the early history of the FI from this point of view is very limited but our initial impression is that the downturn in the 1950s included a low awareness of feminism. However a number of articles in the FI press indicate that a certain level of understanding on the nature of women's oppressionexisted, but there was little discussion on the issue. Traditionally women in the FI were "helpmates" who did the small organizational tasks that kept the sections going during the hard times. Often they held fulltime jobs, assuming the role of breadwinner, thereby providing the section with the possibility of paying their husbands a meagre movement salary.

The rise of the second wave of feminism had a big impact on the FI. Comrades in Canada and the United States led the turn to the women's movement, partly because the feminist movement and the campaign for abortion rights developed there earlier than in most other countries. As the result of women comrades' involvement in a feminist movement and as women were recruited to the revolutionary organizations from that movement, sections developed a relatively high proportion of women members. While the revolutionary parties of the pre-World War I socialist movement never exceeded a female membership of 10%, in the 1970s a few sections had more than 40% women members.

By the mid-1970s the sections of the FI were plunged into feminist campaigns. Our international press reflected strategic debates from the feminist movement and reported on new research on women's history. The International proved its usefulness in promoting an international campaign on abortion rights. Women's Commissions in Europe, the United States and Mexico all contributed to the 1979 debate on the political and ideological analysis that formed the resolution on women's liberation. The debate on positive action was concentrated in Europe, Canada, the U.S.A., and Australia precisely because they already agreed on many basic issues about women's oppression, because there was a mass feminist movement in these countries. Although in its analysis of the modern movement it reflected basically the experience of the advanced capitalist countries, this text was fundamental for educating comrades in the basic principles of feminism, although the discussion remained uncompleted and the assimilation of the principles laid out was partial and unequal.

Today, we have to revise some of the conclusions of the discussion. It was dominated by an inadequate and idealistic vision on the assimilation of our programme. We were not able to consolidate in terms of organization what we understood politically, because the document had an idealistic conception of the way in which men's sexist and heterosexist attitudes could be challenged and failed to analyse how they were reproduced in different generations, including among revolutionaries. This applies to all questions related to the family and sexuality - not only women's position but everything which challenges the heterosexual model, and to religious prejudices - not the individual right to religion and faith, but conservative traditions in relation to women.

The other weakness of the document was to put forward the goal of full political, social and legal equality of women as if it could be achieved by a spontaneous and gradual extension of the rights of men. This idea did not take into account the dynamic of exclusion of women from public spaces and of men's privileges.

The degree of organization of women in the FI at this stage was halted by the effects of the turn in some sections, or by the ill thought-out and schematic idea of being "a useful party" with mass influence in others, although women participated in both processes. Additionally, one aspect of the turn to industry was to emphasize sectors of the industrial working class that are overwhelmingly male.

Combined with the declining impact of the women's movement, this led to a loss of women cadre, particularly the layers of women recruited in the early 1970s. Recruitment of women declined and the organization saw the work of women comrades active in the women's liberation movement as less central - leading to the marginalization of feminism within many sections.

For the women who made the turn into male-dominated industries, many faced problems of sexual harassment and isolation from other women workers. Women who stayed in public sector unions, or in "female" occupations, found their experiences ignored. There was also a loss of prestige in many sections for those women who had led a mass women's movement but who no longer had such a strong base from which to operate. Unless they could learn to operate in another milieu they were seen as less valuable to their sections and marginalized.

A crucial error was ending the International Women's Commission in the International, especially given the small number of women in the International leadership. Between 1979 and 1985, at the same time as new sections were joining the International, there was no collective reflection on the political questions posed by the women's movement in advanced capitalist countries or the rise in new opportunities, given women's self-organization in the semi-colonial world.

In several countries when our comrades pointed to how women were discriminated against in political and public life, they found themselves in a compromising position. Women faced the same situation within their own party. If we are to build egalitarian and revolutionary parties, we must overcome this contradiction and reflect the full participation of women in our own internal life and public activities.

Pressure for formal reports at the Latin American and European Political Bureaus led to reports on the situation of women in Europe and Latin America and a self-critical resolution on the Place of Women in the FI at the 1986 IEC. A document on Europe was passed at the 1987 IEC and a report was given on Latin American feminism. A report on Women in the

Third World was also on the agenda of the 1988 IEC.

The principle of positive action was revived in the 1986 debate. Both International and European structures were established for the coordination of women's work. Mechanisms for advancing political analysis and coordination for the Latin American sections were also agreed upon. But there is a discontinuity between the work and theorization we did a decade ago and what we are attempting to launch now. The women's movement has changed dramatically. Today it is vibrant in places it did not exist ten years ago, and vice versa. One question we must ask ourselves is what kind of positive action is appropriate now?

What we mean by "positive action" for women and why it is necessary

A revolutionary organization exists to organise the mass of the working class in alliance with the oppressed masses to take state power and transform all social relations of exploitation and oppression. It is this strategic goal which provides the basis for the united action of members of revolutionary parties. The active involvement of the working class in the revolutionary party is a pre-condition for even beginning to attain these goals, as it is the decisive force for revolutionary change. The hegemony of the working class must be promoted within the revolutionary organization.

Alongside this understanding must go an appreciation of the changing nature of the modern proletariat. New layers are becoming part of the proletariat both in the semi-colonial world and in Western Europe. Most often these are specifically oppressed groups, including blacks, women, oppressed national minorities - groups which the organised labour movement often ignores. If revolutionary parties are blind to colour, sex, nationality, caste and social or class position they will end up reinforcing inequality. This would be like fighting to end inequality by failing to liberate the motor force necessary to carry out the task.

Positive action for women is not counterposed to developing proposals for any other specially oppressed layer. In fact, women are often members of those other oppressed groups. Therefore many of the reforms that women want to implement will enable these other oppressed groups to play a stronger role in the party.

Positive action means taking concrete steps to break down barriers to women's participation in the political life of the party. It means recognising the discrimination that women face in society today. It takes into account the social differences between women as well as recognises the oppression that is common to them as a sex. Positive action fits best in an overall plan that takes account of the existing needs and strengths of the organization. It needs to consider the party's next steps. It requires a conscious and self-critical approach to the history and development of revolutionary organizations. It rejects the notion that these problems can "work themselves out naturally." Positive action measures are "artificial" because we want to combat the "natural" tendency.

In the life of our parties very often the forms of functioning and debating derive from the sexual division of labour. The mode of functioning, the nature of leadership and the style of work all operate on what is essentially "masculine" terrain. The privilege of individual development is counterposed to collective work. What prevails is a markedly greater value given to individual development, to personal initiatives and competition to the detriment of collective work.

If we are to build a collective leadership team that can incorporate the skills, insights and experiences of the women cadre, we must find ways to cut across this unhealthy division. Not only are skills are fragmented along gender lines, but those that have been ghettoized into women's sphere are overlooked and devalued, in the sections as well as in the labour market.

Essential to the process of developing leadership criteria is the necessity of identifying the variety of leadership skills necessary for the organization's growth, and not just those skills that are seen as typically "male." The truth of the matter is that the stress on individual initiative and competition has too often produced a battleground of contending forces rather than a coherent organization in which debates and differences are resolved in an atmosphere of genuine respect. Both the skills of abstract theorising and the skills of working collectively must be integrated into criteria for leadership. These need to be woven into the political fabric of the revolutionary party and learned by all, and renewed as the leadership is renewed.

A further problem is the different criteria for political evaluation, not only for the allocation of work but for the individuals as well. This is striking in the case of positions considered important when the situation of women is taken into account concerning their having children or not, the way they live their sexuality or other considerations which have a different weight when they apply to men or to women. It is worth mentioning here that these prejudices also apply to homosexuality whether male or female.

Thus it becomes vital that the whole organization develop a commitment to challenging that reproduction of the sexual division of labour, it is not possible to leave the task to individuals or to the women only - but women will be a major factor in assuring that we will reach our goal. It must be the whole weight of the organization that pushes against the routinism and inertia of the sexual division of labour.

In addition, the symbols used by political organizations are symbols of male power. Not only in terms of language but of aggressivity, and of everything which is developed in the representation of politics. It is very frequent to find an extremely intimidating atmosphere in debates and discussions not only in the way they take place but also because of the frighteningly large number of men which always puts women in an

extremely unfavourable relation of strength. This is even more true when we have no means of fighting against social mechanisms of discrimination against women be it in terms of crèches, issues linked to maternity, times of the meetings, and all the other issues which make women's political participation difficult depending on their social situation. We know very well that there are limits: political organizations cannot get rid of the social differences that exist in society and this is all the more difficult the smaller the organizations are. But this cannot be an excuse for not attempting to find alternative ways of enabling women's political participation.

We can say that the political milieu is still marred by an atmosphere, behaviour and forms of relations which exert daily violence on women. Whether in the use of language, in offensive patronising, in manipulations, in psychological violence, fear is imposed by certain forms of functioning or debate, including the physical and sexual violence which is not absent in revolutionary organizations. And here, in general we find the development of a type of patriarchal and sexist solidarity among men which makes even more difficult to fight against this violence.

Another problem is the undervaluing of feminist work. The weakness of our intervention in the movement imposes great limitations on the feminization of our organizations. The pressure of the movement is fundamental to alter the relations of strength in favour of women. But the weaknesses or setbacks of the movement cannot be an excuse for us not to participate in it, and even less for not developing policies of effective struggle against discrimination in political organizations. Our organizations cannot be so vulnerable that they change their attitude to feminist work according to what happens in the movement. This type of change has however a negative consequence on the militancy of women and their decision to do or not to do feminist work, because this area of political work has little status. It is evident that our militant activities are valued on the basis of other elements and not by feminist work.

In addition, our male-dominated parties produce political analyses that constantly miss out a gender analysis. We can produce conjunctural analyses as if women did not exist; we discuss revolutionary processes without women; we make general political analyses of a given society as if women did not exist.. On top of that, women's work remains treated as if it was only the work of women and not of the party as a whole, including its leading bodies. Here again we can see a very negative dynamic of neutralization and division of women which undermines the building of our strength as militants.

The consequence of this dynamic of exclusion means that women in general stay on the margins of the general political project. And we feel on the margins because in fact we are. Not because of any psychological problem specific to women, but fundamentally because we pay a very high personal price to try to reaffirm our revolutionary political identity every day when it does not exist inside our organizations. This leads to a great loss of women cadres, who take much longer to be replaced. And it weakens our intervention.

Recruiting women to revolutionary parties

Part of this discussion includes looking at the image our sections project. We want to make sure our sections are attractive to women and provide suitable environments for the training and development of women cadre. We can do this by considering our public image:

– We need to have a profile which clearly reflects our commitment to winning women to our perspectives. This means utilizing symbols and heroes that incorporate women's revolutionary experiences, as well as covering issues from women's perspectives - whether this means discussing problems of everyday life, sexual politics and sexual orientations, community or trade union issues, or international concerns - developing women as educators, propagandists, writers, candidates and spokespeople for the sections. It means developing collaborative relations with women who are leaders of a variety of social movements, and making sure interviews and statements by them appear in the party press whenever appropriate. That is, in every way, the presence of women in the revolutionary process is affirmed.

– The party needs to experiment with structures that can help to draw women sympathizers closer to the organization. Women's book clubs, educationals specifically designed for women (sometimes involving men, other times only for women) or more externally-oriented women's clubs are all methods to be considered. In the semi-colonial countries it has been useful to have workshops where the relationship between women's oppression and problems of daily life is demonstrated.

– The party's organizational structures and methods of operating need to be reconsidered in the light of providing a supportive and collaborative atmosphere for women. Above all, it means developing a political atmosphere in which members are not made to feel "stupid" or intimidated, either by unwanted sexual advances, sexual harassment or elitist attitudes. Central is the development of non-factional styles of debate and a comradely spirit of working together. Such an environment will reinforce women's self-confidence and allow for growth.

– We also understand that the size of the organization implies problems of a particular nature in line with its growth. The smaller the organization the more difficult it will be to to identify the problems women confront as objective problems of a social character. The growth of the party with a greater number of women means giving greater attention to women's special problems. This means changing our educational methods, functioning and language, and also discussing the importance of organizing childcare for meetings and external events of the party. Independently of which collective solutions appear appropriate, it is

important to note that mothers and fathers need to be sure that their children are being looked after properly. Ill-prepared childcare is just as disruptive to our functioning as ill-prepared meetings.

What other measures should a positive action plan include?

The development of a policy of positive action means the development of a general policy and not of isolated measures. A general policy to fight against the "natural" dynamic of exclusion. In that sense, it is obviously artificial since the "natural" means the exclusion of women. Here we can say that the first condition lies with changing the balance of forces. To this aim we need not only to develop a general programmatic and political integration but also to develop a conscious policy to change our functioning, to ensure a fundamental policy of integration of women in the leadership and leadership tasks. We, women and men in political parties have known for a long time that real changes do not occur if there are no changes in the leaderships.

Added to this it is fundamental for the building of the strength of women to be able to organise internally in all the ways necessary to the various objectives of building our strength: in numerical terms, in terms of the organizational conditions, of the development of solidarity amongst women. Implementation of only one measure, whichever it is, as the solution to the problem, has a limited effect.

However, it is important to give some ideas on possible measures to be included in such a policy:

Organizing our feminist work

i. Creating and/or strengthening women's commissions in the sections.

ii. Strengthening bodies that exist to organise the women's liberation work in the International and encouraging regional organizing among women in the FI.

iii. Regularly discussing women's liberation work on leading bodies and taking collective responsibility for any problems that arise. Disagreements and differences among women will emerge and should not be viewed as unhealthy. They do not have to be hidden from the organization as a whole.

iv. Inviting members of women's commissions to discussions of the leadership if they are not members of the relevant body.

Education

i. Placing a high priority on education, debate and analysis of women's liberation issues for all members and ensuring that some understanding of these issues is central to the criteria for recruitment.

ii. Organising educational events in which women play an equal or majority role. Ensuring that styles of delivery are not so traditional that they discourage women and less experienced comrades from participating.

iii. The European schools/extended fraction meetings have been relatively successful given the small resources put into building them and because they bring together comrades who have experience in organising over a long period with younger comrades who are today leading the youth organizations.

iv. The educational aspect of the Latin American fraction meetings has been important in developing a common understanding between the comrades of a certain number of theoretical and political questions. This type of initiative should continue in these two regions and be extended to others when possible.

v. The first international FI women's seminar was successful. We must ensure that the second is equally so.

Party image and profile

i. Ensuring the press has articles by and about women - and covers issues of particular concern to women. Pamphlets and other publications need to have a feminist profile.

ii. Ensuring that we have recruitment campaigns aimed at women.

Leadership

i. Ensuring that women are visible as leaders of the organization.

ii. Encouraging the development of young women as political leaders in the youth organizations and sections.

iii. Taking time to train women in branches and national leadership responsibilities so that they feel competent in the tasks they perform.

iv. Not overburdening a small number of women with so many tasks that they become "burnt out" and are forced to withdraw from activity.

v. Making knowledge of, and interest in, questions of women's liberation a criteria for participation in the leadership.

General behaviour and functioning

i. Having a code of practice that specifically outlaws forms of sexual intimidation and violence.

ii. Avoiding sexist language and jokes.

iii. Organising meetings that allow for maximum participation through adequate preparation of chairing and speaking procedures that ensure equal rights to all participants.

iv. Taking account of the problems of parents with children in planning national and local events.

v. There is a need to place a higher value on developing a convivial atmosphere in our political activity, eg having socials at political events.

Self-organization and democratic centralism

In relaunching the debate on this question we have to be clear about the parameters of a revolutionary organization. It is impossible to liberate women without overthrowing the private property relations which reproduce women's subordination in society. Membership in a revolutionary organization is conditioned by this understanding. No

one particular form of organization can end the oppression of women.

Many comrades use this objective limitation to argue that "not much can be done, women cannot be liberated without changing the social structures and making the revolution." We must reject categorically this type of reasoning as being conservative and reactionary.

Revolutionary Marxist organizations, understanding material limitations, must adopt an attitude of creating all the counter-tendencies possible today to existing oppression. We do this in relation to the limits of the workers' movement and racial oppression. It also has to be done as regards women's oppression.

But revolutionary organizations can take steps to reach out to women on their terms, look at their political experiences and adjust their own functioning to make them as women-friendly as possible. Women's fractions, commissions and organizers can help push this process forward.

In general the most positive experiences and the most political discussions take place where the leadership through the CC or the Women's Commission has structured these discussions. The idea of special women's meetings to discuss political questions relevant to women and to which all women in the organization are invited to attend, can be a good model to promote the self-organization of women.

Criteria for leadership

The leadership question is one important aspect of the positive action debate. If approached without an overall plan it will not address the problems of women throughout the organization. We have to have objective criteria for leadership that guarantee a real change in the composition and functioning of leaderships. Just as political continuity is a factor in leadership selection, so is working in a collective team, taking the lead in developing key areas of work, having earned the political confidence of rank-and-file activists and comrades. When a leadership constantly under-represents the number of women in the whole organization it is a sign that the body itself is somewhat disfunctional. We should aim for parity where possible but this should not be a rigid, inflexible schema because women do not wish to reverse roles but to transform the workings of the party. Where parity is not possible we should adopt targets to increase women's representation in relevant leadership bodies.

One suggestion for helping to integrate new women onto leadership bodies is that they should be given time to learn their new tasks and an opportunity to identify practices in the organization they think need changing. This is best facilitated by women's commissions, fractions or a specific caucus meeting that can help to identify such areas and organize report-backs to the relevant leadership bodies. Leadership bodies need to be held accountable for the organization as a whole.

Conclusion

The aim of this document is to restart the debate on positive action. In a sense, it comes ten years after it should have been written. But it is not too late to crystallise organizational as well as political gains out of an important period of women's radicalization, backed up by the self-organization of women and promoted by the leadership.

The women's movement does not have the institutional expression of the trade unions. We have tried to create structures and an understanding inside our sections and the International so that revolutionary continuity on the problems of women are not lost or abandoned. In some countries the women's movement has faced a downturn. But the lessons are not lost for that country or internationally if the gains of modern feminism are fully reflected in both our programme and our practice. It is only by working through the proposals in all the sections that we will be able to make an international balance sheet on this question.

It is worth restating the positive nature of the policy which has been developed in the recent years by the FI. A series of important measures have been applied, which are not however sufficient. The central challenge which remains is that of obtaining this type of policy in a more complete way inside the sections. By taking such special measures, within the framework of unifying the party as a whole, we will not only counter any philistinism among communists, but win and keep more women in our ranks. This is central to ensuring that the political projects of our organizations are collective projects of women and men.