



On the Current Stage of World Revolution

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THE TIME HAS COME to try to assemble into a coherent framework the Fourth International's analysis of the important changes that have occurred in the world situation during the past eight years. The present theses represent an attempt in this direction. We have deliberately left aside all tactical and organizational problems and even all economic analysis in order to concentrate on what is essential in the process of world revolution at this stage.

There have been several previous attempts at such a global analysis on the part of the Fourth International. At the Third World Congress in 1951 important steps forward were made in understanding the specific forms taken by the colonial revolution under the impact of the combination of the crisis of imperialism and the crisis of Stalinism. At the same time, the analysis of the Third World Congress was marred by the incorrect projection of the "war-revolution" concept on a world scale. (This concept has turned out to

have only limited application, in some exceptional cases of victorious revolutions in semicolonial countries.)

The theses on the “Dynamics of World Revolution Today,” adopted by the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International in 1963, integrated what remained valid in the 1951 analysis with a more balanced view of the interrelationships among the socialist revolution in the imperialist countries, the colonial revolution, and the political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states. However, while this resolution correctly predicted the coming upsurge of the Western proletariat, it could not anticipate all the striking features of the rising socialist revolution in capitalist Europe that have asserted themselves since May 1968 in France, the “creeping May” in Italy in 1969, and the upsurge of the Portuguese and Spanish revolutions since then.

An initial attempt at a new synthesis was made by the theses of the Ninth World Congress in 1969, “The New Rise of World Revolution,” and by this author's report to the congress on the theses. (See *Quatrieme Internationale*, May 1969, for the text of the theses and report.) The present theses represent an extension of this initial attempt. In them, we have tried to incorporate the lessons of the latest developments in the semicolonial countries and the bureaucratized workers states.

ONE

THE BASIC FEATURE of the world socialist revolution is its *proletarian and conscious* character, the first characteristic being the objective pre-condition of the second, the second being the subjective expression of the first – the socialist revolution and the building of socialism constitute the first phase of world history that cannot be reached purely by the action of objective forces but instead

requires a conscious effort by the toiling masses. The proletariat is the only social class that, through its social conditions, is capable of creating a planned economy and emancipated society, a “society of associated producers,” as Marx put it. The proletariat's conscious participation in and leadership of the process leading to it. While the uneven development of proletarian class consciousness is the foundation stone of the Leninist theory of the *party*, the necessity of a rising level of class consciousness on the part of the *entire class* in order to achieve a victorious proletarian revolution and the building of a socialist society is the foundation stone of the Marxist-Leninist theory of soviet power, soviet democracy, and the construction of socialism. Trotskyism, contemporary revolutionary Marxism, unites both theories into an indissoluble unity.

TWO

THE FACT that the objective conditions for world socialism have existed at least since 1914, if not since 1905, does not lead to an automatic or inevitable victory of world socialism, essentially because of the central role played by the subjective factor in the achievement of socialist revolution. Although it has proven possible in some colonial and semicolonial countries to overthrow capitalism despite a “left centrist” leadership and a still insufficient level of consciousness and conscious activity on the part of the proletariat (weak in any case), this possibility must be ruled out in the industrially developed countries. “The crisis of humanity is the crisis of revolutionary leadership (and of class consciousness) of the proletariat.” If this crisis is not resolved through the construction of a mass revolutionary International, the decline of capitalism could result not in the emergence of world socialism but instead in barbarism: a massive destruction of productive forces, human beings,

and civilization through nuclear war, fascist-type regimes, destruction of the ecological system, and so on.

THREE

MATERIALLY, the highest achievement of capitalism was the worldwide objective socialization and division of labor, albeit on a sharply unequal basis. This internationalization of the productive forces creates the material basis for the globalization of the economy, politics, the class struggle, and war in the epoch of imperialism. World revolution and world socialism begin from this material basis, even though their growth reflects uneven and combined development, which is the *form* taken by this process of globalization under capitalism. In its totality, the theory of permanent revolution, cornerstone of Trotskyism, is nothing but the conscious expression of this process.

FOUR

IT FOLLOWS FROM THIS that what occurred after the 1917-23 upsurge of the world revolution can be seen only as a *historic defeat of world revolution*. The initial goal of the Bolsheviks had not been, nor could it have been, the building of an isolated socialist society in backward Russia, nor was it the creation of a permanent “power base” for world revolution in that single country, isolated and backward into the bargain. Their goal was to trigger the process of world revolution. But they failed to complete this project. In the final analysis, the temporary restabilization of capitalism after 1923, the victory of Stalinism in Russia, the emergence of fascism in Europe (and semifascism in Japan at the end of the 1930s), the long decline in the level of working class consciousness, and the outcome of the second world war with all its horrors (from Auschwitz to Hiroshima) are the results of the long series of defeats for the international revolution that occurred between 1923 and

1943 (although this series of defeats was of course interrupted by partial, geographically limited upsurges).

FIVE

THE DOWNTURN of world revolution between 1923 and 1943, although the dominant world trend, did not lead to complete defeat. True, it was *universal* — the victory of Stalinism in Soviet Russia and the consolidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship in that country, as well as the crushing defeat of the second Chinese revolution in the cities being among the expressions of a great retreat of the proletariat. But it was *not complete* in that capitalism was not restored in the Soviet Union and the toiling masses in China maintained their active and massive resistance to the onslaught of Japanese imperialism, especially in the countryside. This created a favorable objective starting point for the next wave of the rise of world revolution following the successful resistance of both the Soviet state and masses on the one hand and of the Chinese masses on the other hand, which greatly weakened imperialism in continental Europe and Asia and opened the way for the overthrow of capitalism in East Europe, North Korea, and China after 1945. The general weakening of capitalism and imperialism as a result of the second interimperialist war (in spite of the tremendous economic and military power of U.S. imperialism) and the rise of mass revolt and revolution against the unbearable living conditions this war imposed on the toiling masses of many countries combined with the above-mentioned Soviet and Chinese resistance to determine a new upsurge of world revolution, the starting point of which may be placed in 1943, when the fascist dictatorship in Italy was brought down. This new upsurge was expressed in a limited revolutionary wave in Europe and a long and formidable one in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

SIX

HOWEVER, although the defeat of world revolution during the period 1923-43 was not complete *objectively* in the Soviet Union and China, *subjectively* the effects of the victory of Stalinism in Russia and in the Communist International became a major obstacle to the victory of the world revolution, an obstacle that remained long after the retreat of the world revolution had ended. The Stalinist parties strangled and betrayed the Spanish revolution of 1936 and the revolutionary developments in Greece, Italy, and France from 1944 to 1948. Moreover, the abhorrent aspects of the Stalinist dictatorship in the USSR and East Europe became an important subjective obstacle to the development of revolutionary class consciousness in the two numerically strongest sectors of the world proletariat, the American proletariat and the Soviet one. Since a number of important problems of world revolution — that is, of world politics and economics considered from the class standpoint of the proletariat — cannot be resolved without the conscious revolutionary activity of the 150 million or so workers of these two countries, world history since 1945 can be correctly interpreted only through a correct method of *grasping the dialectic of the objective and subjective factors*. The concept of “world dual power,” like the concept of “war-revolution” on a world scale, both of which seriously underestimate the importance of the subjective factor, are unable to do this. Likewise, it is at best incomplete, if not downright incorrect, to assert that the reconstruction of capitalism in West Europe after the second world war was imposed on U.S. imperialism by the strength of the Soviet Union. It must be added that this reconstruction was *made possible* by the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties' betrayal of the 1943-48 revolutionary upsurge in West

Europe, which prevented a victorious breakthrough of socialist revolution in that region.

SEVEN

IT FOLLOWS that the post-second-world-war period has features fundamentally different from those of the postworld-war-one period. These must be grasped as basically contradictory. On the one hand, capitalism has been further weakened and as a world system it is in a greater state of decay than it was in 1917. This is expressed particularly in the downfall of the capitalist system in China, East Europe, North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam. On the other hand, the postwar revolutionary wave in the imperialist countries was again quickly defeated. It is true that between 1949 and 1968 this wave by and large continued in colonial and semicolonial countries (Korea, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Bolivia, Indonesia, Iraq, Palestine, the Portuguese colonies in Africa, Chile, etc.), with varied results — some striking victories, some crushing defeats. But the overall impact of this wave was not sufficient to prevent the relative stabilization of imperialist power in the imperialist metropolises themselves. Hence, while it is correct to state that the overall relationship of forces evolved to the advantage of the anticapitalist forces, this evolution did not at all imply an intrinsic weakening of the economic or military power of imperialism. On the contrary, as of May 1968 that power was greater than it had been in 1938 or 1948, not only in absolute terms, but even in terms of international centralization. (True, interimperialist competition had increased at the expense of U.S. imperialism, which lost its absolute hegemony of the 1945-50 period, but it was nowhere as violent as it had been before World War 1 or World War II.) At the same time, it must be added that this greater economic and military

strength was undermined by a *deeper social crisis*, which began to break out during the late 1960s.

Again, the apparent paradox can be explained only by the dialectic of the objective and subjective factors. The defeats of the world revolution in 1923-43 and in West Europe in 1943-48 and the downturn of workers struggles in the United States after 1947 caused by the cold war and McCarthyism created not only the subjective but also some of the objective conditions for a new development of the productive forces under capitalism. The sharp upward shift in the rate of exploitation of the working class determined an increase in the average rate of profit, which triggered a long-term acceleration of capital accumulation under conditions of technological revolution, aided by permanent rearmament and permanent “mild” inflation. This enabled imperialism to grant some reforms and concessions both to the working class in the imperialist countries and to the bourgeoisie in the semicolonial countries (which made the transition from colonial to semicolonial status), which helped to relatively stabilize the system for two decades.

Neither the economic and political effects of the colonial revolution nor the external pressure of the bureaucratized workers states has been able to seriously upset that stability, which could be challenged decisively only from the inside, by the proletariat of the imperialist countries themselves. In this sense, the course of world history has confirmed the correctness of the basic orientation of the Fourth International since the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both the Fanon-Lin Piao “third worldist” concept that a generalized victory of the colonial revolution was a necessary and probable prerequisite to a new upsurge of the proletariat in the imperialist countries and the Khrushchevist “two world camps” variant of the theory of “socialism in one country,” with its emphasis on the “socialist.’ countries’ overtaking the

standard of living of the imperialist countries before any possible new rise of the working class in the imperialist countries have been proven false.

But for a basic challenge to the capitalist order to occur in the imperialist countries themselves something decisive had to change in the class consciousness of the proletariat and its vanguard. During the 1940s and 1950s this consciousness was profoundly marked by the *longterm effects of past defeats*. Class consciousness after the second world war was qualitatively lower than it had been after the first world war. This is the *basic* reason why Trotsky's prediction that the Fourth International would grow rapidly after the second world war turned out to be erroneous. While Stalinism and reformism constituted the main *form* in which this low level of class consciousness was expressed, the *long duration* of Stalinism's hold over the proletariat in key countries is likewise a *result* of this low level of class consciousness.

It was only in the 1960s that a new generation of proletarian revolutionaries emerged in these countries as the nucleus 'of a new vanguard. The emergence of this vanguard was the combined result of key social processes in the imperialist countries (growth of the productive forces, which included an increase in the number, skills, and cultural level of the proletariat; deepening crisis of capitalist relations of production; growing awareness of that crisis on the part of the proletariat and its mounting instinctive and semiconscious attempts to integrate the seizure of the means of production into ongoing working-class struggles), the subjective by-products of the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, and the growing international crisis of Stalinism. Operating in a context of increasing working-class militancy and class consciousness, this new generation was finally able to begin to build new Leninist organizations with growing success, essential nuclei of tomorrow's mass

revolutionary parties that will lead the Western proletariat to the conquest of power.

EIGHT

THE OPPORTUNIST CONCEPT that capitalism can be overthrown gradually, first on one-sixth, then one-third, then two-fifths, one-half, three-fifths of the world's surface and so on until a final military test of strength results in the downfall of "Fortress America" through a combined external onslaught by the "socialist world" is nothing other than an updated extension of the Stalinist concept of "socialism in one country" to the "two world camps" theory. It is fundamentally wrong from an analytical standpoint and it leads to political conclusions that could be disastrous for world revolution and for the very survival of humanity. Its main errors are as follows:

a. It sees relationships of forces in purely quantitative and relative terms, overlooking the fact that the *absolute* strength of imperialism and the *absolute* level of productive forces and of material civilization, as well as such quantitative and relative relationships, are of decisive importance in a victorious breakthrough to socialism. Because of the amplitude of destruction and loss of life, a nuclear war in which the "socialist camp" was "victorious" would make the building of a classless society impossible for centuries and would thus be a defeat and not a victory for world socialism.

b. It overlooks or underestimates the organic unity of the world economy and ignores the fact that because of the increasing interdependence of the world economy, even the economically developed and growing workers states that have been established in some countries may find their social evolution toward socialism *blocked*, as has obviously

been the case with the Soviet Union and East Europe for the past twenty-five years.

c. It fails to see that the disarmament of the major imperialist powers, the United States in the first place, can be accomplished only from within these countries through the revolutionary conquest of power by the proletariat; this is the only way in which the catastrophe of world nuclear war can be avoided.

d. It implies, whether consciously or not, the pacifist illusion that the military power of imperialism can somehow be “neutralized” and its ruling class “pressured” into permanent passivity, demoralization, or capitulation by the growth of the military power of the workers states. Nothing in history justifies such an assumption. Even if it becomes only “half as strong” as the “socialist camp,” U.S. imperialism will still fight — and to the death — to retain its power. And this implies nuclear war, so long as it is *materially* possible (just as, for example, Hitler would have used the atomic bomb if he had had one, even in 1945, on the eve of imminent defeat), *provided the political and social relationship of forces inside the United States allows it*. In that sense, the decisive battle for the survival of humanity will indeed be fought in the United States. U.S. imperialism cannot be disarmed from the outside. *Its relative weakening does not lead to its disarmament*, but could even lead to greater aggressiveness.

This analysis does not imply any tendency toward “capitulation to nuclear blackmail by U.S. imperialism.” Rather it implies that all changes on a world scale *must be gauged also from the standpoint of their effects on the class struggle in the United States*. The history of the Vietnam war provides striking confirmation of this. U. S. imperialism was not *militarily* defeated by the Vietnamese revolution. In fact, U. S. imperialism is probably militarily stronger today

than it was in 1965. It was compelled to withdraw from Vietnam because it was *politically* paralyzed through a shift in the relationship of political forces within the United States (the unbreakable resistance of the Vietnamese masses, the demoralization of the expeditionary corps in Indochina, and the mass antiwar movement played the decisive roles here). But this political paralysis is neither permanent nor definitive, nor is it even tendentially growing. It could be sharply reversed by defeats or a decline of awareness of the U.S. masses. Any event that aids developments in that direction (Mao's counterrevolutionary policies toward Nixon, for example) objectively contributes toward unleashing a world nuclear war. Only developments that aid the U.S. proletariat in finding the road to mass political action and socialist class consciousness will lead toward a disarmament of U.S. imperialism, through its overthrow. But socialist revolution in the United States is neither assured nor automatic. "Socialism or fascism in the United States" will be tomorrow's concrete expression of the alternative "socialism or barbarism" on a world scale.

NINE

THE ROOTS of the new upsurge of the European proletariat — which has been ripening since 1968, is now fully unfolding in the Iberian peninsula, and will spread at least to Italy and France — lie essentially in the advance of the power and consciousness of the proletariat as the combined result of the growth in the productive forces during the past twenty-five years, the growing internal contradictions of bourgeois society (above all the growing crisis of capitalist relations of production), and the growing understanding by broad vanguard layers of the proletariat of the fundamental bankruptcy of "classical" Social Democracy and Stalinism. The combination of all these factors, fertilized by the growth of the revolutionary vanguard, has

given workers struggles a growing anticapitalist and antibureaucratic impetus, the material source of which is the *proletariat's objective need and capacity for democratically centralized (that is, planned) self-management in the economy and society*. For this basic reason, the next wave of socialist revolution will unfold on a qualitatively higher level of proletarian strength and class consciousness than did the 1917-23 wave, not to mention the post-second-world-war wave. The collective memory and intelligence of this working class is finally beginning to draw all the lessons of the historic victories and defeats of the world proletariat. In this sense, the European socialist revolution will fulfil the predictions made by Trotsky about the end of the second world war — with thirty years' delay.

TEN

THE HISTORIC FUNCTION of the European revolution — and the historic breakthrough of the Fourth International alongside the unfolding of that revolution — will be to decisively modify the *subjective* situation of the two largest sectors of the world proletariat, the working classes of the United States and the Soviet Union, and, subsequently, of the entire world proletariat. Under the present social (and international) relationship of forces, the conquest of power in West Europe is possibly only if it grows out of a clear revolutionary-socialist decision by the majority of the toiling masses, which means the majority of the population. This in turn is possible only on the basis of experience with forms of self-organization and mass activity higher than those possible under bourgeois democracy, forms which herald a higher form of state power from the standpoint of the democratic rights and decision-making power of the broad masses compared with those partially enjoyed in a bourgeois-democratic state: a workers state based on

organizations of workers councils, workers power, and workers council democracy.

Once again, however, under the present social (and international) relationship of forces in Europe, such a state would *from the outset* represent such a leap forward in the emancipation of the workers, both individually and collectively, that its impact on the world proletariat would be enormous. The attractive power of such emancipation on the American and Soviet working classes would contribute decisively to overcoming the basically apolitical attitude of both. The former would leap over anticommunism and lack of class consciousness to active sympathy with workers councils, socialism, and democracy. The latter would be able to break out of the impasse “bureaucratic dictatorship or capitalism.” Socialist revolution in the United States and political revolution in the USSR would become concrete perspectives.

ELEVEN

THE BASIC *subjective* difficulty in achieving a victorious socialist revolution in West Europe, a difficulty resulting from the whole past history of the labor movement, lies in the deep reformist and semireformist illusions of broad toiling masses, in other words, the widespread identification of their own democratic freedoms with the institutions of the bourgeois-democratic state. So long as this identification is not broken, bourgeois attempts to overcome the qualitative weakening of the repressive state apparatus, which is a feature of the beginning of every revolutionary crisis, through a campaign to restore the integrity of the institutions of the bourgeois state disguised as “popular will” and “respect for the universal franchise” will meet with success among the majority of the workers. And one of the essential elements in breaking that identification is that the

workers themselves experience higher forms of democratic freedoms on a broad scale.

For this reason, *the generalization and centralization of soviet-type bodies of self-organization* of the toiling masses (workers councils, soldiers committees, peasant leagues or councils, neighborhood committees, popular committees, etc.) *is the key problem of revolutionary strategy from the very beginning of the revolutionary crisis in Europe.*

Only if such a situation of generalized dual power emerges can the majority of the masses come to understand through their own experience that the direct democracy of workers councils allows them greater freedom than indirect bourgeois democracy and that the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus is a precondition for the free and unfettered development of mass initiative and activity and does not represent the beginning of a gradual withering away of the democratic rights and freedoms of the working class. This in turn is a precondition for winning the majority of the working class away from reformism, without which the conquest of power in imperialist countries is impossible under the present national and international relationship of forces.

In this sense, it is wrong to present the democracy of workers councils simply as an extension or “completion” of bourgeois democracy. A basic defense of private property and capitalist exploitation is inherent in bourgeois democracy, and this implies a fundamental reduction of the role of the toiling masses to that of passive observers and voters, the basic intent being to prevent them from becoming key actors in the political process on a permanent basis. What the democracy of workers councils does indeed extend and “complete” are those “nuclei of proletarian democracy within bourgeois democracy” within which the working class counterposes its own organizations and

activities to those of the bourgeois-democratic state organs. These nuclei can become generalized and universal only through the destruction of the bourgeois-democratic state organs. Moreover, proletarian democracy, with its integration of the economic liberation and decision-making power of the toilers, has a *quality and content* that differs from bourgeois democracy, as well as *basically different* forms.

Likewise, the generalization and centralization of organs of mass power are indispensable in achieving an increasingly generalized mobilization and unification of the broadest masses, for neither the existing trade unions nor mass parties, with their bureaucratic structures and leaderships, can by themselves really unite the organized and unorganized workers, technicians, intellectual toilers, students, high-school students, apprentices, housewives, poor peasants, soldiers, and so on. Again and again, experience since May 1968 has confirmed that all these layers can and should be united in the process of socialist revolution, at least in their majority.

TWELVE

UNDER THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES in the imperialist countries of historically developed ideological differentiation and organizational division of the working class and the workers movement, *genuine generalization and centralization of organs of the worker-council type are impossible without thorough respect for proletarian democracy*, in other words, respect for the existence within these organs of different parties, factions, groups, etc., and respect for the right to speak, write, print, and debate both inside and outside these organs. Any attempt to question, restrict, or suppress these basic democratic freedoms of the masses among other ways by claiming that this or that party or current is “bourgeois” — can only call into question and

weaken the legitimacy of socialist democracy as opposed to bourgeois democracy in the eyes of the masses and thus help the bourgeoisie and its reformist agents to restore stable bourgeois institutions. Similarly, any such attempt will necessarily deeply divide the working class and break the upsurge of the mass movement toward overthrowing capitalism.

THIRTEEN

THE SOLUTION to the two aspects of the “crisis of the subjective factor” — weakness of proletarian class consciousness and inadequacy of revolutionary leadership (weakness of the revolutionary party) — are closely interconnected. In their majority, masses who are still dominated by reformist or semireformist ideology cannot be led toward the conquest of power by a revolutionary party. Likewise, a party unable to alter the reformist consciousness and practice of the majority of the proletariat is not yet an adequate revolutionary party. Only through the experience of a situation of generalized dual power will the majority of the proletariat in the imperialist countries be able to break with reformist ideology decisively. This implies that most probably it is only under conditions of generalized dual power that the revolutionary party will be able to win the majority of the working class to its political project.

FOURTEEN

OF COURSE, this will not be a spontaneous development. It will depend on the revolutionary party's applying a correct strategy and tactics. Nor will the actual conquest of power (destruction of the bourgeois state machine, transfer of power to the congress of workers councils) be the result of an automatic addition of spontaneous or semi-spontaneous mass actions. A centralized plan and willingness and capacity to act at the decisive moment are indispensable in

this. All of which implies the leading role of the revolutionary party.

But this leading role can be successfully played out, averting adventures, only if the party is supported by the majority of the proletariat. In the imperialist countries today, this implies a generalized structure of workers councils and a conquest of political predominance within them by the revolutionary party (possibly in alliance with some left-centrist forces, but on the basis of the plan and projects of the revolutionary Marxists). Thus, the emergence of a structure of generalized dual power, the conquest of the majority of the proletariat, the fusion of the broad proletarian vanguard with the revolutionary Marxist program and cadres, and the building of a mass revolutionary party contesting for hegemony within the entire class are all closely linked and intertwined processes in today's proletarian revolution.

FIFTEEN

DICTATORSHIP of the proletariat means exactly what the words say: the dictatorship of a class (which in the imperialist countries today represents between 75 and 90 per cent of the working population) and not the dictatorship of a party or party leadership. It means the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the creation of a state of a new type in which the proletariat can exercise state and economic power directly and can protect that state against attempts by the former ruling class and its political forces to overthrow it. It does not mean a one-party system, nor does it mean rule by the revolutionary party, restriction of democratic rights and freedoms, or institutionalized terror. Arising in imperial countries from a revolutionary period and a conquest of power in which the decisive role is played by workers councils (the bodies of self-organization of the masses), the dictatorship of the proletariat can only mean

the rule of *soviets* (workers councils and so on). The revolutionary party attempts to guide the soviets through persuasion, through winning political hegemony, and through conquest of the majority and not through administrative or repressive measures. It accepts the *majority rule* of the soviets, without which the multiparty system and soviet democracy are impossible.

There are two fundamental reasons for adhering to this concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. First, any alternative (any variant of a one-party system, even the “mildest” one, such as that which prevailed in the Soviet Union between 1921 and 1923) inevitably fuels the growing passivity of the masses and the growing restriction of workers democracy (including within the revolutionary party itself), which causes a growing resort to administrative rule and command, in other words, the growth of bureaucracy and of the power of the bureaucracy. (This is not to say that the one-party system in the USSR during the 1921-23 period was the basic cause of the passivity of the workers. This passivity resulted primarily from the enormous sacrifices and efforts made by the proletariat during the civil war. But it was accentuated and prolonged by the failure to return to soviet democracy after 1921). The price to be paid for such a *departure* from the road to socialism, such a bureaucratic process, is immeasurably greater than the potential price of any “excessive democracy.” An effective struggle against bourgeois democracy also requires an atmosphere of free political debate and cultural-ideological pluralism. Otherwise, the transformation of Marxism into a “state religion” threatens to stifle Marxist creativity and the genuine commitment of youth to socialist convictions. Paradoxically, as the example of the Soviet Unions has strikingly confirmed, this will fuel a much more powerful re-emergence of reactionary ideologies

than would be the case under conditions of free ideological struggle.

In any event, *from its inception* the socialist revolution in the West will combine a powerful antibureaucratic impetus with its basic anticapitalist thrust, a result of the whole past and present of working class experience. The resistance of the masses to any attempt to impose a one-party system will be powerful and long standing. It would have to be crushed by terror essentially directed against the proletariat itself. The consequent split and demoralization of the working class would be fatal to the attempt to consciously build a classless society. In fact, however, there is no reason to believe that such an attempt will actually be undertaken. The relationship of forces between the bureaucratic and democratic currents within a victorious proletariat and within postcapitalist society as a whole in the presently advanced capitalist countries will be decisively in favor of proletarian democracy.

Second, the *objective needs* of rule, power, and management by the masses themselves arise from the very richness and complexity of the economies and societies of the imperialist countries. There are no pre-established recipes for the innumerable problems posed by the building of socialism in these countries. Only the freedom of action of the working class as a class — that is, freedom of debate, dissent, and experimentation, freedom to make mistakes and to correct them rapidly, in other words, *a free and unfettered process of self-education of the proletariat in power* — can gradually resolve these complex problems in the successful construction of a classless society and a classless world. If this is already increasingly felt to be the case in countries like the USSR or Czechoslovakia, it is a hundred times more the case in West Europe, North America, and Japan. Any attempt to replace workers self-

management in the economy and society with central rule by one party inevitably leads to the twin evils of bureaucratic centralization and/or "market socialism", which in turn leads to maximum waste, inefficiency, disorder, and the survival of habits and motivations of bourgeois origin. Only planned self-management, that is, rule by soviets, can ensure both optimal growth and the Leninist project of the dictatorship of the proletariat as "a state which begins to wither away from its very inception".

SIXTEEN

THE INTERNATIONAL EXTENSION of the European socialist revolution will most likely be determined by the dynamic of the international class struggle and by the effects of international capital's attempt to crush the first workers state or states in West Europe. Given the present relationship of forces, it is likely that this attempt will take the form of an economic blockade rather than immediate military intervention. It follows that the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe has an immediate transitional function against these attempts: to mobilize the proletariat of the capitalist European countries to block these counter-revolutionary moves and join the revolutionary process. Any proposal that would place additional political or ideological obstacles on the road to the immediate international extension of the revolution (for example, a proposal for immediate linkup with the Soviet Union) would be counterproductive and should be avoided.

In the course of this process of international consolidation of workers power in one or several countries of West Europe, the question of aiding the development of the political revolution in the USSR will surely arise. Demands that can be advanced to aid the rise of the political revolution could include proposals for joint economic planning with the countries of East Europe. But such

slogans should take on central importance only if the political revolution has become an immediate perspective. In all other circumstances, such propaganda should be subordinated to the immediate and burning practical tasks of protecting and consolidating the first European workers state or states by mobilizing the masses in other capitalist countries and helping them on the road to the conquest of power.

Yugoslavia, however, presents a special case. Because of the special relationship of the Yugoslav working class with that of several West European countries, because of the sympathy evoked among the West European proletariat and organized labor movement for the hybrid, imperfect, but nonetheless basically more progressive Yugoslav system of "self-management", and because of the serious threats the international and "national" forces of the bureaucracy (as well as procapitalist forces) could represent for the most advanced conquests of the Yugoslav working class in the near future, an immediate offer of federation and of pooling of economic resources made by a victorious socialist revolution in southern Europe to the Yugoslav working class could constitute an important stimulus for a successful self-defense by the Yugoslav proletariat against such threats and could thereby constitute an important stimulus for the political revolution in Yugoslavia and elsewhere in East Europe.

SEVENTEEN

IN THE FIFTEEN YEARS since the victory of the Cuban revolution, the colonial revolution has suffered many defeats, some crushing (Brazil, Indonesia, Iraq, Chile), some grave (Algeria, Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Sudan); in addition, there has been a disastrous retreat in the most important semicolonial country, India. On the positive side of this bleak balance-sheet there is only the long struggle

and final victory of the Indochinese revolution, with its positive repercussions throughout Southeast Asia. But these repercussions will bloom into full-fledged revolutionary opportunities only slowly and in the long run.

The *basic* reason for this long wave of defeats lies neither in the greater flexibility of world imperialism nor in its more vicious response to revolutionary mass movements (large-scale or covert military intervention, terror, assassinations, counter insurgency, blockade, economic sabotage, etc.). Clearly, all these factors are operative today; but they were likewise operative — for long years and on a broad scale in countries in which the revolution was finally victorious, like China, Cuba, and Vietnam.

The basic reason for the long chain of defeats of the colonial revolution lies in the adherence of its leadership to the conception of two-stage revolution, whether for primarily social reasons (where the leadership is mainly bourgeois or petty bourgeois), or for mainly ideological reasons (where it is predominantly Stalinist, whether of the pro-Moscow or pro-Peking variety). What has been negatively confirmed by these defeats (and positively confirmed by the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese victories) is the correct fundamental assumptions of the theory of permanent revolution, namely that under the pressure of the mass revolutionary upsurge of the workers and peasants in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the bourgeoisie in these countries is compelled to massively go over to the camp of counterrevolution, *along with its state apparatus and army*. Any tying of the proletariat to the “national” bourgeoisie, its political leadership, bourgeois state apparatus, and army necessarily disarms the proletariat in face of the counterrevolutionary onslaught.

EIGHTEEN

THE LONG DELAY of victorious socialist revolution in the semicolonial countries and the temporary consolidation of bourgeois states in many of them, however, has not resulted in total stagnation or retrogression in these countries. We have seen a new manifestation of the law of combined and uneven development: Although significant portions of the toiling masses of the semicolonial countries have experienced *an absolute decline* in living standards and democratic rights (in striking contrast to the rise in the standard of living of the workers and the power of the organized labor movement in West Europe and Japan throughout the twenty-five years that preceded the recession of 1974-75), this decline was *combined* with a significant movement toward industrialization, urbanization, and numerical growth of the wage-earners (the proletariat and semiproletariat), especially in countries like Brazil, Mexico, Iran, Colombia, Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Peru, Hong Kong, and Singapore, but also in countries in which there had already been a numerically strong working class, like Argentina, India, and South Africa.

Although the peasantry remains the largest class numerically in the semicolonial world as a whole, and even in such key countries as India, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt, and Iran, and although the conquest of the political leadership of the peasant movement by the proletariat and its revolutionary party through a correct fight for the national-democratic slogans (agrarian revolution, national independence from imperialism, constituent assembly, etc.) remains absolutely vital, nevertheless, in the long run this numerical and social growth of the proletariat in the colonial and semicolonial countries creates much more favorable conditions both for the building of revolutionary parties (sections of the Fourth International in these countries) and for the political defeat of all bourgeois, petty bourgeois, and

Stalinist leaderships that hitch the growing working-class movement to the wagon of the “national” bourgeoisie.

The struggle against “populist” interclass political ideologies and programs and for the political and organizational independence of the rural and urban proletariat in the colonial and semicolonial countries constitutes the key political struggle that must be waged in these countries in coming years. It is through this struggle that the Fourth International will be built in these countries.

This struggle should in no way be counterposed to the needs of the anti-imperialist struggle. Rather, it must be seen as the expression of the lessons of the past sixty years of history, namely that no consistent and completely victorious anti-imperialist struggle is possible under the leadership of or in political alliance with the “national” bourgeoisie, its parties, armies, and states.

NINETEEN

HISTORICALLY, THE BALANCE-SHEET that may now be drawn of the emergence of the powerful Fidelista current in the Latin American revolutionary movement is that it was the expression of *an initial and only partial break with populism*. In the early 1960s the rising Fidelista current did break with the Stalino-populist “two-stage” theory of the Latin American revolution and stood, correctly, for an intertwining of the democratic and socialist tasks of the Latin American revolution; this was particularly expressed in the Second Declaration of Havana and the writings of the Guevara. In doing this the Fidelista current dealt a powerful, though not decisive, blow to the Stalinopopulist concept of historical “blocs” with the “national” bourgeoisie against the oligarchy and imperialism.

But inasmuch as the Fidelista current increasingly and essentially focused on armed struggle and gave the form of

the struggle greater and greater priority over the problems of the class composition and class content of the revolutionary forces, it allowed in through the window what it had thrown out the door: the possibility of essentially *populist organizations* (people's armies and people's parties) divorced from the specific needs and concerns of the proletariat and therefore susceptible to being periodically coopted by the strategy of alliance with the "progressive sectors" of the bourgeoisie, including the bourgeois army.

The ultimate reabsorption of the Fidelista current by the Latin American Communist parties should not be exaggerated. What has occurred is more a result of the Cuban workers state's dependence on military and economic aid from the Kremlin, a product of the isolation of that state because of the successive defeats of the Latin American revolution. The ideological and political ferment introduced into the revolutionary and working class movement in Latin America by the victory of the Cuban revolution will prove to have lasting effects. Even in Cuba itself, the autonomy of the Fidelista current and of the best Guevarista traditions may reassert itself if there is a new upturn in the Latin American revolution. But in Latin America more than anywhere else, the struggle against populist illusions and deviations and for the political independence of the working class remains the key problem for this future upturn. Whether that upturn is imminent or will yet be some years in coming depends to a large extent on the outcome of the military coup in Argentina and on the degree to which the Argentine working class is able to reorganize its forces and build an alternative leadership in spite of the coup. To put it another way: It will depend on the degree to which the Argentine bourgeoisie proves capable of using the coup to inflict a defeat on the Argentine workers as crushing as the defeat inflicted upon the Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan proletariats.

TWENTY

IT IS INCREASINGLY likely that the victory of the proletarian revolution in West Europe will precede the victory of the political revolution in the Soviet Union and China. Barring unforeseen turns in the world situation, this is the variant on which we must base ourselves. The reason for this lies not in any objective “need” for or “function” of the bureaucracies in the bureaucratized workers states, nor in any broad mass base among the toiling population allegedly being acquired by these bureaucracies. On the contrary, all evidence confirms that revulsion against and opposition to waste, oppression, disregard for the workers' desire to administer production, and wanton strangulation of the elementary democratic rights of the masses are more widespread than ever.

The greatest obstacles on the road to political revolution are essentially *subjective and political* and not objective and social. They are:

a. The widespread conviction in the East European countries and among the oppressed nationalities of the USSR that any direct and open challenge to the Kremlin's rule in these areas that does not coincide with or quickly lead to a similar challenge in the Russian heartland itself will be quickly crushed as in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968.

b. The lack of political perspectives and consciousness among the Soviet proletariat in the absence of a realistic and *credible* alternative to both capitalism and the rule of the bureaucracy (the depth of the historical disappointment of the Russian proletariat).

c. The destruction of any continuity in the organization and cadres of a revolutionary Marxist working-class opposition, a result of Stalin's terror and the subsequent

“milder” repression under Khrushchev and, especially, Brezhnev.

d. The long-term, slow but steady increase in the standard of living of the workers in the USSR during the past twenty-five years (briefly interrupted in the early 1960s), which, given the lack of political perspective, creates a material basis for “consumerism” and for posing only “reformist” demands on the government. It is true that any recurrent interruption in this rise of the standard of living (for example as a result of a new crisis in the food supply or in distribution) as well as any renewed tension among the oppressed nationalities could give rise to explosive mass struggles, but of too scattered and unconnected a character to directly challenge the rule of the bureaucracy.

The inability of the “new” opposition to go beyond the aspirations of the intelligentsia and to develop a political and organizational project of linking up with the working class and the rebellious youth has undoubtedly contributed to this same trend.

The key role of the rise and victory of the socialist revolution in West Europe in overcoming these obstacles has already been stressed. Embryonically, it has been confirmed by the limited experience of the Prague Spring and the panic this provoked among the bureaucrats, who feared that the ‘Czechoslovak experience’ would trigger a universal movement in favor of socialist democracy and self-management in East Europe and the Soviet Union. The effects of a much more advanced example in West Europe, where military intervention by the Kremlin is excluded, would be much deeper, if less rapid, than those of the Prague Spring.

TWENTY-ONE

WHILE THE MOST LIKELY variant today is that the political revolution in the USSR and East Europe will occur after the victory of the socialist revolution in several key countries of West Europe, this in no way reduces the tremendous contribution this political revolution will make to the process of world revolution as a whole. The workers of the bureaucratized workers states will bring to the world revolution not only an acute sensitivity to the necessity of nipping bureaucratic deformations in the bud (a sensitivity born of their terrible experiences with Stalinism), but will also bring a technical skill and cultural level immeasurably higher than that of the Russian proletariat in 1917. They will bring the positive results of a tradition of living outside bourgeois society, results which are extensive and important in such fields as a less frantic work pace, greater weight of cultural needs, and deeper feelings of group solidarity, in spite of all the terrible consequences of bureaucratic dictatorship in all fields of social life.

Once the shackles of that dictatorship have been broken, it is likely that the Soviet, Czechoslovak, East German, Yugoslav, Polish, Hungarian proletariats will rise to great heights of political and social consciousness. On the basis of their rich political experiences, they will contribute powerfully to the general struggle for a socialist world.

TWENTY-TWO

THE ESCALATION of the Sino-Soviet conflict to the state level has strongly underlined the reactionary role played in world politics today by the identification of the interests of the workers states with the interests of a privileged bureaucracy. Although one may indeed demonstrate that the ideological roots of the *petty-bourgeois reactionary nationalism* that dominates the dynamics of this conflict in both Moscow and Peking lie in the theory of "socialism in one country", it is nonetheless the case that the relative

autonomy that has been taken on by this conflict at the state level, its reactionary impact on the international class struggle and the colonial revolution, and the way in which imperialism has been able to make use of it go well beyond its originally ideological aspect.

During the first stage of the conflict, essentially during the 1960s, the Kremlin undoubtedly played the more reactionary role. It allied with bourgeois India against the Chinese workers state, supported reactionary bourgeois governments in several semicolonial countries against local CPs, and refused essential military and economic aid to the People's Republic of China during a serious crisis for that country. More generally, Moscow introduced into the ranks of the CPs, particularly but not exclusively the CPs of the bureaucratized workers states themselves, such utterly reactionary prejudices as the “need to defend Western civilization against the Yellow peril” as well as chauvinistic contempt for “backward peasants who want to build communism on a bowl of rice.” It is no wonder that during this period the Maoist and semi-Maoist currents were able to win broad support among oppressed and rebellious layers in semi-colonial and even imperialist countries against such fundamentally conservative and counterrevolutionary ideologies.

In a second stage, however, essentially since the very end of the 1960s or the beginning of the 1970s, the scales have tipped in the opposite direction. Today the Maoist bureaucracy upholds policies and ideologies far more reactionary than those of the Kremlin or the “official” Communist parties. Beginning with the concept of the “two super powers” regarded as equally obnoxious) an ideological rationalization of Peking's diplomatic maneuvers between Washington and Moscow, based on the theory that capitalism had been restored in the USSR and in most of the

East European countries), Mao has gradually shifted toward the concept of “Soviet imperialism” as the main danger. This had led to approval of NATO and of nuclear rearmament of European imperialism, to defense of the capitalist “fatherland” in West Europe against the “military threat from Moscow”, to openly counterrevolutionary interventions in the Portuguese and Angolan revolutions, and to alliances with blatantly procapitalist forces, not only against the CPs, but even against the independent mass movements of the proletariat.

This tragic evolution once again highlights the importance of systematic internationalist education of the proletariat and of fighting against the divisive effects chauvinism and nationalism have within the proletariat and the working-class movement itself. The evolution of Chinese policy has led to the self-liquidation of a whole layer of dedicated revolutionaries. The importance of *building an international organization alongside and simultaneous with national revolutionary parties*, a fundamental distinctive feature of revolutionary Marxism, of Leninism, of Trotskyism, embodied by the Fourth International today, becomes all the more significant in light of the disastrous ideological and political results of petty-bourgeois nationalism run rampant in the organized labor movement, a phenomenon of which the latest degeneration of Maoism is a new, but by no means the only, confirmation.

TWENTY-THREE

ON THE OTHER HAND, one must not deduce wrong conclusions about the internal dynamics of Chinese society from the overwhelmingly reactionary role played by Maoist diplomacy and “orthodox” Maoist sects in world politics today. Recent events have once again confirmed that in China, contrary to Stalinist Russia, the masses are neither atomized nor politically passive. The cycle of political

differentiation and confrontation in the People's Republic of China occurs in a context basically and historically different from that which prevailed in Russia in 1927-53. Again and again, the manoeuvres of the Maoist faction of the bureaucracy have been limited by the independent dynamics of the mass movement, initially among the youth and now, it appears, increasingly among the proletariat as well. Thus, to reduce the phenomenon of the cultural revolution, its aftermath, and the current political struggle in China to simple intrabureaucratic conflicts would mean to seriously underestimate the potential revolutionary consciousness and militancy of significant sectors of Chinese society.

The crisis of Maoism now unfolding in the People's Republic of China is a crisis in which the masses are intervening more directly and autonomously than was the case during the crisis of Stalinism in the USSR. From a Marxist point of view, this must be the starting point of any analysis of political developments in China. This is the basis for the optimism of the Fourth International about the possibilities for a rebirth of Leninism and Trotskyism in China itself.

TWENTY-FOUR

FROM A *programmatic* standpoint, the slogan of the Socialist United State of *Europe* has now been superseded by the need to fight for the Socialist United States of the *World*. The key problems of world economics and politics — underdevelopment, hunger, averting nuclear destruction, prevention of depletion of natural resources, etc. — can be resolved only through a *world planned economy*. The increase in the number of workers states and the need to overcome any relations of nationalist egoism among them leads to the same conclusion. Any notion that from a programmatic point of view we lend priority to common planning with the “rich” workers states of the USSR and

East Europe as against the “poor” ones of Asia would be monstrous. Any world strategy for socialism that does not take account of the special problems and sensitivity of the underdeveloped countries will lead to disaster. As the *world* party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International must consciously express the need for this world planning and must build a *world* leadership with that goal in mind. Continental or regional priorities must be subordinated to this strategic priority.

Solidarity with the struggle of the key sectors of the colonial and semicolonial world to which imperialism will cling to the bitter end for obvious reasons (South Africa, Palestine, the oil-producing centers of the Middle East, probably the Panama Canal zone and the surrounding areas of Central and northern South America) will play an important role in developing among the liberating ranks of the proletariat of Europe the consciousness needed to begin solving the key tasks of the liberation of humanity.

TWENTY-FIVE

WORLD REVOLUTION and world socialism are indissolubly linked to a consciously planned worldwide use of human and material resources to realize a certain number of priority objectives that can be achieved only on a global scale:

- a. Elimination of want and avoidable illness for all human beings.
- b. Radical closing of the gap in material and cultural development between the northern and southern hemispheres, which implies a massive transfer of resources to the superexploited peoples of the southern hemisphere.
- c. Conservation or restoration of the ecological balance and of scarce resources for future generations.

d. Radical revolution in technology, which must be subordinated to the human needs of the producers and to the diversified possibilities in various geographic milieus.

All these revolutionary changes cannot be achieved under conditions of soviet democracy unless they are accompanied by an end to any form of domination, paternalism, or authoritarianism on the part of the white "race" as against other races and on the part of men as against women. Social equality among all people and races can become a reality only if it is based on equality of material resources and power. To achieve this without any decline in the material well-being of the proletariat and without any form of coercion on key sectors of the working class remains the most audacious and ambitious goal of communism, for which the Fourth International is the only consistent fighter today.
