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R10

C O N T E N T S

The Transitional Programme.....1

Introduction.....1

Dave Reid, 2002

The Transitional Programme.....2

Leon Trotsky, 1938

Founding the Fourth International.....18

Niall Mulholland, 2008

On the Radicalisation of the Masses.....21

Introduction.....21

Bill Hopwood, 1988

On the Radicalisation of the Masses.....22

Leon Trotsky, 1930

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It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme*, 1938

Introduction

by Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales (CWI, England & Wales)

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in June 2002 in The Socialist, newspaper of the Socialist Party (CWI, England & Wales).

Trotsky's Transitional Programme Winning Support for Socialism

Leon Trotsky's *Transitional Programme* is more than just a political programme. It is in essence a whole method for socialists to use in the struggle to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism.

The working class is the only force that can perform this task. But how do we convince the majority of working class people of the need for socialist ideas and of the correct methods to change society?

In the *Transitional Programme* Trotsky shows how the problems of working class people should be approached in a socialist way.

Transitional demands

Socialists fight for immediate reforms (minimal demands) but the day-to-day problems, unemployment, low pay etc. are linked to the socialist transformation of society by a series of intermediate demands (transitional demands).

The world that Trotsky was addressing when he wrote this pamphlet in 1938 was a very different one to today. In 1938 the world was just one year away from being engulfed in World War Two.

Fascism had crushed the workers' movements in Germany and Italy and was triumphant in Spain.

In the Soviet Union, where capitalism had been overthrown, a vicious dictatorship led by Stalin was wiping out the last remnants of workers' influence in a mass purge of millions of people.

However it was not only a period of brutal counter-revolution. Time and again in the 1930s the working class in most countries in Europe had conducted mass struggles against capitalism and fascism only to be thwarted by timorous or treacherous leadership. As Trotsky explained: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership".

Trotsky proposed The *Transitional Programme* as the programme for the new world party of the working class, the Fourth International to replace the Stalinised third International.

It is a document of its time dealing with the main issues that faced the working class of the day. Many of the programme's points are no longer completely applicable today, but the method that Trotsky outlines is timeless.

The *Transitional Programme* demonstrates the method that Marxists have used to point the way to socialism from Marx himself to the parties organised around the Committee for a Workers' International today.

A bridge to change

While there is a different world situation today from the 1930s there are still similar features. Today working class people around the world are also throwing themselves into struggle to defend their conditions.

In recent months in Argentina, in Italy and in Venezuela the working class has used revolutionary methods to confront the forces of capitalism. In all these countries the ruling class has been shaken by the power of the masses as they stirred into action, but capitalism has escaped due to the inaction of the leaders of the working class.

Virtually all the political, economic and social problems that we face are caused by capitalism: low pay, unemployment, expensive and inadequate housing, bad health, racism and war all flow from this system.

This basic truth is obscured by the media, the politicians and the capitalist system itself. It is not enough, therefore, for socialist organisations to simply proclaim socialism and wait for the workers to support it.

Marxists must link the struggles of the working class on "bread and butter issues" to the wider struggle to change society.

We propose demands that help to alleviate the basic problems that the working class face but also point in the direction of fundamentally changing society through the working class taking over, replacing capitalism with a democratically planned economy.

These demands, transitional demands as Trotsky refers to them, act as a bridge between answering the immediate problems of working people and the socialist transformation of society, the ultimate solution to all the separate issues.

End capitalism

The *Transitional Programme* is a programme for socialist change which is rooted in the current consciousness of the working class. That is why the method that Trotsky describes is more important than the actual demands he put forward in 1938.

Many small groups have rigidly tried to apply The *Transitional Programme* today by merely repeating demands from it which do not apply today. Workers on strike have been amused by strange people appearing on their picket lines demanding "workers' defence guards" ripped out of the context of The *Transitional Programme* of 1938.

If the *Transitional Programme* is a bridge from today's level of consciousness to the prospect of changing society the most important step on that bridge is the first one. The first demands have to reach the actual experience of working class people to make the rest of the demands relevant.

It is no good having the purest programme for socialist revolution if the mass of working people do not bother to read it because it is out of touch with the reality of their lives.

As The *Transitional Programme* points out, leaders of the labour movement (and some left groups today) focus on immediate issues, separating them from the need for socialist change whilst talking about socialism maybe in the dim and distant future. Transitional demands link the two together, starting from today's solutions and pointing to a future where society is run by working class people to meet the needs of all.

The Transitional Programme

The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International

by Leon Trotsky, 1938



The Objective Prerequisites for a Socialist Revolution

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.[1]

The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth. Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system inflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses. Growing unemployment, in its turn, deepens the financial crisis of the state and undermines the unstable monetary systems. Democratic regimes, as well as fascist, stagger on from one bankruptcy to another.

The bourgeoisie itself sees no way out. In countries where it has already been forced to stake its last upon the card of fascism, it now toboggans with closed eyes toward an economic and military catastrophe. In the historically privileged countries, i.e., in those where the bourgeoisie can still for a certain period permit itself the luxury of democracy at the expense of national accumulations (Great Britain, France, United States, etc.), all of capital's traditional parties are in a state of perplexity bordering on a paralysis of will.

The "New Deal",[2] despite its first period of pretentious resoluteness, represents but a special form of political perplexity, possible only in a country where the bourgeoisie succeeded in accumulating incalculable wealth. The present crisis, far from having run its full course, has already succeeded in showing that "New Deal" politics, like Popular Front politics in France, opens no new exit from the economic blind alley.

International relations present no better picture. Under the increasing tension of capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe)[3] must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions. The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914.

All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet "ripened" for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only "ripened"; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.

The Proletariat and its Leadership

The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a pre-revolutionary state of society. The chief obstacle in the path of transforming the pre-revolutionary into a revolutionary state is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership: its petty bourgeois cowardice before the big bourgeoisie and its perfidious connection with it even in its death agony.

In all countries the proletariat is racked by a deep disquiet. The multi-millioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines.

The Spanish proletariat has made a series of heroic attempts since April 1931 to take power in its hands and guide the fate of society. However, its own parties (Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists, POUMists)[4] – each in its own way acted as a brake and thus prepared Franco's triumphs.

In France, the great wave of "sit down" strikes, particularly during June 1936, revealed the wholehearted readiness of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist system. However, the leading organisations (Socialists, Stalinists, Syndicalists)[5] under the label of the Popular Front succeeded in canalising and damming, at least temporarily, the revolutionary stream.

The unprecedented wave of sit down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States (the CIO)[6] is the most indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed on them by history. But here too, the leading political organisations, including the newly created CIO, do everything possible to keep in check and paralyse the revolutionary pressure of the masses.

The definite passing over of the Comintern[7] to the side of bourgeois order, its cynically counterrevolutionary role throughout the world, particularly in Spain, France, the United States and other "democratic" countries, created exceptional supplementary difficulties for the world proletariat. Under the banner of the

October Revolution, the conciliatory politics practiced by the "People's Front" doom the working class to impotence and clear the road for fascism.

"People's Fronts" on the one hand – fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. From the historical point of view, however, both these resources are stopgaps. The decay of capitalism continues under the sign of the Phrygian cap in France as under the sign of the swastika in Germany. Nothing short of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can open a road out.

The orientation of the masses is determined first by the objective conditions of decaying capitalism, and second, by the treacherous politics of the old workers' organisations. Of these factors, the first, of course, is the decisive one: the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus. No matter how the methods of the social betrayers differ – from the "social" legislation of Blum[8] to the judicial frame-ups of Stalin[9] – they will never succeed in breaking the revolutionary will of the proletariat. As time goes on, their desperate efforts to hold back the wheel of history will demonstrate more clearly to the masses that the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International.

The Minimum Programme and the Transitional Programme

The strategic task of the next period – pre-revolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organisation – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation. It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its programme into two parts independent of each other: the *minimum programme* which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the *maximum programme* which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum programme no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word *socialism* is used only for holiday speechifying. The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial, questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat, all its layers, occupations and groups should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not for the fact that it frees the revolutionary party from day-to-day work but because it permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution.

The Fourth International does not discard the programme of the old "minimal" demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective. Insofar as the old, partial, "minimal" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism – and this occurs at each step – the Fourth International advances a system of *transitional demands*, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimal programme" is superseded by the *transitional programme*, the task of which lies in systematic mobilisation of the masses for the proletarian revolution.

Sliding Scale of Wages and Sliding Scale of Hours

Under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the meagerised life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism. They must defend their mouthful of bread, if they cannot increase or better it. There is neither the need nor the opportunity to enumerate here those separate, partial demands which time and again arise on the basis of concrete circumstances – national, local, trade union. But two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarised the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalised slogans and methods of struggle.

The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the politics of the capitalists which, to a considerable degree, like the politics of their agents, the reformists, aims to place the whole burden of militarism, the crisis, the disorganisation of the monetary system and all other scourges stemming from capitalism's death agony upon the backs of the toilers. The Fourth International demands *employment* and *decent living conditions* for all.

Neither monetary inflation nor stabilisation can serve as slogans for the proletariat because these are but two ends of the same stick. Against a bounding rise in prices, which with the approach of war will assume an ever more unbridled character, one can fight only under the slogan of a *sliding scale of wages*. This means that collective agreements should assure an automatic rise in wages in relation to the increase in price of consumer goods.

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. The *right to employment* is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, "structural" as well as "conjunctural," the time is ripe to advance along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of *a sliding scale of working hours*. Trade unions and other mass organisations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was

under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other programme for the present catastrophic period.

Property owners and their lawyers will prove the "unrealisability" of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a "normal" collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralisation and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. "Realisability" or "unrealisability" is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.

Trade Unions in the Transitional Epoch

In the struggle for partial and transitional demands, the workers now more than ever before need mass organisations, principally trade unions. The powerful growth of trade unionism in France and the United States is the best refutation of the preachments of those ultra-left doctrinaires who have been teaching that trade unions have "outlived their usefulness."

The Bolshevik-Leninist[10] stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. He fights uncompromisingly against any attempt to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state and bind the proletariat to "compulsory arbitration" and every other form of police guardianship – not only fascist but also "democratic." Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists, including those of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Sectarian attempts to build or preserve small "revolutionary" unions, as a second edition of the party, signify in actuality the renouncing of the struggle for leadership of the working class. It is necessary to establish this firm rule: self-isolation of the capitulationist variety from mass trade unions, which is tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution, is incompatible with membership in the Fourth International.

At the same time, the Fourth International resolutely rejects and condemns trade union fetishism, equally characteristic of trade unionists and syndicalists.

• Trade unions do not offer, and in line with their task, composition and manner of recruiting membership, cannot offer a finished revolutionary programme; in consequence, they cannot replace the *party*. The building of national revolutionary parties as sections of the Fourth International is the central task of the transitional epoch.

• Trade unions, even the most powerful, embrace no more than 20 to 25 percent of the working class, and at that, predominantly the more skilled and better paid layers. The more oppressed majority of the working class is drawn only episodically into the struggle, during a period of exceptional upsurges in the labour movement. During such moments it is necessary to create organisations *ad hoc*, embracing the whole fighting mass: strike committees, factory committees, and finally, soviets.[11]

• As organisations expressive of the top layers of the proletariat, trade unions, as witnessed by all past historical experience, including the fresh experience of the anarcho-syndicalist unions in Spain, developed powerful tendencies toward compromise with the bourgeois-democratic regime. In periods of acute class struggle, the leading bodies of the trade unions aim to become masters of the mass movement in order to render it harmless. This is already occurring during the period of simple strikes, especially in the case of the mass sit-down strikes which shake the principle of bourgeois property. In time of war or revolution, when the bourgeoisie is plunged into exceptional difficulties, trade union leaders usually become bourgeois ministers.

Therefore, the sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organisations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions. If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian factions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ("progressive") bureaucratic cliques. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution.

Factory Committees

During a transitional epoch, the workers' movement does not have a systematic and well-balanced, but a feverish and explosive character. Slogans as well as organisational forms should be subordinated to the indices of the movement. On guard against routine handling of a situation as against a plague, the leadership should respond sensitively to the initiative of the masses.

Sit-down strikes, the latest expression of this kind of initiative, go beyond the limits of "normal" capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is boss of the factory: the capitalist or the workers?

If the sit-down strike raises this question episodically, the *factory committee* gives it organised expression. Elected by all the factory employees, the factory committee immediately creates a counterweight to the will of the administration.

To the reformist criticism of bosses of the so-called "economic royalist" type like Ford[12] in contradistinction to "good," "democratic" exploiters, we counterpose the slogan of factory committees as centres of struggle against both the first and the second.

Trade union bureaucrats will, as a general rule, resist the creation of factory committees, just as they resist every bold step along the road of mobilising the masses.

However, the wider the sweep of the movement, the easier will it be to break this resistance. Where the closed shop has already been instituted in "peaceful" times, the committee will formally coincide with the usual organ of the trade union, but will renew its personnel and widen its functions. The prime significance of the committee, however, lies in the fact that it becomes the militant staff for such working class layers, as the trade union is usually

incapable of moving to action. It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come.

From the moment that the committee makes its appearance, a factual dual power is established in the factory. By its very essence it represents the transitional state, because it includes in itself two irreconcilable regimes: the capitalist and the proletarian. The fundamental significance of factory committees is precisely contained in the fact that they open the doors, if not to a direct revolutionary, then to a pre-revolutionary period – between the bourgeois and the proletarian regimes. That the propagation of the factory committee idea is neither premature nor artificial is amply attested to by the waves of sit-down strikes spreading through several countries. New waves of this type will be inevitable in the immediate future. It is necessary to begin a campaign in favour of factory committees in time in order not to be caught unawares.

"Business Secrets" and Workers' Control of Industry

Liberal capitalism, based upon competition and free trade, has completely receded into the past. Its successor, monopolistic capitalism not only does not mitigate the anarchy of the market, but on the contrary imparts to it a particularly convulsive character. The necessity of "controlling" economy, of placing state "guidance" over industry and of "planning" is today recognised – at least in words – by almost all current bourgeois and petty bourgeois tendencies, from fascist to Social Democratic. With the fascists, it is manly a question of "planned" plundering of the people for military purposes. The Social Democrats prepare to drain the ocean of anarchy with spoonfuls of bureaucratic "planning." Engineers and professors write articles about "technocracy." In their cowardly experiments in "regulation," democratic governments run head-on into the invincible sabotage of big capital.

The actual relationship existing between the exploiters and the democratic "controllers" is best characterised by the fact that the gentlemen "reformers" stop short in pious trepidation before the threshold of the trusts and their business "secrets." Here the principle of "non-interference" with business dominates. The accounts kept between the individual capitalist and society remain the secret of the capitalist: they are not the concern of society. The motivation offered for the principle of business "secrets" is ostensibly, as in the epoch of liberal capitalism, that of "free competition". In reality, the trusts keep no secrets from one another. The business secrets of the present epoch are part of a persistent plot of monopoly capitalism against the interests of society. Projects for limiting the autocracy of "economic royalists" will continue to be pathetic farces as long as private owners of the social means of production can hide from producers and consumers the machinations of exploitation, robbery and fraud. The abolition of "business secrets" is the first step toward actual control of industry.

Workers no less than capitalists have the right to know the "secrets" of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry and centralised transport should be placed under an observation glass.

The immediate tasks of workers' control should be to explain the debits and credits of society, beginning with individual business undertakings; to determine the actual share of the national income appropriated by individual capitalists and by the exploiters as a whole; to expose the behind-the-scenes deals and swindles of banks and trusts; finally, to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labour which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits.

No office holder of the bourgeois state is in a position to carry out this work, no matter with how great authority one would wish to endow him. All the world was witness to the impotence of President Roosevelt and Premier Blum against the plottings of the "60" or "200 Families"[13] of their respective nations. To break the resistance of the exploiters, the mass pressure of the proletariat is necessary. Only factory committees can bring about real control of production, calling in – as consultants but not as "technocrats" – specialists sincerely devoted to the people: accountants, statisticians, engineers, scientists, etc.

The struggle against unemployment is not to be considered without the calling for a broad and bold organisation of *public works*. But public works can have a continuous and progressive significance for society, as for the unemployed themselves, only when they are made part of a general plan worked out to cover a considerable number of years. Within the framework of this plan, the workers would demand resumption, as public utilities, of work in private businesses closed as a result of the crisis. Workers' control in such case: would be replaced by direct workers' management.

The working out of even the most elementary economic plan – from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters – is impossible without workers' control, that is, without the penetration of the workers' eye into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at conference to choose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions and finally, of national industry as a whole. Thus, workers' control becomes a *school for planned economy*. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry when the hour for that eventuality strikes.

To those capitalists, mainly of the lower and middle strata, who of their own accord sometimes offer to throw open their books to the workers – usually to demonstrate the necessity of lowering wages – the workers answer that they are not interested in the bookkeeping of individual bankrupts or semi-bankrupts but in the account ledgers of all exploiters as a whole. The workers cannot and do not wish to accommodate the level of their living conditions to the exigencies of individual capitalists, themselves victims of their own regime. The task is one of reorganising the whole system of production and distribution on a more dignified and workable basis if the abolition of business secrets be a necessary condition to workers' control, then control is the first step along the road to the socialist guidance of economy.

Expropriation of Separate Groups of Capitalists

The socialist programme of expropriation, i.e., of political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and liquidation of its economic domination, should in no case during the present transitional period hinder us from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, in answer to the pathetic jeremiads of the gentlemen democrats about the dictatorship of the "60 Families" of the United States or the "200 Families" of France, we counterpose the demand for the expropriation of those 60 or 200 feudalistic capitalist overlords.

In precisely the same way, we demand the expropriation of the corporations holding monopolies on war industries, railroads, the most important sources of raw materials, etc.

The difference between these demands and the muddleheaded reformist slogan of "nationalisation" lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers.

The necessity of advancing the slogan of expropriation in the course of daily *agitation* in partial form, and not only in our propaganda in its more comprehensive aspects, is dictated by the fact that different branches of industry are on different levels of development, occupy a different place in the life of society, and pass through different stages of the class struggle. Only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie on the order of the day. The task of transitional demands is to prepare the proletariat to solve this problem.

Expropriation of the Private Banks and State-ization of the Credit System

Imperialism means the domination of *finance capital*. Side by side with the trusts and syndicates, and very frequently rising above them, the banks concentrate in their hands the actual command over the economy. In their structure the banks express in a concentrated form the entire structure of modern capital: they combine tendencies of *monopoly* with tendencies of *anarchy*. They organise the miracles of technology, giant enterprises, mighty trusts; and they also organise high prices, crises and unemployment. It is impossible to take a single serious step in the struggle against monopolistic despotism and capitalistic anarchy – which supplement one another in their work of destruction – if the commanding posts of banks are left in the hands of predatory capitalists. In order to create a unified system of investments and credits, along a rational plan corresponding to the interests of the entire people, it is necessary to merge all the banks into a single national institution. Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with the necessary actual, i.e., material resources – and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources – for economic planning.

The expropriation of the banks in no case implies the expropriation of bank deposits. On the contrary, the single *state bank* will be able to create much more favourable conditions for the small depositors than could the private banks. In the same way, only the state bank can establish for farmers, tradesmen and small merchants conditions of favourable, that is, cheap credit. Even more important, however, is the circumstance that the entire economy – first and foremost large-scale industry and transport directed by a single financial staff, will serve the vital interests of the workers and all other toilers.

However, the *state-ization* of the banks will produce these favourable results only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers.

The Picket Line, Defence Guards/Workers' Militia and the Arming of the Proletariat

Sit-down strikes are a serious warning from the masses addressed not only to the bourgeoisie but also to the organisations of the workers, including the Fourth International. In 1919-20, the Italian workers seized factories on their own initiative, thus signalling the news to their "leaders" of the coming of the social revolution. The "leaders" paid no heed to the signal. The victory of fascism was the result.

Sit down strikes do not yet mean the seizure of factories in the Italian manner, but they are a decisive step toward such seizures. The present crisis can sharpen the class struggle to an extreme point and bring nearer the moment of denouement. But that does not mean that a revolutionary situation comes on at one stroke. Actually, its approach is signalised by a continuous series of convulsions. One of these is the wave of sit-down strikes. The problem of the sections of the Fourth International is to help the proletarian vanguard understand the general character and tempo of our epoch and to fructify in time the struggle of the masses with ever more resolute and organisational measures.

The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counterattack on the part of capital. New waves of sit down strikes can call forth and undoubtedly will call forth resolute countermeasures on the part of the bourgeoisie. Preparatory work is already being done by the confidential staffs of big trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organisations, woe to the proletariat if it is again caught unawares!

The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with the official police and army. In the United States even during "peaceful" times the bourgeoisie maintains militarised battalions of scabs and privately armed thugs in factories.[14] To this must now be added the various groups of American Nazis.[15] The French bourgeoisie at the first approach of danger mobilised semi-legal and illegal fascist detachments, including such as are in the army. No sooner does the pressure of the English workers once again become stronger than immediately the fascist bands are doubled, trebled, increased tenfold to come out in bloody march against the workers.[16] The bourgeoisie keeps itself most accurately informed about the fact that in the present epoch the class struggle irresistibly tends to transform itself into civil war. The examples of Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain and other countries taught considerably more to the magnates and lackeys of capital than to the official leaders of the proletariat.

The politicians of the Second and Third Internationals[17] as well as the bureaucrats of the trade unions, consciously close their eyes to the bourgeoisie's private army; otherwise they could not preserve their alliance with it for even twenty-four hours. The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed.

The duty of the Fourth International is to put an end to such slavish polices once and for all. The petty bourgeois democrats – including Social Democrats, Stalinists and Anarchists – yell louder about the struggle against fascism the more cravenly they capitulate to it in actuality. Only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory – and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with

every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defence*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the programme of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organise groups for self-defence, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms.

A new upsurge of the mass movement should serve not only to increase the number of these units but also to unite them according to neighbourhoods, cities, regions. It is necessary to give organised expression to the valid hatred of the workers toward scabs and bands of gangsters and fascists. It is necessary to advance the slogan of a *workers' militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organisations, meetings and press.

Only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable, courageous agitational and organisational work always on the basis of the experience of the masses themselves, is it possible to root out from their consciousness the traditions of submissiveness and passivity; to train detachments of heroic fighters capable of setting an example to all toilers; to inflict a series of tactical defeats upon the armed thugs of counterrevolution; to raise the self-confidence of the exploited and oppressed; to compromise Fascism in the eyes of the petty bourgeoisie and pave the road for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Engels defined the state as "bodies of armed men".[18] *The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, else leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International.

The Alliance of the Workers and Farmers

The brother-in-arms and counterpart of the worker in the country is the agricultural labourer. They are two parts of one and the same class. Their interests are inseparable. The industrial workers' programme of transitional demands, with changes here and there, is likewise the programme of the agricultural proletariat.

The peasants (farmers)[19] represent another class: they are the petty bourgeoisie of the village. The petty bourgeoisie is made up of various layers, from the semi-proletarian to the exploiter elements. In accordance with this, the political task of the industrial proletariat is to carry the class struggle into the country. Only thus will he be able to draw a dividing line between his allies and his enemies.

The peculiarities of national development of each country find their queerest expression in the status of farmers and, to some extent, of the urban petty bourgeoisie (artisans and shopkeepers). These classes, no matter how numerically strong they may be, essentially are representative survivals of pre-capitalist forms of production. The sections of the Fourth International should work out with all possible concreteness a programme of transitional demands concerning the peasants (farmers) and urban petty bourgeoisie, in conformity with the conditions of each country. The advanced workers should learn to give clear and concrete answers to the questions put by their future allies.

While the farmer remains an "independent" petty producer he is in need of cheap credit, of agricultural machines and fertiliser at prices he can afford to pay, favourable conditions of transport, and conscientious organisation of the market for his agricultural products. But the banks, the trusts, the merchants rob the farmer from every side. Only the farmers themselves with the help of the workers can curb this robbery. *Committees elected by small farmers* should make their appearance on the national scene and jointly with the workers' committees and committees of bank employees take into their hands control of transport, credit, and mercantile operations affecting agriculture.

By falsely citing the "excessive" demands of the workers the big bourgeoisie skilfully transforms the question of *commodity prices* into a wedge to be driven between the workers and farmers and between the workers and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities. The peasant, artisan, small merchant, unlike the industrial worker, office and civil service employee, cannot demand a wage increase corresponding to the increase in prices. The official struggle of the government with high prices is only a deception of the masses. But the farmers, artisans, merchants, in their capacity of consumers, can step into the politics of price-fixing shoulder to shoulder with the workers. To the capitalist's lamentations about costs of production, of transport and trade, the consumers answer: "Show us your books; we demand control over the fixing of prices." The organs of this control should be the *committees on prices*, made up of delegates from the factories, trade unions, cooperatives, farmers' organisations, the "little man" of the city, housewives, etc. By this means the workers will be able to prove to the farmers that the real reason for high prices is not high wages but the exorbitant profits of the capitalists and the overhead expenses of capitalist anarchy.

The programme for the *nationalisation of the land and collectivisation of agriculture* should be so drawn that from its very basis it should exclude the possibility of expropriation of small farmers and their compulsory collectivisation. The farmer will remain owner of his plot of land as long as he himself believes it possible or necessary. In order to rehabilitate the programme of socialism in the eyes of the farmer, it is necessary to expose mercilessly the Stalinist methods of collectivisation,[20] which are dictated not by the interests of the farmers or workers but by the interests of the bureaucracy.

The expropriation of the expropriators likewise does not signify forcible confiscation of the property of artisans and shopkeepers. On the contrary, workers' control of banks and trusts – even more, the nationalisation of these concerns, can create for the urban petty bourgeoisie incomparably more favourable conditions of credit purchase, and sale than is possible under the unchecked domination of the monopolies. Dependence upon private capital will be replaced by dependence upon the state, which will be the more attentive to the needs of its small co-workers and agents the more firmly the toilers themselves keep the state in their own hands.

The practical participation of the exploited farmers in the control of different fields of economy will allow them to decide for themselves whether or not it would be profitable for them to go over to collective working of the land – at what date and on what scale. Industrial workers should consider themselves duty-bound to show farmers every co-operation in traveling this road: through the trade unions, factory committees, and, above all, through a workers' and farmers' government.

The alliance proposed by the proletariat – not to the "middle classes in general but to the exploited layers of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, against all exploiters, including those of the "middle classes" – can be based not on compulsion but only on free consent, which should be consolidated in a special "contract." This "contract" is the programme of transitional demands voluntarily accepted by both sides.

The Struggle Against Imperialism and War

The whole world outlook, and consequently also the inner political life of individual countries, is overcast by the threat of world war. Already the imminent catastrophe sends violent ripples of apprehension through the very broadest masses of mankind.

The Second International repeats its infamous politics of 1914 with all the greater assurance since today it is the Comintern which plays first fiddle in chauvinism. As quickly as the danger of war assumed concrete outline the Stalinists, outstripping the bourgeois and petty bourgeois pacifists by far, became blatant haranguers for so-called "national defence." The revolutionary struggle against war thus rests fully on the shoulders of the Fourth International.

The Bolshevik-Leninist policy regarding this question, formulated in the thesis of the International Secretariat (*War and the Fourth International*, 1934), preserves all of its force today.

In the next period a revolutionary party will depend for success primarily on its policy on the question of war. A correct policy is composed of two elements: an uncompromising attitude on imperialism and its wars, and the ability to base one's programme on the experience of the masses themselves.

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

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

"*Disarmament?*" – But the entire question revolves around who will disarm whom. The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to disarm the bourgeoisie, the workers must arm themselves.

"*Neutrality?*" – But the proletariat is nothing like neutral in the war between Japan and China, or a war between Germany and the USSR. "Then what is meant is the defence of China and the USSR?" Of course! But not by the imperialists who will strangle both China and the USSR.

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

It is necessary to interpret these fundamental ideas by breaking them up into more concrete and partial ones, dependent upon the course of events and the orientation of thought of the masses. In addition, it is necessary to differentiate strictly between the pacifism of the diplomat, professor, journalist, and the pacifism of the carpenter, agricultural worker, and the charwoman. In one case, pacifism is a screen for imperialism; in the other, it is the confused expression of distrust in imperialism. When the small farmer or worker speaks about the defence of the fatherland, he means defence of his home, his family and other similar families from invasion, bombs and poison gas. The capitalist and his journalist understand by the defence of the fatherland the seizure of colonies and markets, the predatory increase of the "national" share of world income. Bourgeois pacifism and patriotism are shot through with deceit. In the pacifism and even patriotism of the oppressed, there are elements which reflect on the one hand a hatred of destructive war, and on the other a clinging to what they believe to be their own good – elements which we must know how to seize upon in order to draw the requisite conclusions.

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

From this point of view, our American section, for example, entirely supports the proposal for establishing a referendum on the question of declaring war. No democratic reform, it is understood, can by itself prevent the rulers from provoking war when they wish it. It is necessary to give frank warning of this. But notwithstanding the illusions of the masses in regard to the proposed referendum, their support of it reflects the distrust felt by workers and farmers for bourgeois government and Congress. Without supporting and without sparing illusions, it is necessary to support with all possible strength the progressive distrust of the exploited toward the exploiters. The more widespread the movement for the referendum becomes, the sooner will the bourgeois pacifists move away from it; the more completely will the betrayers of the Comintern be compromised; the more acute will distrust of the imperialists become.

From this viewpoint, it is necessary to advance the demand: electoral rights for men and women beginning with age of 18. Those who will be called upon to die for the fatherland tomorrow should have the right to vote today. The struggle against war must first of all begin with the *revolutionary mobilisation of the youth*.

Light must be shed upon the problem of war from all angles, hinging upon the side from which it will confront the masses at a given moment.

War is a gigantic commercial enterprise, especially for the war industry. The "60 Families" are therefore first-line patriots and the chief provocateurs of war. *Workers' control of war industries* is the first step in the struggle against the "manufacturers" of war.

To the slogan of the reformists: *a tax on military profit*, we counterpose the slogans: *confiscation of military profit* and *expropriation of the traffickers in war industries*. Where military industry is "nationalised," as in France,[21] the slogan of *workers' control* preserves its full strength. The proletariat has as little confidence in the government of the bourgeoisie as in an individual capitalist

Not one man and not one penny for the bourgeois government!

Not an armaments programme but a programme of useful public works!

Complete independence of workers' organisations from military-police control!

Once and for all we must tear from the hands of the greedy and merciless imperialist clique, scheming behind the backs of the

people, the disposition of the people's fate. In accordance with this, we demand:

1. Complete abolition of secret diplomacy;

2. All treaties and agreements to be made accessible to all workers and farmers;

3. Military training and arming of workers and farmers under direct control of workers' and farmers' committees;

4. Creation of military schools for the training of commanders among the toilers, chosen by workers' organisations;

5. Substitution for the standing army of a *people's militia*, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc.

Imperialist war is the continuation and sharpening of the predatory politics of the bourgeoisie. The struggle of the proletariat against war is the continuation and sharpening of its class struggle. The beginning of war alters the situation and partially the means of struggle between the classes, but not the aim and basic course. The imperialist bourgeoisie dominates the world. In its basic character the approaching war will therefore be an imperialist war. The fundamental content of the politics of the international proletariat will consequently be a struggle against imperialism and its war. In this struggle the basic principle is: "the chief enemy is in *your own country*" or "the defeat of *your own* (imperialist) government is the lesser evil."

But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary, the majority are victims of imperialism. Some of the colonial or semi colonial countries will undoubtedly attempt to utilise the war in order to east off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating. It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed countries in their war against oppressors. The same duty applies in regard to aiding the USSR,[22] or whatever other workers' government might arise before the war or during the war. The defeat of *every* imperialist government in the struggle with the workers' state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil.

The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government, no matter what might be the diplomatic and military relations between the two countries at a given moment. If the governments find themselves in a temporary and, by the very essence of the matter, unreliable alliance, then the proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the non-imperialist "ally" through its *own* methods, i.e., through the methods of the international class struggle (agitation not only against their perfidious allies, but also in favour of a workers' state in a colonial country; boycott, strikes, in one case; rejection of boycott and strikes in another case, etc.)

In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarise either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy[23] of the USSR. On the contrary, it maintains full political independence from the one as from the other. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies and in the USSR, strengthens there the authority and influence of the Fourth International, and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country, the reactionary bureaucracy in the USSR.

At the beginning of the war the sections of the Fourth International will inevitably feel themselves isolated: every war takes the national masses unawares and impels them to the side of the government apparatus. The internationalists will have to swim against the stream. However, the devastation and misery brought about by the new war, which in the first months will far outstrip the bloody horrors of 1914-18 will quickly prove sobering. The discontents of the masses and their revolt will grow by leaps and bounds. The sections of the Fourth International will be found at the head of the revolutionary tide. The programme of transitional demands will gain burning actuality. The problem of the conquest of power by the proletariat will loom in full stature.

Before exhausting or drowning mankind in blood, capitalism befouls the world atmosphere with the poisonous vapours of national and race hatred. *Anti-Semitism* today is one of the most malignant convulsions of capitalism's death agony.

An uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and shades of national arrogance and chauvinism, particularly anti-Semitism, should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International, as the most important part of the struggle against imperialism and war. Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the World Unite!

Workers' and Farmers' Government

This formula, "workers' and farmers' government", first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat. The significance of this designation comes mainly from the fact that it underscored the idea of an *alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry* upon which the Soviet power rests.

When the Comintern of the epigones[24] tried to revive the formula buried by history of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," it gave to the formula of the "workers' and peasants' government" a completely different, purely "democratic," i.e., bourgeois content, *counterposing* it to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Bolshevik-Leninists resolutely rejected the slogan of the "workers' and peasants' government" in the bourgeois-democratic version. They affirmed then and affirm now that when the party of the proletariat refuses to step beyond bourgeois democratic limits, its alliance with the peasantry is simply turned into a support for capital, as was the case with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in 1917,[25] with the Chinese Communist Party in 1925-27, and as is now the case with the "People's Front" in Spain, France and other countries.

From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the SRs and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. Under this provision the Bolshevik Party promised the Mensheviks and the SRs, as the petty bourgeois representatives of the worker and peasants, its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie categorically refusing, however, either to enter into the government of the Mensheviks and SRs or to carry political responsibility for it. If the Mensheviks and SRs had actually broken with the Cadets (liberals)[26] and with foreign imperialism, then the "workers' and peasants' government" created by them could only have hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was exactly because of this that the leadership of petty bourgeois democracy resisted with all possible strength the establishment of its own government. The experience of Russia demonstrated, and the experience of Spain and France once again confirms, that even under very favourable conditions the parties of petty bourgeois democracy (SRs, Social

Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists) are incapable of creating a government of workers and peasants, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and the SRs: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!" had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and SRs to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days,[27] definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks.

The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!" is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organisations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam[28] Internationals. The slogan, "workers' and farmers' government," is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that "democratic" sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to Socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path.

Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the programme of the "workers' and farmers' government."

Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organisations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is, to say the least, highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, there is no need to indulge in guesswork. The agitation around the slogan of a workers'-farmers' government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalised slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old bourgeois parties, the downfall of democracy, the growth of fascism, the accelerated drive of the workers toward more active and aggressive politics). Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power.

It is impossible in advance to foresee what will be the concrete stages of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class struggle of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power.

Soviets

Factory committees, as already stated, are elements of dual power inside the factory. Consequently, their existence is possible only under conditions of increasing pressure by the masses. This is likewise true of special mass groupings for the struggle *against war*, of the *committees on prices*, and all other new centres of the movement, the very appearance of which bears witness to the fact that the class struggle has overflowed the limits of the traditional organisations of the proletariat.

These new organs and centres, however, will soon begin to feel their lack of cohesion and their insufficiency. Not one of the transitional demands can be fully met under the conditions of preserving the bourgeois regime. At the same time, the deepening of the social crisis will increase not only the sufferings of the masses but also their impatience, persistence and pressure. Ever new layers of the oppressed will raise their heads and come forward with their demands. Millions of toil-worn "little men," to whom the reformist leaders never gave a thought, will begin to pound insistently on the doors of the workers' organisations. The unemployed will join the movement. The agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, the women workers, housewives, proletarianised layers of the intelligentsia – all of these will seek unity and leadership.

How are the different demands and forms of struggle to be harmonised, even if only within the limits of one city? History has already answered this question: through *soviets*. These will unite the representatives of all the fighting groups. For this purpose, no one has yet proposed a different form of organisation; indeed, it would hardly be possible to think up a better one. Soviets are not limited to an *a priori* party programme. They throw open their doors to all the exploited. Through these doors pass representatives of all strata, drawn into the general current of the struggle. The organisation, broadening out together with the movement, is renewed again and again in its womb. All political currents of the proletariat can struggle for leadership of the soviets on the basis of the widest democracy. The slogan of *soviets*, therefore, crowns the programme of transitional demands.

Soviets can arise only at the time when the mass movement enters into an openly revolutionary stage. From the first moment of their appearance, the soviets, acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their struggle against the exploiters, become competitors and opponents of local authorities and then of the central government. If the factory committee creates a dual power in the factory, then the soviets initiate a period of dual power in the country.

Dual power in its turn is the culminating point of the transitional period. Two regimes, the bourgeois and the proletarian, are irreconcilably opposed to each other. Conflict between them is inevitable. The fate of society depends on the outcome. Should the revolution be defeated, the fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie will follow. In the case of victory, the power of the soviets, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist reconstruction of society, will arise.

Backward Countries and the Programme of Transitional Demands

Colonial and semi-colonial countries are backward countries by their very essence. But backward countries are part of a world dominated by imperialism. Their development, therefore, has a *combined* character: the most primitive economic forms are combined with the last word in capitalist technique and culture. In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism. Democratic slogans, transitional demands and the problems of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in this struggle, but stem directly from one another. The Chinese proletariat had barely begun to organise trade unions before it had to provide for soviets. In this sense, the present programme is completely applicable to colonial and semi-colonial countries, at least to those where the proletariat has become capable of carrying on independent politics.

The central task of the colonial and semi-colonial countries is the *agrarian revolution*, i.e., liquidation of feudal heritages, and *national independence*, i.e., the overthrow of the imperialist yoke. Both tasks are closely linked with each other.

It is impossible merely to reject the democratic programme; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a National (or Constituent) Assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic programme. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic programme, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the "national" bourgeoisie. Then, at a certain stage in the mobilisation of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise. Their historical role in each given period, particularly their relation to the National Assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.

The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat's struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent by the *degree* of its backwardness. Nevertheless, the general trend of revolutionary development in all backward countries can be determined by the formula of the permanent revolution[29] in the sense definitely imparted to it by the three revolutions in Russia (1905, February 1917, October 1917).

The Comintern has provided backward countries with a classic example of how it is possible to ruin a powerful and promising revolution. During the stormy mass upsurge in China in 1925-27, the Comintern failed to advance the slogan for a National Assembly, and at the same time forbade the creation of soviets. (The bourgeois party, the Kuomintang, was to replace, according to Stalin's plan, both the National Assembly and soviets.) After the masses had been smashed by the Kuomintang, the Comintern organised a caricature of a soviet in Canton. Following the inevitable collapse of the Canton uprising, the Comintern took the road of guerrilla warfare and peasant soviets with complete passivity on the part of the industrial proletariat. Landing thus in a blind alley, the Comintern took advantage of the Sino-Japanese War to liquidate "Soviet China" with a stroke of the pen, subordinating not only the peasant "Red Army" but also the so-called "Communist" Party to the identical Kuomintang, i.e., the bourgeoisie.[30]

Having betrayed the international proletarian revolution for the sake of friendship with the "democratic" slave masters, the Comintern could not help betraying simultaneously also the struggle for liberation of the colonial masses, and, indeed, with even greater cynicism than did the Second International before it. One of the tasks of People's Front and "national defence" politics is to turn hundreds of millions of the colonial population into cannon fodder for "democratic" imperialism. The banner on which is emblazoned the struggle for the liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples, i.e., a good half of mankind, has definitely passed into the hands of the Fourth International.

The Programme of Transitional Demands in Fascist Countries

It is a far cry today from the time when the strategists of the Comintern announced the victory of Hitler as being merely a step toward the victory of Thaelmann.[31] Thaelmann has been in Hitler's prisons now for more than five years. Mussolini has held Italy enchained by fascism for more than sixteen years. Throughout this time, the parties of the Second and Third Internationals have been impotent, not only to conduct a mass movement, but even to create a serious illegal organisation, even to some extent comparable to the Russian revolutionary parties during the epoch of Tsarism.

Not the least reason exists for explaining these failures by reference to the power of fascist ideology. (Essentially, Mussolini never advanced any sort of ideology.) Hitler's "ideology" never seriously gripped the workers. Those layers of the population which at one time were intoxicated with fascism i.e., chiefly the middle classes, have had enough time in which to sober up. The fact that a somewhat perceptible opposition is limited to Protestant and Catholic church circles is not explained by the might of the semi-delirious and semi-charlatan theories of "race" and "blood," but by the terrific collapse of the ideologies of democracy, Social Democracy and the Comintern.

After the massacre of the Paris Commune,[32] black reaction reigned for nearly eight years. After the defeat of the 1905 Russian revolution, the toiling masses remained in a stupor for almost as long a period. But in both instances the phenomenon was only one of physical defeat, conditioned by the relationship of forces. In Russia, in addition, it concerned an almost virgin proletariat. The Bolshevik faction had at that time not celebrated even its third birthday. It is completely otherwise in Germany where the leadership came from powerful parties one of which had existed for seventy years, the other almost fifteen. Both these parties, with millions of voters behind them, were morally paralysed before the battle and capitulated without a battle. History has recorded no parallel catastrophe. The German proletariat was not smashed by the enemy in battle. It was crushed by the cowardice, baseness, perfidy of its own parties. Small wonder then that it has lost faith in everything in which it had been accustomed to believe for almost three generations. Hitler's victory in turn strengthened Mussolini.

The protracted failure of revolutionary work in Spain or Germany is but the reward for the criminal politics of the Social Democracy and the Comintern. Illegal work needs not only the sympathy of the masses but the conscious enthusiasm of its advanced strata. But can enthusiasm possibly be expected for historically bankrupt organisations? The majority of those who come forth as emigre

leaders are either demoralised to the very marrow of their bones, agents of the Kremlin and the GPU,[33] or Social Democratic ex-ministers, who dream that the workers by some sort of miracle will return them to their lost posts. Is it possible to imagine even for a minute these gentlemen in the role of future leaders of the "anti-fascist" revolution?

And events on the world arena – the smashing of the Austrian workers, the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, the degeneration of the Soviet state – could not give aid to a revolutionary upsurge in Italy and Germany. Since for political information the German and Italian workers depend in great measure upon the radio, it is possible to say with assurance that the Moscow radio station, combining Thermidorian lies with stupidity and insolence, has become the most powerful factor in the demoralisation of the workers in the totalitarian states. In this respect as in others, Stalin acts merely as Goebbels' assistant.

At the same time, the class antagonisms which brought about the victory of fascism, continuing their work under fascism too, are gradually undermining it. The masses are more dissatisfied than ever. Hundreds and thousands of self-sacrificing workers, in spite of everything, continue to carry on revolutionary mole-work. A new generation, which has not directly experienced the shattering of old traditions and high hopes, has come to the fore. Irresistibly, the molecular preparation of the proletarian revolution proceeds beneath the heavy totalitarian tombstone. But, for concealed energy to flare into open revolt, it is necessary that the vanguard of the proletariat find new perspectives, a new programme and a new unblemished banner.

Herein lies the chief handicap. It is extremely difficult for workers in fascist countries to make a choice of a new programme. A programme is verified by experience. And it is precisely experience in mass movements which is lacking in countries of totalitarian despotism. It is very likely that a genuine proletarian success in one of the "democratic" countries will be necessary to give impetus to the revolutionary movement on fascist territory. A similar effect is possible by means of a financial or military catastrophe. At present, it is imperative that primarily propagandistic, preparatory work be carried on which will yield large-scale results only in the future. One thing can be stated with conviction even at this point: once it breaks through, the revolutionary wave in fascist countries will immediately be a grandiose sweep and under no circumstances will stop short at the experiment of resuscitating some sort of Weimar[34] corpse.

It is from this point onward that an uncompromising divergence begins between the Fourth International and the old parties, which outlive their bankruptcy. The emigre "People's Front" is the most malignant and perfidious variety of all possible People's Fronts. Essentially, it signifies the impotent longing for coalition with a non-existent liberal bourgeoisie. Had it met with success, it would simply have prepared a series of new defeats of the Spanish type for the proletariat. A merciless exposure of the theory and practice of the "People's Front" is therefore the first condition for a revolutionary struggle against fascism.

Of course, this does not mean that the Fourth International rejects democratic slogans as a means of mobilising the masses against fascism. On the contrary, such slogans at certain moments can play a serious role. But the formulae of democracy (freedom of press, the right to unionise, etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents (Spain!). As soon as the movement assumes something of a mass character, the democratic slogans will be intertwined with the transitional ones; factory committees, it may be supposed, will appear before the old routinists rush from their chancelleries to organise trade unions; soviets will cover Germany before a new Constituent Assembly will gather in Weimar. The same applies to Italy and the rest of the totalitarian and semi-totalitarian countries.

Fascism plunged these countries into political barbarism. But it did not change their social structure. Fascism is a tool in the hands of finance capital and not of feudal landowners. A revolutionary programme should base itself on the dialectics of the class struggle, obligatory also to fascist countries, and not on the psychology of terrified bankrupts. The Fourth International rejects with disgust the ways of political masquerade which impelled the Stalinists, the former heroes of the "Third Period",[35] to appear in turn behind the masks of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, German nationalists, liberals – only in order to hide their own unattractive face. The Fourth International always and everywhere appears under its own banner. It proposes its own programme openly to the proletariat in fascist countries. The advanced workers of all the world are already firmly convinced that the overthrow of Mussolini, Hitler and their agents and imitators will occur only under the leadership of the Fourth International.

The USSR and Problems of the Transitional Epoch

The Soviet Union emerged from the October Revolution as a workers' state. State ownership of the means of production, a necessary prerequisite to socialist development, opened up the possibility of rapid growth of the productive forces. But the apparatus of the workers' state underwent a complete degeneration at the same time: it was transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy. The bureaucratisation of a backward and isolated workers' state and the transformation of the bureaucracy into an all-powerful privileged caste constitute the most convincing refutation – not only theoretically, but this time, practically – of the theory of socialism in one country.

The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a *degenerated workers' state*. Such is the social diagnosis. The political prognosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism.

To the sections of the Fourth International, the Moscow Trials[36] came not as a surprise and not as a result of the personal madness of the Kremlin dictator, but as the legitimate offspring of the Thermidor. They grew out of the unbearable conflicts within the Soviet bureaucracy itself, which in turn mirror the contradictions between the bureaucracy and the people, as well as the deepening antagonisms among the "people" themselves. The bloody "fantastic" nature of the trials gives the measure of the intensity of the contradictions and by the same token predicts the approach of the denouement.

The public utterances of former foreign representatives of the Kremlin, who refused to return to Moscow, irrefutably confirm in their own way that all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko).[37] The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist,

counterrevolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism. These candidates for the role of compradors consider, not without reason, that the new ruling layer can insure their positions of privilege only through rejection of nationalisation, collectivisation and monopoly of foreign trade in the name of the assimilation of "Western civilisation." i.e., capitalism. Between these two poles, there are intermediate, diffused Menshevik-SR-liberal tendencies which gravitate toward bourgeois democracy.

Within the very ranks of that so-called "classless" society, there unquestionably exist groupings exactly similar to those in the bureaucracy, only less sharply expressed and in inverse proportions: conscious capitalist tendencies distinguish mainly the prosperous part of the collective farms (*kolkhozi*) and are characteristic of only a small minority of the population. But this layer provides itself with a wide base for petty bourgeois tendencies of accumulating personal wealth at the expense of general poverty, and are consciously encouraged by the bureaucracy.

Atop this system of mounting antagonisms, trespassing ever more on the social equilibrium, the Thermidorian oligarchy, today reduced mainly to Stalin's Bonapartist clique, hangs on by terroristic methods. The latest judicial frame-ups were aimed as a blow *against the left*. This is true also of the mopping up of the leaders of the Right Opposition, because the Right group of the old Bolshevik Party, seen from the view point of the bureaucracy's interests and tendencies, represented a *left* danger. The fact that the Bonapartist clique, likewise in fear of its own right allies of the type of Butenko, is forced in the interests of self-preservation to execute the generation of Old Bolsheviks almost to a man, offers indisputable testimony of the vitality of revolutionary traditions among the masses as well as of their growing discontent.

Petty bourgeois democrats of the West, having but yesterday assayed the Moscow Trials as unalloyed gold, today repeat insistently that there is "neither Trotskyism nor Trotskyists within the USSR." They fail to explain, however, why all the purges are conducted under the banner of a struggle with precisely this danger. If we are to examine "Trotskyism" as a finished programme, and, even more to the point, as an organisation, then unquestionably "Trotskyism" is extremely weak in the USSR. However, its indestructible force stems from the fact that it expresses not only revolutionary tradition, but also today's actual opposition of the Russian working class. The social hatred stored up by the workers against the bureaucracy – this is precisely what from the viewpoint of the Kremlin clique constitutes "Trotskyism." It fears with a deathly and thoroughly well-grounded fear the bond between the deep but inarticulate indignation of the workers and the organisation of the Fourth International.

The extermination of the generation of Old Bolsheviks and of the revolutionary representatives of the middle and young generations has acted to disrupt the political equilibrium still more in favour of the right, bourgeois wing of the bureaucracy and of its allies throughout the land. From them, i.e., from the right, we can expect ever more determined attempts in the next period to revise the socialist character of the USSR and bring it closer in pattern to "Western civilisation" in its fascist form.

From this perspective, impelling concreteness is imparted to the question of the "defence of the USSR." If tomorrow the bourgeois-fascist grouping, the "faction of Butenko," so to speak, should attempt the conquest of power, the "faction of Reiss" inevitably would align itself on the opposite side of the barricades. Although it would find itself temporarily the ally of Stalin, it would nevertheless defend not the Bonapartist clique but the social base of the USSR, i.e., the property wrenched away from the capitalists and transformed into state property. Should the "faction of Butenko" prove to be in alliance with Hitler, then the "faction of Reiss" would defend the USSR from military intervention, inside the country as well as on the world arena. Any other course would be a betrayal.

Although it is thus impermissible to deny in advance the possibility, in strictly defined instances, of a "united front" with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution, the chief political task in the USSR still remains the *overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy*. Each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration. It is in precisely this direction that the Comintern moves as the agent and accomplice of the Stalinist clique in strangling the Spanish Revolution and demoralising the international proletariat.

As in fascist countries, the chief strength of the bureaucracy lies not in itself but in the disillusionment of the masses, in their lack of a new perspective. As in fascist countries, from which Stalin's *political* apparatus does not differ, save in more unbridled savagery, only preparatory propagandistic work is possible today in the USSR. As in fascist countries, the impetus to the Soviet workers' revolutionary upsurge will probably be given by events outside the country. The struggle against the Comintern on the world arena is the most important part today of the struggle against the Stalinist dictatorship. There are many signs that the Comintern's downfall, because it does not have a *direct* base in the GPU, will precede the downfall of the Bonapartist clique and the Thermidorian bureaucracy as a whole.

A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against *social inequality and political oppression*. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labour!

The struggle for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold in the struggle for the regeneration and development of *Soviet democracy*.

The bureaucracy replaced the soviets as class organs with the fiction of universal electoral rights – in the style of Hitler-Goebbels. It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now *it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets.* In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants, and Red Army men.

Democratisation of the soviets is impossible without legalisation of *soviet parties*. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognise as soviet parties.

A revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organised consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products.

Reorganisation of the *collective farms* in accordance with the will and in the interests of the workers there engaged!

The reactionary *international policy* of the bureaucracy should be replaced by the policy of proletarian internationalism. The complete diplomatic correspondence of the Kremlin to be published. *Down with secret diplomacy!*

All political trials, staged by the Thermidorian bureaucracy, to be reviewed in the light of complete publicity and controversial openness and integrity. Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development toward socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection – the party of the Fourth International!

Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

Long live Soviet democracy!

Long live the international socialist revolution!

Against Opportunism and Unprincipled Revisionism

The politics of Leon Blum's party in France demonstrate anew that reformists are incapable of learning anything from even the most tragic lessons of history. French Social Democracy slavishly copies the politics of German Social Democracy and goes to meet the same end. Within a few decades the Second International intertwined itself with the bourgeois democratic regime, became, in fact, a part of it, and is rotting away together with it.

The Third International has taken to the road of reformism at a time when the crisis of capitalism definitely placed the proletarian revolution on the order of the day. The Comintern's policy in Spain and China today – the policy of cringing before the "democratic" and "national" bourgeoisie – demonstrates that the Comintern is likewise incapable of learning anything further or of changing. The bureaucracy which became a reactionary force in the USSR cannot play a revolutionary role on the world arena.

Anarcho-syndicalism in general has passed through the same kind of evolution. In France the syndicalist bureaucracy of Leon Jouhaux has long since become a bourgeois agency in the working class. In Spain, anarcho-syndicalism shook off its ostensible revolutionism and became the fifth wheel in the chariot of bourgeois democracy.

Intermediate centrist organisations centred about the London Bureau represent merely "left" appendages of Social Democracy or of the Comintern. They have displayed a complete inability to make head or tail of the political situation and draw revolutionary conclusions from it. Their highest point was the Spanish POUM, which under revolutionary conditions proved completely incapable of following a revolutionary line.

The tragic defeats suffered by the world proletariat over a long period of years doomed the official organisations to yet greater conservatism and simultaneously sent disillusioned petty bourgeois "revolutionists" in pursuit of "new ways." As always during epochs of reaction and decay, quacks and charlatans appear on all sides, desirous of revising the whole course of revolutionary thought. Instead of learning from the past, they "reject" it. Some discover the inconsistency of Marxism, others announce the downfall of Bolshevism. There are those who put responsibility upon revolutionary doctrine for the mistakes and crimes of those who betrayed it; others who curse the medicine because it does not guarantee an instantaneous and miraculous cure. The more daring promise to discover a panacea and, in anticipation, recommend the halting of the class struggle. A good many prophets of "new morals" are preparing to regenerate the labour movement with the help of ethical homeopathy. The majority of these apostles have succeeded in becoming themselves moral invalids before arriving on the field of battle. Thus, under the aspect of "new ways," old recipes, long since buried in the archives of pre-Marxian socialism, are offered to the proletariat.

The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the bureaucracies of the Second, Third, Amsterdam and Anarcho-syndicalist Internationals, as on their centrist satellites; on reformism without reforms; democracy in alliance with the GPU; pacifism without peace; anarchism in the service of the bourgeoisie; on "revolutionists" who live in deathly fear of revolution. All of these organisations are not pledges for the future, but decayed survivals of the past. The epoch of wars and revolutions will raze them to the ground.

The Fourth International does not search after and does not invent panaceas. It takes its stand completely on Marxism as the only revolutionary doctrine that enables one to understand reality, unearth the cause behind the defeats and consciously prepare for victory. The Fourth International continues the tradition of Bolshevism which first showed the proletariat how to conquer power. The Fourth International sweeps away the quacks, charlatans and unsolicited teachers of morals. In a society based upon exploitation, the highest moral is that of the social revolution. All methods are good which raise the class consciousness of the workers, their trust in their own forces, their readiness for self-sacrifice in the struggle. The impermissible methods are those which implant fear and submissiveness in the oppressed before their oppressors, which crush the spirit of protest and indignation or substitute for the will of the masses – the will of the leaders; for conviction – compulsion; for an analysis of reality – demagogy and frame-up. That is why Social Democracy, prostituting Marxism, and Stalinism – the antithesis of Bolshevism – are both mortal enemies of the proletarian revolution and its morals.

To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives – these are the rules of the Fourth International. It has shown that it could swim against the stream. The approaching historical wave will raise it on its crest.

Against Sectarianism

Under the influence of the betrayal by the historical organisations of the proletariat, certain sectarian moods and groupings of various kinds arise or are regenerated at the periphery of the Fourth International. At their base lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses, as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism. They propose turning their backs on the "old" trade unions, i.e., to tens of millions of organised workers – as if the masses could somehow live outside of the conditions of the actual class struggle!

They remain indifferent to the inner struggle within reformist organisations – as if one could win the masses without intervening in their daily strife! They refuse to draw a distinction between the bourgeois democracy and fascism – as if the masses could help but feel the difference on every hand!

Sectarians are capable of differentiating between but two colours: red and black. So as not to tempt themselves, they simplify reality.

They refuse to draw a distinction between the fighting camps in Spain for the reason that both camps have a bourgeois character. For the same reason they consider it necessary to preserve "neutrality" in the war between Japan and China. They deny the principled difference between the USSR and the imperialist countries, and because of the reactionary policies of the Soviet bureaucracy they reject defence of the new forms of property, created by the October Revolution, against the onslaughts of imperialism. Incapable of finding access to the masses, they therefore zealously accuse the masses of inability to raise themselves to revolutionary ideas.

These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the same meagre abstractions. Political events are for them an occasion for comment but not for action. Since sectarians, as in general every kind of blunderer and miracle-man, are toppled by reality at each step, they live in a state of perpetual exasperation, complaining about the "regime" and the "methods" and ceaselessly wallowing in small intrigues. In their own circles they customarily carry on a regime of despotism. The political prostration of sectarianism serves to complement, shadow-like, the prostration of opportunism, revealing no revolutionary vistas. In practical politics, sectarians unite with opportunists, particularly with centrists, every time in the struggle against Marxism.

Most of the sectarian groups and cliques, nourished on accidental crumbs from the table of the Fourth International lead an "independent" organisational existence, with great pretensions but without the least chance for success. Bolshevik-Leninists, without waste of time, calmly leave these groups to their own fate. However, sectarian tendencies are to be found also in our own ranks and display a ruinous influence on the work of the individual sections. It is impossible to make any further compromise with them even for a single day. A correct policy regarding trade unions is a basic condition for adherence to the Fourth International. He who does not seek and does not find the road to the masses is not a fighter but a dead weight to the party. A programme is formulated not for the editorial board or for the leaders of discussion clubs, but for the revolutionary action of millions. The cleansing of the ranks of the Fourth International of sectarianism and incurable sectarians is a primary condition for revolutionary success.

Open the Road to the Woman Worker!
Open the Road to the Youth!

The defeat of the Spanish Revolution engineered by its "leaders," the shameful bankruptcy of the People's Front in France, and the exposure of the Moscow juridical swindles – these three facts in their aggregate deal an irreparable blow to the Comintern and, incidentally, grave wounds to its allies: the Social Democrats and Anarcho-syndicalists. This does not mean, of course, that the members of these organisations will immediately turn to the Fourth International. The older generation, having suffered terrible defeats, will leave the movement in significant numbers. In addition, the Fourth International is certainly not striving to become an asylum for revolutionary invalids, disillusioned bureaucrats and careerists. On the contrary, against a possible influx into our party of petty bourgeois elements, now reigning in the apparatus of the old organisations, strict preventive measures are necessary: a prolonged probationary period for those candidates who are not workers, especially former party bureaucrats: prevention from holding any responsible post for the first three years, etc. There is not and there will not be any place for careerism, the ulcer of the old internationals, in the Fourth International. Only those who wish to live for the movement, and not at the expense of the movement, will find access to us. The revolutionary workers should feel themselves to be the masters. The doors of our organisation are wide open to them.

Of course, even among the workers who had at one time risen to the first ranks, there are not a few tired and disillusioned ones. They will remain, at least for the next period as bystanders. When a programme or an organisation wears out the generation which carried it on its shoulders wears out with it. The movement is revitalised by the youth who are free of responsibility for the past. The Fourth International pays particular attention to the young generation of the proletariat. All of its policies strive to inspire the youth with belief in its own strength and in the future. Only the fresh enthusiasm and aggressive spirit of the youth can guarantee the preliminary successes in the struggle; only these successes can return the best elements of the older generation to the road of revolution. Thus it was thus it will be.

Opportunist organisations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the women workers. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class; consequently, among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice.

Down with the bureaucracy and careerism!

Open the road to the youth!

Turn to the woman worker!

These slogans are emblazoned on the banner of the Fourth International.

Under the Banner of the Fourth International!

Sceptics ask: But has the moment for the creation of the Fourth International yet arrived? It is impossible, they say, to create an International "artificially"; it can arise only out of great events, etc., etc. All of these objections merely show that sceptics are no good for the building of a new International. They are good for scarcely anything at all.

The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption. The Third International, following the Second, is dead for purposes of revolution. Long live the Fourth International!

But has the time yet arrived to proclaim its creation? ... the sceptics are not quieted down. The Fourth International, we answer, has no need of being "proclaimed." It exists and it fights. It is weak? Yes, its ranks are not numerous because it is still young. They are as yet chiefly cadres. But these cadres are pledges for the future. Outside these cadres there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name. If our international be still weak in numbers, it is strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Who does not perceive this today, let him in the meantime stand aside. Tomorrow it will become more evident.

The Fourth International, already today, is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals and fascists. There is not and there cannot be a place for it in any of the People's Fronts. It uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task – the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim – socialism. Its method – the proletarian revolution.

Without inner democracy – no revolutionary education. Without discipline – no revolutionary action. The inner structure of the Fourth International is based on the principles of *democratic centralism*: full freedom in discussion, complete unity in action.

The present crisis in human culture is the crisis in the proletarian leadership. The advanced workers, united in the Fourth International, show their class the way out of the crisis. They offer a programme based on international experience in the struggle of the proletariat and of all the oppressed of the world for liberation. They offer a spotless banner.

Workers – men and women – of all countries, place yourselves under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the banner of your approaching victory!

Footnotes

1. This pamphlet was published in 1938. It was adopted as the founding document for the Fourth International, a body set up under the leadership of Leon Trotsky from those elements of workers organisations across the world who had neither capitulated to capitalism nor sold out to the dictatorship imposed in the USSR by Stalin.

2. The 'New Deal': the response of the more farsighted sections of US capitalism to the 1930s slump and fears of workers uprisings. It involved a debt moratorium and subsidies for devastated farmers, massive state investment in infrastructure projects and government control of the financial system. Dismantling of the remnants of this control in the 1990s contributed to the crash of 2008.

3. The 1930s saw invasion of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy aiming to expand its 'empire'; a three year civil war in Spain, where workers fought Franco's armies backed by Hitler and Mussolini; invasion of China by Japanese militarists seeking to expand their domination in the Far East; coups and attempted coups in the Balkans, the smashing of a workers uprising In Austria, its absorption in Nazi Germany and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, all with the tacit support of the main capitalist powers, Britain, France and the USA.

4. Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists, POUMists: the main working class political groupings in the Spanish Republic. The POUM was an independent, semi-Marxist party with considerable support among workers, especially in Catalonia.

5. Socialists, Stalinists, Syndicalists: main working class political groupings in France.

6. Confederation of Industrial Organisations: A trade union movement which developed in the depression as a reaction against the reformist American Federation of Labour. In a single year, four million workers joined and it became a mass force in the American working class.

7. Communist International (Third International or Comintern). Originally founded by the Bolsheviks in 1919 as the organisation linking Communist Parties across the world to build a world party of revolution. Its second congress in 1920 was attended by delegates from 37 Communist parties across the world. By 1938 had become merely a tool of Stalin's foreign policy. Abolished by Stalin in 1944 as a gesture to US President Roosevelt.

8. Prime Minister of the French 'Popular Front' government swept to power in 1936 as a consequence of the wave of industrial unrest (sit-in strikes) in France.

9. Josef Stalin (1879-1953) member of the Bolshevik Party during the Russian Revolution. During the consolidation of Soviet power in Russia after Lenin's death, he gathered administrative power into his hands, rising as a representative of the bureaucratic elite which had developed in the aftermath of the devastation of the USSR. In the 1930s he consolidated an absolute dictatorship, framing or murdering anyone he saw as a threat to his power.

10. Bolshevik Leninists: The Fourth International adopted this title because they saw themselves as the true heirs of the revolutionary and democratic traditions of the Bolshevik party as built by Lenin from 1910.

11. Soviets: literally Russian for 'Councils'. In Revolutionary Russia, workers power was organised via committees of workers in individual factories, areas, etc., sending delegates to the Supreme Soviet where all decisions were made. Delegates had no special privileges and could be replaced instantly by the body from whom they had been delegated.

12. 'Economic Royalist': Henry Ford was a classic example of an employer who treated his employees like feudal serfs, viciously opposed to trade unions. As distinct from 'democratic' employers who tolerate trade union organisation, so long as it does not threaten their interests.

13. '60 families', '200 families': The families seen as the central core of the capitalist class. In the USA - the Rockerfellers, Mellons, Guggenheims etc. (See F. Lundberg *America's Sixty Families* (Viking 1937); revised and expanded as *The Rich and the Super Rich* (Bantam 1969)).

14. e.g.: gangs of armed thugs under the control of the Pinkerton detective agency.

15. For example: the German- American Bund which organised rallies of tens of thousands, marching under the Nazi swastika barmier: Father Coughlin's anti-Semitic 'Christian Front'; William Pelly's fascist 'Silver Shirts'.

16. In the 1930s Mosley's British Union of Fascists was given wholehearted support by the Daily Mail newspaper. Its proprietor, among others, financed the fascists.

17. Second International: international grouping of Social Democratic parties set up in 1889. Although committed to opposing capitalist wars, it fell apart along nationalist lines in 1914. Revived at the end of World War II, using CIA money, as part of the Cold War struggle against the USSR. Still exists as a shell.

18. Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Properly and the State*.

19. Peasants, farmers. Trotsky uses these terms interchangeably to refer to small farmers, tenants, or owners of small plots of land, who mostly raise only enough to support their own families.

20. Collectivisation of agriculture in the USSR was a vital necessity given the backwardness and inefficiency of tiny peasant farms. Trotsky insisted that such collectivisation could only be voluntary, taking the peasants along with it and showing them its benefits. However, under Stalin's orders, the 'collectivisation' of agriculture carried out in the 1930s was a forced expropriation of land from the peasantry by the Red Army. Carried out with the utmost brutality and inefficiency, it resulted in a huge drop in agricultural production and millions of deaths through famine.

21. Leon Blum's Popular Front government 'nationalised' the defence industries, including aircraft production. The partial nature of this process can be seen by the fact that Bloch, the owner of one of the biggest firms, changed his name to Dassault and continued producing aircraft during the German occupation of France (and beyond).

22. USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (also known as

the Soviet Union). The name adopted after the October revolution for the areas under Soviet control including Great Russia, White Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan etc., etc. Dissolved under Gorbachov (1990), now reverted to a pack of squabbling corrupt capitalist states.

23. Thermidorian. Trotsky is using a shorthand term for the bureaucracy which grabbed control in the USSR in 1923-30. He is comparing it to the petty bourgeois stratum that took control via a coup in France after the 1789 Revolution in the month of Thermidor, year II of the French Republic (July 1794).

24. Epigones, literally inferior followers or imitators. From the Greek word for Alexander the Great's generals.

25. Mensheviks and SRs. The Mensheviks, with the Bolsheviks were originally part of the Russian Social Democratic Party. In 1903 this split into majority (bolshevik) and minority (menshevik) factions. Despite attempts by Trotsky and others to re-unify the party, the factions drifted apart and split formally in 1912. By July 1917, the Mensheviks strongly opposed the overthrow the Russian capitalist state. 'SRs' Social Revolutionaries were a party mostly based on the peasantry.

26. 'Cadets' (Constitutional Democrats): party of the Russian bourgeoisie.

27. July Days: in the period between the first (February) and the second (October) Russian revolutions, the Bolsheviks gained a majority for the first time among the workers of Petrograd. However, impatient with the counter-revolutionary role of the Mensheviks and SRs, Petrograd workers staged an uprising which was suppressed by the Provisional Government. The suppression of this uprising led to the jailing or exile of most Bolshevik leaders and the party appeared briefly on the verge of annihilation.

28. Amsterdam International: a loose grouping of left reformist parties and groups.

29. Permanent Revolution. The theory put forward by Trotsky after the Russian 1905 revolution predicting the course of revolution in backward countries. Completely vindicated in Russia and in other countries since.

30. Stalin's orders to the Chinese Communist Party were not accepted by those of its leaders who had escaped massacre by the Kuomingtang in Shanghai (including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai). They retreated to the countryside and rebuilt the Red Army on the basis of the poor peasantry, in opposition to the Kuomingtang. In the Chinese revolution of 1949 the Red Army overthrew the Kuomingtang government and expelled Chiang Kai-shek's gangsters from China.

31. Ernst Thaelmann: the leader of the German Communist Party in the 1930s. Jailed in 1933, he was killed in Buchenwald Concentration Camp in 1944. The Comintern's view in 1930 was that a Nazi victory would lead to victory of the Communist Party.

32. Rising of the Paris workers, 1870.

33. GPU: Stalin's secret police. Later reformed as NKVD after execution of its leaders.

34. Weimar: location of the setting up of the German republic after World War I. The German working class was prepared to overthrow capitalism but the leaders of German Social Democracy went into government with the capitalist parties to produce the weak Weimar Republic, overthrown by Hitler in 1933.

35. 'Third period': period in Stalinist foreign policy when Social Democratic parties were proclaimed as indistinguishable from Fascism. The division in the German working class caused by this policy paved the way for Hitler's victory.

36. A set of show trials of 'Trotskyists' and 'Oppositionists' in Moscow in 1935-37. They aimed to eliminate any leading members of the Communist Party who might have proved a threat to Stalin. Ludicrous 'confessions' to impossible acts of sabotage were obtained by torture. Nevertheless, many 'lefts' in Britain and the US accepted them as genuine. Trotsky was forced to spend much time exposing the idiotic nature of the charges. Ironically, Yezhov, head of the GPU and chief torturer in the early trials was found guilty of 'treason' in a later trial and executed.

37. Representatives of factions inside the Russian Communist Party. Reiss broke with Stalinism and was assassinated by the GPU in Switzerland in 1937.

Founding the Fourth International

by Niall Mulholland, International Secretariat, CWI

This article was published on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. It originally appeared in December 2008 in Socialism Today (Issue. 124), the journal of the Socialist Party (CWI, England & Wales).

Trotsky considered his efforts in creating the Fourth International his most important work. To him, it was more important than the development of his theory of the permanent revolution, which brilliantly foretold the general outlines of the 1917 Russian revolution. More important than his key role, second only to Vladimir Lenin, in leading the successful October socialist revolution. And more important than his leadership of the Red Army, which defended the young Soviet Union against invading armies of counter-revolution.

Although founded in 1938, the Fourth International emerged out of a struggle that began in the Soviet Union in 1923, shortly before the death of Lenin, and then spread throughout the world. This was a struggle for genuine Bolshevism, initiated by Lenin and continued by the Left Opposition and later the International Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, against the privileged, Soviet bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin.

In the major congress document of the Fourth International, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, Trotsky declared: "The Fourth International… is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals and fascists… Its task – the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim – socialism. Its method – the proletarian revolution..."

Today, when the capitalist press or pro-establishment politicians refer to the Fourth International, it is usually to pour scorn on Trotsky's attempts to lay the basis for a mass international. These representatives of the profit system, along with numerous former lefts, sneer that the fate of the Fourth International is further proof that all attempts to forge a socialist international to challenge capitalism are doomed to failure.

This cynical, impressionistic argument ignores Trotsky's conception of the Fourth International as primarily concerned with preserving, defending and developing the priceless heritage of genuine Marxism, in a time of big defeats and betrayals for the international working class, and preparing its young leaders – "pledges for the future" – for the big class struggles to come.

Its origins were not just rooted in the struggle against Stalinism, but also in the previous workers' internationals. The First International (the International Working Men's Association – IWMA), was established in 1864 by the founders of scientific socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. This was a great step forward for the international working class, bringing together socialists, trade unionists, radicals and other militants. Its ideas and influence grew across Europe and North America, including among leaders of the short-lived 1871 Paris Commune, the first example of a workers' government. However, worsening difficulties with the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and his supporters led to splits and to the dissolution of the IWMA, after the transfer of its headquarters to the United States in 1872.

The Second International, founded by Engels in 1889, was an association of national, social-democratic parties, including both revolutionary and reformist elements. Its strongest and most authoritative section was the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). However, decades of capitalist economic growth had the effect of creating a conservative bureaucracy in the unions and social democracies, despite their formal adherence to Marxism. The Second International was torn apart in 1914, when most its sections supported 'their side' in the imperialist war.

The Third (or Communist) International was organised under Lenin's leadership and with the authority of the 1917 Russian revolution, as an attempt to create an international of workers' parties with an anti-imperialist and revolutionary character. During its first years (1919-24), the Third International (also called the Comintern) was a genuine internationalist body and it held congresses each year, despite the enormous difficulties of civil war and famine faced by the young Soviet Union.

Emerging bureaucratic rule

The overthrow of tsarism, landlordism and capitalism by the working class, led by the Bolshevik party (which later became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, CPSU), was a beacon to the working masses and poor around the world. It inspired revolutionary movements throughout Europe. But after the failure of those revolutions, including in Germany (1918) and Hungary (1919), mainly due to the inexperience of the leaders of the young communist parties and the counter-revolutionary role of the social democrats, the Soviet Union remained isolated. Degeneration appeared in the apparatus of the new regime in economically and culturally backward Russia. After years of war, revolution, civil war and severe privations, the mass of workers became exhausted and apathetic.

Stalin emerged as the leading representative of those layers in the apparatus who had become concerned with the advancement of their own increasingly distinct interests at the expense of the international working class. Keenly aware of the dangers to the revolution, Lenin, in 1923, called for the removal of Stalin from the post of general secretary of the CPSU because he was using it to bureaucratise the party and state apparatus. Lenin prepared a fight against the bureaucratisation of the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet state, "a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations", but he died before he could carry it out. With Lenin out of the way, Stalin gradually eliminated his main opponents, starting with Trotsky (who was marginalised before being driven into exile in 1929), until he became virtual dictator of the party and state by the 1930s. In tandem, the Third International became increasingly transformed under the leadership of the Stalinist bureaucracy into an instrument of Russian foreign policy.

But none of this happened without a struggle between living social forces. In 1923, Trotsky's Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists or 'Trotskyists') was established as a faction of the CPSU and proposed the 'New Course' in October: to campaign against the bureaucratisation of the party, for young proven working-class elements to take leading positions in the party, for elections for party positions, and a plan for industrialisation and pro-poor peasant policies.

A struggle erupted over Stalin's so-called theory of 'socialism in one country', introduced in 1924, which postulated that a socialist society could be achieved inside the borders of a single country. Stalin's theory was anathema to genuine Marxists but reflected the interests of the privileged tops. In reply, Trotsky pointed out that, while the Soviet Union must industrialise and modernise, generally, this was a long way from socialism: a society with higher labour productivity and standards of living than in the most advanced capitalist societies. This presupposes the working class taking power internationally and establishing a world socialist planned economy.

Disastrous policies

Stalin's socialism in one country, Trotsky correctly warned, would lead to disastrous policies within Russia (including the forced collectivisation of agriculture) and transform the Communist International (Comintern) into a counter-revolutionary tool of Stalin's foreign policy. Eventually, in 1943, at the request of his allies, Winston Churchill and Franklin D Roosevelt, Stalin dissolved the Communist International.

Comintern policy in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in disasters for the international and Soviet working class. Trotsky's warnings were proved correct but, paradoxically, the mood of isolation and despair among the Russian masses resulting from these international defeats strengthened the Stalinist bureaucracy.

A revolutionary opportunity again developed in Germany in 1923, due to a severe economic crisis and the French invasion of the Ruhr. A majority of the German working class turned towards the Communist Party. But the party leaders vacillated and missed an exceptionally favourable opportunity to struggle for power, allowing the German ruling class time to recover. Comintern leaders, Stalin and Grigori Zinoviev, also had responsibility for this wasted opportunity, as they had no confidence in the German party taking power and urged it to hold back.

Another blow to the working class came when the British general strike of May 1926 was betrayed by the reformist leaders of the TUC. The Comintern, under the leadership of Stalin, was complicit in this betrayal, as it had allied itself with the 'lefts' in the TUC officialdom through the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee. Trotsky had warned that the Anglo-Russian Committee was acting to protect the reformists against criticism of the left.

In China, Stalinist policy led to bloody defeat. A revolutionary situation developed from 1925-27, which the merchant and industrial bourgeoisie in the nationalist Kuomintang sought to exploit for their own class interests. The Russian bureaucracy was hostile to the development of an independent workers' and poor peasants' movement in China, in which they had no faith. To serve the needs of its narrow nationalist policy, the Comintern instructed the Chinese Communists to enter the Kuomintang. This renunciation of an independent class policy meant opposing the creation of soviets (councils of workers and peasants) during the rising tide of revolution and an agrarian revolution. As the Kuomintang army marched on Shanghai, workers instinctively realised the danger and rose up and seized the city, only to be told by the Comintern to allow Chiang Kai-shek's forces to enter in April 1927. The Kuomintang then set about massacring the communist workers.

The disastrous Comintern policies led Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, two 'old Bolshevik' leaders, to break from Stalin. Along with Stalin, these two veteran leaders had made up the triumvirate which arrayed itself against Trotsky and the Left Opposition from 1923-25. In July 1926, Zinoviev stated at a plenary of the Central Committee of the CPSU that "on the question of the apparatus-bureaucratic repression Trotsky was correct against us". From July-October 1926, the Left Opposition temporarily joined Kamenev and Zinoviev to form the United Opposition. They opposed the right-wing, pro-kulak (rich peasant) trajectory of Stalin and Bukharin, calling for a return to workers' democracy and for industrialisation.

However, after the bureaucracy counter-attacked, expelling the Left Opposition leaders from the party, Kamenev and Zinoviev capitulated to Stalin. By the end of 1927, the dominant Stalin faction had decisively defeated the Left Opposition, imprisoning or exiling its leaders. Alarmed at the danger posed by the kulaks, who had become increasingly powerful as a result of Stalin's policies, Stalin broke with Nikolai Bukharin, and decreed brutal five-year plans which brought untold human misery and the country close to catastrophe.

Assembling the forces

In February 1929, Trotsky was deported to Turkey. By then a considerable number of dissidents in Europe and the Americas had been expelled from the communist parties and the Communist International. Some of them created small groups that proclaimed sympathy or solidarity with the Left Opposition. During this period, the major programmatic statements of the Left Opposition were formulated by Trotsky.

By 1930, the Left Opposition groups in a number of countries had advanced to a position where they felt they needed to coordinate their activities in a more organised form. On 6 April 1930, national representatives met in Paris and declared the first international conference of the Left Opposition. Ideological clarification developed through the International Bulletin, theses, resolutions and manifestos. But an international meeting, a 'pre-conference', was not held until February 1933.

Until 1933, Trotsky opposed calls for a new international made by some oppositional trends to Stalinism. He argued that the communist parties still represented the most militant sections of the working class, despite their Stalinist leaderships. Although Stalin did not allow any real opposition within the Third International, if the Left Opposition turned its back on those workers, it would be further isolated as Stalin wished. Trotsky believed that big events, inside and outside the Soviet Union, could stir the masses and give the Left Opposition the chance to grow rapidly.

However, Trotsky changed his position when Adolf Hitler took power in 1933 and smashed the mighty organisations of the German working class. As the Nazi menace had grown, Trotsky advocated a united front of the mass workers' organisations – the social democrats and communists. But, under the leadership of the Comintern, the German communists followed an ultra-left policy of denouncing social democrats as 'social fascists' and kept the working class divided, thus allowing Hitler to come to power.

The February 1933 pre-conference of the International Left Opposition took place just one week after Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany, before he consolidated his victory and when the Left Opposition still expected the German working class to resist the Nazis, even leading to civil war. But the German Stalinists showed complete political bankruptcy, and Hitler soon crushed the workers' movement with ease.

For Trotsky, the destruction of the German working class without a struggle signalled the collapse of the Third International and the adoption of the Stalinist leadership of a policy of conscious counter-revolution. When the leaders of the Comintern declared its policy in Germany had been flawless and banned any communist party debating the issue, which they docilely followed, Trotsky declared: "An organisation which has not been wakened up by the thunderbolt of fascism… is dead and cannot be revived".

For the rest of his life, Trotsky set about the difficult task of assembling the forces of a new international. He was in no doubt of the historical issues at stake and his role: "I think the work on which I am engaged now, despite its extremely insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work of my life… now my work is the most 'indispensable' in the full sense of the word… to carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method". (*Diary in Exile*)

The break with the Comintern

After Hitler's victory, the Left Opposition concluded in August 1933 that further efforts to regenerate or reform the Comintern were futile. The Left Opposition ceased to be a faction of the Comintern and became an independent movement towards the creation of a new international and new revolutionary parties throughout the world. To express this change, it changed its name to the International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninists). The ICL also came to the conclusion that a 'political revolution' would be necessary in the Soviet Union to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy and to restore real workers' democracy.

To assemble the forces necessary to launch a new international in extremely difficult circumstances, Trotsky looked towards various left centrist parties that had been repelled by the Stalinist policy in Germany and had drawn some lessons. The Declaration of the Four, signed in August 1933, between the International Left Opposition and other left organisations (the German SAP, and the Dutch parties, the OSP and RSP), was an example of this orientation. It proclaimed the need for a new international and new revolutionary parties. The results of the declaration for the ICL were minimal. The German SAP moved to the right and denounced the declaration. The Dutch parties merged to become the RSAP and joined the ICL, but later split over the civil war in Spain, although opposition youth in the RSAP came out for the Fourth International.

Growing radicalisation in Western Europe in the 1930s led to the growth of the social-democratic parties, especially to the growth of their youth wings and the leftwing. The ICL called on its sections to orientate towards these leftward moving elements to win them to a revolutionary position. In October 1934, a resolution was passed at an ICL meeting which pressed the French comrades to enter the French Socialist Party. The 'French turn' was subsequently carried out by other sections, as well.

The three years following the 1933 pre-conference were spent gathering leading cadres for the Fourth International and developing its programmatic positions. In July 1936, the ICL sponsored an international conference for the Fourth International. Trotsky, then in Norway, wanted this to be the founding conference of the Fourth International, but the delegates disagreed, arguing that the time had not yet come. They were only prepared to go as far as to rename the ICL the Movement for the Fourth International.

The possibilities for advancing the emerging new international were dealt a severe blow when the Spanish section, one of the largest, broke with Trotsky and merged with the centrist workers' and peasants' bloc to form the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) in 1935. Eventually the POUM joined the Spanish Popular Front government.

The Comintern policy of popular fronts or people's fronts called for alliances between the workers' parties and the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, in the name of a struggle against war and fascism. Popular front governments came to power in Spain and France in 1936. By subordinating the independent interests of the working class to the so-called 'democratic capitalists', popular frontism led the working class to historic and bloody defeats, opening the path for fascism and world war.

The founding conference

In 1936, fearing that the heroic example of the Spanish revolution could inspire a resurgence of class militancy in the Soviet Union, Stalin unleashed the Moscow show trials and the mass extermination of Left Opposition supporters and 'old Bolsheviks' in the Soviet Union. "A river of blood" separated Bolshevism and Stalinism, Trotsky remarked.

It was with the background of these historic defeats for the working class that the founding congress of the Fourth International (the 'World Party of Socialist Revolution') was held on 3 September 1938 in France. Just 21 delegates, representing eleven countries, met in conditions of extremely tight security, with plenary sessions limited to a single day. Many sections and sympathisers could not attend for security reasons. The long arm of Stalinist repression nevertheless found its way into the congress, as it was later revealed that the de facto Russian delegate was a GPU (secret police) agent.

As well as the physical liquidation of the biggest section (the Russian Opposition) in the months running up to the meeting, the movement also lost leading figures at the hands of Stalinist agents, including Rudolph Klement, responsible for the preparation of the founding conference. A personal tragedy hit Trotsky, when his son, Leon Sedov, a leading Left Opposition figure in his own right, died in a Paris hospital in circumstances that pointed to a GPU assassination.

The two Polish delegates to the congress presented a resolution opposing founding a new international, arguing that it was premature. In the major congress document, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (also known as *the Transitional Programme*), Trotsky replied directly to the doubters: "Sceptics ask: But has the moment for the creation of the Fourth International yet arrived? It is impossible, they say, to create an international 'artificially'; it can arise only out of great events etc, etc. The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history…"

The signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact, in August 1939, led to political crisis in the US section (SWP) of the Fourth International, with a faction, led by James Burnham and Max Shachtman, arguing to change the SWP's position of defence of the Soviet Union. This minority, reflecting the pressure of bourgeois public opinion, questioned the characterisation of the Soviet Union as a workers' state which must be defended against imperialism despite the bureaucratic caste that had usurped power. The majority of the executive centre of the Fourth International, which was transferred to New York at the start of the war in Europe, proved to be supporters of the Shachtman-Burnham group.

An emergency conference of the international was called to discuss the political issues debated following the Stalin-Hitler pact, to assess the nature and development of the war and to establish a cohesive and functioning leadership. Trotsky wrote the Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War for the May 1940 emergency conference, his last programmatic document.

A new international

Trotsky predicted the coming world war would provoke mass revolutionary movements, which would transform the fortunes of the Fourth International. Its small forces, however, were hit hard by wartime conditions, with many of its young militants killed either at the hands of fascism or of Stalinism. The greatest blow the young international suffered, an inestimable loss, was the assassination of Trotsky, at the hands of a Stalinist agent in Mexico, August 1940.

Nevertheless, Trotsky's political prognosis was generally correct. Europe was swept by revolutionary movements after the second world war and the working class could have come to power in a number of countries, if it had a leadership worthy of the name. A successful revolution in any one European country would have marked the start of a European and world socialist revolution, which would have also swept away Stalinism and reintroduced workers' democracy in the Soviet Union. But the social-democratic and communist parties, which had a mass base and influence among the working class in Europe, at the time, diverted a socialist transformation and, thereby, saved capitalism.

The Fourth International was unable to play a decisive role. Moreover, in the post-war period, it did not succeed in becoming a mass force because of a combination of unfavourable objective factors and difficulties, together with the mistakes made by its leaders. In some cases, Trotskyism had a powerful effect on the workers' movement, such as in Sri Lanka, Latin America, Vietnam, France and, in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, under the banner of the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party). The

'Militant tendency' led the 1983-86 Liverpool council struggle against the Thatcher government and the successful mass anti-poll tax campaign of 1989-90.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), established in 1974, developed rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s and now has sections and groups in around 40 countries, on four continents. (See: A Socialist World is Possible – History of the CWI, by Peter Taaffe, for more on why Trotsky's original conception of the Fourth International did not take off, and for details of the origins and development of the CWI.)

Today, as world capitalism enters its gravest crisis since the 1930s, there is a crying need for a mass political alternative of the working class. The task of the CWI is to help to create the conditions for the formation of such an international. However, this is only possible on the basis of learning from the lessons of the past and, particularly, from the failings of previous internationals. The creation of mass parties, on a national scale, will be giant steps towards a new mass international. But we cannot wait for the emergence of such parties before developing the scaffolding of such an international in the new explosive period ahead. The CWI can play a vital role in this process.

On the Radicalisation of the Masses

Introduction

by Bill Hopwood, 1988

Introduction

Trotsky was one of the great teachers of the school of revolutionary struggle. Many of his lessons remain as valid today as when he wrote. Therefore Northern Militant supporters [forerunner of the Socialist Party, CWI, England & Wales] are republishing an edited version of Trotsky's article "The 'Third Period' of the Comintern's Errors".

He explains the nature of economic development and the relation with the radicalisation and struggles of the masses. He stresses that this is not a simple process but is full of uneven and contradictory characteristics.

This article was written in early 1930; mush of the detail is about events at that time in France and has been edited to concentrate on the analysis of the processes in society.

The Communist International

The Comintern, founded in 1919 on the inspiration of the Russian Revolution, represented the best militants of the working class. However by 1930 it was dominated by the bureaucratic clique which had come to power in Russia due to the isolation of the Russian Revolution. Under Stalin, the leadership of the Comintern had ceased to be that of a party of world revolution. They had abandoned the methods of Marxism. This article was part of the struggle of the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, to re-win the Comintern to Marxism.

The Comintern had adopted the policy of the so-called 'Third Period'. This claimed that capitalism was in its final crisis and that anyone who was not a member of the Comintern was an implacable enemy. This policy was totally false. There is no such thing as a final collapse of capitalism. It will survive until it is overthrown. Today the only other option is nuclear annihilation. The international overthrow of capitalism cannot be left to an inevitable piling up of its economic contradictions or the actions of a tiny minority. Only the working class can achieve its own emancipation.

The working class today has the potential power to carry out the socialist revolution. The objective impasse of the economic system is intensifying. The crucial issue is the building of a Marxist leadership with a programme and method to give the required direction to the socialist transformation.

The approach of the 'Third Period', of the Comintern against the rest, meant the communist parties built huge barriers between themselves and the mass of the workers coming into struggle. This policy reached its most extreme form in Germany where the Communist Party branded the SPD, the socialist party, which had more support among workers, as "social fascist". They claimed the socialists were no different from the Nazis. This split in the most powerful working class in Europe of the time paved the way for the victory of Hitler.

Economic Instability

The article was written just after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 which was the prelude to the worst slump in capitalist history. France was one of the last countries hit by the slump.

The inter-war era was one of economic instability, similar to the period since the end of the long post war boom of 1950-75 [or the period since the onset of the 2008 World Economic Crisis]. Within an era of crisis there is still a cycle of growth and recession. The article deals with such a growth phase, parallels to the present upturn since 1981.

As well as economic crisis, the years between the wares were a time of revolution and counter-revolution. Time and again workers moved into struggle even after partial defeats and the mass unemployment created by the slump. Only the bloody crushing of the victory of fascism or the outbreak of World War II stopped the revolutionary wave.

The working class was determined enough to win several revolutions; only the failures of the leaders of the workers' organisations saved capitalism.

On the Radicalisation of the Masses



(from The "Third Period" of the Comintern's Mistakes)

by Leon Trotsky, 1930

What is Radicalisation of the Masses?

The radicalisation of the masses for the Comintern has become, at present, an empty catechism and not the characterisation of a process. Genuine Communists – teaches *l'Humanité* – should recognise the leading role of the party and the radicalisation of the masses. It is meaningless to put the question that way. The leading role of the party is an unshaken principle for every Communist. Who does not follow it can be an anarchist or a confusionist, but not a Communist, that is, a proletarian revolutionary. But radicalisation itself is not a principle, but only a characterisation of a state of the masses. Is this characterisation correct or is it not correct for the given period? That is a question of fact. In order to estimate seriously the state of the masses, correct criteria are necessary. What is radicalisation? How does it express itself? What are its characteristics? With what tempo and in which direction does it develop? The deplorable leadership of the French Communist party does not even pose these questions. At most an official article or a speech will refer to the growth of strikes. But even there only bare figures are given, without serious analysis, without even a simple comparison with the ones of the preceding years.

Such an attitude to the question flows not only from the unfortunate decisions of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. but, as a matter of fact, from the Comintern programme itself. It speaks of the radicalisation of the masses as a continuous process. It believes: today the mass is more revolutionary than it was yesterday, and tomorrow it will be more revolutionary than it is today. Such a mechanical idea does not correspond with the real process of development of the proletariat or of capitalist society as a whole.

The social democratic parties, especially before the war, had imagined the future as a continual growth of social democratic votes, which will grow till it comes to the very moment of the complete possession of power. For a vulgar or pseudo-revolutionary this perspective still retains, essentially, its force, only instead of a continuous growth of votes, he talks of the continual *radicalisation of the masses*. This mechanical conception is sanctioned also by the Bukharin-Stalin program of the Comintern. It goes without saying that from the point of view of *our epoch as a whole* the development of the proletariat goes in the direction of the revolution. But this is not at all a straight process, just as the objective process of the sharpening of capitalist antagonism is not straight. The reformists see only the ups of the capitalist road. The formal "revolutionaries" see only its downs. But a Marxist sees the line as a whole, with all its conjunctural rises and declines, without for a moment losing sight of is main direction – to the catastrophes of wars, to the outburst of revolutions.

Sharp turns

The political mood of the proletariat does not change automatically in one and the same direction. The upturns in the class struggle are followed by downturns, the flood-tides by the ebbs, depending upon complicated combinations of material and ideological conditions, national and international. The activity of the masses, if not utilised at the right moment, or misused, goes to its opposite and ends in a period of decline, from which the masses recover faster or slower, again due to the influence of new objective stimuli. The characteristic of our epoch is the especially sharp changes of different periods, the extraordinary abrupt turns in the situation and this puts upon the leadership unusual obligations in the matter of correct orientation.

The activity of the masses, even when it is quite correctly ascertained, may have different expressions depending upon different conditions. The mass may, at certain periods, be completely absorbed in an economic struggle, and show very little interest in political questions. On the other hand, suffering from a series of failures on the field of the economic struggle, the mass may abruptly transfer its attention to the realm of politics. But here too – depending upon a series of conditions and on the experience with which a mass entered these conditions – its political activity may go either by the purely parliamentary way or by way of extra-parliamentary struggle.

We take only a very few examples, which characterise the contradictions of the revolutionary development of the proletariat. Those who know how to follow facts and understand their meaning, will admit without difficulty that the variations traced above are not some kind of theoretical combination but an expression of the living international experience of the last decade.

In any case, it is clear from what has been said that when the radicalisation of the masses is being discussed, a concrete definition of it should be demanded. The Marxist Opposition should, of course, put the same demand to itself. A simple denial of radicalisation brings just as little as its complete affirmation. We should have an estimate of what the situation is and of what it is becoming.

Start with the facts

The official leaders speak of the radicalisation of the French working class almost exclusively in connection with the strike movement. The growth of the latter is an incontestable fact, systematically established. We will take this fact as a starting point.

After the high point of strikes in 1919–20, the diminishing progression takes place until 1928, with a very small break in 1923. In the years of 1928–29 we observe an unmistakable, and, what is more, a considerable increase of the strike movement, connected it is not hard to understand – it will be shown further on – with the rise in industry under the influence of the stabilisation of the currency.

We can say with perfect confidence that the period of 1919–27 forms a certain independent cycle in the life of the French proletariat, including the cyclonic rise of the strike movement immediately after the war, as well as its defeats and its decline especially acute after the catastrophe in Germany in 1923. In the most general of its aspects this cycle is characteristic not only of France alone, but of the whole of Europe, and in considerable degree, the whole world. What is characteristic of France as such is the comparatively moderate extent of fluctuation between the highest and lowest points of the cycle: victorious France did not go through a genuine revolutionary crisis. In the rhythm of the French strike movement the gigantic events developing in Russia, Germany, England, and other countries found only a weakened reflection.

Other statistics establish these same trends of the French workers

strike movement. The number of strikers and the number of days of each strike, fell sharply beginning with the year 1922. In 1921 each strike had an average of 800 strikers and lasted more than 14,000 days. In 1925 each strike already had less than 300 strikers and a little more than 2,000 days. We can assume that in 1926–27, these averages did not in any case, grow bigger. In 1929, we already have 400 men per strike.

What do the facts mean?

Do the statistics confirm the thesis of the radicalisation of the masses or do they refute it? First of all, we answer, it takes it out of the realm of abstractions in which Monmousseau says "Yes" and Chambelland says "No", without giving any definition of what is meant by radicalisation. The data of the strike struggle given above are indisputable proof of certain moves in the working class. At the same time, they give a very important estimate of the number and quality of these moves. They outline the general dynamics of the process and make it possible, to a certain degree to anticipate the future, or more exactly, the possible variations of the future.

In the first place, we can affirm that the data for 1928–29, compared with the preceding period, characterise the beginning of a new cycle in the life of the French proletariat. They give us the right to assume that deep molecular processes have taken and are taking place in the masses, as a result of which the momentum of the decline begins – if only on the economic front now – to be overcome.

Nevertheless, the same data show that the growth of the strike movement is still very modest, and does not in the least give a picture of a tempestuous upsurge, which would allow us to draw conclusions about a revolutionary or at least a pre-revolutionary period. In particular, there is no marked difference between 1928 and 1929. The bulk of the strikes continued to be in light industry.

From this fact, Chambelland comes to a general conclusion against radicalisation. It would be a different matter, he says, if strikes were taking hold of the large enterprises in heavy industry and the machine shops. In other words, he imagines that radicalisation falls from the sky ready-made. As a matter of fact these figures testify not only that the new cycle of proletarian struggle has begun, but also that this cycle is only now passing through its first stage. After defeat and decline, a revival, in the absence of any great events, could only start in no other way than from the industrial periphery, that is, from the light industries, from the secondary branches, from the smaller establishments of heavy industry. The transfer of the strike movement into the metal industry, machine shops, and transportation, would mean its transition to a higher stage of development, and would signify not only the symptoms of the beginning of a movement but the fact of a decisive break in the mood of the working class. It has not come yet. But it would be absurd to shut our eyes to the first stage of the movement only because the second has not begun yet or the third, or the fourth. Pregnancy even in its second month is pregnancy. To force it may lead to a miscarriage. But it is possible to arrive at the same result by ignoring it. It may be well, though, to add to this analogy that in the social realm dates are by no means as stable as in the realm of physiology.

Facts and Phrases

In discussing the question of the radicalisation of the masses, it should not for a moment be forgotten that the proletariat attains "unanimity" only in periods of the highest revolutionary flood tide. In the conditions of "everyday life" in capitalist society, the proletariat is far from being homogeneous. Moreover, the heterogeneity, of its layers manifests itself most acutely precisely at the turning points in the road. The most exploited, the least skilled, or the politically most backward layers of the proletariat are frequently the first to enter the arena of struggle, and, in case of failure, are often the first to desert it. It is exactly in the new period that those groups which did not suffer defeats in the preceding period are easily attracted to the movement, if only because they did not generally take part in big fights. In one way or another, these phenomena are bound to appear also in France.

Even in relation to the purely economic front, one cannot speak of the offensive character of the struggle, as Monmousseau and company do. They base this definition on the fact that a considerable percentage of the strikes are conducted in the name of increased wages. The thoughtful leaders forget that such a form of demands is forced upon the workers on the one hand by the rise of prices in food products, and on the other by the intensified physical exploitation of the worker as a result of new industrial methods (rationalisation). A workman is compelled to demand an increase in his nominal wages in order to defend his standard of living of yesterday. These strikes can have an "offensive" character only from the standpoint of capitalist bookkeeping. From the standpoint of trade union policies they have a purely defensive character. It is precisely this side of the question that every serious trade unionist should have clearly understood and brought to the forefront by every means. But Monmousseau and company believe they have a right to be good-for-nothing trade unionists because they are, if you please, "revolutionary leaders". Shouting till they are hoarse about the offensive, political and revolutionary character of purely defensive strikes, they do not, of course, change the nature of these strikes and do not increase their significance by a single inch. But on the other hand, they do their best to arm the bosses and the government against the workers.

It does not improve matters when our "leaders" point out that the strikes become "political" on account of ... the active role of the police. An astounding argument! The beating up of strikers by policemen is designated ... a revolutionary advance of the workers. The history of France knows quite a few massacres of workers in purely economic strikes. In the United States, a bloody settlement with strikers is the rule. Does this mean that the workers in the United States are leading the most revolutionary struggle? The shooting of strikers has in itself, of course, a political significance. But only a loudmouth could identify it with the revolutionary political advance of the working masses – thus unconsciously playing into the hands of the bosses and their police.

When the British General Council of Trade Unions represented the revolutionary strike of 1926 as a peaceful demonstration, it knew what it was doing: that was a deliberately planned betrayal. But when Monmousseau and company represent scattered economic strikes as a revolutionary attack on the bourgeois state, nobody will think of accusing them of a deliberate betrayal: it is doubtful of these people can act with deliberation. But it is certainly no help to the workers.

In the next section we will see how these terribly revolutionary heroes render some other services to the bosses, ignoring the rise of commerce and industry, underestimating its significance, that is, underestimating the profits of the capitalists – and by the same token undermining the foundation of the economic struggles of the workers.

Economic Cycles

Capitalist development is generally inconceivable without conjunctural contradictions; they existed before the war and will exist in the future. It is doubtful if even Chambelland would deny this commonplace. But from this there does not as yet flow any revolutionary perspective. On the contrary: if for the past century and a half the capitalist world passed through eighteen crises, then there is no basis for the conclusion that capitalism must fall with the nineteenth or twentieth. In actuality, conjunctural cycles in the life of capitalism play the same role as is played, for example, by the cycles of blood circulation in the life of an organism. From the periodicity of the crises, there flows just as little the conclusion of the inevitability of the revolution, as the inevitability of death – from a rhythmic pulse.

At the Third Congress of the Comintern (1921), the ultra-Leftists of the time (Bukharin, Zinoviev, Radek, Thaelmann, Thalheimer,

Pepper, Bela Kun and others) calculated that capitalism would never again know an industrial revival because it had entered the final ("Third"?) period, which would develop on the basis of a permanent crisis until the very revolution. Around this question, a big ideological struggle took place at the Third Congress. My report was devoted to a considerable extent to proving the idea that in the epoch of imperialism the laws determining the change in industrial cycles remain in effect and that conjunctural vacillations will be characteristic of capitalism as long as it exists: the pulse ceases only with death. But from the state of the pulse, in conjunction with other symptoms, a doctor can determine whether he is dealing with a strong or weak organism, a healthy or a sick one.

Crisis and Radicalisation

If Vassart does not know the mechanics of business cycles and does not understand the relationship between conjunctural crises and revolutionary crises of the capitalist system as a whole, then the dialectical interdependence of the economic conjuncture and the struggle of the working class is just as unclear to him. Vassart conceives this dependence just as mechanically as his opponent Chambelland, although their conclusions are directly contrary, and moreover erroneous to the same degree.

Chambelland says:

> "Radicalisation of the masses is in a certain sense the barometer which makes it possible to evaluate the condition of capitalism in a given country. If capitalism is in a state of decline the masses are necessarily radicalised."

From this Chambelland draws the conclusion that because the strikes embrace only the periphery of the workers, because metallurgical and chemical industries are affected only to a slight degree, capitalism is not as yet in decline. Before him there is still a forty years' period of development.

What does Vassart answer to this? Chambelland, according to him, "does not see the radicalisation because he does not see the new methods of exploitation." Vassart in every respect repeats the thought that if one recognises the intensified exploitation and understands that it will develop further, "that in itself compels you to reply affirmatively to the question of the radicalisation of the masses."

Reading these polemics one gets the impression of two blindfolded men trying to catch each other. It is not true that a crisis always and under all circumstances radicalises the masses. Example: Italy, Spain, the Balkans, etc. It is not true that the radicalism of the working class necessarily corresponds with the period of capitalism's decline. Example: Chartism in England, etc. Like Chambelland, Vassart also ignores the living history of the labour movement in the name of dead forms. And Chambelland's conclusion is also wrong. You cannot deny a beginning of radicalisation because strikes have not yet embraced the main sections of the workers; what can and must be made is a concrete evaluation of the extent, depth and intensity of this radicalisation. Chambelland, evidently, agrees to believe in it only after the whole working class is engaged in an offensive. But such leaders who wish to start only when everything is ready, are not needed by the working class. One must be able to see the first, even though weak, symptoms of revival, while only in the economic sphere, adapt one's tactics to it and attentively follow the development of the process. Meantime one must not disregard, even for an hour, the general nature of our epoch, which has proved more than once and will yet prove, that between the first symptoms of revival and stormy upsurge which creates a revolutionary situation, not forty years but perhaps only a fifth or a tenth of that are required.

This matter stands no better with Vassart. He simply establishes a mechanical parallel between exploitation and radicalisation. How can the radicalisation of the masses be denied, Vassart says irritably, if exploitation grows from day to day? This is childish metaphysics, quite in the spirit of Bukharin. Radicalisation must be proved not by deductions but by facts. The conclusion of Vassart can be turned into its opposite without difficulty. It is sufficient to put a question like this: How could the capitalists increase exploitation from day to day if they were confronted by the radicalisation of the masses? It is precisely the absence of fighting spirit in the masses that permits an increase of exploitation. True, such reasoning without qualifications would also be one-sided, but still a lot nearer to life than Vassart's constructions.

The trouble is that the growth of exploitation does not under all circumstances raise the fighting spirit of the proletariat. Thus, with a declining conjuncture, with the growth of unemployment, particularly after lost battles, increased exploitation does not breed radicalisation of the masses, but quite the contrary, the falling of spirit, dispersal and disintegration. We saw, that, for example, in the English coal mining industry right after the strike of 1926. We saw it on a still larger scale in Russia when the industrial crisis of 1907 fell with the wrecking of the 1905 revolution. If in the past two years the growth of exploitation in France brought about the evident growth of the strike movement, the ground for it was created by the rise in the economic conjuncture and not its decline.

Economic upturn

The Monmousseau school – if one may give such a title to an institution where people are taught to unlearn thinking, reading and writing – is afraid of an economic rise. It must be said plainly that for the French working class, which has renewed its composition at least twice, during the years of the war and after the war, having included in its ranks tremendous numbers of youth, women and foreign-born – and is far from having fused this raw mass together in its melting pot – for the French working class, the further development of an industrial rise would have created an incomparable school, would have welded its strength, would have proved to the most backward sections their meaning and role in the capitalist mechanism, and would thereby have raised class consciousness as a whole to new heights. Two or three years, even one year, of a broad, successful economic struggle would give rebirth to the proletariat. After a properly utilised economic rise, a conjunctural crisis might give a serious impetus to a genuine political radicalisation of the masses.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that wars and revolutions in our epoch result not from conjunctural crises but from the contradictions between the development of the productive forces on the one hand and the national boundaries of the bourgeois state on the other, carried to their climax. Imperialist war and the October revolution have succeeded in showing the strain of these contradictions. The new role of America has developed them further. The more serious a character the development of the productive forces has in one country or another, or in a series of countries, the faster a new rise in industry will find itself confronted with the basic contradiction of world industry and the sharper will be the reaction – economic, political, domestic and international. A serious industrial rise would be at all events, not a minus but a tremendous plus for French Communism, creating a mighty strike forerunner to a political offensive. Conclusion: there will be no lack of revolutionary situations. It is quite likely, however, that there will be a lack of ability to utilise them.

But is the continuing upward trend in the French industrial conjuncture guaranteed? This we cannot dare to assume. Here all sorts of possibilities remain open. At any rate, it does not depend on us. What does depend on us, and what we are obliged to do, is not to close our eyes to facts in the name of pitiful schema, but to take the course of economic development as it really is and to work out trade union tactics on the basis of real facts. We speak in the given case of tactics in distinction to strategy, which is determined, of course, not by conjunctural changes but by basic tendencies of development. But if tactics are subordinated to strategy then, on the other hand, strategy is realised only through tactics.

Political radicalisation

The question of the radicalisation of the masses is not exhausted, however, with the strike movement. How do matters stand with the political struggle? And above all: how do matters stand with the numbers and influence of the Communist Party?

It is remarkable that in speaking of radicalisation the official leaders, with a striking light-mindedness, ignore the question of their own party. Meanwhile, the facts are that beginning with 1925 the membership of the party has been falling from year to year.

It may be said that quality is more important than quantity, and that there now remain in the party only the fully reliable Communists. Let us assume that. But this is not at all the question. The process of the radicalisation of the masses can by no means signify the isolation of the cadres, but on the contrary, the influx into the party of reliable and semi-reliable members and the conversion of the latter into "reliables." The political radicalisation of the masses can be reconciled with the regular decline in party membership only if one sees the role of the party in the life of the working class as a fifth wheel to a wagon. Facts are stronger than words: we observe a steady decline of the party not only during the years 1925–27, when the strike wave was ebbing, but also during the last two years, when the number of strikes was beginning to grow.

At this point, the honorable Panglosses of official Communism will interrupt, pointing to the "disproportion" between the numbers of the party and its influence. This is now the general Comintern formula, created by the shrewd for the simpleton. However, the canonised formula not only fails to explain anything but in some respects even makes matters worse. The experience of the labour movement testifies that the difference between the extent of organisation and the extent of the influence of the party – all other conditions being equal – is all the greater the smaller the revolutionary and the bigger the "parliamentary" character of the given party. Opportunism is a lot easier than Marxism, for it bases itself on the diffused mases. This is especially evident from the simple comparison of the socialist and Communist Party. The systematic growth of the "disproportion," with the decline in the number of organised Communists, can mean only that the French Communist Party is being transformed from a revolutionary into a parliamentary and municipalist party. That this process to a certain degree took place in the last years, of that the recent "municipal" scandals are incontestable witness; and it may be feared that "parliamentary" scandals will follow. Nevertheless, the difference between the Communist party in its present form, and the social-democratic agents of the bourgeoisie, remains enormous. The Panglosses in the leadership merely slander the French Communist Party when they discourse on some kind of a gigantic disproportion between its numbers and its influence. It is not difficult to prove that the political influence of Communism, unfortunately, has grown very little in the last five years.

For Marxists – it is no secret that parliamentary and municipal elections sharply distort and even falsify the underlying mood of the masses. Nevertheless, the dynamics of political development find their reflection in parliamentary elections: this is one of the reasons why we Marxists take an active part in electoral struggles.

Other indications of political life speak just as fully against, to say the least, premature parrotings on the so-called political radicalisation of the masses, which is to have taken place in the last two years. The circulation of *l'Humanité*, to our knowledge, has not grown in the past two years. The collections of money for *l'Humanité* undoubtedly represent a gratifying fact. But such collections would have been considerable, in view of the demonstrative attack of reaction on the paper, a year, two and three ago as well.

On the First of August – it must not be forgotten for a minute – the party was incapable of mobilising not only that part of the proletariat which voted for it but not even all the unionised workers. In Paris, according to the undoubtedly exaggerated accounts of *l'Humanité*, about fifty thousand workers participated in the First of August demonstrations. That is, less than half of the unionised. In the provinces, matters stood infinitely worse. This fact proves, by the way, that the "leading role" of the Political Bureau among the C.G.T.U. apparatus people does not guarantee the leading role of the party among the unionised workers. But the latter contain only a tiny fraction of the class. If the revolutionary rise is such an irrefutable fact then what good is a party leadership which, in the acute moment of the Soviet-Chinese conflict, could not bring out at an anti-imperialist demonstration even a quarter (more correctly stated, even a tenth) part of its electorate in the country. No one demands the impossible of the leadership of the party. A class cannot be maniupulated. But what gave the August First demonstration the character of a flat failure is the monstrous "disproportion" between the victorious shouts of the leadership and the real response of the masses.

So far as the trade union organisations are concerned, they went through the party's decline – judging by the official figures – after a delay of one year. In 1926, the C.G.T.U. numbered 475,000 members. In 1927, 452,000. In 1928, 375,000. The loss of 100,000 members by the trade unions at a time when the strike struggles in the country increased, represents an irrefutable proof that the C.G.T.U. does not reflect the basic processes at work in the field of the economic struggles of the masses. As an enlarged shadow of the party, it merely experiences the decline of the latter after some delay.

The data given here doubly confirm the preliminary conclusions we came to on the basis of our analysis of the strike movement. Let us recall them once more. The years 1919–20 were the culminating point of the proletarian struggle in France. After that, an ebb set in, which, in the economic field, began to change six years later by a new, but still slow tide: but in the political field the ebb-tide or stagnation continues even now, at any rate, in the main mass of the proletariat. Thus, the awakenings of the activity of certain sections of the proletariat in the field of economic struggle, is irrefutable. But this process too is only passing through its first stage, when it is primarily the enterprises of light industry that are drawn into the struggle, with an evident preponderance of the unorganised workers over the organised and with a considerable specific gravity of the foreign-born workers.

The impetus to the strike struggles was the rise in the economic conjuncture, with a simultaneous rise of the cost of living. In its first stages the strengthening of economic struggles is not accompanied ordinarily with a revolutionary rise. It is not evident now either. On the contrary, the economic rise for a certain time may even weaken the political interests of the workers, at any rate, of some of its sections.

If we take further into consideration that French industry has been on the upturn for two years now; that there is no talk of unemployment in the basic branches of industry and that in some branches there is even an acute shortage of workers, then it is not difficult to conclude that with these exceptionally favourable conditions for trade union struggle the present swing of the strike movement must be acknowledged as extremely modest. The basic indications of the moderate character are: the quiescence of the masses that still remains from the last period and the slowness of the industrial upturn itself.

What Are the Perspectives?

Regardless of the tempo of the conjunctural changes, it is only possible to approximate the change in the phases of the cycle. This was true also of pre-war capitalism. But in the present epoch the difficulties of conjunctural prediction have multiplied. The world market has not attained, after the shake-up of the war, the establishment of a uniform conjuncture, even though it has now approached it appreciably compared to the first five years after the war. This is why one must now be doubly careful in attempting to determine beforehand the alternating changes in the world conjuncture.

At the present moment the following basic variations appear likely:

1. The New York stock market crisis proves to be the forerunner of a commercial-industrial crisis in the United States, which reaches

great depths in the very next months. United States capitalism is compelled to make a decisive turn toward the foreign market. An epoch of mad competition opens up. European goods retreat before this unrestrained attack. Europe enters a crisis later than the United States but as a result the European crisis assumes extraordinary acuteness.

2. The stock market crash does not immediately call forth a commercial-industrial crisis, but results only in a temporary depression. The blow at stock market speculation brings about a better correlation between the course of paper values and commercial-industrial realities, just as between the latter and the real buying power of the market. After the depression and a period of adjustment, the commercial-industrial conjuncture rises upward once more, even though not as steeply as in the previous period. This variation is not excluded. The reserves of American capitalism are great. Not the last place among them is held by the government budget (orders, subsidies, etc.).

3. The withdrawal of funds from American speculation generates commercial and industrial activities. The further fate of this revival will in turn depend just as much upon purely European factors. Even in case of a sharp economic crisis in the United States, a rise may yet be maintained in Europe for a certain time, because it is unthinkable that capitalism in the United States will be able in the period of a few short months to reconstruct itself for a decisive attack on the world market.

4. Finally, the actual course of developments may pass between the above-outlined variations and yield an equivalent in the form of a shaky, broken curve with weak deviations upward or downward.

The development of the working class, especially as expressed in the strike movement, from the very beginning of capitalism, has been closely bound with the development of the conjunctural cycle. But this must not be considered mechanically. Under certain conditions that overflow the boundaries of the commercial-industrial cycle (sharp changes of the world economic or political environment, sharp social crises, wars and revolutions), the strike wave may express fundamental historical revolutionary tasks of the working class, not their immediate demands evoked by the conjuncture. Thus, for instance, the post-war strikes in France did not have conjunctural character but reflected the profound crisis of capitalist society as a whole. If we approach the present strike in France with this criterion, it will present itself primarily as a movement of conjunctural character; the course and tempo of the labour movement will depend in the most immediate sense on a further movement of the market, on alternating conjunctural phases, on their fullness and intensity. The instability of this current period makes it all the more impermissible to proclaim the "third period" without any regard for the real development of economic events.

There is no need to explain that even in case of a renewal of the favourable conjuncture in America and the development of a commercial-industrial rise in Europe, the coming of a new crisis is entirely unavoidable. There is not the least doubt that when a crisis actually arrives, the present leaders will declare that their "prognosis" was fully justified, that the stabilisation of capitalism proved its weakness, and that the class struggle took on a sharper character. It is clear, however, that such a "prognosis" costs very little. One who started to predict daily the eclipse of the sun would finally live to see his prediction fulfilled. But it is doubtful if we would consider such a prophet a serious astronomer. The task of the Communists is not to predict crises, revolutions and wars every single day, but to prepare for wars and revolutions, soberly evaluating the situation, the conditions which arise between wars and revolutions. It is necessary to foresee the inevitability of a crisis after a rise. It is necessary to warn the masses of the coming crisis. But to prepare them for the crisis will be more easily possible the more fully the masses under a correct leadership, utilise the period of rise.

Political strikes

Dorelle demanded that the revolutionary Communist trade unionists – there are no other revolutionary trade unionists at the present time – show the workers in every strike the dependence of isolated examples of exploitation to the contemporary regime as a whole, and consequently the connection between the immediate demands of the workers and the task of the proletarian revolution. This is an ABC demand for Marxists. But this in itself does not determine the character of a strike. A political strike is not a strike in which Communists carry on political agitation, but a strike in which the workers of all trades and enterprises conduct a struggle for definite political aims. Revolutionary agitation on the basis of strikes is a task of Communists under all circumstances; but the participation of workers in political, that is, revolutionary strikes, presents by itself one of the sharpest forms of struggle and occurs only under exceptional circumstances, which neither the party nor the trade unions can manufacture artificially according to their desires. To identify economic strikes with political strikes creates chaos which prevents the trade union leaders from correctly approaching economic strikes, from preparing them and working out an expedient program of workers' demands.

Matters are worse still in respect to general economic orientation. The philosophy of the "third period" demands an economic crisis immediately at all costs. Our wise trade unionists, therefore, close their eyes to the systematic improvement of the economic conjuncture in France in the past two years although without a concrete estimation of the conjuncture it is impossible to work out correct demands and to struggle for them with success. Claveri and Dorelle would do well if they would think the question through to the end. If the economic rise in France should last for another year (which is not out of the question) then primarily the development and deepening of the economic struggles would soon be on the order of the day. To be able to adapt themselves to such circumstances is a task not only of the trade unions but also of the party. It is insufficient to proclaim the abstract right of Communism to a leading role; it is necessary to conquer this by deeds, not only within the narrow frame of the trade union apparatus but on the whole field of the class struggle. To the anarchist and trade unionist formula of autonomy of the trade unions, the party must counterpose serious theoretical and political aid to the trade unions, making it easier for them to orientate correctly in questions of economic and political developments, and consequently, the elabouration of correct demands and methods of struggle.

The unavoidable shift in the upturn caused by a crisis will change the tasks, putting economic struggles into the background. It has already been said above that the coming of a crisis will serve in all probability as an impetus to the political activity of the masses. The strength of this impetus depends directly on two factors: on the depth and duration of the previous rise and the sharpness of the crisis that has come. The more abrupt and decisive the change, the more explosive will be the action of the masses. The reason for this is not difficult to understand. By the power of inertia, strikes generally acquire the greatest impetus at the moment when the economic rise begins to pass into depression. It is as if in the heat of running, the workers encounter a solid wall. With economic strikes you can then accomplish very little. The capitalists, with the depression under way, easily utilise the lockout. It is natural if the class consciousness of the workers which has risen begins to seek other means of expression. But which? This already depends not only upon conjunctural conditions but on the whole situation in the country.

To declare in advance that the next conjunctural crisis will create an *immediate* revolutionary situation in France, for that there is at present no basis. *Under the juncture of a series of conditions overflowing the boundaries of conjunctural crisis, this is quite possible.* On this count only theoretical suppositions are thus far possible. To put forward today the slogan of a general political strike as an actual one, on the basis that the coming crisis may push the masses on the road of revolutionary struggle, means to attempt to appease the hunger of today with the dinner of tomorrow.

The tide of political activity of the masses, before it assumes a more decisive form, may, for a certain and for that matter a lengthy period, express itself in a greater attendance of meetings, in a wider distribution of Communist literature in the growth of electoral votes, increase in the number of Party members, etc. Can the leadership adopt in advance a purely a priori orientation on a stormy tempo of development at all events? No. It must have its hands united for one and for the other tempo. Only under this condition can the party, not deviating from the revolutionary direction, march in step with the class.

The Art of Orientation

The art of revolutionary leadership is primarily the art of correct political orientation. Under all conditions. Communism prepares the political vanguard, and through it the working class as a whole, for the revolutionary seizure of power. But it does it differently in different fields of the labour movement and in different periods.

One of the most important elements in orientation is the determination of the moods of the masses, their activity and readiness for struggle. The mood of the masses however does not fall from the skies. It changes under the influence of certain laws of mass psychology, which are set into motion by objective social conditions. The political condition of the classes is subject, within certain limits, to a quantitative determination (press circulation, attendance at meetings, demonstrations, strikes, elections, etc., etc.). In order to understand the dynamics of the process, it is necessary to determine in what direction and under the influence of what reasons the mood of the working class changes. Combining the subjective data with the objective, it is possible to establish a tentative perspective for the movement that is a scientifically based prediction without which a serious revolutionary struggle is in general inconceivable. But prediction in politics has the character, not of a rigid schema, but of a working hypothesis. While leading the struggle in one or the other direction, it is necessary to attentively follow the changes in the objective and subjective elements of the movement, in order to introduce opportunely corresponding corrections in tactics. Even though the actual development of the struggle never fully correspond with the prognosis, that does not absolve us from making political predictions. One must not however, get intoxicated with finished schemas but continually check-up the course of the historic process and adjust oneself to its indications.

The Communist Parties in the capitalist countries, which still have to struggle for power or to prepare for such a struggle, cannot live without prediction. A correct, everyday orientation is a question of life or death for them. But they do not learn this most important art because they are compelled to leap and skip interminably at the command of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Bureaucratic Centralism which is able to live for a time off the interest on the capital of already captured proletarian power, is entirely incapable of preparing the young Parties for the conquest of power. In this lies the principal and most formidable contradiction of the Comintern today.

Is it not a suspicious circumstance that the revolutionary situation emerges simultaneously in the whole world, in the advanced countries and the colonies, completely ignoring in this period "the law of uneven development", that is, that single historic law which, at least by name, is known to Stalin? In reality, there can be no talk of such simultaneousness. The analysis of world conditions is replaced by the summing up of isolated conflicts occurring in different countries under different conditions.

Economic Changes and Strikes

The rise of the strike movement in a series of countries was caused, as we already know, by the improvement of this economic conjuncture in the course of the past two years. This refers primarily to France. True, industrial revival which is far from general for the whole of Europe remained until now very retarded even in France and its future is far from certain. But in the life of the proletariat, even a small conjunctural turn in one direction or the other does not take place without leaving its mark. If they continue daily to lay off workers in the factories, then those at work will not have the same spirit which is bred with them by the hiring of new workers, even though in limited numbers. The conjuncture has no less an influence on the ruling classes. In the period of an industrial revival which always breeds hopes for a still greater revival in the future, the capitalists are inclined to a softening of the international contradictions precisely in order to secure the development of a favourable conjuncture. And this is the "spirit of Locarno and Geneva".

In the not distant past, we had a great illustration of the correlation of conjunctural and fundamental factors.

The years of 1896–1913 were with few interruptions years of a powerful industrial rise. In 1913, this changed to depression, which for all informed, clearly opened the long and drawn out crisis. The threatening break of conjuncture, after the period of an unprecedented boom, created an extremely nervous mood in the ruling classes and served as a direct impetus to the war. Of course, the imperialist war grew out of basic contradictions of capitalism. This generalisation is known even to Molotov. But on the road to war, there were a whole series of stages when the contradictions either sharpened or softened. The same applies also to the class struggle of the workers.

In the pre-war period, the basic and the conjunctural processes developed much more evenly than in the present period of abrupt changes and sharp downturns, when comparatively minor shifts in economy breed tremendous leaps in politics. But from this it does not at all flow that it is possible to close one's eyes to the actual development and to repeat three incantations: "Contradictions sharpen", "the working masses are turning to the Left", "the war is imminent" – every day, every, day, every day ... If our strategic line is determined *in the last analysis* by the inevitability of the growth of contradictions and the revolutionary radicalisation of the masses, then our tactics, which serve this strategy, proceed from the realistic evaluation of each period, each stage, each moment, which may be characterised by a temporary softening of contradictions, a rightward turn of the masses, a change in the correlation of forces in favour of the bourgeoisie, etc. If the masses were to turn leftward uninterruptedly, then any fool could lead them. Fortunately or unfortunately, matters are more complicated, particularly under the present inconstant, fluctuating "capricious" conditions.

The General Strike

It would seem that isolated and episodic strikes occur in different countries for quite different reasons but, in general, arising as they do out of a conjunctural upturn in the world market, are not yet – precisely because they are isolated and episodic – "tremendous revolutionary events". But Molotov wants to combine the isolated strikes. A praiseworthy task. But in the meantime, only a task, and not an accomplished step. To unite isolated strikes – Molotov teaches – is possible by means of mass political strikes. Yes, having at hand the necessary conditions, the working class may be united by revolutionary mass strikes. The problem of the mass strike is then, according to Molotov, "that new, that basic and most characteristic problem which stands in the centre of the tactical tasks of the Communist Parties at the given moment". "And this means" – continues our strategist – "that we have approached (this time only "approached"! – *L.T.*) new and higher forms of class struggle". And in order definitely to affirm the Tenth Plenum religion of the Third Period, Molotov adds: "We *could not have* advanced the slogan of a mass political strike, *if we had not* found ourselves in a period of ascent." This trend of thought is truly unexampled! At first both strategic feet entered the most tremendous revolutionary events, later on it appeared that before the theoretical head stands only the task of the general strike – not the general strike itself, but only its slogan. And from here alone, by the inverse method, the conclusion is made that we "have

approached the highest forms of class struggles". Because, don't you see, had we not approached them, then how could Molotov advance the slogan of the general strike? The whole construction is based on the word of honour of the newly made strategist. And the powerful representatives of the parties respectfully listened to the self-confident blockhead and upon roll call reply: "Right you are!"

At any rate, we find out that all countries, from Great Britain to China – with France, Germany and Poland at the head have now attained the slogan of the general strike. We are finally convinced that not a trace is left of the unhappy law of uneven development We might manage to be reconciled to this, if they would only tell us in the name of what political aims the slogan of the general strike is advanced in every country. It should at least not be forgotten that the workers are by no means inclined towards general strikes just for the sake of general strikes. Anarcho-syndicalism broke its head on the failure to understand this. The general strike may sometime have the character of a protest demonstration. Such a strike is realisable, generally speaking, in cases when some clear, sometimes unexpected, event stirs the imagination of the masses and produces the necessity for unanimous resistance. But a *strike demonstration* is not yet, in the true sense, a *revolutionary* political strike, it is only one of the preparatory rehearsals for it. As far as the revolutionary political strike is concerned, in the real sense of the word, it constitutes, so to speak, the final act in the struggle of the proletariat for power. Paralysing the normal functions of the capitalist state, the general strike, brings forward the question: *Who is master in the house?* This question is decided in no other way than by armed force. That is why a revolutionary strike which does not lead to an armed uprising ends finally with the defeat of the proletariat.

"The Conquest of the Street"

Along with the general strike is set the task of "the conquest of the street". The question here – at any rate in words – is not that of the defence of one of the "democratic" rights, trampled upon by the bourgeoisie and social democracy, but of the determination of the "right" of the proletariat – to barricades. That is precisely how "the conquest of the streets" has been interpreted in the numerous articles of the official Communist press immediately after the July Plenum. It is not for us to deny the right of the proletariat to the "conquest of the streets" by means of barricades. But it is necessary to clearly understand what this means. Above all, it must be understood that the proletariat does not go on the barricades for the sake of the barricades, just as it does not participate in strikes for the sake of strikes. Immediate political ends are required, which weld together millions and give firm support to the vanguard. That is how revolutionaries pose the question. The opportunists gone mad approach the question quite differently.

For the revolutionary "conquest of the street" – like art for art's sake – special days are set aside. The latest invention of this sort appeared, as is known, on the first of August. Ordinary mortals wondered: why the first of August, the failure of which was pre-determined by the failure of the first of May? What do you mean, why? – the official strategists answered excitedly: "for the conquest of the streets!" Precisely what is to be understood by that: the conquest of the sidewalk or the pavement? Up to now we thought that the task of the revolutionary party is the conquest of the masses, and that the policy which can mobilise the masses in the greatest numbers and actively inevitably opens up the street, no matter how the police guard and block it. The struggle for the street cannot be an independent task, separated from the political struggle of the masses and subordinated to the office schedule of Molotov.

And what is more important, you cannot fool history. The task is not to appear stronger, but to get stronger. A noisy masquerade will not help.

"No Alliance with Reformists"

But there is another important tactical deduction from the "Third Period", which Molotov expresses in these words: "Now more than at any other time the tactic of coalition between the revolutionary organisations and the organisations of the reformists is inadmissible and harmful."

Agreements with the reformists are inadmissible now "*more than at any other time*". Does it mean that they were inadmissible before too? How then shall we explain the whole policy of the years 1926–1928? And precisely why have agreements with the reformists, inadmissible in general, become *particularly* inadmissible now? Because, they explain to us, we have entered a period of revolutionary ascent. Yet we cannot but recollect that the conclusion of a bloc with the General Council of the British trade unions was motivated at the time precisely by the fact that England had entered a period of revolutionary ascent, and that the radicalisation of the British working masses pushed the reformists to the Left. By what incident is yesterday's tactical super-wisdom of Stalinism stood on its head?? We would look in vain for a solution to the riddle. It is quite simple: the empiricists of Centrism burned their hands on the experiment of the Anglo-Russian Committee and with a strong oath they want to guard against scandals in the future. But an oath will not help, for our strategists have not yet understood the lessons of the Anglo-Russian Committee.

The mistake was not in making the episodic agreement with the General Council, which was actually going "Left" in that period under the pressure of the masses. The first mistake was in the fact that the bloc was concluded not on concrete practical tasks clear to the working class but on general pacifist phrases and false diplomatic formulas. The chief mistake, however, which grew into a gigantic historical crime, lay in the fact that our strategists could not immediately and openly break with the General Council when it turned its weapons against the general strike, that is, when it turned from an unreliable semi-ally into an open enemy.

The influence of the radicalisation of the masses on the reformists is quite similar to the influence that the development of a bourgeois revolution has on the liberals. In the first stages of the movement of the masses the reformists move leftward, hoping in this way to retain the leadership in their hands. But when the movement overflows the limits of reform and demands from the leaders an outright break with the bourgeoisie, the majority of the reformists sharply change their tone. From cowardly fellow-travellers of the masses, they turn into strike-breakers, enemies, open betrayers. At the same time, however, part of them, consisting not entirely of their better elements, jump over into the camp of the revolution. An episodic agreement with the reformists, at the moment when under the influence of conditions, they happen to be compelled to make a step or a half-step forward, may be unavoidable. But it must be understood beforehand that the Communists are ready to break mercilessly with the reformists the moment they take a jump backward. The reformists are betrayers not because they carry out, at every given moment and in every one of their acts, the direct instructions of the bourgeoisie. If that is how the matter stood, the reformists would have no influence on the workers, and consequently would not be needed by the bourgeoisie. Precisely in order to have the necessary authority for the betrayal of the workers at the decisive moment, the opportunists are compelled at the preparatory period to assume the leadership of the workers' struggle, particularly at the beginning of the process of the radicalisation of the masses. From here follows the necessity of the united front tactic, in connection with which we are compelled for the sake of a broader unification of the masses to enter into practical agreements with their reformist leaders.

The United Front

Only a hopeless ignoramus can imagine that due to the miraculous power of the "Third Period", the working class as a whole will turn away from the social democracy driving the whole reformist bureaucracy into the camp of Fascism. No, the process

will develop by more complicated and contradictory roads. A growing dissatisfaction with the Social Democratic government in Germany, with the Labourites in England, the transformation of partial and isolated strikes into mass movements, etc. (when all these developments actually do take place) will have as their unavoidable consequence – all the Molotovs had better mark it well! – a *leftward turn* of very wide circles of the reformist camp, just as the inner process in the U.S.S.R. necessitated the leftward swing of the Centrist camp – to which Molotov himself belongs.

The social democrats and those of the Amsterdam International with the exception of the more conscious Right wing elements (types like Thomas, Herman Mueller, Renaudel, etc.) will be compelled, under corresponding conditions, to assume the leadership of the advance of the masses – in order to confine these advances within narrow limits, or in order to attack the workers from the rear when they overstep these limits. Although we know that in advance, and openly warn the vanguard about it, nevertheless, in the future there will still be tens, hundreds and thousands of cases when the Communists will not only be unable to refuse practical agreements with the reformists, but will have to take the initiative in such agreements in order, without letting the leadership out of their hands, to break with the reformists the moment they turn away from shaky allies into open betrayers. This policy will be unavoidable primarily in regard to the Left Social Democracy, which during an actual radicalisation of the masses, will be compelled to oppose the Right wing more decisively, even to the point of a split. This perspective in no way contradicts the fact that the head of the Left Social Democracy most often consists of the most degraded and dangerous allies of the bourgeoisie.

How is it possible to refuse practical agreements with the reformists in those cases where, for instance, they are leading strikes? If there are very few of such cases now, it is because the strike movement itself is very weak as yet and the reformists can ignore and sabotage it. But with the drawing into the struggle of great masses, agreements will become unavoidable for both sides. It is just as impossible to block the way for practical agreements with the reformists – not only with the Social Democratic mass, but in many instances also with their leaders or what is more likely with part of the leaders – in the struggle against Fascism.

Let the present leaders of the French Communist Party and in addition all the other Parties in the International recall their own recent past. All of them, with the exception of the youth, came from the ranks of the reformists under the influence of the leftward swing of the workers. That did not prevent us Bolsheviks from entering into agreements with the leftward moving reformists, putting very precise conditions to them. One of these innumerable agreements was, for instance, Zimmerwald. It is true, the capacity of opportunists for moving leftward is not unlimited. When the Rubicon – the decision, the uprising – is reached, the majority of them jumps back to the right. The desertion of such rotten elements is a gain for the party. But the sad part of the situation is that the simultaneously false, irresponsible, adventurist, smug, and cowardly policy of the official leadership creates a very favourable cover for the deserters and pushes toward them proletarian elements whose place belongs in the ranks of communism. In order to further entangle matters, the imminent revolutionary situation is combined with an immediate war danger.

There is no doubt that, in case of war or even an actual and clear approach of one, the reformists will be completely with the bourgeoisie. An agreement with them for a struggle against war is just as impossible as a bloc to carry out the proletarian revolution. Precisely for this reason, Stalin's justification of the Anglo-Russian Committee as an instrument of struggle against imperialism was a criminal deception of the workers.

But history knows not only wars and revolutions but also periods between wars and revolutions, that is, periods when the bourgeoisies makes preparations for war, and the proletariat for revolution. This is the period we are living in today. We must win the masses away from the reformists, who, far from declining, have grown in recent years. By this growth, however, they have become dependent on their proletarian base. It is upon this dependence that the tactic of the united front is directed toward.

Reliable methods

There is no doubt, however, that right-wing elements will actually attempt to make use of some of our points of criticism. This is absolutely unavoidable. Not all of the arguments of the right-wingers are wrong. Quite often they have a basis for their criticism in the goat-leaps of left opportunism.

A straight line is determined by two points. For the determination of a curve it is necessary to have not less than three. The lines of politics are very complicated and curved. In order to evaluate correctly the different groupings, it is necessary to take their activities must be examined during different stages: at the moments of revolutionary upsurge and at the moment of ebb. Marxists view the problem as a whole, carrying out their basic strategy consistently despite changes in circumstances. This method does not give instantaneous results but it is the only reliable method. Let the spoilers despoil. We will prepare tomorrow.

Footnotes

1. L'Humanite was the newspaper of the French Communist Party.

2. Tenth Plenum of the ECCI. Tenth full meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

3. Monmousseau and Chambelland were both members of the French CGTU, the left trade union confederation, which was dominated by the Stalinists. They disagreed over policy, Chambelland was a syndicalist while Monmousseau supported the Stalinists.

4. The 1926 British General Strike was described, correctly, by the ruling class as a political struggle for power. As the Trade Union Congress refused to wage a political struggle, the strike was defeated.

5. Vassart was a leader of the French Communist Party and CGTU.

6. Pangloss was a character from Voltaire's Candide who had an unfounded optimism, saying, "All was for the best in the best of all possible worlds."

7. The Comintern declared 1 August an international 'Red Day' of demonstrations. In words, this day appeared to be the start of the revolution while in deeds it was a fiasco.

8. Dorelle was a member of the French CGTU.

9. Bureaucratic Centralism was Trotsky's initial description of the developing bureaucracy in Russia which, at that stage, had not fully consolidated its grip on power.

10. The "spirit of Locarno and Geneva" describes moves in the mid-1920s to reduce rivalries between capitalist countries through diplomatic efforts and organisations such as the League of Nations.

11. Molotov was a leading member of the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern. He was a strong supporter of Stalin's policies.

12. The failure of 1 May 1929 was a demonstration called in Berlin by the Communist Party against government orders. It was poorly prepared and 25 workers were killed.

13. The Anglo-Russian Committee was a joint committee of British and Russian trade union leaders. The British Trades Union Congress used this committee as a left cover after they betrayed the general strike of 1926.

14. The Amsterdam International was an international federation of reformist trade unions.

15. Zimmerwald, Switzerland, was where a conference of socialists against World War I was held.

Political Education Programme

MARXIST WORKERS PARTY

Topic 1
Introduction to Marxism: who were Marx & Engels and what did they say?
Reading 1: Marx the Revolutionary (MWT)
Reading 2: The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism (Lenin)
Reading 3: Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto (Trotsky)
Reading 4: The Communist Manifesto, Chapters 1 and 2 (Marx & Engels)

Topic 2
How do Marxists understand the world? Marxism's dialectical and historical materialism
Reading 1: Dialectical Materialism: the Foundation of Revolutionary Theory (MWP)
Reading 2: The Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (Marx)
Reading 3: The Materialist Conception of History (Engels)
Reading 4: How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Chapter 2 (Rodney)

Topic 3
How is the working class exploited? Introduction to Marxist economics
Reading 1: Capitalism's Big Con: Understanding Marxist Economics (CWI)
Reading 2: Value, Price and Profit (Marx)
Reading 3: Capital, selected chapters (Marx)

Topic 4
Social grants & police brutality – the Marxist theory of the State
Reading 1: The State (Lenin)
Reading 2: The State and Revolution, extracts (Lenin)
Reading 3: Should We Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments? (Lenin)

Topic 5
How can we win the working class to revolutionary socialism? Trotsky's Transitional Programme
Reading 1: The Transitional Programme (Trotsky)
Reading 2: Founding the Fourth International (CWI)
Reading 3: On the Radicalisation of the Masses (Trotsky)

Topic 6
When the working class took power The lessons of the Russian Revolution
Reading 1: The Russian Revolution and the Rise of Stalinism (MWT)
Reading 2: The Lessons of October (Trotsky)

Topic 7
The rise and fall of Stalinism: how and why did the bureaucratic dictatorship fail?
Reading 1: The Rise of Stalinism, (MWT)
Reading 2: The Nature of the Soviet Regime, (MWT)
Reading 3: The Crisis of the Stalinist States, (MWT)
Reading 4: From Perestroika to Capitalist Restoration (CWI)

Topic 8
The socialist revolution in the neo-colonial world – Trotsky's Permanent Revolution vs the SACP's National Democratic Revolution
Reading 1: The Theory of the Permanent Revolution (MWT)
Reading 2: The "New" SACP's Explanation of Stalinism (MWT)
Reading 3: Results & Prospects (Trotsky)
Reading 4: The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Lenin)

Topic 9
Lenin's theory of imperialism: why was Africa colonized and how is it exploited today?
Reading 1: Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Lenin)
Reading 2: The Colonial Revolution (MWT)
Reading 3: A History of Pan-African Revolt, excerpts (CLR James)
Reading 4: Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions (Lenin)

Topic 10
Apartheid and the liberation struggle
Reading 1: The Nature and Tasks of the Revolution (MWT)
Reading 2: Lessons of the 1950s (MWT)
Reading 3: The Soweto Uprising (MWT/MWP)
Reading 4: Tasks of the South African Revolution (MWT)
Reading 5: Letter to South African Revolutionaries (Trotsky)

Topic 11
Africanism vs. Marxism
Reading 1: Class & Race: Marxism, Racism and the Class Struggle (MWP)
Reading 2: Africanism vs. Marxism (MWP)
Reading 3: The Third International After Lenin, selected chapters (Trotsky)
Reading 4: African Socialism Revisited (Nkrumah)

Topic 12
The revolutionary party & democratic centralism – organising a Bolshevik party
Reading 1: Our Organising Principles (MWP)
Reading 2: A Letter to a French Syndicalist (Trotsky)
Reading 3: The Class, the Party and the Leadership (Trotsky)
Reading 4: Tactics & Revolution, selected articles (Lenin & Trotsky)

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