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WHAT SHOULD BE MODIFIED AND WHAT SHOULD BE MAINTAINED  
IN THE THESES OF THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS OF THE  
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ON THE QUESTION OF STALINISM?

(Ten Theses)

By E. Germain

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FOREWORD -- The theses on general orientation adopted by the 9th Plenum of the IEC have defined the general perspectives of the revolution and of our movement in the years ahead. They represent the basis on which the discussion for the Third World Congress should be conducted. Without understanding them, without assimilating them, our sections would inevitably be perplexed and disoriented by the successive upheavals in the political and social situation which will mark the preparation and unleashing of the Third World War by imperialism.

However, these Theses do not pretend to define the exact attitude of our movement toward all the important questions now under discussion. In particular, they cannot present a comprehensive conception on the question of Stalinism. Our International possesses a fundamental document on this subject: the Theses of the Second World Congress. Within the framework of the traditional Trotskyist conception, we have since been led to make certain modifications in the views expressed in this document, especially in the resolution of the 8th Plenum on the revolution in the Far East, in the resolution of the 9th Plenum on the Yugoslav Revolution, and in the theses on the orientation of the 9th Plenum. For the international discussion to proceed with complete clarity, it is necessary to undertake once more a comprehensive analysis of Stalinism, specifying just what we are modifying and what we are maintaining in the Theses adopted by the Second World Congress. That is the aim of the following document.

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I. ". . . between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period. The latter cannot but combine the features and properties of both these systems of social economy."

These lines by Lenin, cited from an unfinished article, "The Economy and Politics of the Epoch of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," (Selected Works, English edition, Vol. VIII, page 3), remain to this very day the basis from which one must start in order to understand the USSR. In Lenin's time, capitalism and nascent communism struggled against each other in Russia under the form of two different modes of production. The capitalist mode of production has been conquered; the fundamental contradiction in Soviet society today resides in the antagonisms between the non-capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois norms of distribution.\* However, this

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\*"Distribution, however, is not a merely passive result of production and exchange; it has an equally important reaction upon both of these. . . The development of each new mode of production or form of exchange is at first retarded not only by the old forms and the political institutions which correspond to these, but also by the old mode of

distribution; it can only secure the distribution which is essential to it in the course of a long struggle." (Engels, Anti-Duehring, page 169.)

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antagonism, which is inherent in every transitional society, does not diminish in acuteness and does not tend to disappear in the Soviet Union with the development of the productive forces, but is, on the contrary, being accentuated because of the special role played by the bureaucracy. The increasing inequality, the bureaucratic administration of the economy, the monstrous degeneration of the state, all these phenomena in the last analysis express this fundamental contradiction which consists in the fact that, despite the abolition of the capitalist mode of production in Russia, the worker continues to receive as income only the strict minimum necessary to regenerate his labor power.

The essential error of the revisionist theories of the nature of the USSR consist in their inability to grasp this contradiction. The theory of bureaucratic collectivism recognizes the non-capitalist nature of the Soviet mode of production but, in denying the bourgeois character of the norms of distribution, it is forced to invent "a new form of slave exploitation." It does not understand that in reality the capitalist past and the encirclement of Russia have hampered and deformed the new society which has issued from a proletarian revolution. The theory of State Capitalism recognizes the bourgeois nature of the norms of Soviet distribution and thereby, the capitalist origin of the entire degeneration of the USSR. But it mechanically transposes and generalizes these facts to all the levels of Soviet economic life and thus constructs a "State Capitalist" mode of production which is completely mystical. Only the traditional Trotskyist theory combines an understanding of these two antagonistic characteristics of the Soviet economy and explains their meaning while disclosing their historical origins and their dynamism.

The maintenance of the bourgeois norms of distribution, the increase of inequality, the absence of any participation of the masses in the administration of the economy and the planning, more and more hold back the development of the productive forces in the USSR. The rate of accumulation decreases from one Five-Year Plan to the next.

The bureaucratic administration produces anarchy on an ever-increasing scale through the development of a parallel market and illegal trade, not only in food products and means of consumption as before 1941, but also in labor power, raw materials, machines and means of transport.

The vitality of the Soviet system of production has proved greater than was thought possible before the war, and in the short run there has not been any stagnation of the productive forces in the USSR. At the same time the possibility of the development of centrifugal forces within this system also exceeds our previous predictions. This fact alone explains why, after four Five-Year Plans, the Soviet Union continues to appear as a retarding and predatory economic force in respect to such countries as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, not to speak of Western Europe.

The Theses of the Second World Congress on the question of the USSR outlined this dynamic of the Soviet economy for the first time. This conclusion remains an integral part of our program. The overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR has become an urgent necessity, even from the purely economic standpoint, if the USSR is to continue to benefit from its progressive bases and bridge the still enormous distance separating it from the United States.

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II. By its very existence and nature, the bureaucracy reflects and concentrates the contradictions of Soviet society. The bureaucracy remains attached to the non-capitalist mode of production in the USSR, to the planned economy and collectivized property, and in its own manner defends these against their internal and external enemies. At the same time, by its own existence, its parasitism, its irrational and arbitrary administration, it constantly gives rise to tendencies corroding this planned economy and this collectivized property. What is here involved is not the tendency of the individual bureaucrat toward private appropriation -- a real but secondary factor -- but rather the objective function of the bureaucracy as a caste which ceaselessly undermines the economic bases of the USSR. Proletarian democracy has more and more become an indispensable condition for promoting a new upswing of the productive forces.

Stalin's internal policy contains all the contradictions which result from this special role of the bureaucracy in Soviet society. It defends and protects the privileges of the bureaucracy -- but only to the extent that these do not tend to directly break the framework of collectivized property and planning. It defends and protects the economic base of the USSR against bureaucratic "excesses," but by constantly strengthening the vise of the dictatorship against the masses, it reproduces these "excesses" on a constantly growing scale. Thus the Bonapartist character of the Stalinist dictatorship still best expresses the real policy of the Kremlin in respect to the present social forces in the USSR.

The foreign policy of the bureaucracy extends the contradictions of its own social nature beyond the borders of the USSR. On the international arena, the bureaucracy seeks to defend, with its own methods, the economic bases of the USSR without which its own social existence is impossible. At the same time its highly counter-revolutionary policy prolongs the existence of world imperialism. By its efforts to completely subordinate the international workers' movement, it weakens the anti-capitalist forces on a world scale and time and again brings serious conjunctural defeats to the proletariat. Despite all the apparent successes the bureaucracy has obtained, it is truer today than ever that the bourgeoisie continues to rule over a great part of the globe thanks only to the crimes of the Kremlin.

Before the Second World War, the international politics of the Soviet bureaucracy relied primarily on maneuvering between the imperialist groupings; the proletariat was utilized only as a subordinate instrument within the framework of these maneuvers. After the Second World War, the international politics of the bureaucracy was above all based on maneuvering between imperialism on the one hand and the anti-imperialist forces on the other (proletariat, colonial peoples);

the exploitation of the inter-imperialist contradictions now play no more than a secondary role. This change is the product of two decisive upsets in the world. The transformation of the relationship of forces between the great imperialist powers has precluded an alignment of two imperialist blocs against each other for an entire epoch. The new world revolutionary upsurge, which began with the August 1942 days in India and with the Italian revolution of 1943 in Europe, likewise excluded the possibility of using the anti-imperialist forces in the world as no more than a pawn on the political chessboard. So long as this new world situation is not profoundly modified, no change in this fundamental strategy of the Kremlin can be foreseen.

Within the framework of this over-all strategy, different stages have succeeded each other. During the initial stage, the Kremlin collaborated with imperialism against the revolution in Europe and in Asia. During the second stage, the Kremlin leaned on the colonial revolutions against imperialism. But neither case involved a new strategic line; they both represented no more than special aspects of one fundamental policy of playing one side against another. The Soviet bureaucracy can no more collaborate firmly for any length of time with the international bourgeoisie than it can with the proletarian world revolution. Decisive victories of the international bourgeoisie or of the proletariat always carry with them the threat of destruction of the bureaucracy. That is why the Theses of the Second World Congress on the question of the USSR have correctly emphasized the fundamentally reformist character of the Soviet bureaucracy and its international politics. Its aim is not the overturn of world imperialism, but the establishment of an advantageous modus vivendi with the latter. That does not result from the political errors of the bureaucracy or its timidity, but from its social nature: the incapacity it finds of controlling the forces liberated by the international development of the revolution which would stimulate the combativity of the Soviet proletariat and push the bureaucracy to its downfall.

III. The contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy is only partially reflected in the Stalinist parties.\*

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\*Certain Stalinist parties in the buffer countries and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are, of course, not included in the following definition.

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The dual nature of these parties is of a different social origin; it does not flow from the special role of a parasitic bureaucracy in a workers' state, but from the dual function of these parties, which are working class because of their mass base in their own country as well as international instruments for the Soviet bureaucracy. In their respective countries they have to strive to conquer and maintain an extensive mass base in the working class and the middle class; that involves the necessity of following a policy which allows them to exploit at least partially the aspirations of these masses. For the Kremlin, the usefulness of this mass base consists exclusively in serving its diplomatic designs. But these designs periodically involve a political line diametrically opposed to the most elementary aspirations of the masses. From this flows the possibility of the

outstripping of the Communist parties by their own mass base which, in action, can go beyond the objectives set by the Kremlin and escape from its control. This possibility has always been one of the fundamental perspectives of the Trotskyist movement. It can happen only in the event of a genuine and powerful revolutionary upsurge of the masses; a limited upsurge, in the absence of a revolutionary party of the masses, like that experienced in Europe after 1943, generally enables the Stalinist leadership to adapt itself step by step to the combativity of the masses while maintaining its control over them and continuing to serve the diplomatic objectives of the Kremlin.

Our movement has traditionally conceived the outstripping of Stalinism by the masses as involving profound splits inside the Communist parties. The Yugoslav and Chinese examples have demonstrated that, placed in certain exceptional conditions, entire Communist parties can modify their political line and lead the struggle of the masses up to the conquest of power, while passing beyond the objectives of the Kremlin. Under such conditions, these parties cease being Stalinist parties in the classical sense of the word. However, such an eventuality, which has moreover been foreseen by our Transitional Program, demands above all a genuine and deep-going mobilization of the masses. In the case where Communist parties are installed in power by the bureaucratic action of the Kremlin, the opposition between the needs of the independent development of the revolution in their countries and the demands of the Kremlin leads only to impotent attempts at independence by the Communist leaders (Rajk, Kostov, Gomulka, Patrascanu, etc.).

The outstripping of the Communist parties by the masses, within the framework of a genuine and powerful revolutionary wave, does not ever begin by a break of the masses with these parties. In the beginning it signifies an outstripping in action of the opportunist Stalinist policy by the most advanced layers, when a veritable influx of the most backward sections is still coming towards these parties. The former are then obliged to adapt themselves, at least partially, to this new situation in order not to lose control over the masses in the coming revolutionary upsurge in Western Europe, during the period of preparation and unleashing of war, the growing pressure of the masses is liable to force the French and Italian Communist Parties to modify their pacifist course of "neutralizing" the bourgeoisie. These parties could then, as the Theses of the 9th Plenum of the IEC declare, "project a revolutionary orientation" and "see themselves forced to undertake a struggle for power," if they wish to avoid having the masses advance directly towards the second stage of outstripping them, which would mean an organizational break with the leadership of these parties and the direct struggle against them.

The projecting of a struggle for power is one thing, and the effective conquest of power is quite another.

In the two cases where the Communist parties have actually conquered power through the action of the masses (in Yugoslavia and China), this has not immediately culminated in a break with the political and organizational methods of Stalinism nor in a public rupture with the Soviet bureaucracy. Only subsequently, through the necessity for maintaining and extending their mass base in order to conserve and consolidate the conquests of their revolution, were

these Communist parties impelled towards a policy more and more independent of the Kremlin. This dialectical development can be explained by the following facts:

a.) Yugoslavia and China are very backward countries, having a not very numerous proletariat with a weak Marxist tradition, which moreover passed through two decades of prostration under a reactionary dictatorship. The Communist parties, even with their Stalinist line, found themselves at the extreme left of the working class forces.

b.) The revolutionary struggle has its center of gravity in the countryside and assumes the form of a military centralization by the Communist parties of the uprisings of the poor peasantry. The Soviet bureaucracy fears the struggles of these masses less than those of the industrial proletariat. The objectives of this peasant struggle do not immediately run counter to the objectives pursued by the Kremlin.

c.) The revolutionary victory was obtained by the military conquest of the cities, where, for a number of historical reasons, no proletarian uprisings occurred.

d.) For all these reasons, the revolutionary victory could be secured without the Communist Party having to break completely with an opportunist tactic and publicly demarcate itself from the Kremlin.

The listing of these factors permits us to specify that a similar conquest of power by an independent Communist party could be duplicated in the Middle East and in East Asia, but is extremely improbable in an industrially advanced country of Western Europe or America. In these countries the revolution could never advance from the countryside to the city, but will always proceed from the cities to the countryside.\*

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\*Italy and Spain, because of their special geographical and social structure, represent borderline cases which have to be examined from a special standpoint.

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A large-scale military struggle could not precede but only follow the revolutionary mobilization of the industrial proletariat. This proletariat, by virtue of its traditions, its past, its level of class consciousness, possesses a considerable vanguard which is consciously oriented toward the socialist revolution, even if it still follows the Communist Party. An independent assumption of power by the Communist parties of these countries is possible only through a genuine revolutionary mobilization of the proletarian masses which demands a genuine outstripping of the program, the policy, and the organizational forms of Stalinism. On its own side, the Kremlin, for whom such a development in an advanced country would represent a thousandfold more deadly threat than the Yugoslav revolution, would really do its utmost to prevent such a development. A friendly coexistence for any length of time of the victorious revolution in an advanced country and of the Soviet bureaucracy is therefore not very probable.

It is thus necessary to conclude that the Communist Parties are not simply reformist parties because they can, under certain excep-

tional conditions, conquer power in an independent fashion. Just like centrist parties, and even certain left Social-Democratic parties (Austria and Spain, 1934), they can further be compelled, under pressure from the masses, to modify their customary counter-revolutionary course in a turn toward the left, which can lead them up to the point of projecting a struggle for power, these cases being less exceptional than the before-mentioned cases. The exact relations of these parties with the Soviet bureaucracy could be modified by virtue of these political turns, to the degree that they lead the Communist Party to positions imperiling the Bonapartist character of the Soviet bureaucracy whose power also rests upon an international balance between the fundamental classes of modern society.

IV. The continually more advanced decomposition of world capitalism is the historical background against which it is necessary to view the movement of the masses beyond Stalinism and the conquest of power by certain Communist parties with the forces of the proletariat in their own country. The world revolutionary upsurge continues to widen and deepen, even if between 1948 and 1950 it undeniably experienced a temporary recession in Europe. Today it embraces all Asia, tomorrow it will cross the Atlantic and confront Capital in its last stronghold. The development of this upsurge is the semi-automatic product of the extreme decay of capitalism. In the absence of a sufficiently strong revolutionary leadership, this revolutionary upsurge temporarily assumes new or transitory forms, such as we have seen in Yugoslavia and presently see spreading through Asia.

For ten years the forward march of the world revolution has assumed the most diverse and unexpected forms and the most audacious and perplexing combinations. We have seen a national anti-imperialist movement with extensive bourgeois participation advance to the verge of a general armed insurrection in India in August 1942; we have seen the proletarian revolution raise its head under a tottering but not yet beaten dictatorship in Italy in 1943; there were petty-bourgeois parties proclaiming the dissolution of the regular army and the imposition of workers' control over production in Warsaw in 1944; there were the armed struggles of the workers for power veiled by the ideological facade of "the National Front" with their own bourgeoisies, as in France and Greece, 1944; there was the dictatorship of the proletariat established following the departure of bourgeois ministers from the government in Yugoslavia in 1945; we have seen the most backward peasant masses put the Soviet state on the agenda in Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma, 1946 to 1950; the Bolivian miners compelled to take the destiny of their country in their own hands on several occasions, 1948-1949; a Communist party still imbued with the most opportunist ideology taking power in China, 1949; a monarchist and ultra-reformist Socialist Party actually calling the workers to the barricades in Belgium, 1950.

Not to understand this concrete development of the world revolution and to take refuge behind schemas of an "ideal" world revolution is to turn one's back on the real movement in the name of a chimera and to degrade communism from the status of a science to that of a utopia.

V. Soviet expansionism originated in the fact that the Stalinist bureaucracy, obliged to defend the USSR in its own manner to



maintain and extend "its power, its privileges and its prestige" (L. Trotsky), was confronted with such a degree of decomposition of the capitalist regime in the neighboring countries as permitted it to extend its zone of influence without the risk that the international proletarian revolution would sweep over the bureaucracy's head. In the last analysis, this situation resulted from the modification of the world relationship of forces between the classes and does not at all demonstrate the existence "of expansionist aspirations" on the part of the bureaucracy. It does not at all correspond to a "profound logic" of Soviet society, or to any inherent need in its economy.

Historically, the bureaucracy can consolidate its power over the countries in its zone of influence only by structurally assimilating them into the USSR. But that is true only from an historical point of view. Experience has already proved that the ruling bureaucracy of a degenerated workers' state can, under certain conditions, temporarily manipulate bourgeois property relations for its own benefit. The Kremlin has done so for many years in the case of the Chinese Eastern Railway. For five years it has had mixed companies in purely capitalist countries like Finland, Austria and Iran. For years it has exploited to its profit economies based on private property in the means of production in Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. An understanding of this possibility, contained in the Theses of the Second World Congress on the question of the USSR, is from now on part of our program.

If the Theses of the Second World Congress did not envisage as assured the complete destruction of the bourgeoisie in all the "buffer zone" countries, that is not because our movement forgot Trotsky's teachings, according to which the bureaucracy does not wish to share its privileges with the bourgeoisie. We have affirmed from the beginning and reiterated that the bureaucracy tends to assimilate its buffer zone into the USSR. What was put in question was not the desire of the bureaucracy, but its capacity. The error committed was not one of over-estimating the capacity for resistance of the bourgeoisie in the buffer zone whose extreme weakness, if not non-existence by virtue of events during the war, was clearly manifest from the beginning. The Theses made a different error. It consisted in the proposition that the bureaucracy could not lean on the masses to eliminate the remnants of the bourgeoisie in the whole of the buffer countries without running the risk that these masses would go over the bureaucracy's head. This thesis was realized in only one case and in an unexpected form. In Yugoslavia, the only country where the bourgeoisie was crushed by the action of the masses from the first stage, the Kremlin actually lost control over events. But because of the extremely limited character of the mobilization of the masses in the other countries of the buffer zone, because of the passivity and even the growing apathy of the workers in these countries, unexpected by our movement, such a development was not duplicated, and the Kremlin could eliminate the vestiges of the bourgeoisie step by step, while maintaining a strict control over the masses. The Soviet bureaucracy has actually subordinated structural assimilation of its buffer zone to its own work of destruction of the possibilities for the free development of the workers' movement, but these possibilities have been, because of the very consequences of Soviet expansionism, reduced to the minimum. That is why, from the

viewpoint of the international revolution, structural assimilation achieved in the case of this or that country is infinitely less important than the destruction of the living workers' movement which has preceded it (Poland).

Thus our movement ought to guard against two errors: the error of underestimating the importance of the mass movement by permitting ourselves to be blinded by the temporary Stalinist leadership (an error committed by certain sections in the case of Vietnam, of Greece, of China, etc.) and the error of overestimating the scope of this movement by considering it necessarily and in advance capable of passing beyond bureaucratic control (the error committed in the case of the buffer zone). The distinction here is between a limited development, utilizable and controllable by the Kremlin, and a powerful and general sweep of the movement and of the consciousness of the masses. That is what gives rise to these two variants of development in the last analysis.

VI. To resolve the problem of the perspectives of the future of Stalinism, one must distinguish between two phenomena which, up to now, have been mutually exclusive: Soviet expansionism (military occupation of certain countries by the Soviet army) and the conquest of power by the Communist parties with their own means, that is to say, propelled forward by a powerful revolutionary upsurge. Wherever Soviet occupation has occurred, as a general rule the revolutionary upsurge has been halted and broken; the Kremlin has not lost but increased its control over the Communist parties; moreover the Communist parties have always been cut off from the masses; they have more and more been transformed, through a series of crises, into pure and simple machines under the command of the Soviet bureaucracy. The bureaucracy has not been weakened but reinforced by this process. Wherever, on the contrary, the Communist parties have been propelled into power by the mass movement, Stalinism has actually found itself weakened. But that has not come as a result of its "expansion" but rather because of the depth of the revolutionary movement of the masses. Here one of the fundamental theses of Trotskyism finds itself confirmed: Stalinism is a phenomenon of the recession of the workers' movement and can extend itself only under conditions of recession. Wherever, on the periphery of the bureaucracy's sphere of influence, powerful revolutionary movements have broken out, the bureaucracy has tried with might and main to produce their retreat, either by abandoning these arenas to imperialist repression, as in Greece or by actively contributing to it, as in Poland. Only in Yugoslavia did this same tactic of the bureaucracy (Eden-Molotov agreement) fail, thanks to the depth of the movement of the masses and to the empirical assimilation of certain experiences of revolutionary struggles by the Yugoslav CP leadership.

A mechanical opposition of Soviet expansionism to the revolutionary upsurge, obviously simplifies the problem in the extreme. Reality has produced many more variants. We have seen cases where the approach of the Soviet armies stimulates the revolutionary activity of the masses. The effects of the occupation only later lead to a recession in the movement of the masses. On the other hand, occupation by the Russian army has had completely reactionary effects from the viewpoint of this movement, above all in countries where living standards and culture are higher than in the USSR. Temporary occupa-

tion of countries which are on a lower level (such as Inner Mongolia, North Korea, North Iran, etc.) can produce opposite effects because, in these countries, the bureaucracy does not appear as a rapacious force and the low level of political consciousness amongst the masses permits the establishment of a control over them by methods which appear progressive in their eyes compared with the oppression they have previously experienced. The de facto United Front which today exists between the colonial revolutions in Asia and the Soviet bureaucracy, which has its objective origin in their being both menaced by imperialism, is rendered subjectively possible by this difference in the relations of the bureaucracy and the masses in Asia as against those existing in Europe. In the long run, the antagonism between the international revolution and the Soviet bureaucracy will also reveal itself in Asia, but in the first place on the political plane.

In Europe on the other hand, this antagonism should appear as quickly on the political plane as on the economic plane. It is no mere coincidence that the bureaucracy has conceived its theory that socialism can no longer conquer in Europe without occupation by the Soviet army. It appears certain that the bureaucracy cannot, under penalty of self-destruction, favor an extensive revolutionary mobilization of the masses in Western Europe. Under these conditions it will tend to limit the insurgent activities of the Communist parties there in the event of an outbreak of war and will try to impose on them a course of neutralizing the bourgeoisie in these countries, as well as collaborating with certain sections of the bourgeoisie. Even more than in Eastern Europe will it try to make every attempt to smash the free development of the workers' movement there. But, unlike Eastern Europe, an eventual Soviet occupation of the advanced countries in Western Europe would occur in the face of masses engaged in a full revolutionary upsurge.

The capacity of the Soviet bureaucracy to manipulate the movement of the masses as it pleases, or to intervene brutally against it, will therefore be far more restricted, and will be determined by the relationship of forces between the proletariat and the bureaucracy. The more extensive the revolutionary upsurge, all the more will it tend to accentuate the crisis of Stalinism by forcing the Communist parties to partially adapt themselves to the revolutionary aspirations of the masses. The more a new leadership, independent of the Communist parties will strengthen itself by adroitly utilizing the twists and turns of the Communist parties, the more restricted will become, not the will but the counter-revolutionary capacity for action, of the Kremlin. Only the overturn of the capitalist regime in many important countries on the continent before an eventual Soviet occupation will eliminate any danger that the proletariat may have to pass through this new bitter experience. If, primarily because of lack of an effective leadership, the revolutionary upsurge should fail to overturn in time the decayed rule of the bourgeoisie, this rule would not be destroyed by an eventual Soviet occupation but only obliged, after an intermediary period, to modify its form as the resistance movement of the working masses for proletarian democracy develops against the occupation regime that the Stalinist bureaucracy would impose upon them.

Our revolutionary optimism is expressed in the prediction of our Transitional Program that the objective conditions of a decadent

capitalism will in the long run surmount all the bureaucratic obstacles on the road to the revolution. The revolutionary upsurge at the beginning of which we find ourselves will fully justify this prediction. It will sound the knell of the Soviet bureaucracy and of Stalinism, products of a stage of world reaction which has irretrievably gone by.

VII. The role of the Soviet bureaucracy in the Third World War is determined by the specific character, by the entirely new character, this war will possess, which was specified for the first time by the Theses on orientation of the 9th Plenum. It will be fundamentally different from the Second World War for two reasons: it will not break out at the end of a long period of defeats and retreats of the proletariat to which war came as the logical and final culmination (1923-1939). It will on the contrary occur in a profoundly revolutionary epoch, during which the international bourgeoisie would have shown itself unable to crush the proletarian forces in Asia and in Western Europe, an incapacity of which the war itself will this time be the ultimate culmination. It will not break out between two imperialist blocs but between the united imperialist front on the one hand and the USSR, the buffer countries and the colonial revolutions on the other. Precisely because on the eve of the Second World War the revolution had reached its lowest ebb did this war have first of all the character of an inter-imperialist war. Its counter-revolutionary nature came forward as decisive only in the period of its liquidation. Precisely because on the eve of the Third World War the world revolution has attained a more threatening and universal point than ever, will this war first of all be a counter-revolutionary war. American imperialism will not launch the war in order to punish the crimes of Stalin or to combat the privileges of the bureaucracy; it will launch it, economically, to force the USSR, the buffer zone, China, Yugoslavia to return into its orbit by destroying collectivized property there, and, politically, to attempt through a final desperate effort to drown in blood the revolution which will unfold on the five continents. It is this specific character of the Third World War which will determine at one and the same time our unequivocal position of defending the USSR, the buffer zone, China, the colonial revolution and Yugoslavia against the war of imperialism, and our assurance that the Soviet bureaucracy will perish together with the international bourgeoisie.

During the period of liquidating the Second World War, the decay of the imperialist system and the appearance of a new revolutionary wave were sufficiently advanced to save the USSR from destruction, but the revolutionary wave was inadequate to break the Stalinist grip upon the workers' movement in the countries in the centers of the revolution. Two new developments, products of the postwar period, radically modify this capacity of the Soviet bureaucracy to maintain itself and survive. The infinitely greater decadence of capitalism has already liberated and will yet liberate revolutionary forces of such magnitude that they can definitively destroy the international equilibrium between the classes and prepare a new revolutionary upsurge of the Soviet proletariat, which can overturn the reactionary bureaucratic caste in the USSR. The universal extension of the revolutionary wave has already created, in numerous future centers of the revolution (USA, Great Britain, Germany, Latin America, even India and Japan) a new situation in the workers' movement which will

no longer permit Stalinism to play a decisive counter-revolutionary role there. Moreover, because it clearly understands this situation, the Soviet bureaucracy will do everything possible to avoid the outbreak of war. But precisely because it is more and more losing its ability to control -- and thus to betray -- the international revolution, it can no longer, in the last analysis, halt by its own concessions the march of American imperialism toward this war.

The existence of the Soviet bureaucracy objectively originated in the setbacks suffered by the Soviet and the international proletariat, as well as in the low level of the productive forces in Russia after October. The world development of the revolutions ahead of us will destroy to their roots these foundations of the Kremlin's domination. The Kremlin will succumb under the blows of the Russian proletariat aided and supported by the proletariat of the advanced countries where the revolution will triumph, above all in the United States, Great Britain and Germany. It is not excluded that the widespread devastation produced by an extended Third World War will provoke vast collapses in the machinery of production in great parts of the world which would thus facilitate initial bureaucratic deformations of new victorious revolutions. These deformations would not however be comparable to the monstrous bureaucratization of the USSR, a product of twenty-five years of special historical development. The experience of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions -- despite all their weaknesses -- fully confirms the prediction of Marx that each victorious proletarian revolution would surmount in large part the weaknesses and setbacks of the preceding revolutions. Our conviction in the victory of the American revolution, giving the socialist world a prodigious productive capacity even after a devastating war, allows us to envisage with confidence perspectives of proletarian democracy after the Third World War.

VIII. The defense of what remains of the October conquests, as a strategic task of our movement, has been correctly specified by the Theses of the Second World Congress on the question of the USSR following the new developments which occurred since the outbreak of the Second World War. Since then, we have been led, for the first time in the history of our movement, to raise as an immediate concrete possibility, the waging by the Soviet bureaucracy of an historically reactionary war against a workers' state, against the victorious proletarian revolution in Yugoslavia, in the course of which revolutionary defeatism would have to be the task of the Soviet revolutionists. This example, added to the experience of the counter-revolutionary intervention of the Soviet armies in the buffer countries, demands that we maintain the utmost precision regarding the tactical significance of our strategy in defending what remains of the October conquests in different concrete situations.

We defend what remains of the October conquests against the restorationist attempts of imperialism. But the proletarian masses are not and cannot be restorationists; that is why the defense of the USSR cannot in any respect imply the defense, the justification or critical support for the military actions of the bureaucracy, either against workers' states like Yugoslavia or against insurrectionary movements of the peoples in the buffer zone. Even in time of war, and independently of the repercussions it may have on the immediate development of hostilities, we will always unconditionally

support every insurrectionary movement of the masses against the Soviet bureaucracy, if this movement corresponds to the real aspirations of the masses, because an independent development of the revolution in the world represents a thousandfold more deadly blow against imperialism than any advance here or there of the Soviet armies. Our position is not that of defending one "diplomatic bloc" against another. We reject the notion of orienting our policy as a mere function of the existing "two blocs." Our policy is a class policy. We defend the Soviet Union against imperialism, and at the same time the world revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. We do not identify the revolution with its bureaucratic usurpers. While imperialism does not merely combat the bureaucracy but also the Soviet Union and the revolution, the bureaucracy does not merely defend in its own manner the Soviet Union against imperialism, but also its privileges and its power against the masses and against other victorious revolutions. Our policy takes into account both sides of the question.

The tragic lesson of the Warsaw Commune ought to be assimilated by the revolutionists of all countries. The development of anti-imperialist insurrectionary movements behind the front lines whose justification ought to be determined by the relationship of forces between the classes and not by the military needs of the Soviet army, should not in any event culminate in a coordination of these forces with the bureaucratized general staffs of the Soviet armies, or a subordination to the latter. The tragic experience of the last war demonstrated that the bureaucracy would far more prefer a setback or a temporary military weakening to the reinforcement of the independent armed forces of the proletarian revolution. It would not hesitate, if it felt necessary, to try and crush such forces right in the middle of the world war. To bind oneself militarily to the general staffs of the bureaucracy in the name of defending the Soviet Union would signify digging a grave for the revolutionary movement of the masses.

Thus, except for the USSR itself, where the defense of what remains of the October conquests imposes specific military tasks on revolutionists, in the rest of the world this strategic task is completely identified with the task of promoting the victory of the socialist revolution in the different countries themselves or in defending and completing the revolutionary conquests already made in those countries (Yugoslavia, China, the buffer countries). In time of peace as in time of war, any policy which lessens the cohesion of the proletarian forces, lowers their level of class consciousness and their confidence in their own strength, diverts them from their revolutionary objectives or utilizes them for aims which are not those of their own class, will be pitilessly fought by the Fourth International, whatever semblance of "military" justification might be alleged in this or that concrete situation.

IX. The method by which our movement has resolved the question of the class nature of Yugoslavia in the resolution adopted by the 9th Plenum of the IEC, is directly linked with its Marxist-Leninist tradition, already successfully defended in its solution of the question of the Soviet Union. The resolution of the 9th Plenum settled the Yugoslav question by taking its point of departure from the real class forces and not from the property relations isolated

from their historical origin. At the same time it "legalizes" the use of the formula of "Workers and Peasants Government" to designate certain transitional stages between the crumbling of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the construction of a state apparatus of a new type. This formula, inscribed in our Transitional Program, has since demonstrated its full usefulness in the case of China, where our movement uses it to characterize the present stage of development in the Chinese revolution. It is part of our programmatic arsenal needed to understand the transitional phenomena belonging to our epoch.

The international discussion now under way on the class nature of the buffer countries could be positively concluded only on condition that the theoretical acquisition which constituted its point of departure is not abandoned. Everyone admitted, at the beginning of the discussion, that in the buffer zone we had to deal with countries dominated by the Soviet bureaucracy since 1944. In the course of this domination, certain structural transformations had been effected in these countries within the framework of the policy of structural assimilation pursued by the bureaucracy. The difficulty consists in this: how to determine at what moment the transformation of quantity into quality was effected in the process of structural assimilation. Where a proletarian revolution occurs in a country, the very fact of this revolution dispenses with the need to seek for other criteria to demonstrate the shift in the domination from one class toward another; the Yugoslav example is a new proof of this. We could very well conceive that the proletariat, after taking power in certain countries, might maintain private property in the means of production in certain sectors there for an entire period. The complete nationalization of the means of production has not even yet been accomplished in the Soviet Union. A generalized nationalization can only serve as proof of the previous existence of a workers' state, no bourgeois state presumably being able to undertake these measures. In the buffer zone, the problem is quite different: there has not been a proletarian revolution and the question to be determined -- the form of the passage of power from one class to another -- is complicated by the fact that the bureaucracy has effectively exercised power from the very beginning there. It is in this sense (to determine the moment of structural assimilation) that we have raised the question of planning and the abolition of effective frontiers, and not at all to limit the possibilities for action of victorious revolutions in small countries, or to introduce new criteria for a revolutionary victory.

Consequently it is necessary to admit that the bourgeoisie very quickly lost political power -- the dates differing from one country to another -- with the power passing over to the Communist Parties, supporting themselves on the military and police forces of the bureaucracy. And they have ruled for an entire period without radically transforming the structure of private property and the state apparatus. The changes which have recently taken place in numerous countries in the state apparatuses mark a new stage in the transformation of these workers and peasants governments into deformed workers' states. At the same time, this transformation is accompanied by an ever stricter and more direct control of the Soviet bureaucracy over the entire social life of these countries. The culmination of this process is the effective integration of their economy into Soviet

planning, of their armies into the Soviet army, which will terminate the process of structural assimilation. So long as this process is not concluded, the situation of each country in the buffer zone remains unstable and transitory and subject to the oscillations of the international relationship of forces (the examples of Germany and Austria have quite recently demonstrated this). One can discuss concretely whether this process has already been concluded in this or that country (it appears most advanced in Poland and Bulgaria). But it would be necessary to admit that the criterion of property relations, as important and decisive as it may be, cannot by itself alone enable us to settle the question, if it is isolated from its entire historical context.

X. The tasks of our movement in respect to Stalinism cannot be conceived in isolation from the nature of the epoch in which we live, powerfully emphasized by the events which have unfolded in the past two years. The collapse of imperialist domination in East Asia, the independent development of the Chinese revolution, the outbreak of the Yugoslav affair prove that the world revolution, passing to a new stage of its expansion, has at the same time strongly accentuated the crisis of Stalinism. What matters above all in the present period is to give the proletariat an international leadership capable of coordinating its forces and proceeding to the world victory of communism. The Stalinist bureaucracy, forced to turn with a blind fury against the first victorious proletarian revolution outside the USSR, is socially incapable of accomplishing any such task. Herein is the historical mission of our movement. We ought to prepare ourselves, in line with the genius-like prediction of Trotsky "for long years, if not decades, of wars, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings." During this period we will fulfill the central task of forging the international general staff of the revolution.

The historical justification for our movement does not reside in the fact that it is more democratic than Stalinism, that it makes the revolution with less overhead expenses or that it is alone capable of constructing a socialist society. Its only possible justification, confirmed by three dramatic decades, resides in the incapacity of Stalinism to overturn world capitalism, an incapacity rooted in the social nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. That is why its final defeat is as certain as that of the international bourgeoisie. No more than the bourgeoisie will it survive a war which will be transformed into a world upsurge of the revolution. The period elapsing between the Second and Third World Wars will appear in history as a temporary interlude, and the prediction of Trotsky that the bureaucracy would not survive a war would find itself historically confirmed.

It is not because the defense of what remains of the October conquests acquires a new and higher importance in the present conjuncture of events that our movement has in the past two years taken a turn toward the Communist workers. On the contrary, it is because the new revolutionary wave contains in embryo the destruction of the Stalinist parties as such that we ought to be much closer today to the Communist workers. This is only one phase of our fundamental task: to construct new revolutionary parties. Experience has shown us that in certain countries, these parties can come forth in an



unexpected form, or even that Communist parties can, under pressure of grandiose revolutionary experiences, take the first steps on the road toward a regeneration. But all these cases are located in the perspective of the crisis of Stalinism, and not in its even temporary revitalization. If our slogan today is "Closer to the Communist Workers," that is because we feel the moment coming when we can deliver a mortal blow to Stalinism, it is precisely because the revolutionary preoccupations of this worker collide more and more with the counter-revolutionary policy of Stalinism. To be "closer to the Stalinist workers" then signifies at the same time to affirm more than ever our own program and our own Trotskyist policy in opposition to the Stalinist policy which leads them into a blind alley. There is no other possibility for an international victory of the revolution.

However, this orientation is itself of limited application. It does not apply to the Anglo-Saxon countries where the Stalinist parties represent an insignificant minority and this embraces three of the most industrialized countries in the world, the USA, Great Britain, Canada. It no longer applies to many countries in Western Europe, and above all to Germany. It does not yet apply to most of the countries of Latin America. It does not apply to certain countries of the Far East like Ceylon and even perhaps to India. And when the masses will revive tomorrow in all the countries of the buffer zone, it will very likely no longer apply there, with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia, where this reawakening could still begin with the Communist Party.

The historical task of Trotskyism, in the USSR itself, in the buffer zone and in other countries which may be later occupied by the bureaucracy, takes on a new meaning in the framework of our revolutionary perspectives. It consists in assuring to the insurgent movements of the masses, which will inevitably break out in these countries in the event of a prolonged war or a world revolutionary upsurge, a leadership independent of imperialism, capable of leading these countries forward toward proletarian democracy and not backward toward capitalism, capable of cementing the alliance of the workers and peasants on the maintenance of the collectivized property, combined with the democratization of all social life. An indispensable condition for the realization of this task is the participation in the resistance movements of the masses against the Soviet bureaucracy, just as participation in the revolutionary movement of the masses directed by the Communist parties in Asia and eventually in Europe is an indispensable task for passing beyond and doing away with Stalinism in these countries. The participation in the real movements of the masses, the conquest of as large a section as possible of the masses in the different countries at the present stage, are the necessary preconditions for realizing our task in the following stage, whatever be the concrete nature of this stage. Our task is world-wide. It consists in embedding ourselves in the movement of the masses in all countries, in coordinating these movements on an international scale, and this task can not at all be summed up in an attitude towards the problem of Stalinism alone.

If our movement shows itself capable of establishing and deepening its contacts with the masses in all the important countries; if it continues to form a new generation of cadres and workers' leaders

on an international scale; if it remains the only center where the international experiences of the mass movement and the revolution are progressively assimilated, its future and its victory are assured, whatever be the conjunctural advances this or that opportunist party can still make here or there.

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